

Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM): Sekondi-Takoradi Design Report 2018–2020

This report was written in collaboration with Kofi Takyi Asante, Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research.

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Executive Summary: Sekondi-Takoradi

Sekondi-Takoradi's highly collaborative co-creation process resulted in an action plan reflective of citizen priorities. This plan continues previous OGP commitments in fiscal transparency and civic participation in the areas of development planning and sanitation. Civic participation in public procurement monitoring represents a new area for reform with a transformative potential impact. Looking ahead, Sekondi-Takoradi should design commitments to ensure government responsiveness to citizen input to increase reforms' potential open government impact.

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is a global partnership that brings together government reformers and civil society leaders to create action plans that make governments more inclusive, responsive, and accountable. The Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) monitors all action plans to ensure governments follow through on commitments. Sekondi-Takoradi joined OGP in 2016. This report evaluates the design of Sekondi-Takoradi's second action plan.

The Sekondi-Takoradi second local action plan was co-created through an inclusive process in alliance with several civil society organisation (CSOs), such as Friends of the Nation and Berea Social Foundation. Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) funding supported a highly collaborative co-creation process that included 10 community consultations and two consultations with vulnerable groups. High-level government support, ongoing public communication through radio and television, and an inclusive working group strengthened the process. Efforts resulted in an action plan reflective of citizen priorities.

The action plan continues previous commitments in the sectors of sanitation, fiscal transparency and participation, and public participation in development planning. The plan includes several ambitious reforms, most notably commitment 1 that aims to foster citizen monitoring of public procurement for infrastructure projects, which carries a transformative potential impact. Commitment 4 to reactivate the assembly's citizen public service complaint channels also represents a new policy area in Sekondi-Takoradi's OGP action plans.

The design of this action plan has two main areas for improvement. First, most commitments rely on online information disclosure and portals. Only a fraction of Ghana's population has access to the internet. Therefore, commitments focused on transparency and participation channels online reach a minority of the population. Second, most commitments in this plan include channels to collect citizen feedback but do not explicitly outline how the

Table 1. At a glance
Participating since: 2016
Action plan under review: Second
Report type: Design
Number of commitments: 5
Action plan development
Is there a Multi-stakeholder forum: Yes
Level of public influence: Collaborate
Acted contrary to OGP process: No
Action plan design
Commitments relevant to OGP values: 1
Transformative commitments: 1
Potentially starred: 1



feedback will inform government practice. Moving forward, Sekondi-Takoradi should design commitments with explicit reference to how the assembly will respond to public input and use input to improve government services.

Table 2. Noteworthy commitments

Commitment description	Moving forward	Status at the end of implementation cycle.
<p>1. Transparency and Accountability in Public Infrastructure</p> <p>Enhance transparency and accountability in the delivery of public infrastructure by publishing project and contract information; develop mechanisms for citizens to monitor and report on implementation</p>	<p>For this commitment to meet its transformative potential, implementers must develop a plan to ensure the long-term sustainability of citizen monitoring groups. Additionally, government responsiveness to citizen feedback should be mandatory and public. It will also be crucial that project and contract information is published in a timely manner.</p>	<p><i>Note: this will be assessed at the end of action plan cycle.</i></p>
<p>2. Civic Participation and Fiscal Transparency</p> <p>Enhance civic participation by empowering citizens in decisions related to development planning, composite budgeting, and fee fixing; create a localised standard operating procedure for streamlining financial records management and sharing.</p>	<p>Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly (STMA) fiscal information should be published in both accessible and open data formats. Greater financial transparency could provide a foundation for participatory budgeting and civic monitoring in future action plans.</p>	<p><i>Note: this will be assessed at the end of action plan cycle.</i></p>
<p>3. Public Service Delivery Communication and Citizen Feedback</p> <p>Improve transparency and reduce bureaucracy in the acquisition development permits through a smart governance system.</p>	<p>For ambitious implementation, the online platform could include a portal for the public to submit concerns or observations regarding development projects and the permitting process. Increased project transparency could offer the groundwork for future civic monitoring of development projects.</p>	<p><i>Note: this will be assessed at the end of action plan cycle.</i></p>

Recommendations

The IRM recommendations aim to inform the development of the next action plan and guide implementation of the current action plan.

Table 3. Five KEY IRM Recommendations

1. Develop a plan to ensure that broad and inclusive co-creation consultations are repeated in future cycles with available resources
2. Strengthen communication between working group members and the community on co-creation and implementation progress
3. Ensure online portals are sustainable and complemented with offline activities for open government results
4. Raise commitments' potential for results by focusing commitment design on government responsiveness to citizen input
5. Collaborate with civil society to explore opportunities for participatory budgeting in future action plans

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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 (IRM) assesses development and implementation of national action plans to foster dialogue among stakeholders and improve accountability.

Dr. Kofi Takyi Asante is a research fellow at the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) at the University of Ghana, Legon. He is a Development Sociologist, with interests in political economy, state formation, citizenship, local governance and decentralisation, and entrepreneurship. He obtained a PhD in Sociology from Northwestern University and was a postdoctoral fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study in Toulouse.



I. Introduction

The Open Government Partnership is a global partnership that brings together government reformers and civil society leaders to create action plans that make governments more inclusive, responsive, and accountable. Action plan commitments may build on existing efforts, identify new steps to complete ongoing reforms, or initiate action in an entirely new area. OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) monitors all action plans to ensure governments follow through on commitments. Civil society and government leaders use the evaluations to reflect on their own progress and determine if actions have made an impact on people's lives.

Ghana joined OGP in 2011, and Sekondi-Takoradi joined OGP in 2016. This report covers the development and design of Sekondi-Takoradi's second action plan for 2018-2020.

The Independent Reporting Mechanism of OGP has partnered with Dr. Kofi Takyi Asante and the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER), University of Ghana, who carried out this evaluation. The IRM aims to inform ongoing dialogue around development and implementation of future commitments. For a full description of the IRM's methodology please visit <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/about/independent-reporting-mechanism>.

II. Open Government Context in Sekondi-Takoradi

The Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly is one of 260 Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs) in Ghana and was the first to join the OGP local program. MMDAs in Ghana have primary responsibility for local development. However, at the time of co-creation, institutional challenges and low citizen engagement inhibited governance reforms. At a national level, Ghana's strong democratic system and civil liberties provides a solid foundation to open government at the local level.

General Background

Sekondi-Takoradi is one of 260 Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs) exercising political and administrative authority in local governance in Ghana.¹ MMDAs are the central pillars of Ghana's decentralisation programme, but their effectiveness is limited by several factors, including institutional weakness, inability to adequately generate revenue, and a lack of citizen participation in governance at the local level.²

The Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly (STMA) is the political and administrative government of the twin-city of Sekondi-Takoradi in the Western Region of Ghana. At the time of the co-creation process, it was one of 23 districts in the region.³ MMDAs are mandated to collect local level revenue, although a large portion of their expenditure is funded through grants from central government, such as the District Assemblies' Common Fund.⁴ The Western Region is home to the country's crude oil industry, which started production in December 2010.⁵

Local Government Set-up in Ghana

Decentralisation in Ghana has a long history and can be traced as far back as the promulgation of the Municipal Ordinance of 1859 by the British colonial administration. However, the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) government and the passage of PNDC Law 207 in 1988 led to the current decentralisation framework.⁶ Upon Ghana's return to democratic rule, this was further enshrined in Article 34 of the 1992 Constitution. Further, Chapter 20 of the same constitution mandated the transfer of functions, powers, and competencies to local government units, the establishment of revenue generating capacities, and the provision of opportunities for citizen participation in local level governance.⁷ Moreover, the Local Government Act requires MMDAs to be responsible for local level development.⁸

The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development exercises oversight responsibilities over the MMDAs. At the time of writing, chief executives of all MMDAs are appointed by the president, but government is currently reviewing the system, and there is a bill in parliament which, if passed, will allow citizens to directly elect their metropolitan, municipal, and district chief executives.⁹ There is general optimism that if this bill is passed into law, it will transform the nature of politics in the country as a whole, as well as enhance the quality of local governance.¹⁰

Challenges to Effective Local Governance

Local governance in Ghana is hampered for several reasons. The lack of effective devolution of power to decentralised governments remains one of the most important obstacles to effective decentralisation across the country. Appointment of chief executives of MMDAs undermines their autonomy. In particular, it makes these heads of local governments accountable to the national executive rather than to citizens at the local level. Thus, the call from several quarters for Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Chief Executives (MMDCEs) to be directly elected.¹¹

Another key problem is that Assembly Members (AMs)—the local elected officials under the MMDAs—are not paid. This is a significant flaw, since AMs provide the concrete link between the state and citizens and perform crucial duties within the assemblies.¹² During interviews for this report, AMs expressed to the IRM researcher that in addition to not being paid for their work, they also are not provided with resources, like administrative or research staff, to help them perform their duties.¹³ For instance, AMs are supposed to consult with their constituents before assembly

meetings and to report back to them thereafter. However, without a budget for such consultations, it is difficult to fulfil this legal obligation; some AMs are compelled to fund consultation and other official duties out of their own pockets.¹⁴

The above weaknesses in decentralised governance are further compounded by disengagement of citizens from local governance. A survey by the Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) found participation in local governance and contact with local government leaders to be generally low. Moreover, citizens tend to be unaware of the actions of their local governments, and know little about local government revenue sources, such as the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF), which in line with the constitution allocates a minimum of five percent of national revenue among all District Assemblies in Ghana.¹⁵ Citizens, therefore, tend to be distrustful of local government structures and officials.¹⁶

Civil Liberties

The above problems notwithstanding, MMDAs perform strongly on measures of civil liberties, which is in line with the country's reputable human rights records since the return to democratic governance. This is a reflection of the expansion of the democratic space since Ghana's return to constitutional rule in 1992. In the most recent Human Freedom Index report, Ghana ranked fourth in Africa and 57th in the world.¹⁷ Freedoms of expression, association, assembly, among others, are guaranteed and widely enjoyed at both national and local levels. Media freedom is also guaranteed, resulting in the proliferation of private radio and television stations, and close scrutiny of aspects of government actions.

