

Report on the OGP CSOs and the Media Engagement on the NAP 4 Development

The National Council for Civic Education and Development (NaCCED), in partnership with Campaign for Good Governance, Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), and the OGP Steering Committee, on the 9th September 2021 held consultations with representatives from different Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and media houses at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Freetown, as part of the co-creation process to develop the Fourth National Action Plan commitments and milestones.

The Chairman of the National Council for Civic Education and Development, Mr. Kalilu Totangi in his opening remarks thanked the Steering Committee members for "keeping the OGP boat afloat on the high seas." "Sierra Leone", he said "has been a member of the global Open Government Partnership since 2013, but when the new government of President Julius Maada Bio took over, a high level delegation from the OGP Support Unit in Washington visited. During that meeting, President Julius Maada Bio reiterated his commitment to accountability transparency and other good governance strides and have since met their words with action in the work of the OGP in the country".

In her virtual statement, Mrs Maureen Karuiki, the Senior Regional Coordinator Africa and the Middle East noted that "for civil society, this OGP co-creation process in Sierra Leone is providing an opportunity to engage in direct dialogue with government on an agenda for reform of critical sectors of government. For the media this process is also a first critical entry point into OGP which I encourage you to take. It is the heart of the OGP process, as it is where government and civil society debate and define the country's two-year open government reform agenda and the media can help inform this broader governance reform effort because it also affects the media." For instance, open contracting and beneficial ownership are both themes with strong existing government and civil society communities of support within OGP".

In his keynote address, the Minister of Information and Communication, Mr. Mohamed Rahman Swaray, who also is the OGP Ministerial Lead, reiterated government's continuous commitment to the OGP process. He outlined the progress made in the just completed NAP 3, which includes "in the area of Education the Teaching Service Commission has recruited 5,000 teachers, deputy directors and district officers in all 16 districts, distributed core text books to all registered and enrolled pupils in all government and government assisted schools. As part of OGP Commitments, the first ever Open Parliament Day and study tour on open parliament was organized, the Gender Empowerment and Records and Archives Management Bills are now in Parliament waiting to be passed into an Act of Parliament". The Minister further reiterated what the Chairman of NaCCED had said earlier about visitors coming from OGP secretariat and added that as a government they are aware that, "democracy comes as a package, openness is one of the cardinal principals." He said that he is pleased to say that as a government, they have not stood in the way of Civil Society, "Rather we have tried to ensure that we built a sustainable relationship based on mutual respect, consultation and co-creation".

Earlier, Executive Director, Campaign for Good Governance Mrs Marcella Samba Sesay, who is also member of the OGP Steering Committee made it clear that, “In reality OGP aims to secure corporate commitment from government to promote transparency, accountability, empower citizens, fight corruption and harness new technology to strengthen governance.”

Yeama Thompson, Executive Director Sierra Leone News Agency a Steering Committee member hammered home her point that, “It is important that as always, the process of co- creating the action plan be inclusive of voices from Civil society, Media, Private sector and marginalized communities that will not always be empowered by the central government.”

During the afternoon session, different presentations were made by Mr Abu Bakarr Kamara, National Coordinator Budget Advocacy Network on the Open Government Partnership processes. This session was moderated by Mr Sahr Kendema. The next presentation was done by Ms Yeama S Thompson on the role of Civil Society and Media in the Open Government Partnership National Action Plan development and implementation and this session was moderated by Mrs Hannah Hamida Jimmy. Following the different presentations participants were now asked to break up into plenary groups representing the OGP Grand challenges to solicit and then develop possible NAP 4 Commitments and milestones.