

Secrecy plague invades Tanzania too

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The price governments pay for transparency is much lighter and affects only the minority-specifically rogue politicians and connected greedy business people.

By Chris Musiime

Lawmakers in Tanzania have vowed to cause the removal of their Minister for Energy and Minerals, Prof. Sospeter Muhongo, for refusing to disclose contracts the government signed with oil and gas companies operating in the country.

The Minister angered the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of Parliament last week when he told them he could not divulge details of 26 agreements due to “technical reasons.”

But the legislators would hear none of that, and threatened to remove the Minister from office, arguing that the privilege of withholding such information lay solely in the hands of the President.

The Tanzania Petroleum Development Corporation (TPDC) is now pleading with the MPs for more time to consult with the oil and gas companies before releasing the agreements, citing strict confidentiality clauses contained therein.

Surprisingly, Tanzania is a member of the [Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative \(EITI\)](#) and the [Open Government Partnership](#), both globally accepted standards for transparency and public accountability.

But this apparent reluctance to open up its oil and gas sector to parliamentary scrutiny places it at the same unenviable non-transparent footing as its neighbour Uganda, which neither belongs to EITI nor OGP.

Kenya appears to have picked some lessons from Uganda as well, and their draft oil contracts contain those dreaded non-disclosure clauses. But by far, Uganda remains the most secretive of all.