Areas for National Policy Action

The current action plan contains commitments on five key policy areas, namely transparency in public infrastructure; civic participation and fiscal transparency; public service delivery; access to information; and sanitation. These commitments could help the assembly to improve transparency and accountability. It should be noted, however, there are crucial obstacles in the way of efficiency and accountability which are beyond the mandate of the STMA and other subnational governments to resolve. Policy issues like non-payment of assembly members and appointment of MMDCEs are determined at the national level and would require parliamentary review. There is currently a bill in parliament, which, if passed, would allow citizens to directly elect their MMDCEs

¹ During the action plan development, Ghana had 254 MMDAs. In February 2019, six more were added. "Government to inaugurate six new districts today", GhanaWeb, 19 February 2019,

<https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Government-to-inaugurate-six-new-districts-today-724450>.

² "A Survey on Citizen Participation in Local Governance", CDD-Ghana Research Paper #25, 2015.

³ In 2019, another region, the Western North Region, was carved out of the Western Region following a referendum. "Ghana Now Has 16 Regions", ModernGhana, 16 February 2019, <https://www.modernghana.com/news/916140/ghana-now-has-16-regions.html>.

⁴ "The Local Government System in Ghana", no date,

http://www.clgf.org.uk/default/assets/File/Country_profiles/Ghana.pdf.

⁵ "Ghana oil begins pumping for first time", BBC, 15 December 2010, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-11996983>.

⁶ "Politics of Decentralisation Reforms in Ghana: The Experience of Northern Ghana", Callistus Mahama, 2013; "National Popular Participation Framework", Government of Ghana, November 2016.

⁷ "1992 Constitution", Government of Ghana.

⁸ 1993 Local Government Act (Act 462).

⁹ "Bill for election of MMDCEs laid in parliament", GhanaWeb, 20 February 2019; "The Local Government System in Ghana", no date, http://www.clgf.org.uk/default/assets/File/Country_profiles/Ghana.pdf.

¹⁰ "Election of MMDCEs will end the 'Winner-Takes-All' disorder", GhanaGov, 15 January 2019,

<http://www.ghana.gov.gh/index.php/media-center/news/5337-election-of-mmdces-will-end-the-winner-takes-all-disorder>.

¹¹ "Challenges of Ghana's Decentralisation Process", NewsGhana, 24 September 2014.

¹² "Assembly Members must be paid monthly salaries; before elections of MMDCEs begin", Myjoyonline, 6 November 2017, <https://www.myjoyonline.com/opinion/2017/november-6th/assembly-members-must-be-paid-monthly-salaries-before-elections-of-mmdces-begin.php>.

¹³ James Amakye, interview by IRM researcher, 3 April 2019; Samuel Amissah, interview by IRM researcher, 4 April 2019.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Common Fund, http://www.commonfund.gov.gh/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=329&Itemid=361.

¹⁶ "A Survey on Citizen Participation in Local Governance", CDD-Ghana Research Paper #25, 2015.

¹⁷ "Ghana improves rankings on Human Freedom Index", GhanaBusinessNews, 28 December 2018, <https://www.ghanabusinessnews.com/2018/12/28/ghana-improves-ranking-on-human-freedom-index-2018/>.

III. Leadership and Multi-stakeholder Process

All key units of the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly (STMA) participated in co-creation, with the Development Planning Unit providing leadership. An inclusive working team of STMA and civil society organisation (CSO) partners held broad consultations, including with persons living with disability and people living with HIV. The collaborative co-creation process was further facilitated by high-level government support, Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) funding, and frequent public communications, which resulted in an action plan highly reflective of citizen priorities.

3.1 Leadership

The Development Planning Unit was the lead office responsible for co-ordinating activities that went into the co-creation of the 2018–2010 second local action plan (LAP II). The assembly passed a resolution that formalises STMA’s membership and participation in OGP.¹ This resolution was made upon STMA’s application to join the OGP local government pilot programme in 2016.² The head of the Developing Planning Unit, Isaac Aidoo, is also the OGP Point of Contact (POC). High-ranking officials are also involved in the process. For instance, the Presiding Member (PM) of STMA, Hon. John Buckman, is a member of the multi-stakeholder forum (MSF), and the Metropolitan Chief Executive (MCE), Hon. Anthony K. K. Sam, regularly attended and spoke at the official meetings of the MSF. The MCE is also a co-chair of the MSF. He was present at and presided over the launch of the co-creation process.³ The OGP POC also briefs STMA heads of departments during bi-monthly business meetings.⁴

There is no institutionally dedicated budget for OGP, although the assembly received funding from the OGP Multi-Donor Trust Fund through the World Bank.⁵ STMA also aims to generate enough resources to finance OGP activities.⁶ There was a change of national government in 2017 following the defeat of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) government in the December 2016 presidential and parliamentary elections. The MCE was subsequently changed, but nothing about the assembly’s participation in the OGP changed as a result.

STMA worked closely with CSOs in the co-creation of the LAP II. For instance, the co-chair of the MSF is the executive director of African Women International, Mrs. Victoria Araba Dennis. Three CSOs in particular, Friends of the Nation, Berea Social Foundation, and STMA Citywide Settlement Upgrading Fund (STMA-CSUF), have worked closely with the Assembly before and during the co-creation process.⁷

3.2 Multi-stakeholder process throughout action plan development

In 2017, OGP adopted the OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards intended to support participation and co-creation by civil society at all stages of the OGP cycle. All OGP-participating countries are expected to meet these standards. The standards aim to raise ambition and quality of participation during development, implementation, and review of OGP action plans.

OGP’s Articles of Governance also establish participation and co-creation requirements a country or entity must meet in their action plan development and implementation to act according to OGP process. Sekondi-Takoradi did not act contrary to OGP process.⁸

Please see Annex I for an overview of Sekondi-Takoradi’s performance implementing the Co-Creation and Participation Standards throughout the action plan development.

Table 3.1: Level of Public Influence

The IRM has adapted the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Participation to apply to OGP.⁹ This spectrum shows the potential level of public influence on the contents of the action plan. In the spirit of OGP, most countries should aspire for “collaborate.”

Level of public influence		During development of action plan
Empower	The government handed decision-making power to members of the public.	
Collaborate	There was iterative dialogue AND the public helped set the agenda.	✓
Involve	The government gave feedback on how public inputs were considered.	
Consult	The public could give inputs.	
Inform	The government provided the public with information on the action plan.	
No Consultation	No consultation	

Multi-stakeholder forum

The Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly (STMA) has had a multi-stakeholder forum (MSF) since its first action plan, but this was reconstituted for the creation of the current local action plan (LAP II) in order to be more inclusive.¹⁰ The MSF was reconstituted by a 9-member working team¹¹ comprising of five males and four females. The working team, after conducting a stakeholder mapping, formally invited nominations from organised groups, who sent representatives to serve on the forum. The working team was responsible for constituting the MSF for the LAP II. The resulting 40-member MSF had only 17 government representatives. Throughout the process, the working team functioned as a secretariat for the MSF, which had the ultimate responsibility of coordinating the co-creation process and making decisions.¹²

The MSF represented a wide cross-section of the metropolis, and its composition reflected actors both in and out of government, as well as professional CSO actors and social groups. It had 17 government representatives and 23 representatives from organised groups, including CSOs, the private sector, women's groups, youth groups, and persons with disability. All members took an active part in the consultation and validation of the national action plan (NAP) proposal developed by the working team. Decisions were taken on the basis of active discussions among members of the MSF. The co-creation process showed evidence of attempts to achieve gender balance in the leadership of the process. For instance, the working team had a rough gender balance and one of the two MSF co-chairs was a woman—the Executive Director of African Women International.¹³

During the co-creation process, the MSF met in person once a month in July and August and twice in September, but regularly coordinated or exchanged information via the WhatsApp platform.¹⁴ This provided a means for remote co-ordination of the activities of the MSF. The MSF reported back to the community on the progress on the co-creation process via regular appearances on local and national radio stations, TV, and town hall meetings.¹⁵

Participation and engagement throughout action plan development

In June 2018, the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly (STMA) issued a notice to the public about the upcoming co-creation exercise. This notice was disseminated through newspapers and television stations with nationwide coverage, such as Daily Graphic, Ghanaian Times, TV3, and UTV. In addition, the notice was circulated on local radio stations such as Twin-City Radio, Skyy Power FM, Rok FM, Empire FM, and Radio 360.¹⁶ The notice provided general details about the OGP and the history of the national and local government's participation in the process, as well as the timeline for the LAP II co-creation. It also included information about the consortium of three non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Friends of the Nation [FON], Berea Social Foundation [BSF], and STMA Citywide Settlement Upgrading Fund [STMA-CSUF]) who acted as key partners to STMA

in the co-creation process. These three NGOs have been part of the Sekondi-Takoradi OGP process since its inception. Even before the consultation began, there were opportunities for interested stakeholders to participate in the process. For instance, the public notice included a template for individuals or organisations to submit their views or contributions.¹⁷

The Metropolitan Chief Executive officially launched the co-creation process in July 2018, delivering an address in which he stressed the importance of “building trust in local and regional public administration” as a key part of the strategy for achieving development.¹⁸ Following this, the process continued with capacity-building and brainstorming sessions with members of the MSF and selected community champions.¹⁹ The capacity-building sessions included training on relevant legislations, such as the Local Governance and the Public Finance Management Acts, and an introduction to social accountability tools.

