

OGP Civil Society Steering Committee Retreat

Draft Participant List

Civil Society Steering Committee Members

Alejandro Gonzalez	GESOC
Manish Bapna	World Resources Institute (WRI)
Mark Robinson	World Resources Institute (WRI) (<i>second for Manish Bapna</i>)
Martin Tisne	Transparency and Accountability Initiative
Muhammad Ilham Bahajio	Transparency International Indonesia (<i>second for Sugeng</i>)
Mukelani Dimba	Open Democracy Advice Centre (ODAC)
Nathaniel Heller	Results for Development
Veronica Cretu	Open Government Institute
Warren Krafchik	International Budget Partnership

Government Representatives (Session 3 only)

Deputy Minister Ayanda	Deputy Minister of Public Service and Administration, Government of South Africa
Qinisile Delwa	Department of Public Service and Administration, Government of South Africa

Open Government Partnership Support Unit

Alonso Cerdan	Support Unit (select sessions)
Dietlind Lerner	Support Unit (select sessions)
Joe Foti	Support Unit (select sessions)
Joe Powell	Support Unit
Kitty von Bertele	Support Unit (select sessions)
Paul Maassen	Support Unit
Sangita Sigdyaal	Support Unit (select sessions)
Sanjay Pradhan	Support Unit (select sessions)
Tonu Basu	Support Unit

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Key Points of Discussion and Action Items

MONDAY February 22, 2016 | Strategic Priorities: Vision and Action

Session 1: Setting the Agenda

The Co-Chairs highlighted the tremendous opportunities and challenges that lay in front of OGP - with increased government engagement and thinking around transparency and accountability, alongside global conversations such as the Sustainable Development Goals. The group also discussed the challenges that lay ahead in the realm of global policy.

Within this global context, a few key priorities were flagged. These included:

- Need to create wider civil society engagement within OGP – both in numbers and issues and explore the link between OGP and other agendas (anti-corruption, climate, SDGs etc).
- On the government side, need to focus on (re-)engagement and accountability on OGP of the ministerial level
- Emphasis on documentation and dissemination of stories of impact and inspiration.

Session 2: Leadership Transition: Opportunities and Considerations

This session focused on the leadership transitions that are in the pipeline for OGP's governance structure, including new Co-Chairs, and new membership of the Steering Committee, and a new CEO.

Civil Society

Paul provided an update on the long list of candidates nominated for the civil society Steering Committee. The list of 47 candidates provides a good mix in terms of regional and gender diversity - roughly 50% of the list consisted of women candidates and there were 13 nominations each from Asia-Pacific, Europe, and the Americas and 8 from Africa. The next steps on this process entailed the preparation of a shortlist by the Selection Committee, followed by a round of interviews. 6 candidates will be recruited in total, by the end of April, 2 to start immediately and 4 at UNGA (September).

Governments

The elections for the government SC members is in July, with the new members scheduled to join at UNGA (September). Options to succeed France as chair are Georgia, Croatia, Romania and Chile.

New CEO

The conversation then turned to what Sanjay Pradhan's short and medium priorities should entail as he assumes his new role. Some of those flagged included stronger emphasis on communication; documenting stories of impact; re-engage senior political leaders in key countries as well as civil society

leaders; get the OGP Trust Fund up and running and revisiting roles of Support Unit and Steering Committee.

Session 3: Big Picture: Looking Ahead 2016 - 2018

Alejandro introduced the session, outlining the priorities of the Co-Chairs, highlighting that this was the first effort of its kind when the civil society and government Chairs had jointly worked to identify priorities and vision for the next two years. In addition to the thematic priorities, which include Parliaments, subnational, SDGs, access to justice, he also talked about reviving ministerial participation in OGP countries and development of ambitious commitments in the current NAP cycle to be key strategy priorities for the Steering Committee.

