

## **EXAMINING THE RESPONSE TOWARDS PUBLIC PROCUREMENT PREFERENCES IN TANZANIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Although sometimes criticized, preference or discriminatory provisions in public procurement are largely used by governments throughout the world to encourage domestic bidders by deliberately granting them margins during bid evaluation which make them look competitive against their foreign counterparts when contesting for public contracts. This study was conducted in Tanzania with an aim of examining compliance with public procurement preferences. The study involved both secondary and primary data. Primary data were collected by use of questionnaire whereby a total of 168 respondents including 85 Heads of Procurement Management Units (HPMU) and 83 bidders were included. The study found that some local bidders lacked awareness about preferential arrangement stated in the Public Procurement Act, 2011 and thus could not fully take advantage of the related opportunities. Also, the study revealed that procuring entities (PEs) did not comply with the regulations which granted local bidders preferential treatments. In order to enforce preference in the public procurement system, the Government of Tanzania through Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) should introduce sensitization programs to local bidders across the country. They too should have compliance with procurement preference provisions as a specific compliance indicator in annual audits of PEs.*

**Key words:** *Public procurement, preferences, compliance*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Globally, discriminatory public procurement practices have been applied for many years with such aims as protecting domestic industries, expediting the growth of domestic businesses, creating employment and addressing the plight of marginalized or disadvantaged sections of the population. Many public procurement systems have had discriminatory provisions or preference schemes built in their procurement laws to address such objectives. The provisions favor domestic bidders by introducing clauses which make them look relatively competitive than foreign bidders or other *bidders* respectively when contesting for public tender opportunities. . Similarly, the Republic of South Africa (2003) enacted a law known as “Black Economic Empowerment Act No. 53 of 2003” under the “Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment” (BBBEE) initiative to address the plight of the black population which had been largely marginalized during the time the apartheid policy was in force. In particular, the Republic of

Some governments have also introduced quota arrangements in the public procurement systems in favor of the disadvantaged groups like women, youth and persons with disabilities. For instance, Anderson and Kovacic (2007) observed that many countries including the United States of America have introduced policies which favor their domestic suppliers in regard to at least some aspects of their public procurement thus locking out foreign suppliers especially when they are not covered by applicable trade agreements. It is also noted that the US Small and Medium Enterprises procurement preference policies have been in existence since 1953 following the US Small Businesses Act of 1953 (Linarelli, 2010)

South Africa is one of the few countries which have the public procurement subject in their constitutions (Watermeyer, 2003).

At this point it is worth noting that the introduction of preference schemes in procurement markets of developing countries especially in those countries where some groups of population have not been able

to access public procurement opportunities for historical and sometimes political reasons is a rational policy. The key argument here is that, this special arrangement will stimulate the domestic economy and create job opportunities and other benefits from the trickle-down effect. However, while Tanzania, just like other developing countries introduced preferential arrangements in favor of local bidders, the implementation of the same has not been effective. Evidence from a country-wide Procurement Assessment Report (CPAR) of 2006 revealed that out of 388 preference-eligible procurement transactions, only 3% had the preference provisions applied as required by the public procurement law. Further evidence from performance evaluation carried out by the Tanzania' Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA, 2007) revealed that application of preferences to deserving local firms had dropped further to 2%. It is an unfortunate scenario, triggering questions which needed to be answered.

Based on the above background, this paper examined the response towards public procurement Preferences in Tanzania. Specifically, the paper strives to achieve two specific objectives. Firstly, the paper examines level of awareness about procurement preferences among bidders and procuring entities. Secondly, the paper seeks to determine extent to which procuring entities complied with preference provisions as stated by Public Procurement Act, 2011.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Types of preferential public procurement schemes

There are various preferential public procurement schemes and the way they are implemented differs across countries. First there are those which are discriminatory in nature whereby domestic bidders are awarded some predetermined bonus points during bid evaluation, making them look competitive when compared with their foreign counterparts. The aim here is promotion of domestic businesses and creation of job opportunities by easing domestic bidders' access to the local procurement market opportunities. The points are awarded during financial evaluation whereby bidders will have

gone through the rest of the qualification criteria. For most countries the points range between 10 – 15% and are loaded on the lowest evaluated best foreign bid. Swaziland for instance allows a *national preference* of 15% for construction works, 10% for consultancy assignments and 7.5% for goods in what has been dubbed as “Measures to Promote Swazi Companies” (Kingdom of Swaziland, 2010). On the other hand Zimbabwe allows a 10% price margin to all locally based suppliers and an additional 10% to all previously economically disadvantaged contractors (Musanzigwa, 2013). However, there are some countries where the rates go significantly high like Ethiopia where domestic companies in the pharmaceutical industry enjoy price preference of 25% when competing with foreign pharmaceutical companies (Chekol & Tehulu, 2014)