The MSF and community leaders undertook consultations in 10 communities out of the three sub-metropolitan districts. They also held separate consultations with vulnerable groups, namely persons living with disability and people living with HIV. In total, 1,141 people attended the consultations that were held in the various communities.²⁰

Following consultations, the working team and MSF held brainstorming sessions to formulate concrete commitments out of the feedback generated. The MSF subsequently held a number of engagements through multiple media, like radio discussions and press conferences to provide feedback on the draft commitments and to explain why some proposals were not adopted. For instance, they explained that the number of commitments could not exceed five or some proposals were subsumed under specific commitments. The five commitments were presented to the public at a town hall meeting, where they were validated.²¹ STMA has a section on its website dedicated to OGP, where the action plan and some of the documents relating to the co-creation process are available.²²

Seven broad proposals were received from various stakeholders during co-creation of the action plan. They were as follows: 1) Better public service delivery (municipal services); 2) Better service delivery (services of transactional nature such as permitting); 3) Increased access to information; 4) Public safety; 5) Broader public participation in planning and project implementation; 6) Fiscal transparency; and 7) Better access to information for the disabled, e.g., printing documents in braille. The government partnered with community members to propose commitments 2 and 5. The other commitments were proposed jointly by community members, CSOs, or the private sector, with the exception of Commitment 7, which was exclusively proposed by persons living with disability.²³

The breadth and depth of engagements improved the quality of the commitments. This is reflected in the range of commitments, reflecting issues which affect different social groupings and interests. For instance, the sanitation commitment (see below), is of direct concern to the poor and vulnerable, while the budgeting and rate fixing commitment more directly addresses the interests of the business community.²⁴ Further, the commitments include measures—such as the dissemination of information in different languages and in accessible formats—to ensure that even those without a high level of education can effectively participate in their implementation. This is in part due to the inclusive nature of the composition of the MSF.²⁵ Many members of the MSF told the IRM researcher that everyone was given enough opportunities to speak during deliberations. As a further measure to avoid excluding some members, discussions were held in both English and Fante (the local language most widely spoken in the metropolis). This ensured that both the co-creation process and the action plan largely reflect the views and aspirations of the stakeholders.

Co-creation and participation recommendations throughout development

Sekondi-Takoradi showed evidence of achievement and strong performance in areas of MSF mandate, communication, and outreach during the action plan development process. It also showed a marked improvement since the previous co-creation. For instance, the membership of the MSF was increased. Moreover, the MSF had more members from civil society and social groups than from government. Of the 40 members of the MSF, only 17 were local government representatives.

The working team met four times between 18 June 2018 and 15 February 2019.²⁶ Furthermore, the MSF made the consultation process as broad as possible, increasing the number of residential communities consulted from four to 10. The MSF was cautious and held separate consultations with two vulnerable groups who might feel intimidated in a general meeting.²⁷ Over the course of the co-creation process, the working team had about eight appearances on local radio stations to sensitise the public to the process.²⁸ In addition, 60 people were trained on local governance processes and social accountability.²⁹ The IRM researcher recommends that this should continue going forward.

Funding from OGP financed key elements of the co-creation process, such as media engagement. It also enabled stakeholder and community engagement and enabled the MSF to reach over 1,200 community members during the consultation phase. Finally, OGP funding also allowed for the creation of a safe space for marginalised groups, such as persons living with disability and persons living with HIV/AIDS, during the consultation process.³⁰

Therefore, it would be desirable if STMA had a dedicated budget for the OGP process. The strong performance of STMA on the co-creation process for the current action plan was in part due to the financial support of the Multi-Donor Trust Fund. It would be desirable for STMA to have an alternative budget for the process in order to ensure sustainability beyond the duration of the funding. Because of the financial constraints that STMA and other metropolitan, municipal, and district assemblies (MMDAs) face, there is no dedicated budget for OGP from the internal resources of the assembly.

These recommendations will face a number of challenges, notably the fact that local governments depend heavily on central government budgetary allocations, especially the District Assembly Common Fund.³¹ Therefore, there is a limit to what the STMA can independently do to address this issue.

¹ Isaac Aidoo, interview by IRM researcher, 1 April 2019.

² "Second Ordinary Meeting of the First Session of the Seventh Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly held on 24th and 26 August 2016 at the Assembly's Chamber", Minutes on file, No. STMA/LG 4/VOL 4. The text of the minutes of the meeting of the Assembly where the resolution was passed reads as follows: "After deliberations on the benefits of the OGP, the house resolved that the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly has embraced OGP and its principals; would do all within its power in the dissemination of information on the OGP, work with all relevant stakeholders to promote inclusive governance and the success of the subnational pilot program."

³ "STMA launches co-creation process for the 2018-2020 OGP Local Action Plan", Ghana News Agency, 15 July 2018, <http://www.ghananewsagency.org/politics/stma-launches-co-creation-process-for-the-2018-2020-ogp-local-action-plan-135609>.

⁴ Isaac Aidoo, interview by IRM researcher, 1 April 2019.

⁵ Support from the multi-donor trust fund helped improved the quality of the co-creation process and resulted in commitments that reflected the aspirations of the public. It facilitated the work of the consortium of NGOs that was formed to work with the assembly to co-create the action plan. This enabled the broad consultations which formed the basis of the second local action plan, as well as capacity-building or training workshops for members of the MSF and selected community champions. (Isaac Aidoo, interview by IRM researcher, 1 April 2019; Aziz Mahmoud, STMA-CSU, interview by IRM researcher, 2 April 2019.)

⁶ Rhoda Danquah, interview by IRM researcher, 1 April 2019.

⁷ Aziz Mahmoud, STMA-CSU, interview by IRM researcher, 2 April 2019; Ebow Barker, Senior Project Officer, Berea Social Foundation, interview by IRM researcher, 3 April 2019; and Solomon Kusi, interview by IRM researcher, 6 April 2019.

⁸ Acting Contrary to Process - Country did not meet (1) "involve" during the development or "inform" during implementation of the NAP (2) government fails to collect, publish, and document a repository on the national OGP website/webpage in line with IRM guidance.

⁹ "IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum", IAP2, 2014,

http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/foundations_course/IAP2_P2_Spectrum_FINAL.pdf.

¹⁰ Isaac Aidoo, interview by IRM researcher, 1 April 2019.

¹¹ The WT comprised of the Presiding Member of STMA, the Assistant Development Officer/OGP Point of Contact (POC), three CSO representatives, a traditional leader, a representative of the private sector, a representative of vulnerable groups, and a media person (STMA LAP).

¹² Isaac Aidoo, interview by IRM researcher, 1 April 2019.

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- ¹³ “Reports on Engagements in the Co-Creation Process of 2018-2020 Local Action Plan (LAP II)”, STMA files.
- ¹⁴ Ebow Barker, Senior Project Officer, Berea Social Foundation, interview by IRM researcher, 3 April 2019.
- ¹⁵ “Reports on Engagements in the Co-Creation Process of 2018-2020 Local Action Plan (LAP II)”, STMA files.
- ¹⁶ “OGP Local Action Plan II Co-Creation Notice!!!”, STMA files, STMA/LG47/54.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ “Address delivered by the Metro Chief Executive, Hon. Anthony K. K. Sam at the official launch of STMA’s co-creation process”, Akroma Plaza Hotel, Takoradi, 13 July 2018.
- ¹⁹ “Report on Open Government Partnership (OGP) Capacity Building on Social Accountability and Advocacy Tools Workshop”, Akroma Plaza Hotel, Takoradi, STMA files, 29 August 2018.
- ²⁰ STMA LAP II document, p. 13.
- ²¹ Solomon Kusi Ampofo, “Facilitation of the OGP Participation and Co-Creation Process in Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis,” Akroma Plaza, Takoradi, 18 September 2018; Isaac Aidoo, interview by IRM researcher, 1 April 2019; Isaac Aidoo, written communication with IRM researcher, 21 August 2019; Aziz Mahmoud, STMA-CSU, written communication with IRM researcher, 21 August 2019.
- ²² Isaac Aidoo, interview by IRM researcher, 1 April 2019.
- ²³ Aziz Mahmoud, STMA-CSU, interview by IRM researcher, 2 April 2019; Isaac Aidoo, written communication with IRM researcher, 21 August 2019; Aziz Mahmoud, STMA-CSU, written communication with IRM researcher, 21 August 2019.
- ²⁴ Richard Adjorlolo, interview by IRM researcher, 2 April 2019.
- ²⁵ Isaac Aidoo, interview by IRM researcher, 1 April 2019; Nana Kofi Abuna V, interview by IRM researcher, 4 April 2019.
- ²⁶ Reports on the meetings of the Working Team, STMA files.
- ²⁷ Isaac Aidoo, interview by IRM researcher, 1 April 2019; Alexander Effum, interview by IRM researcher, 3 April, 2019.
- ²⁸ Isaac Aidoo, interview by IRM researcher, 1 April 2019.
- ²⁹ Presentation by Solomon Kusi Ampofo, Friends of the Nation, Akroma Plaza, Takoradi, 18 September 2018.
- ³⁰ Isaac Aidoo, written communication with IRM researcher, 21 August 2019; Aziz Mahmoud, written communication with IRM researcher, 21 August 2019.
- ³¹ “The Local Government System in Ghana”, no date,
http://www.clgf.org.uk/default/assets/File/Country_profiles/Ghana.pdf.

IV. Commitments

All OGP-participating governments develop OGP action plans that include concrete commitments over a two-year period. Governments begin their OGP action plans by sharing existing efforts related to open government, including specific strategies and ongoing programs.

