

Role of Mass Media in Facilitating Citizen's Participation in Bangladesh Public Procurement

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Public procurement (PP) is considered as one of the key most important functions of any government across the world. Over the years, it has been argued by the scholars that third party engagement (except government officials and bidders) in procurement system facilitates to achieve good governance in this sector. In this regard, it is generally expected that third-party monitoring (TPM) of PP, especially monitoring by citizens might earn the trust and confidence of the people in government activities. This study aims at exploring the roles of media in promoting citizen engagement (CE) in PP in order to make the procurement process impartial, efficient, effective, and accountable. The study uses a qualitative methodology in conducting the research with the data being collected through key informant interview, semi-structured interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGD), secondary document, and literature reviews. The findings of this study suggest that if the media can play an effective role, the procurement literacy rate will be increasing. Hence, an enabling environment could be created where people will feel at ease to talk about compliance with procurement rules and acts. Hence, media may act as a catalyst to promote citizens involvement in the PP process to hold the respective groups accountable for their activities.

Keywords: PP, TPM, media, CE

Introduction

Public procurement (PP) is perceived as a major function for any government. Through PP, a government looks to maximise public welfare by providing quality services and products, raising growth opportunities for the private sector, and ensuring efficient spending of government money. Many developing countries have realised that a well-organised procurement system contributes to good governance by increasing confidence that public funds are well spent (Hunja, 2003). In this regard, it is generally expected that third-party monitoring (TPM) of PP, especially monitoring by citizens might earn the trust and confidence of the people in government activities. Transparency International (TI) asserted that “everyone—from individual citizens to high level government officials—can play a role in ensuring that the tax payers’ money spent on procurement delivers good quality services at a fair economic cost for all” (TI, 2010, p. 1). It has been therefore argued over the years that TPM could be a viable solution for fighting irregularities in PP. Moreover, the role of citizen has been widely recognized in upholding transparency and accountability in the PP process. Reportedly, compliance with any law or rules becomes easier when the concerned stakeholders are aware of the benefits and necessity of abiding by those provisions. Experiences show that the more the stakeholders are informed, the more improved is the compliance level. Therefore, nowadays some countries (Philippines, Mexico, India,

Nepal, Bangladesh, and Pakistan) have started realizing that stakeholders' (especially civil society, media, and the public at large) engagement in the procurement process is very crucial (Simone & Shah, 2012; The Affiliated Networks for Social Accountability [ANSA], 2009, Centre for Governance and Development [CGD], 2010).

Citizen Participation in PP: Bangladesh Context

Now-a-day citizen engagement (CE) is taking place all around the world from small grass-root projects to global intergovernmental initiatives (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UNDESA] 2011). Since procurement is to ensure value for money, therefore in order to best utilise of public money and ensure the transparency and accountability of the process, CE in PP process is required. Government of any country carries out procurement by using the citizens' money in order to provide services to citizens. Citizens therefore should have an obvious role in contributing from needs assessment to contract implementation in PP. Besides, as tax payers, people have the right to know how public money is being utilised. It is now widely recognised that civil society can have a crucial role in contributing to the transparency and integrity of PP processes. CE or TPM can take place at different stages such as, procurement planning, preparation, advertisement, pre-qualification, bid evaluation, award of contract, and contract implementation of the PP process.

Traditionally, the process of PP of Bangladesh had exclusively been confined to the government procuring entities and the members of the private bidding community like contractors, suppliers, and intellectual service providers since the British era. Mahmud (2003) mentioned that, in Bangladesh, local people's participation is limited because they are not directly involved in design, control, or management of any development projects. In this regard, Siddiqui (1994) mentioned that the bulk majority of the people particularly the poor and the disadvantaged, enjoyed little or no scope for participation except in electing their representatives. In a word, there is very little scope of participation for common people in decision-making or management and the community as whole or particular stakeholders is not concerned about the quality and sustainability of the public works. Participatory culture in Bangladesh, therefore remained a distant reality. At the beginning of 1990s, the process of non-government participation has become buzz word around the world. Nonetheless, in recent times, the concept of CE in development programs has been introduced through inclusive and participatory government. However, though in slow pace Bangladesh also did not remain untouched from the changes sweeping across the world. The provision of CE has also started in Bangladesh through donor driven project, namely, Reaching out of School Children and Rural Development Programmes. In the line with this practice Government of Bangladesh (GoB) is intended to introduce TPM in PP in order to make PP more transparent, participatory, efficient, effective, and accountable. The idea of CE in PP in Bangladesh is mooted in the fourth component of the Public Procurement Reform Project-II (PPRP-II) titled Communication, Behavioral Change and Social Accountability (Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division [IMED], n.d).

