

# Translating resource revenues into effective services & infrastructure

Final evaluation of the Open Contracting Partnership's work funded  
by the BHP Foundation

*Summary report*

March 2023

Jasmine Kendall

Kate Iida

André Petheram

Richard Stirling

Natalia Carfi



<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Overarching findings</b>	<b>5</b>
OCP's main contributions	5
Strategic shifts since midterm evaluation	7
Challenges	9
<b>Working towards impact</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Working towards scale</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Working towards longevity</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Environmental sustainability</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Social inclusion</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Lift program</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>34</b>
Successes	34
Challenges	35
Recommendations	36

# Introduction

This report provides an independent final impact evaluation of the Open Contracting Partnership (OCP)'s program of work funded by the BHP Foundation (BHPF) under the *Translating Resource Revenues Into Effective Services & Infrastructure* project. The program runs from the end of 2017 until March 2023, and has supported OCP's work in 23 countries. It's overarching objective is to transform public contracting in resource rich countries through 'open contracting' to promote:

- i) accessible, user-friendly open data along the entire 'deal flow' of public contracts; and
- ii) better business and civic engagement to put that data to work across government.

Over the five years of the BHP Foundation project, OCP expects that when significant changes are made to procurement practices and open contracting data is used more widely by businesses, governments and citizens, this will result in:

- improved **service delivery**;
- better **value for money** and **internal efficiency**;
- improved **public integrity**; and/ or
- increased **business competition**.

The evaluation's primary objectives are to identify and validate evidence of where OCP has achieved 'significant, widespread changes in procurement policies and practices' in these areas as a result of the program activities. The evaluation tackles three primary research questions, each addressed in a chapter of the evaluation. These are:

- **Impact.** What are the impacts, progress, gaps and lessons from the past four years of this program? In particular, how can OCP get most value out of work done to date, so that it is embedded, sustained, and replicated?
- **Scale.** What is the scale of open contracting in program countries - i.e. where has OCP helped partners to scale up (by increasing the magnitude of impact), scale out (multiplying the number of reforms and beneficiaries) and scaling wide (changing mindsets practices and values)? How can OCP amplify the scale of its impact in the future?
- **Longevity.** Building on the program so far, what is now needed to better sustain the open contracting ecosystem and empower partners to reach impact in the long term, independently of OCP?

Additional research questions considered within the evaluation, also addressed in subsequent chapters, were:

- **Environmental sustainability.** OCP has strengthened its focus on environmentally sustainable procurement since the midterm evaluation. How can OCP further evolve its

support to better address concerns around environmental sustainability and the energy transition through procurement going forward?

- **Social inclusion.** How has OCP strengthened its focus on inclusive procurement since the midterm evaluation? How can it best promote open contracting that has a positive impact on people's lives?
- **OCP's Lift impact accelerator program.** How has the Lift program specifically contributed to OCP's progress across all of the research questions above?

In each chapter of this summary report, we summarise the background of each research question (i.e. why it is important to OCP), before outlining relevant findings from the evaluation, both in terms of successes and gaps. Each chapter concludes with a series of actionable recommendations for OCP to address gaps and build upon progress in the relevant area.

## Methodology

We worked with OCP at the start of the project to identify countries to focus on in the evaluation with a broad regional spread, and a range of levels of progress. Given that we also sought to evaluate the Lift impact accelerator programme, we prioritised countries where Lift projects are operating, as well as countries which are receiving significant funding from the program. These countries and areas include:

- Argentina
- **Chile<sup>1</sup>**
- **Colombia**
- Ecuador
- India
- **Indonesia**
- **Nigeria**
- United Kingdom
- **United States**
- Lift (covered by other country interviews and an additional interview with partners in Mexico City)

---

<sup>1</sup> Countries in bold are focus countries, where interviews were prioritised.

To evaluate progress, outcomes and impacts in each country, we used qualitative research methods consisting of **interviews** and **desk research**. To capture diverse perspectives, we conducted 45 interviews with representatives from civil society organisations, central and local governments, journalists, international donors, and the private sector, where relevant.

Country	Number of interviews (including OCP team) note
Argentina	7
<b>Chile</b>	7
<b>Colombia</b>	7
Ecuador	5
India	3
<b>Indonesia</b>	7
<b>Nigeria</b>	9
United Kingdom	4
<b>United States</b>	7
Lift (other countries)	2

# Overarching findings

OCP defines impact as “significant widespread documented change”, which needs to outlast projects.<sup>2</sup> Under the BHP Foundation grant, OCP’s goal was to see 5 instances of impact within the focus countries covered by the grant. This target was updated to 7 instances of impact in October 2020.

Desk research and interviews with partners during the course of this evaluation confirmed that OCP is on track to reach their goal of at least 7 documented impacts. So far, OCP has documented 7 impacts in:

- year 1 and year 3 in Colombia;
- year 4 in Chile and Buenos Aires, Argentina; and
- year 5 in Indonesia, Ecuador, and Nuevo León, Mexico.

OCP country managers were also optimistic that they would be able to document further impacts in the coming months in Mexico City, Buenos Aires, and Ekiti State.

OCP furthermore set a target to capture and share at least 17 progress and data use stories throughout the course of the grant. As of October 2022, OCP has exceeded their target, publishing 36 progress and data use stories. Many of these stories were independently verified by interviewees in the course of this evaluation, including progress stories in:

- Buenos Aires, Argentina;
- Manizales, Colombia;
- Assam, India; and
- Nigeria.

## OCP’s main contributions

**Through interviews, partners highlighted four main areas where OCP had made an important contribution to their work. These were:**

- 1. Coalition building**, in reference to building and strengthening open contracting communities across the local and national levels.

One of OCP’s key value adds remains coalition building. This is an approach that is crucial to OCP’s Theory of Change and interviews confirmed that OCP’s projects centre around coalition building. Interviewees pointed to a number of collaborative projects across multiple government agencies and civil society organisations, where these groups worked together to address a shared

---

<sup>2</sup>*Open Contracting Partnership*. Open Contracting delivers, and why it’s the smart thing to do. <https://www.open-contracting.org/impact/>

goal.

In one country, for example, OCP has helped to connect a CSOs organisation with auditors working in government to partner on work to help reduce corruption, a partnership that interviewees expressed would have been difficult to forge without OCP's support. OCP has done similar work to link CSOs working on anti-corruption and human rights issues with government officials motivated in the same area for collaborations. Interviewees expressed that these collaborations were sparked by OCP, and wouldn't have happened without their involvement. Others highlighted OCP's value as an international connector to other advocates of open contracting. Being part of an international community was highlighted for its role in building solidarity, but also in driving towards further impact, by taking inspiration from successful case studies.

We recommend that OCP continue to prioritise coalition building and building bridges between government and civil society as this was particularly valued by partners.

**2. OCDS and broader data publication and use support** for less technically focussed partners.

Since the midterm evaluation, OCP's data support has evolved, and partners welcomed the shift. There were significantly fewer critiques of the useability of OCDS for a non-technical audience than in the midterm evaluation and one partner even explicitly recognised and welcomed OCP's shift from "immediate standardisation" towards further data use in alternative formats.<sup>3</sup>

Government partners often highlighted the value of OCP's contribution to OCDS publication and improvements to data quality, whilst CSOs and journalists referred to a wider range of data support along the technical spectrum, including training on how to use data in CSV format, for example.

OCP should continue to offer this diversified data support and emphasise helping partners to use contracting data in the best way for them. OCP should also continue to, and expand on, their work to help partners to improve the quality of their data.

**3. Change management support with regular check-ins.**

One of OCP's main shifts in the 2021 Strategy Refresh is to "make change management support central to OCP's offer" while at the same time scaling up the Lift impact accelerator program.<sup>4</sup>

Interviewees have responded positively to this shift, often highlighting the value in having frequent catch ups and being able to pick up the phone to OCP. Multiple partners said that OCP holds them to account and keeps them motivated, whilst helping them to put in place concrete action plans for

---

<sup>3</sup> *Open Contracting Partnership* (2021). 2021 Strategy Refresh. <https://www.open-contracting.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/OCP2021-strategy-refresh-1.pdf>, p 12.

