

Chapter 3

Aligning Sustainable Procurement with Broader Sustainability Goals:

The Role of Digital Innovations in Public Sector Accountability

Adam Sandow Saani

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-4286-6055>

Tamale Technical University, Ghana

Lord Emmanuel Yamoah

Takoradi Technical University, Ghana

Abdul-Aziz Mustapha

Tamale Technical University, Ghana

Mohammed Awal Zingnaa Iddrisu

Tamale Technical University, Ghana

ABSTRACT

The abstract discusses sustainable procurement, which aligns purchasing with sustainable development principles to support goals like the UN SDGs. It examines strategies to integrate sustainable procurement with sustainability frameworks, emphasizing economic, social, and environmental impacts. Benefits include advancing SDGs related to poverty, health, education, and responsible consumption, while challenges involve policy support, supply chain collaboration, and performance

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measurement. Case studies highlight successful strategies, and the paper calls for ongoing dialogue among stakeholders and further research to maximize sustainable procurement's impact.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainable procurement, defined as the strategic acquisition of goods, services, and works to maximize economic, social, and environmental benefits, has emerged as a pivotal mechanism for advancing global sustainability agendas (Institute for Supply Management [ISM], 2020). This strategic function increasingly intersects with service supply chain management, where digitalization creates new accountability paradigms requiring specialized frameworks for sustainable global performance (Hmioui, Bentalha, & Alla, 2020).

In the public sector, where procurement constitutes 12–15% of gross domestic product (GDP) in developed economies and up to 20% in developing ones, it wields unparalleled influence over markets, supply chains, and societal outcomes (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2022). The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda, provide a universal framework to address pressing challenges such as poverty (SDG 1), inequality (SDG 10), climate change (SDG 13), and responsible consumption (SDG 12) (United Nations, 2015). Public procurement's scale positions it as a transformative tool to operationalize these goals, yet its alignment with such frameworks remains inconsistent due to systemic barriers like fragmented policies, cost-driven decision-making, and limited transparency (European Commission, 2021).

This chapter examines how sustainable procurement can be strategically aligned with the SDGs, with a particular emphasis on the role of digital innovations in enhancing accountability and efficiency within local government procurement. Accountability, in this context, encompasses the obligation of public institutions to demonstrate transparent, responsible, and impactful use of resources while meeting stakeholder expectations (Bovens, 2010). Local governments, as stewards of community resources, face unique pressures to balance fiscal prudence with social and environmental priorities, making them ideal contexts for exploring procurement's potential. Digital technologies—such as e-procurement platforms, blockchain, artificial intelligence (AI), and open data systems—offer solutions to longstanding challenges by improving data access, streamlining processes, and fostering public trust (Smith et al., 2025).

The chapter's purpose is fourfold:

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