

Report on High Level Stakeholders Engagement on the OGP

The high level stakeholder's engagement on Open Government Partnership (OGP) was organized by the National Council for Civic Education and Development in collaboration with Campaign for Good Governance and Westminster Foundation for Democracy and the entire membership of the Steering Committee at the Radisson Blu Hotel on the 3rd June 2021 at 9 am. The Chairman of the National Council for Civic Education and Development, Mr Kalilu Totangi in his opening remark gave a brief background of the OGP process and the need for government officials to embrace it. He further talked about the role of government in National Action plans development and that as we are in the process in developing the fourth action plan and also emphasizes on the support needed from MDAs.

The Chief Minister, Mr Jacob Jusu Saffa in his keynote address applauded NaCCED for the tremendous work in promoting the OGP process. He stated that the OGP was inherited and the fact that government maintained it is a testament to President Bio's commitment to the whole process. On that note, he urged the Secretary to Cabinet and head of the Civil Service to encourage Permanent Secretaries and deputies to attend future meetings as a demonstration of government commitment. He further pointed out that since 2018, "The government has amended the sexual offences act 2012 to provide stronger penalties for violation against women. Government has also established the fast-track court to ensure sexual based violent cases are deliberated promptly." Mr. Saffa said, the OGP process in any country promotes fiscal transparency, citizens engagement, assets and income disclosure and access to information which comprise key achievements that this government has maintained. The Chief Minister went on to say that, "The successes of Sierra Leone's economic and Financial policy implemented since 2018 has further reaffirmed and underscore the commitment as evidenced in the passing of the Treasury Single Account and in addition to fact that international financial institutions such as World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Africa Development Bank have reengaged government in the delivery of budgetary allocations. He ended his address by assuring all that his presence to this occasion is a justification of governments commitment to open governance and the government of Sierra Leone will continue to make available resources to support the OGP.

The Chairman of NaCCED Mr. Kalilu Totangi, thanked the Chief Minister for reiterating governments commitment to the OGP process and urged the participation of heads of MDAs at OGP meetings. He said this is something we have always looked forward to. The Chairman clearly stated that, "Sometimes we have a meeting of 16 steering committee members, which comprise equal representation from government and civil society, but having 7 Civil Society versus 1 MDA in previous attendances is discouraging . Like I said, it's open government, not open Civil Society." He also added by expressing how pleased he is to have a proactive Chief Minister who understand this issue very well and has shown interest to work with us so that we can continue on the trajectory that the President has introduced openness, transparency and civic based. Mr. Kalilu also disclosed that Sierra Leone is doing very well on the global stage on

OGP and furthered by stating that Sierra Leone is a role models to other OGP participating countries on citizens engagement.

Earlier, the Deputy Minister of Information and Communication ESQ Solomon K. Jamiru said that, "The OGP process in Sierra Leone has been guided by the principles of accountability and transparency and the use of innovation and technology to engage citizens. He further stated that after the 2018 election in Sierra Leone, a high level delegation of OGP Global Officials during their visit with President Bio, he reiterated his government's commitment to the process and appointed the Minister of Information and communication Mr. Mohamed R. Swaray as OGP ministerial lead and mandated the newly established NaCCED to serve as the point of contact", he noted. He also added that as the lead ministry, they are always available for any OGP event and engagement and they will remain committed with all it's process.

Marcella Samba Sesay, Executive Director CGG, said, "since 2013 when Sierra Leone became member of the Global OGP they have worked assiduously with other civil society organizations to enable government become more transparent, accountable and ensures citizens participation in governance". She further mentioned that civil society and government work together to develop robust transformative commitments that governments implement over a period of two years. She also stated that, "It is vital to have government and Civil Society involved in co-creation processes."

Glynnis Cummins John; former OGP Global Steering Committee member and deputy director Restless Development noted that they have been playing an international role and showcasing key good governance achievement Sierra Leone has been making at the global stage.

The Second Deputy Secretary who represented the British High Commission re-committed the long standing relationship between Sierra Leone and Britain. He said they commend the government of Sierra Leone for being part of the OGP and that the best governance process is one that is democratic, transparent and accountable to its people.

Honourable Sellu Mustapha, member of the OGP working group in Parliament said, "with support from DIFID, through the West Minister Foundation for Democracy, the Parliament of Sierra Leone and its leadership has thought it fit to further enhance their effort towards transparency, accountability and ensure increased access to citizens interaction in the work of parliament.

Maureen Karuiki Senior Regional Coordinator, Africa and the Middle East in her statement applauded the leadership of OGP Sierra Leone, the Ministry of Information and Communications and National Council for Civic Education and Development for the significant Sierra Leone has made in key areas of transparency, the fight against corruption, access to justice, gender policy and the inclusion of marginalized groups in the state affairs in the past two years. She further reiterated that Sierra Leone continue to maintain the good governance gains it has achieve over the past years. She also commend all OGP partners for supporting Sierra Leone OGP process which have got Sierra Leone being an OGP country worth emulating.

She further that there are crisis all over the world including that of inequality, democracy among others and we all have a critical role to play in creating a more hopeful future that includes promoting public oversight, procurement transparency

During the afternoon session, the first presentation was done by Mr Kalilu Totangi on the role of government in open government partnership national action plans. (NAP). He talked about the NAP development, the current commitments and status of implementation. He also recommended all for collective ownership and participation in the process. Ms Yeama Thomspson gave a presentation on the OGP co creation standards. She talked about the two year cycle of the OGP process during which action plans are developed and implemented. Mrs Marcella Samba Sesay gave a presentation on the OGP process which includes an equal representation of government and civil society. She talked about showcasing Sierra Leone good governance strides at global platforms and how Sierra Leone came second during the OGP Global open governance challenge. She urged all that in order to maintain the good gains we must ensure best practices by showing more commitment to the process. A survey form was shared among participants to solicit feedback for draft commitments for the National Action Plan 4.