<sup>4</sup> *Open Contracting Partnership* (2021). 2021 Strategy Refresh. <https://www.open-contracting.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/OCP2021-strategy-refresh-1.pdf>, p 8.

achieving their goals. This was a particularly common response amongst Lift participants. One interviewee said that they felt one of OCP's main contributions was "being there for us, having those check-in meetings, guiding us with specific documents, the MEL plan..."

We recommend that OCP offer a similar type of change management support with regular check-ins to their non-Lift partners as well, as this contribution was particularly valued by the partners who received it.

#### **4. Financial support.**

Eleven interviewees also highlighted OCPs financial support in the form of Lift grants, Action Research grants, and more continuous funding support as one of OCP's primary contributions to their work. Two interviewees identified funding in particular as OCP's most important contribution to their work. According to one partner, an Action Research grant during the pandemic was like "oxygen" without which they would not have been able to continue to investigate contracting. They even implied that the Action Research work helped them to find more funding, by building up their experience investigating government contracts.

We recommend that OCP continue to directly fund projects where possible, and prioritise awarding Action Research Grants in particular to small organisations in areas that receive low levels of funding, where a relatively small grant could make a significant impact on their operations.

## Strategic shifts since midterm evaluation

Mostly, OCP has responded effectively to the recommendations made in the midterm evaluation, despite a number of global challenges emerging since 2020 which have threatened to stall progress, including political instability and recurring waves of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**In particular, we found evidence that OCP has made changes which responded to the following recommendations in the midterm:**

### **1. Clarify specific use cases in each country for stakeholders to gather around and collaborate on, to move towards impact.**

OCP has clearly responded to the need for clearer use cases for open contracting through the Lift impact accelerator program, launched in 2021.<sup>5</sup> The program invites selected teams to work closely with OCP over an 18 month period to apply an open contracting lens to a specific use case. Over the course of the evaluation, we spoke to partners involved in five Lift projects, who highlighted the importance of the technical support provided by the programme, but also the value of frequent catch up calls in keeping projects on track. As explored in further detail in the Impact and Lift chapters of the evaluation, Lift has been a driver of impact since its inception, and had led

---

<sup>5</sup>*Open Contracting Partnership*. Elevate public services: how will you change public contracting to radically improve goods, works, or services? <https://www.open-contracting.org/implement/lift/>



to the publication of an impact story in Ecuador, and a number of expected impacts soon to be published in Ekiti state, India and Mexico City.

## **2. Co-create theories of change with in-country partners, identifying specific impact areas and KPIs.**

In interviews carried out for the midterm evaluation, we often heard that there were no formal theories of change for OCP's engagement in a number of countries and cities. In direct contrast, during this evaluation we found that country managers we interviewed were able to speak to an established theory of change for each country in scope of the evaluation. Again, we found that the Lift project has been a key driver of progress here, since the program encourages partners to define key performance indicators early in their engagement with OCP. This was apparent in interviews, where Lift partners were amongst the most confident when speaking to their plans for quantitative impact tracking.

Nonetheless, we found that there is still scope for OCP to push further in this area, particularly when it comes to co-creating theories of change and plans for impact tracking. These recommendations are discussed in further detail in the Impact chapter of the evaluation.

## **3. Re-articulate the case for introducing the Open Contracting Data Standard (OCDS) or be selective about where to work towards its adoption.**

This is a recommendation that OCP has responded to very well. A key barrier identified in the midterm evaluation was that OCDS was perceived to be difficult to use and partners were not always convinced of its value.<sup>6</sup> In response, as part of the 2021 strategy refresh, OCP made a strategic shift away from the "immediate standardisation" of data to prioritising its "immediate value".<sup>7</sup> OCP has also worked to internalise its technical helpdesk, previously made up of contracted experts largely focussed on providing OCDS support, introducing further focus on providing flat file data support and tooling. One OCP staff member, working in this team, characterised the approach as "meeting partners where they are".

This shift has been explicitly welcomed by partners:

*"In the early days a lot of OCP's focus was on the data and they've become more strategic, asking what the data is used for and how it improves public services."*

Elsewhere, most interviewees spoke about OCDS positively. For example, government partners in one country highlighted how OCP has worked with their team, to help them develop and implement a more user-friendly OCDS portal. Where more technically focussed partners did have

---

<sup>6</sup>Oxford Insights (2020). Translating resource revenues into effective services and infrastructure: midterm evaluation of the Open Contracting Partnership's work funded by the BHP Foundation, summary report.

<sup>7</sup>Open Contracting Partnership (2021). 2021 Strategy Refresh. <https://www.open-contracting.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/OCP2021-strategy-refresh-1.pdf>, p 12.

criticisms of OCDS, they often were focussed on more specific issues related to the interoperability of different countries' standards.

#### **4. Introduce more sector specific and procurement specific expertise to support data use within government.**

The midterm evaluation recommended that OCP focus efforts on specific sectors that could benefit substantially from open contracting, like infrastructure and healthcare. Some country specific recommendations also posited that OCP should focus more on these areas, where the midterm highlighted both healthcare and infrastructure as “the most promising areas for ongoing analysis and support” in one country.<sup>8</sup>

It is clear that OCP has adapted their strategy in response to these recommendations. In particular, OCP has established roles such as Infrastructure Manager and Head of Infrastructure, dedicated to advancing the use of open contracting in the sector.<sup>9</sup> Some of these projects are particularly innovative in the sense that they intersect with OCP's goals around promoting social inclusion and environmental sustainability.

Furthermore, there is evidence that OCP has also responded to this recommendation at a country level since the midterm evaluation. In one country, we heard how OCP has focused on new work in both the infrastructure and health sectors, with new projects with the government working to open up contracting data on infrastructure projects, as well as an explicit focus on health procurement, which led to an impact story.

## Challenges

**Whilst some strategic shifts respond to recommendations made in the midterm evaluation, we found evidence that other recommendations have not yet been fully implemented. Partners highlighted the following persistent challenges where they would appreciate further support.**

#### **1. Partners would like OCP to consider developing a global open contracting benchmark.**

Interviewees in the midterm evaluation felt that comparative analyses, such as Indexes or other benchmarking initiatives could be a useful lever for ensuring continuing government commitment to open contracting, by promoting ‘competition’ with regional neighbours or previous administrations.

---

<sup>8</sup> *Oxford Insights* (2020). Translating resource revenues into effective services and infrastructure: midterm evaluation of the Open Contracting Partnership's work funded by the BHP Foundation, summary report.

<sup>9</sup> *Open Contracting Partnership*. Team. <https://www.open-contracting.org/about/team/#gavin-hayman>

During the final evaluation, multiple interviewees argued again that international comparisons have the potential to deepen political buy-in for open contracting. We know that OCP is (rightly) wary of benchmarking because it risks incentivising only surface level reform, but it is clear that partners feel that some form of alternative comparative analysis could help make the case for open contracting within government. OCP has started to explore cross country and cross departmental comparisons with a series of business intelligence tools, although partners we interviewed were not aware of this work. As such, OCP could do more to socialise and further develop this workstream as a driver of political buy-in. We discuss the recommendation for further comparative research in the scale chapter of the evaluation.

## **2. OCP should offer further regulatory and legislative support to partners advocating for legal changes.**

This was a recommendation made across multiple countries in the midterm evaluation. Partners felt that in order for reforms to be robust and sustainable, OCP could do more to help them to advocate for open contracting reforms to be enshrined in primary legislation, to protect against the stalling of progress that often occurs when administrations change.<sup>10</sup>

We acknowledge that OCP does not lobby for legislative change directly as its primary objective. During this final evaluation, however, we heard from partners in a number of countries that a lack of legislation supporting open contracting remains a serious challenge, and that this is an area in which OCP could offer further support, by doing more to share best practices and OCP's existing legislative guidance. We offer further detail on this recommendation in the chapter on the longevity of reform.