Commitments should be appropriate to each country's/entity's unique circumstances and challenges. OGP commitments should also be relevant to OGP values laid out in the OGP Articles of Governance and Open Government Declaration signed by all OGP-participating countries.¹ The indicators and method used in the IRM research can be found in the IRM Procedures Manual.² A summary of key indicators the IRM assesses is below:

- **Verifiability:**
 - Not specific enough to verify: As written in the commitment, do the objectives stated and actions proposed lack sufficient clarity and specificity for their completion to be objectively verified through a subsequent assessment process?
 - Specific enough to verify: As written in the commitment, are the objectives stated and actions proposed sufficiently clear and specific to allow for their completion to be objectively verified through a subsequent assessment process?
- **Relevance:** This variable evaluates the commitment's relevance to OGP values. Based on a close reading of the commitment text as stated in the action plan, the guiding questions to determine the relevance are:
 - Access to Information: Will the government disclose more information or improve the quality of the information disclosed to the public?
 - Civic Participation: Will the government create or improve opportunities or capabilities for the public to inform or influence decisions or policies?
 - Public Accountability: Will the government create or improve public facing opportunities to hold officials answerable for their actions?
 - Technology & Innovation for Transparency and Accountability: Will technological innovation be used in conjunction with one of the other three OGP values to advance either transparency or accountability?
- **Potential impact:** This variable assesses the potential impact of the commitment, if completed as written. The IRM researcher uses the text from the action plan to:
 - Identify the social, economic, political, or environmental problem;
 - Establish the status quo at the outset of the action plan; and
 - Assess the degree to which the commitment, if implemented, would impact performance and tackle the problem.
- **Completion:** This variable assesses the commitment's implementation and progress. This variable is assessed at the end of the action plan cycle, in the IRM Implementation Report.
- **Did It Open Government?:** This variable attempts to move beyond measuring outputs and deliverables to looking at how the government practice, in areas relevant to OGP values, has changed as a result of the commitment's implementation. This variable is assessed at the end of the action plan cycle, in the IRM Implementation Report.

What makes a potentially starred commitment?

A potentially starred commitment has more potential to be ambitious and to be implemented. A good commitment is one that clearly describes the:

1. Problem: What is the economic, social, political, or environmental problem? Rather than describing an administrative issue or tool (e.g., "Misallocation of welfare funds" is more helpful than "lacking a website.").
2. Status quo: What is the status quo of the policy issue at the beginning of an action plan (e.g., "26 percent of judicial corruption complaints are not processed currently.")?
3. Change: Rather than stating intermediary outputs, what is the targeted behavior change that is expected from the commitment's implementation (e.g., "Doubling response rates to information requests" is a stronger goal than "publishing a protocol for response.")?

Starred commitments

One measure, the “starred commitment” (★), deserves further explanation due to its particular interest to readers and usefulness for encouraging a race to the top among OGP-participating countries/entities. Starred commitments are considered exemplary OGP commitments. To receive a star, a commitment must meet several criteria:

- Potential star: the commitment’s design should be verifiable, relevant to OGP values, and have transformative potential impact.
- The government must make significant progress on this commitment during the action plan implementation period, receiving an assessment of Substantial or Complete implementation.

This variable is assessed at the end of the action plan cycle, in the Implementation IRM report.

General Overview of the Commitments

The action plan focused on five key areas, namely 1) transparency in the provision of public infrastructure, 2) fiscal transparency, 3) permitting and enforcement of land use and spatial planning, 4) access to information, and 5) provision of sanitation services. Some of these commitments, such as the second and fifth, are extensions or continuations of the first action plan. The commitments also make explicit references to how their implementation would contribute to the achievement of specific Sustainable Development Goals. Each commitment also comes with a detailed list of time-bound milestones, together with accompanying list of resources necessary to see to their implementation.

¹ “Open Government Partnership: Articles of Governance”, OGP, June 2012 (Updated March 2014 and April 2015), https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/OGP_Articles-Gov_Apr-21-2015.pdf.

² “IRM Procedures Manual”, OGP, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/irm-procedures-manual>.

I. Transparency and Accountability in Public Infrastructure

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

“Enhance transparency and accountability in the delivery of public infrastructure by publishing project and contract information; develop mechanisms for citizens to monitor and report on implementation.”

Milestones:

1. Foster partnership with the relevant local and international organisations, the Public Procurement Authority (PPA) and other actors to develop and launch web-based geo-spatial Information Platform for Public Infrastructure;
 - a. Where procuring entities of infrastructure projects disclose and share information in a disaggregated and user friendly format.
 - b. Where citizens can monitor implementation, report and receive feedback on public infrastructure delivery in the Metropolis
2. Test and pilot the Information Platform through field and lab tests to identify and improve its usability. Two (2) communities, where there is an on-going infrastructure project, would be sensitized on how to use the application to generate the needed feedback on usability.
3. Design mechanisms to officially launch and publicize the Information Platform for Public Infrastructure. Test the various outreach methods to determine which reach the most people and are most comprehensible.
4. The Metropolitan Assembly and the MSF will foster partnership with the relevant local and international organisations, using the PPA Act, will develop and disseminate a simplified procurement manual detailing out the steps, procedures, timelines, tasks and responsibilities for public procurement in a user friendly format which will also be shared on community notice boards, town hall meetings. We will also leverage on the existing time with community and the Media network to be established for education and dissemination.
5. Build the capacity and leverage on the diversity of the Multi-Stakeholder Forum (MSF) to lead, plan and dialogue on key issues regarding public infrastructure in the Metropolis. This could be replicated to the other local government in the western region of Ghana.
6. Foster partnership with the relevant local and international organisations to build the capacity of 100 CSOs and media through workshops to raise awareness of the importance of transparency and accountability in public infrastructure.
7. Partner with the relevant local and international organisations to select and train 200 community champions to empower them to use information on public infrastructure to demand for accountability. The trainees will constitute monitoring groups and they would be involved in the STMA's scheduled monitoring visits to compare the disclosed data with direct observation, reviewing materials and assessing their status. The training will be evaluated to ensure that the community champions are able to engage with the platform and actually submit inquiries.
8. Institute a Media Award for outstanding work in reporting important issues on public infrastructure projects.
9. Expand the existing „Assembly on radio“ to include CSOs and citizens to discuss key issues identified on infrastructure projects. The effect of the Media Award and radio debates on public confidence will be measured through a co-designed survey measuring trust in government.
10. Conduct a broader evaluation of the impact of the IPPI on project transparency, as measured through disparities between direct observations and IPPI records. ¹

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	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
1. Overall		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

The award of contracts for infrastructural projects is one of the most common sources of embezzlement and other forms of corruption in Ghana.² The annual audits of the Public Procurement Authority and sittings of the Public Interest and Accountability Committee (PIAC) of parliament regularly brings to light many procurement breaches, often involving large sums of money. This is compounded by widespread suspicion that the public procurement process provides an avenue for politicians and senior public officials to either extract monies illegally from the state or to reward partisan associates.³ Moreover, there are virtually no means by which citizens can monitor and directly report to responsible officials about the state of ongoing public infrastructural projects. This has resulted in widespread cynicism at both the national and local level about the integrity of the procurement process.⁴

To address these problems, the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly (STMA) plans to produce an accessible information sheet on the procurement process for the general public. The assembly has entered into a partnership with Construction Sector Transparency (CoST), a global initiative that promotes transparency and accountability in the provision of public infrastructure.⁵ The assembly plans to adopt the CoST Infrastructure Data Standard in order to make procurement of data easily and widely accessible to the public.⁶

To encourage citizen engagement and monitoring, STMA plans to launch an online geospatial-based information platform where citizens can have access to public procurement information and monitor progress of public works. Citizens can also report unsatisfactory progress of work through this platform. The assembly is building the capacity of staff to respond adequately and in a timely fashion to complaints when they arise.⁷ Finally, this commitment involves setting up an award for outstanding reporting on infrastructural projects in order to encourage media houses to focus on this issue.

This commitment is relevant to the OGP value of access to information because it involves measures to increase the amount and quality of information available to the public, such as development of the web-based geospatial information platform and a simplified procurement manual for the public. It is also relevant to the OGP values of civic participation and public accountability as it aims to train media, CSOs, and community members to demand accountability on infrastructure issues. Most importantly, the online portal will provide a mechanism for citizens to submit comments and concerns. Assembly staff are also to receive training to improve responsiveness to public demands or queries. Finally, because the commitment seeks to make use of the web-based geospatial information platform to enhance access to information on infrastructural projects, it is relevant to the OGP value of the use of technology and innovation for openness and accountability.

The commitment is specific enough to verify its completion. If this is fully implemented, it is likely to bring about a transformative change. It will open up an aspect of governance which tends to be opaque to public view. In interviews with the IRM researcher, the OGP POC and Metropolitan Budget Analysts⁸ noted that this would bring a marked shift in the practice that prevailed in the past, where the assembly starts infrastructural projects without consulting the communities, and thus, discouraging the communities from owning these projects. Greater procurement transparency and citizen input provide the necessary prerequisites for public accountability. However, training to ensure public uptake of these resources and government responsiveness are the core ingredients for social accountability. The creation of citizen-monitoring groups and a media award to incentivise public uptake of procurement information give this commitment its transformative potential.

Implementation of this commitment is likely to generate benefits that could extend beyond the provision of infrastructure. For instance, collaboration between citizens and local government officials in the monitoring of projects is likely to bring local governance closer to the public and generate more trust between people and their local leaders. This is likely to further increase public participation in local governance, which tends to be very low across the country, according to the CDD-Ghana report cited earlier.

Two challenges may limit implementation of this commitment. First, the national government's delayed release of infrastructure project funds may pose a challenge to timely release of public procurement information at the local level. Delayed disbursement poses a serious problem to infrastructural project completion across the country, as a recent report indicated.⁹ Second, the commitment was designed with funding from donor partners. When this funding cycle ends and is not renewed, the assembly is going to face serious challenges in financing future commitment design process. This issue goes beyond STMA, as the assembly's revenue-generating capacity is limited, and it must rely on subventions from government, which are often not enough to finance all the assembly's expenditure for the fiscal year. This issue emerged during the interviews, especially with Abdul Aziz of the Citywide Settlement Upgrading Fund (STMA-CSUF), Nana Kofi Abuna V, and Isaac Aidoo, the OGP POC. All respondents expressed anxiety about the viability of the entire OGP process after the current funding cycle ends. As a short-term measure, the IRM researcher recommends exploring funding opportunities within Ghana, for instance, from national philanthropic and civil society organisations, such as STAR-Ghana.

Next steps

The IRM researcher makes the following recommendations:

- This commitment should be prioritised in future action plans. The commitment can have potentially high impact that can restructure the current relationship between the people and the assembly.
- The commitment fosters active engagement between local government officials and representatives of CSOs in the implementation design. This should also be continued in subsequent action plans.
- The implementation of this commitment could benefit from the inclusion of enforcement and accountability mechanisms to ensure that complaints and findings from community champions and the general public are adequately dealt with.

