

Independent Reporting Mechanism

Action Plan Review:
Seychelles 2023–2025

Open
Government
Partnership



Independent
Reporting
Mechanism

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Section I: Overview of the 2023–2025 Action Plan

Seychelles’ second action plan indicates a growing open government community coalescing around issues of national importance. The action plan includes ambitious reforms to strengthen public participation in constitutional discussions and fisheries governance. The action plan was designed through a short but collaborative co-creation process and benefits from high-level government support.

Seychelles’ second action plan reflects national priorities. Commitments to further open the fisheries sector and deliberate constitutional issues have clear potential for opening government. The action plan also includes commitments addressing alcoholism, government employee wellness, and government IT capacity. As these three reforms are primarily internally facing, it is not yet clear to what extent they may open government to the public.

The Action Plan reflects the Seychelles’ four-year National Development Strategy (NDS),¹ which was prepared through broad public consultations. The Multi-Stakeholder Forum (MSF) and other organizations that contributed to the co-creation process used the NDS to select relevant policy areas.

Two reforms hold the greatest potential to open government. Commitment 2 promises to increase grassroots constitutional knowledge, broader understanding of the political power structure (executive, legislature, and judiciary), and amend laws parallel to the current constitution. Commitment 1 promises to bring more stakeholders to contribute to fisheries policymaking. It provides more civic participatory channels for the government and its citizenry to deliberate on best practices and sustainable governance. Moreover, it aims to formalize the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) Secretariat and the FiTI National Multi-Stakeholder Group (NMSG).

The quality of the action plan significantly improved from the previous action plan. Members of the civil societies interviewed noted that there were more adequate consultations than the previous action plan.² The co-creation, drafting, and submission occurred between October and December 2023. Despite this limited timeline, it was developed through a collaborative partnership between the government, independent state institutions, the corporate sector, and civil societies. Input generation initiatives were conducted with these entities to allow the representation of diverse voices. The involvement of independent state institutions championing

AT A GLANCE

Participating since: 2018
Number of commitments: 5

Overview of commitments:
Commitments with an open government lens: 3 (60%)
Commitments with substantial potential for results: 2 (40%)
Promising commitments: 2 (40%)

Policy areas:
Carried over from previous action plans:

- Open fisheries

Emerging in this action plan:

- Integrity, good governance, and human rights
- Regulating alcohol and substance abuse
- Civil service wellness
- IT government capacity

Compliance with OGP minimum requirements for co-creation:
Yes

Commitment 2 and the corporate sector spearheading Commitment 5 reinforces the importance of open governance to the overall stakeholders in Seychelles.

The civil society and government members were optimistic about the action plan's potential to produce transformative results. Persistent lobbying from civil society organizations (CSOs) motivated the government to commit to the second action plan.³ Nevertheless, there were concerns over the limited time frame, budgetary constraints, and lack of defined administrative structures to assure continuity. The one-and-a-half-year delay in the OGP action plan, from 2021 until 2023, was mostly attributed to the administration change. According to the Co-Chair of the Multi-Stakeholder Forum, Mr. Chrystold Chetty, the OGP process became a subject of concern after the 2023 OGP Global Summit in Estonia. The high-level participation of Vice President Ahmed Afif in the OGP process further signalled the importance of addressing existing issues and catalysed rapid movement. Likewise, the Point of Contact⁴ confirmed that they mobilized and relied on people with prior experience in the OGP process. In the future, it is recommended that the government and civil societies dedicate resources to formalizing the Multi-Stakeholder Forum, as well as allocating human resources to support to the OGP Point of Contact in their OGP Secretariat functions. This allows for continuity and maintaining institutional knowledge even in the event of administration changes.

The IRM observes that the limited co-creation time frame affected the overall presentation of Commitments 3, 4, and 5 in the action plan. For example, the scope of Commitment 5 is currently unclear, such as whether the public will shape government decision-making and whether implementation will result in policy changes. Moreover, Commitments 3 and 4 are positive initiatives but lack a clear connection to open government as they are internal reforms.

Seychelles has made notable strides in further institutionalizing OGP by establishing a multistakeholder steering committee, OGP social media sites, and by locating OGP in the Cabinet Office. Reformers are encouraged to continue disseminating information on Seychelles' open government work and structures to lay a foundation for broadening participation in the future.

¹ Ministry of Finance, Trade, Investment and Economic Planning—Department of Economic Planning, *Seychelles National Development Strategy 2019-2023* (Mahé, Seychelles: 2019), http://www.finance.gov.sc/uploads/files/Seychelles_National_Development_Strategy_2019_2023_new.pdf.

² Chrystold Chetty (Transparency Initiative Seychelles & Co-Chair of Seychelles OGP Steering Committee), interview with IRM researcher, 15 March 2024.

³ Chetty, interview.

⁴ Margaret Pillay (Seychelles OGP Point of Contact), interview with IRM researcher, 11 March 2024.

Section II: Promising Commitments in Seychelles 2023–2025 Action Plan

The following review looks at the two commitments that the IRM identified as having the potential to realize the most promising results. Promising commitments address a policy area that is important to stakeholders or the national context. They must be verifiable, have a relevant open government lens, and have modest or substantial potential for results. This review also provides an analysis of challenges, opportunities, and recommendations to contribute to the learning and implementation process of this action plan.

Table 1. Promising commitments

Promising Commitments
1. Continuation of Implementation of the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI): This commitment aims to increase stakeholder participation in the marine fisheries sector through the FiTI MSF and the increase of sectoral transparency to the general public.
2. Integrity, good governance, and human rights: This commitment aims to create the National Integrity Coalition, a constitutional committee with government and civil society participation to inform policymaking regarding Constitutional structures and systems of governance.