## **3. OCP should build even stronger arguments for open contracting as a driver of both internal efficiency and taxpayer value for money, as these are arguments which resonate particularly strongly with governments.**

A key recommendation from the midterm evaluation was that OCP could do more to rearticulate the case for open contracting as a driver of government efficiency, and value for public money – arguments which are most likely to resonate with governments.<sup>11</sup> To an extent there is evidence that OCP has responded to this recommendation, since recent impact stories from Indonesia and

---

<sup>10</sup> *Oxford Insights* (2020). Translating resource revenues into effective services and infrastructure: midterm evaluation of the Open Contracting Partnership's work funded by the BHP Foundation, summary report.

<sup>11</sup> *Oxford Insights* (2020). Translating resource revenues into effective services and infrastructure: midterm evaluation of the Open Contracting Partnership's work funded by the BHP Foundation, summary report.

Buenos Aires in particular illustrate how open contracting can save governments time and money.<sup>12</sup> In 2018, OCP also added internal efficiency as a fifth use case of open contracting, acknowledging that this constitutes a powerful argument for reform amongst procurement officials in particular.<sup>13</sup>

Nonetheless, we believe that OCP could go further in convincing governments that open contracting is vital for optimising efficiency, particularly where arguments focussed around anti-corruption risk open contracting being viewed as a means of punishing governments. This view was shared by some partners. For instance, one interviewee felt that more research and advocacy which gets executive leadership “to connect the dots on cost savings” could be particularly valuable. We explore this recommendation further in the chapter on working towards impact.

**The evaluation also identified a series of new challenges. The following chapters go into further detail about these obstacles and offer a series of recommendations for addressing them. Summarised, however, some of the main challenges identified in the final evaluation are:**

- **OCP’s quantitatively focussed definition of impact did not seem to resonate with the majority of partners**, many of whom did not yet feel they could point to the quantitative impact of their work, and in one cases even argued that quantitative impact was not a priority for them, as they were more interested in being able to qualitatively evidence a positive influence on people’s lives (*discussed in more detail in ‘Working towards impact’*).
- **Some partners are struggling to relate OCP case studies to their contexts**, given the legislative and political differences that divide countries, and the varying resourcing capacities of partners. We heard this from three sets of partners (*discussed in more detail in ‘Working towards scale’*).
- **Green procurement, one of OCP’s strategic focuses, is still seen as an unrealistic prospect for the majority partners in the short term.** Most partners suggested that

---

<sup>12</sup> *Open Contracting Partnership* (2022). Partners in crime prevention: how civil society and government worked together to open up public contracts in Indonesia.  
<https://www.open-contracting.org/2022/04/27/a-partnership-for-better-procurement-how-civil-society-and-government-worked-together-to-open-up-public-contracts-in-indonesia/>

*Open Contracting Partnership* (2021). From open data to joined-up government: driving efficiency with BA Obras.  
<https://www.open-contracting.org/2021/07/12/from-open-data-to-joined-up-government-driving-efficiency-with-ba-obras/>

<sup>13</sup> *Open Contracting Partnership* (2018). A 5th dimension: Why we decided to add internal efficiency as a new use case.  
<https://www.open-contracting.org/2018/04/26/5th-dimension-decided-add-internal-efficiency-new-use-case/>

they are still fighting to make progress on the “basics” of open contracting, such as more standard data use and publication (*discussed in more detail in ‘Environmental sustainability’*).

- **Some partners expressed doubt around finding alternative funding after an OCP grant concludes.** Whilst financial support was highlighted as a key OCP contribution by almost a quarter of interviewees, three sets of partners explicitly expressed uncertainty regarding the future of their funding. Although OCP is not a ‘forever-funder’ this corroborates OCP annual survey findings which suggest partners are not confident that they will continue to reach impact without OCP’s support (*discussed in more detail in ‘Working towards longevity’*).

## Working towards impact

This section explores the first of our evaluation questions: What are the impacts, progress, gaps and lessons from the past four years of this program on which OCP can build in continuing this work?

### Background

**In terms of OCP’s definition of impact, OCP has a well-defined vision for impact as “significant widespread documented change”, which needs to outlast projects.**<sup>14</sup>

Crucially, to be classed as impact according to OCP’s criteria, partners “must be able to verify the quantitative results through rigorous evaluative measurement such as hard data analysis”.<sup>15</sup>

**The original goal of OCP’s work under the BHP Foundation grant was that there would be 5 instances of impact recorded in one (or multiple) of the grant’s focus areas by the end of the agreement.**<sup>16</sup>

This target was then updated to 7 following the October 2020 amendment which extended the grant by one year. Impacts were expected to be achieved in line with the timeline below. Impact

---

<sup>14</sup>*Open Contracting Partnership*. Open Contracting delivers, and why it's the smart thing to do. <https://www.open-contracting.org/impact/>

<sup>15</sup>*Open Contracting Partnership* (2019). 2019-2023 Strategy. <https://www.open-contracting.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/OCP-strategy-19digital.pdf>, p. 28.

<sup>16</sup> Note that originally the grant agreement outlined that 5 countries would have demonstrated impact, but this was later updated to be understood as 5 instances of impact.

marked with an asterisk (\*) indicate those which were updated following the grant amendment in 2020.

Year	Target no. of impacts
1	0
2	1
3	1
4	2*
5	2
6	1*

**In addition to these documented impacts, the grant also seeks to achieve a number of outcomes - defined in this evaluation as positive developments which do not in themselves amount to long-term or widespread change.** These outcomes are organised along three main objectives;

- 1. Increasing the collection, quality and publication of open contracting data in target countries** – e.g. by the end of the agreement, the grant states that fifteen government agencies should publish open contracting data regularly in alignment with the Open Contracting Data Standard (OCDS).
- 2. Improving stakeholder engagement and data use in target countries** – e.g. by the end of the agreement, the grant states that seven government agencies should regularly engage in dialogue with civil society and business on open contracting data.
- 3. Promoting learning and field building among target countries and globally** – e.g. the grant aims to have increased understanding of open contracting and its applications through twenty five peer-learning events by the end of the agreement.

To achieve these impacts and outcomes, OCP will offer technical advice; tools and guidance; advocacy for global norm setting; peer-learning and field building; and seed funding for innovators across government, civil society and business.

**OCP has taken a tactical approach to deploying this support, which involves ‘pivoting’ toward areas of highest potential impact, and by the same logic, reducing the intensity of support where work is proving unsuccessful due to political blockers, for example.**

This is detailed in OCP's 2019 strategy, in which OCP commits to an “agile approach” to advocacy, investment and support, which leaves room for “experimentation and surprises”.<sup>17</sup>

OCP has shifted focus where opportunities or insurmountable barriers to impact present themselves. For example, the crisis in Afghanistan, previously a BHP grant target country which was a focus in the midterm evaluation, meant that all OCP operations had to cease. Meanwhile, opportunities in Ecuador, India and Indonesia have seen those countries added to the grant target list since the midterm evaluation, and engagement has been deepened in Chile to add further support in the health, infrastructure and SME sectors.<sup>18</sup>

## Summary of findings with regards to impact

### Program successes

- 1. OCP is on track to achieve the increased number of impacts outlined in the grant amendment, having continued to achieve impact since the midterm evaluation by taking an agile approach which focussed on the areas of highest potential.** OCP has achieved both the original impact target of five countries identified under the original grant agreement and is set to exceed targets set around all but one of the intended outcomes. *(Outcome)*
- 2. OCP is succeeding in their effort to increase engagement with partners working at the subnational level. OCP is currently working with partners in 7 of the 9 countries assessed in this evaluation at the subnational level.<sup>19</sup> As a result of this engagement, OCP has achieved or expects to achieve 5 more instances of impact since the midterm evaluation.<sup>20</sup>** Engagement with local or city governments is allowing OCP to drive towards impact in areas where progress on the federal level has stalled, either due to a lack of political buy-in or more technical challenges. *(Outcome)*

<sup>17</sup> *Open Contracting Partnership* (2019). 2019-2023 Strategy.

<https://www.open-contracting.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/OCP-strategy-19digital.pdf>, p.7.