¹ "STMA Local Action Plan 2018-2020", Open Government Partnership, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Sekondi-Takoradi_Action-Plan_2018-2020.pdf.

² "Ghana Corruption Report", GAN Business Anti-Corruption Portal, September 2016.

³ See, for instance, "Bawumia bemoans corruption in public procurement", Daily Graphic, 26 June 2018, <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/bawumia-bemoans-corruption-in-public-procurement.html>; "Report: Massive Violation of Public Procurement Law", Myjoyonline, 12 November 2018, <https://www.myjoyonline.com/news/2018/November-12th/report-mass-violation-of-public-procurement-law.php>.

⁴ "Main Report: The IEA Corruption Survey", The Institute of Economic Affairs, 2016, <https://ieagh.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/IEA-CORRUPTION-SURVEY-REPORT.pdf>; "Construction Business and Corruption Are Twins", Modern Ghana, 27 December 2018, <https://www.modernghana.com/news/906220/construction-business-and-corruption-are-twins.html>.

⁵ Isaac Aidoo, interview by IRM researcher, 1 April 2019.

⁶ "Address delivered by Mayor of Sekondi-Takoradi", 13 March 2019, STMA Conference Room.

⁷ Kofi Yeboah, interview by IRM researcher, 4 April 2019.

⁸ Similar views were expressed by the Chief of Essipon, Nana Kofi Abuna V, as well as CSO representatives like Abdul Aziz of STMA-CSUF, and Ebow Barker of the Berea Social Foundation.

⁹ “Delayed government disbursement threatens infrastructural growth – Report”, GhanaWeb, 16 April 2018, <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/business/Delayed-government-disbursement-threatens-infrastructure-growth-Report-643448>; “IDEG calls for immediate disbursement of Common Fund”, The Common Fund Newsletter, Issue 2, December 2014.

2. Civic Participation and Fiscal Transparency

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

“Enhance civic participation by empowering citizens in decisions related to development planning, composite budgeting and fee fixing; create a localised standard operating procedure for streamlining financial records management and sharing.”

Milestones:

1. Sensitise the public on the planning and budget process and disseminate simplified information on the Assembly’s 2019 Action Plan and Composite Budget in the three sub-metropolitan councils.

The efficacy of the sensitisation and dissemination of the simplified information will be evaluated to determine if people are able to understand the budget process and information
2. Build the capacity of 250 people (government, civil society organizations, marginalised groups, traditional leaders, private sector, the media and selected community champions) to understand the planning, budget formulation fee fixing processes and understanding the annual financial account statement and how they can effectively engage with the Assembly.

The efficacy of the training will be evaluated to determine if people are able to understand the budget process and information.
3. The Metropolitan Assembly to work closely with the 250 trained community champions to develop inclusive, participatory specific community action plans for each community in STMA through a bottom-up approach to capture the felt needs and aspirations of the citizens. This bottom-up approach will include an iterative evaluation to measure the quality of the plans and which residents are making inputs. These documents will serve as inputs into the preparation of the new 4-year Medium-Term Development Plan (2022-2025) of the Assembly. *The last time the Assembly adopted this approach was in 2012 in partnership with Global Communities (formerly CHF), a non-governmental organization to develop 35 communities action plans.*
4. Develop and disseminate simplified version of development plan, budget and fee fixing documents to engage citizens and other stakeholders. The Metropolitan Assembly will make use of the 250 trained people to champion this initiative and leverage on the existing “Time with community” to educate, discuss and take citizens inputs.
5. Develop an STMA operating procedure for financial data sharing. We will develop operating guidelines on format (simplified template for disaggregating revenue generated and utilization according to each sub metro within STMA.) and time of delivery of financial information and collection of feedback.
6. Develop and test 3 to 5 financial data sharing “use cases” and test them through field and lab experiments to evaluate whether they improve comprehension, engagement, and trust in government. Engage citizens, and Assembly Officers, to develop a preliminary set of current “use cases” to requesting and obtaining financial data. “Use cases” will encompass both requests for internal use, and sharing financial information outside of the Assembly through town hall meetings, community engagement, media engagement, community notices boards, Assembly website.
7. Develop, mount and update Community notices boards, upgrade its website and also use the media, and other social media platforms to disseminate the simplified planning, budget fee fixing resolution documents and the annual financial account statement.

Social media research trials will be used to evaluate how effective different outreach messages are at attracting engagement.

8. Institute an award scheme to recognize and award deserving Assembly Members, Citizens and institutions for dedication and volunteerism. The effect of the award scheme on community pride will be measured through a co-designed survey.¹

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	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
1. Overall		✓	✓	✓				✓		Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.					

Context and Objectives

The commitment aims to encourage citizen participation in local government fiscal planning. The Local Governance Act 2016² and other supporting legislations (such as the Public Financial Management Act and the National Development Planning System Regulations)³ to make public consultation a prerequisite for local level budgeting, fee fixing, and development planning. However, this hardly translates into reality for a number of reasons. Across the country, public participation in local governance tends to be low and awareness of technical aspects, such as budgeting, tend to be even lower. For instance, a nationwide study by the Ghana Centre of Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) found that less than a quarter of respondents were aware of Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDA) processes for determining property rates, licences, and fees, while only 33 percent were aware that MMDAs were obligated to seek citizens' input when preparing development plans.⁴

In Sekondi-Takoradi, only well-established representatives of CSOs and social groups directly participate in fee fixing and medium-term plan development.⁵ A similar situation prevails across the country, resulting in fees, rates, and development plans that fail to reflect the interests or priorities of the poor and marginalised.⁶ Officials from the STMA Budget and Planning offices stated that this situation results in a lack of public identification with the assembly's development plans, cynicism about the budget, and resistance to rates and fees.⁷

This reform builds on two commitments in the previous action plan. The first commitment aimed to publish financial information in accessible formats and saw limited implementation. STMA began to develop an operating procedure and guidelines for sharing financial information and collecting feedback. The international organisation Engine Room also drafted a data-sharing protocol. The second commitment resulted in partnership between STMA and business associations to set new fee rates for 2018 in a participatory manner.⁸

This commitment is relevant to the OGP value of access to information because it seeks to provide accessible information to the public in a variety of formats, including online, community notice boards, and via local radio stations. It is also relevant to the OGP value of civic participation as 250 CSO and community leaders will be trained on the planning, budgeting, and fee fixing process to better engage the assembly. This commitment involves various units of the assembly (such as Budgeting and Development Planning) working together with a number of influential civil society organisations (such as the Berea Social Foundation, Friends of the Nation, and the Centre for Democratic Development).

The commitment is specific enough to verify its completion. If fully implemented, the commitment has a moderate potential to increase transparency and public participation in the budget process.⁹ Representatives of the core CSO partners in the OGP process, namely Aziz Mahmoud (STMA-CSUF), Solomon Kusi Ampofo (Friends of the Nation), and Ebow Barker (BSF)¹⁰ expressed optimism that, if implemented as written, this commitment would demystify the workings of the assembly to the general public. The people who will be trained under this commitment include members of marginalised groups, which will enhance the general inclusiveness of the assembly. Further, officials of the STMA budgeting office stated that by directly involving the public in fixing rates, this commitment could reduce resistance towards payment of fees and tolls levied by the assembly.¹¹ This could, thus, help the assembly to increase revenue.

Next steps

The IRM researcher makes the following recommendations:

- It is laudable that this commitment involves capacity building for CSO representations and selected community members. This should be continued in future action plans.
- Consulting with representatives of CSOs and other social groups is an important first step. Going forward, implementers could ensure that representatives of the multi-stakeholder forum (MSF) report back to their organisations or associations on the consultations and decisions made.
- The assembly should consider adopting open data formats that would enable citizens, CSOs, and experts to analyse fiscal data.
- The assembly should also consider building in elements of participatory budgeting and citizen monitoring of actual spending or expenditure.

¹ “STMA Local Action Plan 2018-2020”, Open Government Partnership, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Sekondi-Takoradi_Action-Plan_2018-2020.pdf.

² Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936), https://ghalii.org/gh/gh/legislation/LOCAL%20GOVERNANCE%20ACT%2C%202016_3.pdf.

³ Public Financial Manage Act, 2016 (Act 921), <https://www.mofep.gov.gh/sites/default/files/reports/economic/PUBLIC%20FINANCIAL%20MANAGT.%20%20ACT%2C%202016.pdf>; National Development Planning (System) Act, 1994 (Act 480): Public Financial Manage Act, 2016 (Act 921).

⁴ “A Survey on Citizen Participation in Local Governance” CDD-Ghana Research Paper #25, 2015.

⁵ “STMA Local Action Plan 2018-2020”, Open Government Partnership, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Sekondi-Takoradi_Action-Plan_2018-2020.pdf; This is a long-standing problem in the district assemblies across the country: “Survey shows lack of consultation in fixing fees by district assemblies”, GhanaWeb, 24 July 2008, <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Survey-shows-lack-of-consultation-in-fixing-fees-by-district-assemblies-147392>.

⁶ “Citizens to be involved in MMDAs Planning and Budgeting Process”, NewsGhana, 14 February 2017, <https://www.newsghana.com.gh/citizens-to-be-involved-in-mmdas-planning-and-budgeting-process/>.

⁷ Rhoda Kankam Danquah, Efuwa Sintim Aboagye, and Alfred Nyantakyi, interview by IRM researcher, 1 April 2019.

⁸ “Sekondi-Takoradi Final IRM Report 2017”, Open Government Partnership, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/sekondi-takoradi-final-report-2017/>.

⁹ “Final report, Survey of local government taxation capacity, 2017: findings and policy implications,” IGC, 2017, S-33417-GHA-1, http://www.mlgrd.gov.gh/ctn-media/filer_public/02/19/02197feb-197e-4a23-a32b-6af52c44289d/internally_generated_funds_survey_report_final.pdf; “A Survey on Citizen Participation in Local Governance”, CDD-Ghana Research Paper #25, 2015.