Commitment 1: Continuation of Implementation of the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) **[Blue Economy Department, Ministry of Fisheries, and the Blue Economy]**

For a complete description of the commitment, see Commitment 1 at:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/16ypfzeiWXWbMMLsrzeNF2bwcm5oNxuDj>

Context and objectives:

This commitment is a continuation from the first action plan and aims to address the problem of limited stakeholder participation in marine governance, both in terms of the FiTI National Multi-Stakeholder Forum composition and in terms of increasing sector transparency. According to Transparency Initiative Seychelles, improving fishery governance was an essential thematic area for civil society.¹ They lobbied the government to enhance transparency initiatives in the fishing sector, which led to Seychelles joining the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) and implementing FiTI standards. CSOs also advocated for the inclusion of this reform in OGP action plans.²

The first action plan led to the publication of FiTI reports, which has helped inform public debate and parliamentary discussion on fair and sustainable fisheries practices. The FiTI National Multi-Stakeholder Group had broad government and civil society representation, however it was challenging to engage small-scale fishermen and private citizens in the process, as they were mostly focused on fishing rather than sectoral governance participation. Additionally, restrictions on in-person meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic hindered the government's efforts to involve these groups.³ The current commitment aims to address this challenge and builds on sectoral transparency progress by improving stakeholder participation in policymaking. It seeks to include formerly marginalized groups, embed open governance values into the fisheries, and

address the unavailability of publicly accessible data and stakeholder disengagement in fisheries management. To achieve these aims, implementors have committed to disclosing marine sector data, to establish channels for participation in fisheries governance, and to formalize the FiTI multistakeholder group and secretariat under Commitment 1.

According to Consultant to the Ministry of Fisheries and Blue Economy Philippe Michaud,⁴ fisheries governance has a generally low participation rate in Seychelles. He added that in the past, the government consistently provided platforms for citizens to participate in marine governance, through roundtable discussions, meetings, and seminars. Therefore, it is important that this commitment is providing more opportunities for citizen participation. It intends to deepen inclusivity in Seychelles' policy-making process, accountability, and government transparency. It seeks to improve platforms for public participation beyond passive recipients of subsidies and policies, subsequently developing mutual government and grassroots interactions.

Potential for results: Substantial

Implementing the FiTI in Seychelles could substantially enhance transparency and accountability in the marine sector. Investing in FiTI is a strategic move that potentially yields benefits for other sectors in the country. While Seychelles' fisheries contribute substantial revenue to the economy,⁵ its management cannot be approached exclusively from an economic standpoint. These fisheries also link directly to historical, cultural, social, and environmental dynamics. Therefore, opening marine governance can generate sustainable cooperation from various stakeholders that have not been successfully engaged in the past, such as small-scale fishermen.

Commitment 1 could increase checks and balances within the public sector administration, resource management, trade (domestic and foreign), procurement, and policymaking. Due to FiTI obligations, Seychelles published the 2019, 2020, and 2021 FiTI reports⁶ with detailed information on these areas. In 2020, the government went the extra mile by publicizing local and foreign fishing license contracts on the Seychelles Fishing Authority's website.⁷ This move allowed the general public to monitor, evaluate, and question the government's Blue Economy policy and management strategy.⁸ International organizations like the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFA) used this data to inform their investigations on the sustainability of the fishing agreement between Seychelles and the Taiwan Deep-Sea Tuna Longline Boat Owners and Exporters Association (TTA) and Top Fortune International (TFI).⁹ Continued publication of FiTI reports will provide further opportunities for non-governmental stakeholders both within the FiTI National Multi-Stakeholder Group (NSMG) and the general public to access sectoral governance information. This will inform public debate to contribute to sustainable marine governance.

This commitment builds on Seychelles' fisheries transparency efforts thus far. Its pathway begins with the government renewing its pledge to disclose data on marine governance (Milestone 1).¹⁰ Availing resources to support these publications shows the willingness of the government to nurture a culture of transparency through information dissemination. The lead implementing agency representative (Mr. Philippe Michaud), Point of Contact (Ms. Margaret Pillay), and Transparency Initiative Seychelles (Mr. Chrystold Chetty) concur with this assertion.¹¹ They noted that FiTI is an important area for the highest political and administrative authorities.

Although Milestone 1 focuses on making previously sealed data open access online, the implementors can also provide easily understandable information beyond statistics and expert

jargon. This widens avenues for inclusivity as people from all walks of life can independently engage with the FiTI reports without third-person assistance. To maximize the success of Milestone 1, the Blue Economy Department (FiTI Secretariat) is encouraged to invest in nationwide broadcasting of the annual FiTI reports, building on previous efforts to disseminate FiTI reports and handouts on the importance of sectoral transparency to small-scale fishermen. It can take a step beyond uploading the reports on social media and government websites.

Publicizing marine data could lead to an informed, data-driven society that relies on factual evidence. Milestone 1 seeks to provide verifiable and credible sources that citizens can use to counteract false narratives or corroborate publicly circulating information. Similarly, FiTI requires annual reports to provide “a succinct summary of key information on the status of the country’s fisheries, clearly communicate recommendations made by the National Multi-Stakeholder Group (NSMG) and establish the credibility of public information on the fisheries sector.”¹²

Milestone 2 promises to introduce avenues for public participation in fisheries policymaking. Historically, the government has managed the fisheries sector without input from the public or those working in the sector. Implementation could bring these voices into fisheries policymaking and introduce a sense of mutual partnership in marine governance. According to several interview sources,¹³ public disengagement and apathy are major constraints to civic participation in Seychelles. Therefore, changes such as high turnout, vigorous meeting discussions, and overall public understanding of the FiTI Secretariat and the NMSG are all possible evidence of strong early results that these participation mechanisms are facilitating the goal of enabling the public to influence government policy and action.