Why Media for Promoting Citizen Participation in PP?

By disseminating information mass media creates space for diverse public views regarding socio-economic and political processes, and increases people's scope for democratic participation (Hudock, 2003; Besley, Burgess, & Prat, 2002) consequently its role has become "larger than life" (Anam, 2007). Media, in Bangladesh, often shed light on the government plans on purchases. Besides, government routinely briefs the press after every

meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council. The media also keeps track of the outcome of any meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Government Purchase and the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs. Moreover, news on government purchases or tender processes always gets publish in daily newspaper (Debnath, 2010). Thus, media may play multiple roles in creating awareness among local people about TPM programme by disseminating procurement related information. Barber (1969, as cited in Anzal, Rahim, Basri, & Hasim, 2012) noted that citizen knowledge resources are an important element in evoking citizen participation. Some activities like, coverage of social issues have played a pivotal role in bringing about a change in the media’s approach from “information dissemination” to “public education” (Anam, 2007). World Bank (2010) asserted that a diverse and independent media sector can be an effective way to increase government accountability and to benefit the poor by enhancing their participation and dialogue. In a wide variety of contexts, media has a key role to play in informing individuals; providing an inclusive and critical platform for public dialogue and debate; stimulating interpersonal communication and ultimately, policy-making that benefit a greater number of people (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2011). Moreover, media is an extensive resource of information for millions of people which inform the people about the latest news and happening around the world, which broadens the horizons of knowledge. Furthermore, mass media has given each of us a platform to voice our opinions on all sorts of social and political issues and share information with one another. According to the agenda-setting theory of mass communication, the media plays an important role in shaping the public opinion. In brief, the mass media in the past was instrumental in bringing people awakening; in present it is becoming increasingly important in influencing and modeling the opinion of people relating to various matters of life (Vasile, 2010). Thus, media play a crucial role in creating the sense of community and promote sense of citizenship among citizens. Thus, by publishing or airing processes and procedures related to the procurement process, such as laws, rules, regulations, standard bidding documents and clauses, and means and processes by which contracts are defined, awarded, and managed media helps citizens to get adequate access to information thereby ensuring transparency and accountability in their PP systems.

From the foregoing discussions, it may be argued that by performing three types of roles (disseminator of procurement information, vehicle for procurement education and platform of shaping public opinion) media can promote citizen participation in PP. Figure 1 depicts the relationship between media role and CE.

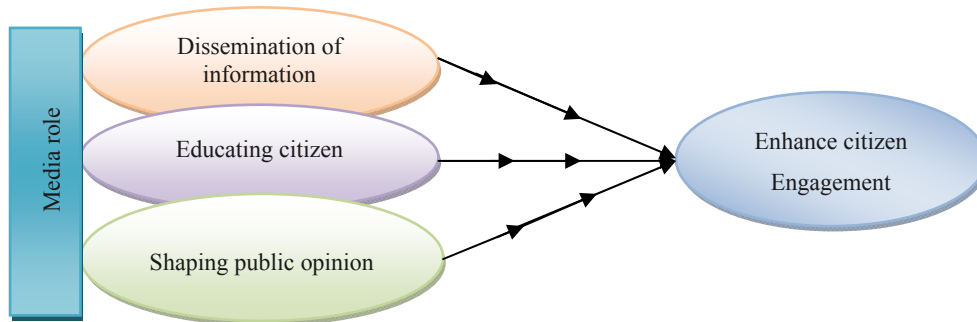


Figure 1. Relationship between media role and CE (Source: Author has developed this framework on the basis of different literature review).

This study aims at exploring the roles of media in promoting CE in PP in order to make the procurement process impartial, efficient, effective, and accountable. In order to conduct this study, Focused Group

Discussion (FGD), in-depth interview, content analysis, and pertinent literature reviews have been deployed for identifying the role of media in stimulating CE in PP process.