The second category of preference schemes are ‘reservations’ whereby some quotas of the public procurement business are reserved for economically disadvantaged groups of the population. Such groups include youth, women and persons with disabilities. In Kenya, for instance, the Public Procurement and Disposal Act, 2005 under a program known as, “Access to Government Procurement Opportunity” (AGPO) reserves 30% of public procurement for youth, women and persons with disabilities as provided for in section 140 of (Republic of Kenya, 2005). Treasury Circular No.1/2015 requires all accounting officers to, among other things, to implement the AGPO program in adherence to the legal provisions stated in the Act (Republic of Kenya, 2015). Similar experience can be drawn from Brazil where all government procuring entities (PEs) are required to reserve all contracts with value below US \$ 35,000 to the domestic small and medium enterprises (Reis and Cabral, 2014)

According to Tanzania's Public Procurement Act 2011 (URT, 2011), preferential schemes in the public procurement systems are organized into five categories (URT, 2011). The first category is on national preference to local contractors, suppliers, consultants and providers of non-consultancy services. Where a margin of preference of 10% is awarded to local bidders. The second category is on joint ventures and association arrangements. This category has three sub-categories based on the extent of foreign component and margin of preference. The first sub-category allows a foreign component of between 50 and 70% and has a margin of preference of 6%. The second sub-category with a foreign component between 25 and 49% has a margin of preference of 8% while the last sub-category allows

foreign component between 0 and 24% with preference margin of 10%. The third category is on preference margin for goods mined or manufactured in Tanzania regardless of the nationality of the supplier: this category has a preference margin of up to 15%. The fourth category is on exclusive preference to local suppliers /contractors / service providers. This category is applicable where the tender value does not exceed TZS 10,000,000,000 for works and TZS 2,000,000,000 for goods and also for non-consulting services. The fifth category is preference on special groups i.e. youth, women and persons with physical disabilities to whom 30% of the procurement volume is reserved. This was introduced in 2016 as an amendment provision on the Public Procurement Act, 2011. However, the argument of this paper is whether the preference schemes listed above were being effectively implemented during the public procurement proceedings.

## 2.2 Discriminatory Procurement Practices

Literature on discriminatory or preferential public procurement practices is fairly rich but seems to be limited when the focus turns to compliance with rules and regulations compelling government agencies to apply required discriminatory or preference provisions. While literature on non-compliance with public procurement preference provisions in developed countries is almost non-existent, a lot was expected on the developing countries because their procurement systems are still at an infancy stage; just as it is the case for their governance institutions which are necessary for supporting a well-functioning public procurement system. Although not focusing specifically on compliance with preference provisions, a number of empirical studies have revealed some causes for non-compliance with public procurement rules (Eyaa & Oluka, 2011; Chekol & Tehulu, 2014; Sang & Mugambi, 2014; Nkonge & Ngugi, 2014). Those studies established causes on non-compliance to be lack of familiarity with public procurement rules (Eyaa & Oluka, 2011; Chekol & Tehulu, 2014) and poor procurement personnel skills and competences (Sang & Mugambi, 2014); In their study on factors constraining effective implementation of public procurement reforms in Kenya, Nkonge and Ngugi, had established among others, that failure to comply would occur where the procurement work force was not adequately

educated on the procurement laws. In their study on explaining non-compliance in public procurement in Uganda Eyaa and Oluka (2011) established that familiarity with public procurement regulations was a significant predictor of compliance with procurement regulations adding that once people were aware or familiar with what they were supposed to do or not to do, it became easier for them to do the right thing.

Besides failure by public authorities to comply with procurement rules on preferences there have also been cases where the targeted groups i.e. bidders could not exploit the opportunities brought in by the preferential schemes. Studying on interventions that could enable youth SMEs in Uganda to win public procurement contracts, Peter Obanda, (2012) identified training and information being significant factors. A more or less similar argument was advanced by Lagat et al (2016) from their study on factors constraining youth, women and persons with disabilities towards accessing public procurement opportunities in Kenya's Transzoia county. They established that failure by the preference-targeted groups to access public procurement opportunities in the district government was attributed to among others, lack of knowledge.

