OGP Youth Toolkit 2.0

A Practical Guide to Meaningful Youth Engagement in Open Government



Open Government Partnership

Acronyms

AI	Artificial intelligence
CSO	Civil society organization
CxT	Ciudadan@s por la Transparencia
EU	European Union
FLY	Federation of Liberian Youth
FOI	Freedom of Information
GIZ	German Corporation for International Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit)
IRM	Independent Reporting Mechanism
SPB/iSPB	School participatory budget/inclusive school participatory budget
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and other sexual orientations and gender identities
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MSF	Multi-Stakeholder Forum
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OGP	Open Government Partnership
RRP	Rapid response protocol
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNOY	United Network of Young Peacebuilders
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
YDC	Youth Democracy Cohort

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Introduction

Introduction

A Renewed Sense of Urgency

Young people represent almost a fifth of the world's population and are a generation facing climate change, new technology, rising inequality, and attacks on democracy. Because of this, they have consistently stood up for themselves and future generations by demanding a voice in policy-making. Yet when it comes time for actual decisions, young people are too often only invited for photos, consulted once, and then pushed to the side.

That is changing. More and more young people are online, connected to each other, and organizing quickly. As a result, they have more power than ever to shape reforms and influence decisions that used to happen without them.

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) has been one of the most concrete platforms where young people's influence can be exercised. OGP requires all its member governments to co-create reform commitments together with civil society, not alone. This mandate opens hundreds of chances each year for young people to help shape real policy reforms. In 2025 alone, local and national members drafted over 400 commitments. However, many governments still find it difficult to include youth voices in a meaningful way, and youth organizations often struggle to be heard.

The OGP Youth Toolkit 1.0 (2022) laid important groundwork to address that, but the need for clear guidance has only grown since then. This new version, OGP Youth Toolkit 2.0, builds on that momentum. It uses the experience of the OGP Youth Collective to give clear steps for meaningful youth participation, and to show what it takes to make that happen in practice.

How this Toolkit was Developed

Members of the OGP Youth Collective from 10 countries rewrote this Toolkit completely. They contributed with real examples, tested tools, and honest lessons about what works and what does not. The OGP Youth Toolkit 2.0 is built on their experience of moving from being consulted, to co-creating and sharing power in governance.

ABOUT THE OGP YOUTH COLLECTIVE

The OGP Youth Collective is a global community of young people working on open government reforms in OGP member countries. The Collective meets regularly to share experiences and advocate for stronger youth engagement in OGP processes.

Members of the Collective informed and shaped the content of this Toolkit through co-design workshops, individual input forms, case studies, tool contributions, and peer review.

> *Young people are not just the future of governance. We are the present. We are already doing the work—monitoring budgets, mobilizing communities.*
>
> *This Toolkit would make that work visible and connected.*
>
> **— OGP Youth Collective member**

What this Toolkit Does

Meaningful youth participation means changing how a process works so young people get a real say in it. It should help both young people and the process itself. Within the OGP journey, that means three things for young people: get real influence over decisions, keep a role at every moment, and receive clear feedback showing how their input was used.

For these reasons, this Toolkit aims to help young people, civil society organizations (CSOs), and governments move from symbolic inclusion to real partnership, with practical tools to make that shift.

The OGP Youth Toolkit 2.0 is specifically designed to:

- Help young people and CSOs understand and meaningfully engage at every moment of the OGP journey.
- Give governments and OGP Points of Contact practical, tested strategies to move from symbolic youth inclusion to genuine co-governance.
- Offer ready-to-use tools and templates that save time when designing participatory mechanisms.
- Provide recommendations based on real examples from the OGP community: what worked, why, and how others can repeat it.

Who this Toolkit is For

This Toolkit speaks to young people, CSOs, and governments simultaneously. Every section is useful to anyone who wants to meaningfully include young people in the OGP journey.

For Young People and CSOs	For Governments and OGP Points of Contact
Find entry points and understand potential youth roles at every moment of the OGP journey.	Understand why meaningful youth engagement strengthens and enriches the OGP journey.
Access ready-to-use tools and templates to support youth meaningful participation.	Find concrete tools and strategies to move beyond symbolic consultation.
Connect with the global OGP youth community to keep learning, sharing, and improving the practice of open government.	Learn from real examples that have effectively embedded youth participation institutionally.

How to Use this Toolkit

This Toolkit is organized around three key moments of the OGP journey, plus one moment that cuts across all of them: co-creation, implementation, accountability, and space. Each section includes a brief introduction to that moment, practical recommendations, case studies, and tools and templates. All tools and templates in this Toolkit have been tested in the field, and can be used and adapted.

The OGP Journey is flexible so readers can start at whichever moment is most relevant to them right now. It is not necessary to read it cover to cover.

A LIVING RESOURCE

This Toolkit is designed to grow and improve over time. As new examples emerge, tools are tested, and the OGP landscape evolves, this document will be updated. Readers with a case study, tool, or lesson worth sharing can contact the OGP Youth Collective to explore its inclusion in future versions: info@opengovernmentpartnership.org.

Moments in the OGP Journey

Moments

The OGP Youth Toolkit 2.0 is structured around the three principal moments of the OGP journey: co-creation, implementation, and accountability. Under the 2026 OGP Action Framework, these moments do not follow a fixed order, but happen continuously with ongoing chances to get involved. Youth engagement should work the same way: present at every moment, rather than being limited to a single consultation.

The OGP Youth Collective also added one cross-cutting moment, called “space,” to keep youth representation sustainable throughout the whole OGP journey.

Moment	What Happens	Youth Role
Co-creation	Commitments are designed and agreed	Co-design priorities and propose solutions
Implementation	Commitments are implemented and delivered	Co-lead implementation, track progress, and flag barriers
Accountability	Commitments are reviewed	Monitor impact and lead evaluations
Space	Structures for ongoing engagement	Sit in the multi-stakeholder forum (MSF), represent youth perspectives in regional and global fora, join the OGP Youth Collective, and build networks

Why Youth Engagement Matters in the OGP Journey

Youth engagement in open government is not a nice-to-have nor a checkbox. It is a requirement for reforms to be legitimate, effective, and built to last. The evidence is clear: when young people are genuine partners in co-creating and implementing processes and reforms, public trust grows. Here are six reasons why.

Reason	What This Looks Like in Practice
Policy relevance	Young people use services like education and employment every day, so they know what works and what doesn't. Involving them leads to commitments grounded in real needs.
Democratic legitimacy and civic trust	Policies developed with youth are more likely to last through political transitions and build long-term trust in democracy. When young people are genuine partners, public trust in institutions grows—a core OGP goal.
Innovation	Young people bring digital skills, new methodologies, and fresh analytical approaches. Their inclusion also ensures a constant renewal of perspectives in MSFs and other governing bodies, keeping processes relevant and sustainable across generations.
Intergenerational justice	Major decisions today on climate, debt, or artificial intelligence (AI) governance will define the world young people inherit. Youth must help shape them.
Diversity of voice	Like any other stakeholder, young people are not one uniform group. Young women, rural youth, LGBTQIA+ youth, and young people with disabilities, among others, bring perspectives that improve policy quality.
Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Young people are central to achieving the 17 SDGs, which tackle the root causes of poverty, inequality, and climate change under the promise to "leave no one behind." OGP processes that exclude young people miss a critical implementation partner.

Co-Creation

Shaping the Commitments

Co-Creation

Co-creation is where open government commitments are born. It is the process through which governments, CSOs, and other stakeholders, including youth organizations, jointly identify problems, propose solutions, and agree on what will be formally submitted as a standalone commitment or as part of an OGP action plan. This is not just a procedural step: OGP evidence shows that when civil society is genuinely engaged, action plans are better designed, more ambitiously implemented, and deliver stronger results for people.

For young people, co-creation is the critical entry point. Done well, it ensures OGP commitments reflect their real needs and priorities. Done poorly, it becomes a box-ticking exercise where youth are invited at the last minute and cannot influence anything of substance. This section offers tools and recommendations to help make sure that doesn't happen.

USING THIS TOOLKIT ALONGSIDE OGP'S CO-CREATION RESOURCES

The tools in this section are designed to complement OGP's broader co-creation resources from the 2026 OGP National Handbook, not replace them. Use them alongside the resources listed below.

- **Co-Creation Guidance:** Practical steps for implementing an inclusive and participatory co-creation process.
- **Participation and Co-Creation Standards:** The five standards and minimum requirements that all OGP members must meet, covering all stages of the process.