Doable/Possible Media Role in the Context of Bangladesh

The role mass media plays in Bangladesh is generally perceived to be as a provider of day-to-day information. Nowadays, due to the improvement of communications system in Bangladesh, both urban and rural people by and large have access both to newspapers and electronic media. As democracy is functioning and the press is working in a relatively free environment in Bangladesh, the chance of hearing the voices of the public is huge. Therefore, by improving the level of procurement knowledge among the mass people, the media may create scopes for the civil society members and conscious citizens to play an effective and constructive role in PP. Ali (2006) asserted that, in Bangladesh, the print media has created a space for civil society representatives, mainly think-tanks, research organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to raise public awareness about their chosen issues and areas of work, as well as to engage in debate regarding socio-political concerns. He also mentioned that media play a strong and meaningful role in bringing a variety of governance concerns to public attention (Ali, 2006). In Bangladesh, mass media are the prime channels of communicating the messages on PP to the public. Therefore, the onus lies with them to rightly focus any issue that is important to public life (Debnath, 2010). From the newspaper content, analysis of the last two years the author found that apart from promoting good governance and rule of law, media plays a significant role in different national events including curbing corruption, campaigning against acid violence, fostering gender equality, and uncovering misdeed regarding environmental degradation etc. Thus, these kinds of activities make media as a mean of social change agent nowadays. In the light of the foregoing discussion, the possible media role for promoting CE in PP is discussed below.

Dissemination of Procurement Literature

Adequate access to relevant procurement information is one of the most important preconditions for procurement monitoring. It is widely believed that the degree to which people access, use, and trust information, and how they communicate, is increasingly shaping social, economic, and political outcomes (Meskell, 2009; Stott, 2009; Tolbert, McNeal, & Smith, 2003; Raiz, 2012; Quattrociochi, Conte, & Lode, 2011). Besides, without reliable information, it would be impossible for citizens to use their power effectively. There are a lot of opportunities for the mass media to get in touch with ordinary people, to collect information, and to create sustainable change (United Nations Development Program [UNDP] & TI, 2011). In PP, media can be a channel of transfer of formal procurement information, such as tender notices, award notices etc. It is a medium from where people can get required information as different public procuring entities are required by law to publicise procurement information in mass media. The mass media, especially the print media, may play a critical role in informing the public about what is being purchased, how it is purchased, what are the standard criteria for purchasing that service or work, who are evaluating the qualification, and what was the process of giving award etc. procurement-related concerns. Respondents of FGD opined that media can also highlight whether evaluation committee was qualified enough in terms of resources, skills, experiences, legality, and other related matters. The media should aim at empowering mass people by providing the required project or procurement information to hold the responsible person accountable and make them responsive to local needs. Thus, the presence of adequate coverage of procurement issues in the national media will create an opportunity for the mass people to know the ins and outs of the procurement process. Thus growing public conscious and interest

regarding this field will make it possible to enhance citizen participation in procurement practices.

Make the People Educated and Aware Regarding Their Right

Citizen with proper Procurement knowledge may know how, where, and when they can engage themselves in PP process. In this way, their participation will break the monopoly of specific groups on PP. Educating stakeholders with knowledge of PPA & PPR is a big challenge in the context of Bangladesh. At this phase, media can take the role of filling the knowledge gap. Media like newspapers and television channels can play an educational and informational role. Thus, media can educate people about procurement by publishing procurement rules-regulations, different methods, and processes of PP. In order to do this, mass media may also forge alliance with procuring entities, civil societies, and other stakeholders for promoting “procurement literacy” among people. In the regional conference on “Partnership Against Corruption” arranged by UNDP and TI in 2011, it had been discussed that free access to information has a great anti-corruption potential (e.g., in the field of PP, budgetary expenditures, and others). For this reason, media should proactively broadcast information regarding *RTI Act* and people's right to use it. Media may make the mass people aware regarding access to information in the PP process and highlight its importance to hold the procuring agency accountable. Moreover, media, along with NGOs or research organizations, can organize campaigns, rallies, and other activities to strengthen the awareness regarding *RTI Act* among the local people. Moreover, it may inform people that it is the right of the people to know specific information related with any implementing project. This process may strengthen peoples' knowledge and awareness or what may be called their sense of citizenship. It is expected that socially conscious citizens will demand details about the project duration, project cost, starting date, and project completion date of their respective areas. Media may also work to make people aware of the public expenditures, yearly budgets, and allocation of annual development program for specific projects. Budget awareness among civil society at the national and local level, can play an important role in ensuring transparency in public expenditure. In this way, the stakeholders can ensure that public officials are using the public resources for civic purposes rather than for private gain (Jeppesen, 2010).