It is worth noting that preferences in the public procurement system have also been criticized especially by scholars and practitioners in from the developed countries. They accuse them as a barrier to free international trade and thus constitute an obstacle to economic integration (Trepte, 2007; Arrowsmith, 2005). They argue that practicing discrimination in public procurement works against Ricardo's theory of comparative advantage which states that: "by specializing in the production and export of goods and services for which it holds a comparative advantage, a state's resources will be used most efficiently and thus wealth will be enhanced" (Trepte, 2007; Arrowsmith, 2005).

Nonetheless, it can be argued that procurement preference provisions are there to facilitate easy access to procurement markets by those who would otherwise find it difficult and sometimes impossible to do so. It is also expected that such special arrangement would increase their chances to win government contracts. It follows, therefore, that where preference provisions exist, bidding for government tender opportunities by the preference-targeted groups will also increase and in turn increase their chances to win the tenders (Reis and Cabral, 2014). However, this logic does not seem to

apply to Tanzania where response towards exploiting public procurement preference provisions as a business opportunity to domestic bidders, SMEs and the disadvantaged groups of the population has been poor (CPRA,2006; PPRA, 2007). The unexplained poor performance of public procurement preference schemes in Tanzania is a knowledge gap which has motivated this study.

### 3. Methodology

This paper relied on the findings of a survey carried out in Tanzania covering two groups of public procurement namely procurement entities and bidders. In total the study involved 168 respondents including 85 Heads of Procurement Management Units (HPMU) and 83 bidders. Contracting authorities or procuring entities and bidders who had transacted business with the authorities for the previous three years (Bidder who had transacted the highest procurement volume with the relevant contracting authority). At the time of conducting the survey the number of contracting authorities in Tanzania, that is, ministries, departments and agencies – including parastatal organizations and local government authorities was estimated at about 400

Data were collected by use of two sets of questionnaires. Two sets of structured questionnaires were developed with enquiries capable of addressing the research questions. One set of questionnaires was sent to procuring entities to be filled out by heads of procurement management units or departments (HPMUs) while the other one was sent to private firms / institutions that had transacted procurement business with government institutions since year 2007, one year after the time the last Country Procurement Assessment Report (CPAR) on Tanzania came out. There were open ended questions allowing for flexibility in having respondents freely speak their mind. Most questions were based on frequencies and percentages and a few were based on a 5-point Likert Scale to allow for easy quantification of the outcomes. The first category of questionnaires i.e. those distributed to HPMUs had a question requiring the respondent to indicate whether or not he/she was aware of the legal requirement in Tanzania to consider procurement preference schemes where applicable; also to indicate their level of knowledge of the computations involved.

Secondary data included in particular, PE procurement audit and compliance monitoring reports released annually by the regulatory body i.e. the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA). The reports picked for the study were those which covered the period between years 2006/7 (the time the regulatory agency–PPRA started to roll out *Annual Performance Evaluation Reports*) and 2014-05 inclusive. The consulted secondary data and in particular the annual reports Issued by PPRA were necessary for addressing the third preposition or research question on the role the agency played in enforcing legal compliance by contracting authorities. The data was useful for deriving conclusions on the effectiveness of the regulatory body in ensuring that procuring entities adhered to the legal requirement of effecting preference provisions where applicable.

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 4.1 Awareness about preference provisions

The two categories of respondents to this study, including Heads of Procurement Management Units (HPMUs) representing Procuring Entities (PEs) and Bidders were asked to indicate whether they were aware of the preferential provisions in the public procurement system. Findings revealed that 95% of the HPMUs were aware of those preferences. In this case, therefore, only 5 % of them were not aware. Further, the findings showed that among 80 bidders involved in the study, 66 (80%) were aware while 17 (20%) were not. Detailed results are presented in Table 3 below.

*Table 1: Awareness of preference provisions by Heads of PMUs and Bidders*

|           | HPMUs |      | Bidders |      |
|-----------|-------|------|---------|------|
|           | n     | %    | n       | %    |
| Aware     | 81    | 95%  | 66      | 80%  |
| Not Aware | 4     | 5%   | 17      | 20%  |
| Total     | 85    | 100% | 83      | 100% |

**Source:** survey data, 2016

Respondents (bidders) who indicated that they were aware of the preferential provisions were further asked if they would ask for preference margins in their bids or not. Results revealed that all 66 bidders who were aware would ask for those margins in their bids. Nonetheless, not all heads of PMUs indicated

that they would implement the preferential provisions in the public procurement system even though they were aware. Findings revealed that out of 81 heads of PMUs who were aware with this special arrangement, only 58 (72%) implemented it in the tender award procedures. Furthermore, heads of PMUs were asked to indicate the extent to which members of their respective tender evaluation committees were knowledgeable about preferences in the public procurement system. According to section 40 of the Public Procurement Act 2011, the PMU among other responsibilities, recommends the members of the evaluation committees (ECs) to the Accounting Officer for approval. According to the former, 59.7% of ECs were highly knowledgeable of preferences, 35.1% had average while 1.3% had very low knowledge. However, 2.6% of them were found to be highly knowledgeable which is good.

