OGP Civil Society Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

February 28, 2020 | Berlin, Germany

Participants: María Baron, Asma Cherifi, Glynnis Cummings-John, Helen Darbishire, Aidan Eyakuze (remote), Delia Ferreira Rubio, Robin Hodess, Giorgi Kldiashvili, Tur-Od Lkhagvajav, José Marín, Lucy McTernan, Marion Mondain, Elisa Peter, Jameela Raymond, Zuzana Wienk
Support Unit: Paul Maassen, Maia Koytcheva

The Civil Society Steering Committee met on 28. February in Berlin to discuss and agree on a set of OGP strategic priorities for the next three years from a civil society (SC) perspective. The retreat was aimed at strengthening the CS SC role as civil society representatives in the Steering Committee, as well as the role of CSOs working on the ground in every OGP country.

The agenda for the day is included as Annex 1.

The following notes are clustered thematically and a table of action points is included to assist structured follow-up.

(CS) SC Mandate, Roles, and Expectations[1]

The cohort debated various issues related to a lack of clarity on their mandate, the role of CS SC within the SC, as well as the relationship between the (CS) SC and the Support Unit (SU). A review of the mandate and roles was suggested in line with OGP's 10th anniversary, as well as the option to consider team building and coaching activities.

- In the past, parity between the CS SC and the government counterparts was a point of concern. It was noted that this was perhaps a smaller issue following the successful Berlin SC meeting, despite the notable absence of some and inactive participation of others . However, the cohort requested clearer and more timely communication from the SU, especially on matters that either affect them or where they might be able to help (i.e. absence France/South Africa, coordination around Guatemala, advocacy around SC membership). This relates both to the need for improved communication between SC and SU, the need to address some frustration on both sides stemming from, for example, some unclarity or disagreement on roles and mandate. It was suggested to use the OGP@10 momentum to also have a process to openly discuss and revisit the governance structure as well as roles and responsibilities of SU and SC.
- Some cohort members expressed a desire to be more closely involved in OGP regional planning processes, activities and events and to be able to reach out to government Points of Contact directly. The SU noted that a list of all OGP Points of Contact is publicly available. Further options to improve communication around regional activities will be developed and presented by the SU.
- It was suggested that even though the Articles of Governance are very detailed, they do not reflect the reality of the SC's work. Going ahead, a mapping of responsibilities and expectations

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[1] See Annex 2 for mandate

was suggested. It was also apparent that members around the table each approach their role differently to an extent, in line with the different flavours described in the roles and responsibilities document for the CS SC.

- There was a discussion of SC members having multiple 'hats': the CS SC role and the CS SC member's day jobs. This at times creates a tension between the personal/organisational stance and SC mandate, which by definition needs to respond to the needs of all stakeholders, most notably civil society and government SC members.
- Some support was voiced for the previous SC grid, as it allowed to map SC members to specific initiatives according to their individual strengths, however, the consensus was that it should be retired.
- The idea for a collective agenda unique to the CS SC was discussed to ensure continuity on key issues like civic space and supporting CSOs across the co-chairs. It was broadly agreed that the recent SC priorities have featured these CS-focused themes over time.
- **The SU agreed to provide a mapping of CS SC common and individual work areas across the regions with key links to OGP's 3YP.**
- **Many crucial themes about roles and mandate ought to be considered as part of an "OGP at 10" agenda. Clarity and specificity on this agenda needs to come from the SU, in support of SC work but also in terms of what the SU itself will review at this 10 year inflection point..**

OGP Response to Crisis and Shrinking Space

Going into the discussion, there was broad recognition that the current response mechanisms are not entirely fit for purpose, especially when it comes to "rapid" response. There was also agreement that even the more established Response Policy takes too long..

Both the [OGP Response Policy](#) and [Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM)](#) were discussed at length and found wanting. The RRM did not work as designed, mostly because the government members did not feel comfortable following the agreed protocol. That said, there was agreement around the table that a clear protocol should be in place to guide OGP responses. It was also noted that despite the RRM being slow, it can trigger diplomatic work and positive change through unofficial channels.

One of the suggestions was to have an external review of the Response Mechanisms of OGP, but most members were not in favour at this time, feeling we simply needed a new approach, and for C&S to present a way forward on the existing policies in due course. The solution most widely supported was to develop a new protocol for rapid response that falls to the CEO and support unit. Several members pointed out that **C&S has already been tasked with taking the suggestion forward. However, Delia volunteered to create the first draft.**

Another concern raised was the worsening situation for civil society -- and how the OGP might respond to this in OGP countries. **To further bolster the Partnership, the group also suggested making the [OGP Values Check Assessment](#) applicable not only during eligibility but also to existing OGP members -- and on an ongoing basis.** This seemed a doable option, given that it currently impacts only on a few countries, and yet provides a lever for some of the problematic cases regarding civic space.