<sup>18</sup> *Open Contracting Partnership* (2020). How open contracting can help the COVID-19 response and recovery with BHP Foundation support.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pT3hluLmEik7Kq-QhGM3g7IQJfkT1koXMfWgo-AvIkA/edit#heading=h.9odwgdf8af6>

<sup>19</sup>OCP is engaged with partners working at the subnational level in Argentina, Colombia, Nigeria, India, Indonesia, USA, Mexico and the UK(outside the scope of this evaluation).

<sup>20</sup> Impacts at the subnational level since the midterm have been achieved in Buenos Aires, Argentina and Nuevo Leon, Mexico (outside the scope of this evaluation). Country managers expect to see further impacts in the coming months in Mexico City, Mexico, Ekiti State, Nigeria, and a second impact story in Buenos Aires.

3. **OCP's shift from "immediate standardisation" to "immediate value" in terms of data support has been well received.**<sup>21</sup> While this shift is not necessarily about helping OCP to achieve more impact according to its definition, it is instead focused on reaching more partners, one of OCP's key goals related to scale. Multiple non-technical partners highlighted the value of OCP's data support team in helping them to make use of contracting data in a way that suited their immediate needs. *(Insight)*
4. **OCP's anti-corruption work in particular has had an impact on people's lives in a number of countries.** *(Insight)*
5. **OCP has successfully responded to crises and political ruptures, and has been able to push forward significant progress in rapidly changing contexts.** In Ecuador, for example, the coronavirus pandemic served as the impetus for the government to quickly begin publishing data on emergency procurement openly, and OCP supported these efforts through the Lift project.<sup>22</sup> In the UK, OCP has taken advantage of Brexit to encourage the UK government to push forward procurement reforms. *(Insight)*

## Gaps

1. **Despite the increase in subnational engagement, a number of partners still felt that more could be done to achieve impact at the local level, especially in underrepresented regions which feel the effects of poor contracting decisions most acutely.** Partners spoke specifically about the value of extending OCP's work to CSOs and journalists in areas outside of the capital cities.
2. **For many partners – especially civil society partners operating with smaller budgets – the language of quantitative impact did not seem to resonate in interviews.** Partners were rarely able to point to clear quantified impacts of their work, and often expressed that they felt it would take time for the impacts of their work to be able to show an effect that could be quantitatively measured.

---

<sup>21</sup>Open Contracting Partnership (2021). 2021 Strategy Refresh.

<https://www.open-contracting.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/OCP2021-strategy-refresh-1.pdf>, p 12.

<sup>22</sup>Open Contracting Partnership (2021). How open contracting Lift projects are reforming public procurement. <https://www.open-contracting.org/implement/lift-projects/#Ecuador>



- 3. Partners continue to report a number of barriers to impact which also emerged during the midterm evaluation, including a lack of government time and resources, poor quality data and limited data literacy.** Though partners said that OCP is already playing an important role in improving the quality of open data published by governments, these are still barriers they continue to face.

## Recommendations

- 1. Whilst we recognise partners' call for OCP to go more local, OCP is unlikely to reach impact if its resources are spread too thinly across multiple local projects. Instead, OCP should foster local work by bolstering in-country networks, strengthening the connections between partners and encouraging them to involve local journalists and CSOs in their work.** OCP should also prioritise local partners in the allocation of small grants, such as the Action Research grants. This would prove an inexpensive way to support the work of local CSOs and journalists and spread the demand for open contracting beyond metropolitan centres.
- 2. Similarly, where progress has stalled at a federal/national level, OCP should join forces with other organisations (who will be facing similar challenges) to explore how pressure might be applied to government in a way that is sensitive to resourcing constraints.**
- 3. Economic arguments in favour of open contracting continue to resonate strongly with government stakeholders. As such, OCP should be sure not to neglect use cases linked to efficiency and value for money as it develops strategic focuses in green procurement and anti-corruption.** Tagging use cases to allow partners to find examples of these benefits could be a useful way of making sure partners can find the information they need to best convince senior decision makers.

4. **OCP should be selective about how it drives partners towards impact, pushing for partners with the capabilities to record robust quantitative impacts to do so, and helping others to collect MEL data in less burdensome ways, which still demonstrate the power of open contracting.** Celebrating the small wins through progress stories, or even smaller ‘success’ stories is also important, given that many partners feel they are still far from reaching quantitatively evidenced impact.
1. **OCP should continue to pursue its goals around impact, which have allowed the organisation to robustly demonstrate the benefits of its work. Yet in acknowledgement of its high bar for impact, OCP should also ensure it does not risk completely deprioritising work with partners who *could* reach impact, but across a longer timeframe and in various contexts. As well as leaders in impact, OCP should look to foster a wider ecosystem of partners. This will create the demand and community of practice that is essential for the long term success of open contracting reform.** To achieve this, OCP could explore introducing a dedicated workstream dedicated to lower capacity partners, which offers tailored support to partners earlier on the path to impact.
5. **OCP should continue in its ‘agile approach’ to support, factoring in opportunities or crises into future programs of work.**

## Working towards scale

This section of the evaluation asks two primary questions; what is the scale of the impact achieved and how can OCP further scale, across multiple dimensions?

### Background

**According to OCP, scaling should be achieved over three dimensions:**

1. **Scaling out**, to multiply the number of reforms and beneficiaries, through independent replication or ‘snowballing’ of projects, for example.

This is also reflected in OCP’s 2019-2023 strategy; “to achieve scale, we seek to work with and through others so that interventions can be replicated and lessons and tools can be shared.”<sup>23</sup>

2. **Scaling up**, to amplify the magnitude of progress or impact. This might involve achieving new policy changes, improving the data quality or coverage of a procurement system, or achieving new ways of collaboration.
3. **Scaling wide**, to change mindsets, practices and values, including through its approach to community engagement and empowerment. “We aren’t after a bit more transparency,” the 2019-2023 strategy explains, “we want a transformational shift in how business is done.”<sup>24</sup>

**OCP aims to achieve these different dimensions of scale on multiple levels, globally, at the regional and country level, and more locally.**

One of the key ways that OCP seeks to achieve global scale is by “building a community of practitioners and practice that can deliver open contracting and share learning independently of us.”<sup>25</sup> At the other end of the spectrum, OCP also looks to ‘go local’ with its support, by supporting government and civil society at the city and subnational level. OCP’s strategy outlines how local and global change should have a symbiotic relationship;

“As local changes succeed, and as the evidence of the positive impact mounts, momentum should build for wider changes in global norms.”<sup>26</sup>

**In this chapter we focus primarily on evaluating OCP’s progress when looking to scale up and scale out.**

Given the close relationship between scale and impact, this chapter of the evaluation primarily focuses on how OCP is progressing with its goals of expanding the breadth and magnitude of reform, to avoid repetition with other chapters.

---

<sup>23</sup>Open Contracting Partnership (2019). 2019-2023 Strategy. <https://www.open-contracting.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/OCP-strategy-19digital.pdf>, p. 22.

<sup>24</sup>Open Contracting Partnership (2019). 2019 2013 Strategy. <https://www.open-contracting.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/OCP-strategy-19digital.pdf>, 10

<sup>25</sup>Open Contracting Partnership (2019). 2019 2013 Strategy. <https://www.open-contracting.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/OCP-strategy-19digital.pdf>, 3

<sup>26</sup>Open Contracting Partnership (2019). 2019 2013 Strategy. <https://www.open-contracting.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/OCP-strategy-19digital.pdf>, 19

## Summary of findings regarding scale

### Program successes

- 1. OCP is on track to reach its goals for community building, as explained in its Theory of Change. In interviews, 15 partners specifically said they valued OCP's role in building and facilitating connections with other partners and organisations, both those working in the same country and internationally.** In particular, partners highlighted the value of OCP's international examples and connections in helping them to get ideas and insights for their own work. Four partners also explicitly highlighted OCP's role in getting government and civil society to collaborate as particularly important in their context. *(Outcome)*
- 2. Three partners in particular highlighted the value of OCP as an international organisation which gives legitimacy to their work when looking to scale.** Partners said that OCP's role as an international organisation helped them to gain legitimacy and pressure to enact reforms in a way that they could not have done on their own. *(Insight)*
- 3. Partners expressed that OCDS itself is an important lever for global scale, as it facilitates collaborations as people using the format "speak a common language."** Interviewees also added, however, that they would appreciate even more collaboration between countries publishing their data in OCDS format. *(Insight)*
- 4. Finally, we identified progress in terms of OCP's ambition to "scale out", as we identified instances of at least three OCP supported projects being replicated by others, even without OCP involvement.** *(Outcome)*

