

Rwanda's Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has launched a new review of the country's public procurement system after auditors revealed major failures in government contracting, including 18 halted projects worth Rwf 16.3 billion.

The committee began the review Tuesday, meeting with stakeholders from the private sector, civil society and government agencies involved in procurement. PAC said it wants to understand why procurement laws are repeatedly violated and to recommend long-term reforms that will improve transparency and accountability.

The investigation follows a PAC report presented to Parliament late last year, which was based on findings from the Auditor General's office. The report highlighted widespread problems in several government institutions, including poor planning, irregular procurement practices and weak project management. It noted that contracts were often awarded at costs exceeding the budgeted amounts, and that evaluation of bidders' documents was delayed, leading to slow or incomplete procurement processes.

PAC also raised concerns about contracts being awarded outside the national E-procurement system, Umucyo, which limits transparency and prevents the public from tracking procurement activities. In many cases, contracts were poorly drafted, leading to repeated extensions and project delays. The committee said the government continued to make payments to contractors even when work was behind schedule, contributing to increased costs and reduced value for public money.

MP Terence Kayigire questioned how such problems could persist in public procurement in a country that has made significant progress in governance. "It is unacceptable that in a country that has advanced in governance, contracts are still awarded without first going through the relevant authorities," he said.

PAC's report also noted that 18 projects, valued at Rwf 16.3 billion, were completely halted and left unfinished. The committee identified several state institutions as the worst offenders, including the Water and Sanitation Corporation (WASAC Ltd), the Rwanda Transport Development Agency (RTDA), and the Rwanda Electricity Distribution Company Ltd (EUDCL). PAC said these agencies demonstrated significant delays, financial losses and poor management of government assets.

The committee's findings align with a December 2024 report by Transparency

International Rwanda, which found that procurement officials frequently fail to publicly announce open bidding processes. The report said this creates opportunities for officials to award contracts to themselves or accept bribes, undermining fairness and public trust in the procurement system.

PAC's ongoing review is expected to increase pressure on government agencies to strengthen compliance with procurement laws and improve transparency. The committee has warned that its findings could lead to legislative and administrative reforms if institutions fail to address the persistent issues.