Define "Youth" Before Beginning

There is no universal definition of "youth." The United Nations (UN) uses ages 15 to 24. The African Union Charter extends this from 15 to 35. UN Security Council Resolution 2250 focuses on 18 to 29. OGP recommends adopting an inclusive definition that reflects the country's own reality and writing it clearly in the action plan or commitment text. This definition should then guide the youth engagement strategy of the co-creation process.

INTERSECTIONALITY: YOUTH ARE NOT A MONOLITH

Young people's experience of participation differs depending on gender identity, socio-economic background, disability, ethnicity, geographic location, sexual orientation, and migration status. A strategy designed for urban university students will not reach rural youth, indigenous youth, or young women in informal settings.

Young women, LGBTQIA+ youth, young people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups face several barriers at once. The engagement strategies should be designed specifically for these communities. One open door does not mean all doors are open.

Map the Landscape and Build on Existing Networks and Alliances

Before launching a co-creation process for an action commitment, it is important to map who is already doing what, instead of building youth engagement from zero. In almost every OGP country, youth networks, youth-related CSOs, student organizations, and youth councils already exist, and they've already earned young people's trust. Building on these existing networks makes the process more credible.

Mapping should not be limited to formal actors. There's a much wider ecosystem out there. Informal groups, community leaders, faith-based youth groups, and online communities should be included too, especially those representing marginalized and underrepresented young people. These actors often have relationships with young people who rarely show up in official spaces, which makes their representation more genuine.



> *Participation has to be intentionally designed to be meaningful. Training alone is not enough—it works best when it is connected to real participation spaces.*
>
> **— OGP Youth Collective member**

The goal is not to only invite more young people into the process, it is to change the process itself, so that those who are usually absent can participate safely, contribute meaningfully, and influence decisions. Where possible, governments should invite actors with deep community roots as co-designers and facilitators of the participatory process.

TOOL 1 Youth Stakeholder Mapping

This structured template maps the full youth ecosystem in a given context. It helps identify who is present, who is missing, where power is concentrated, and what barriers keep certain young people from participating. It should be used before launching any OGP co-creation process, to make outreach intentional, inclusive, and grounded in the real landscape.

Inform Young People about the Process Before it Starts

Most youth organizations miss the opportunity to join a co-creation process because they find out about it too late, or because the format does not suit them. To avoid that, organizers should identify barriers to participation early (such as financial, language, digital, geographic, and logistical barriers) and design outreach accordingly.

- Reach out to the organizations and networks already identified, and invite them to participate. Where relevant, ask them to join as co-organizers of the co-creation process itself.
- Work with youth media, content creators, and trusted digital voices to raise awareness among young people about OGP and the opportunities to get involved in the development of commitments and action plans.

- Verify that the basic infrastructure for transparent co-creation is in place: a public website dedicated to the country's participation in OGP, a co-creation timeline with key milestones published before the process begins, and a clear point of contact responsible for coordinating it.
- If the information is not publicly available, CSOs can contact their country's OGP Point of Contact (whose name and email is available in the OGP Members webpage) to learn the co-creation timeline and how youth can be formally included. Transparency about the process itself is a minimum requirement.

> **TOOL 2 OGP Co-Creation Process Calendar**
>
> A simple calendar can map OGP co-creation activities in a given country: which processes are running or planned, who leads and coordinates each one, and what consultation mechanisms they use. Under the 2026 OGP Action Framework, there may be more than one process running at once, since any government institution can co-create commitments with civil society. Sharing the calendar with other youth organizations will help them know when and where to participate.

Make OGP Exciting, Relevant, and Accessible

Young people will not engage with OGP if they cannot understand what it is or see how it connects to the issues they care about. The most successful co-creation processes translate OGP concepts into plain, accessible language, and connect them directly to young people's priorities and everyday concerns.

The OGP Glossary is the go-to reference for clear, up-to-date definitions of OGP-related terms. Any government or CSO can use it together with this Toolkit's tools to turn OGP concepts and open government jargon into language that resonates with young people.

Here are a few examples for how you can explain key terms.

Action commitment: "A public promise by the government, developed with civil society, to deliver a specific reform by a specific date. You can hold them to it."

> *OGP should not sound like a technical framework. It should sound like a simple, everyday tool that you can use to ensure that your government is accountable to you, that they are involving you in participatory approaches, and that they are transparent in their engagement.*
>
> **— OGP Youth Collective member**

National action plan: "A package of commitments the government submits together, with a start and end date. Since 2026, this is one option among several: commitments can also be submitted individually or in batches."

Co-creation: "A process to define the reforms together—with your ideas and your priorities—helping decide which problems should be addressed and what solutions should be pursued."

Multi-stakeholder forum (MSF): "A committee where civil society and government institutions work together on open government priorities and guide the OGP process in a country."

Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM): "An independent body that assesses how well countries are implementing their commitments."

TOOL 3 Youth-Friendly OGP Glossary

This glossary explains key OGP terms in simple words. It includes a "What does this mean for young people?" column that can be adapted to national contexts.

TOOL 4 Open Gov Explainer Cards

These visual cards introduce key open government concepts in simple, youth-friendly language. Each card explains a concept, connects it to young people's everyday realities, and includes a reflection question to spark discussion. They can be used in workshops and outreach events.

Bring Diverse Youth Voices, Not Just the Usual Suspects

Co-creation processes often reach the same young people who are already engaged: those who are urban, educated, and formally organized. However, a meaningful co-creation process requires proactive outreach to rural youth, indigenous communities, young women, young people with disabilities, and those in informal sectors. In practice, that means going where they already are, using their channels, and building engagement around their schedules and constraints.

Before reaching out, it also helps to decide whether to work online or in person. Each has pros and cons, and the right choice depends on the purpose of the discussion. Digital tools can expand reach and lower barriers, but in-person dialogue (such as policy forums, community workshops, citizen assemblies, and other face-to-face spaces) is where the deepest engagement and relationship-building happen. The key is to use the channels, formats, and spaces that are most relevant and accessible to the young people wanting to engage.

Usually a mix works best. Here are a few examples:

- **In-person surveys and online surveys** accessible on mobile devices to reach those with low bandwidth.
- **Hybrid event formats** that include online participants in real-time deliberations with equal speaking rights and opportunities to contribute.
- **Asynchronous contribution mechanisms**, such as online submissions and video statements, for youth across time zones.

Potential Strengths of Digital and In-Person Engagements

Engagement	Potential Strengths	When this Might or Might Not Work
Digital engagement[1]	• Can scale quickly and at lower cost • Supports online-first youth organizers (i.e. those using TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp) • Enables broad data collection through surveys and forms • Useful for asynchronous contributions and keeping participants informed	Works well when young people are already active online and have the means to participate, when participants are spread out, or when time and resources are tight. It works less well where connectivity, digital literacy, language, or device access is limited.
In-person engagement	• Enables deeper conversation, deliberation, and trust-building • Creates genuine community and sustained relationships • Better for reaching youth without reliable internet access or in remote areas	Works well when building new relationships, discussing complex issues, or engaging communities that value face-to-face interaction. Depending on the context, travel costs, time, and accessibility needs may limit participation.
Hybrid approaches	• Combines the advantages of both methods and offers multiple ways to participate • Can increase flexibility and provide alternative channels for engagement	Works well when different groups face different barriers or preferences, or when it matters to balance broad participation with real deliberation. Hybrid formats need extra coordination and resources to make sure online and in-person participants can contribute equally.

[1] Use this curated selection of online tools that may be useful at different stages of co-creating, developing, and implementing a commitment. This is not an official OGP endorsement of any tool or platform. Before adopting any, consider the privacy and security implications for your participants, especially when working with young people or vulnerable communities.

TOOL 5 Youth Consultation Survey Template

This survey gathers youth priorities, needs, and barriers before the co-creation agenda is set. It can be adapted for digital and paper formats, so it reaches young people across different connectivity and resource contexts.

TOOL 6 Youth Co-Creation Workshop Facilitation Guide

This guide can be used and adapted to run inclusive, participatory workshops with young people during co-creation. It includes agenda templates, icebreaker activities, methodologies, facilitation tips for diverse groups, and a results documentation template.

Go Wide: Youth Care about Everything

One of the most common mistakes is confining young people to "youth topics" such as sports, arts, or education. In reality, young people have urgent perspectives on many governance areas and add real value to each of them. For instance, OGP Youth Collective members are active in anti-corruption and public procurement; digital rights and AI governance; climate action and environmental justice; access to information and freedom of expression; budget transparency and fiscal accountability; and access to justice and civic participation. Governments and CSOs should not assume what young people care about: they should ask them. The answer is often surprising.