Shaping Public Opinion


As an influential part of daily life, media influences the public to a great extent. It is voice of the voiceless and a great force in building the national consensus. Hadesian (2006) asserted that, “media is the most powerful tool for the formation of Public opinion in contemporary times”. Now-a-day public opinion consequently becomes a key factor in the decision making process (Anam, 2007). Voltmer (2010) mentioned that media are expected to provide a forum where a broad range of voices—opposition parties, civil society actors, independent experts and ordinary citizens—can express alternative views. Both print and electronic media should equally offer an opportunity to the mass people to present their visions, concern, and opinions regarding PP in front of government to make choices about what needs to be purchased. Procurement related programs, such as, talk-shows, street shows, or public opinion shows provide a space for mass people to uphold their demands, express their objections and suggestions for improvements of PP process, and debate for protecting public interest. While reporting on local level procurement issue, media may consult local elites, dwellers, civil society organizations, local government bodies, and local level people representatives to bring out the reflection of public opinions regarding any particular procurement issues or projects of that respective area. Besides, media may work to mobilise public opinion for their most popular projects and galvanize political will to fulfill the local demand. It can also arrange dialogues among different political parties and local

people on procurement issues to address various local issues related with PP. Hence, these kinds of activities create opportunities for the grassroots people to participate in PP and ensure their engagement in need assessments level. Sometimes, local people fail to draw the attention of the concerned authorities regarding the procurement issues in their constituency. Mass media can point up their concerns to the appropriate authorities through its different programs. At a first step, the media may mobilise public opinion and organise the concerns of those who would benefit from the respective project or process. More specifically, it is important to influence the mob or mobilise the consensus of the people for ensuring the value of money.

On the basis of the forgoing discussions a matrix has been developed in order to portray how media may influence citizen participation in PP (see Table 1 below).

Table 1

Doable Media Role and Possible CE

Major procurement stages	Media role that can lead to 	Possible citizen participation in PP
Needs assessment	<p>Consultation with stakeholders about what is needed and broadcast evidence report based on local needs. Article coverage, street shows, and talk shows on local level procurement issues.</p> <p>Publish procuring entity's annual procurement plan. Local media can circulate information need assessment phase of different projects undertaken by local level procuring authority.</p>	<p>People's participation in consultation led by media will ensure their contribution to need assessment phase of PP.</p> <p>Wide range media coverage on procurement issue will promote people's awareness consequently encourage mass people to point out specific need of their constituency.</p> <p>Conscious citizen may participate in need assessment phase of different projects undertaken by local level procuring authority.</p>
Advertisement	<p>Publish tender notice on behalf of procuring entity. Highlights pre-qualification application, tenders, quotations, or proposal for carrying out particular procurement invited by procuring entities.</p> <p>Clear and fair descriptive report on tender notice or already advertised procurement.</p> <p>Proactively broadcast relevant information (description of what is to be purchased and the criteria for its evaluation).</p> <p>Radio, television, newspaper, and other popular mass media can circulate procurement laws, rules, methods, and processes among mass people widely.</p>	<p>Conscious people can check whether procuring entity is following standard procurement rules and regulations for advertisement and other processes of procurement.</p> <p>Conscious people may ask standard document of setting evaluation for particular project to the concerned procuring entity.</p> <p>It would be easier if anyone wants to access the quality of bidding process.</p> <p>Excessive reports on tender notice will provide equal opportunity to all to bid.</p>
Prequalification	<p>Proactively disclose relevant information regarding eligibility of bidder, standard tender documents and contracting guidelines for mass people.</p> <p>Also disclose information related to evaluation committee (who are the members, their qualification etc.).</p>	<p>Citizens will have better access to information and may review relevant documents pertaining to the particular tendering process.</p> <p>Citizen can ask information from procuring entity if required.</p>
Bid evaluation—Technical & Financial	<p>Media can disclose information regarding the assessment process.</p> <p>Proactively encourage people to use <i>Right to Information Act</i> in order to get proper information.</p>	<p>Citizen will be aware that they are entitled to get any information related to pp and it is the responsibility of government office to provide procurement-related papers or documents asked by general public.</p> <p>Citizen could be able to ensure integrity of PP process by using this information.</p>

