

Armenia has made progress in increasing public access to information, particularly in extractive industries and government decision making at sub-national level. While positive developments were noted, commitments did not lead to major changes in opening government.

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is a voluntary international initiative that aims to secure commitments from governments to their citizenry to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. The Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) carries out a review of the activities of each OGP-participating country. This report summarizes results of the period from July 2014 to December 2016, considering that Armenia's OGP action plan included commitments with completion due in December 2016.

The Staff of the Government acts as the Secretariat for OGP in Armenia. The OGP working group, a multi-stakeholder dialogue on OGP, was established by the Prime Minister's decree from 15 July 2014. The working group consists of 24 members, of which 16 represent the Government and 8 represent the Civil Society Organization (CSO) community.

In October 2016, Armenian government published the end of term self-assessment report of its 2014-2016 action plan¹.

At the time of writing this report, the Government of Armenia published draft of the Armenian third action plan² containing eight new commitments. Most of the commitments from second action plan have not been carried over into the third action plan. Within the framework of OGP, the Government decided to continue implementation of one commitment on improving the transparency of asset and income declarations of high ranking officials. Other commitments of the second action plan do not have direct relationship with the third action plan.

Table 1: At a Glance		
	Mid-term	End-of-term
Number of commitments:	11	11
Level of completion (milestones)		
Completed:	3	6
Substantial:	1	4
Limited:	6	1
Not started:	1	0
Number of commitments with:		
Clear relevance to OGP values:	10	
Moderate or Transformative potential impact:	3	
Substantial or complete implementation:	4	9
All three (★):	0	0
Did it Open Government?		
Major:	N/A	0
Outstanding	N/A	0
Moving forward		
Number of commitments carried over to next action plan:	1	

¹ For government self-assessment report see:

https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Armenia_2014-2016_Self-Assessment_ENG.pdf

² For the third action plan see: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Armenia_NAP3_2016-18.pdf

Consultation with civil society during implementation

Countries participating in OGP follow a process for consultation during development and implementation of their OGP action plan. Consultations during implementation process were held at Government's premises, within the format of OGP working group.

During the period covered by the OGP IRM progress report, the OGP working group held a meeting on 15 February 2016¹ to discuss: implementation of the second action plan, and the development of the third action plan. Additionally, the OGP working group held an expanded meeting on 5 October 2015² to discuss (1) the implementation of the second action plan, (2) the self-assessment report, and (3) the monitoring report prepared by the Freedom of Information Center of Armenia CSO (FOICA). In some instances, CSO representatives in OGP working group monitored progress on implementation of their proposed commitments, which were also included in the second action plan. Whereas, in other cases, CSOs representatives in the OGP working group lacked the expertise on issues covered by Government's proposed commitments. For instance, none of the representative CSOs were allocated with monitoring the implementation of commitment on public awareness of health care financing, and on community micro-surveys. Other CSOs working on health and community development issues were neither aware of OGP commitments, nor able to monitor their implementation.

During implementation meetings, the Government invited the working group CSOs to participate. While only working group members are officially invited the meetings were open. In the earlier meetings of the OGP working group, Government representatives refrained from giving floor to CSOs, instead using the meeting as a platform for highlighting the work regarding implementation of commitments. However, the Government representatives modified this approach later and employed their meetings with the OGP working group to listen to the CSO representatives. Moreover, the Government engaged in consulting with CSOs on implementation of commitments and processes thereof.

Table 2: Action Plan Consultation Process

Phase of Action Plan	OGP Process Requirement (Articles of Governance Section)	Did the Government Meet this Requirement?
During Implementation	Regular forum for consultation during implementation?	YES
	Consultations: Open or Invitation-only?	Invitation-only
	Consultations on IAP2 spectrum	Consult

¹ "Meeting of the OGP Working Group", OGP.am, February 15, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2sbIPTP>.

² "OGP Working Group Meeting was Held", OGP.am, October 7, 2015, <http://bit.ly/2sbNTGR>.

Progress in commitment implementation

All of the indicators and method used in the IRM research can be found in the IRM Procedures Manual, available at (<http://www.opengovpartnership.org/about/about-irm>). One measure deserves further explanation, due to its particular interest for readers and usefulness for encouraging a race to the top between OGP-participating countries: the “starred commitment” (★). Starred commitments are considered exemplary OGP commitments. In order to receive a star, a commitment must meet several criteria:

1. It must be specific enough that a judgment can be made about its potential impact. Starred commitments will have "medium" or "high" specificity.
2. The commitment’s language should make clear its relevance to opening government. Specifically, it must relate to at least one of the OGP values of Access to Information, Civic Participation, or Public Accountability.
3. The commitment would have a "transformative" potential impact if completely implemented.
4. Finally, the commitment must see significant progress during the action plan implementation period, receiving a ranking of "substantial" or "complete" implementation.

Based on these criteria, Armenian action plan neither contained starred commitments at the midterm report, nor at the end of term.

Commitments assessed as star commitments in the midterm report can lose their starred status if at the end of the action plan implementation cycle, their completion falls short of substantial or full completion, which would mean they have an overall limited completion at the end of term, per commitment language.

Finally, the graphs in this section present an excerpt of the wealth of data the IRM collects during its progress reporting process. For the full dataset for Armenia, see the OGP Explorer at www.opengovpartnership.org/explorer.

About “Did it Open Government?”

Often, OGP commitments are vaguely worded or not clearly related to opening government, but they actually achieve significant political reforms. Other times, commitments with significant progress may appear relevant and ambitious, but fail to open government. In an attempt to capture these subtleties and, more importantly, actual changes in government practice, the IRM introduced a new variable ‘did it open government?’ in End-of-Term Reports. This variable attempts to move beyond measuring outputs and deliverables to looking at how the government practice has changed as a result of the commitment’s implementation. This can be contrasted to the IRM’s “Starred commitments” which describe *potential* impact.

IRM Researchers assess the “Did it open government?” with regard to each of the OGP values that this commitment is relevant to. It asks, did it stretch the government practice beyond business as usual? The scale for assessment is as follows:

- Worsened: worsens government openness as a result of the measures taken by commitment.
- Did not change: did not change status quo of government practice.
- Marginal: some change, but minor in terms of its impact over level of openness.
- Major: a step forward for government openness in the relevant policy area, but remains limited in scope or scale
- Outstanding: a reform that has transformed ‘business as usual’ in the relevant policy area by opening government.