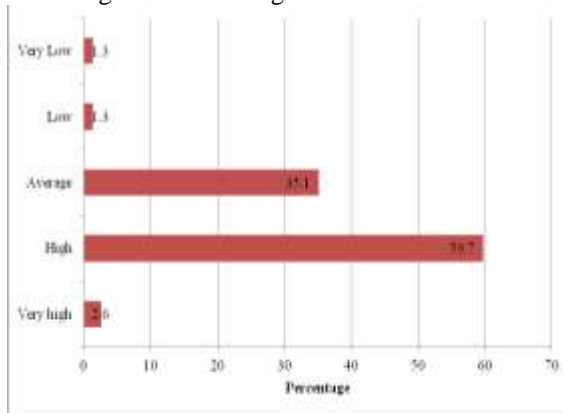


Figure 1: Evaluation Committee's level of knowledge on preferences (n=77)

Source: survey data, 2016

Level of knowledge about public procurement preference varied among bidders. Findings showed that a large proportion of them had fair or moderate knowledge about preference in the procurement system. Only about one third of them (indicated that they were highly knowledgeable about those preferences. However, only few indicated that they had low or very low knowledge about preferences in the public procurement system.

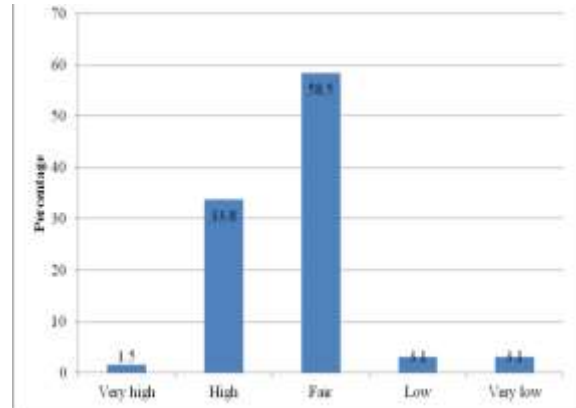


Figure 2: Ranking of the Knowledge of the Bidders

Source: survey data, 2016

Heads of procurement management units were asked to give their opinion by indicating their level of agreement with assertion that 'procurement audits did not feature issues of procurement preferences as significant or important'. Generally, the results showed that 55 (65.5%) respondent agreed with the assertion while 29 (34.5%) disagreed. The implication of this finding is that about two thirds of respondents opined that procurement preferences were not taken into account in the audit process.

4.2 Level of Compliance with Preferential Treatment

Again the heads of procurement management units (HPMUs) from selected public organizations were asked to indicate the percentage of bids that were liable for preferential procurement treatments as per the legal provisions. In Particular, they were to rate extent to which the liable cases were awarded in three financial years from 2011/12 to 2013/14.

Table 1: Proportion of cases liable for preferential treatment (2011/12 – 2013/14)

| Proportion | 2011/12 (n = 60) | 2012/13 (n =59) | 2013/14 (n =63) |
|------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 0 to 20%   | 43.3             | 39.0            | 33.3            |
| 21 to 40%  | 5.0              | 6.8             | 6.3             |
| 41 to 60%  | 18.3             | 15.3            | 22.2            |
| 61 to 80%  | 30.0             | 35.6            | 34.9            |
| 81 to 100% | 3.3              | 3.4             | 3.2             |
| Total      | 100.0            | 100.0           | 100.0           |

Source: survey data, 2016

Findings, further revealed that consideration for preferences was low whereby 44.8% of the

Procuring Entities (PEs) applied preferences on less than 20% of the liable preference cases during the years 2011/12 and 2012/13 with the position worsening during 2013/14 where the figure dropped to 41.8%. On the other hand only 4.5%, 6.0% and 4.5% of the government agencies did consider the preference provisions on more than 80% of the preference liable cases respectively during the three years

**Table 2: Proportion of liable preference cases that were considered (2011/12 – 2013/14)**

| Proportion | 2011/12<br>(n = 60) | 2012/13 (n<br>= 59) | 2013/14 (n<br>=63) |
|------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 0 to 20%   | 44.8                | 44.8                | 41.8               |
| 21 to 40%  | 3.0                 | 3.0                 | 1.5                |
| 41 to 60%  | 22.4                | 10.4                | 20.9               |
| 61 to 80%  | 25.4                | 35.8                | 31.3               |
| 81 to 100% | 4.5                 | 6.0                 | 4.5                |
| Total      | 100.0               | 100.0               | 100.0              |