(table 1 continued)

Major procurement stages	Media role that can lead to →	Possible citizen participation in PP
Award of contract	Media can be pro-active disclosure of notification of award of contract. Media may widely publish that citizen should get free and unlimited access to all relevant government documents and information.	Socially aware citizen will ask access to information related to procuring entity, bid evaluation committee, bidders, and bidding evaluation process.
Contract implementation	Media may proactively publish standard specifications of completion of particular project as contained in the bid. Time to time media can report on progress of projects, strengths, and weakness of implementation process, any deviation committed by contractor or procuring entity. Consult local people before preparing above mentioned reports.	People can participate in contract implementation phase through some social accountability tools, like Citizen Report Cards, Community Scorecards, Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys, Integrity Surveys using by media. Well circulated information will help third party monitor to ensure that the goods or services are being delivered as per agreement of the contract.

**Current Media Role and Challenges for Media in promoting Citizen Participation:
Bangladesh Scenario**

The role media plays in this country is generally perceived to be as a provider of day-to-day political information. It has been found from last two years newspaper scanning that newspapers play a vital role in highlighting anomalies regarding procurement issues in Bangladesh. Nowadays, due to the improvement of communications system in Bangladesh, both urban and rural people by and large have access both to newspapers and electronic media. As democracy is functioning and the press is working in a relatively free environment in Bangladesh, the chance of hearing the voices of the public is huge. Therefore, by improving the level of procurement knowledge among the mass people, the media may create scopes for the civil society members and conscious citizens to play an effective and constructive role in PP. However, this study found that the role of media in this respect is not without challenges.

Respondents (public officials) of FGD considered the media coverage to be overly focused on scandals and to have too little positive procurement news. They opined that “media is, however, yet to harness the full potential that would allow it to assume its role as an influential partner in the involvement of citizens in PP process”. Sometimes, media suffers from lack of adequate information on particular procurement issues. Terminologies and stages of procurement also get misinterpreted due to lack of adequate idea on procurement issues. In some cases, the losing party approaches the media and offer one-sided version. On ethical grounds, accommodation of the version of the other side in the news item is a must. But sometimes deviations take place. Respondents (public officials) of FGD claimed that “there are many reporters who publish procurement news without knowing right information or reality regarding the procurement process. Even it has found that media circulates wrong information in many cases”. The respondents also mentioned that “it has been noticed over the years that media broadcasts this type of news without knowing actual situation which hampers both parties’ (contractors and procurement entities) image. Further, they remarked that “sometimes concerned authorities send their clarifications but the media shows indifference to publishing that information. It has also been found that sometimes reporters publish news in order to serve particular interest groups which creates barrier in project implementation”.

On the other hand, respondents (media representatives) mentioned that government officials do not feel obligation to pass requisite information. They opined that “in general, most of the officials of public procuring

entity are afraid of questions and are hostile to media". As a result, it becomes difficult for them to make proper report in given time frame. In this regard, Anam (2007) remarked, in Bangladesh, neither government nor the bureaucracy has an obligation to share information with the media. Media representatives also opined that getting information through applying *RTI Act* kills more than actual time consequently hampers value of the particular report. They also remarked that the absence of competent designated information officials in many public offices is another hurdle of getting procurement related information. Media personnel also mentioned that every media house has its own editorial policy (most of the cases they lack of proper policy of publishing PP news) which does not allow them to report PP news all the time, consequently, much important news related to PP has remained unpublished. Moreover, there is a lack of follow-up news for the above mentioned reasons which they identify as an important criterion to address of the importance of concerned projects. In many cases, owners of the media houses become the bidder of particular project. In these cases, they may try to use their media in order to serve their own interest. Nevertheless, media professionals maintain liaison and continuous contact with different local government bodies in order to know about PP process of different sectors. This type of liaison sometimes jeopardize media's major role. Another problem raised by the participants of FGD is, there is no dedicated team within the media house to report on PP. In some cases, reporters mentioned that due to the demand for "fresh and hot news" they are unwilling to work for PP issues since it does not get attention as the most valuable news to all types of readers. Besides, in the competitive market media houses always fight to sustain in market therefore, they need fresh and attractive news to retain their subscribers. In this backdrop, it is difficult for them to report the same type of news in every day. In addition, another alarming finding of this study is the lack of investigative news on PP issue. Besides, media houses do not take care to give their staff proper training on reporting investigative PP news. Furthermore, at the local level due to absence of Central Procurement Technical Unit, the local level journalist cannot get the opportunity to clarify many complex issues regarding PP. As a consequence, PP related news has remained neglected by the media representatives hence its significance and importance keep out of attention from main stream media.