To assess this variable, researchers establish the status quo at the outset of the action plan. They then assess outcomes *as implemented* for changes in government openness.

Readers should keep in mind limitations. IRM End-of-Term Reports are prepared only a few months after the implementation cycle is completed. The variable focus on outcomes that can be observed on government openness practices at the end of the two-year implementation period. The report and the variable do not intend to assess impact because of the complex methodological implications and the time frame of the report.

General overview of commitments

As part of OGP, countries are required to make commitments in a two-year action plan. End of term reports assess an additional metric – ‘did it open government?’ The tables below summarize the completion level at the end of term and progress on this metric. For commitments that were already complete at the midterm, only an analysis of ‘Did it open government?’ is provided. For additional information on previously completed commitments, please see the Armenia IRM midterm progress report¹.

Armenia's second action plan contained commitments related to mining industry (commitments 1 and 2), health and education management and financing (commitments 3 and 9), transparency of asset and income declarations of high ranking officials (commitments 4), public procurements (commitment 5), community management (commitments 6 and 11), public participation in policy development (commitments 7 and 8), and training of public servants on freedom of information and corruption (commitment 10).

For the above-mentioned commitments, there are no independent reports assessing the impact of implementation in respective areas. The Government and the CSO community may need to put more efforts into monitoring successful implementation of these commitments and communicate the impact or early results.

If successfully implemented, commitments on mining can substantially open the government on the said issue. The Government did not complete implementation of commitment 11, which was due in April 2016, for online broadcasting of sessions of Community Councils.

With support from FOICA, the government initiated a public awareness campaign on TV. However, there is substantial room for improvement of communication with the Armenian society as CSOs have highlighted Armenian civil society’s lack of awareness on OGP as well as Armenian participation in OGP.

The draft of the third action plan was published on www.ogp.am website on 18 July 2016 and approved by the Government on 11 August 2016. The action plan includes eight commitments related to following:

- (1) improving regulation of business trips of executive officials;
- (2) improving regulation of awarding grants from the state budget;
- (3) improving the transparency of the budget;
- (4) improving the electronic system of presentations of declaration of assets and income of high level officials and persons affiliated with them;
- (5) creating an electronic portal of decisions of local authorities; (6)
- (6) creation of a single electronic ledger of bodies awarding licenses and notifications;
- (7) improving public awareness on social services and their accessibilities; and
- (8) implementation of pilot “one-stop-shop” project in military recruitment centers.

¹ See: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Armenia_IRM14-15_EN_0.pdf.

Table 3: Overview: Assessment of Progress by Commitment

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion		Midterm	Did it Open Government?						
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	End of term	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
1. Digitization and publication of data collected by the “Republican Geological Fund”			✓		✓		✓			✓			✓		✓					✓		
2. Ensure transparency in mining			✓		✓	✓				✓			✓		✓					✓		
3. Public awareness of health care financing			✓		✓		✓		✓				✓						✓			
4. Asset and income declarations of high-ranking officials			✓		✓				✓							✓			✓			
5. Broadcasting State Procurement Appeals Board sessions			✓		✓		✓		✓						✓					✓		
6. Community micro-surveys			✓			✓	✓		✓				✓			✓				✓		
7. State policies and legislative reforms			✓			✓			✓					✓		✓				✓		
8. Public awareness on the law-making activity of state governance bodies			✓		✓				✓				✓		✓				✓			
9. Transparency of secondary education institutions’ Governing Boards elections and annual budget planning			✓			✓	✓		✓						✓					✓		
10. Freedom of information and anti-corruption training			✓		Unclear					✓				✓					✓			
11. Transparency of local self-government bodies			✓			✓				✓			✓						✓			

1. Digitization and Publication of Data Collected by the “Republican Geological Fund”

Commitment Text:

The geological exploration studies of subsurface collected in the "Republican Geological Fund" SNCO, as well as the geological and other information gathered during the exploitation of minerals in the form of relevant documents (certificates, reports, drawing materials, etc.) is stored in hard copies, which restricts the availability of geological information to the public.

It is planned to fully digitize the information of the fund, at the same time ensuring the digitization of new materials (maps, financial and non-financial reports, and other documents).

The program is expected to digitize over 12,000 geological reports on approximately 750 mines and 600 mineral occurrences and 8,000 mapping and drawing packages, to create a website where all the materials will be posted (in PDF, JPG, EXCEL and other formats), using the information search principle. Besides, site interactive map will be created to facilitate the exploration of materials posted on the website and the materials will be pinned to the respective RA areas.

The following information will also be posted on the above-mentioned website: on the issued mining rights of subsurface for the purpose of extracting minerals, mining rights to extract minerals from the geological study of subsurface rights, on mining rights for the extraction of underground mineral waters and metal minerals map, which is now published on the website of the RA Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources.¹ Thus the access to information for the public will be improved.

Responsible Institution: Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources of the Republic of Armenia

Supporting Institution(s): None

Start Date: December 2014...

End Date: December 2016

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion		Midterm / End of Term		Did it Open Government?				
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
			✓		✓		✓			✓		✓			✓				✓		

Commitment Aim

This commitment aims to digitize the data stored at the Republican Geological Fund (Fund) to create a publicly accessible repository of geological information, including mining rights, geological research, mineral maps, and financial reports from the exploration of natural resources. If fully implemented, the commitment would make the Fund data easily accessible to the public.

Status

Midterm: Not Started

At the time of writing of the midterm report, Government had not started implementation of this commitment. The Ministry of Energy Infrastructure and Natural Resources was still negotiating financial support for this project with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

End of Term: Substantial

The Government transferred the necessary technical equipment, such as computers and scanners, to the Fund². According to the government, by mid-September 2016, about 350 thousand pages and maps for 2500 thousand square meters have been digitized. Since October 2016, information about the Fund has been available online³. Further, according to the Government, about half of the work envisaged by the commitment was completed by mid-December 2016 and the website was visited around 1200 times. The Government informed the public about the website within the framework of its activities related to second commitment, viz., to ensure transparency in mining. For example, during the first session of the working group on Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) on 25 November 2016, the Government representatives informed about the launch of the website⁴ and communicated the same via TV news.