A second common mistake is relying solely on youth-only spaces, such as dedicated dialogues or working groups for young people. These have their place when they are genuinely meaningful, but they can also separate young people from the main conversation instead of including them in it. Young people can and should contribute to all topic discussions alongside other stakeholders. Engaging young people more broadly makes the process richer and OGP commitments more relevant.

TOOL 7 Handbook of Civic Engagement Activities

This repository offers low-cost, flexible engagement activities to reach diverse topics. Options include pre-event surveys, storytelling, interactive card games, brunch dialogues, and community council simulations. These activities work both online and offline.

Track Youth Contributions

After each co-creation session, organizers should write a report to keep a record of what was proposed and discussed. Verbal contributions can easily be ignored, but when they are documented, they are far more likely to be referenced and followed up.

Some recommendations to keep in mind:

- Use participatory tools that are easy to document and compile into a short report. Clearly record what was said, what decisions were made, and what needs follow up.
- Share the report with public officials and CSOs involved in the process for accountability.
- Use this documentation to challenge the invisible dynamics that shape decision-making (see the “Space” section) and ensure youth contributions are not lost in the process.

TOOL 8 Youth Accountability Scorecard and Community Feedback

This two-step survey collects youth priorities in advance, and tracks how young people felt during the engagement and whether their proposals made it into commitments afterward.

Include Youth Contributions in Commitment Narratives

When OGP commitments are written, youth contributions must be visible in the commitment text, not just in the consultation report. This means:

- Explicitly referencing youth needs and priorities in the problem statement of each commitment.
- Including youth organizations as named co-leads or implementing partners in the commitment text.
- Making commitments specific, measurable, time-bound, and clearly linked to open government values. Vague commitments cannot be tracked or held accountable.
- Establishing a feedback loop: after co-creation, share with participating youth groups exactly how their inputs were incorporated, and why some were not.

TOOL 9 Commitment Quality Checklist (Youth Lens)

This checklist assesses youth inclusion in draft commitments: Is it measurable? Does it align with the open government values of transparency, accountability, and participation? Does it address issues that specifically affect young people? This tool includes a youth impact question for each criterion.

Co-Creation in Action: Case Studies

ECUADOR

Young Ambassadors for Open Government (2025)

Context: Reflections on Ecuador's OGP processes revealed a consistent gap. Although young people had participated in different ways over the years, little had been done to ensure they could meaningfully contribute to co-creation. This showed the need for more intentional youth engagement and stronger pathways
for young people to take part in decision-making and shape national discussions.

What happened: Fundación Datalat, with support from the Youth Democracy Cohort, launched the Young Ambassadors for Open Government (Jóvenes Embajadores por el Estado Abierto) program during Ecuador's third action plan (2025–2027). The initiative brought together 29 young people from 15 provinces, including participants from rural and indigenous communities, most of whom had never taken part in a national policy process before. After receiving training on open government and advocacy, the ambassadors joined official co-creation roundtables in the cities of Quito, Manta, and Riobamba, engaging directly with public officials and civil society.

Results: Ambassadors participated in the co-creation of 29 proposals and contributed to many more through the national platform. They brought what they had learned back to their communities, organized additional workshops, created digital campaigns, and encouraged other young people to get involved. Their work became a key milestone within one commitment in Ecuador's third action plan, and the initiative expanded the open government community by bringing in new organizations and individuals.

Key lessons: 1) Preparing participants at the community level before national engagement dramatically improves participation quality. However, training alone is not enough: it works best when connected to real participation spaces. 2) Peer mobilization, where participants recruit other participants, is more effective than top-down outreach. 3) Exposure to national policy processes can help young people connect open government principles to local realities and inspire action within their own communities. 4) Connecting youth contributions to existing accountability mechanisms gives youth institutional legitimacy and increases the likelihood that ideas and relationships would continue beyond a single initiative.

METSAMOR, ARMENIA

Reaching Youth in their Own Spaces (2025)

Context: In Metsamor, Armenia, the OGP local team set out to engage youth in the co-creation process. Rather than waiting for young people to show up to formal meetings, they started by mapping and proactively reaching out to youth groups through joint sessions with municipalities and local CSOs.

What happened: Instead of inviting youth to institutional spaces, facilitators went to them. They attended youth events and meetings to introduce the OGP process on familiar ground, using methodologies adapted to different contexts: Brunch Dialogues for focus groups in relaxed, informal settings; Community Council Simulations that used structured sessions with municipality staff; Youth Participation Debates that hosted thematic discussions between youth and government; and Remote Village Community Meetings to reach outlying areas.

The municipality also drew on its existing ties with schools and colleges in the city, schools in the villages, cultural houses, and the sports school. These institutions helped spread the calls for participation and nominate young people to take part. They also helped reach youth who would not otherwise respond to an open call, including those not already active in civic life or living in more remote villages.

Results: The approach produced a tangible shift. Metsamor's OGP action plan (2025–2026) included a youth-focused commitment that won the 2025 Open Gov Challenge Award, and the government boosted youth involvement in ongoing implementation, not just co-creation. Equally significant, the municipality's own understanding of youth engagement shifted beyond just organizing school events to also recognizing young people as active governance stakeholders.

Key lessons: 1) Proactive youth group mapping is essential, but it only sustains if backed by genuine governmental support. 2) Having a government partner that can engage the institutions it already works with (such as schools, colleges, cultural houses, and sports schools) to share calls and nominate participants is what can transform outreach from a one-time effort into an embedded process.

COLOMBIA

Youth Inclusion that Wasn't Planned (2023)

Context: During Colombia's fifth action plan (2023–2025) co-creation process, young people from CSOs, including Datasketch, participated actively in co-creation roundtables. Youth participation was not originally planned into the process, but they got involved anyway.

What happened: Young participants advocated for a cross-cutting gender and inclusion approach, which led to the use of an IRM-inspired assessment form to evaluate draft commitments. The form included questions on measurability, alignment with OGP values, and a gender perspective.

Results: Four commitments adopted a cross-cutting gender and inclusion approach as a direct result of this structured lens. The same approach is now being extended to a youth perspective.

Key lessons: Youth participation was not originally built into the process, yet young people still made their voices heard and helped shape the outcomes. Even without formal mechanisms, they brought perspectives that enriched the discussion and influenced decisions. This experience highlights that meaningful youth engagement should not depend on chance or individual initiative. What happened organically should now be intentionally embedded into the process, ensuring that young people have a consistent, recognized, and influential role in shaping decisions that affect them.

The whole co-creation process was supported by a mini grant from OGP's Feminist Open Government Initiative.

MACHAKOS COUNTY, KENYA

Political Goodwill to Include Youth Voices (2025)

Context: Building on the 2022 Machakos County Youth Empowerment Act, which institutionalizes youth participation in county governance in line with Article 55 of Kenya's Constitution, the County Executive of Machakos County made a political commitment to intentionally include youth in the co-creation process of its OGP action plan (2025–2027).

What happened: CSOs facilitated inclusive consultative forums, brought in youth from multiple networks, and made sure youth contributions were documented and reflected in commitments. Young people were especially helpful to identify priority issues, gaps in service delivery, and realistic solutions.

Results: The result was a set of actionable commitments grounded in real community needs. The process also strengthened ownership among stakeholders, increasing the likelihood that engagement would continue and last, even across political transitions.

Key lessons: Strong political goodwill from the executive branch, combined with a shared commitment from CSOs and community stakeholders, is key to including youth voices in a safe environment where they are heard and taken seriously.

QUINTANA ROO, MEXICO

Co-Creating a Youth Engagement Protocol (2022)

Context: A 2021 survey by Ciudadan@s por la Transparencia (CxT) and UnidosMX found that 68 percent of young people in Quintana Roo did not feel included in public life, and 88 percent wanted more opportunities to participate.

What happened: As part of its OGP action plan (2021–2022), the government of Quintana Roo, together with CxT and UnidosMX, co-created and implemented a youth engagement protocol in 2022 to bring young people into political life and government decision-making. The protocol sets out five recommendations for public institutions: communicate proactively about opportunities to participate; use innovative participation tools; explain institutional work in clear, accessible language with a gender lens; involve youth across all stages of policy design, implementation, and evaluation; and report back transparently on the protocol's own results. Alongside it, CxT and UnidosMX also produced a companion manual, "Ciudadanx Chidx," explaining in plain language how the government works and how to get involved.