¹⁰ Aziz Mahmoud, STMA-CSUF, interview by IRM researcher, 2 April 2019; Solomon Kusi Ampofo, Friends of the Nation, 6 April 2019; Ebow Barker, BSF, 3 April 2019.

¹¹ Rhoda Kankam Danquah, Efuwa Sintim Aboagye, and Alfred Nyantakyi, interview by IRM researcher, 1 April 2019.

3. Public Service Delivery (Permitting and Enforcement of Land Use and Spatial Plans)

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

“Improve transparency and reduce bureaucracy in the acquisition development permits through a smart governance system.”

Milestones:

1. Procure, install and operationalize a geospatial platform to enhance the processing of developments and building permits. The platform will aid prospective developers and business operators to track and monitor their applications from the submission to the final approval and collection stage.
2. Establish a technical working team to
 - ensure the implementation of the geospatial platform.
 - coordinate the integration of all land development revenues (property tax and business operating permits) data unto the platform to aid in data usage and management..
3. Develop mechanisms for updating database. The Metropolitan Physical Planning Department will work with the relevant departments to update database on development to allow easy access to information and local revenue mobilisation.
4. Ensure real time monitoring through the introduction of surveillance drone-: Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (VAN). The Metropolitan Assembly will procure VAN to assist in real time monitoring. This will ensure prompt responsiveness to unauthorised development.
5. Build the capacity of building inspectors and revenue collectors to effectively use the geospatial platform to track and monitor development.
6. Institute mechanisms to enhance permit acquisition. The Metropolitan Assembly will adopt mechanisms such monthly meeting of the Spatial Planning Committee to reduce the turnaround time for permitting.
7. Develop a comprehensive communication plan. The Metropolitan Assembly will develop this plan to educate and sensitize the public on how to access the platform and permitting processes and procedures leveraging on the Multi-stakeholder forum, media and the existing community engagement.¹

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?			
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	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
1. Overall		✓	✓			✓			✓		Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.			

Context and Objectives

Land use and spatial planning present big problems in the various local government areas across the country. One of the main problems has to do with excessive delays in acquiring building permits for private development. These delays are caused by factors such as use of a manual instead of a digital application process. The complexity of the process renders it obscure to applicants.² This lack of

transparency creates the incentive for corruption and frustrates the public who are anxious to commence building projects. As a result, many ongoing private physical development projects around the country are unauthorised.³ This disrupts the official spatial planning designs and limits the ability of the local governments to levy and collect housing rates. Many of these unauthorised structures are built on waterways, frequently resulting in flooding, property destruction, and unfortunate loss of lives. This, in turn, necessitates occasional demolition exercises across the country.⁴

This commitment seeks to address these problems by promoting transparency of the permitting process. The central component of this commitment involves the deployment of a publicly-accessible geospatial monitoring platform to facilitate monitoring of private and public development projects. This would allow prospective developers to track their applications from submission to collection stage. Under this commitment, the inhouse workflow is being streamlined to make the process more efficient.⁵ As part of this strategy, the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly (STMA) plans to utilise surveillance drones to assist in real-time monitoring and to ensure speedy action on unauthorised development projects. The assembly also plans to have public education forums on the use of this platform.⁶

This commitment is relevant to the OGP value of utilising technology and innovation for openness and accountability, due to the inclusion of the geospatial internet platform. It is also relevant to the value of access to information, as the platform will allow individuals, prospective developers, and business operators to track and monitor their application progress. This will be complemented by public education on how to access the platform. This commitment is specific enough to verify its completion.

This commitment has a moderate potential to improve government delivery of permits and spatial planning through increased transparency of the permit and planning process. Kofi Yeboah, head of the STMA Physical Planning Office, shared that the benefits of this commitment are likely to be far-reaching.⁷ For instance, speedy processing of permit applications will encourage more people to apply for building permits before commencing private developments.⁸ This would give the assembly more control over spatial development, and begin to address the problem of flooding in the metropolis.⁹ In addition, opportunity for local officials to extort bribes will be significantly reduced because applicants will be able to monitor the progress of their application in real time. Moreover, the use of the surveillance drones will allow the assembly to effectively monitor the state of physical development in the twin city. Finally, as the Physical Planning Officer observed, this commitment could enhance STMA's ability to generate more revenue through issuance of permits and updated database for the collection of housing rate.¹⁰ These views were shared by other representatives on the multi-stakeholder forum (MSF). For instance, Seth Nyarko, a National Health Insurance Scheme representative, opined that if this commitment was implemented, it would bring about a marked improvement in the lives of the people.¹¹

Next steps

The IRM researcher makes the following recommendations:

- If continued in future action plans, this commitment could incorporate a participatory element by training stakeholders—like CSO representatives or community champions—in the use of the geospatial platform to enable them to also track and monitor spatial developments in the metropolis.
- The action plan could also integrate an accountability mechanism, notably by allowing citizens to address issues deemed problematic either in the instrument or in the awarding of Land Use permits.
- As written, this commitment could minimise the incidence of corruption that tends to be associated with the permit application process. However, it could further tighten these measures by including strong sanctions against any identified instance of corruption.

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- ¹ “STMA Local Action Plan 2018-2020”, Open Government Partnership, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Sekondi-Takoradi_Action-Plan_2018-2020.pdf.
- ² Zaney, G.D., “Reforming licencing, permitting and certification regime for business operations in Ghana”, Ghana.gov.gh, <http://www.ghana.gov.gh/index.php/media-center/features/2868-reforming-the-licensing-permitting-and-certification-regime-for-business-operations-in-ghana>.
- ³ “Issue building permits within 90 days”, Daily Graphic, 15 March 2014, <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/issue-building-permits-within-90-days.html>.
- ⁴ “Demolition Rocks Takoradi”, Modern Ghana, 8 February 2014, <https://www.modernghana.com/news/521750/demolition-rocks-takoradi.html>; “Massive demolition at Madina leaves hundreds homeless and without workplaces”, Ghana Web, 24 April 2019, <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Massive-demolition-at-Madina-leaves-hundreds-homeless-and-without-workplaces-740955>.
- ⁵ Kofi Yeboah, interview by IRM researcher, 4 April 2019.
- ⁶ STMA LAP II document, pp. 24-27.
- ⁷ Kofi Yeboah, interview by IRM researcher, 4 April 2019.
- ⁸ “Issue building permits within 90 days”, Daily Graphic, 15 March 2014, <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/issue-building-permits-within-90-days.html>.
- ⁹ Agyeman, Stephen, Samuel Boamah Asiedu, and Zoya Evans Kpamma, “Challenges in the processing of building permits in Ghana – a precursor for development of illegal structures”, Proceedings of the 7th Annual International Applied Research Conference, July 2014.
- ¹⁰ Kofi Yeboah, interview by IRM researcher, 4 April 2019.
- ¹¹ Seth Nyarko, interview by IRM researcher, 3 April 2019.

4. Public Service Delivery Communication and Citizen Feedback

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

“Strengthen the Client Service Unit of the Assembly by creating a centralised communication platform and outlet to enable citizens to access key information, report complaints and receive feedback on municipal services.”

Milestones:

1. Liaise with relevant public facing departments and unit of the Assembly to Identify and collate the various information needs of citizens to update the Service Charter.
2. Strengthen and equip the Client Service unit.
 - Build capacity of client service staff
 - Re-activate and operationalize various communication mediums (toll free line, email, SMS, Website, Social Media, Assembly Brochures, Suggestion Boxes).

This process will involve continuous A/B testing on these different outreach methods to determine which is most effective at increasing engagement, and which community members they are able to engage.
3. Re-activate and expand the Smartsol2 to provide information through field and lab evaluations.
 - Municipal services
 - Financial information on revenue and expenditure
4. Take stock of the performance and satisfaction levels of citizens on public services rendered by the STMA, government institutions and other agencies (ECG, GWCL, GPHA, GRC) for continuous improvement by
 - Preparing the 3rd citizens report card
 - Instituting annual social accountability forum using Community Scorecards

The Community Scorecards will go through rapid iterative testing to ensure that the final design is effective at increasing pro-social behaviours
5. Provide notice boards in selected communities within the Metropolis to display relevant information. ¹

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	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
1. Overall		✓	✓			✓		✓			Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

This commitment seeks to reactivate communication channels between the assembly and citizens to improve public service delivery. The assembly and CSO partners will update the citizen Service Charter and reactivate online and offline channels for citizens to submit public service complaints. Public-facing units of the assembly would also be trained on client-service delivery. Finally, this commitment calls for continued monitoring of citizen satisfaction with public service delivery through a third citizen report card.

Launched in 2011, the IncluCity program sought to increase public engagement with government service delivery in Sekondi-Takoradi and Accra. The program was managed by Global Communities and Funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Within this program, STMA prepared a Client Service Charter that outlined what services citizens can expect and how to provide feedback.² A Client Service Unit was established along with a toll-free hotline.³ The hotline received an average of 23 calls a day, 70 percent of which could be settled immediately without referral. The program also introduced the first citizens' report cards on public service delivery in Sekondi-Takoradi in 2012.⁴ In 2015, STMA partnered with Global Communities to launch the SmartSol platform to monitor and accept citizen feedback on public service delivery. It was the first website of its kind in the country, and aimed to allow citizens to submit comments on services such as streetlights, education, waste management, and construction. However, a combination of weak capacity of STMA and unenthusiastic response from citizens prevented these tools from reaching their fullest potential.⁵ At the time of writing, the SmartSol website is not operational.⁶

This commitment is relevant to the OGP value of access to information, as the assembly will proactively share public service information as well as reactively respond to citizen feedback. Government renewal of the SmartSol platform for citizen complaints makes this commitment relevant to the values technology and innovation and openness and accountability. The IRM did not find evidence that the government would be required to respond to citizen feedback, and therefore this commitment does not meet the threshold for the OGP value of public accountability as written.