Presently, the website provides information on some mineral deposits. In several cases the reports are dated as far back as 1960s and 1970s. For example, the webpage presents 1965 report on the stock of pumice deposit at Jraber⁵; or reports about research done in 1981-1983, 1966, 1958-1961, and in 1962 regarding copper deposits at Karnut⁶; or geological research of gold and silver deposits at Tsarasar in 1979-1983⁷. There are also reports of some research carried out in recent years. For example, the page on Tekhut copper- molybdenum deposit contains reports dated between 1991 and 2014.

At the time of writing this report (mid-January 2017) three pages related to (1) mining rights to extract minerals⁸, (2) rights to carry out geological research⁹, and (3) rights to carry out research related to water resources¹⁰, did not provide information on rights and licenses already awarded.

Did it Open Government?

Access to Information: Marginal

Availability of digital information on geological data related to the exploitation of minerals has been limited in Armenia. Creation of the website, therefore, is a positive step towards increasing access to such information in digital format.

However, for the website to be more useful, currently uploaded data needs to be presented in a more user-friendly and machine-readable format. Representatives of Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center (TIAC) are of the view that simply availing scanned documents and maps in PDF or JPG formats will not constitute digitization. Nevertheless, it is expected that once fully functional, the website will become a useful source of information for researchers and CSOs working on environmental issues.

Carried Forward?

The commitment was not carried over to the third action plan.

¹ Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy Infrastructure, accessed June 11, 2017, <http://www.minenergy.am/>.

² "The Government of Armenia Decree No. 677-A", arlis.am, June 30, 2016, <http://www.arlis.am/>. The decree, which pertains to transfer of property without incurring charge, is available in Armenian .

³ Republican Geological Fund, accessed June 11, 2017, <https://www.geo-fund.am/hy/>.

⁴ "The first meeting of the initiative group of multi transparency in extractive industries", Gov.am, November 25, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2rQbBqA>.

⁵ Republican Geological Fund, accessed June 11, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2rQwZvG>. See table enlisting 'The natural Resources of Armenia'.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ "Granted Rights", Republican Geological Fund, accessed June 9, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2t4epy5>

⁹ Ibid., <http://bit.ly/2scC5Ei>

¹⁰ Available at <https://www.geo-fund.am/hyhttps://www.geo-fund.am/hy/Տրամադրված-իրավունքներ? filter=water#loads>

2. Ensure Transparency in Mining

Commitment Text:

The current situation in the mining sector does not meet the contemporary requirements presented by the state and the society, particularly, the level of accountability of mining companies and the state on expenses and revenues needs improvement.

Joining the initiative will increase the transparency in the sector, will ensure high level of accountability, as well as improve the investment environment.

Responsible institution: Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources of the Republic of Armenia

Supporting institution(s): Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Economy, and Ministry of Finance

Start Date: July 2015
2016

End Date: December

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion		Midterm End of Term		Did it Open Government?				
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
				✓		✓	✓				✓				✓					✓	

Commitment Aim

The commitment aims to enhance transparency in the extractive sector by joining the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), a global standard to promote open and accountable management of natural resources. The commitment also mentions holding discussions, negotiations, and other necessary preparatory work without, however, specifying their outcomes.

Status

Midterm: Limited

At the time of writing the midterm report, the government had publicly announced its intention of joining EITI as well as appointed the Chief of the Government Staff for leading the implementation of EITI in Armenia.

End of Term: Substantial

Government made substantial progress on this commitment. The Government took several measures to join the EITI. Firstly, it appointed the Chief of the Government Staff, a senior official, to lead the implementation process. Secondly, to oversee the EITI implementation

process, the Government also established a multi-stakeholder group, during its second session on 26 December 2016¹, discussed and approved its work plan for 2017-2018¹.

The multi-stakeholder group comprises: six officials representing the government, four representatives of the industry, four representatives of CSO community (representing TIAC, Ecoright CSO, Association of Young Environmental Lawyers and Economists, and EcoLur CSO), and one person representing scientific community (the Sustainable Development Center of Yerevan State University). The draft of Government decree on establishment of a multi-stakeholder working group was in circulation from September 2016¹. On 19-20 September 2016, in cooperation with USAID, the Government organized training on “Mine Inspection and Reclamation Bonding” for the members of the EITI Armenia multi-stakeholder group and other specialists working in the mining sector. The Minister – Government Chief of Staff presented information about the implementation process of the EITI in Armenia during a television interview².

The EITI working group was formally set up by Prime Minister Decree №1104-A adopted on 24 November 2016, and held its first official session on 26 November 2016. During its second session on 26 December 2016, the EITI working group discussed and approved its work plan for 2017-2018³. The work plan foresees activities in following areas:

- (1) making information on extractive industry and EITI available to the public via creation of a dedicated website, development and approval of communication strategy, and preparation of the EITI report during a conference to be organized in October 2018;
- (2) development of roadmap to reveal the beneficial owners and presenting the roadmap to EITI Secretariat by September 2017;
- (3) study and analysis of Armenian legislation to identify gaps with EITI requirements with the approval of respective action plan in December 2017;
- (4) study of best international practice and development of roadmap in line with requirements specified under EITI Standard 2016 requirement 8.3.a.iii⁴;
- (5) assurance of EITI candidate country status for Armenia;
- (6) preparation of a complete report in line with EITI standards by August 2018 and review of comments from EITI Secretariat by December 2018.

To help the Government implement this commitment, the British Embassy in Yerevan, USAID Armenia, the World Bank and invited experts to conduct series of workshops to assist Armenia develop a successful EITI Candidature Application and become an EITI candidate country⁵. Information on Government’s efforts related to implementation of this activity is available on the Government website⁶.

IRM researcher notes that Armenia became 52nd EITI candidate country on 10 March 2017⁷. However, the researcher also points out that Armenia’s EITI candidature happened long after the completion of the second action plan (late June 2016 or late December 2016). Also considered was the fact that commitment language did not clearly specify the government’s intention to join the initiative at the time of completion of the action plan. For these reasons, as of late December 2016, IRM researcher assesses the completion level as 'Substantial'.