Strengthening the role of Media for Enhancing Citizen's Engagement

Though there are many challenges for media to play its roles, however, it can be strengthened by more internal transparency and a greater and more genuine commitment to hold them accountable. Media in each country is considered as one of the core institutions affecting governance; therefore, a holistic approach is required to development the media sector. Journalists need support in regard to professional skills, journalism ethics, and management skills. This study focuses on the following areas in order to make the media more effective and efficient in exhilarating CE in PP in Bangladesh.

Building Capacity

UNDP and TI (2011) mentioned that the media's main role is to get the public involved, which is a difficult task, particularly when a complex investigative story needs to be presented in a manner that entices the public. Investigative reporters need a set of complex skills for conducting serious investigations, especially since in most countries they are underpaid and do not have these skills at all (UNDP & TI 2011). Capacity development training is therefore needed to develop an efficient, modern, and professional media corps for reporting such a technical issue like procurement which will ultimately affect the nature of people's participation in PP process. Sometimes, press institutes, universities, and media NGOs may offer this type of training for the media corps who is particularly assigned for reporting PP news. Donors can also allocate fund

for training programmes or journalist exchange programs particularly focused on PP. Each media house should take initiatives to develop highly skilled corps of journalists who will work extensively for enhancing citizen's participation in PP. In a report, OECD (2011) mentioned that the complexities of modern PP can make this difficult, but many procurement authorities may invite media representatives to PP workshops and trainings, which enable journalists to understand and critically investigate the subject matter. There should be orientation training on *RTI*, *PPR*, and *PPA*. Thus, Central Procurement Technical Unit can organise seminars and workshops for media professional. All these types of trainings/workshops will assist media houses to cover pertinent procurement news with the interest of different stakeholders of the procurement process. The skilled media personnel would be able to publish reports on complex procurement issues in such ways that could be instrumental in promoting constructive discourses and debates between stakeholders and the government representatives. This kind of debate may help the stakeholders to hold the government officials/representatives accountable for their activities.

Full Access to Information

Media's credibility as an effective institution of enhancing people's participation will be enhanced if they can broadcast and disseminate required and authentic information among mass people. Since media has a huge responsibility of conveying PP relevant information to the common people, therefore it can be effective only if it has access to a wide range of information. Though *RTI Act* has been enacted by the government in 2009, the culture of sharing information is yet to develop in this region. Government should therefore enforce *RTI Act* fully so that media corps can easily get required information. Public procuring agencies and contractors should disclose information for media coverage. In PP, for instance, access to information means availability of adequate news regarding procurement including decisions taken and money spent. For promoting and sustaining a real people's participation in procurement process, media needs continuous access to data and information relevant with procurement. Access to information should be provided to the media in line with the *RTI Act*. And if the media people have some basic idea about the procurement cycle and the places where they should move for information, they can report more objectively without any bias. The readers then can have more authentic information.

Professionalism

As media is the main source of information and act as a bridge between the government and citizens, therefore, the questions of its credibility should be remained unquestioned. Media reporters therefore should follow journalistic standards and professionalism while presenting facts and figures to their readers/viewers/listeners hence would be able to change people's mind set towards particular issue. For achieving professionalism, media corps have to be very much conscious and possess the art of presenting any sensational news related to PP in a sophisticated reader friendly way. Professionalism also demands respect towards whistle blower and source of information. Maintain of accuracy of original information is equally important in this respect. A professional journalist will never disclose or publish any information pertaining to informants without their permission. Another aspect of professionalism in this respect is to ensure that any clarifications or rejoinders are placed in the exact spots where the original reports had been published. It is also very important to locate powers, interests, tactics, and constraints of this profession. Professionalism also requires strong culture of intolerance to any form of malpractice. Every media house should avoid the unauthentic source of information. They should assess each and every information with accuracy and precision

with full of integrity. Since problems like information verification is often associated with media operations, it is very important for the media to base their stories on authentic sources of information.