Results: The protocol and manual became the starting point for later youth involvement in the state's Strategic Plan for Sustainable Development to 2050. Through the #ImaginaQuintanaRoo campaign, 300 university students from Cancun took part in participatory planning dialogues shaping the state's long-term development vision.

Key lessons: 1) Co-creating a formal protocol, not only running one-off consultations, gives youth engagement a structure that can outlast a single administration, campaign, or action plan cycle. 2) Co-creating how institutions should engage youth is as valuable as co-creating specific policy content, and it can be reused across many later processes.

Implementation

Keeping the Commitments Alive

Implementation

The implementation phase is where government commitments are actually carried out, and where youth engagement most often drops off. This is a problem. The 2021 OGP Vital Signs report shows that keeping stakeholders involved during implementation leads to higher completion rates and stronger results. Keeping youth in the room is not a nice-to-have: it is what makes the difference between a commitment that delivers and one that stalls.

This section provides practical strategies to keep youth meaningfully involved throughout the process as co-leads who drive commitments forward and hold the process accountable when things go off track.

Assign or Claim a Youth Role in the Implementation Structure

The best way to guarantee youth engagement during implementation is to name youth organizations as formal co-leads of commitments. Youth organizations that helped develop a commitment during co-creation should stay involved and help monitor progress, give feedback, and contribute to reporting.

Here are some recommendations to make that co-ownership happen in practice:

- Name specific youth organizations or youth-related CSOs as co-responsible implementing partners in the commitment text. This can mean joining thematic working groups from the co-creation process or hiring youth consultants to help move specific milestones forward.
- Give youth and CSOs co-leads the same access to information, meetings, and decision-making spaces as government focal points.

> *Participation without continuity limits impact. Early engagement in co-creation must be matched with structured involvement in implementation tracking and accountability processes. Without clear feedback mechanisms and defined roles for youth beyond consultation, participation risks becoming symbolic.*
>
> **— OGP Youth Collective member**

- Designate one government official as the main point of contact for youth co-leads and hold regular progress meetings.
- Advocate for a dedicated budget line that covers participation costs for youth co-leads throughout implementation, such as travel, equipment, interpretation, and more. Unpaid participation systematically excludes youth from marginalized backgrounds.

TOOL 10 Commitment Implementation Plan

This tool can be adapted for tracking the implementation of OGP commitment milestones and youth organizations' role in them: specific activities, timelines, resources, responsibilities, and potential risks. The template can be completed for each commitment individually.

Track Commitments with Simple Tools

One of the main barriers to tracking OGP commitments is that progress updates are not always easy to find. Under the OGP minimum requirements, countries are supposed to publish implementation updates online. Youth organizations can start by finding out whether their country is doing so and where. If websites are outdated or broken, that's worth flagging. Youth can push for more consistent and accessible reporting.

THE OGP DATA DASHBOARD

The OGP Data Dashboard and country pages are the first place to look when tracking the progress of OGP commitments. They show what commitments the countries and local governments have made, their level of ambition, and how implementation is advancing.

Knowing what exists and what was promised gives youth organizations the information they need to follow up, ask the right questions, and flag when progress stalls.

Where information is not publicly available, a well-designed spreadsheet or community scorecard can do more than a complex platform, as long as it's kept up regularly. This works especially well for youth organizations with limited technical and financial resources, since it can run on free tools like Google Sheets or Airtable.

Another option is to track budget allocations against OGP commitments. If the data isn't public, youth organizations can file access-to-information requests. Budget tracking can be a powerful tool for organizations that do not yet have relationships inside government, and it can reveal whether political commitments are backed by real resources.

> **TOOL 11 Youth-Friendly Budget Tracking Template**
>
> This simplified tool tracks budget allocations against OGP commitments. It includes a guide for filing Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to access budget data.

Give and Get Feedback on What's Happening

Building an internal feedback system helps check progress and raise concerns about a commitment. Here are some actions that can be part of that system. They work for both governments and youth organizations:

- **Take stock of what public-facing channels already exist in the country or locality.** Countries following OGP processes must maintain a repository or website where commitment updates and evidence are published. It is worth checking whether the country has one, whether it is kept up to date, and whether local people know where to find it.

- **Consider where youth organizations can play a role, either complementing existing channels or supporting new ones.** If implementation updates exist only on a government webpage, youth organizations can help spread that information through social media or community newsletters, reaching audiences that would otherwise miss it. When creating new reporting channels, consult with youth organizations to learn which formats are easiest to find. Public awareness of progress is only meaningful if the channel is consistent and reachable over time.
- **A simple "halfway report" can give implementing institutions valuable technical input on a commitment's progress.** This report should follow the commitment's own milestones: what has been completed, what is delayed, and what evidence exists. The OGP Self-Assessment Template is a good starting point for this.
- **Attend OGP meetings on implementation updates and present findings, raise concerns, and push for course corrections when needed.** Under the 2026 OGP Action Framework, members are expected to take stock of all their action commitments at least every two years, reviewing progress and identifying next steps together with stakeholders. This is a key moment to assess whether implementation is on track, whether youth co-leads are still active and resourced, and whether course corrections are needed.

Train Both Parts

Implementation is most effective when both government officials and youth co-leads have the knowledge and skills they need. Governments sometimes disengage from youth organizations simply because they don't know how to engage with them. Youth organizations, meanwhile, often lose influence during implementation because the process becomes more technical, leaving them feeling out of their depth. The solution is not to lean on external experts: it is to build technical know-how within the team.

- Continue training government officials on OGP processes, youth engagement methods, and enabling environments.
- Build youth co-lead capacity through mentoring, peer learning, and access to technical expertise.
- Use a "train the trainer" approach. Youth co-leads can pass on what they learn to their networks.
- Create opportunities for mutual learning between government officials and youth co-leads.
- Document and create simple handover notes, shared resources, and opportunities for peer learning to help maintain continuity when young leaders or government officials change.

BUILD CAPACITY THROUGH OGP NETWORKS

Implementation is stronger when governments and CSOs are not working alone. The OGP Support Unit can connect anyone interested with other OGP members working on the same topics or facing similar challenges. These peer exchanges are a practical way to learn how others have handled OGP processes, strengthened youth engagement, or delivered results on specific policy areas.

OGP also runs thematic networks that bring together practitioners around shared areas of work. The OGP Youth Collective focuses specifically on youth engagement in open government processes. Other networks, such as the OGP Coalition on Justice or the Open Algorithms Network, connect members working on specific reform areas of open justice and digital governance. Joining these networks can strengthen both the quality of developing and implementing commitments and the connections across the OGP community.

Create Parallel Youth Action Plans

Some OGP members have started to develop Youth Action Plans or Youth Strategies that run in parallel to ongoing domestic OGP reforms, allowing youth organizations to take ownership of their own implementation agenda.

- A Youth Action Plan or Youth Strategy can include OGP commitments plus additional youth-led initiatives.
- Youth Action Plans or Youth Strategies create accountability within the youth community itself, not only toward the government.
- Under the 2026 OGP Action Framework, a Youth Action Plan or Youth Strategy can also feed the official process directly: commitments co-created within it that have a government lead institution can be submitted to the country's OGP portfolio, individually or in batches, in coordination with the Point of Contact.

THE NEW OGP ACTION FRAMEWORK: A DOOR OPENS FOR YOUTH

Under the updated 2026 OGP Action Framework, the core unit of OGP action is the individual action commitment. Commitments can be grouped in an action plan with start and end dates set by the country, or submitted individually or in batches at any time. For youth, this creates a major new opportunity. The entry point is no longer an action plan cycle that comes around every few years: youth organizations can initiate and co-create a commitment with a government partner whenever the opportunity arises.

Youth organizations can initiate and co-create open government commitments together with a government agency acting as lead institution. When these commitments are submitted through, or in coordination with the country's OGP Point of Contact, they become part of the country's official portfolio of OGP commitments. Coordinating with the Point of Contact from the start is what secures formal recognition, visibility, and accountability for a youth-led commitment.

The choice of approach is made in consultation with the MSF or the country's regular space for dialogue, and is clearly communicated to OGP. However, regardless of format, the fundamentals do not change: every commitment must be co-created through multi-stakeholder dialogue, have clear start and end dates, name a lead institution, and be regularly reviewed, including a stock-take of all commitments at least every two years. This means that youth engagement belongs in the co-creation and review of every commitment, however it is submitted.