The members also discussed the passing of Decree 4-2020 on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) for Development in Guatemala, as signed on February 27 by President Alejandro Giammattei, wanting to move forward with a statement. There was concern that a response policy case would again take too long.

Action Plans

The cohort expressed support for the discussions during the SC meeting around more flexible Action Plans to broaden and deepen engagement. The level of progress from governments should be clearly communicated by OGP to encourage a race to the top.

Concerns were expressed regarding the harder to sell aspects of OGP, as commitments in Action Plans don't necessarily touch upon the concerns of citizens, as well as impact across Action Plans not being currently monitored. Further, governments are seen as playing to their strengths and not pushing themselves far enough. The implementation and delivery of commitments will require a reorientation of the Support Unit and SC.

It was acknowledged that OGP cannot and should not dictate the content of Action Plans. However, it can work more perhaps on capturing the opinions and suggestions of CSO and facilitate conversations through the sharing of successful examples of commitment design and implementation.

There was appreciation for the openness in the SC and from SU side to seriously revisit the OGP mechanism, rules and guidance and especially for early ideas shared (i.e. flexible delivery windows, flexible AP cycle). The SU, with C&S in the lead, will develop a process as part of OGP@10 timelines, to work on these issues (as planned in the 3YP).

To support stronger co-creation processes, the cohort suggested developing communication material around process-related stories. One of the strengths and the unique selling points of OGP is its process of co-creation. Communicating this clearly through a campaign can help broaden the base and increase local input into programmatic work.

Links to and across civil society in OGP

The cohort voiced support for utilizing existing civil society groups and communications channels to place messages succinctly and help broaden the base, emphasizing the groups and networks they are part of themselves. **These channels are to be mapped.** Ways to make the OGPs message resonate and get heard across networks were discussed. In particular, the need to highlight success stories (both short-term wins and long-term success monitoring stories) and share the data behind them was mentioned. Further peer-to-peer learning should be encouraged.

To strengthen informed decision making, networking and stronger co-creation, a database of CSOs involved in OGP was suggested. Further, this database could help CSO (re-)engagement. A lot of this information is available through IRM reports and in the heads of OGP staff, and would mean prioritising the effort to map it, if deemed useful.

The OGP civil society survey is a helpful tool to understand how OGP is delivering for the most involved civil society. **The cohort expressed the wish to be consulted for the design of the 2020 survey.**

Research and Data

Strong support was expressed to expand the scope and depth of OGP data provision and research to support informed decision making by SC and SU. It was acknowledged that some research does not need to be undertaken by OGP. There could be stronger cooperation with third parties. It was also acknowledged that there is a wealth of information already on open government, where better or repeated dissemination and uptake could be an easy lift.

The CS SC noted that they do not always possess the in-depth knowledge for thematic deep-dives to support OGP's work. The CSO community should be used more strongly as a resource in these situations.

Zuzana and Helen volunteered to take the lead on follow-up discussions.

Action Items and Next Steps

To-Do	Lead	Notes CS SC call March 11
1. Response mechanism update: CEO Response Proposal	Delia with Maria	A first draft of suggestions for C&S consideration to be created by Delia, to feed into C&S process. Maria to contribute.
2. CS SC Statement on Guatemala	Robin	Statement was published on 10.3.2020.
3. Extended use of values check	Aidan with Alonso	Aidan to discuss next steps further with Paul & Alonso.
4. Subcommittee Work Plans to be shared	Aidan & Zuzana	Consider a blog to share work plans with the community and introduce them to the cohort in the next call.
5. Inclusion Strategy for 3YP	Glynnis	Glynnis to work closely with Allison on the inclusion strategy.
6. Operations Mapping of CS SC 2020	Maia & Maria	This mapping will focus on providing clarity on where the CS SC operates geographically and thematically to help align actions within the cohort and to the 3YP.
7. Expectations Mapping (incl. SC and resource issues, communication)	Robin, Helen, Maia	This exercise will focus on mapping the expectations the SC holds towards OGP and in turn what OGP expects of the SC. The aim

