



Open Government in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities

May 21st, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. (GMT+1)

Webinar Report

Context

On the occasion of OpenGov week 2021 and in an effort to gather and stimulate the African community of the Open Government Partnership; the Department of Administration Reform of the Ministry of Economy, Finance and Administration Reform of the Kingdom of Morocco, organized in collaboration with the « Center of Excellence for Development » an event entitled: “Open Government in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities”, on May 21th 2021. The event included the participation of Government and civil society representatives from 11 different countries, with the aim of creating an ecosystem to further strengthen South-South ties between the OGP African community and promote synergy within this Open Government regional dynamic.

Format

This event was held remotely and divided into the following sections: opening segment, statements from the official and potential members of the OGP African community, pre-recorded videos from civil society actors and a closing segment, which included a presentation of the outcomes of the event and recommendations.

Opening segment

Opening Statement by Mr. Ahmed Laamoumri, Secretary General of the Department of Administration Reform - Ministry of Economy, Finance and Administration Reform, Morocco :

The Secretary General of the Department of Administration Reform, Mr. Ahmed Laamoumri, highlighted that the number of participating countries in the webinar reflects the high importance that is given to the Open Government process in Africa. He also expressed his conviction that this webinar will undoubtedly be an occasion to discuss opportunities, challenges and explore the different Open Government perspectives across Africa in the spirit of sharing and win-win partnerships. The Secretary General pointed out that African countries have embarked on a path of reforms aiming at anchoring the principles of good governance and consolidating the rule of law. In this sense, he added that major advances have been made in the area of strengthening of democratic principles, including various good governance strengthening initiatives, which in turn, established a momentum for the institutionalization of rights and freedoms and the promotion of citizen participation at all levels of public administration.

The Secretary General of the Department of Administration Reform, Mr. Ahmed Laamoumri, highlighted the Kingdom of Morocco's achievements in the context of the Open Government Partnership, which began with Morocco's official accession to the OGP in 2018. He added that, under the leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, the Kingdom of Morocco has made significant progress in the areas of promoting the mechanisms of participatory democracy, strengthening the values of transparency and integrity. These include the implementation of Morocco's first National action plan at an 84% rate, the establishment of a multi-stakeholder forum consisting of a steering committee, an implementation committee and a civil society to oversee the OGP process in Morocco and the ongoing co-creation of Morocco's second national action plan.

Mr. Ahmed Laamoumri, added that this meeting aims to create an ecosystem for strengthening open government partnerships and to explore ways and means of harnessing open government principles to address the challenges facing the African continent. He called on all participants to coordinate their efforts to anticipate and harness future gains and also to address any present challenges; adding that this coordination could lead to the development of a common action plan on the level of the African continent.

Statement by Mr. Tarik Nesh-Nash, President of Center of Excellence for Development :

The President of the Center of Excellence, Mr. Tarik Nesh-Nash, began his remarks by highlighting that this gathering over 11 African countries is a testament to the great interest given to the Open Government process. He reiterated the Secretary General's statement regarding Morocco's great achievements in the context of the Open Government during the past 3 years. Adding that these successes have created a national dynamic of Open Government, which in addition to the national level, also includes actions at the regional level, such as the engagement of three regions (Tangier-Tetouan-Hoceima, Bni Mellal-Khenifra and Casablanca-Settat) in Morocco in the OGP process.

Mr. Nesh-Nash stressed that the shared challenge of making transformative effects on the lives of our citizens and the quality of public services is achievable one hand because Africa youthful population is ready to engage in a participatory democratic process and on the other because the OGP process has brought to light the many open government champions within each public administrations. He emphasized that the adoption of action plans by the OGP community creates a unique opportunity to build synergies between the African OGP community, adding that building a Continental roadmap could strengthen collaboration between open government initiatives. Building on the Secretary General's proposal to create a panafrican network, Mr. Nesh-Nash also proposed the development of an online platform that gathers best practices, tools and methods that can be shared and promoted and to periodically organize events to gather the OGP African community.