The FiTI Secretariat aims to invite various stakeholders, including formerly marginalized, dormant, and even outspoken groups, to participate in decision-making.¹⁴ These stakeholders are expected to be equal players whose input will be used to inform sustainable policymaking. This could open platforms for liaisons between administrative political elites and the grassroots fishing industry. Mr. Phillippe Michaud (Blue Economy Department/FiTI Secretariat) pointed out that most stakeholders often limit their interaction with the government to financial incentives and relief aid. To alleviate this predicament, the implementors could design consultative platforms to also empower stakeholders to demand more services such as health insurance and retirement benefits. Implementors are encouraged to regularly raise awareness about these information channels to ensure sufficient stakeholder engagement. This strategy could potentially invigorate public interest in civic participation.

Milestone 3 seeks to formalize the FiTI Secretariat and NMSG, which promises to institutionalize transparency and participation in the fisheries sector. Establishing FiTI as a formal, legal, but independent entity can help ensure that government and non-governmental entities comply with the directives of the FiTI standards. Without formalized structures, various stakeholders could perceive the FiTI Secretariat and NMSG as a “toothless bulldog.” For instance, during interviews, the representative from the implementing agency (Mr. Phillippe Michaud) mentioned several problems that are beyond their scope as a non-institutionalized organization. Examples include the lack of updated records and illicit fishing of endangered species or overfished species like octopuses. These shortcomings can partially be resolved by institutionalizing the FiTI Secretariat. Institutionalizing FiTI is a notable step in transforming fisheries’ transparency, accountability, and inclusivity into a norm. It allows for continuity in the event of regime or administrative change.

Opportunities, challenges, and recommendations during implementation

The commitment has substantial potential to shape open governance policy in Seychelles. The strategic advantage of FiTI as a policy area is that it deals with an activity of economic, social, and cultural significance to the government and the citizens.¹⁵ Thus, strengthening marine governance yields mutual benefits for both parties, which can increase cooperation. Nevertheless, implementors are encouraged to pay attention to the following:

- **Milestone 1:** It is recommended that implementors consider accessibility as an indicator of successful implementation at the end of the milestone. Implementors are recommended to make FiTI reports accessible to everyone, including those highly educated and those with limited formal education, as well as those in both the high-income fishery and in low-income, small-scale fishing sectors. This can be done by ensuring FiTI reports are available in Seychellois Creole and in accessible, plain language formats. The government could also organize regular media briefings, including when new important data is published. These reports could be fundamental in leading investor decision-making by including verifiable information on laws and practices in the fisheries sector. The government can also benefit by using these documents to draft new policies or amend existing ones.
- **Milestone 2:** This milestone can reach its full potential if more stakeholders are represented during public consultations and policy development, such as commercial fisheries, informal fishermen, researchers, experts, and ordinary citizens. The interview with Mr. Michaud (Blue Economy Department/FiTI Secretariat) revealed that Seychelles lack official records for determining the ratio of informal and formal fisheries and also emphasized that stakeholders lack interest in registering with the government bodies.¹⁶ Thus, it is possible that fishermen also distance themselves from CSOs and unions. The FiTI Secretariat could collaborate with the Ministry of Fisheries and the Blue Economy and the Seychelles Fishing Authority (SFA) to build a catalogue for documenting formal and informal fisheries as well as leverage its independence from the government to build trust with stakeholders and guarantee data protection and confidentiality. The FiTI Secretariat can also work with the Ministry of Fisheries and the Blue Economy and the SFA to allocate resources to public consultations to ensure that they are sustainably institutionalized in marine governance in the Seychelles.
- **Milestone 3:** Despite Mr. Michaud's confirmation that "FiTI cannot be a government body," information from several interview sources shows that FiTI has very strong support from the highest political level, like the active participation of the Vice President.¹⁷ This represents opportunities and threats to establishing open government standards in Seychelles. From a positive angle, persistent lobbying and demonstrated success from Milestones 1 and 2 have potential to result in FiTI and NSMG framework changes. The goal to institutionalize within the stipulated time frame can be achievable, if this cooperation is maintained. On the other hand, implementors are advised to be on the lookout for the over-politicization of the FiTI agenda. It is recommended that a balance between the government performing its duties and politicians acting to boost their political mileage be maintained.

Commitment 2: Transparency and Good Governance [Seychelles Human Rights Commission CSO collaborators]

For a complete description of the commitment, see Commitment 2 in <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/16ypfzeiWXWbMMLsrzeNF2bwcm5oNxDJ>

Context and objectives:

This commitment establishes a new practice in the constitutional development of Seychelles. Before the adoption of Commitment 2, there were gaps in Seychelles' political structure, such as the grassroots' lack of constitutional knowledge, inadequate broader understanding of the political power structure (executive, legislature, and judiciary), and outdated laws parallel to the current constitution. The commitment was originally held by the Seychelles Human Rights Commission, however, the lead implementer moved to the position of Ombudsman. The commitment is now held within that body. According to the OGP Point of Contact and CSO members, the 1993 constitution allowed for the implementation of these changes. However, there were minimum efforts dedicated to improving the status quo.

Commitment 2 reinforces the importance of adherence to good governance, constitutionalism, and transparency in Seychelles. CSOs,¹⁸ independent state institutions,¹⁹ and the government²⁰ highly endorsed including this commitment in the second action plan. While the country is democratizing faster than other African countries and young democracies,²¹ formal and informal stakeholders are aiming to fully democratize in the foreseeable future. They concur that Commitment 2 standards set the base for achieving a functional democracy status. Therefore, they formed a National Integrity Coalition comprising diverse key independent State institutions.²²

Institutions in the Coalition include the Anti-Corruption Commission of Seychelles (ACCS), Constitutional Appointments Authority (CAA), Electoral Commission, Information Commission (InfoCom), Media Commission, Ombudsman's Office, Public Service Appeal Board (PSAB), and Seychelles Human Rights Commission (SHRC). The Coalition is mandated to: operate independently from the government; act as a bridge between the government and civil societies; audit the political elites (arms of the state); externally review each other's conduct; and advocate for good governance and integrity.