Implementation in Action: Case Studies

NIGERIA

Youth-Led Implementation Tracking (2024)

Context: DEAN Initiative in Nigeria launched a Students Open Gov Fellowship to train young university students to access and analyze local government budget documents and track incomplete infrastructure projects.

What happened: Using the Freedom of Information Act with digital tools to monitor government budget implementation, the students obtained four out of six local government budget copies and created a shared tracking database that was updated monthly.

Results: The combination of legal and digital tools, along with community engagement, created pressure that was hard for government agencies to ignore. Presenting the findings at a press conference marked a turning point: local council budgets were no longer seen as sacred, untouchable documents the public should never see. This made the students become OGP champions, not just activists.

Key lessons: Young people with real tools and real information become genuine implementation and accountability partners. Moreover, evidence submitted through official channels has more traction than reports published only by civil society.

ARMENIA

Youth Monitoring of Participatory Budgeting (2022–2024)

Context: As part of Armenia's fifth action plan (2022–2024), Armavir Development Center and NGO Center, with support from the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ) under the "Good Governance for Local Development South Caucasus" program, designed and implemented a civic monitoring component for Armenia's participatory budgeting process across six municipalities: Noyemberyan, Akunq, Talin, Tashir, Martuni, and Gavar.

What happened: Up to 60 citizen monitors, about 80 percent of them young people, were trained through a series of in-person workshops on how to monitor participatory budgeting. Using one shared methodology, they tracked the full participatory budgeting cycle in their own communities, from idea submission through implementation. Monitors documented their findings and brought them directly to structured feedback sessions and joint working groups alongside municipal officials.

Results: The monitoring produced a cross-municipality analysis of trends, challenges, and recommendations. This analysis fed into a proposed dedicated section for Armenia's national Participatory Budgeting Methodological Guideline, turning a six-municipality pilot into language designed to shape how every municipality in the country handles citizen oversight.

Key lessons: 1) Training youth monitors on one shared methodology, rather than letting each community improvise, makes findings comparable, credible, and harder to dismiss. 2) Evidence needs a formal channel to travel. Structuring dialogue with officials, instead of only publishing a report, is what turns monitoring findings into institutional change.

Learn how participatory budgeting is reshaping the relationship between citizens and local governments in Armenia.

ZVIAHEL & ORZHYTSYA, UKRAINE

Inclusive School Participatory Budgeting (2024–2026)

Context: In 2019, the CSO Civil Society Development Forum developed a model for a school participatory budget. The goal was to give children a real, structured say in how public money is spent in their own schools. This became the Council of Europe's official model.

What happened: In 2025, as part of Zviahel's first OGP action plan (2025–2026), the Civil Society Development Forum developed an Inclusive School Participatory Budget model (iSPB or SPB 2.0) to also include students with special educational needs and disabilities in decision-making. With financial support of OGP through the European Union (EU) Integrity Program, the Civil Society Development Forum allocated EUR 15,813 across 12 schools in Zviahel and Orzhytstya to implement this new methodology. Through a transparent, democratic process, over 2,000 students voted to choose which project proposals would be funded.

As part of the commitment, the organisation with the support of the International Renaissance Foundation, developed the DIY4iSPB (or DIY4Change) Toolbox. This is a set of interactive and inclusive tools for organizing and implementing participatory budgeting in schools, helping train students and teachers on civic engagement and budgeting. So far, 20 communities in Ukraine have begun implementing the iSPB model.

Results: Iryna Hudz, Deputy Mayor of Zviahel, stated: "Thanks to OGP, the proactive youth have realized that their ideas are valued by the community, and they are increasingly motivated to participate in local decision-making and drive positive change". In the coming months, the Civil Society Development Forum expects to continue expanding the use of the model and increase students' understanding of democracy and civic participation.

Key lessons: 1) Giving children control over a small, concrete budget teaches democratic participation through practice. 2) Building for students with special educational needs and disabilities at the update stage, rather than trying to design for everyone from day one, shows that participatory budgeting can keep getting more inclusive over successive cycles.

Accountability

Auditing Process and Commitment Progress

Accountability

Not all commitments target youth directly, but most affect how young people experience governance. That's why accountability means more than asking whether commitments were fulfilled: it also means asking whether the process itself met its requirements. Doing this takes sustained engagement and technical knowledge that can feel out of reach, but it doesn't have to be. This section provides practical strategies to build that knowledge and lead meaningful accountability work.

Evaluate the Involvement of Young People in Commitments

One of the first questions to answer when doing accountability work is whether young people were genuinely part of the process from start to finish:

- Were youth voices present and meaningfully involved throughout?
- Did they have real influence?
- Were their contributions reflected in outcomes?
- Did the experience match the promise?

Start by reviewing the OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards. The standards set out the minimum requirements a government must meet at each stage of the OGP journey, from co-creation to implementation and monitoring. These standards are the baseline for assessing any process. Knowing them gives youth organizations a clear way to spot where governments fall short, and where accountability is needed.

> *You cannot hold a government accountable if you don't speak the same data language as they do. To move beyond tokenism, youth must become the experts the system needs to function, not just the voices the system is forced to hear.*
>
> **— OGP Youth Collective member**

Another valuable practice is comparing young people's experience of OGP processes with their experience of other participation spaces (such as elections or public consultations). This comparison helps reveal whether the process in that country or locality is actually building more trust in public participation, or simply repeating the same patterns. A simple way to do this is to survey young people on their trust in public institutions before the OGP process begins. Then, ask them again about their trust in the OGP process once they have experienced it. Over time, this evidence can be a powerful tool for demonstrating the value of open government.

TOOL 12 Youth Involvement Assessment Framework

These key questions assess how well young people and/or youth organizations are involved at each stage of the OGP journey. They help identify where engagement was genuine, where it was symbolic, and what to push for in the next co-creation or review moment.

Build Youth Capacity and Empower Them to Lead the Evaluation

Youth accountability usually fails because organizations lack the technical skills to speak the government's language, read data, design indicators, and engage credibly with formal assessment processes. Building those skills is itself an act of open government.

- Train youth organizations in basic monitoring and evaluation (M&E) skills, such as how to design indicators, collect data, document findings, and present evidence in ways that are credible to government and institutional audiences. Young people who can speak the language of results are much harder to dismiss.[2]
- The IRM is one of the most powerful tools available to youth organizations: its reports are independent, public, and based on input from both government and civil society. It is important to understand what the IRM assesses, when it publishes, and how civil society can submit evidence.
    - Ask the OGP Point of Contact or MSF to inform youth co-leads when IRM assessments are taking place, and ensure youth co-leads are included in the process of providing evidence and information to the IRM researcher.
    - Once the IRM assessment groundwork is in place, any organization can request to speak with an IRM researcher directly to share perspectives on implementation of OGP processes. This is a formal opportunity to ensure youth perspectives are captured in an independent evaluation, no need to wait to be invited.
    - IRM findings can inform participation, conversations, and advocacy work. When the IRM identifies a gap in a commitment or a co-creation process, that's a valuable reference point. Bringing IRM findings into MSF meetings, government conversations, and public communications helps ground advocacy in independent evidence.
    - For OGP Local members, the IRM in a Box toolkit offers practical tools and recommendations to set up local monitoring bodies and evaluate the OGP process.

THE IRM: OGP'S ACCOUNTABILITY ARM

The IRM is OGP's independent monitoring body. It provides objective, evidence-based reporting to hold governments accountable and support their open government efforts.
It assesses both the quality of commitment design and implementation and whether countries' processes comply with OGP rules and standards.

The IRM reviews documentation submitted by government and civil society, conducts desk research, and interviews stakeholders involved in the OGP process. CSOs, including youth organizations, can submit evidence and contribute to IRM assessments. All IRM reports are publicly available on the OGP website.

[2] The Local Government Social Accountability Training Manual by Accountability Lab offers a practical, rights-based framework for social accountability monitoring. It covers how to track public resource management and engage with local government oversight, complementing the OGP monitoring approach.

TOOL 13 Professional Competency Framework for Youth Evaluators

This framework maps the skills needed to monitor and evaluate public commitments: ethical standards, technical methods like data collection and analysis, and analytical approaches. It can be adapted for academic programs or civil society training.