## Gaps

- 1. To help scale open contracting on a global level, interviewees highlighted an opportunity for OCP to explore more international comparisons. Partners identified international case studies as particularly helpful in sparking ideas for open contracting reforms, when these are relevant to their contexts.** Interviewees also felt that these case studies would help them to drive forward procurement reforms in areas such as green procurement and social inclusion by giving more concrete examples.
- 2. On a related note, four interviewees also called out for more case studies which are responsive to their own contexts and constraints. Partners feel this could support them in replicating open contracting reforms in their own government or department, effectively helping OCP to scale out.** Partners in India, the UK, Mexico City and the US said they found it difficult to adapt existing OCP case studies to their own contexts and needs, given the stark difference between country's legislation and political climates, and partners' resourcing capabilities.<sup>27</sup>
- 3. Finally, we heard in one case that OCP could do more to offer further support partners with technical assessment work. This could also help with building scale, as simplifying the process would help new partners more easily begin their engagements with OCP.**

## Recommendations

- 1. OCP should use Lift to test projects that could be scaled later, and set this as a specific goal of the next Lift cohort.** Projects that are most likely to be replicated independently are bounded projects with clear goals, often taking place at the sub-national level, and being replicated in other cities and regions. Lift lends itself to supporting this style of project, and therefore should be prioritised as a lever for scale.
- 2. OCP should explore the potential for more international comparative research. This could take the form of nuanced comparisons of specific aspects of**

---

<sup>27</sup>Interview LIFT G1, 17/10/2022. Interview INDIA CS1, 7/10/2022. Interview UKG1, 5/10/2022. Interview USG1, 10/10/2022.

**implementation, such as data quality and legislation, which can help to spur investments in reform. Strengthening existing partnerships with Global Data Barometer, or other open data organisations, could be fruitful here.** Based on insights from OCP managers, it is clear that OCP is not interested in exploring indexes to rank countries on their implementation of open contracting reforms, however, more nuanced comparative research carried out in conjunction with open data organisations, could be a good way to respond to partners' calls for more benchmarking.

- 3. OCP should work closely with partners to help them understand how to apply lessons from other case studies to their own work, so approaches to progress can be replicated across contexts.** Some partners would benefit from more of a steer regarding how to use case studies. Re-coding case studies on the OCP website, to allow case studies to be filtered by context or use case, would also make it easier for partners to find case studies which suit their needs.
- 4. OCP should be sure to offer support to partners as they undertake technical assessment work and OCDS mapping, in acknowledgement that these can be arduous (if necessary) tasks.** Whilst we believe that there was an isolated example of a partner not receiving the help they needed in this area, this is a risk OCP should be aware of in the future. The internalisation of the OCDS helpdesk will potentially help to mitigate this risk, however, by tightening the feedback loops between partners and data support staff.

## Working towards longevity

In this section of the evaluation, we consider how OCP can get most value out of its future work, to ensure impacts are not just achieved by also embedded, sustained, and replicated in the long-term?

### Background

**One of OCP's core strategic objectives is to "build a self-sustaining community of policy and practice."<sup>28</sup>**

---

<sup>28</sup>*Open Contracting Partnership* (2019). 2019-2023 Strategy.  
<https://www.open-contracting.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/OCP-strategy-19digital.pdf>, p 25.

To achieve this, OCP seeks to enable its partners in government and across civil society to create a long lasting and self-sustaining contracting community and ecosystem that functions without OCP in the long term. An important target within this objective is that 10 new partners receive funding for open contracting work outside of OCP.

Upon inception in 2015, OCP introduced a sunset clause, planning only to operate for eight years, – four years to learn and another four years to scale – so that the organisation could ultimately help to create a self-sustaining open contracting community.<sup>29</sup> In the 2019-2023 strategy, however, OCP decided to extend the life of the organisation due to feedback that partners were not yet ready for OCP to exit, extending this timeline further.<sup>30</sup> However, one of OCP’s key objectives (and targets) is to empower partners to be able to eventually do this work on their own without the involvement of OCP.

**Longevity is also fundamental to the goals of the BHP foundation grant, and OCP ultimately plans to hand its work over to other practitioners to continue support long term.**

The sustainability plan highlights five objectives in this regard:

- Building a self sustained business case, which demonstrates the value of open contracting reform through impact stories
- Building a cadre of people and organisations beyond OCP that can provide technical and process guidance to innovators
- Connecting open contracting actors so they can continue to learn from each other when the program ends
- Developing and sharing tools and resources for continued guidance
- Embedding open contracting in global fora and norm setting, through institutions and events such as the G20, B20, OGP and World Bank.

**In order to assess how well partners feel that they can do this work on their own without the support of OCP, OCP conducts a survey with partners to measure their ‘empowerment score’. This is a key metric for assessing progress on longevity.**

The empowerment score is the extent to which partners feel as though they could continue to do their open contracting work without OCP, as reported by partners in the OCP annual survey. In the annual survey, OCP asks to what extent partners feel confident in achieving their open contracting

---

<sup>29</sup>*Open Contracting Partnership* (2019). 2019-2023 Strategy.  
<https://www.open-contracting.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/OCP-strategy-19digital.pdf>, p 35.

<sup>30</sup>*Open Contracting Partnership* (2019). 2019-2023 Strategy.  
<https://www.open-contracting.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/OCP-strategy-19digital.pdf>, p 35.

goals with less support from OCP in the coming year. whether or not they helped partners feel capable to do more work in the coming year with less OCP support.

## Summary of findings regarding longevity

### Program successes

- 1. Two interviewees explicitly said that OCP had contributed to long lasting changes in their countries and they considered it highly unlikely for procurement processes to return to the way they were before, as progress would withstand changes in political administration.** This was tied to OCP's assistance in helping governments implement e-procurement systems or begin to publish open procurement data. There was a sense among interviewees that these were steps that would be difficult to revert back on, especially if there was also a community of civil society organisations and journalists invested in using the data. *(Outcome)*
- 2. Often conversations around longevity in interviews were tied to projects' financial sustainability. Multiple interviewees highlighted the importance of tactical financial support from OCP, including Action Research grants and Lift funding, in allowing them to get projects off the ground and move towards impact, or to secure additional funding.** Even smaller fundings opportunities such as Action Research grants were highlighted as vital for small NGOs or local journalists, for whom this funding represents a substantial investment in their work. *(Insight)*



## Gaps

- 1. Most partners do not feel confident that they can continue their work without OCP's direct support.** There is a gap, therefore, between OCP's goals around partner empowerment. Partners from both CSOs and government officials expressed these same insecurities. Some partners said that because of financial uncertainty, they were less confident they could reach impact over the long term.
- 2. Along with concerns about funding, three government officials also highlighted that they had concerns about having the time and resources to continue work on open contracting after their formal engagements with OCP have ended.** Government interviewees in several countries said that they had concerns that work on open contracting would slow or stop after their engagements with OCP have ended due to this work not being prioritised by higher level officials.
- 3. Partners highlighted that changes of political administration, along with regular turnover in government roles, pose challenges to the longevity of projects.** When particular champions in government leave or switch departments due to regular turnover in government roles, or when a new government administration comes in and replaces the majority of the previous officials with newcomers, interviewees said it can be difficult to sustain ongoing work or to bring projects to completion.
- 4. Finally, interviewees in three countries said that in order to truly sustain open contracting reforms long-term, their country's legislation would have to undergo significant changes.**

## Recommendations

- 1. Partners would benefit from continued OCP support beyond 2028. If OCP does wind down its operations in five years time, then it needs to be transparent about its plans for winding down – which could include slimming down the team, and further work to bolster local and global networks of innovators.**
- 2. OCP should explore further ways to help partners plan for financial longevity. This could involve making partners more aware of their ability to help partners with financial networking, or connecting partners to potential sources of funding.** This could involve compiling a repository of potential funders for partners to access, with information about the type of projects funders support, and the level of support they are likely to offer. Further clarity in this area stands to be particularly beneficial for projects on shorter funding timelines, where partners feel less confident reaching impact without knowing that they have longer term funding available.
- 3. OCP should focus on further building capacity among government officials to help guard against open contracting work stalling after formal engagements with OCP have ended.**
- 4. OCP should be sure to make partners aware of its existing work on open contracting legislation, and should continue to focus on helping partners to enshrine the principles of open contracting in law in countries where this has been emphasised as a need.** Pushing for more legislative change in areas of strategic importance, such as green procurement and social inclusive procurement, should also be a focus for OCP when it comes to helping partners advocate for legal reform.