According to the OGP Point of Contact and the responsible for implementation of this commitment,²³ the Coalition is the first of its kind in Seychelles' political history. The OGP process was significant in supporting the creation of the Coalition.²⁴ The government and stakeholders indicated their ambition to ensure the continuity of the coalition. Likewise, Mr. Laurence (CEPS) indicated that CSOs were also mobilizing to form a similar coalition.²⁵ It would open avenues for grassroots engagement further beyond the National Integrity Coalition. Although civil societies are not included in the Coalition steering committee, they remain paramount in successfully executing the Commitment. They will be invited to contribute their input and participate in the activities of the Coalition. The broader aim is to improve legitimate structures for transparency and accountability in governance and constitutional consciousness in civic spaces. Commitment 2 has the potential to advance the constitutional transition that started in 1993 and strengthen good governance in the Seychelles.

Potential for results: Substantial

Commitment 2 shows substantial potential for attaining transformative results in the open government dynamics of Seychelles. This commitment can potentially strengthen public information on citizens' constitutional rights, including those around public participation. It also aims to engage civil society and solicit their input on constitutional issues under discussion. Finally, the Coalition's recommendations to the government may contribute to further open government reforms.

The National Integrity Coalition is a prerequisite foundation for establishing functional democratic institutions in Seychelles. Strong independent institutions and check-and-balance mechanisms are key for open and democratic governance. The standards of open governance (transparency, civic participation, public accountability) will be unattainable without this base framework. This commitment will set a strong foundation for good governance-oriented initiatives. The Coalition has the potential to contribute to a sustainable culture of political administration that values integrity, accountability, the rule of law, and constitutionalism.

Moreover, the commitment seeks to bring about the amendment of outdated laws to match the current constitution. According to the OGP Point of Contact and the commitment holder, not all laws were amended when the 1993 constitution was adopted.²⁶ Commitment 2 seeks to ensure that the legal system remains relevant, effective, and consistent with the principles and values enshrined in the Constitution. This is essential for open governance because a constitution is a foundational framework for government that defines various branches' powers and duties while guaranteeing citizens fundamental rights and freedoms. Outdated laws often lead to inconsistencies, legal ambiguities, and potential violations of constitutional rights. It is important that the National Integrity Coalition creates avenues for ensuring constitutional compliance.

At the time of writing, implementing Milestone 1—to enhance online availability and accessibility of fisheries information, via the publication of FiTI reports—is underway. It began with the formation of the National Integrity Coalition, the design and signing of the Memorandum of Understanding, and the selection of 2024 priority areas. The selected focal areas include: review and recommendations on the Public Service System; educational programs; and producing a report stating the case for the independence and autonomy of all constitutional and statutory oversight institutions. These focal points will reinforce transparency as these independent state institutions disclose more information on their internal and external affairs.

Unlike other commitments in the previous and current action plans, this commitment is implemented by independent state institutions. This gives a new dimensional approach to attaining open governance standards because these institutions were created to reinforce good governance. It also creates the foundation for open government to become a cross-branch government-wide priority. Firstly, their operational framework obligates them to operate as regulatory agencies, providing checks and balances against the government's arbitrary use of authority. According to Seychelles' constitution, these institutions are constitutionally mandated to operate autonomously from the government despite their dependence on state-allocated resources, especially fiscal capacity.²⁷ This background experience in oversight and regulatory capacity gives the institutions a comparative advantage in attaining their desired results.

Members of the CSO and government interviewed were optimistic about the dedication to enhance accountability from the pinnacle of the political pyramid.²⁸ The IRM observes that the potential for transformative results in the National Integrity Coalition stems from its evaluation

structure, which accentuates internal evaluation. The internal evaluation strategy demonstrates that integrity begins from within. In this context, it pertains to these institutions holding each other accountable, collaborating, coordinating, and supporting each other to embed standards of good governance in their respective departments.²⁹ Considering these institutions operate as a broker between the government and the citizenry, ensuring their competence and integrity is essential. Implementation of Commitment 2 could result in increased credibility (independent state institutions) with both the government and the grassroots, eventually strengthening the resilience of democracy.

The National Integrity Coalition also aims to foster public awareness of the constitutional structures of Seychelles. According to the Coalition's second meeting minutes, the stakeholders agreed to focus on an educational program (named Constitutional Mechanics). Mr. Laurence (CEPS) pointed out that the Human Rights Commission developed the course outline. It is expected to cover: the overall structure of the Constitution; the importance of the Constitution; public participatory avenues guaranteed by the Constitution; and citizens constitutional rights and responsibilities. This will grant citizens more access to information on their governing structures. Likewise, implementing this educational program could facilitate civic participation, as the course participants will be CSOs and the general populace.³⁰ This knowledge will enable the grassroots to understand and comprehend actions taken by the three arms of government in their legal capacity. It allows the citizens to assess whether these actions are within the constitutional confines and enacted in good faith. Finally, the course will ensure that more citizens understand ways in which they can hold the government accountable such as peacefully protesting, requesting information from the authorities, or participating in budget formulation among others.³¹

Besides the educational programs, the National Integrity Coalition will create more deliberative platforms for civic participation. According to Seychelles Human Rights Commission Legal Director and commitment holder, CSOs will be invited to participate in the Coalition's meetings and activities. He also added that they will be given opportunities to share their input and recommendations.

Opportunities, challenges, and recommendations during implementation

The commitment has a strong potential to positively influence the open governance transition in Seychelles. Nevertheless, the implementors are encouraged to consider the role of civil society.