Deputy Minister Ayanda Dlodlo (South Africa) joined the civil society SC for this particular session. She reiterated that this effort was not just focused on development of joint priorities, but also to enhance the collaboration between government and civil society. She touched on South Africa's efforts to expand the OGP base in the African continent through approaches including introduction to the pan-African Parliament, as well as other regional bodies. She also expanded on South Africa's focus on legislatures, and it being one of the key themes for the Africa Regional Meeting. Lastly, she emphasized the importance of forging partnerships with NGOs operating at the local level, as opposed to large, well-resourced organizations alone in order to make civil society engagement within OGP both representative and relevant.

Thereafter, Joe Powell and Paul Maassen provided updates based on the SU/IRM workplan. Joe outlined the following areas as strategic priorities:

- **Ambitious commitments:** The consultation and drafting processes for the 50+ countries submitting National Action Plans this summer. Steering Committee members can provide invaluable guidance and expertise - based on their own experience and work of their respective organizations. The Support Unit will support governments and civil society organizations in the 50+ OGP countries which are producing new national action plans in 2016 to make ambitious and relevant open government reform commitments, including on the Sustainable Development Goals agenda. 10-15 countries will be prioritised for in depth support, to raise ambition levels and impact.
- **Better co-creation:** Strengthening national processes to ensure more meaningful consultation and engagement, including institutionalizing a forum for permanent dialogue between government and civil society on the OGP process.

Following this, Paul outlined a few perspectives, as aired by civil society colleagues across regions. These were drawn from communication to the SU as well as exchanged at forums such as the OGP Civil Society Leaders' Workshop organized in January 2016 and the 2015 OGP Civil Society Survey. Some of the perspectives included:

- Overall, the 2015 Survey tells is that civil society partners involved at the national level are happy with the OGP process and the potential for change it has, but less so on actual delivery.

There is a risk of early OGP adopters – both national and international – disengaging if the return-on-investment for them doesn't improve.

- Civil society colleagues stressed on the importance of OGP to get better at showing impact. Both in terms of getting better at capturing and telling the stories, but also in having plans that include more meaningful reforms that resonate with country needs.
- There is a conflicting message when it comes to plans resonating with priorities. The 2015 civil society survey has positive numbers from the 600+ respondents if it comes to plans including their priorities. Still, in conversation – and at Forums like the summit – we consistently hear that the plans need to resonate better with the big issues countries face: corruption, impunity, immigration, public services etc.
- Some civil society colleagues cautioned us about loudly praising OGP “successes” and ask for a bit more modesty - both in terms of real reform but also in balancing praise and critique. Civil society applauded us at the time of introduction for the response policy but want to still see OGP deliver on its promise that it will hold the feet to the fire for those that don't deliver in general and especially those that undermine the OGP values. The community wants to see their struggles inside and outside OGP more clearly acknowledged if it comes to civic space and real participation. There is a clear ask to further improve the mechanism of OGP – especially the consultation guidelines and the sticks for non-compliance.
- Broadening the base of actors informed is crucial to make OGP endure - not just on the civil society side but equally on the government side where there often is a small base. Elections or re-assignment of PoC pose big risks to national processes. We have a strategy for broadening the base on civil society side but might need to do more thinking on government side. On civil society side this includes not just bringing in more coalitions and networks (on which SU can lead) but also stimulating countries to be smart and creative in bringing more grassroots and direct citizen voices.
- Internationally, OGP is keen to keep innovating and run ahead with new issues that energize and inspire. While that may help with broadening the base, we do need to realize that the pace at country level in most countries is slower and the work harder to get the basics of OGP right. On a related note, although we like to position OGP as a delivery mechanism for the SDGs, in our conversations with many actors of the ground we found that SDGs is not yet a core issue that they want to push for in the national action plans. Some of the issue they raised were related thematic issues such as education, justice, fiscal transparency - something to keep in mind when we frame and communicate OGP strategy around SDGs.
- In summary: a clear ask for showing more impact, improving the mechanism – and compliance - further, broadening the base, together demonstrating OGP is more than a promise and positive spin but really a sustainable platform for reform.