Statement by Mr. Theophilous Chiviru, Regional Lead Coordinator of Africa and Middle East, Open Government Partnership :

Mr. Theophilous Chiviru, highlighted that this conversation is happening at a very important time, which is the Open Government week 2021 and the 10th anniversary of the Open Government Partnership. He added that this conversation is also important for the African continent itself because the partnership has grown from 2 member countries in Africa to 14. Mr. Theophilous Chiviru pointed out that the Covid-19 pandemic has brought to light and exacerbated many of the challenges the African continent is facing, making the pandemic not only a health crisis, but also a governance crisis that is seen across the continent. He stressed that the Covid pandemic also

brought to light the importance and the relevance of the open government values and the urgent need for the open government principles and values in our continent.

Mr. Theophilous Chiviru emphasized that while hundreds of millions of dollars are flowing across the African continent through loans, aid or assistance, very little information is known about these loans and aid that is supposed to help countries respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, which in itself speaks for the importance of open government reforms. He added that the principles of Open Government have never been more important and relevant than at the current moment. In this sense, OGP national action plans become instruments governments can use to make sure open government reforms are successfully implemented and that citizens have a voice that is visible in policies, in monitoring and evaluation of reforms and government expenditure and revenue.

Mr. Theophilous Chiviru stated the African continent has the most ambitious and innovative action plans and commitments around fiscal transparency, budgeting and access to information. He added that the biggest challenges in the continent in this context is that of implementation and called on participants to collectively think about how can the OGP ecosystem in the continent be governed to help make implementation reform. Mr. Chiviru concluded by stressing the importance of investing in open government reform, ensuring political leadership and coordination with civil society.

Remarks by OGP National Members & Civil Society Organizations

Statement by Ms. Pelagie Kabre, Representative of the Permanent Secretariat for Modernization of Administration and Good Governance, Burkina Faso :

Ms. Pelagie Kabre, gave an overview of the commitment relating to the systematization of online registration of all the competitions of public administration for post-baccalaureate and at least 50% of baccalaureate level competitions, which is part of Burkina Faso's first national action plan. She added that the platform "econcours" enables and facilitates registration to public administration competitions; as of 2020, all public administration competitions are online. Once candidates enter the website and login, they are able to register to take various examinations or public administration competitions. She highlighted that this website has innovative features, such as its ability to correct and grade the exams of each candidate in an automated manner, which not only saves time and energy but also financial resources.

Message from Mr. Malick Ligani, President of BEOG NEERE, Burkina Faso :

Mr. Malick Ligani, shared the experience of Beog Neere in the context of promoting the values and principles of the open government partnership and more specifically in the areas of civic tech and the promotion of human rights, citizen participation, peace and social justice, and the fight against corruption.

Message from Mr. Lawrence W Yealue, II, Country Director, Accountability Lab, Liberia :

Mr. Lawrence W Yealue, II, shared the experience of Accountability Lab in the context of adapting to the implementation challenges caused by the Covid pandemic through the use of social media to ensure the continued promotion of the values and principles of the open government partnership.

Statement by Ms. Mariama Koné, Technical Advisor to the Minister Organization, Ministry of Trade and Industry, Côte d'Ivoire :

Ms. Mariama Koné, highlighted that in the span of 10 years, the OGP initiative was able to unite a number of governments and civil society organizations, which she believes is a demonstration of relevance of the OGP and a testament to the will of populations to participate in the decision making process. She added that the Cote d'Ivoire joined the OGP in October 2015 after having satisfied the eligibility criteria relating to budget transparency, access to information and citizen participation. Ms. Koné pointed out that Cote d'Ivoire joined the OGP as a government led initiative, which civil society also adhered to and was able to contribute to effectively. She gave the example of the third national action plan, which included various commitments that were initiated by civil society; Initially, the government organized public hearings, in which civil society participated to identify a number of challenges that were later taken into consideration in national action plans. Ms. Koné explained that due to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, Cote d'Ivoire had to reconsider its action plan elaboration process and rely more on civil society and technologies; as a result, Cote d'Ivoire relied on an online public consultation process to build on the proposals of civil society actors and discussed them with the concerned public administrations to identify a number of commitments.