- Article 3B of the Memorandum of Understanding focuses on including civil society, while the Coalition's Meeting Procedures states that members can propose and vote on engagements with civil society. However, civil society's actual influence on the National Integrity Coalition is unclear. The implementors of Commitment 2 and the coalition are encouraged to elaborate further on the article. They can consider adding CSOs' participatory parameters (rules and regulations) and clarifying how the input from civil societies will be incorporated into the Coalition's. Finally, it is important to ensure that the Coalition has a clear role and adds meaningful value to the process, to ensure continued commitment by all participants.
- The IRM recommends that the implementors refer to Scotland, United Kingdom Participation Framework.³² It developed a participation framework to guide policymakers on the forms of participatory methods to use to involve the public in decision-making.³³ Similarly, Sweden also developed the "Consultation Model to Engage CSOs."³⁴ It is a dialogue model (sokråd) to engage with CSOs on issue-specific consultations.³⁵

Other commitments

Other commitments that the IRM did not identify as promising commitments are discussed below. This review provides recommendations to contribute to the learning and implementation of these commitments.

Commitment 3: Digital Transformation and Connecting People

This commitment addresses the important issue of digitalization of government and government services. However, as currently written, it does not promise to make government more transparent, accountable, or participatory for the public. The commitment focuses on reforms internal to government that may contribute to a digital foundation to open government in the longer term.³⁶ The Government of Seychelles notes that this commitment will be implemented by a technical committee chaired by the Vice President comprising government and private sector representations, with the intention to include civil society representation. While not stated in the action plan, the Government of Seychelles highlighted that implementation would include the creation of a Civic Tech platform to facilitate public feedback on government services. The platform would be accessible through a website and mobile application with an initial function for the public to report issues with transportation infrastructure to be expanded to other functionalities over time. The government intends to hold consultation workshops to identify priority use-cases for citizens. Implementation of the Civic Tech platform carried out in the course of this commitment will be taken into account by the IRM in the Results Report.³⁷

Commitment 4: Employee Wellness and Empowerment Policy

Importantly, this commitment addresses the welfare of the public officeholders, which can lead to a satisfied, healthier, and more productive workforce, and improved service delivery. However, as currently written, this commitment has no direct connection to the open governance principles of transparency, civic participation or public accountability. It raises a matter that concerns internal public service review and remuneration rather than an open governance initiative. Implementors can consider adding activities that would directly open government to the public. If reformers seek to strengthen public service delivery, then an open government reform might include strengthening channels for the government to receive and act on public feedback on government services. If reformers seek to strengthen public servants' competencies, then a reform could be mainstreaming access-to-information training across government to strengthen public access to government-held information.

Commitment 5: Managing Alcohol Consumption for a Healthy and Productive Nation

Several interviewees underscored that addressing alcoholism as an issue of national importance in the Seychelles.³⁸ However, it is not clear how the public and non-government actors will participate in shaping government policies to address alcohol consumption under this commitment. The commitment calls for a public survey to collect data to inform government policy. While positive, this activity does not enable the public to actively participate in the policymaking process. To strengthen the ambition of this reform, the IRM recommends that the government incorporate clear and specific avenues for two-way dialogue with the public on alcohol consumption and government solutions. This reform could be used as an opportunity to facilitate dialogue between the public, government, and private sector that informs government actions. This commitment could prove to be relevant to open government, if the public and civil society are participants in government decision-making.

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For Public Comment – Do Not Cite or Circulate

- ¹ Alvin Laurence (CEO of Civil Society Engagement Platform – CEPS), interview with IRM researcher, 14 March 2024.
- ² Laurence, interview.
- ³ Mark Odaga and Eva Okoth, *Seychelles Transitional Results Report 2019-2021* (OGP Independent Reporting Mechanism) 3, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Seychelles_Transitional-Results-Report_2019-2021.pdf
- ⁴ Philippe Michaud (Consultant for Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries and Blue Economy), interview with IRM researcher, 14 March 2024.
- ⁵ World Bank Group, “The World Bank in Seychelles” (accessed 26 March 2024), <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/seychelles/overview#1>.
- ⁶ Will May, “Seychelles publishes 2021 FiTI Report” (Fisheries Transparency Initiatives, 28 February 2023), <https://fiti.global/seychelles-publishes-2021-fiti-report>.
- ⁷ Seychelles Fishing Authority, <https://www.sfa.sc/services1/fishing-licence>.
- ⁸ Elizabeth Claire Alberts, “Seychelles embraces transparency in fisheries, but gaps in data and action remain” *Mongabay* (2022), <https://news.mongabay.com/2022/02/seychelles-embraces-transparency-in-fisheries-but-gaps-in-data-and-action-remain/>.
- ⁹ Gorez Beatrice, “The new fishing agreement between Seychelles and Taiwan is now public. But will tuna fisheries sustainability improve as a result?” (Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements, 9 January 2023), <https://www.cffacape.org/publications-blog/the-new-fishing-agreement-between-seychelles-and-taiwan-will-be-made-public-but-will-tuna-fisheries-sustainability-improve-as-a-result>.
- ¹⁰ Refer to *Seychelles’ Second Open Government National Action Plan 2024-2025*, page 17. Available in the online repository at <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/16ypfzeiWXWbMMLsrzeNF2bwcm5oNxuDj> (accessed 26 March 2024).
- ¹¹ Margaret Pillay (Seychelles OGP Point of Contact), interview with IRM researcher, 11 March 2024; Chrystold Chetty (Transparency Initiative Seychelles & Co-Chair of Seychelles OGP Steering Committee), interview with IRM researcher, 15 March 2024; Michaud, interview.
- ¹² Ministry of Fisheries and Blue Economy- Republic of Seychelles, “FiTI Reports” (accessed 23 March 2024), <http://www.mofbe.gov.sc/fiti/fiti-reports/>.
- ¹³ Pillay, interview; Laurence, interview; Chetty, interview.
- ¹⁴ Michaud, interview.
- ¹⁵ The Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust (SEYCCAT), “Seychelles” (2024), <https://seyccat.org/about-us/seychelles/>.
- ¹⁶ Michaud, interview.
- ¹⁷ Philippe Michaud (Consultant for Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries and Blue Economy), response email to the IRM researcher, 28 March 2024.
- ¹⁸ Chetty, interview; Laurence, interview.
- ¹⁹ George Robert (Legal Director, Seychelles Human Rights Commission & Commitment 2 Implementor), interview with IRM researcher, 9 April 2024.
- ²⁰ Pillay, interview.
- ²¹ Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2023* “Seychelles” (2024), <https://freedomhouse.org/country/seychelles/freedom-world/2023>.
- ²² Anti-Corruption Commission Seychelles, et al., National Integrity Coalition Memorandum of Understanding (2024), <https://www.infocom.sc/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/MOU-National-Integrity-Coalition-Platform.pdf>.
- ²³ Pillay, interview; Robert, interview. Georges Robert was the Human Rights Commission Legal Director when the National Action Plan was drafted but is now the Ombudsman. However, he remains the commitment holder.
- ²⁴ Vidya Gappy, “Launch of second OGP Action Plan 2024-2025 and National Integrity Coalition Platform” *Seychelles Nation* (2 March 2024), <https://www.nation.sc/articles/21318/launch-of-second-ogp-action-plan-2024-2025-and-national-integrity-coalition-platform>.
- ²⁵ Laurence, interview.
- ²⁶ Pillay, interview; Robert, interview.
- ²⁷ Republic of Seychelles, Constitution of the Republic of Seychelles (Fourth Amendment) Act (1996), <https://seylil.org/akn/sc/act/1996/14/eng@1996-08-05>.
- ²⁸ Pillay, interview; Chetty, interview; Laurence, interview; Robert, interview.
- ²⁹ Refer to *Seychelles’ Second Open Government National Action Plan 2024-2025*, page 24. Available in the online repository at: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/16ypfzeiWXWbMMLsrzeNF2bwcm5oNxuDj>.
- ³⁰ Robert, interview.
- ³¹ *Id.*
- ³² Scottish Government, “Participation Framework” (29 February 2024), <https://webarchive.nrscotland.gov.uk/20240229135832/www.gov.scot/publications/participation-framework>.

