

Aidan Eyakuze
Open Government Partnership Co-Chair Candidacy Statement
September 9, 2020

I am pleased to submit this statement in support of my candidacy for co-chair of the Open Government Partnership (OGP).

Introduction

I have been involved with the OGP since October 2015 when I attended the Summit held in Mexico City. I must confess to being overwhelmed by meeting and the countless ideas, concepts, mechanisms, practices, objectives and assessments of open government that I encountered for the first time at that meeting. It was when I participated in a session led by Martin Tisne and Julie McCarthy that explored taking OGP to the subnational level that the concept of open government and the OGP platform became alive and tangible.

Since then, I have been an enthusiastic participant and member of the OGP. In May 2016, I successfully applied to joined the Steering Committee. In 2018, I was selected to represent the OGP Steering Committee as a Council Member of the OGP Multi-Donor Trust Fund managed by the World Bank. In October 2018, I took over from Robin Hodess as civil society co-chair of the Criteria & Standards subcommittee. In 2020 I was appointed to the [Board](#) of the OGP Secretariat, the legal entity that is responsible for fiduciary and legal oversight of the OGP Support Unit and the Independent Reporting Mechanism.

In April 2018, I co-convened, with Nathaniel Heller, an Open Government Champions Network of 11 senior government officials from 8 countries, 13 CSO leaders from 11 countries and two representatives from the private sector to revitalize the *esprit de corps* in the OGP leadership. That convening helped persuade several individual and government participants to join the Steering Committee soon thereafter.

As a member of the OGP Practice Group on Dialogue and Deliberation, I worked on '[The Deliberation Series](#)', a collection of papers designed to improve the 'practice of public dialogue and deliberation to help solve "complex" issues, especially where difficult trade-offs must be made, or priorities set.'

I have learnt a great deal from my involvement with the Open Government Partnership. I am keen to offer my leadership services as one small way of 'returning the favour' to the intrepid global community of reformers and activists that breathes daily life into the idea of government working for the people.

What priorities will you drive during your OGP co-chair term to advance OGP goals?

I propose to focus on three strategic dimensions of open government during my co-chair term: defending civic space, consolidating the OGP Local program and connecting open government to improvements to the quality of life at household level.

- a) **Defending civic space (focus on CONTEXT)**. This is an existential matter for the OGP, because without civic space it does not work. If the environment for real transparency, participation and accountability becomes hostile, everything else the Partnership does is meaningless theatre. Civil liberties – basic freedoms of expression, association and assembly – are under threat across the world. The context only be slightly better among OGP countries. The OGP has articulated five useful principles for protecting civic space in member countries action plans, namely, i) do no harm to civic space, ii) raise the volume of civic space commitments, iii) improve the scope of civic space commitments, iv) find the right fit of commitments to context, and v) aim for net impact (is collaborative dialogue contributing to more civic space).

Building on the second of the five principles, I propose to focus on the ‘political’ aspects of promoting civic space in the partnership by a) persuading government members on the Steering Committee to lead by example in opening civic space, b) offering public commendation for commitments and actions that open up the space and c) brokering partnerships between authorities and human rights defenders. I will also draw on lessons from Twaweza’s experience in Tanzania where, despite a sharp deterioration in overall civic space, we have been able to create the conditions for strong citizen participation at the local government level, where the political stakes can sometimes be lower than at the national level. This creates a great opportunity to harvest the commitments and actions of the OGP Local members’ commitments and actions for their civic space ‘content’ and implications.

- b) **Consolidating the OGP Local pillar of the Partnership (focus on LOCATION)**. Taking the principles and mechanisms of inclusive open government to the subnational level is one of the most important innovations of the OGP. Since local governments are where most citizens interact with government, they are an ideal space for designing and implementing transparent, inclusive and accountable governance ideas, producing results relatively quickly and tangible. There is a lot of interest, energy and enthusiasm for the OGP Local program ‘out there’. Witness the fact that we received 313 individual applications, 112 joint CSO-government applications, and 24 non-joint applications from either government or civil society for 50 ‘vacancies’.

To live up to its ambition i) of supporting OGP’s vision for improving citizen-centered governance and public service delivery, ii) allowing innovations to spread, iii) localizing global norms and preserving open government values at the subnational level, iv) deploying our co-creation, ambitious action, accountability and peer learning mechanisms, the OGP Local program must be consolidated within the OGP. I propose to work with the Support Unit to help onboard the new members and work out any strategic challenges that will emerge. I would also use the co-chair’s ‘podium’ to amplify the successes of OGP Local members to relevant national governments, and to the ‘outside’ world.