## Environmental sustainability

OCP has strengthened its focus on environmentally sustainable procurement since the midterm evaluation. This chapter evaluates how OCP can further evolve its support to better address concerns around environmental sustainability and the energy transition through procurement going forward?

## Background

Sustainable procurement relates to three pillars of economic, social and environmental benefits. According to OCP's definition, sustainable procurement is that which "considers the long-term effects of government acquisitions, including impacts beyond the procuring agency and end user", and incorporates these considerations into decisions made along the contracting life-cycle.<sup>31</sup> To avoid confusion with this broader definition, when referring to the promotion of open contracting for environmental ends specifically, we will use the term 'green procurement' in this evaluation.

**Since the midterm evaluation, green procurement is a stronger strategic priority for OCP.<sup>32</sup> In the 2021 strategy refresh, the importance of using open contracting to promote environmental sustainability was explicitly highlighted.**

In fitting with a broader shift away from transparency as an end itself, OCP acknowledged how changing the way governments buy goods and services would be crucial to tackling climate change. The fact that this evaluation includes a section focussed on green procurement, a topic which was not discussed in depth in the mid-term counterpart, also bears testament to the increasing importance of green procurement for the organisation. Since the midterm evaluation OCP has also released guidance on green procurement. This includes a report on 'green flags' in public contracts - metrics that can be used to track the adoption of green public procurement, and an Open & Sustainable Public Procurement toolkit, which looks to provide practical advice to those looking to implement green reforms in this space.<sup>33 34</sup>

**OCP's work on environmental sustainability also responds to demand from partners.**

In a December 2022 Annual Partners' Survey, green procurement was also highlighted as the second priority for partners in terms of where they want to grow their capacity and learning, second only to anti-corruption.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> *Open Contracting Partnership* (2021). Green Flags: how open data can throw light on public procurement. <https://www.open-contracting.org/resources/green-flags-how-open-data-can-throw-light-on-sustainable-procurement/>, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> *Open Contracting Partnership* (2021). 2021 Strategy Refresh. <https://www.open-contracting.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/OCP2021-strategy-refresh-1.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> *Open Contracting Partnership* (2021). Green Flags: how open data can throw light on public procurement. <https://www.open-contracting.org/resources/green-flags-how-open-data-can-throw-light-on-sustainable-procurement/>

<sup>34</sup> *Open Contracting Partnership, Spend Network and PUBLIC* (2022). Open and Sustainable Public Procurement Toolkit. <https://sustainable.open-contracting.org/>

<sup>35</sup> *Open Contracting Partnership* (2023). Feedback on 2022: what you told us and what we are doing about it. <https://www.open-contracting.org/2023/01/19/feedback-on-2022-what-you-told-us-and-what-we-are-doing-about-it/>

**OCP's categorises its work on green procurement into work with three main objectives;<sup>36</sup>**

- **Promoting a net-zero emissions economy through systemic reforms**

For instance, OCP has worked with the Lithuanian government, helping to implement an ambitious 100% green public procurement reform.<sup>37</sup>

- **Stimulating innovation for sustainable public services and infrastructure**

This includes the Ecobici Lift project in Mexico City, which improved the city's bike sharing system through open contracting.

- **Building climate-resilient communities.**

Work in Assam, India, would fall into this category. Here OCP has been helping partners to combine open contracting, flooding and disaster spending data to better plan for the impacts of climate change.

**Whilst the grant agreement does not mention environmental sustainability per se, green procurement is arguably most important in the resource rich countries in scope of the BHP Foundation funding.**

The strategic aims outlined in the BHP Foundation grant agreement do not include any objectives related to environmental sustainability. Arguably, however, OCP's green procurement goals are most relevant to the countries under the scope of the grant, which are replete with natural resources which need to be mobilised sustainably if they are to provide public benefit.

## Summary of findings regarding environmental sustainability

---

<sup>36</sup>*Open Contracting Partnership*. Because every procurement should be sustainable.  
<https://www.open-contracting.org/what-is-open-contracting/sustainability/>

<sup>37</sup>*Open Contracting Partnership* (2022). Going 100% green in Lithuania.  
<https://www.open-contracting.org/2022/10/17/going-100-green-in-lithuania/>

## Program successes

- 1. Overall, OCP partners were receptive to the idea of using open contracting to promote environmental sustainability.** In five countries, partners across civil society and government said that there is already political buy-in on environmental issues, which could be leveraged for more progress on green procurement. *(Insight)*
- 2. One of OCP's key goals in their 2021 Strategy Refresh is to adjust their mission and approach to prioritise green procurement. OCP has been successful in working with partners from three Lift teams on environmentally focused projects which are on track to achieve impact in this area.** These projects are Mexico City's Ecobici project, Civic Data Lab's project linked flood data with procurement data to inform disaster management decisions, and Lift partners in the city of Des Moines who are working to incorporate environmental sustainability criteria into their procurement process. *(Outcome)*

## Gaps

- 1. Despite growing interest in green procurement, and progress in this area with certain partners, the overwhelming majority of interviewees did not have experience working on green procurement, and felt this is still a nascent policy area.** This is acknowledged in – and a key driver of – the recently published Open and Sustainable Public Procurement Toolkit, published by OCP with partners in mid 2022.<sup>38</sup>
- 2. Where partners were able to point to existing government commitments on green procurement, there were sometimes doubts about the effectiveness of their implementation.** In three countries, partners expressed concerns that these projects would either be only surface level and make no substantial changes or lead to unintended consequences.

---

<sup>38</sup> Open Contracting Partnership, Spend Network and PUBLIC (2022). Open and Sustainable Public Procurement Toolkit. <https://sustainable.open-contracting.org/>

- 3. Some interviewees from less mature contexts suggested that more ‘basework’ is needed in terms of achieving contract transparency more generally, before green procurement could be pursued at the national level.** In certain contexts, there is a significant amount of work to be done to digitise procurement practices and publish data, and interviewees felt that it would be difficult to begin working towards green procurement before these steps had been completed.
- 4. Similarly, other partners identified a need for better quality data and metrics before any robust analysis on green procurement issues could begin.** Multiple interviewees said that the contracting data currently being collected and published is not of sufficient granularity to allow them to use it on its own to support green procurement. Other partners said they would need better data to be able to run analyses of the environmental impacts of contracting decisions.

## Recommendations

- 1. In the first instance, OCP should continue to use Lift to build an evidence base for environmentally focussed contracting, working with civil society and government through the program to compile success stories and lessons learned which can be used to mainstream green procurement as a concept.**
- 2. Where OCP is looking to promote green procurement approaches with national governments, they should prioritise Lift’s approach of working with partners on clearly defined problems that there is already political will to tackle.**
- 3. OCP should be sure to offer varying levels of support based on the government’s capacity to address green procurement, echoing the ‘meeting partners where they are’ ethos of the data team.** In the same vein, publishing a range of resources for both higher and lower capacity partners in this area will be necessary to anticipate demand, as partners will move at different paces in this area.
- 4. Finally, where OCP does engage partners on green procurement, establishing clear strategic goals and metrics for tracking their progress will be particularly crucial.**

# Social inclusion

This chapter of the evaluation considers how OCP has strengthened its focus on inclusive procurement since the midterm evaluation. Here we ask how OCP can further evolve its support to better address concerns around environmental sustainability and the energy transition through procurement to better mobilise open contracting which has a positive impact upon people's lives.