Other questions and issues that were raised included:

OGP looking ahead: resources, capacity, opportunity

- How to strike a balance a balance between growing the partnership in terms of countries, and deepening engagement on issues and delivering stronger action plans for existing members?
- On a related note, is the current OGP Support Unit operating model optimized to deliver - and what is the right fit and scale for country support?
- How can the existing travel of the SC members be used more strategically? How can we encourage the new crop of civil society SC members to be strong OGP advocates in their regions?
- In terms of creating actual impact, what issues should OGP focus on in its next five years?
- How can we develop a body of evidence on how open government can help deliver on a broader set of development goals - and share this with the wider public and political leadership?
- How can we engage the private sector?
- What should the goal of peer learning and support be? Do the existing Working Groups support these goals enough? If not, what are the changes that are needed or alternatives we have?

Country level engagement

- How can OGP think about sustained representation and engagement at the country level? A small secretariat and now 70 countries make regular contact with the SC and the SU a challenge. More support might help strengthen and speed up the national process.
- Is there space to pilot more formal models of OGP presence in-country - for example testing the need or viability of having OGP chapters or units - that could be the nodal group for all OGP-related activities in country?
- In thinking about strengthening forums for permanent dialogue at the national level, what can the SC and SU do to build capacity (of both civil society and government)? Revising guidelines alone might not be enough.
- How can we think of leveraging and guiding political leadership - and work with civil society to do so - balancing the “inside game” (co-creating) and “outside game” (advocating)?

Content and form of National Action Plans

- Since there is a growing concern about the implementation of commitments, should the Support Unit encourage countries to adopt fewer commitments?
- On Parliaments - what can civil society SC members do in a focused manner to further open up parliaments? Where can their attention and capacity be best used? On a related note, how can legislative Action Plans be aligned with country Action Plans? what role can the civil society SC play in strengthening that alignment?

Session 4: Identifying must-haves for 2016 Summit and OGP Fifth Anniversary

Ideas for UNGA (September

- High-level support and collaboration with governments

- How to engage civil society?
 - Create excitement and focus on knowledge/awareness on how OGP helps tackle real issues - creation and promotion of tools and networks to enhance the impact you're having (as peers and decision-makers).
- Program focus/design
 - Theme: Looking to the future - the future of open government, what are we moving to? or OGP for the people? How we're relevant and what we have to offer.
 - Share a vision for scaling open government and OGP.
 - Provide an incentive for concrete impact stories that the leaders could include in their comments - such as the most interesting example of how OGP has helped you.
- Partnerships/ participation
 - Invite 1-2 of civil society leaders that can speak authoritatively on declining civic space

Ideas for the Global Summit (December)

- High-level support and collaboration with governments
 - France could help bring a number of new Francophone governments (or announce joining).
- How to engage civil society?
 - How can OGP in Paris - be measurably different Mexico, UK? Festival of ideas/ OGP theater/culture/literature - move beyond panels.
 - Who are the prominent speakers/ star performers we'd want to have? Who are the people who're outside the usual suspects who can challenge some core ideas and bring in new ones?
 - Work across silos created between thematic issues and the open government movement.
 - Link to the agendas in the summits of other thematic issues and create excitement around open government as a tool - and bring their key issues into the Global Summit.
- Program focus/design
 - What's the vein that runs through Summit and UNGA? If we want to ensure reigniting momentum? How can the design speak to that?
- Partnerships/ participation
 - Involve new issues/organizations
 - Involve the OGP Ambassadors
 - Get senior European leaders to attend
 - Open up parts of the Summit to Parisians to get a broader community of people excited about these issues.

Cross-cutting/ Communications

- Communicate at the country-level. Increase visibility of these two events. Have country events prior to events.
- Explore possibilities of enabling remote joining - for key sessions.
- Involve Mayors from OGP countries or those who will be part of the new subnational pilot programme.

Session 5: Making priorities concrete: Priority Issue Subnational

Nathaniel, Mark and the Support Unit updated the group about the subnational pilot. There has been a lot of interest in both the pioneers' and leaders' tiers, from subnational governments and civil society organisations and academics.

