

GHANA

STRIVING FOR A CO-CREATION PROCESS



The late President John Atta Mills signed Ghana up to the OGP in September 2011, after which there was a prolonged period of inertia. It took a long time for the information to trickle down to the relevant ministry. 'The initiative was treated as a foreign affairs issue. Knowing more about the OGP, we kept pushing behind the scenes and just weeks before the deadline of April 2012, government convened a meeting with the help of the World Bank,' Emmanuel Kuyole of Revenue Watch Ghana recalls. The OGP found its home within the Public Sector Reform Secretariat (PSRS), which is part of the Office of the President. 'We hurriedly assembled an ad hoc working group made up of relevant government agencies and civil society representatives and put together a report for the international OGP conference in Brasilia,' explains Effie Simpson Ekuban of the OGP Secretariat. Although government was unable to attend, civil society

was represented by Vitus Azeem of the Ghana Integrity Initiative.

BUILDING A TEAM

Soon after the Brazil conference, the ball started rolling and the process of setting up the steering committee gathered momentum. Government adopted a dual strategy for gaining CSO representation - the Coalition of Civil Society was consulted and certain organisations were directly approached to nominate ten representatives to make up the committee, which had a total of 20 members. Says Effie,

'The Coalition is a credible group and I believe civil society increasingly realises that interaction with government is much more effective when they're organised.'

Civil society is represented on the committee by various national

and international development NGOs and organisations working on governance and transparency issues as well as by the Christian and Muslim Council of Ghana. All these bodies have the responsibility of informing and involving others in their respective professional networks. 'All the members are based in Accra but many have offices and branches in the regions and districts. At present membership is not balanced in terms of gender,' observes Emmanuel. In addition to meeting six or seven times at the outset to prepare the draft plan, the entire steering committee went on a two-day retreat outside Accra. 'This really helped us to establish ourselves as a team before we hit the road,' says Vitus.

The steering committee appointed the Institute of Democratic Governance to draft the Action Plan. 'We received financial support from the World Bank and we decided to

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- Vitus Azeem of the Ghana Integrity Initiative

contract this task out to a consulting agency. They worked closely with us, gathering content from all the members. This enabled us to make optimum use of our own time,' says Effie. With general elections looming ever closer, the consultation process in the three zones was squeezed into a two-month period starting in mid-October. Steering committee members were encouraged to go into the field. This is where the groundwork was done spreading the OGP message and inputs on the proposed commitments were gathered. Each event attracted 40 to 60 participants from political parties, the public service, CSOs and the media, as well as traditional and religious leaders. In many instances, journalists were present in overly large numbers. 'Traditional media is still very strong and influential in Ghana and we wanted the launch event and the zonal meetings to be covered by the newspapers, radio and TV,' says Emmanuel. While the

steering committee was generally satisfied with the inputs received, the number of participants was considered low. Limited financial resources and lack of sufficient time were cited as major concerns. 'Ideally, we should have covered all ten regions and not have held the consultations so close to the elections,' reflects Vitus.

Soon after the consultations, the steering committee held a validation workshop in the capital in order to refine all the inputs prior to finalising the Action Plan. While this event was well attended by the major development partners and CSOs, attendance by government agencies was sub-optimal. 'By this time, the election process was revving up and many top government officials were holding the fort for their political bosses who were occupied elsewhere,' says Effie. Similarly, civil society organisations working on governance issues were actively

engaged in the monitoring of the whole election process. From the end of November to Mid-January, little was done as the new president was inaugurated and his administration assumed its duties. The Minister of State retains his portfolio for overseeing the OGP, thereby providing much-needed continuity from one administration to the next.

While there has been no formal evaluation of the consultation process, both civil society and government feel it provided a good opportunity for developing and validating the ideas of the steering committee. The Action Plan outlines activities to be implemented by government with the strong support of civil society. To date, the entire process has been a joint exercise and for government the impact of this has been very positive. 'The document is the product of the steering committee and is fully owned by it. We feel our inputs and

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knowledge have been integral and appreciated,' says Vitus.

Once the Action Plan has been signed off by the OGP steering committee, the implementation process will start in earnest. One of the issues on the table is a review of the membership of the steering committee. 'Regular attendance is important and those not participating will be either replaced or dismissed,' says Effie. Involving the media in a more strategic and structured way is also being considered; the question of how the media can genuinely foster participation, transparency and accountability is being addressed. The second objective is to popularise the Action Plan among other development partners, especially those working on public sector reform, and other stakeholders.