Evaluate the Impact of Commitments on Young People

Delivery is not the same as impact. An implementer can tick every process and commitment milestone, and still leave young people's lives unchanged. Assessing whether a process or commitment made a real difference for young people requires collecting evidence from the ground up, in a systematic way. Here are some practical strategies that make this possible even in low-resource settings:

- Implement community scorecards completed by young people to assess the quality and responsiveness of a government during a participatory process. This turns lived experience into structured evidence. See Tool 8: Youth Accountability Scorecard and Community Feedback for a ready-to-use format.
- Use simple data collection templates, in paper and digital formats, to capture how a commitment is changing conditions for young people at the community level. If a separate data collection process isn't possible, include a few simple questions in the existing M&E strategy instead. Simple data collection leads to more consistent, comparable results.
- Create formal roles for youth organizations to present evidence of a commitment's impact at regular review moments, including the biennial stock-take of commitments. Including young people in these spaces ensures their perspectives shape how progress is assessed, not just how it is implemented.

APPLY AN INTERGENERATIONAL LENS

For OGP commitments affecting future generations, evaluation should ask a forward-looking question: will this commitment benefit young people in 10 to 20 years? The intergenerational lens ensures that open government commitments are evaluated not only on short-term delivery but on long-term impact.

Make it Public

After accountability reviews, findings must be shared back with all stakeholders who participated. This means:

- Publishing findings in accessible, youth-friendly formats, not only in technical reports or through mandatory FOI requests.
- Feeding all monitoring findings, including those developed by youth organizations, into the official accountability record. The member's OGP repository or website is the IRM's primary source of evidence, and publishing there enables youth perspectives to be captured in any independent assessment.
- Using accountability findings to inform the next co-creation process.

This is what transforms accountability from a one-time exercise into a continuous improvement process, and builds the trust that sustains long-term youth engagement.

SURVIVAL TIPS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY IN DIFFICULT CONTEXTS

Youth accountability isn't seen as legitimate everywhere. These following strategies can help navigate difficult contexts.

- **Always document in writing:** Verbal commitments disappear. Written records create accountability obligations.
- **Build coalitions before confronting:** A coalition of different organizations presenting shared evidence is much harder to dismiss than one organization with the same evidence.
- **Find allies inside the government:** Most bureaucracies have officials who genuinely want to improve how the country works, and who are willing to become champions from the inside. Identifying them and building relationships with them can be a turning point in supporting youth accountability.
- **Go public strategically:** Media attention is a last resort, but it can be effective. It works best once official channels are exhausted and the evidence is ready to go.
- **Speak the language of data:** In contexts where youth voices are dismissed, technical credibility matters. Investing in the skills to produce professional-quality evidence pays off.

Accountability in Action: Case Studies

JORDAN

Making a Youth Strategy Measurable (2021–2025)

Context: Jordan's National Youth Strategy, launched in 2019, struggled to demonstrate impact in its early years. This was not because it lacked ambition, but because it lacked an implementation plan and measurable indicators. In its OGP action plan (2021–2025), the Ministry of Youth submitted an OGP commitment to update and strengthen the National Youth Strategy with the participation of young people.

What happened: The Ministry of Youth revised the National Youth Strategy and developed its first implementation plan with indicators through a participatory approach. To do this, the Ministry formed working teams for each component of the strategy, including relevant government ministries, CSOs, and youth representatives (at least one man and one woman).

To measure implementation of the National Youth Strategy, the Ministry developed an inter-agency monitoring system. This included an online Activities Bank to capture activities by different stakeholders. By the end of 2023, the first implementation report was published. The Ministry also collaborated with the OECD to evaluate the current strategy against international standards, with findings feeding into the next Youth Strategy (2026–2030).

Results: For the first time, Jordan had a functional implementation plan and measurable indicators for its National Youth Strategy, making it possible to track whether commitments to youth were actually being met. Youth and CSO participation in designing the strategy and tracking its progress increased compared to previous strategies.

Key lessons: 1) Building in structured roles for youth, such as dedicated seats in working teams, leads to more responsive and representative policy design. 2) Investing in monitoring and coordination infrastructure, such as a shared activities platform and measurable indicators, makes youth engagement visible and harder to ignore in future cycles.

SIERRA LEONE

Countable Targets for Youth Economic Inclusion (2024–2028)

Context: Youth between 15 and 35 make up more than a third of Sierra Leone's population, yet decades of marginalization have left many without meaningful economic or political participation. This exclusion has deep roots. Social inequality, patriarchal traditions, and a governance culture run by older generations have long denied young people a voice. Despite the existence of national youth policies, new challenges keep limiting young people's ability to contribute to national development.

What happened: Through this OGP commitment, the government of Sierra Leone set out to take an approach that places young people at the heart of socio-economic and political development of the country. Key actions include training 150,000 youth in essential skills and capacity building; supporting the inclusion of youth-owned businesses in public works and infrastructure contracts; establishing a Youth Opportunity Centre in every district headquarters; developing a national online platform for youth employment opportunities; providing entrepreneurship training and start-up grants for 8,000 young people; and setting up two digital centers to employ 500 young women in technology and entrepreneurship.

Results: This commitment has expected completion dates of August 2028, so full results are not yet available. However, the commitment's accountability value lies in its design. Its specific, countable targets (such as 150,000 youth trained, 8,000 start-up grants, 500 young women employed, and a Youth Opportunity Centre in every district) give implementers concrete numbers to track well before 2028.

Space

Creating and Sustaining the Conditions for Youth Engagement

Space

Youth engagement in OGP should not depend on individual champions. When one committed government actor leaves, or one dedicated youth advocate moves on, the work should not collapse. Sustainable youth participation in the OGP journey requires building and protecting the structural spaces that keep engagement possible over time, regardless of who holds which position. This section covers some strategies for building those conditions.

Institutionalize Youth Representation in MSFs

The MSF (also called a "steering committee" or "technical working group," depending on the country) is the core governance space of OGP. Is where co-creation, implementation, and accountability decisions are made. If young people are not in the room, their priorities are not reflected in the outcome.

Requiring youth participation in MSFs, with allocated seats and real decision-making power, is one of the most impactful changes any OGP country can make.

> *What we need is intention in action in the form of protecting spaces or having mandatory youth participation. Allocate numbers and seats for youth!*
>
> **— OGP Youth Collective member**

Here are some recommendations to make that representation meaningful and durable:

- Youth representatives should have equal status, information access, and voting rights to other MSF members. In other words, this should be a standing role with clear responsibilities, not a one-time invitation.
- Select youth MSF representatives through transparent, open processes rather than informal appointments. This builds legitimacy and ensures diverse representation.
- Consider establishing a dedicated Youth Working Group within the MSF or a Youth Advisory Panel. Either could act as an oversight body for specific commitments.
- Embed youth participation in the MSF terms of reference as a formal requirement, not an informal practice, so it survives political transitions.

In contexts where the composition of the MSF is fixed by law, regulation or other formal arrangements, countries can explore alternative mechanisms to ensure youth voices are systematically represented and heard throughout the OGP process.

If a government hasn't yet identified which youth-focused or youth-led CSOs could represent youth voices in the MSF the Co-Creation section of this Toolkit or the OGP Youth Collective can help find potential allies.

THREE TYPES OF POWER YOU NEED TO MAP

Giving young people a specific seat in the MSF does two things: it ensures representation and meaningful participation, and it spreads out power in decision-making. Before any meeting, it helps to map the three types of power that can exist in the room at once:

- **Visible power.** The official rules that determine who is invited, who can speak, and how decisions are formally made. Key questions: Who is officially at the table? Who has the right to vote or veto? Whose role is written into the terms of reference?
- **Hidden power.** The informal influence that shapes decisions before the meeting even starts. Key questions: Who is talking to whom before the session? Whose interests already show up in the agenda? What trade-offs were agreed behind closed doors?
- **Invisible power.** The cultural and social norms that silence certain voices. For instance, the unspoken belief that "elders lead and youth follow," or that technical expertise matters more than lived experience. Key questions: Who speaks freely and who holds back? Whose ideas get taken seriously and whose get politely ignored? What would happen if a young person challenged the room?

When invisible power tries to silence young people, building relationships with allies inside the room can amplify their voice!

Create Safe and Enabling Environments

OGP processes depend on civil society's freedom to operate in the civic space. In some political contexts, visible youth engagement can carry real risks, especially for young activists operating under repressive conditions. Assessing those risks before engaging youth publicly is a prerequisite for responsible participation.