This commitment is specific enough to verify its completion. If fully implemented as written, it is likely to have a minor impact on citizen feedback on public service delivery. Reinvigorating channels for citizen complaint and comments on government service delivery is an important step towards a more transparent and open assembly.⁷ However, previous attempts to implement the SmartSol platform and other accountability tools included in this commitment have fallen short. This was a result of a lack of assembly officials' capacity and low public trust. The milestones included begin to address these challenges through training for public officials and greater dissemination of these tools' availability to the public. However, they represent only an incremental step beyond the status quo. This commitment could prove to have a greater open government impact if implementation leads to improved government service provision. Therefore, documented government responses to citizen input on service delivery would demonstrate open government results.

Next steps

The IRM makes the following recommendations:

- Government responsiveness to citizen complaints should be facilitated through clear procedural guidelines and consequences for failure to respond in a timely manner.
- The assembly should provide transparency around citizen complaints received and the government's response. Disclosed information could include the channels most used, complaints received in regard to quantity and content, how complaints are processed and responded to, and average response time.
- Citizen report cards and community scorecard results should be made public.

¹ "STMA Local Action Plan 2018-2020", Open Government Partnership, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Sekondi-Takoradi_Action-Plan_2018-2020.pdf.

² "IncluCity Mid-Term Progress Report", Global Communities, 2014, <https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/2014-ghana-inclucity-report.pdf>.

³ "NGO launches online platform to improve service delivery", Ghana Web, January 2016, <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/regional/artikel.php?ID=342808>.

⁴ "Sekondi-Takoradi Citizens' Report Card 2012", Global Communities, [https://www.globalcommunities.org/publications/STMA%20Citizens%27%20Report%20Card%20\(small\).pdf](https://www.globalcommunities.org/publications/STMA%20Citizens%27%20Report%20Card%20(small).pdf).

⁵ Isaac Aidoo, OGP POC, interview by IRM researcher, 1 April 2019; Hon. John Buckman, interview by IRM researcher, 1 April 2019; “STMA Local Action Plan 2018-2020”, Open Government Partnership, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Sekondi-Takoradi_Action-Plan_2018-2020.pdf.

⁶ “About”, STMA Smartsol, <http://twincityghana.com/about-smartsol>.

⁷ For instance, Isaac Aidoo, OGP POC, interview by IRM researcher, 1 April 2019; John Buckman, STMA PM, interview by IRM researcher, 1 April 2019; Richard Adjorlolo, ST Chamber of Commerce and Industry, interview by IRM researcher, 2 April 2019; Aziz Mahmoud, STMA-CSUF, interview by IRM researcher, 2 April 2019; Abdul Salaam Mohammed, Global Communities, interview by IRM researcher, 2 April 2019; Christiana Quansah, Ghana Federation of Disability, interview by IRM researcher, 2 April 2019; Ebow Barker, BSF, interview by IRM researcher, 3 April 2019; Samuel Amissah, STMA AM, interview by IRM researcher, 4 April 2019; Solomon Ampofo, Friends of the Nation, interview by IRM researcher, 6 April 2019.

5. Public Services – Sanitation

Language of the commitment as it appears in the action plan:

“Implement the new model of collaboration between STMA and landlords to increase the coverage of household toilets.”

Milestones:

1. Review the developed strategy/model of collaboration under the first Local Action Plan.
2. The Metropolitan Assembly will intensify awareness creation on the need for household toilet.
3. Complete the compilation of data on the registration of households/landlords who do not have access to household toilets.
4. Hold a stakeholder consultative meeting with the Land Lord Association, Metropolitan Assembly, civil society organizations, including STMACSUF and Global Communities to integrate the data collection results into the new model and develop an implementation plan. The Assembly should involve tenants during such meetings to ensure better understanding of issues that may arise.
5. Conduct a 3 month test of implementing the new model. The Metropolitan Assembly – together with landlord associations, CSOs, and Media – will test the strategy in four pilot communities (to be selected based on an analysis of “need and interest”) over a three month period.
6. Review and assessment. The Metropolitan Assembly will meet with landlord associations and other involved actors to assess the advantages and disadvantages of the new model (and how it has or has not helped to achieve the goal within our bylaws). Based on our assessment, we will develop a plan for replicating the model in other communities, or testing a new one.¹

Commitment Overview	Verifiability		OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	Not specific enough to be verifiable	Specific enough to be verifiable	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
1. Overall		✓	✓	✓			✓				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				Assessed at the end of action plan cycle.				

Context and Objectives

This commitment rolls over the sanitation commitment from the first action plan. The lack of household toilet facilities is a serious problem in Sekondi-Takoradi, where many people have been arrested in recent years for violating the assembly’s by-laws on open defecation.² A lack of household toilets and open defecation is one of the main reasons for the assembly’s poor performance on the UNICEF- and CDD-Ghana-published District League Table, coming up at 201 out of 216 districts in 2017.³ This commitment aims to address an issue that has wider reaching medical implications. However, this commitment only addresses one dimension of the larger sanitation problem. The full scale of the sanitation issue includes problems like choked gutters or drains, lack of litter bins, and irregular waste collection and disposal.⁴

A change in government and resource constraints delayed implementation of this commitment during the previous implementation period. By the end of the period, the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly (STMA) was in the process of registering households in informal settlements for the pilot project. However, STMA did develop “a new model of collaboration and financing in delivering of household toilets in partnership with key stakeholders.” In particular, some headway was also made in getting landlords to acquire toilets for tenants in Fijai and Engyiresia.⁵

The current action plan will continue work on this commitment by registering and creating a database of households or landlords who do not yet have access to household toilets. The key CSO partners involved in this commitment are STMA Citywide Settlement Upgrading Fund (CSUF) and Global Communities, who, together with the assembly, will hold consultations with landlords and tenants. The scheme will first be piloted in four communities before being eventually extended to the entire metropolis.

This commitment is relevant to OGP values of civic participation in the provision of public services in that it involves consultations with landlords, tenants, and CSOs, among others. The stakeholder consultations and sensitisation on household toilet data and health risks make this commitment relevant to the OGP value of access to information. This commitment is specific enough to be verified.

If implemented as written, this reform is expected to have a minor impact on public engagement in sanitation. Collecting data and establishing an implementation model are important first steps to expanding access to toilets. However, some of these activities began during the previous implementation period, and milestones stop short at widespread rollout of the model. According to Aziz Mahmoud (CSUF),⁶ this commitment could ease the difficulties experienced by residents with no access to basic household toilet facilities, while also helping the assembly to address a serious sanitation issue. Metropolitan Environmental Health Officer Abdul Hudu also believed that this would help improve the sanitation situation in the metropolis.⁷ However, as indicated above, the problem of sanitation is much broader, and includes other aspects not mentioned in the commitment, such as waste disposal. Therefore, while the commitment is likely to address the problem of open defecation, there are other sanitation-related problems that remain. Having said that, it should be noted that for many poor residents, having household toilets installed in their homes for the first time is going to have a very meaningful impact on their lives. Going forward, this commitment could be effectively linked to a more comprehensive programme of combating sanitation.

Next steps

The IRM makes the following recommendations:

- Once participatory waste management processes are established, the assembly should consider broadening efforts to a holistic sanitation strategy. Such a strategy would involve well-maintained gutters and drains, provision of litter bins in public places, and enforcement of by-laws regarding sanitation-related nuisances.
- Public and CSO partners could also be engaged to develop guidelines and monitor new development planning to ensure proper sanitation and water management.

¹ “STMA Local Action Plan 2018-2020”, Open Government Partnership, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Sekondi-Takoradi_Action-Plan_2018-2020.pdf.

² “9 arrested in Sekondi/Takoradi for open defecation”, Daily Graphic, 18 August 2017, <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/9-arrested-in-sekondi-takoradi-for-open-defecation.html>; “63 people in Sekondi-Takoradi were arrested last year for open-defecation”, Ghana News Agency, 8 February 2018, <http://www.ghananewsagency.org/social/63-people-in-sekondi-takoradi-were-last-year-arrested-for-open-defecation-128412>.

³ “District League Table 2017”, UNICEF, CDD-Ghana, [https://www.unicef.org/ghana/DLT_REPORT_UNICEF_FINAL_2017_\(Website\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/ghana/DLT_REPORT_UNICEF_FINAL_2017_(Website).pdf).

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- ⁴ “New Takoradi residents complain of poor sanitation”, GhanaWeb, 20 February 2017, <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/New-Takoradi-residents-complain-of-poor-sanitation-511899>;
- B. Fei-Baffoe, E.A. Nyankson, and J. Gorkeh-Miah, “Municipal Solid Waste Management in Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis, Ghana”, *Journal of Waste Management*, 2014.
- ⁵ “Sekondi-Takoradi Final Report 2017”, Open Government Partnership, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/sekondi-takoradi-final-report-2017/>; “STMA Local Action Plan 2018-2020”, Open Government Partnership, p. 7, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Sekondi-Takoradi_Action-Plan_2018-2020.pdf.
- ⁶ Aziz Mahmoud, interview by IRM researcher, 2 April 2019.
- ⁷ Abdul Hudu, interview by IRM researcher, 1 April 2019.

V. General Recommendations

This section aims to inform development of the next action plan and guide implementation of the current action plan. It is divided into two sections: 1) IRM key recommendations to improve OGP process and action plans in the country or entity and, 2) an assessment of how the government responded to previous IRM key recommendations.

5.1 IRM Five Key Recommendations

1. Develop a plan to ensure that broad and inclusive co-creation consultations are repeated in future cycles with available resources

Sekondi-Takoradi undertook a highly collaborative co-creation process with broad outreach and consultations. This was due to significant government and CSO efforts as well as funding through the Multi-Donor Trust Fund. The Sekondi-Takoradi OGP Secretariat should develop a roadmap to ensure continued inclusive co-creation with national, local, or partner funding. Additionally, there should be transparency around the selection of working group members and opportunities for those outside the working group to participate.