Did it Open Government?

Access to Information: Did Not Change

Civic Participation: Marginal

Despite substantial steps taken to bring Armenia closer to the EITI Candidate status, at the time of writing this report (January 2017), there is no evidence to indicate that the implementation of this commitment has improved access to information on the extractives industry in the country. Access to information is expected to improve once the Government implements the EITI standard and publishes its first EITI report.

Creation of the multi-stakeholder group has generated an opportunity for civil society in the governance of the extractive sector. However, according to representatives of Transparency International Armenia, there have been disagreements between the government and the CSO community related to future decision-making process within the framework of multi-stakeholder group. CSOs were looking for consensus-based system for decision making. At the meeting held in May 2016, the Government representatives and the CSOs agreed on a decision-making process.

Carried Forward?

According to TIAC, the Government rejected the proposal to include this commitment in the third action plan. According to the Government, the process of preparation of successful EITI Candidature Application is already an official policy reflected in programs of the Ministry of Energy Infrastructure and Mineral Resources, and other government programs. Therefore, this commitment being a precondition for implementation of other international agreements, the government is interested in its full implementation, whether a part of the OGP action plans or not.

¹ "GOA Draft Decree", Gov.am, September 8, 2016. PDF form available in Armenian at <http://bit.ly/2rW5Oya>

² Davit Harutyunyan, "Initiative within the Framework of Anti-Corruption Measures", YouTube interview video, 9:57, posted by Square TV, November 28, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFnKjvfX8KI>

³ "EITI_Work Plan_Armenia", Gov.am, December 26, 2016. Available in Armenian in PDF form at <http://bit.ly/2s6PVXI>

⁴ '8.3.a.iii' requirement can be explained as: '8.3' denotes 'EITI Validation Deadline and Consequences', 'a' signifies 'Assessment of Progress with EITI Implementation' and 'iii' stands for 'Efforts beyond the requirements'

⁵ British Embassy Yerevan's Facebook page, accessed June 9, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2sMLVcK>

⁶ "The EITI Implementation Process of Armenia", Gov.am, accessed June 12, 2017, <http://gov.am/en/armeniaeiti/>. For more information on EITI multi-stakeholder group see "The EITI MSG of Armenia", *ibid.*, <http://gov.am/en/eitimg/>

⁸ "Official News: Armenia Became a Candidate Country of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative/EITI", Gov.am, March 10, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2sgYCio>. For more information on Armenia's EITI candidature, see "The EITI Board Welcomes Armenia to the EITI Family", *eiti.org*, March 9, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2riCPaF>.

3. Public Awareness of Healthcare Financing

Commitment Text:

There is a huge gap amongst the existing developments in the health care financing system; the citizens do not know their rights and are not able to manage their rights in a variety of health care system sectors, inter alia receiving hospital care and primary health care services. Within some standards of organizing and financing the treatment those processes are described, but there are dynamic and transparent systems revealing the developments of those relations.

To create healthcare system financial portal where people, professionals and the public may obtain information on the state-guaranteed funding, on the basic package of services, when the payment for services is due for the patient, and when not, how they can get recipes subject to state-guaranteed payment, on financial and non-financial reports and other information.

Responsible Institution: Ministry of Health of the Republic of Armenia

Supporting Institution(s): None

Start Date: September 2014
September 2015

End Date:

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Comple tion		Midterm		Did it Open Government?				
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Maior	Outstanding
			√		√			√		√			√			√		√			

Commitment Aim

This commitment entails creation of a healthcare system financing portal that would allow users to access information on government provided free health services and healthcare financing.

Status

Midterm: Limited

The health financing portal <http://sha.am> was created on 1 January 2014, prior to the start of the action plan. However, the web page on state-guaranteed services was still under construction at the time of progress report. By July 2016, the portal contained more than 29 different reports in PDF format According to the Government, there were about 10000 visits to the portal since its creation. The healthcare database is available at the Ministry of Health's 'Outpatient Clinics Analytical Reporting Portal'¹.

End of Term: Complete

The portal is functioning and on 10 June 2016 the Ministry of Health made a presentation for nine CSOs working in the health sector. According to representatives of FOICA and TIAC, also in attendance at the presentation, the website is not sufficiently user-friendly. In addition, the Ministry of Health would need to be more proactive in promoting its usage. Moreover, it is difficult to state whether complete information related to health care financing is available on the specified websites.

Did it Open Government?**Access to Information: Did Not Change**

The commitment aimed to make information on state-guaranteed health services available to public and medical professionals. According to TIAC, public awareness on existence of this tool is low. At the time of writing this report, implementation of the commitment had not brought any improvement in public access to information. Although limited information is available on the two aforementioned portals, FOICA indicates that CSOs working in health sector are not active users. The Ministry of Health does not publish statistics on primary users of the website, nor on the type of information searched.

Carried Forward?

The commitment was not carried over to the third action plan. To make the website more usable and beneficial, information would have to be available not only in PDF, but also in machine readable format. Besides, the website could also be of further utility by providing information on the number of accesses and downloads, and additional user statistics.

¹ "Outpatient Clinics Analytical Reporting Portal", Ministry of Health, accessed June 13, 2017, <https://pbf.am/public-reports.aspx>.

4. Asset and Income Declarations of High-Ranking Officials

Commitment Text:

The list of data of declarations on property and income of high-ranking officials, subject to publicity established by the Government Decision N 1835-N of December 15, 2011, does not provide a fully transparent list of all operations of property of high-ranking officials and their affiliated persons included in the declarations. In particular, those are restricted by the price thresholds of operations.

The Commission plans to reduce such restrictions and want to expand the list of available data to public and thus increase the accessibility of declarations to the public.

Ensuring transparency of declarations of property and income of the RA High-ranking officials.

Responsible Institution: The Commission on Ethics of the High-Ranking Officials (upon consent)

Supporting Institution(s): Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Finances

Start Date: November 2014 ..
2015

End Date: June

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion		Midterm		Did it Open Government?				
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
			✓		✓				✓							✓	✓				

Commitment Aim

This commitment aims to enhance transparency of the asset disclosure of high ranking public officials in Armenia. At the time of adoption of the second action plan, certain thresholds were defined for the value of owned assets to be reported. The Government committed to removing these thresholds with a goal to make more information on public officials' wealth available to public.

