

Civic Participation in OGP

Regional Focus: Africa and the Middle East

OVERVIEW

A government cannot be truly open without recognizing and engaging the public as important stakeholders in the decision-making process. OGP members in Africa and the Middle East are advancing civic participation in their action plans, particularly by increasing public participation in budgeting and public service delivery. Going forward, members in the region can also focus on protecting civic space and institutionalizing participation in policy-making.

Recommendations

The following recommendations represent a few examples of relevant policies:

- **Civic space:** Develop or reinforce legal frameworks that protect the rights of activists, journalists, and independent media (including privacy laws and the rights to association, assembly, and expression) and remove barriers preventing people from fulfilling these rights on the ground and online.
- **Participation in policy-making:** Require “notice and comment” periods, in which the public’s feedback is taken into account for draft regulations and policies, create a unified website for regulations where the public can track their status, and publish government responses to consultations alongside comments received.
- **Participation in service delivery:** Empower communities to audit and report on public services, provide open data on funding for public services to allow the public to track expenses (particularly for procurement), and create institutionalized processes for citizens to seek redress for services they should have received.

RESOURCES

Investing in civic participation brings concrete benefits. [The Skeptic’s Guide to Open Government: 2022 Edition](#) (EN, ES, FR) outlines these benefits—in simple language—based on a rigorous literature review of the evidence in areas like social audits and grievance redress mechanisms.



The pandemic presents a unique challenge to civic participation. [The Guide to Open Government and the Coronavirus](#) (EN, ES, FR) is a one-stop shop for resources on how to implement open government policies during the current context, including in areas like civic space, inclusion, and participation and deliberation.



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COMMITMENTS FROM THE REGION IN AREAS OF CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Civic Space

Current commitments show potential to protect civic space, particularly in terms of promoting women's participation and supporting the freedom of association. However, more commitments are needed. Countries in Africa and the Middle East have only made a total of 16 civic space commitments to date.

Participation in public service delivery

Among national and local members in the region, 14 members have 27 commitments involving participation in public service delivery. Most of these commitments were made in recent years, pointing to the growing interest in this topic in the region.

LESSONS FROM REFORMERS



Cabo Verde

In its 2018-2020 action plan, Cabo Verde committed to convening public consultations on a large infrastructure, housing and cultural heritage rehabilitation project to address urban planning issues. Beyond seeking public input, the country plans to ensure citizens can access information about the project as it is implemented.



Jordan

In its ongoing action plan (2021-2023), Jordan committed to strengthening youth civic participation. One goal is to conduct an annual review of its National Youth Strategy by consulting youth stakeholders, relevant governmental institutions, civil society organizations, and the private sector. The country also aims to raise awareness about its new Virtual Youth Center platform and make it more useful to youth beneficiaries, such as by linking it to the national employment portal.



Sekondi-Takoradi, Ghana

Sekondi-Takoradi's second action plan (2018-2020) focused on developing citizen engagement programs. One commitment from the plan builds on previous work to improve access to sanitation facilities in each household. Following consultations with civil society, community leaders, trade unions, and business leaders, the government consulted the public for feedback on how to best address the issue.



Tunisia

To promote further use of its two national portals for online public participation, Tunisia committed to hosting public consultations to gather feedback on citizens' expectations for the portals and how to improve them in its 2021-2023 action plan. A joint working group made of up relevant departments and civil society organizations will be created to implement the commitment.