Ms. Koné emphasized the importance of the OGP process as a response to preoccupations of many populations who want to be informed, to understand and be more involved in the decision making process; she also stressed the importance of the co-creation process in this context. She pointed

out that while the current health crises has forced public administrations to think more innovatively, the challenges that remain are mainly financial, which requires a new way of thinking that would encourage both the private, public sectors and other partners to contribute to the implementation of OGP related initiatives. In this context, she stated that Cote d'Ivoire is currently thinking about how it could put in place an OGP secretariat or entity that would reinforce cooperation between different sectors and administrations and that would further promote OGP values and principles.

Message from Mr. Stanley Achonu, Operations Lead, BudgIT, Nigeria :

Mr. Stanley Achonu, shared a few lessons learned in the areas of collaboration and volunteering to contribute to the implementation of the principles of the OGP and public procurement.

Message from Ms. Fatou Jagne, Regional Director, Article 19, Sénégal :

Ms. Fatou Jagne, shared her experience as a civil society actor working alongside the government to develop and implement an action plan that will address governance challenges, including ensuring access to information and transparency.

Statement by Mr. Khaled Sellami, Director General of E-Government Unit, Republic of Tunisia :

Mr. Khaled Sellami, shared Tunisia's experience as a member of the Open Government Partnership since 2014 and stated that the country is currently in the final stages of the adoption of its fourth national action plan. He pointed out that Tunisia achieved many Open Government commitments and aspects of its third national action plan, including on the level of 12 municipalities. When speaking about Tunisia's fourth national action plan, he added that the former has been approved by the Tunisian government and includes 13 commitments revolving around four axes: access to information and transparency, citizen participation and participatory democracy, local open government, improvement of public services, this fourth action plan will be published soon.

Mr. Sellami highlighted that Tunisia was able to put in place a repository of actions in the form of a website that includes all of Tunisia OGP related initiatives and accomplishments. He added that Tunisia was also able to implement a number of initiatives, such as an open data initiative, through

which Tunisia has put in place an Open data decree and open data portal gives access to data from various other portals from other public administrations.

Mr. Sellami pointed out that Tunisia, in the context of the OGP, has also implemented an incubation program that utilizes open data and hackathons to help launch a number of businesses and startups. Tunisia was also able to put in place OGP initiatives on the local level in many municipalities and plan to launch more OGP local initiatives in the context of its upcoming fourth national action plan. Also on the local level, two Tunisian municipalities have become members of the OGP initiative. In the context of access to information, Tunisia has a well established legal framework that guarantees access to information.

Mr. Sellami applauded this important initiative which includes the participation of and exchange of experiences and lessons learned between both french and english speaking countries in Africa; and hopes to continue to advance this initiative.

Message from Ms. Marcella Samba-Sesay, Executive Director, Campaign for Good Governance, Sierra Leone :

Ms. Marcella Samba-Sesay, shared her experience in the context of promoting the implementation of the principles of the OGP through Sierra Leone's various national action plans; the last of which focuses on parliamentary openness.

Message from Ms. Zukiswa Kota, Head of Monitoring and Advocacy, Public Service Accountability Monitor, South Africa :

Ms. Zukiswa Kota, shared two recent developments within the OGP space in South Africa at the moment. The first is publication of the most recent action plan, the fourth national action plan and the second is the introduction of the first OGP local in South Africa in a local authority called Makhanda.

Statement by Mr. Totangi Kalilu Chairman National Council for Civic Education and Development (NaCCED), Sierra Leone :

Mr. Tatangi Kalilu, highlighted that Sierra Leone has been part of the OGP process since 2013 and the country is currently in the final stages of the implementation process of its third national action plan and has entered in the co-creation process of its fourth national action plan. Mr. Tatangi added that the last national action plan aimed to look at the areas that were not included in the second

action plan such as beneficial ownership, education, gender and access to justice are also areas that were included in the action plan. He stated that most of OGP related initiatives are overseen by a steering committee and require the highest level of commitment from the government because the latter undertakes the implementation of these initiatives.