**Source:** survey data, 2016

Furthermore, the study examined the overall compliance with the requirement of public procurement acts i.e. 2004 and 2011. Findings showed that overall level of compliance was not stable. Details are presented on Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Overall level of compliance with the public procurement law over years**

| Year    | Number of CPIs used | Number of PEs Evaluated | Overall Compliance Level (%) |
|---------|---------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| 2006/07 | 14                  | 20                      | 39%                          |
| 2007/08 | 13                  | 70                      | 43%                          |
| 2008/09 | 13                  | 30                      | 66%                          |
| 2009/10 | 13                  | 99                      | 55%                          |
| 2010/11 | 13                  | 106                     | 63%                          |
| 2011/12 | 13                  | 121                     | 74%                          |
| 2012/13 | 7                   | 120                     | 64%                          |
| 2013/14 | 7                   | 76                      | 65%                          |
| 2014/15 | 7                   | 80                      | 69%                          |

**Source:** PPRA Annual Performance Evaluation Reports: From 2006/7 – 2014/15.

Records showed that procurement performance evaluation was carried out annually by PPRA based on “Compliance and Performance Indicators” (CPIs) throughout the period covered by the study. Use of CPIs is a methodology employed by PPRA to evaluate the performance of government entities with regard to

procurement and assets disposal processes. Entities are thus gauged against a number of predetermined CPIs which are also drawn from international public procurement best practices. A study sponsored by the World Bank i.e. Country Procurement Assessment Report (CPAR) on Tanzania in the year 2006 had established among others, that the country’s level of compliance with preference provisions was only 3% (CPAR 2006). The annual procurement audit report by PPRA the following year that is, 2006/07 revealed that the level of compliance on procurement preferences had dropped further to 2%, (PPRA Annual Report, 2006/07). The number of CPIs used in the assessments during the year 2006/07 were 14 and had included one on compliance with preference provisions. Little is known about the level of procurement preference compliance the following year 2007/08 as the indicator had been dropped, bringing the number down to 13; a situation which went on until the year 2012/13 when the indicators were harmonized and merged into seven (Table 3). This innovation on the reduced number of indicators leaves doubts as to whether the application of preferential schemes in the public procurement systems can still be traced with the reduced number of performance indicators. Findings on the overall compliance rate also showed that there was no stable improvement over years. A serious downfall was noticed in 2009/10 when compliance rate dropped to 55%.

## 5. Discussion, conclusions and recommendations

The findings showed that some bidders lacked knowledge or awareness about preferences in the public procurement system in Tanzania. This finding is in consonance with a number of previous empirical studies which found out that lack of familiarity was among the major reasons for non-compliance with preferential provisions in the public procurement systems in the developing countries (Eyaa & Oluka, 2011; Chekol & Tehulu, 2014). Also, the findings revealed that there was poor compliance with the written laws and regulation about preference in the public procurement system. This was evidenced in a finding which showed that about 45% of the Procuring Entities (PEs) applied preferences on less than 20% of the liable preference cases during the years 2011/12 and 2012/13. Furthermore, about two thirds of heads of PEs indicated that procurement preferences were not taken into account during audits. This specific finding may suggest that although Tanzania established preferential schemes by Public

Procurement Act 2011 (URT, 2011, there were no effective mechanisms of enforcement. Same argument could also be raised from another finding which showed that number of compliance and performance indicators (CPIs) used to assess compliance with preferential schemes in public procurement in Tanzania in 2006/07 was 14 and had included procurement preferences as a “stand-alone indicator” before it was dropped the following year 2007/08.

Generally, therefore, the above findings lead to the following conclusions. First, the government of Tanzania through its regulatory authorities in public procurement demonstrated willingness to create better conditions to local bidders by introducing preferential schemes in the country’s public procurement legislation. However, there were no mechanisms laid down to ensure that those schemes were effectively applied. Second, although the preferential schemes were introduced some years ago, still local bidders lacked awareness about how they worked. This may imply that the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) of Tanzania had not taken enough initiatives to create awareness to local bidders about opportunities that are granted by the procurement regulations.

Based on the above conclusions, this study calls for more efforts by PPRA to create awareness about opportunities that can be exploited by local bidders as far as preferences in public procurement system are concerned. Also, there is a need for PPRA to reinstate compliance with public procurement preference provisions as a CPI in the audit processes so as to enhance its compliance level in the country’s public procurement system.

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