"Safe" means more than physical safety. A genuinely safe and enabling environment for youth in OGP processes requires:

- **Equal access to participation:** Processes must be designed so that youth with disabilities, youth from rural areas, and youth speaking minority languages can engage on equal terms, free from discrimination based on identity, background, or living conditions.
- **Physical and digital safety:** Youth participants should not face physical, digital, or reputational risks as a result of their engagement. For instance, this includes unsafe travel to a venue, exposure to surveillance, or being publicly identified in contexts where visibility carries consequences.
- **Freedom to speak without fear:** Youth must be able to speak, question, and dissent without fear of consequences throughout the process.
- **Clear protection mechanisms:** Establish in advance what happens if a youth participant faces discrimination, harm, or censorship, and who is responsible for responding when such an incident occurs.

When civic space is under threat, youth organizations are often among the first to feel the pressure. The OGP Civic Space Support Guide offers concrete strategies and resources for CSOs on how to stay safe and defend civic space when it comes under attack. In terms of OGP processes, the OGP Rapid Response Protocol (RRP) is a mechanism CSOs can use for more serious situations, such as allegations that a member government seriously violated the OGP values and principles outlined in the Open Government Declaration and the Articles of Governance. This protocol gives OGP a formal way to intervene swiftly. It applies when a concern is urgent, meaning the IRM, Procedural Review, or the Response Policy cannot or will not address it within three months.

NAVIGATE HOSTILE ENVIRONMENTS STRATEGICALLY

Some contexts are genuinely hostile to youth participation, whether because of political gatekeeping, cultural norms, or restrictive legislation. This does not mean engagement is impossible, but that it requires different strategies.

- **Build collective strength before entering:** Never send one young person alone into a hostile room. Coordinate internally first, and show up as a united group. One voice speaking for many is harder to dismiss than individual advocates.
- **Document everything:** In hostile environments, documentation is protection. Record proceedings (where legal), keep written records of all promises made, and share widely.
- **Engage media strategically:** Strategic media coverage changes the political calculus for officials who prefer closed processes.
- **Counter harmful narratives:** Youth advocates in hostile environments often face misinformation or attempts to delegitimize them. The Young Peacebuilders Guide to Tackling Harmful Narratives, developed by the United Network of Young Peacebuilders, offers ways to identify, counter, and replace harmful narratives.
- **Know when to step back:** In some contexts, formal participation is genuinely dangerous. The risk should be assessed, the team protected, and an emergency plan kept ready.

For more practical guidance on navigating hostility while keeping advocacy going, Digital Democracy Initiative and Accountability Lab's Strategic Communications Trainer's Module is a hands-on resource. It covers how to manage visibility safely, protect an organization from digital attacks, and build long-term resilience under pressure. Their Advocacy Under Constraint Toolkit also offers concrete strategies for keeping up advocacy work when political conditions make it hard. More resources can be found here.

Build Pathways for Youth Leadership

Turning today's participants into tomorrow's leaders requires structured pathways and opportunities for young people to grow. OGP offers multiple entry points where this can happen: co-creation roundtables, MSF meetings, IRM consultations, the OGP Global Summit, and regional events. Participating consistently across these builds youth leadership capacity, strengthens representation, and creates a generation of practitioners who understand open government from the inside.

To sustain that pipeline over time:

- **Establish youth fellowship or mentorship programs** pairing young advocates with experienced CSO leaders and government actors. Real change happens when youth and senior decision-makers engage as equals.
- **Spotlight youth** by creating dedicated opportunities for young people to present their work, lead conversations, and be recognized as experts in OGP forums and events.
- **Invest in youth-led research and knowledge production.** Position youth as co-authors, not just beneficiaries, and ensure their findings are treated as evidence.
- **Create youth alumni networks** to maintain connections and enable peer learning across generations of participants.
- **Connect youth with global networks** that have direct experience supporting youth participation in OGP. The organizations featured below (Accountability Lab, the Youth Democracy Cohort, and the Governance Action Hub) are partners of the OGP Youth Collective and each bring distinct resources and expertise to different stages of the OGP journey.

OGP-SUPPORTED SCHOLARSHIPS AND TRAINING

When resources allow it, OGP actively supports hands-on learning pathways to equip young leaders with practical open governance skills. For instance, through OGP's partnership with the Transparency International School on Integrity in Vilnius, Lithuania, scholarships have been available since 2023 for young professionals from Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine). This is thanks to the EU Integrity Program.

Additionally, OGP recently supported the 2026 "Youth for Open Governance" Erasmus+ training in Barcelona. The training brought together youth workers and young leaders from 10 countries to build skills in advocacy, policy design, and civic tech. Activities included OGP co-creation process simulations, interactive role-plays, and mobile app prototyping.

ACCOUNTABILITY LAB: TOOLS, TRAINING, AND NETWORKS TO STRENGTHEN YOUR OGP WORK

Accountability Lab is a global network to support and connect people demanding better governance. Operating across Africa, Asia, and Latin America, they build accountability ecosystems through campaigns and advocacy, training, and coalitions of reformers.

For youth organizations engaged in OGP processes, their programs offer concrete ways to build capacity and translate accountability into action. The Accountability Incubator supports young people to develop innovative accountability solutions, while Civic Charge provides a year-long accelerator for change agents working on inclusion, digital governance, and civic agency. Their insider-outsider work brings underrepresented voices into governance and accountability conversations through conscious music and film projects like Voice2Rep and a global film fellowship. Civic Action Teams offer a practical model for closing the feedback loop between citizens and government during implementation. Their Training & Facilitation programs

build M&E and accountability capacity in flexible, context-sensitive formats. For tech-oriented youth, HackCorruption connects civic innovators with resources to develop anti-corruption tools.

They also produce resources that directly complement the OGP accountability journey, including the Advocacy Under Constraint Toolkit and the Strategic Communications Trainer's Module.

YOUTH DEMOCRACY COHORT: FUNDING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN POLICY-MAKING

The Youth Democracy Cohort (YDC) is a global platform and network advancing meaningful youth involvement in democratic processes at national, regional, and global levels. Through its Youth Participation Fund, it provides financial and technical support for innovative youth participation interventions in policy-making processes. The fund is fully operational from December 2026.

OGP is the primary advocacy framework for the Youth Participation Fund because it offers exactly what the fund needs to operate: a structured multi-stage process, an established government-civil society relationship, and a built-in accountability mechanism. Organizations already engaged (or keen to become engaged) in an OGP process are already in the right place to apply.

Beyond funding, the Youth Democracy Cohort offers two key resources for youth advocates developing OGP commitments:

- Global Youth Participation Index: A youth-led global dataset on political participation that can help map a country's context and build the evidence base for advocacy.
- Menu of Possible Commitments: 33 actionable policy recommendations across five thematic areas (youth in governance, youth in government, freedom of expression, culture of political participation, and human rights) that can inform and strengthen OGP commitment proposals.

Learn more about the collaborative work between the YDC and OGP here.

GOVERNANCE ACTION HUB: EXPLORING WHAT'S POSSIBLE IN GOVERNANCE REFORM

The Governance Action Hub is a global lab and accelerator that uses collaboration, inclusion, and social innovation to find new governance approaches. The initiative brings together people with different perspectives to tackle common challenges or pursue common goals. It is organized under two broad themes: a) rethinking democracy, with a focus on engaging citizens in local development; and b) influencing climate action, including a fair transition to clean energy, climate advocacy, and natural resource management.

For youth groups engaged in OGP, the Hub offers a space to connect subnational and national-level work to broader governance reform efforts. Its Governance Explorers Community offers members a Portal with virtual workspaces for collaborating in real time or on their own schedule, with shared resources around common interests. Through Action Labs, members work together to develop strategies and design projects that are then connected to funding opportunities. Its Academy aims to build a shared language to reclaim development, helping members avoid the mistakes and dependencies of the past. The approach emphasizes capacity sharing, bringing new voices from around the world to inform the future of democracy and development.

Other relevant resources are the materials of the “Reclaiming Development Global” course, the Public Leadership Masterclass, and the general page for resources and ideas.

Document, Share, and Build for the Long Term

Every country that tries something new—a deliberative format, a digital participation tool, or an intergenerational dialogue method—creates learning the rest of the OGP community can use. That knowledge shouldn't stay local. Here are some suggestions for documenting and sharing what was learned:

- Document methodologies even when results are partial. The process itself has value.
- Submit case studies to OGP and its Youth Collective for inclusion in future Toolkit updates.
- Connect with the global OGP community through peer exchange mechanisms. All OGP countries participated in at least one peer exchange in 2025 to improve their processes.

Sharing lessons with the wider OGP community is one part of the picture. It's equally important to document things internally, so the engagement itself can survive beyond a single government. Political transitions such as elections, ministerial reshuffles, and government changes are among the most common reasons sustained youth engagement collapses. Planning for them from the start matters.