Ownership and Functional Autonomy

As a watchdog organization, media observe the mismanagement especially the awarding of licenses and contracts in particular cases of procurement system. Therefore, media should be guided by non-partisan, pro-people values, systems, and principles. Media independence is guaranteed if media houses are financially independence, free from political and corporate influence and irrational intervention of owners and operate in a democratic environment. As media is supposed to play the leading role to expose the irregularities of procurement process, therefore, it has to be transparent and accountable in its own activities beforehand. In order to achieve the target (promoting CE in PP), media corps need to be free, truthful, accurate, accountable, impartial, and work as the voice of citizens. For functioning autonomously, journalists should know how to negotiate with different actors (supply and demand sides, powerful and powerless actors) and how to choose neutral actors in PP domain. Participants of FGD remarked that, in Bangladesh, the problem is that some news houses has been grown up under state auspices and others belong to wealthy business groups so they cannot be truly independent, consequently end up as mouthpieces of those interests' groups. Media coverage on corruption phenomenon of PP may discover the involvement of bureaucrats, politicians, and their associates in it. Any type of alliance with political parties or other interested groups and political and financial dependence of media may create barriers in exposing those corruptions. Therefore, media should maintain ethical practices in its ownership and should be independent in its activity.

On the basis of the above discussions this study attempts to showcase the policy recommendations for strengthening media in promoting CE in PP (Figure 2).

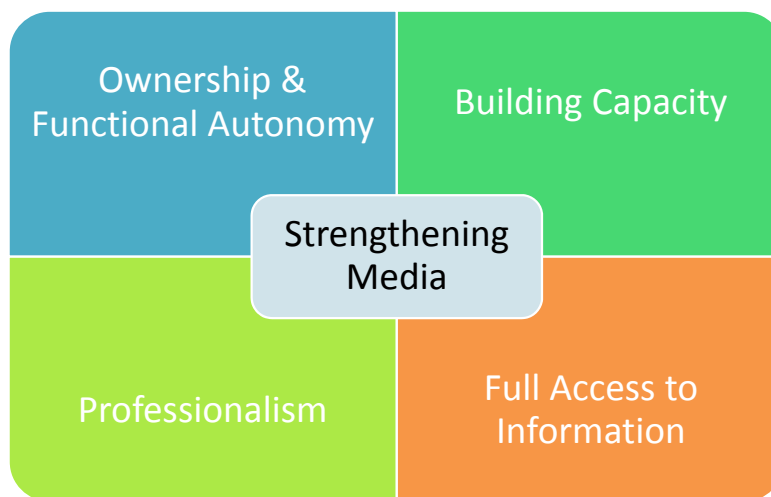


Figure 2. Policy recommendations for strengthening media in promoting CE in PP.

Conclusion

The dilemma of the developing countries is that mass people are not fully aware of their basic rights and if they know, they do not know to exercise these rights. It is a vivid reality that the common people tend to be apathetic and hesitant to speak up regarding government actions. Due to an inherited non-participatory culture in this subcontinent, people are usually not interested in interfering in government business. A complex issue

like procurement will generally stir even less enthusiasm amongst common people. If the media can play an effective role, the procurement literacy rate will be increasing. Hence, an enabling environment could be created where people will feel at ease to talk about compliance with procurement rules and acts. In this respect, the role of Bangladeshi mass media is deemed critical. Through the effective intervention of media, there is great possibility of ensuring citizens' voluntary (or under any legal or pseudo-legal framework) engagement in PP and thereby improve the quality of PP. However, the growing sense of insecurity amongst the journalists is one of the major reasons the media professionals do not give proper emphasis on such a high-stake issue (PP) where the affected people can easily turn violent on the reporting journalists for their financial losses. The government needs to take appropriate measures to protect those who work on establishing transparency and accountability in PP. Lastly, it should be borne in mind that though media is a crucial ally in providing information and generating public support, there should also be a framework for monitoring their work in order to steer its own accountability, transparency, and responsiveness. It is believed that public involvement in evaluating the performance of procurement entities and bidder communities will make it more meaningful and enhance efficiency in the respective work. Hence, media may act as a catalyst to promote citizens involvement in the PP process to hold the respective groups accountable for their activities.

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