Status

Midterm: Complete

The progress report specified that the Government approved the decree on "making amendments to Government of Armenia Decrees №1835-N from 15 December 2011 and №1819-N from 15 December 2011" that removed the thresholds on assets and transactions to be declared by high-ranking officials. Since 2014, declarations of many high-ranking officials have been available on the website of The Ethics Commission¹.

Did it Open Government?

Access to Information: Did Not Change

Most high-ranking officials had already presented their declarations for 2015 in the revised format. However, media reported that not all declarations of high-ranking officials were available online². The media did not publish information about any new findings based on reduced thresholds.

As pointed out in the progress report, political power and economic interests tend to be closely intertwined in Armenia and the Commission of Ethics has no mandate or resources to verify the declarations or to sanction non-compliance. If the verification of declarations is not performed, high ranking officials' declaration of transactions bigger or smaller than USD20K/USD100K are rendered irrelevant. As specified above, despite Armenian media and CSOs' close monitoring of the publications of assets and income of high-ranking officials, there was no uncovering of new data following removal of thresholds.

Carried Forward?

The commitment related to the declarations of high ranking officials was carried forward in the third action plan for 2016-2018. The Government decided to improve the electronic system of asset and income declarations of high-ranking officials and individuals related to them. The commitment in the next action plan envisages publishing details of officials (subject to income disclosures) who fail to submit declarations within the time limits specified by law. It also entails ability of interactive extraction of data from the system in an open data format.

¹ The Commission on Ethics of High-Ranking Officials, accessed June 12, 2017, <http://ethics.am/en/>

² "What is the secret mark", shame.am, September 3, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2sVHsVa>. For more media reports on instances of officials' non-compliance of income declarations, see usaarmenianews.com, September 7, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2s4As8N>; Alisa Manukyan, "Shushan Upper Field", blognews.am, September 5, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2rpfShg>.

5. Broadcasting State Procurement Appeals Board sessions

Commitment Text:

The monitoring results of the organization certify that the decisions of the Procurement Appeals in many occasions give way to concerns, to address which, only making them public is not enough, and it is also necessary to indicate how they were adopted during the board sessions.

Responsible Institution: The Staff of the Government of the Republic of Armenia

Supporting Institution(s): None

Start Date: May 2014

End Date: June

2015

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion		Midterm End of term		Did it Open Government?				
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did not change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
				√		√		√		√						√			√		

Commitment Aim

The goal of this commitment is to make the Procurement Appeals Boards decisions transparent and publicly accessible. Ensuring transparency of the decision-making process could help increase public trust towards procurement system.

Status

Midterm: Complete

As of June 2015, Procurement Appeals Board sessions are regularly broadcasted online¹.

Did it Open Government?

Access to Information: Marginal

Often, the decisions of the Procurement Appeals Boards were not transparent and did not properly address the concerns of parties presenting appeals. According to the Government, due to online broadcasting of sessions of Procurement Appeals Board, the number of appeals increased significantly. According to Transparency International Anticorruption Center (TIAC) monitoring report², in first half of 2016, 69 appeals were forwarded, compared to 54 in 2015 and 48 in 2014. In 2016, 32 appeals received positive answers (24 in 2015 and 22 in 2014). TIAC report also noted that the State Procurement Appeals Board is demonstrating changes towards more accountability. However, the quality and completeness

of online broadcasting needs to improve. TIAC report mentions the cases of unauthorized individuals participating in investigations of complaints. As highlighted in the midterm progress report published by OGP IRM, online broadcasting of sessions of Appeals Board are short and, in some cases, are even limited to reading board's decisions without providing relevant details. Consequently, there are justified concerns that the part of the commitment, related to method of adopting decisions (that is, how the decisions were adopted during the Board session – as specified in the action plan), can be improved further.

Carried Forward?

The commitment is not included in the next action plan.

¹ "Electronic Government of the Republic of Armenia", e-gov.am, accessed June 12, 2017, <https://www.e-gov.am/en/>

² TIAC Report on monitoring of public procurments during 2015 and 2016 is available in Armenian at <http://bit.ly/2sVJ2GP>.

6. Community Micro-Surveys

Commitment Text:

Through short messages community residents get involved in local government decision-making process. Via short messages (SMS) community residents receive one or several questions about the community problems with variants of possible answers. Within 24 hours, residents are responding to inquiry by sending an SMS stating their preferred option. Community micro-surveys are an affordable and unique tool that will strengthen communication between the community and local self-governance bodies and will ensure the transparency in the decision-making process.

Responsible Institution: Ministry of Territorial Administration of the Republic of Armenia

Supporting Institution(s): Marz (Regional) Administrations, Communities (upon agreement)

Start Date: February 2015 ..
2016

End Date: December

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion		Midterm		Did it Open Government?				
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
			✓		✓		✓		✓					✓					✓		

Commitment Aim

Community micro-surveys were meant to strengthen communication between the community and local self-governing authorities, and to ensure transparency of locally made decisions.

Status

Midterm: Limited

At the time of writing of the midterm report, micro-surveys addressing issues deemed important for specific communities by their respective leaders, had been carried out in four out of ten communities.

End of Term: Complete

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) continues to promote Community Micro-Survey Project in different communities in Armenia¹. By the end of the action plan cycle, community micro-surveys had been carried out in nine communities², some within the framework of UNDP project. In some cases, survey results were available at SMS polling program's website³, and in others they were available at community websites. According to

UNDP, local self-governing bodies also used other means of communication (such as local media and boards) to make the community members aware of micro-survey results.

Did it Open Government?

Civic Participation: Marginal

Upon investigating the impact of micro-surveys, UNDP concluded that local self-governing authorities took the results of micro-surveys into account during decision making. The micro-survey tool is currently installed in three cluster communities that cover 17 settlements (towns and villages). It will allow residents to participate in the polls related to consolidated communities as well as small-scale issues related to villages/towns.

