

Open Parliaments

Parliaments as Partners in Open Government Reform

Strong legislative frameworks and independent, effective oversight are important enabling factors in high-impact, open government reforms. Parliamentary openness, as well, is critical in ensuring that legislative, budgetary, and oversight mechanisms are subject to public scrutiny and public input.

Concretely, parliaments can help advance OGP commitments (and the open government agenda more broadly) in three key ways:

- 1. Legislative Action:** parliaments can take legislative action to help translate commitments into action at the country level.
- 2. Parliamentary Oversight:** parliaments can advance open government reforms and OGP commitments by holding governments accountable.
- 3. Opening up Parliament:** parliaments can adopt the open government principles of transparency, accountability, participation, and inclusion in their own work and practices.

Trajectory in OGP

Parliamentary commitments tend to be highly impactful at higher rates than commitments in other policy areas. Twenty-five percent of parliamentary commitments have resulted in significant changes to open government practices.

Despite this, the number of parliamentary commitments, on average, has remained relatively constant, with around 30 percent of OGP members making a commitment each year. Currently, 12 OGP members are implementing open parliament commitments. [Recent evidence from the OGP Support Unit](#) suggests that adapting the OGP process to accommodate longer co-creation and implementation timelines for parliaments may allow for more parliamentary commitments. Some parliaments have chosen to postpone or not co-create at all, because the timelines for the executive branch do not align with those of the parliament.

Securing Commitments and Supporting Implementation

Within OGP, parliamentary involvement in open government generally falls into three categories: legislative action, parliamentary oversight, and opening up parliamentary processes. OGP's own Independent Reporting Mechanism has found, on average, that these are some of the highest impact commitments¹

Legislative action: Parliaments have participated in OGP from the very beginning by tackling legislative action to enable landmark open government reforms. [Ireland's](#) 2014 Protected Disclosures Act, heavily influenced by civil society actors before and during its passage through parliament, was hailed as one of the most robust pieces of whistleblower legislation in the world. The parliaments of [Kenya](#), [Sri Lanka](#), and

About OGP and this series

In 2011, government leaders and civil society advocates came together to create a unique partnership—one that combines these powerful forces to promote transparent, participatory, inclusive and accountable governance. As the Open Government Partnership (OGP) completes 10 years, this series of thematic snapshots provide a glimpse how policy areas have advanced, as accelerated by the OGP platform and a growing global community of reformers in governments, civil society, business, media and international organizations.



[Paraguay](#) also advanced right-to-information legislation, strengthening the enabling framework for broader open government reforms. More recently, [Armenia](#) and [Nigeria's](#) legislatures enacted pivotal provisions en route to implementing beneficial ownership commitments.

Parliamentary oversight: Alongside legislative action, OGP stakeholders are starting to leverage the oversight powers of parliament to protect and advance open government reforms. In [Sierra Leone](#), members of parliament are sourcing gender-disaggregated data to better understand and support open government commitments. [Kyrgyz Republic](#) and [Liberia](#) have adopted commitments that call on parliament to monitor and support the implementation of OGP action plans. While there are only a few commitments in this area to date, this area will be a critical area for growth. This is due to the unprecedented growth of executive power during the COVID-19 crisis, with its attendant growth of spending and emergency powers, as well as increasing authoritarianism. As the most representative branch of government, parliaments play a linchpin role in democratic oversight and empowerment of the public to hold governments accountable.

Opening up parliament: Parliaments are using OGP action plans to co-create and implement their own open parliament reforms. The Chilean Congress and the National Democratic Institute co-hosted the first Global Legislative Openness Week in 2014 and paved the way for the emergence of an open parliament community. Since then, a growing number of open parliament champions have worked with civil society advocates to make legislative institutions and processes more transparent, accountable, and inclusive. By the close of 2020, 34 OGP members had co-created open parliament commitments and seven ([North Macedonia](#), [Georgia](#), [Indonesia](#), [Paraguay](#), [Chile](#), [Kyrgyz Republic](#), and [Morocco](#)) had delivered full-fledged open parliament plans.

How OGP Supports Open Parliaments Reforms

Increasing Parliamentary Collaboration with Civil Society

OGP multistakeholder forums must have civil society participation. Many also have parliamentarians directly involved. This allows for collaboration and deliberation directly between civil society experts, advocates, and parliamentarians. In [Kenya](#), Mzalendo, a non-partisan project established to “keep an eye on parliament,” has worked through the OGP process to ensure the proper implementation of Kenya’s law on public participation. In [Chile](#), over 100 civil society organizations participated in co-creating a new standard for public participation across both chambers of congress. And in [Argentina](#), parliament engaged dozens of civil groups in the co-creation of the first formal open parliament plan.

Building Global Networks to Support National Action

Committed reformers have leveraged OGP to inspire and strengthen a global community. The Open Parliament eNetwork (OPeN) is at the heart of these efforts in OGP. (OPeN is a partnership of the National Democratic Institute, Directorio Legislativo, the Latin American Network for Legislative Transparency, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, ParlAmericas, and the Westminster

Foundation for Democracy.) It has built a network driving the co-creation and implementation of open parliament reforms through OGP. Notable reforms supported by OPeN include: the adoption of a parliamentary Code of Conduct in [Georgia](#); a new framework for asset declaration by members of parliament in [Argentina](#); and a Sustainable Development Goals platform allowing citizens to track how congress and its individual members are advancing its implementation in [Paraguay](#).

Looking Ahead

OGP has enabled parliamentarians and collaborators in civil society to undertake a number of critical reforms. However, many things still need to be done to make a difference. The Support Unit will continue to work with partners to encourage the adoption of parliamentary commitments in three areas: legislative action, parliamentary oversight, and parliamentary transparency and inclusion.

Parliaments have the potential to advance transformative reforms across all OGP policy areas. The OGP Support Unit will encourage transformative reforms in key areas of interest, including anti-corruption (specifically asset declarations, political party financing, and monitoring of public spending), safeguarding civic space, digital governance, and climate change.

In 2021, OGP is updating its policy and guidance on parliamentary engagement to better support stakeholders to achieve these goals.

References

¹ [Parliamentary Engagement in OGP: Learning from the Evidence](#). July 21, 2021.