³³ Open Government Partnership, “Open Gov Guide: Open Government Foundations” (accessed 14 April 2024), <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/open-gov-guide/open-government-foundations-mainstreaming-participation/>.

³⁴ Swedish Government, “Consultation Model to Engage CSOs”, (accessed 15 July 2024), <https://www.regeringen.se/sakrad/>.

³⁵ Open Government Partnership, “Open Gov Guide: Open Government Foundations.”

³⁶ Republic of Seychelles, *Seychelles National Action Plan, 2019 – 2021* (12 December 2019), <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/seychelles-action-plan-2019-2021/>.

³⁷ Information provided by the Government of Seychelles to the IRM during the prepublication comments period for this report. August 2024.

³⁸ Pillay, interview; Chetty, interview; Laurence, interview.

Section III: Methodology and IRM Indicators

The purpose of this review is not an evaluation. It is intended as a quick, independent, technical review of the characteristics of the action plan and the strengths and challenges the IRM identifies to inform a stronger implementation process. The IRM highlights commitments that have the highest potential for results, a high priority for country stakeholders, a priority in the national open government context, or a combination of these factors.

The three IRM products provided during a national action plan cycle include:

- **Co-Creation Brief:** A concise brief that highlights lessons from previous IRM reports to support a country's OGP process, action plan design, and overall learning.
- **Action Plan Review:** A technical review of the characteristics of the action plan and the strengths and challenges IRM identifies to inform a stronger implementation process.
- **Results Report:** An overall implementation assessment that focuses on policy-level results and how changes happen. It also checks compliance with OGP rules and informs accountability and longer-term learning.

In the Action Plan Review, the IRM follows a filtering and clustering process to identify promising reforms or commitments:

Step 1: Determine what is reviewable based on the verifiability of the commitment as written in the action plan.

Step 2: Determine if the commitment has an open government lens. Is it relevant to OGP values?

Step 3: Review commitments that are verifiable and have an open government lens to identify if certain commitments need to be clustered. Commitments that have a common policy objective or contribute to the same reform or policy issue should be clustered. The potential for results of clustered commitments should be reviewed as a whole. IRM staff follow these steps to cluster commitments:

- a. Determine overarching themes. If the action plan is not already grouped by themes, IRM staff may use OGP's thematic tagging as reference.
- b. Review commitment objectives to identify commitments that address the same policy issue or contribute to the same broader policy or government reform.
- c. Organize commitments into clusters as needed. Commitments may already be organized in the action plan under specific policy or government reforms.

Step 4: Assess the potential for results of the clustered or standalone commitment.

Filtering is an internal process. Data for individual commitments is available in Annex 1. In addition, during the internal review process of this product, the IRM verifies the accuracy of findings and collects further input through peer review, OGP Support Unit feedback as needed, interviews and validation with country stakeholders, an external expert review, and oversight by IRM's International Experts Panel (IEP).

As described earlier, IRM relies on **three key indicators** for this review:

I. Verifiability

- **Yes, specific enough to review:** As written in the action plan, the stated objectives and proposed actions are sufficiently clear and include objectively verifiable activities to assess implementation.
- **No, not specific enough to review:** As written in the action plan, the stated objectives and proposed actions lack clarity and do not include explicitly verifiable activities to assess implementation.
- Commitments that are not verifiable will be considered not reviewable, and further assessment will not be carried out.