		is to improve communication, provide clarity on roles/mandate, strengthen action towards achieving results, and build trust.
8. Civic Space Advice from the official human rights bodies: what can we do?	Elisa (Marion/PWYP) & Tonu	
9. Fundraising and financial planning with Board	Zuzana, Glynnis, Giorgi	To be aligned with Aidan and Maria, as members of the board.
10. Ongoing Local Taskforce	Lucy	Regular updates on the progress of OGP Local.
11. Regional groups brainstorming and communication/information flows	Maria (lead), Asma, Glynnis w. Joe, Alonso, Paul, Shreya	Maia and Jaime will develop a proposal to improve regional coordination with the SC and share it for discussion.
12. International cooperation	Giorgi	
13. Campaigns 2020 onwards	Elisa, Helen, Zuzana w. Stephanie	A learning evaluation of the Break The Roles campaign would be helpful before we embark on a new campaign - to better understand what works and doesn't as an OGP campaign.
14. OGW 2020	Asma w. Stephanie	The cohort suggests to try and go ahead despite coronavirus crisis and lean into agendas in times of crisis. OGP could scale back expectations and encourage digital events.
15. SC Rotation	Maria/Aidan w. Maia & Paul	We need a good list of candidates and should aim keep the group updated and informed about progress and next steps.
16. Research follow-up, benchmarking progress	Zuzana & Helen w. Joe Foti	
17. Retire the SC grid	Paul	SU Note: Grid has already been retired

18. SC evaluation	Robin & Maria with input from Elisa	Medium term goal.
19. Timetable of upcoming SC meetings planned out in advance	Maia and Jaime	To consider balance of virtual, in-person, high-level and working-level meetings.

OGP Civil Society Steering Committee Retreat

February 28th, 2020, Berlin

Office of Transparency International, Alt Moabit 96, Berlin

Purpose

The purpose of this retreat is to agree a set of OGP strategic priorities for the next three years from a civil society perspective.

Following three days of core OGP Steering Committee business, from programmatic to governance issues, the civil society cohort will retreat to focus on the path ahead for OGP.

Our aim is to strengthen our role as civil society representatives in the Steering Committee, as well as the role of CSOs working on the ground in every OGP country. We have made great progress over the years but we know that there is still much to be achieved within the partnership.

We will examine challenges and define priorities for the coming years in a series of reflective, free-ranging and creative conversations. The ideas we generate will strengthen the Partnership and support the goals of the Steering Committee, its subcommittees, as well as our civil society constituencies.

Agenda

8:30-9:00: Arrival - Breakfast and welcome to the retreat (Robin)

09:00 - 10:30 - Quo vadis OGP? Rethinking the OGP Steering Committee from a civil society perspective. (Robin & Zuzana)

OGP is one of few global initiatives that is designed on equal participation of civil society and governments, both at the national and the international level. This session will examine the role of the cohort with the Steering Committee and define goals we have for the SC over the next three years.

Guiding Questions
- How do we see our role in the SC as civil society members and cohort?
    - Where are we heard and where is our voice perhaps not strong enough?
    - What do we need in order to feel comfortable and be effective in our role in the Steering Committee?

- To what extent is the SC reflective enough of civil society approaches and values? What/how can we improve?
- When should we be a cohort and when should we work across the aisle? Where can we find common ground to strengthen an equal relationship with governments?
- Do we want to revisit the mandate and composition of the Steering Committee as part of the OGP@10 trajectory? Are there ideas to make the SC more effective?
- How can we better coordinate with and be supported by the Support Unit?

Expected outputs
- Clear markers of an equal relationship with governments
- A defined vision of what we want the SC overall and the cohort to be in 3 years and agreed steps towards achieving that vision
- Specific ideas for better collaboration with the SU on SC matters
- Agreement on the need to have CS SC statements or develop new CS SC tools to respond to democracy crises and dissenting mechanisms if needed (to present to the full SC or OGP broader community - *TBD*).

Background reading
- [Articles of Governance](#)
- [Civil Society Steering Committee Mandate](#)
- [OGP Response Policy](#)/ [OGP Rapid Response Mechanism](#)

10:30 - 12:00: The role of the civil society community in OGP. Challenges at the national and local level. (Maria & Lucy)

This session will focus on understanding the challenges faced by civil society in participating in and using OGP and discuss how these can be best addressed. We will also explore how to build stronger links between the civil society community and the Steering Committee and how to reach civil society not yet engaged in OGP.

