

Report on OGP Civil Society Leaders' Workshop, 21- 22 January 2016
Hivos, The Hague, Netherlands
Fuimaono Tuiasau, Chair, NZ OGP Stakeholder Advisory Group

OGP is 5 years old this year.

This workshop was part of a series of OGP actions to empower civil society leaders in OGP participating countries to engage holistically in OGP processes in their respective countries to improve effectiveness of engagement on the OGP, and to support CSOs in a strategic and coordinated way. (programme attached)

The workshop sought inter alia, to identify CSO challenges to effectively engaging in OGP processes nationally; explore solutions to these challenges; and equip participants with knowledge, skills and tactics to enable them be effective in the development of robust National Action Plans (NAPs), implementation and monitoring of commitments. The workshop drew on government and civil society experiences of OGP participating countries.

The country reports provided insights about the range of experiences and challenges across countries in the OGP network. South African OGP experiences were of both alarm and frustration particularly as an OGP founding member it has steadily retreated from OGP obligations. Other countries saw OGP as one of many strategies and actions among other mechanisms for civil society engagement and consultations for making government accountable and transparent using technology and engaging communities.

OGPs influence in the change management processes is still in its infancy, which is a matter of discussion to some and concern to others. The high expectations of OGP continues to face strong headwinds of national crises', corruption, poor resources and lack of leadership at the national level. New Zealand is quite advanced in some areas of policy development and civil society engagement, consultation processes (by legal or formalized or informal processes). There was strong support for bureaucracy to use simple language in there processes and actions which will greatly assist in accountability and gaining public confidence.

Paul Maasen of **the OGP Secretariat** provided summary of OGP international progress using a set of highly informative infographics (about the 1000 + commitments, action plans and high level issues and intermediate challenges for OGP) The results of a survey of 600 + CSO respondents indicated a high level of trust and confidence in OGP principles and CSO engagements. There were also strong international support for OGP, and an outline of major OGP events in 2016.

The **strategy and policy development session** led by dynamic presenters Cat Tully formerly with UK government and Claire Hickson was a very good forum for practical knowledge sharing and practical analytical tools for using in addressing issues and campaign work. There was a valuable session of engaging and understanding government: Policy formulation, communication and campaigning. During the session other matters were raised. A permanent national OGP body can provide some assurance there is open-avenue for OGP collaboration and accountability activity for OGP commitments. This can provide a genuine sense of commitment and perceived value. The issue of aligning the SDG and OGP goals and strategies provides a valuable opportunity for support and collaboration for each, where OGP processes may be a valuable support and monitoring role for the SDG roll out. One key project is the Open Data agenda to ensure government information is made accessible to CSOs and citizens.

The session on **monitoring of implementation of National Action Plans** was highly relevant. Tinatin Ninua (Head of Research OGP CSE) and Tim Hughes of the UK covered topics which included the basics on the IRM Self Assessment Reports + opportunities for civil society engagement; the basics on the IRM Processes + opportunities for civil society engagement (Using reports for advocacy etc); shadow reports by civil society - understanding what participants have done in that respect. It was apparent that governments that have a lead institution in charge of OGP are likely to provide for better engagement and assessment processes and review. It was apparent for the OGP research group that there were higher achievement rates with NAPs that had fewer, not numerous, actions and priorities

There were discussions on whether NAPs should have a theme to greatly focus on the priority issues and extracting a coherent theme from them, given the 2 year action planning cycle. The new NAP Review Tool recently launched is to assist NFPs make assessments about progress against OGP goals which ensures good tracking and accountability in OGP activities.

On day 2 the UK experiences highlight the outcome of a hard hitting IRM report can drive better processes for engagement and consultation, and for support for more resources to get OGP work underway.

The session on Instituting **Permanent Dialogue Mechanisms** (handbook). Some important points from the discussions included engaging with officials who have appropriate of authority and mandate; collaborate constantly; make action plan development language in the language of civil society and NFPs to ensure language is clearly focused on their involvement and what matters to them. Thus, ensuring the right government agency leaders involved who are the final decision makers in developing the action plan will make for good progress in the planning processes.

Participation processes are different from one country to another Costa Rica has government degree for the establishment of OGP office, others have OGP as one of many international obligations. Some countries have formal rotation representation for government agencies in their OGP national structures; there was also a question of instituting OGP principles into agencies and government departments as standard practice as a grand legacy challenge for OGP. The action planning process should be an ngo/nfp driven process to improve the process and content of the NAP. Infographics and simple language are important tools for engaging civil society.

The Raising the Bar Globally session was led by Civil Society Engagement team members Suneeta Kaimal and Tonu Basu who presented on how national plans could benefit from the models of international engagement practices and networks that could help in the OGP practices. Bundling aligned strategies – e.g. OGP and SDG to achieve goals and plans could assist leverage and support. Global networks should be mixed and matched to deliver on matters of joint interest that could include Oxfam, World Vision, CIVICUS.

The OGP working groups are around five themed area – Access to Information, Fiscal Transparency, Legislative Openness, Open Data, and Openness in Natural Resources; which provide support, advice and information on relevant projects. Mapping other opportunities in 2016 and collectively strategizing on ways in which participants involved in national OGP processes can connect with global issues/conversations/opportunities and international networks/discussion.

Final comments

Overall very useful networking event, with good outlines of the OGP internet tools and approaches for engaging CSO and citizens. Better insight about New Zealand's overall position on the OGP agenda and pathways. The Australian presence was significant. Interesting tools and ideas for consultations and engagements was a very helpful reminder about numerous ways of engaging with civil society; as well as civil society should and can co-create the process for engagement and the formulation of NAPs.

OGP Civil Society Engagement Steering Group members (2) are being sought. The nominations deadline is the end of January 2016. New Zealand should consider a position on the SG, however I do not see this as a priority, as it is new on the block, and there is probably better value in supporting SG membership from the many Eastern European, Latin American and Asian OGP member states where the rule of law is weak, and civil rights and human rights activists are exposed to state attacks, physical violence, and imprisonment. Thus NZ should support any of these countries to put up names to the SG, thus showing solidarity for these countries.

OGP Civil Society Leaders' Workshop attendees



Gael Musquet (La Fonderie, France), Duje Prkut (GONG, Croatia), Mukelani Dimba, (Open Democracy Advisory Centre, South Africa/OGP Steering Committee), Janine Ogle (Inyathelo, South Africa), Pablo Collada (Ciudadano Inteligente, Chile), Ilham Saenong (Transparency International, Indonesia/OGP Steering Committee), Sugeng Bahagijo (INFID, Indonesia), Tim Hughes (Involve, UK), Aidan Eyakuze (Twaweza, Tanzania), Viktor Nestulia (Transparency International, Ukraine), Haydee Perez (FUNDAR, Mexico), Fabrizio Scrollini (DATA, Uruguay), Daniel Carranza (DATA, Uruguay), Katherine Szuminska (Open Australia Foundation, Australia) Fuimaono Tuiasau (Transparency International, New Zealand), Ovidiu Voicu (Soros, Romania), Giorgi Kldiashvili (Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI), Georgia), George Topuria (Transparency International, Georgia), Suneeta Kaimal (Natural Resource Governance Institute (NRGI), USA/ OGP Steering Committee), Paul Maassen (OGP Support Unit), Emilene Martinez (OGP Support Unit), Tonu Basu (OGP Support Unit), Shreya Basu (OGP Support Unit) and Tinatin Ninua (OGP Support Unit)