II. Open government lens

This indicator determines if the commitment relates to the open government values of transparency, civic participation, or public accountability as defined by the Open Government Declaration and the OGP Articles of Governance by responding to the following guiding questions. Based on a close reading of the commitment text, the IRM first determines whether the commitment has an open government lens:

- **Yes/No:** Does the commitment set out to make a policy area, institution, or decision-making process more transparent, participatory, or accountable to the public?

The IRM uses the OGP values as defined in the Articles of Governance. In addition, the following questions for each OGP value may be used as a reference to identify the specific open government lens in commitment analysis:

- **Transparency:** Will the government disclose more information, improve the legal or institutional frameworks to guarantee the right to information, improve the quality of the information disclosed to the public, or improve the transparency of government decision-making processes or institutions?
- **Civic Participation:** Will the government create or improve opportunities, processes, or mechanisms for the public to inform or influence decisions? Will the government create, enable, or improve participatory mechanisms for minorities or underrepresented groups? Will the government enable a legal environment to guarantee freedoms of assembly, association, and peaceful protest?
- **Public Accountability:** Will the government create or improve opportunities to hold officials answerable for their actions? Will the government enable legal, policy, or institutional frameworks to foster accountability of public officials?

III. Potential for results

The IRM adjusted this indicator—formerly known as the “potential impact” indicator—to take into account the feedback from the IRM Refresh consultation process with the OGP community. With the new results-oriented strategic focus of IRM products, the IRM modified this indicator to lay out the expected results and potential that would be verified in the IRM Results Report after implementation. Given the purpose of this Action Plan Review, the assessment of potential for results is only an early indication of the possibility the commitment has to yield meaningful results based on its articulation in the action plan in contrast with the state of play in the respective policy area.

The scale of the indicator is defined as:

- **Unclear:** The commitment is aimed at continuing ongoing practices in line with existing legislation, requirements, or policies without indication of the added value or enhanced open government approach in contrast with existing practice.
- **Modest:** A positive but standalone initiative or change to processes, practices, or policies. The commitment does not generate binding or institutionalized changes across government or institutions that govern a policy area. Examples are tools (e.g., websites) or data release, training, or pilot projects.
- **Substantial:** A possible game changer for practices, policies, or institutions that govern a policy area, public sector, or the relationship between citizens and state. The commitment generates binding and institutionalized changes across government.

This review was prepared by the IRM in collaboration with Blessmore Nhikiti and was externally expert reviewed by Mary Francoli. The IRM methodology, quality of IRM products, and review process are overseen by IRM's IEP. For more information, see the IRM Overview section of the OGP website.¹

¹ Open Government Partnership, "Overview: Independent Reporting Mechanism" (2020), <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/irm-guidance-overview/>.

Annex 1: Commitment by Commitment Data¹

Commitment 1: Continuation of Implementation of the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI)

- Verifiable: Yes
- Does it have an open government lens? Yes
- Potential for results: Substantial

Commitment 2: Integrity, Good Governance, and Human Rights

- Verifiable: Yes
- Does it have an open government lens? Yes
- Potential for results: Substantial

Commitment 3: Digital Transformation and Connecting People

- Verifiable: Yes
- Does it have an open government lens? No
- Potential for results: Unclear

Commitment 4: Employee Wellness and Empowerment Policy

- Verifiable: Yes
- Does it have an open government lens? No
- Potential for results: Unclear

Commitment 5: Managing Alcohol Consumption for a Healthy and Productive Nation

- Verifiable: Yes
- Does it have an open government lens? Yes
- Potential for results: Unclear

¹ Editorial notes:

1. For commitments that are clustered, the assessment of potential for results is conducted at the cluster level, rather than the individual commitments.
2. Commitment short titles may have been edited for brevity. For the complete text of commitments, please see Seychelles' action plan: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Seychelles_Action-Plan_2023-2025_December.pdf

Annex 2: Action Plan Co-Creation

OGP member countries are encouraged to aim for the full ambition of the OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards that came into force on 1 January 2022.¹ The IRM assesses all countries that submitted action plans from 2022 onward under the updated standards. Table 2 outlines the extent to which the countries' participation and co-creation practices meet the minimum requirements that apply during the development of the action plan.

OGP instituted a 24-month grace period to ensure a fair and transparent transition to the updated standards. Action plans co-created and submitted by 31 December 2023 fall within the grace period. The IRM will assess countries' alignment with the standards and their minimum requirements.² However, countries will only be found to be acting contrary to the process if they do not meet the minimum requirements for action plans co-created in 2024 and onwards.

Please note that, according to the OGP National Handbook, countries implementing four-year action plans must undertake a refresh process at the two-year mark. Countries are expected to meet minimum requirements 3.1 and 4.1 during the refresh process.³ IRM assessment of the refresh process will be included in the Results Report.

Table 2. Compliance with minimum requirements

Minimum requirement	Met during co-creation?	Met during implementation?
1.1 Space for dialogue: Seychelles established a Multi-Stakeholder Forum before the co-creation process began. The MSF comprised of 9 government and 5 civil society members. The forum members were nominated, and with the Vice President's consent, they were invited to join the committee. ⁴ They met regularly during co-creation (between October and December), and their participation parameters and membership were guided by the Terms of Reference (TOR) ⁵ document.	Yes	<i>To be assessed in the Results Report</i>
2.1 OGP website: Seychelles does not have a standalone website but has designated Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram accounts. These social media platforms ⁶ disseminate information related to the OGP Process. A copy of the action plan was uploaded on each platform along with a Quick Response (QR) code, which reroutes users to the National Action Plan.	Yes	<i>To be assessed in the Results Report</i>
2.2 Repository: There is a publicly accessible Google Drive ⁷ (online repository) created on 23 October 2023. It has sufficient data on the entire OGP process (from co-creation to the action plan launch). Examples of the contents include minutes from MSF meetings, working group minutes, commitment development drafts, an OGP timeline, and pictures from meetings. It was updated at least once a month with information on co-creation, progress, and implementation.	Yes	<i>To be assessed in the Results Report</i>
3.1 Advanced notice: There is evidence of advance notice issued to government and non-governmental entities. Firstly, stakeholders were officially notified in writing ahead of the co-creation process. ⁸ The participants were invited 7 days in advance of the meeting. Likewise, a timeline indicating participation opportunities in the OGP process was published on the aforementioned OGP social media platforms. ⁹	Yes	Not applicable

