

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COMMEMORATING AFRICAN UNION ANTI-CORRUPTION DAY 2022

**THEME: STRATEGIES AND MECHANISMS FOR THE TRANSPARENT
MANAGEMENT OF COVID-19 FUNDS**

The Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII) joins millions around the continent of Africa to commemorate the 2022 AU Anti-Corruption Day in a rather sober mood as corruption in our beloved countries continue to push the economy to the brink of comatose. While the occasion should have presented our countries with an opportunity to take stock of progress made in the fight against corruption, evidence contained in studies conducted into corruption risk in public spending and infractions observed in statutory audit reports does not offer much comfort to the people of Africa.

The theme for this year's, AU anti-corruption day "**Strategies and Mechanisms for the Transparent Management of Covid-19 Funds**" provides us as member states an opportunity to assess our strategies and mechanisms for safeguarding Covid-19 funds; as various corruption risks reports across the globe have revealed numerous procurement infractions. In Ghana. GIIs Corruption Risks Assessment which evaluated the risks of corruption in Government's interventions revealed inadequate transparency with regards to the procurement processes related to Covid-19 interventions Rolled out by government. The revelation of opacity in the procurement processes regarding the COVID-19 interventions was further compounded by inadequate publication and accessibility of procurement contracts by the people of Ghana.

While the situation was not unique to Ghana, the hardships which have ensued after the blatant abuse of public resources in the name of mitigating the effect of the pandemic on the people has left many questions than answers on the minds of Ghanaians.

Various risks assessments undertaken on COVID-19 interventions globally by Transparency International and other development partners on COVID-19 interventions point to the fact that in an attempt to curtail the spread of the pandemic Governments around the globe took drastic decisions on life saving measures, as a result, overlooking laid down principles, rules and regulations of procurement, such as resorting to competitive bidding methods of procurement verifying suppliers, ensuring value for money and determining fair and competitive prices and instead resorted to the use of infamous sole sourcing and restrictive tendering methods.

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These findings have prompted the 28 Transparency International Chapters across Africa to send an open letter to the leaders of the African Union (AU), reminding them of their anti-corruption commitments and urging additional measures as a matter of urgency.

Back home, findings from GIIs Corruption Risks Assessment revealed that, so far, no audit of the COVID-19 interventions has been conducted or published for public accessibility. Subsequent findings by others have corroborated this sad trend which have culminated in calls for an audit by the opposition Members of Parliament which the Speaker has instituted a bi-partisan committee to address.

It is instructive to indicate that in June 2022, the Minister of Finance, presented to Parliament a statement of accounts on the resources for COVID-19 intervention. However, suffice to say, that the Minister's presentation cannot be construed to constitute an audit or accountability as it focused on the headline items rather than the detailed expenditure and compliance issues regarding the use of public funds. Other issues which have been specifically stated as worrying and have a potential to exacerbate the high perception of corruption by citizens include:

1. A \$10million loan to produce emergency PPE kits and gear- there is evidence to suggest that there was no tendering notice given for the procurement contrary to the Public Procurement (Amendment) Act, 2016 (Act 914). Also, the four selected companies by the Ministry of Trade to produce PPEs were not registered with the PPA, offending Sections 43 and 44 of Act 914
2. A \$7.4 million for Community Engagement and Risk Communication- the Government established a National Information Contact Center (NICC) at the Accra Digital Center to provide information on COVID-19 and related matters, however, there has not been any information about how much Government spent on that set-up, as no figures have been released publicly.
3. With regards to a \$ 3.6million for health system strengthening, it is unclear how Government spent funds earmarked under this allocation from the World Bank Funding; and in the case of Government's support to schools with veronica buckets, sanitizers, rolls of tissue paper, gallons of liquid soap and thermometer guns, as well as, hot meals to final year students, there has been no full disclosure of who won these contracts, from which funds the contracts were awarded and whether the contracts went through the proper procurement processes.

GII wishes to use the occasion of the AU Day Against Corruption to make the following recommendations for immediate attention in the spirit of Article 35(8) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana. Our specific recommendations are as follows;

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1. Government should ensure the full compliance of sections 79 and 80 of the Public Financial Management (PFMA) Act and Public Procurement (PPA) Act to safeguard all public funds and deliver value for money
2. Government should enforce Section 92 of the Procurement Act 663 (as amended) which speaks to contraventions and penalties relating to procurement in instances of violations, especially under emergency situations to serve as a deterrent to public officers who may want to take advantage of the system
3. The Public Procurement Authority (PPA) should ensure full compliance with the requirement in Section 44 (2) of the PPA Act that mandates Procurement Entities (PE) to place a public notice for comments from the public before any single source procurement is initiated
4. The PPA should additionally develop regulations and guidelines concerning sole sourcing in Government procurement.
5. The Public Procurement Authority must ensure that all public procurement records are complete and accurate, and easily accessible to the public in a single file.
6. The Parliament should review the provision in Section 14 (3) of the PPA Act that vests power in the Minister of Finance to direct the use of a different procurement procedure where the Minister determines that it is in the “national interest” to do so. Current practices show this does not guarantee that the procedure will be in line with principles of economy, efficiency, and transparency.
7. The Heads of the Civil and Local Government Services should see to the strict enforcement of the Code of Conduct for the Ghana Civil Service.

Finally, GII wishes to commend all anti-corruption stakeholders in Ghana and across the continent for their enormous efforts and call on them to use the Day as an opportunity to reflect and dialogue on the strategies and mechanisms taken on the transparency and accountability in the management of COVID-19 funds to ensure that these funds are used judiciously and solely for the purposes of which they have been released.

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