



Association of Consulting Engineers Botswana

Media Release

Bribery and Kickbacks in Botswana's Construction/Consulting Industry

Ever since Transparency International included Botswana in the list of countries it is monitoring, the country has been reported as one of the least corrupt countries for a long time. It held the number one spot for the least corrupt countries in Africa, also for a long time. Within the last decade, a seesaw performance has been witnessed. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index of 2023 shows that Botswana has dropped a point to score 59 out of 100 and is ranked number 39 of the 180 countries that are being monitored. In July last year, one of the news publications had an article in which corruption was reported as a major impediment to business operations in the country (36% as a severe obstacle).

The construction industry in Botswana is unfortunately vulnerable to corrupt practices such as bribery and kickbacks due to its intricate supply chains, high-value projects, and frequent interactions between public and private entities. These illicit activities distort competition, erode trust, and hinder progress. When illegitimate offerings influence officials, bribery can lead to contracts being awarded to unqualified bidders, compromising the safety and quality of finished projects. Kickbacks, conversely, often involve a portion of the contract value being returned to the official after the award, which incentivizes inflated costs, squeezes public budgets, and diverts funds away from essential infrastructure and services. The far-reaching consequences of these practices impact communities by delaying vital projects, jeopardizing public safety, and undermining the integrity of the entire industry. To combat these issues, stricter regulations, enhanced transparency, and robust enforcement mechanisms are necessary to ensure that the construction sector fulfills its intended purpose of building a better future free from the shadow of corruption.

Construction/Consulting companies play a critical role in enabling and perpetuating corruption. We, as Association of Consulting Engineers Botswana (ACEB), call upon businesses and the construction/Consulting industry to:

- develop and implement comprehensive anti-corruption policies and compliance programs.
- conduct thorough due diligence on partners and suppliers.

- implement transparency measures across their operations, including disclosure of beneficial ownership and financial information.
- adopt ethical sourcing practices and ensure adherence to human rights standards.
- support and participate in collective action initiatives to combat corruption.

Businesses that uphold ethical standards and promote responsible business conduct can contribute to a more sustainable and equitable future.

The presence of corruption in the Construction/Consulting industry doesn't have to be accepted as a given. Instead, it presents an opportunity for collaboration and collective action. Association of Consulting Engineers Botswana (ACEB) is playing a vital role in promoting ethical practices, advocating for industry-wide reform, and fostering transparency throughout the supply chain. By highlighting instances of corruption and encouraging ethical conduct, we can contribute to a future where every project is built on a foundation of quality, safety, and integrity.

The fight against corruption requires a collective effort. We urge all stakeholders in the construction industry, from consulting engineers and contractors to suppliers and government agencies, to join forces in this critical endeavor. By embracing ethical practices, supporting transparency initiatives, and holding each other accountable, we can create an industry that serves its intended purpose – building a better future for all Botswana, free from the shadows of corruption. Let us join hands and collectively illuminate a path toward a more ethical and sustainable construction industry, brick by ethical brick.

To be continued...