- Document all formal agreements with the government in writing, with institutional (not personal) signatories.
- Build relationships across multiple government agencies, not just the OGP Point of Contact.
- Develop institutional memory. Keep records of meeting notes and decisions that new officials can access and follow up on.
- Engage with incoming officials early. Brief them on the OGP process and the youth role before they form their own view.

The goal is a youth engagement practice that outlasts any individual champion, any single government, and any single commitment or action plan.

Space in Action: Case Studies

KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA

Institutionalizing Youth-Led Governance (2021–2026)

Context: Youth participation in Kaduna State has changed dramatically over the last five years. Youth groups have used the OGP platform to move from reactive activism to help shape public policy decisions. This structured space has enabled young citizens to advocate at the highest levels of government, help design state and local budgets, and lead comprehensive public policy reviews.

What happened: The shift happened progressively through different processes to foster representation. First, three youth leaders were successfully nominated as co-chairs of the local OGP Steering Committee, putting young voices directly into the highest decision-making bodies. Second, youth advocates designed the OGP Youth Engagement Power Plan to shift participation from tokenistic representation to structural influence. This framework created permanent subnational mechanisms for youth to guide public policy and democratic processes. State government ministries and key public stakeholders formally committed to folding the Youth Engagement Power Plan into their official annual workplans. Third, strategic youth advocacy played a role in establishing a dedicated Ministry of Youth Development in the state.

Results: The sustained youth engagement led to a comprehensive review of two key policies that had stalled: the State Youth Policy and the Demographic Dividend Roadmap. The review reactivated both policies and updated them to reflect young people's socio-economic realities today.

Youth networks also helped establish the Citizen Participatory Audit framework, a technical auditing system that empowers citizens to track budget spending, push for real transparency, and verify whether money is well spent. State legislators committed to use the Citizen Participatory Audit reports for formal parliamentary follow-ups on local government education infrastructure projects.

Key lessons: 1) A unified coalition of diverse youth networks is essential. Fragmented voices can be easily dismissed, but a united one, backed by authenticity and genuine commitment, commands attention and drives action. 2) Building capacity in engagement, technical analysis, and strategic advocacy has the power to turn youth from participants into leaders. It also gives youth advocates credibility that pushes legislators to act. 3) Funding youth-led organizations multiplies impact, because lived experience produces solutions that cannot come from outsiders. 4) Verbal agreements alone often mean little. Everything needs to be documented and followed up to turn promises into progress.

SOUTH COTABATO, PHILIPPINES

Open Government Youth Ambassador Program (2022–2025)

Context: Youth in South Cotabato had very limited knowledge of concepts like access to information and open contracting, and were largely absent from the province's open government processes.

What happened: As a commitment in its OGP Local action plan (2022–2025), the Provincial Government of South Cotabato launched the Open Government Youth Ambassador Program. The program trained at least 75 young leaders through workshops on transparency, open data, FOI, open contracting, and citizen participation. The workshops were delivered in partnership with the Youth Alliance for Freedom of Information and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), through its former CHANGE project. As ambassadors, these young leaders were expected to carry what they learned back to their communities.

Results: Youth Ambassadors gained a deeper working knowledge of government processes and used it to advocate directly within their own communities. The program also gave young people the knowledge needed to get more involved in policy-making.

Key lessons: Pairing technical training with a clear "ambassador" role turns workshop attendees into long-term multipliers of open government values.

TÉTOUAN, MOROCCO

Institutionalizing a Youth Council in the Local Action Plan (2022–2026)

Context: Under Morocco's Organic Law on Municipalities, consultative bodies for groups such as youth, women, and people with disabilities existed only in a purely advisory role, with no guaranteed influence over decisions.

What happened: As part of its OGP Local action plan (2022–2026), the municipality of Tétouan created a Youth Council. This gave young people a defined channel to propose ideas, contribute to policy development, and take part in decision-making. The mandate also let the Youth Council develop its own thematic action plans, not just respond to government requests.

Results: Youth participation shifted from being invited case-by-case to consultations to holding a standing institutional seat with its own mandate to give opinions and set priorities.

Key lessons: Embedding youth representation directly into an action plan's institutional architecture, rather than leaving it to ad hoc consultations, is what allows it to survive changes in administration.

ORZHYTSYA & ZVIAHEL, UKRAINE

Building Youth Councils Under Wartime Conditions (2025–2026)

Context: Ukrainian youth are often active in informal activism but largely absent from formal policy-making or governance structures, a gap made harder to close by the ongoing war's disruption of institutional life, even in small communities.

What happened: As a joint commitment in Orzhytsia's first OGP action plan (2025–2026), Orzhytsia and Zviahel established Youth Councils with a formal mandate to advise local authorities. To do it, the Youth Councils launched roundtables and youth forums, created online platforms and social media to amplify youth voices, and organized youth festivals to build civic identity. In Zviahel, the local government complemented the creation of Youth Councils with practical support for youth initiatives. This included grant-writing training, a municipal competition for youth projects with funding of up to EUR 1,500 per project, and dedicated budget support for youth-led initiatives.

Results: Youth participation moved from informal activism into a standing advisory structure with its own visibility (such as platforms and festivals) and its own capacity-building support (such as grant writing help).

Key lessons: 1) Institutionalizing a Youth Council matters, but it only becomes effective when paired with practical support, like helping the council write grant proposals. 2) Small community size and wartime conditions do not have to be treated as reasons to wait. The smallest, most stressed contexts can build the same structures that larger and calmer governments often postpone.

LIBERIA

Partner-Led Youth Consultation (2024)

Context: Until Liberia's fifth OGP action plan, youth had never been part of a dedicated consultation in the country's OGP process. Engagement had remained ad hoc and largely symbolic, with no mechanism ensuring their priorities reached the co-creation table.

What happened: Accountability Lab Liberia (the chair of Liberia's OGP MSF) and the Federation of Liberian Youth (FLY), with the support of the Youth Democracy Cohort, convened the country's first National Youth Consultation on Open Government. They mobilized participants through FLY's nationwide network, deliberately reaching beyond the usual civil society circles to include youth leaders from diverse backgrounds, including persons with disabilities. However, getting the event off the ground required sustained advocacy, as the OGP National Secretariat was initially unresponsive and only endorsed the process after persistent pressure from the coalition. In this sense, the collaboration with partners was key to making the consultation with youth a reality.

Results: The consultation produced a formal outcome document that included recommendations on five themes: accountability and transparency, inclusive governance, judiciary and rule of law, social and economic challenges, and civic space. The document was submitted to the OGP National Secretariat and fed directly into Liberia's fifth action plan (2024–2026). This process marked the first time young Liberians were substantively involved in an OGP co-creation process. The IRM credited FLY and the Youth Democracy Cohort for the inclusion of youth with disabilities as a notable achievement.

Key lessons: 1) Building a coalition of partners with complementary strengths creates the necessary credibility and reach to make an inclusive consultation process possible. 2) A youth network's own outreach infrastructure is one of its most valuable assets. In this case, FLY's nationwide presence made broad and diverse participation possible in ways that top-down government mobilization rarely achieves. 3) Producing a strong outcome document matters, but so does following up to ensure youth input is visibly reflected in the final plan.

Credits and Contributors

Credits

The OGP Youth Toolkit 2.0 was developed by the OGP Support Unit, in collaboration with the OGP Youth Collective and partners. This Toolkit exists because of the generosity, expertise, and lived experience of youth practitioners across the OGP community, who shared their stories, tools, and hard-won lessons. The OGP Support Unit is deeply grateful to each of them.

Advisory Group

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- Alie Conteh, TOES, Sierra Leone
- Ana Belén Aguilera Albán, Fundación Datalat, Ecuador
- Ani Mangoshvili, University of Georgia, Georgia
- Azganush Mnatsakanyan, Armavir Development Center, Armenia
- Fanuel Kataka Amanya, Cross Party Democracy Forum, Kenya
- Fradina Makena, Sauti Yetu Afrika, Kenya
- Godfred Kuttin, Youth Initiative Foundation, Ghana
- Juan Pablo Garnica Munévar, Datasketch, Colombia
- Óscar Alonso Juárez Gómez, Red Estatal Jóvenes Anticorrupción, México
- Samuel Kpartor, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Liberia
- Sarah Fadason Garba, The Civic Innovation Hub, Nigeria
- Taiye Ojo, DEAN Initiative, Nigeria

Partner Organizations

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- Governance Action Hub: A partner that brings innovation lens to governance reform and connects this work to broader coalitions.


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