Guiding Questions
- What are the specific challenges civil society faces within OGP (mapping challenges from civic space, to OGP mechanism challenges, to funding)?
- How best to address the challenges identified (and by whom)?
- What kind of support from the CS SC do CSOs need (e.g. to better use OGP, address bigger challenges, reinvigorate engagement)?
- What kind of links do we want to encourage between the civil society community and ourselves as civil society representatives of the OGP SC?
- What kind of channels can OGP - including the SC - create for local CSO to be heard at the global level?
- How can we reach relevant civil society not yet a part of the open government movement?

Expected outputs
- Clear understanding of the challenges and potential solutions for challenges faced by the community at national/local level.
- Clear understanding of the challenges and potential solutions to improve the relationship and role of the cohort in supporting civil society.
- Agreed way forward including lead persons (e.g. working group or task force in the (CS) SC to improve OGP's support to civil society).

Background reading
- [The Skeptic's Guide to Open Government](#)
- [OGP Global Report](#)
- [2018 civil society survey](#)
- Details on how OGP is already supporting CSOs

12:00 - 13:15   LUNCH

13:15 - 15:15: Knowing and applying the CS SC strengths (Helen & Elisa)

Based on a mapping of where the CS SC operates, individual themes and priority areas, we will reflect on how to support the OGP global platform, priority countries, themes, and commitments.

Guiding Questions
- What are our collective and individual strengths (including of the organisations we work at)?
- Are there gaps we need to address in the years to come in order to achieve long-term goals set out in previous sessions?
- How can the CS SC support and encourage OGP in focus countries, themes, and commitments?

Expected outputs
- Map of common and individual work areas/main geographies with key links to OGP -- plus ideas how we should use/promote/extend it
- CS SC work plan and/or civil society cohort set of priorities and measurable objectives for the next 3 years (to be presented to the full SC or OGP broader community and regularly followed up).
- Specific (internal and external) communication elements to be developed into a communications plan

Background reading
- OGP 3 Year Plan

15:15 - 16:30 Wrap up, conclusions and next steps (Robin & Maria)

Revisiting the outputs from each session, we will prioritize our objectives and set out how we will work on them, establishing who will lead and how we will communicate with each other and the wider community.

Expected outputs
- Timeline of follow-up needs and next steps
- Ideas around communicating our outputs and plans

Annex 2

SC and CS SC Mandate

The Steering Committee is the executive, decision-making body of the Open Government Partnership (OGP). The main role of the SC - as outlined in its Articles of Governance - is to develop, promote and safeguard the values, principles and interests of OGP. It also establishes the core ideas, policies, and rules of the Partnership, and oversees its functioning. It manages, in an open and transparent manner, the entry, rotation, and exit of OGP stakeholders. Under the leadership of its co-chairs, the SC plans and manages its major meetings and actions between meetings. As an executive body and through its subcommittees, the SC - as outlined in its Articles of Governance - does the following:

- Provides leadership by example for OGP through its Participating Country government members in terms of their domestic commitments, Action Plan progress, and financial support of OGP, and their participation in OGP Global Summits, OGP regional and thematic events, and other opportunities to promote open government;
- Sets OGP's agenda and direction with principled commitment to the founding nature and goals of the initiative;
- Manages membership, including eligibility and participation;
- Conducts ongoing outreach with both governments and civil society;
- Appoints advocates for OGP to serve as OGP Ambassadors and Envoys;
- Provides support, including its Participating Country government and Civil Society members' intellectual and in-kind and human resource support to OGP;
- Appoints individuals to the International Experts Panel of the Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM);
- Appoints individuals to the OGP Board of Directors; and
- Reviews and provides input to the OGP budget

The eleven civil society members of the OGP SC have further specified their two key responsibilities as follows:

- To perform the international governance role for OGP in the SC;
- To represent the concerns and interests of the global OGP civil society community in the SC

Additional responsibilities include:

- Champion and articulate core OGP ideas and values on the global stage, particularly protecting and promoting the engagement of civil society;
- Leverage OGP to deliver on advocacy asks of key open government movements and issues;
- Advance the open government agenda and the OGP process in country/region(s) they work in;
- Participate in and add demonstrable value to in-person and virtual meetings of the Steering Committee and the subcommittees of which they are a member, including meetings of the civil society members;
- Represent the Steering Committee and OGP at national, regional and international meetings;
- Provide political and technical support to advance the OGP process at the national level, conducting outreach to new countries and supporting existing processes;

- Effectively promote open government to the broader civil society community and bring more civil society actors into the global and national OGP process

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OGP Steering Committee