A CSO representative was not assigned for monitoring implementation of this commitment. It is difficult to ascertain the extent to which micro-surveys contributed in creating a meaningful channel for local community participation in decision-making process of local self-governing bodies. CSOs are not aware of government goals and intentions in this area upon completing the pilot project.

Carried Forward?

The commitment is not included in the third action plan.

¹ On 28 April, 2016, the UNDP Project Coordinator Natalya Harutyunyan presented the Community Micro-Survey Project in Shinuhayr community in Syunik Marz. Information available at <http://bit.ly/2tf7hPn>.

² Nine communities are: Ashtarak community in Aragatsotn marz, Goris community in Syunik marz, Gyumri and Aregnadem communities in Shirak marz; Eghvard, Byureghavan, Khasakh, Jrvezh and Arzakan communities in Kotayk marz.

³ Community micro-survey results are available in Armenian at <http://smspolling.org/>

7. State Policies and Legislative Reforms

Commitment Text:

Independent research results show that the managing process of the Republic of Armenia public agencies sometimes has an informal nature because of the perception of the fundamental values of open governance and legal problems. This gives rise to public mistrust and civic apathy towards the country's governance and oversight. Therefore, the issue of the formation of the efficient, transparent and accountable civil society is necessary in the process of policy and legislative amendments.

Making amendments in the agenda of the boards/councils of Ministries of the RA established by the protocol decision N 47 of November 20, 2008 of the RA government decision, that will:

1. Separate and clarify the functions of boards and councils, will further specify the list of participants, their rights and responsibilities,
2. Define open and transparent formation procedures and activities of councils, as well as the standards of CSO representation and professional qualification,
3. Determine the introduction of electronic accountability system on the official websites of the RA Government and Ministries for making transparent and available the public proposals and official comments thereon, the annual reports of participatory and consultative bodies.

Responsible Institution: Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Armenia

Supporting Institution(s): None

Start Date: August 2014
2015

End Date: August

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion		Midterm		Did it Open Government?				
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not started	Limited	End of term		Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
															Substantial	Completed					
			✓			✓			✓					✓				✓			

Commitment Aim

This commitment aims to promote public participation in policy development by including CSOs in the consultative bodies of governmental agencies. The Government set a goal to come up with a transparent mechanism of engaging CSOs in policy dialogue to address the issue of mistrust and civic apathy towards governance and oversight in Armenia.

Status

Midterm: Substantial

By July 2015 the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) presented the draft regulation regarding the rules governing the functioning of public councils. Civil society was invited to comment on the draft.

End of Term: Complete

Representatives of the NGO Araza and the Freedom of Information Center of Armenia actively participated in discussions around the draft regulation. On 26 November 2015, adopted the rules on the functioning of public councils adjacent to each ministry.

As of the December 2016, some ministries created Public Councils¹, while others are still in the process of establishment of such councils. According to monitoring conducted by Araza, as of late November 2016, 13 out of 18 Ministries had created the Public Councils; one ministry was in the process of creation, one did not create owing to insufficient number of applications from CSOs, and three did not create Public Councils. Among the 13 Ministries that created Public Councils, three had not conducted any sessions. Araza also highlighted that on ministry websites, it is difficult to find information on Public Councils or on the minutes of their sessions.

Did it Open Government?

Civic Participation: Marginal

The government viewed the establishment of Public Councils as an effective instrument for engaging CSOs in policy development and discussion. Araza, an NGO which cooperated with the government on implementation of this commitment, considered the development as substantial and the MOJ to be cooperative. According to Araza, the change in attitude of different ministries is discernible and could be noticed while working on the draft of the third OGP national action plan. Araza also indicated that the creation of public councils elevates expectations from CSOs by strengthening their capacity to engage in meaningful discussions.

However, Araza also pointed out that implementation of this commitment highlighted certain problems. Specifically, it noted that the Government did not carry out public awareness raising campaign. CSOs' lack of interest was characterized by a deficit of trust and motivation owing to the belief that Public Councils would be assigned formal roles, thereby minimizing CSOs' influence in decision making. Ambiguity on roles of CSOs is another challenge that affects proper implementation of this commitment.”

Carried Forward?

The commitment is not included in the third action plan.

¹ See, for example, the information on the Public Council created by following ministries: Ministry of Health available at <http://bit.ly/2smEXyk>; Ministry of Education and Science available at <http://bit.ly/2sW9ekg>; Ministry of Culture at <http://bit.ly/2rcw4mS>; Ministry of Labor and Social Issues at <http://bit.ly/2smHCrV>.

8. Public Awareness on the Lawmaking Activity of State Governance Bodies

Commitment Text:

The draft legal acts are being developed by the RA agencies about which the public is sometimes not sufficiently informed. As a result, the public does not have the opportunity to get acquainted with the draft versions until their adoption, as well as to propose recommendations to responsible agencies, and thus to contribute to the amendment process.

4. General online forum for the publication of draft normative legal acts developed by the government agencies to inform the public about the normative legal acts being developed by the agencies (including, by a subscription principle). The civil society will be given the opportunity to propose recommendations on the draft versions, as well as be informed about their status (i.e. whether it has been adopted or not, how it is edited, as well as the justification for non-adoption).

Responsible Institution: Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Armenia

Supporting Institution(s): None

Start Date: August 2014
2016

End Date: December

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion		Midterm End of term		Did it Open Government?				
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
			✓		✓				✓				✓				✓				

Commitment Aim

This commitment aims to create an online forum for the publication of draft normative legal acts developed by the government agencies. The new website was intended to allow multiple users to access the database of draft legislation and leave their comments and recommendations.

Status

Midterm: Limited

At the time of writing of the midterm report, the online forum for the publication of draft normative acts was not available and the MOJ was negotiating with the World Bank for financial support to create an online forum.

End of Term: Substantial

The Government initiated changes to the Government decree №296 from 2010, which regulates public hearings of drafts of normative legal acts. Authorities responsible for developing the drafts should invite stakeholders to public hearings, through announcements on their websites as well as the unified website of the drafts of legal acts of the MOJ. Information on the place, time, dates, subjects, and the type of discussion as well as deadlines for submission of applications to participate in the hearings could also be published. During implementation of this commitment, MOJ actively cooperated with Araza.