## Background

**OCP's 2021 Strategy Refresh highlights that one of their new areas of focus in response to feedback from partners is in recognising open contracting "as a hidden lever to improve social inclusion and outcomes from government spending".<sup>39</sup>**

In its 2021 Strategy refresh, OCP announced a renewed focus on emphasising the way that procurement reforms can help to support greater social inclusion and "centre the dignity, agency and lived experience of everyone who is impacted by procurement– from civil servants to citizens."<sup>40</sup>

As such, OCP is prioritising partnering with organisations who are working towards projects and goals related to improving social inclusion, as well as working with development banks to support the inclusion of objectives linked to equity and environmental sustainability in future projects, with a particular emphasis on the health sector.

OCP seeks to prioritise co-creation with partners when working on social inclusion initiatives, and to establish KPIs to ensure that projects can demonstrate they have improved people's lives.<sup>41</sup> Social inclusion is also a key component of OCP's 'build back better' approach, which is reflected in the BHP Foundation grant amendment made in 2020, which proposed to pursue equitable objectives through the Lift program.<sup>42</sup>

## Summary of findings regarding social inclusion

---

<sup>39</sup> *Open Contracting Partnership* (2021). 2021 Strategy Refresh, <https://www.open-contracting.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/OCP2021-strategy-refresh-1.pdf>, p 7.

<sup>40</sup> *Open Contracting Partnership* (2021). 2021 Strategy Refresh, <https://www.open-contracting.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/OCP2021-strategy-refresh-1.pdf>, p 6.

<sup>41</sup> *Open Contracting Partnership* (2020). A Procurement Path to Equity, <https://www.open-contracting.org/what-is-open-contracting/inclusion-and-equity/>.

<sup>42</sup> *Open Contracting Partnership* (2020). How open contracting can help with the COVID-10 response and recovery with BHP Foundation support. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pT3hluLmEik7Kq-QhGM3g7IQJfkT1koXMfWgo-AvIkA/edit>

## Program successes

- 1. OCP made social inclusion a priority in their 2021 Strategy Refresh and has executed on it, seeing strong results and international interest.** Partners in several countries are working on projects emphasising social inclusion. *(Outcome)*
- 2. Lift partners in Ekiti State have already collected quantitative evidence to demonstrate impact in this area.** This project on gender responsive procurement has already demonstrated progress which has been documented in a progress story, and is also expected to begin to demonstrate measurable impact.<sup>43</sup> *(Outcome)*

## Gaps

- 1. Despite progress in this area, several partners expressed concerns that efforts to use open contracting to support social inclusion could become tokenistic without making any substantial changes to systemic inequalities.**
- 2. Interviewees expressed that in order for social inclusion initiatives to actually lead to reductions in inequalities, the projects must be co-designed with people from the communities the initiative hopes to support.**
- 3. Furthermore, some countries have specific barriers to exploring social inclusion initiatives.** Both the US and France, have laws which make it difficult to explore these types of initiatives.

---

<sup>43</sup> *Open Contracting Partnership* (2022). Lift off: Ekiti State is empowering women businesses through better procurement practices.  
<https://www.open-contracting.org/2022/03/08/lift-off-beginning-the-journey-to-empowering-women-businesses-in-ekiti-state/>



## Recommendations

- 1. When beginning work on a social inclusion initiative, OCP needs to involve beneficiaries and key stakeholders from the onset in the project design phase and emphasise the importance of measurable objectives in this area.** OCP should also continue to guard against the risk of these initiatives being tokenistic by advocating for a user-centred approach to social inclusion projects, but also encouraging partners to establish clearly defined metrics aligned with the needs of the communities they plan to support.
- 2. OCP should continue to use Lift as the most successful vehicle for pursuing equitable goals, and look to transfer aspects of the Lift methodology to social inclusion work outside of the program.** Lift fosters a ‘start with the problem’ approach, and works with partners at the outset to devise a clear methodology for reaching their goals, and KPIs for tracking progress, both particularly crucial approaches to take with social inclusion initiatives.

## Lift program

In this chapter we specifically evaluate how OCP’s Lift impact accelerator programme has contributed to OCP’s broader objectives under the BHP Foundation grant, and consider how the programme could achieve even greater impact in the future.

## Background

**The Lift impact accelerator program was introduced in 2019, in order to offer more intense support to selected partners to move quickly towards a well-defined goal within a limited timeframe.**<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> *Open Contracting Partnership* (2020). *The Path to Impact from Open Contracting: Lessons Learned from Open Contracting Lift Program*.  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Ah1VlSuiM7NwaRld5Pq1ymmR3jXqQhJYTrvQ5p2DZ5Y/edit#heading=h.x2komzbvsac0>

The goal of the Lift programme is for each team supported to achieve measurable social or economic impact. As part of Lift, partners receive up to US \$30,000 over 18 months to support their project.<sup>45</sup> Partners submit proposals to participate in the program, and are selected according to three categories of criteria, the potential impact of the project, its feasibility, and the capacity of their team to execute it.<sup>46</sup>

Shift 2 of OCP's 2021 Strategy Refresh is to "scale up Lift," doubling the size of the programme to supporting 15 teams per year, up from five teams supported in the first round and seven supported in the second round of the Lift programme, which are directly supported by the amended BHP Foundation grant agreement.<sup>47</sup>

**The Lift programme ties in with several of OCP's strategic aims in other areas, principally anti-corruption, equity and inclusion, and environmental sustainability.**

Lift is advertised as a program which helps partners "use public contracting to improve effective governance and support more equitable and green communities". As such, a number of projects selected to participate in the program fall into areas of OCP's strategic focus, such as environmental sustainability and equity and inclusion.

For example, through Lift, several partners are exploring initiatives with a "green" focus, including Mexico City's Ecobici project, as well as the work CivicDataLab are doing in India to use contracting data to help tackle the risk of floods in the state of Assam. Others, in the US cities of El Paso and Des Moines, for example, are working with OCP under Lift to make their procurement processes more inclusive of women and ethnic-minority owned businesses.

We heard that in future generations of Lift, OCP plans to more explicitly prioritise projects with objectives in one of three core areas: anti-corruption, equity and inclusion, and environmental sustainability.

---

<sup>45</sup> *Open Contracting Partnership* (2021). 2021 Strategy Refresh, <https://www.open-contracting.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/OCP2021-strategy-refresh-1.pdf>, p 17.

<sup>46</sup> *Open Contracting Partnership*. Lift applicant handbook, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oWS5PEJybgXGXlvLMxf4Ly0cG6rTdt6r/view>.

<sup>47</sup> *Open Contracting Partnership* (2021). 2021 Strategy Refresh, <https://www.open-contracting.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/OCP2021-strategy-refresh-1.pdf>, p 8.

