Civil Society Steering Committee Application
Manoj Kumar

What is your motivation to serve on the OGP Steering Committee? What is the greatest asset that you would bring to the SC?

I am motivated to serve on the OGP Steering Committee by the my vision of a world where governments are truly open and work in partnership with their citizens and other stakeholders. I am particularly inspired by the OGP's potential to drive open government initiatives for transparent and accountable governments, innovation in public services, strengthen democratic institutions, empower civil society, and I am keen to play a more active role in realizing this potential in India and other countries.

My greatest asset would be my collaborative approach and my capacity to build strong relationships across diverse actors. I believe that fostering open dialogue and shared understanding is crucial for effective governance. My experience in collaboration skills, e.g., facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogues, building successful partnerships, working in international or cross-sectoral teams, research and capacity building for the local governments, e governance, democratic decentralisation etc will enable me to contribute to a cohesive and impactful Steering Committee that can effectively champion open government principles worldwide.

Another motivation to serve on the OGP Steering Committee stems from a deep-seated belief in the power of open government to foster more inclusive, accountable, and responsive societies. Having witnessed first-hand experience of working with open government initiatives in my own research and training work context which has resulted in greater transparency and participation of the elected representatives and officials, better efficiency and service delivery, MIS/data base etc, I am eager to contribute in policy implementation, civic engagement, data analysis, national/international collaboration to advance the OGP's mission on a global scale. The greatest asset I would bring to the SC is my proven ability to bridge diverse stakeholder perspectives, develop and implement effective strategies, drive collaborative initiatives etc.

Please outline your open government experience and skills. Have you personally engaged in OGP processes or activities at the subnational, national or international level? If so, how?

My experience in open government spans about 29 years and encompasses various facets, including policy development, civil society collaboration, technology implementation for transparency, public participation initiatives, research and capacity building of local self-government institutions for creation of data base/MIS, transparency, accountability, efficiency and resource mobilisation etc. For instance, I was directly involved in leading the implementation of a social audit project, preparation of perspective and annual plans under Backward Region Grant Fund (BRGF) for the district of Mahendergarh and Sirsa in Haryana for 10 years; series of studies on State of Cities in North-western India; recently few projects and training programmes on digitization and e governance reforms for good governance (a book is also forthcoming on this) and some local initiatives for citizen engagement; developing a urban data base for the research and training for the access of public,

governments, researchers and civil society organizations etc. My core skills in this area include research and capacity building/training skills, strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, project management, data analysis and visualization, communication, social audit, and advocacy etc. I have been part of the several local, state, national and international level research projects and training activities, consultations, summits, forums etc. Through these experiences, I have gained a comprehensive understanding of the OGP ecosystem and the opportunities and challenges associated with advancing open government reforms at various levels.

Please outline your experience representing or advocating for civil society interests when engaging with government or multi-stakeholder fora.

My experience in representing and advocating for civil society interests within government and multi-stakeholder fora is extensive and foundational to my approach to open government. I have consistently worked to ensure that the voices and priorities of citizens, marginalized groups, and representatives of local governments and non-governmental organizations are not only heard but also genuinely integrated into policy and decision-making processes.

Specifically, I have been working on awareness, capacity building of elected representatives including women and officials, advocacy for empowering local government bodies, women and marginalised sections and preparing state municipal acts in conformity with central level model municipal law in 200 to augment capacity of local bodies to improve public service delivery. I have also organised winter schools and workshops on public finance and urban policy besides working for promoting civil society interests i.e., increased transparency in budget allocations for a specific sectors, better environmental protections, resource mobilisation etc. I have been associated with various efforts at state and local level like formation of City Managers Association of Punjab (CMAP); mobilisation of local resources of Chandigarh Municipal Corporation; member of Advertise Tax Committee and Convenor of Research Committee on Urban Studies of Indian Sociological Society (ISS) etc.

I have been actively participated in and facilitated multi-stakeholder dialogues and working groups on topics such as climate change, UN Decentralisation Community, International, National and North-western Sociological Associations; digitisation, corruption free local governance through computerisation, digitisation and e governance, greater citizen participation, social audit, data collection, equitable access to information etc through research and capacity building programmes.