

“Open government is at the heart of the contract between state and citizens”

The open government story in Tanzania



Tanzania, one of six countries in Africa that qualified for involvement in the Open Government Partnership (OGP), declared its intention to join during the launch meeting in September 2011. Tanzania presented and submitted its action plan during the OGP Brasilia 2012 annual meeting, thus becoming the ninth government represented on the Steering Committee.

This leaflet tells the story of the OGP in Tanzania thus far.

Political commitment

OGP in Tanzania enjoys high level political commitment and support from top leadership. The president of the United Republic of Tanzania, H.E. Dr Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, in his keynote address at the OGP annual summit in Brasilia, Brazil, in April 2012, affirmed this commitment:

“I promise that we will do our best to live up to the expectations of this Partnership to promote transparency and accountability of our Government to the people of Tanzania. I wish to reaffirm that our political will to achieve the OGP goals will not falter because Open Government is at the heart of the contract between State and Citizens.”



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This commitment marked a series of changes in terms of how the government operates. The spirit of transparency, accountability and citizen engagement are infused in Tanzania's OGP commitments, as well as in the government's relationship with non-state actors; all of which are the fundamental principles of the OGP.

The rationale for joining the OGP

Tanzania's intention in joining the OGP is to make government business more open to its citizens in the interest of improving public service delivery and government responsiveness, combating corruption and building greater trust.

Selected achievements

- Working in partnership with Policy Forum, a civil society coalition, the Ministry of Finance has issued a popular citizens' budget in Swahili.
- Websites for the ministries of education, water and health have been strengthened and are regularly updated. Basic reports, information and data have been uploaded.
- Financial Reports of Agencies under the Ministry of Water (Energy and Water Utilities Regulatory Authority (EWURA) and Dar es Salaam Water and Sewerage Authority (DAWASA)) have been posted on their respective websites, and waterpoint data in machine readable format has been published.
- Basic Education Statistics (BEST) book with national data, educational circulars and sector documents have been posted on the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training website.
- The e-Government Agency has developed a website called 'Nifanyeje,' which provides clear information on how a citizen can get basic things done – such as register a birth, get a driver's license, obtain a title deed, etc.
- The Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs is currently working on the first draft of a Freedom of Information Bill for government approval.
- A bill to amend the law related to public officials' asset disclosures will be tabled in Parliament in its next sitting.

Challenges

- Given the size of the country and inadequate infrastructure, it has been difficult to disseminate, popularize and domesticate the OGP programme comprehensively, particularly at the grassroots. Efforts are being made to popularize this programme through radio and television programmes, newspapers, and workshops and other modes of communication.
- Civil society and private sector participation has been relatively low.
- Scarce resources have hindered effective implementation of some of the commitments.

- Commitments under the OGP National Action Plan have been overly ambitious and therefore it has been difficult to ensure implementation with the desired impact.
- Lack of tools to monitor and evaluate actual implementation of commitments and their impact on target populations.
- Perhaps because OGP is a new way of working for the government, there have been difficulties with some public officers being reluctant to provide information openly.

Conclusion

Despite these challenges, it can be said that the first year action plan was over-ambitious given the fact that the OGP idea is still new and needs to be understood and absorbed by all stakeholders. However, what has been achieved is quite satisfactory and has set the momentum for better performance in the next two year action plan.

Shortcomings experienced during the execution period will be taken on board and rolled over to the next two year OGP Action Plan (2013/14 – 2015/16) which is currently under preparation. Emphasis will be on implementing those commitments that were partially or not completely implemented. These include posting all supplies from the Medical Stores Department (MSD) online, a Freedom of Information Act, fiscal transparency, open data and strengthening citizens' engagement.

Efforts will be made to link the new OGP action plan with a major new government initiative known as Big Results Now (BRN) in which six key priority areas have been identified to be given special emphasis to increase the pace of economic growth and poverty reduction.

Tanzania remains committed to the Declaration of the OGP Principles and will continue to be an active OGP member. Involving more civil society organizations, private sector partners and ordinary citizens in designing and implementing next OGP plan will be an important ingredient in achieving new commitments. This will enable us to overcome the challenge of making OGP more practical and meaningful for citizens so that through accessing more information and increasing participation, they can transform their lives.