- c) **Demonstrating OGP’s relevance by raising the volume on open government for improved public service delivery (a focus on OUTCOMES)**. Previous civil society co-chairs of the OGP - Mukelani Dimba, Nathaniel Heller, Robin Hodess, Maria Baron -

have highlighted this important point. I want to continue making the central case for open government by linking it to tangible improvements in citizens' quality of life. The quality and cost of public services such as utilities (water, electricity, waste management, etc) and social services (health, education, communications, etc) are key drivers of the well-being of ordinary citizens. Indeed, they are what matters most to the vast majority of people. Going further, one senior government minister challenged the OGP to demonstrate the economic value of open government at household: by 'putting another chicken in every pot.'

I propose to champion the ongoing efforts at connecting open government to tangibly better social and economic outcomes for ordinary citizens. More than a decade since its formation, the Partnership should be in a position to provide more evidence and tell more stories that this indeed is (or can be) the case. This narrative will energize the Partnership and inspire those outside it. As the 2016 OGP Strategic Refresh notes, "...over the next five years, OGP's success will be measured not only by the increase in the number of countries or commitments **but by the extent to which ordinary citizens benefit** from governments becoming more transparent, participatory, responsive and accountable."

To sum up my priorities, I propose to focus on improving the context for open government to work better (defending civic space), supporting the deepening of open government principles and practices at local government level (consolidating OGP Local) and demonstrating the value of open government for improving wellbeing at the household level (showcasing improved public service delivery).

How will you (and your organization/network) demonstrate leadership on open government, advance your domestic open government agenda (Tanzania, Kenya) and lead by example?

Twaweza has provided a unique platform for me to demonstrate leadership on open government. Twaweza's current governance-focused strategy has the following three missions which are closely aligned to the OGP's core values and goals: a) demonstrating citizens agency at the subnational level, b) making sure citizens voices are heard and taken seriously by decisionmakers and c) protecting civic space and promoting respect for the rule of law by governments.

Twaweza is a recognized leader in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda for its innovative and assertive work on transparent, inclusive and accountable government. We are already experimenting with a hybrid OGP Local model in seven districts across Uganda and Tanzania with promising results in terms of improved budget transparency, access to secondary education and inclusion of young people in decision-making (in western Tanzania). Some tension notwithstanding, we worked with the government of Tanzania, to convene 90 civil society organizations from across the country to help shape the local government strengthening program due to start in early 2021. We look forward to supporting citizen participation in all planning, budgeting, execution and monitoring of public and social services at village, ward and district levels.

Our work, experiences and impact have attracted global attention mostly at sectoral level (basic education), but also increasingly how our citizens surveys have informed mostly positive government responses to public evaluation of their performance. The government of Uganda and the county government of Makueni (Kenya) are enthusiastic consumers of our public opinion surveys on service delivery and these are feeding into their own plans, budgets and implementation. I propose to continue sharing the strategic and tactical lessons gleaned from Twaweza's efforts at promoting open government in challenging contexts.

What actions will you take to foster a more cohesive leadership body within the Steering Committee?

I have enjoyed an excellent working relationship with the Government of Italy as we co-chair(ed) the OGP's Criteria & Standards Subcommittee and helped to forged consensus and solutions to a number of contentious issues (surveillance of civil society partners in Mexico and the Rapid Response Protocol).

I propose to personally engage with the government representatives/Points of Contact on the Steering Committee, in particular to promote Chatham House Rules discussions on the civic space challenges facing the Partnership. My aim will be to encourage their leadership by example, to support their efforts at inspiring their government peers to intensify the protection and expansion of civic space, and to broker dialogue with relevant domestic and international human rights actors.

What support will be needed from other OGP Co-Chair and the Support Unit?

I look forward to discussing and agreeing with my co-chair government a strategy and approaches for promoting these priority areas. I am excited by the prospect of forging a common front with the government co-chair on these important themes for the Partnership.

From the Support Unit, in addition to the excellent work they already do, I will look for assistance and guidance in two main areas: a) evidence-gathering for the purposes of linking open government with improved welfare outcomes, and b) support in telling creative and compelling stories about both the values and the value of open government and of the Partnership in these era-defining moments.

Thank you for considering my candidacy for the co-chair of the OGP.

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