The process in Ghana started slowly but has embraced the principles

of collaboration and inclusive participation. A willingness to work together is clearly evident and both civil society and government acknowledge that consultation requires a lot of effort if maximum benefits are to be derived. 'We have learned that for the OGP engine to run smoothly and efficiently, government commitment is critical, CSO participation is essential and a well-resourced and functioning secretariat is a vital cog in the machine,' says Effie.

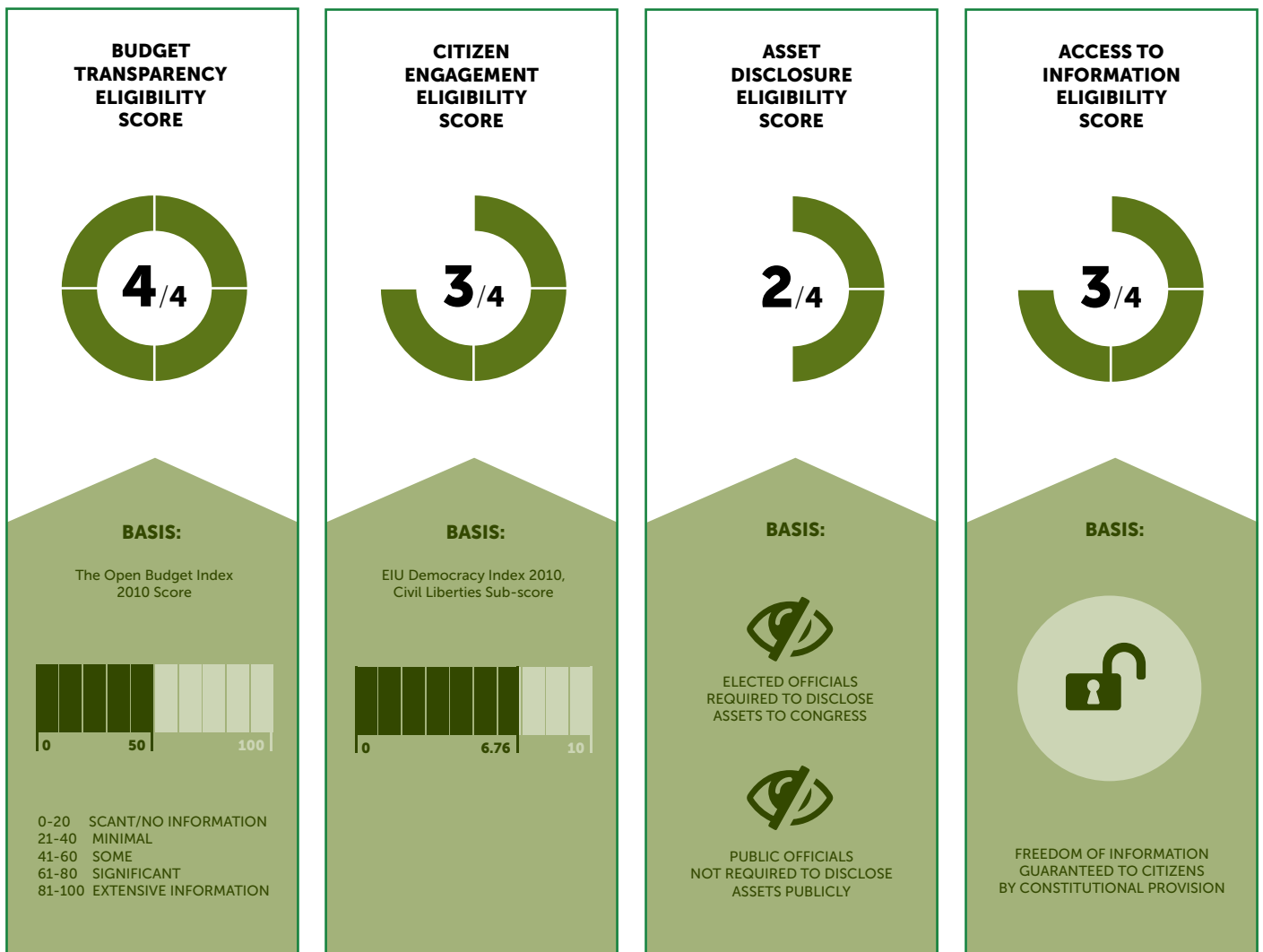
🔗 For more information or to get in touch with one of the people interviewed, please e-mail nvaart@hivos.nl.

📅 OGP MEMBER SINCE:
April 2013

🏠 CURRENT STAGE:
1st Action Plan

🌐 OGP SITE:
<http://www.ghanaopengov.org/>

GHANA OGP ELIGIBILITY DATASHEET



TOTAL OGP ELIGIBILITY SCORE: **12/16**