At the time of finalizing this report (January 2017), the website was available in test mode¹. Originally the Government planned to present the website on 1 December 2016, but later postponed the launch date. On 28 December 2016, the MOJ organized a training course on practical use of e-draft.am for government officials of different state organizations². The portal was tested by all ministries³. According to MOJ, website was functional on 24 January 2017 (past action plan deadline) when it organized the training on launch and application of platform for draft publication⁴. Officials from 18 Ministries, 8 agencies and the Central Bank of Armenia participated in two trainings.

Did it Open Government?

Access to Information: Did Not Change

The Armenian public and CSO community were neither sufficiently informed about legal acts developed by different ministries and agencies, nor provided an opportunity to comment or contribute. The online forum was meant to create channel for publishing draft normative acts. Since the online forum is not yet functioning, there have been no changes in improving access to information.

The Government resolution №296, that regulates process of public hearings, refers to draft “laws”. One needs to see whether the portal will be used for public discussions of all normative legal acts or only select ones.

Carried Forward?

The commitment is not included in the next action plan.

9. Transparency of secondary education institutions' Governing Boards elections and annual budget planning

Commitment Text:

The representation nature of the governing boards of the RA general education institutions (SNCOs) is sometimes violated, because there are cases when in the Governing Board a parent, who is meanwhile a pedagogue of the institution, is being elected. In such a case, the parent cannot be impartial, because, he/she besides being a pedagogue, also works under the management of the institutions' director. In this case, Governing Board is not able to operate efficiently because of the vertical and the horizontal ties existing between the members.

For the purpose of ensuring proportionality among the Governing Boards of the RA general education institutions, an amendment will be done to the procedure of the election to the Governing Board, according to which persons who are involved in the given school's pedagogical staff will not be nominated.

Quite often the information on the annual budget planning and execution of the RA general education institutions is not available to the people receiving educational services of the general secondary education sector, which has a negative impact on the confidence-building environment and parent-school effective cooperation.

Making amendments to the election procedure of the Governing Board of the RA general secondary education institutions,

Ensuring transparency and accountability of the budget planning of the general education services (annual draft budget) and annual financial expenses on the web pages of secondary schools and in the corner of the announcement boards.

Responsible Institution: Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia

Ministry of Territorial Administration of the Republic of Armenia

Supporting Institution(s): None

Start Date: August 2014 ...
2015

End Date: March

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion		Midterm		Did it Open Government?				
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
			✓			✓	✓		✓						✓			✓			
															✓						

Commitment Aim

This commitment aims to increase transparency in the election of school boards, as well as in the annual school budget planning process.

Status

Midterm: Complete

At the time of writing of the midterm report, the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) issued an order to regulate a pilot process of planning of the annual school budgets and the presentation of annual budget execution report. As specified in the midterm progress report, MES established a working group¹ to guide the process of implementation of the commitment. The working group conducted meeting at the beginning, in which members presented their visions on issues and took decisions on organizing the work. The working group did not keep minutes of the meetings. Opinions and drafts of the documents were shared via e-mail. As a result of discussions and consultations, the MES approved two regulations: the first brought an amendment to the formation of school councils², and the second regulation approved the procedures of planning annual budget of schools and the presentation of annual budget execution report.

Did it Open Government?

Civic Participation: Marginal

Public Accountability: Did Not change

Governing Boards of schools in Armenia are not always fully representative, and often there is lack of information on the annual budget preparation and its execution. The Government set an objective to improve the election procedures of the Governing Boards of the schools and ensure transparency and accountability of their financial management. Improvements of selection procedure will give the public more opportunities to participate in governance of schools by disallowing teachers with children studying at same school from representing parents on the Governing Board. Thus, more parents who have not been employed at school will get opportunity to be represented.

The first part of the commitment is related to information on planning and executing the annual budget of general education institutions. The MES placed an order to regulate the planning of schools' annual budgets and the presentation of annual budget execution report. The second part of this commitment refers to formation of councils of schools. The procedures of forming school councils is regulated by the order of the MES³. The Councils must be comprised of eight members: representatives of MES, the Marzpets⁴ or the Mayor of Yerevan, councils of teachers and councils of parents. Government bodies and the school managements (selected by a government body) appointed six out of eight councils member. CSOs believe that current structure is not conducive to impartial governance by school councils. The revision prohibits school teachers (who, according to CSOs, are controlled by school management) from representing in the councils as parents even if they have children studying in the said school.

According to the Open Society Foundation Armenia (OSF), changes initiated by the MES under this commitment fail to go far enough. The document regulating elections of boards does not address some important issues, proportionality being one of them. Whereas, the document regulating the procedure of the annual budget planning and report on expenses was at probation phase until the end of 2015-2016 school year. After completion and finalization of its probation results, the document will have to pass official procedure of registration at the Ministry of Justice to become a normative document for schools. According

to OSF, the MES does not have required information on effectiveness of the regulation's implementation.

According to Freedom of Information Center of Armenia (FOICA), the CSO community is not aware of the impact brought by the changes in regulation, nor of the actions taken by schools. Actual implementation and enforcement of regulation will require time as well as monitoring on part of the MES and the CSO community. The MES advised the Government to include the regulation of planning of the annual budget and reporting on expenditures of secondary schools in the exemplary charter of the "General Education Institution of the Republic of Armenia".

Carried Forward?

The commitment is not included in the next action plan. To improve transparency of management and spending, schools could regularly publish their financial reports.

¹ The Order of the Minister of Education and Science №205-A/Q, on 30 March 2015, approved the regulation on planning of the annual budget of general educational institutions and preparation of annual expenditure report.

² The Order of the Minister of Education and Science №102-N, approved on 24 February 2015, was related to making additions and amendments to the Order of the Minister of Education and Science №113-N adopted on 18 March 2010.

³ The Order of the Minister of Education and Science №113-N18, adopted March 2010, involved approval of Regulation of Formation of Collegial Management Bodies, Councils of the Republic of Armenia "public general educational institution", state non-commercial organizations.

⁴ The regional governors appointed by the Government of Armenia.