3.2 Outreach: There were several outreach programs, including public sensitization through traditional and social media, media debriefing, and newsletter circulation. These activities were designed to disseminate adequate information about the OGP and Action Plan development process. For instance, a training workshop on OGP standards and their application involving civil societies and the Multi-Stakeholder forum was conducted (25–26 October 2023). ¹⁰	Yes	Not applicable
3.3 Feedback mechanism: The OGP process incorporated input from government and non-governmental organizations. The first instance of input collection was noted in the first meeting held on 26–27 October 2023. ¹¹ After this meeting, stakeholders joined working groups to develop proposals, generating specialized input from each working group.	Yes	Not applicable
4.1 Reasoned response: Stakeholder contributions were only generated in working groups during the commitment drafting phase. These are documented in the online repository. ¹² The Multi-Stakeholder Forum and OGP Secretariat engaged in deliberative meetings (in person) with the working groups during the co-creation process. Feedback on each commitment presentation was generated in these meetings. Moreover, the MSF also conducted several press releases to keep the public informed. ¹³	Yes	Not applicable
5.1 Open implementation: The IRM will assess whether meetings were held with civil society stakeholders to present implementation results and enable civil society to provide comments in the Results Report.	Not applicable	<i>To be assessed in the Results Report</i>

Seychelles’ OGP community has taken positive steps to increase transparency around its activities by establishing OGP Seychelles social media sites. Reformers are encouraged to further disseminate and make use of these platforms to engage the public. Seychelles’ co-creation process had a short timeline of a few months in order to meet the submission deadline of December 2023. The IRM recommends that the OGP Secretariat and Forum make advance plans to lengthen the co-creation timeline for the third action plan to ensure inclusive and iterative dialogue.

¹ Open Government Partnership, “OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards” (24 Nov. 2021), <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/ogp-participation-co-creation-standards/>.

² Open Government Partnership, “IRM Guidelines for the Assessment of Minimum Requirements” (31 May 2022), <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/irm-guidelines-for-the-assessment-of-minimum-requirements/>.

³ Open Government Partnership, *OGP National Handbook: Rules and Guidance for Participants* (Mar. 2024) §2.3, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/ogp-national-handbook-rules-and-guidance-for-participants-2022/>.

⁴ For a sample invitation letter for members of the Multi-Stakeholder Forum, see M Afif Secretary of State (Cabinet Affairs), letter to Mr. Alvin Laurence CEO Citizens Engagement Platform Seychelles (CEPS), 30 August 2023, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1eH5ntMcV5rTcPYA1uv59ID79vc-WclGt/edit>.

⁵ OGP Seychelles, “Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Seychelles OGP Multi-Stakeholder Committee for Seychelles’ National Action Plan (NAP) 2023-2025” (X, 5 October 2023), <https://twitter.com/OGPSey/status/1709892160810524930/photo/2>.

⁶ OGP Seychelles’ X (Twitter) account is available at: <https://twitter.com/ogpsey/>; OGP Seychelles’ Instagram account is available at: https://www.instagram.com/ogp_seychelles?igsh=aDhsMTVoZGNlbnAw; OGP Seychelles’ Facebook account is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/people/OGP-Seychelles/pfbid02vvhmatKiRWCCzSTBKDCz6pkyMjYvFw9DnuL57TYHdLfNGzD9ng16qZvczcBZGA7SI/?mibextid=LQQJ4d>.

⁷ The Google drive is available at: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/16vpfzeiWXWbMMLsrzeNF2bwcm5oNxDJ>.

⁸ See “cocreation session oct 2023 [advance notice folder]” at: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1hflSGeGIBKI8BAy8Kp7T7px_MjZ-WCu7.

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For Public Comment – Do Not Cite or Circulate

⁹ OGP Seychelles, “Timeline for delivery of the Second National Action Plan- OGP Seychelles” (X, 5 October 2023), <https://twitter.com/OGPSey/status/1709917139983867928>; OGP Seychelles, “Timeline for delivery of the Second National Action Plan- OGP Seychelles” (Facebook, 5 October 2023), <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=122104758410061915&set=a.122104698392061915>; OGP Seychelles, “Timeline for Delivery of the Second National Action Plan -OGP Seychelles” (Instagram, 5 October 2023), <https://www.instagram.com/p/CyBJ3XWsXkh/?igsh=b3ptNG9lOHBrczly>.

¹⁰ The *Seychelles Nation* newspaper published a detailed article about the two-day training workshop on the OGP co-creation process. Vidya Gappy, “Training workshop on the OGP co-creation process” (*Seychelles Nation*, 26 October 2023), <https://www.nation.sc/articles/19869/training-workshop-on-the-ogp-co-creation-process>.

¹¹ Margaret Pillay (Seychelles OGP Point of Contact), interview with IRM researcher, 11 March 2024

¹² A folder showing different stages of Commitment’s development is available at: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/19jHFafsPFqLcXGkiF_lkoY0byB_OXIf3. Illustratively, the following link contains a draft of the 2nd Commitment; the policy area under discussion was “Civic Space & Citizens Engagement.” The content of this draft differs from the approved commitment included in the action plan. The draft is available at: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Ew5omfREd4M0uQLDdFXuk4nnxBf6n6_J/edit.

¹³ See the “press releases” folder, available at: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/10MRtC5RmwBHlO-x7WXjX5zDchNPd5opQ>.