## Summary of findings regarding Lift

### Program successes

- 1. One Lift project under the scope of the evaluation has already achieved impact in Ecuador. Country managers expect to see documented impact in several places in the coming months as a direct result of Lift projects.** We heard from country managers that they expect to be able to document impact in Mexico City, Buenos Aires and Ekiti State in 2023, and OCP's 'stories' roadmap also anticipates being able to demonstrate impact from Lift in Paraguay, and a progress story from India.<sup>48</sup>*(Impact)*
- 2. Along with the expected documented impacts, two Lift partners said that through their work with OCP they had made significant progress which they felt could not be reversed.** This was in specific reference to Lift projects which supported partners to implement e-procurement systems and begin to publish contracting data openly. *(Outcome)*
- 3. The Lift program has helped OCP to pivot to areas of higher impact when progress stalls in certain areas.** *(Insight)*
- 4. As in OCP's broader work, however, crises over the past two years have been a barrier to impact for one Lift project. However, partners valued Lift funding and support, which in other cases helped them to continue work despite these challenges.** One Lift project was halted due to multiple crises they faced at once, making it difficult to continue with the work. Interviewees from another Lift project, however, said that the financial support of Lift allowed them to continue work despite governmental priorities shifting during the pandemic. *(Insight)*
- 5. Lift projects can be a successful way for partners to explore values-based open contracting initiatives. In particular, several Lift partners working to support social inclusion through open contracting feel optimistic about their progress.** *(Outcome)*
- 6. Under the scope of this evaluation, the Lift program is the key driver of environmentally focussed open contracting initiatives.** *(Outcome)*

---

<sup>48</sup> Open Contracting Partnership. OCP Stories Overview. Accessed January 2022.  
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1IMaGgyWv1PS6oTwKeUO1cJptb82tvFhZMsu0zwSDKMI/edit#gid=300075882>

## Gaps

- 1. Despite project sustainability being part of lift project selection criteria, two Lift partners said that they feel insecure about the longevity of their projects after completing their financial engagements with OCP through Lift.** They said it would help them if OCP were to further help to direct them to other sources of financing to fund their work after their financial engagements with OCP end.
- 2. Furthermore, despite Lift's focus on monitoring, evaluation and learning, for one Lift partner, the language of quantitative impact did not seem to resonate in interviews, echoing findings elsewhere in the evaluation.** One Lift partner in particular explicitly expressed concerns about the feasibility of measuring quantitative impact, especially for small teams with limited resources.

## Recommendations

- 1. OCP should expand Lift, investing in the program as a key driver of scale, particularly when it comes to newer applications of open contracting, such as green procurement or open contracting for social inclusion.**
- 2. OCP should continue to ensure that partners' MEL plans are effectively co-designed with partners, and balance partners' capacity and constraints with supporting them to be ambitious about progress.**
- 3. Even partners judged to meet sustainability criteria under Lift (in terms of resources as well as strong buy-in or support) are conscious of the risks of losing funding. As has been recommended more generally, OCP should also work with Lift partners to help them plan for a future post-Lift.** For government partners this might involve pushing for an internal MoU to be signed, for civil society OCP might need to make partners aware of other potential fundings sources as the cohort approaches its conclusion.

- 4. OCP could consider expanding Lift, or replicating its methodology in a similar program which is more inclusive of lower-capacity partners. The kind of targeted support offered by the program has the potential for high impact in some areas facing serious problems that could be tackled by Lift-style projects, but where open contracting maturity is lower.**

## Conclusion

### Successes

**As an overarching success, this evaluation has found that OCP has met, and will perhaps even exceed, its core impact targets as expressed in the BHP Foundation grant agreement.** Furthermore, all interviews highlighted the value of OCP's expertise, in terms of technical support, project management, and coalition building, but also emphasised the value of the close connections OCP country managers and data support staff have with partners.

**It is clear that OCP has taken steps to address many of the recommendations made in the midterm evaluation.** This includes OCP's shift away from an immediate focus on OCDS, diversification of data support to be more inclusive for non-technical audiences, and placing a greater emphasis on co-creating Theories of Change with in-country partners, along with other changes. An agile approach, enabled by the BHP Foundation grant management, has allowed OCP to successfully pivot towards new areas where the potential for impact is high, while 'keeping the door open' in a less resource intensive way for partners where progress has slowed or halted.

Many of OCP's strategic shifts since the midterm, particularly around diversifying the type of data support offered and meeting partners where they are in terms of technical capacity, have been well received by partners and broadened the base of recipients of OCP's support.

**Since the midterm evaluation, OCP has expanded its focus to apply open contracting to some of the world's biggest problems, namely environmental sustainability and social & economic inclusion.** In this evaluation, the Lift impact accelerator program shone as a particularly effective vehicle for translating these ideas into practice.

### Challenges

**While OCP is making significant progress, partners continue to face persistent challenges.** Those we spoke to during this evaluation reported multiple barriers to achieving impact, including **a lack of government time and resources** to devote to open contracting reforms, poor data quality, and **limited data literacy** on the part of both government officials and civil society organisations. OCP has increased engagement at the subnational level, but multiple

partners also feel as though there is still **more that could be done to achieve impact at the local level.**

This evaluation also brought to light challenges regarding the scale and longevity of open contracting work. Multiple partners expressed difficulty using OCP case studies – a key driver for scaling out across contexts – and called for case studies that would better take into account their own specific constraints, as they felt more relevant case studies could support them to replicate projects in their areas. Furthermore, when discussing project longevity, most **partners do not feel confident that they can continue their work without OCP's direct financial support.** One of the key challenges in this area concerns **changes of political administration**, along with regular turnover in government roles which both pose challenges to the longevity of open contracting reforms.

Finally, there are also challenges specific to green procurement and procurement which looks to support social inclusion. Most interviewees felt that **green procurement in particular is still a nascent policy area**, and five partners said that the work in this area is very preliminary. One interviewee added that their country needs to complete more “basework” on contract transparency more generally before beginning to work on green procurement. Partners also expressed doubts about the effectiveness of green procurement initiatives, and **concerns that social inclusion initiatives could become tokenistic**, enacting only surface level change but doing little to address underlying systemic inequalities.

## Recommendations

To help address these key challenges encountered by partners, we recommend the following:

- In response to concerns around capacity and resources, **OCP should drive partners to commit to specific time commitments, and in the case of governments, push them to secure an internal MoU which secures the relevant time and resources, if they are to receive OCP support.** We found Lift to be particularly successful in helping partners to secure the time and money to commit to specific goals, and applying a similar methodology, with bounded goals and clear commitments, to projects outside of the program could be fruitful.
- In response to partners' calls for more local engagement, **OCP should explore ways to reach more CSOs at the local level by identifying ambassadors within existing networks encouraging them to build coalitions at the local level**, so as to be able to fulfil this need whilst maintaining abreast of OCP's own resourcing constraints.
- In acknowledgement of its high bar for impact, **OCP should ensure it does not risk deprioritising work with partners who could reach impact, but across a longer timeframe and in various contexts.** As well as leaders in impact, OCP should look to foster a wider ecosystem of partners across different capacity levels. This will create the

demand and community of practice that is essential for the long term success of open contracting reform. To achieve this, OCP could explore introducing a dedicated workstream dedicated to lower capacity partners, which offers tailored support to partners earlier on the path to impact.

- To help partners get the most use out of case studies and support them to scale, **OCP should work closely with partners to help them understand how to apply lessons from other case studies to their own work, so progress can be replicated across contexts.** Re-coding case studies on the OCP website, or adding a section of transferable lessons to each case study page could help in this process.
- To address concerns about losing financial support, we recommend that **OCP should re-emphasise its financial networking offer to partners.** Whilst OCP already tracks funding partners are receiving and supports partners in fundraising, more could be done to clearly communicate this work with partners – for example, through an open resource detailing potential funders, their key focuses, and the size of the grants they typically offer.
- **Meanwhile, to address the impact of staff turnover on project progress, particularly in government, OCP should continue to ensure that more than one partner is engaged in each government department** to guard against the possibility of work stalling because a particular champion leaves the government. We acknowledge that this is already a focus on the Lift project, but recommend it is applied more broadly beyond the impact accelerator program.
- **OCP should invest in expanding Lift as a vehicle to help partners explore and build the evidence base for green procurement, and to support social inclusion initiatives.** We found in this evaluation that Lift works particularly well for these types of projects, as the program’s “start with the problem” bounded approach has been particularly successful in beginning to move the conversation around these relatively newer applications of open contracting from theory to practice. The lessons from Lift can then be applied to more comprehensive work at the federal government level, whilst the program’s success stories should be able to drive further interest in these areas.

**Finally, as OCP looks forward to its next strategy cycle, the organisation faces an important decision regarding whether or how to wind down their work.** This evaluation makes clear that OCP still has an important role to play as a bridge between government and civil society, as international advocates to lend legitimacy to smaller projects, as technical advisors on the publication and use of open contracting data, and as financial supporters to help get smaller scale projects off the ground. It seems unlikely that the need for this support would dry up over the next several years, and it is clear that partners do not yet feel sufficiently empowered to operate without OCP’s support. There is scope for continued operations, and further funding, to work towards future impacts while also implementing reforms that change people’s lives.