The group was asked for their input on how to effectively mobilize civil society in the places that are selected to be part of the pioneers' tier and what types of activities would be most useful among the broader network.

In discussion the group reiterated the opportunity the pilot offered to test how the IRM could support accountability for open government commitments in subnational governments. They also suggested it would be useful to create a guide to commitments that are happening in subnational governments and those that relate to subnational governments within national action plans. In particular it would be helpful to highlight what types of reforms are happening locally that are not so common nationally.

The group were keen that OGP capitalizes on the interest in this program and that when subnational governments are applying or civil society groups want to be involved, they are encouraged and that we take the opportunity to help legitimize their work. They also discussed the possibility of a bootcamp with newly involved civil society organizations to make sure they understand all the opportunities OGP offers their work. They decided that should happen in 2017 but that it could be announced as an offer at UNGA or the Paris Summit.



SESSION 6: Making priorities concrete: Priority Issue Parliaments

The group agreed that the objective and strategy around the legislative Action Plans needs to be owned by the SU and SC, driven by the SC, as opposed to external partner organizations. In this context, the question that needs to be addressed is what specific role the civil society SC should play in these conversations. The following actions were agreed upon as next steps:

- Mukelani will be the civil society SC lead for Parliaments, liaising with the Co-Chairs and the Legislative Openness Working Group. He will engage other SC members on next steps.
- SU, will work with the SC, to develop a set of guiding principles (set of minimum requirements) - presenting them to Criteria and Standards - for countries that are working on legislative Action Plans.
- Thereafter, SU will assist in the framing of a rational and options memo to inform the way forward. This will be presented to the Steering Committee in May.
- SC members, led by Mukelani to explore the role that the civil society SC wants to play with regard to this issue.

TUESDAY February 23, 2016 | Strengthening the Partnership

SESSION 1: Making priorities concrete: Priority Issue SDGs

The group highlighted some key issues to consider when thinking about positioning OGP as a key platform for implementation and monitoring of the Global Goals. These include:

- How can the civil society SC members paint a broader vision on how OGP could be central to the delivery of the SDGs?
- In the context of a high-level political forum around creating a global accountability mechanism around the SDGs, how can the role of OGP be positioned?
- While the SC and SU have both initiated efforts to build capacity within countries on leveraging the National Action Plans for SDG-implementation, it is likely to be a slow process that may take a couple of cycles to reach some scale. Important to note is that making the SDGs concrete themselves might take another 1-2 years.

Thereafter, the Support Unit shared the kinds of activities it had completed or is in the process of completing on the SDGs :

- Developed a special SDGs edition of the Open Government Guide that was launched at the Global Summit in Mexico. The guide is a resource for governments and civil society and provides practical ideas for commitments that tackle SDGs.
- Written to OGP ministers welcoming their endorsement of the declaration and encouraging commitments to advance SDGs in new action plans. The SDGs-edition of the Open Government Guide was sent to all government contacts to help them think of commitments to include in their action plans.
- Talking directly to POCs developing new action plans to encourage SDGs-related commitments in action plans and connecting them with resources where needed.
- Held planning sessions with key partners (World Bank, OGP Working Groups, Open Contracting Partnership, IBP, etc.) emphasizing OGP's strategic push on SDGs and asking partners to encourage SDGs-related commitments with their civil society/government networks in countries.
- Drafting a letter to the UNSG signed by the co-chairs to highlight opportunities between OGP and UN on the SDGs agenda.
- Reaching out to global networks and coalitions (such as Oxfam, Restless Development, Save the Children, World Vision, and others), and showcasing the potential of OGP as a platform for implementation and accountability on the SDGs. This will include identifying issues being surfaced at preliminary national level consultations taking place related to SDGs, and matching that need/interest with expertise/local networks galvanized via these networks and coalitions.
- Attempting to raise awareness among national-level coalitions to think of integrating service delivery issues (like water, education, health) - related to the different SDG goals - into their National Action Plans.