In the context of the next national action plan, Mr. Kalilu informed that the government will be including SGBV and women's empowerment related initiatives in addition to the inclusion of the parliament in issues of good governance.

Statement by Dawit Shimelis, Worku Director, Expenditure Management and Control Reform Directorate, Ministry of Finance, Ethiopia :

Mr. Dawit Shimelis gave an overview of the Open Government efforts of Ethiopia, notably in the areas of accountability and budget transparency. He added that the government of Ethiopia has also promoted the engagement of citizens and civil society organizations in development processes.

Statement by Mr. Philip Thigo, Senior Advisor, Data and Innovation, Office of the Deputy President of Kenya :

Mr. Philip Thigo, gave a presentation around the OGP process in Kenya, including its 4 national action plans, 5 sub national action plans and over 70 commitments in total. Kenya has also established a governance structure to oversee the OGP process which includes a steering committee and national multi-stakeholder forum. Mr. Thigo highlighted that the Open Government collective mission is anchored in the Constitution of Kenya. This collective mission aims to promote access to innovative solutions for governments, civil society and citizens for accountability; the proactive use of open government platform to co-create change, enforce transparency, accountability and citizen engagement; leveraging data and evidence based learning; Ownership of OGP in Africa by Governments, including AU organs and private sector.

Mr. Thigo also gave an overview of the key achievements Kenya has made in the area of Open Government, which include attaining global OGP leadership status with steering committee election and Beneficial Ownership Leadership group and sustaining a vibrant multi-stakeholder OGP network. He added that in terms of legislation, Kenya was able to catalyze the enactment of the Climate Change Law, access to information and data protection to include beneficial ownership

information. Among other achievements, Kenya also accelerated the formalization of the Kenya space agency, co-created the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development data.

Regarding Kenya's fourth national action plan, Mr. Thigo added that the former builds on the previous three and puts great emphasis on institutionalizing Open Government and Open Response + Open Recovery + Open resilience. He also highlighted that the fourth action plan is built around the following areas: beneficial ownership, open contracting, open data for development, public participation and legislative openness, access to justice, access to information, open government resilience and public service delivery performance.

Mr. Thigo also shared some proposals on how to promote the principles of Open Government within the network of the African OGP community, which include sharing tactics and insights, collectively think about how to insulate the open government process from the shocks that may happen during political transitions, building legitimate spaces for co-creation and deliberating on how to strengthen engagement within institutions and of other OGP champions.

Statement by Dr. Patrick M. Sokhela, Chief Director: International Cooperation and Stakeholder Relations APRM & OGP Contact Point, South Africa :

Dr. Patrick M. Sokhela, highlighted that as a founding member of the Open Government Partnership, South Africa has the responsibility to stay the course and ensure that the principles of the OGP are sustained. He added that South Africa is currently focusing its efforts on ensuring the principles of accountability and promoting the spirit and principles of the OGP. Dr. Sokhela also expressed South Africa's commitment and support to the initiative launched by the Government of Morocco.

Recommendations

The discussion during the webinar initiated the following recommendations:

- It is recommended to initiate a pan-African dynamic for the promotion of open government. Concretely, the proposal is to collaborate to adopt an action plan that aims for synergy and the sharing of experience between our countries. As for the implementation of this action plan, it is advisable to launch a working group tasked with the co-creation of this action plan.

- In parallel with the preparation of the action plan, and in view of the progress of the various African actors, either at the level of the Government or at the level of civil society, it is recommended to start promoting the sharing of good practices and knowledge between the OGP community in Africa and share reusable tools to allow the community to benefit from them. To enable this exchange in an efficient and rapid manner, it is proposed to set up an online platform as a space for sharing tools, good practices and peer learning.
- It was recommended that the network deliberates on how more countries can be included in the OGP process in Africa and how can the OGP process become more resilient during democratic transitions.
- It was recommended that the OGP African Network organizes an event on the sidelines of the OGP Summit 2021.