10. Freedom of Information and Anti-Corruption Training

Commitment Text:

At present, many state servants do not possess enough knowledge and skills in the sphere of fight against corruption and of freedom of information to act openly and transparently. The recommendation will help bridge the gap of information and knowledge of the officials.

Knowledge of 200 public servants on the fight against corruption, integrity and freedom of information will be improved, as well as the skills on the application of legislation on the freedom of information. The trainings will help the public servants to work openly and transparently, guided by the ethics rules for public servants.

Responsible Institution: Ministry of Territorial Administration of the Republic of Armenia

Supporting Institution(s): Civil Service Council of the Republic of Armenia

Start Date: August 2014
2016

End Date: December

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion		Midterm		Did it Open Government?					
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding	
			√		Unclear					√				√				√				

Commitment Aim

The commitment intends to provide training to civil servants in the areas of freedom of information and the fight against corruption.

Status

Midterm: Limited

In April 2014, in cooperation with Freedom of Information Center CSO (FOICA), the Civil Service Council of Armenia started conducting trainings for civil servants on “Freedom of information and strengthening of public relations in public administration”.

End of Term: Substantial

At the time of writing this report, FOICA carried out a specialized training of 60 civil servants on issues related to freedom of information. The Ministry of Territorial Administration organizes regular general trainings of community servants. Among other topics, such trainings also allocate time for addressal of issues related to corruption (8 hours) and freedom of information (2 hours). According to the Government, during 2014-2015, more than 3700 community servants, mayors and members of community councils, and

employees of Marzpetaran participated in general trainings. These trainings are more of generic nature and only partly cover topics highlighted in the commitment, that is, freedom of information and fight against corruption. CSO representative was not assigned for monitoring the implementation of this commitment within the framework of general trainings conducted for civil/public servants.

Did it Open Government?

Access to Information: Did Not Change

Civic Participation: Did Not Change

Public Accountability: Did Not Change

The Government of Armenia recognized the fact that many civil servants lack necessary knowledge and skills in the fields of fight against corruption and freedom of information. The commitment aimed at addressing this gap. However, there is no publicly available evidence on the level of any changes as a result of the aforementioned trainings. It is also unclear if the questionnaires from the trainings were completed and analysed in a thorough manner, to help adapt future government trainings.

Carried Forward?

The commitment is not included in the next action plan.

11. Transparency of Local Self-Government Bodies

Commitment Text:

Some large communities of Armenia have websites, others not, they are being updated on a quite irregular basis, LSG decisions are being published not on all websites (decisions of Community Council, orders of the community heads) or they are being published partially. The awareness raising on public discussions, hearings, sessions of the Community Council is being done improperly. The sessions of the Community Council is being broadcasted online only in the cities of Vanadzor and Gyumri, and even in some communities because of the lack of sufficient space for halls it is sometimes impossible to ensure the participation of all interested persons in the sessions of the Community Council.

The creation and update of internet pages, the publication of all legal acts adopted by the community authorities, the notification about the sessions of the Community Council, public discussions and hearings, as well as the online broadcasting of the sessions of Community Council will be ensured for the communities of Armenia with the population of 20, 000 and more.

Responsible Institution: Ministry of Territorial Administration of the Republic of Armenia

Supporting Institution(s): Marzpetarans (regional administrations) of the Republic of Armenia

Start Date: August 2014
2016

End Date: April

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion		Midterm End of term		Did it Open Government?				
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
				✓		✓					✓			✓				✓			

Commitment Aim

This commitment aims to provide better access to information on public discussions and hearings of Community Councils by creating and updating of websites and broadcasting online sessions.

Status

Midterm: Limited

At the time of writing of midterm report, most communities had not acquired the equipment necessary for online broadcasting (cameras, microphones, etc.). Out of seventeen communities, only four were broadcasting sessions of Elders Councils, with one of them not broadcasting the sessions regularly.

End of Term: Limited

According to the self-assessment report, as of June 2016, 17 communities have begun receiving equipment to broadcast their council meetings. The report does not mention how many websites were created and whether decisions passed by the councils have been made available.

As of late December 2016, within the framework of 'Development of Civic Youth Centers' programs funded by Open Society Foundations, Armenia Journalists' Club "Asparez" monitored operational transparency of 17 local self-governing bodies with regards to following: opportunities for citizens to be present during the sessions of Elderly Councils or for getting information through other channels of communication.

The monitoring revealed that seven communities, namely, Yerevan, Gyumri, Ejmiatsin, Kapan, Hrazdan, Ararat, and Gavar, broadcasted sessions of Elderly Councils. Out of seven communities specified above, Ararat broadcasted only one session.

Lack of advance announcements on upcoming live broadcasts of Elderly Council sessions emerged as a problem. The monitoring report concluded that authorities in several local self-governing bodies failed to relay appropriate information (time, date and draft agenda) on upcoming sessions of Elderly Council, making viewership impossible and rendering broadcasts meaningless.

Did it Open Government?

Access to Information: Did Not Change

The public has not been properly informed on discussions, hearings and sessions of Community Councils. In some communities, there is no possibility to ensure participation of interested parties due to lack of adequate space. Online broadcasting of sessions of Community Councils can help solve the problem in part. However, according to information obtained at the time of writing this report, no new community had started online broadcasting of sessions.

Carried Forward?

The commitment is not included in the third action plan.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

Commitments are clustered based on the original OGP action plan. This report is based on a desk review of governmental programmes, draft laws and regulations, governmental decrees, a review of the government's self-assessment report, analysis of the commitments, information available on www.ogp.am, minutes of OGP working group meetings, as well as on monitoring the process of elaboration of the Second Action Plan.

The IRM researcher conducted a meeting and discussion with the GOA contact person, Mr. Aram Asatryan. The IRM researcher also had meetings, telephone discussions and e-mail correspondence with government employees, CSO representatives that were most active in the implementation and monitoring of the OGP commitments, and with the representatives of international organizations.

Artak Kyurumyan is an independent researcher with experience in public policy and administration. He has worked for the Ministry of Finance of Armenia. He holds a Masters in Engineering from the American University of Armenia (1995) and an MBA from Tulane University (2003).

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism assesses development and implementation of national action plans to foster dialogue among stakeholders and improve accountability.