Additionally, the OGP Sekondi-Takoradi Secretariat should investigate means to strengthen the capacity and resources of the assembly to engage in, and sustain, commitment implementation. This is necessary to ensure the participation of public officials, including elected Assembly Members (AMs), CSO representatives, and administrative and coordination staff, backed by financial resources for organising and running meetings, further public outreach, and also ensuring adequate and sustained budgeting for the implementation of the commitments over time.

2. Strengthen communication between working group members and the community on co-creation and implementation progress

To make future co-creation processes even more rigorous, it would be necessary to develop a means of ensuring that members of the multi-stakeholder forum (MSF) report back to their communities or association members and to other CSOs and stakeholders. This would help to reduce the scepticism that many interviewees mentioned was shown by the public during consultation for the co-creation process. In order to ensure that this is done, the co-chairs of the MSF could require members to give a brief account, verbally or in writing, detailing how they reported MSF activities and the response of their organisations or constituencies. Feedback should be gathered also from non-participants in the MSF.

3. Ensure online portals are sustainable and complemented with offline activities for open government results

Four of the five commitments in this action plan call for establishing an online portal as a core activity. Past OGP experience demonstrates that long term sustainability of online portals is often a challenge. Therefore, implementers should think strategically about how to maintain the portal over time, including maintenance, updates, and funding. Additionally, transparency portals are often created without complementary offline activities that ensures public uptake or changes to government practice. Commitment 1 in this action plan is considered to have transformative potential precisely because the portal is complemented by activities to ensure that public use translates to government responsiveness. Any future commitments that fall back on a portal should take commitment 1 as a model for design.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that online portals and information only reach a fraction of the population, underscoring the importance of offline transparency efforts. According to the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly's (STMA's) 2010 census, only 17.7 percent of the population in Sekondi-Takoradi had internet access.¹ On a national level, only 34.7 percent of the population in Ghana had access to the internet in 2016, according to the

World Bank.² Therefore, online portals or published information will only reach a small fraction of the population. Information exclusively published online could lead to the further marginalisation of groups without equal access to the internet.

4. Raise commitments' potential for results by focusing commitment design on government responsiveness to citizen input

Four of the five commitments in this action plan include channels to gather citizen feedback, complaints, and/or input. However, none of the commitments explicitly require the government to respond to citizen input publicly and swiftly. Greater emphasis in commitment design as to how citizen input will result in changes to government practice will raise such reform's level of ambition. For example, commitment 4 aims to reactivate Sekondi-Takoradi's public service complaint mechanism. This commitment would be strengthened by clear requirements for the assembly to respond to citizen complaints within a specified timeline. Additionally, the assembly could publish common categories of complaints and changes to service delivery that resulted from citizen input. A strong feedback mechanism is key for the government to demonstrate to citizens that submitting complaints is worthwhile. Moreover, transparent responses to citizen input could increase citizens' trust in government.

5. Collaborate with civil society to explore opportunities for participatory budgeting in future action plans

This action plan includes moderate reforms to increase transparency around budget information and processes through commitment 2. This reform begins to establish citizen participation by training 250 community members and capturing citizens' budget aspirations. However, it stops short of activities that would ensure citizen input results in changes to budget and development plans. Future action plans could seek more ambitious open government fiscal reforms through participatory budgeting. Individuals trained during this cycle could support an awareness and training component in the next action plan. For instance, the District Assemblies Common Fund and the STMA government could agree on a multi-year strategy that allows for allocation of an initial 10 percent towards initiatives designed with citizen participation.

Table 5.1: Five Key Recommendations

1. Develop a plan to ensure that broad and inclusive co-creation consultations are repeated in future cycles with available resources
2. Strengthen communication between working group members and the community on co-creation and implementation progress
3. Ensure online portals are sustainable and complemented with offline activities for open government results
4. Raise commitments' potential for results by focusing commitment design on government responsiveness to citizen input
5. Collaborate with civil society to explore opportunities for participatory budgeting in future action plans

5.2 Response to Previous IRM Key Recommendations

This section is not applicable because the previous IRM report did not include 5 key recommendations.

VI. Methodology and Sources

The IRM reports are written by researchers for each OGP-participating country or entity. All IRM reports undergo a process of quality control to ensure that the highest standards of research and due diligence have been applied.

Analysis of progress on OGP action plans is a combination of interviews, desk research, observation, and feedback from non-governmental stakeholders. The IRM report builds on the evidence available in Sekondi-Takoradi's OGP repository (or online tracker),³ website, findings in the government's own self-assessment reports, and any other assessments of process and progress put out by civil society, the private sector, or international organisations. At the beginning of each reporting cycle, IRM staff share a research plan with governments to open a seven-day period of comments or feedback regarding the proposed research approach.

Each IRM researcher carries out stakeholder interviews to ensure an accurate portrayal of events. Given budgetary and calendar constraints, the IRM cannot consult all interested parties or visit implementation sites. Some contexts require anonymity of interviewees and the IRM reviews the right to remove personal identifying information of these participants. Due to the necessary limitations of the method, the IRM strongly encourages commentary during the pre-publication review period of each report.

Each report undergoes a quality-control process that includes an internal review by IRM staff and the IRM's International Experts Panel (IEP). Each report also undergoes an external review where governments and civil society are invited to provide comments on the content of the draft IRM report.

This review process, including the procedure for incorporating comments received, is outlined in greater detail in Section III of the Procedures Manual.⁴

Interviews and stakeholder input

Primary information for this report was generated through individual interviews with officials of the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly (STMA), members of the civil society organisations (CSOs) that participated in the multi-stakeholder forum (MSF) or the wider consultation during the co-creation process. The interviews were conducted in April 2019. As part of the process of information gathering for this report, the IRM researcher spoke with representatives of the following groups: Friends of the Nation, STMA Citywide Settlement Upgrading Fund, Berea Social Foundation, National Youth Authority, National Fish Processors Association of Ghana, Global Communities, Sekondi-Takoradi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Association of Ghanaian Industry, National Commission of Civic Education, and selected community champions.

About the Independent Reporting Mechanism

The Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) is a key means by which all stakeholders can track OGP progress in participating countries and entities. The International Experts Panel (IEP) oversees the quality control of each report. The IEP is comprised of experts in transparency, participation, accountability, and social science research methods.

The current membership of the International Experts Panel is

- César Cruz-Rubio
- Mary Francoli
- Brendan Halloran
- Jeff Lovitt
- Fredline M'Cormack-Hale
- Showers Mawowa
- Juanita Olaya
- Quentin Reed

- Rick Snell
- Jean-Patrick Villeneuve

A small staff based in Washington, DC, shepherds reports through the IRM process in close coordination with the researchers. Questions and comments about this report can be directed to the staff at irm@opengovpartnership.org.

¹ “2010 Population & Housing Census: District Analytical Report”, Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly, 2014, https://www2.statsghana.gov.gh/docfiles/2010_District_Report/Western/STMA.pdf.

² “Individuals using the Internet (% of population) - Ghana”, World Bank, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS?locations=GH>.

³ “Sekondi-Takoradi OGP repository”, Open Government Partnership, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/countries/sekondi-takoradi-ghana>.

⁴ “IRM Procedures Manual, V.3”, Open Government Partnership, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/irm-procedures-manual>.

Annex I. Overview of Sekondi-Takoradi's performance throughout action plan development

Key:

Green= Meets standard

Yellow= In progress (steps have been taken to meet this standard, but standard is not met)

Red= No evidence of action

Multi-stakeholder Forum	
1a. Forum established: There is a forum to oversee the OGP process.	Green
1b. Regularity: The forum meets at least every quarter, in person or remotely.	Green
1c. Collaborative mandate development: Members of the forum jointly develop its remit, membership, and governance structure.	Green
1d. Mandate public: Information on the forum's remit, membership, and governance structure is available on the OGP website/page.	Yellow ¹
2a. Multi-stakeholder: The forum includes both governmental and non-government representatives.	Green
2b. Parity: The forum includes an even balance of governmental and non-governmental representatives.	Green
2c. Transparent selection: Non-governmental members of the forum are selected through a fair and transparent process.	Green
2d. High-level government representation: The forum includes high-level representatives with decision making authority from government.	Green
3d. Openness: The forum accepts inputs and representation on the action plan process from any civil society or other stakeholders outside the forum.	Green
3e. Remote participation: There are opportunities for remote participation in at least some meetings and events. ²	Yellow
3f. Minutes: The OGP forum proactively communicates and reports back on its decisions, activities and results to wider government and civil society stakeholders.	Green

Key:

Green= Meets standard

Yellow= In progress (steps have been taken to meet this standard, but standard is not met)

Red= No evidence of action

Action Plan Development	
4a. Process transparency: There is a national OGP website (or OGP webpage on a government website) where information on all aspects of the national OGP process is proactively published.	Yellow ³
4b. Documentation in advance: The forum shares information about OGP to stakeholders in advance to guarantee they are informed and prepared to participate in all stages of the process.	Green
4c. Awareness raising: The forum conducts outreach and awareness-raising activities with relevant stakeholders to inform them of the OGP process.	Green
4d. Communication channels: The government facilitates direct communication with stakeholders to respond to action plan process questions, particularly during times of intense OGP activity.	Green
4e. Reasoned response: The multi-stakeholder forum publishes its reasoning behind decisions and responds to major categories of public comment.	Green
5a. Repository: Government collects and publishes a document repository on the national OGP website/webpage, which provides a historical record and access to all documents related to the national OGP process, including (but not limited to) consultation documents, national action plans, government self-assessments, IRM reports and supporting documentation of commitment implementation (e.g., links to databases, evidence of meetings, publications).	Green

Editorial note: If a country “meets” the six standards in bold IRM will recognize the country’s process as a Starred Process.

¹ This information was made public (e.g., on notice boards) but not on the assembly’s website.

² The MSF had a Whatsapp platform that allowed it to remotely coordinate activities of members: see Section III.

³ Some, but not all, of the information on the OGP process is available on the STMA website:

<http://stma.gov.gh/stma/?about-us&page=5140>.