- Introducing civil society groups at the country level to tools such as the Open Gov Guide as well as others developed by OGP partners, which will help them develop ambitious commitments on the different goals.
- Providing civil society actors on the ground with information on which of their respective governments have signed on to the OGP SDGs Declarations so they can use it as an entrypoint for dialogue to advocate for SDG-related commitments.

The group discussed some of the key issue areas or groups to engage in this conversation. OGP is well-placed to engage with service-delivery organizations, in particular reaching them through partnerships with global networks/coalitions as well as country-based advocacy organizations. Another important suggestion was to engage with organizations working on issue areas that have large public expenditure component to them.

On the question of OGP's scope of intervention, one perspective was to use Goal 16 as a point of entry in the first phase and then scale up to emphasize capacity building and resources to include other goals. The other perspective was to not confine OGP's sphere of work to Goal 16, but use the SDGs conversation to widen OGP's reach and engagement with other goals and related issue areas.

SESSION 2: Global Civil Society Concerns and SC Response(s)

On consultation guidelines

While the original guidelines were a good starting point to get countries thinking about how they should approach consultation, as the partnership has grown with new countries and political context being in the mix, these guidelines need revision if we really want them to (continue) driving high quality consultations. The SU/IRM has taken steps to make them concrete, however there are some inherent flaws in the guidelines:

- The consultation guidelines mainly focus on drafting - they don't really touch on implementation and monitoring. If there are guidelines they should touch on all 3 phases of the OGP process.
- The current guidelines focus more on information sharing than on co-creation - it doesn't help incentivize or guide countries towards more robust dialogue processes.

On eligibility criteria

The current eligibility criteria do not push countries towards higher ambition or quality in terms of their OGP commitments. Second, issues like civic space are not adequately considered in the current metrics (the EIU metric does not take into account various issues of civic space or human rights). The group highlighted that there was possibly no single dataset that measured the complex notion of civic space; rather than relying on a single dataset, it might be well worth considering combining multiple data sources together (a bit along the lines of the T/AI work on this). It was also discussed that OGP could consider an explicit civic space/HR check (based on multiple datasources) as a supplement to the eligibility criteria.

The group agreed that the upcoming OGP midterm review would be the appropriate process to assess the effectiveness of the eligibility criteria - and if alternatives are available, as well as to study how countries would compare if measured against other datasets out there as opposed to the ones currently used under the OGP eligibility criteria. Such an assessment would need to cover the following issues:

- Do the existing sources of data adequately capture the vision of OGP? Are the best data sources to represent/relate to the core principles of the OGP Declaration?
- Specifically, how should civic space be treated?
- What is the relationship between existing criteria and ambition?
- What are some of the other datasets out there that we should consider using in assessing eligibility?

SC engagement and communication

Civil society colleagues around the world (as well as in some instances, governments) have articulated that they want to see more engagement from the SC and that there was room to make SC functioning more transparent and accessible to the community. The current chairs have already made concrete suggestions.

The question addressed by the group was whether they should explore changes to the ways of working (such as more refined communications strategy) or whether they should fundamentally look at the nature of the relationship between the larger community and civil society SC members (e.g. frequency, channels, strategy). One suggestion was to revisit civil society SC selection as part of the 5-year review - and examine models implemented by different platforms out there, ranging from voting to having country chapters.

SESSION 3: Strategy for Criteria and Standards and Civic Space in 2016 (including Azerbaijan and Hungary)

Civil society SC representatives on the Criteria and Standards sub-committee provided updates on where the process was at with regard to the cases involving Azerbaijan, Hungary, and Turkey. They discussed the difference in substance with respect to the potential “inactive” status for Azerbaijan, as opposed to a country like Turkey where it is primarily a compliance issue (with process requirements). It was highlighted that given the difference in cases, the countries would need to fulfill different sets of conditions to become active again. The expectations of the community as well as the credibility of OGP were also discussed. More details on these cases in the minutes from the Criteria & Standards meeting.