



OGP Steering Committee Meeting in session at the Century City yesterday



Members of the Steering Committee with the OGP Lead Chairperson, Ms Ayanda Dlodlo (centre).



Delegates at the conference.

By Carey Kluttz and Kouadio Julien Tingain

In October 2015, during the Global Summit of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in Mexico, Côte d'Ivoire officially became the international initiative's first sub-Saharan Francophone member.

This is an important step for this booming country, which is emerging from memories of a post-electoral crisis that still remain fresh.

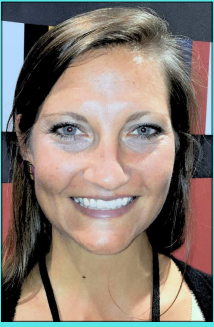
President Alassane Ouattara, who aims to make Côte d'Ivoire an emerging country by 2020, has implemented a number of initiatives in the domain of transparency and good governance, including through OGP membership.

OGP is an international multi-stakeholder initiative launched in 2011 which aims to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance – in a spirit of collaboration between government, non-state actors, civil society organizations, and the media.

Led by the Ministry of Industry and Mines, and under the supervision of the Office of the Prime Minister, Côte d'Ivoire is currently in the process of developing its first National Action Plan (NAP).

To this end, in January 2016 the Ministry of Industry and Mines

Expanding the Reach of OGP in Francophone Africa



Carey Kluttz is currently a Fulbright-Clinton Fellow placed with SODEMI, the national mining company of Côte d'Ivoire, where she is conducting a study on the socioeconomic impact of artisanal gold mining. Under the independent component of her Fellowship, Carey is supporting the development of Côte d'Ivoire's first Open Government Partnership National Action Plan.

Prior to her Fellowship Carey was a Consultant with the World Bank for over three years, where she focused on good governance in the extractive industries, primarily in Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa.

She also worked on Open Contracting, a global movement to promote disclosure and participation in public contracting. Before joining the World Bank, Carey served as Executive Director of the Bridges of Understanding Foundation, a not-for-profit foundation dedicated to fostering understanding between the United States and the Arab world.

Carey holds a B.A. in French and Anthropology from the University of Virginia, and an M.A. in Middle East and Islamic Studies with Arabic from the American University of Paris (AUP), where her thesis focused on nonviolent resistance.



Kouadio Julien Tingain has over 10 years experience in governance of extractive industries, processes of transparency, good governance, and anti-corruption.

He is one of the anti-corruption pioneers in Côte d'Ivoire, and created one of the first Ivorian civil society organizations focused on anti-corruption and promotion of good governance.

Julien led advocacy efforts which led to Côte d'Ivoire's membership in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) in 2008, of which he is member and Technical Counselor to the President.

He also helped to establish a national Publish What You Pay coalition in Côte d'Ivoire, with which he served as National Coordinator from 2009-2012.

Julien has participated in President Obama's exchange program with young African leaders and is a member of both the Board of Directors of Tax Justice Network-Africa and the Crans Montana New Leaders for Tomorrow Forum.

He holds a Masters degree in Management Science and a postgraduate professional degree in Development Project Management.

organized a two-day workshop for civil society, private sector, and government actors with the financial support of the British Embassy.

This offered a range of stakeholders the chance to learn from the experiences of other more advanced OGP countries, including Liberia and Tunisia, and to become

more familiar the steps, process and techniques for developing a NAP.

Over the past few months, regular meetings led by the Prime Minister, and involving representatives from all the technical ministries, demonstrate the engagement of the entire Ivorian

government.

The OGP Technical Committee, which includes representatives from key state structures as well as civil society, private sector, and academia, has its road map and has also organized multiple meetings around the preparation and development of the NAP.

In mid-April the Technical Committee also organized a series of regional consultations in six regions of the country, including Abidjan, Abengourou, Bouaké, Korhogo, Man, and San-Pedro.

In the spirit of OGP more broadly, these consultations demonstrated the commitment of all the

actors – in particular government, non-state, and private sector – to working together toward a more open and accountable government.

Côte d'Ivoire's membership in OGP represents an important opportunity to improve relations between state structures and civil society, and to build the capacity of

civil society – while simultaneously advancing a priority of the government.

The implementation of OGP will help to improve the availability of information and data to the public, to engage citizens and civil society organizations in citizen monitoring, and to achieve greater transparency and responsibility in government.

As there is increasing demand for such efforts from development partners and companies, who prefer to invest their resources in countries where there is greater transparency and good governance, the OGP process will serve to benefit all those in Côte d'Ivoire – as well as neighboring countries.

In addition, as Côte d'Ivoire is one of the pillars of Francophone West Africa, it can play an important role in inspiring other Francophone countries to follow it in joining OGP.

This partnership offers an improved understanding between citizens and the government, and can inspire greater trust and confidence between disparate actors, which would certainly be a welcome development throughout the region.

The vision of a truly transparent and accountable West Africa, where neighboring countries support one another in the shared objective of an open government, could soon be a reality.

By Mukelani Dimba and Maureen Kariuki

CLOSE to a thousand delegates from the African continent and beyond are descending on Cape Town for the Open Government Partnership's (OGP) Africa Regional Summit from 4 - 6 May 2016.

At this grand market of ideas, African countries will take stock of how they have fared in promoting transparency and accountability in the conduct of public affairs and management of scarce public resources.

Delegates will consider such tools as open budgeting, open contracting, open data and access to information, and the common theme throughout will be how these tools of accountability are used to ensure inclusive and sustainable development.

But at a more fundamental level, the principle

The Partnership Question

underlying the OGP is a partnership between governments and civil society, so basic questions will have to be asked regarding how such a partnership is possible in the context of ever decreasing civic space for engagement.

According to Civicus, the global civil society coalition, significant violations of civic space were recorded in over 100 countries in 2015.

Civicus Secretary-General, Dr. Danny Sriskandarajah, noted recently at International Civil Society Week conference, that the demonization of civil society does not only emanate from "corrupt politicians and officials, unaccountable security

forces, unscrupulous businesses and religious fundamentalists" but has also become normalized in mainstream political discourse.

Sriskandarajah points out that the crackdown on civil society is not only coming from authoritarian governments but also democratically elected ones.

This is true even for OGP governments. OGP is currently reviewing the conduct of two of its member states that have introduced policy and legislative measures that have an effect of limiting the operations of civil society organisations. And the global trend of shrinking civil space is

not one to which Africa has been immune. Governments across the continent are openly suspicious of civil society organisations working in the human rights and governance sectors.

These organisations are often regarded as "agents of regime change" or illegitimate because they receive funding from western governments – the very same governments that have been supporting, and continue to support African countries, through foreign aid.

This is untenable discourse. True partnerships between governments and civil society formations in OGP countries need to

be established, as this is the basic tenet of the initiative.

It cannot be that they remain part of OGP while continuing business as usual by clamping down on public dissent and civic space. Joining OGP should mean a change of step, a new recognition that civil society organisations are partners in this effort.

Civil society organisations should not be seen or see themselves as invited guests at the OGP table.

As open government champions from all over the continent converge in Cape Town to craft ideas and plans for how to make their governments more transparent, accountable and responsive, therefore, the very real question of increasingly strained government/civil society engagement on these very matters will no doubt remain a major focus – and rightly so.