

Open Government Partnership Thematic Leadership Subcommittee Call Summary

11 June 2020 | 08:00 - 09:30 EDT (GMT-4)

Attendees

- Government of Canada: Jeff Ball, Benoit Frenette, and Darine Benkalha
- Government of Germany: Sebastian Haselbeck
- Government of Romania: Larisa Panait
- Government of Indonesia: Erie Febriyanto (TLS co-chair)
- Government of South Africa: Matshidiso Kgothatso Semela
- Helen Darbishire, Access Info Europe
- Zuzana Wienk, White Crow (TLS co-chair)
- Giorgi Kldiashvili, Institute for Development of Freedom of Information
- Asma Cherifi, TACID Network
- Glynnis Cummings-John, Restless Development
- Jon Vrushi, Transparency International [Guest Speaker]
- Allison Merchant, OGP Support Unit [Guest Speaker]

Apologies

- Tur-Od Lkhagvajav, Asia Democracy Network

I. Guest presentation by Transparency International: “Getting Ahead of the Curve: Exploring post-COVID-19 Trends and their Impact on Anti-Corruption, Governance and Development”

Reference Material: Getting Ahead of the Curve Study; [Presentation Slides](#); [Anti-Corruption Strategies During COVID-19](#)

To provide a broader context on the effects of the pandemic on many areas of governance and background for the strategic discussion by TLS on next steps on Open Response + Open Recovery, a representative from TI was invited to present one of the earliest studies on the effects of COVID19 on longer term open government issues.

TI research coordinator Jon Vrushi shared insights from their recent study “[Getting Ahead of the Curve: Exploring post-COVID-19 Trends and their Impact on Anti-Corruption, Governance and Development](#)”. Key points included a general decline in civil and political rights, state capacity, equality and social trust, with substantial negative impacts on anti-corruption efforts.

Thematic Leadership Subcommittee (TLS) members expressed interest in any recommendations for topics governments should focus on as they move into the



recovery phase, as well as any forecasted projections for important post-COVID issues. Some reflections include:

- There is a need to quantify the effects of COVID-19 into usable and measurable data in order to make better informed decisions.
- Importance of differentiating between permanent and temporary impacts of COVID-19 on civic space.
- Maximize some of the opportunities brought by the pandemic, such as heightened international cooperation, new ways of citizen engagement in policy making, and increased information sharing and efforts to protect against disinformation.

II. Support Unit report back on OR + OR and plans for next steps

Reference Material: [State of Affairs Presentation](#); [State of Open Gov During COVID-19](#)

To provide additional country-level context from the OGP perspective, the Support Unit (SU) gave a short presentation highlighting the impact of COVID-19 on key OGP areas, including the backslide in inclusion and civic space with national emergency response plans. Of particular concern is the lack of set time limits on many of the restrictions around freedom of expression and assembly. The presentation set the stage for a strategic discussion around opportunities for SU and Steering Committee engagement to advance country-level action and support for OR + OR initiatives and recovery efforts. Some of the topics discussed and inputs provided by TLS include:

- Challenges faced by governments on increasing **public participation** during a pandemic given new constraints around assembly and access, including ways to lodge opinions and complaints about social systems and how they are being implemented during the crisis. Some governments are exploring ways to integrate these elements into existing complaints and grievance redressal platforms, and exploring other ideas on how to make these open.
- Keeping public participation **inclusive** with resource limitations, especially when it comes to engaging under-served communities and within constraints faced by government bureaucracies when they are working remotely, without access to government information systems.
- Understanding challenges related to **digital literacy, digital divide** and the new limitations around **digital governance**, as well as the new advantages and disadvantages of being fully online.
- Challenges faced by country reformers and the SU on keeping **donors** updated on the value add of OGP and why keeping governments open matters as funding priorities shift.



- An emphasis on adapting existing mechanisms and processes for new challenges, keeping in mind the great exertion of efforts already happening in transitioning to new ways of working.
- Figuring out how to mobilize the energy of the TLS and SC on key issues and translate it into concrete actions and goals, potentially through identifying limited collective actions to create a specific campaign.

Next Steps:

- TLS members were encouraged to surface some of these issues in upcoming regional conversations around OR+OR follow-up.
- The SU will report back on regional conversations taking place in June, highlighting any opportunities for engagement at country level
- The SU will work with the TLS chairs to shape following TLS meetings in a specific focus area stemming from the topics discussed in this call. An update on the Leaders Network will also be incorporated into the next TLS call.

Background Note

Advancing Country Action through Open response + Open Recovery (OR+OR):

Following the implementation of OR+OR initiatives such as [Digital Forum](#) and the launch of the “[Guide to Open Government and the Coronavirus](#)”, the next phase of the campaign focuses on driving country-level action where government and/or civil society are interested in integrating these approaches into their OGP processes.

At the country level, the Support Unit has been engaging with high level government officials, partners, strategic advisors, and civil society to support country level follow up and action. Some examples of these include:

- OGP CEO and AsiaPacific regional team convened a [call](#) with **Armenian** Prime Minister’s Chief of Staff to discuss OR + OR matters, including effective and inclusive stimulus and safety nets, strong healthcare systems, integrity in managing international aid, and civic space, including how OGP could provide a platform to advance some of these medium to longer term discussions with civil society. The SU has also been in close contact with Armenian civil society to understand what support they might need to leverage the OGP process for their advocacy on COVID open government reform.
- In **Senegal**, civil society organizations are pushing for a commitment in open contracting as a result of scandals in the government’s response to Covid-19. OGP, Development Gateway and ONG 3D (a civil society member of the Multi-stakeholder Forum of Senegal) [published a blog](#) emphasising the urgent need for transparency in public procurement and open contracting.
- In **South Africa** the SU is supporting the PoC to organize thematic webinars to inform the next action plan with key civil society partners and other actors. So far there have been discussions on beneficial ownership transparency, open data and



