

GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE
National Council of Civic Education and Development (NaCCED)
21 Steward Street, Freetown



OGP Symposium 2022

Report

1.0 Background

In order to help key players identify key challenges in implementing the open government National Action Plan commitments, understand and encourage participation, collective responsibility and create ownership of all open government reforms in the Open Government Partnership country process, the National Council of Civic Education and Development (NaCCED), with support from its development partners, held a day national symposium on the 25th August, 2022 at the Freetown City Auditorium with representatives from the MDA, CSOs, media and from the Development Partners. The keynote address was given by the Chief Minister, Jacob Jusu Saffa with several dignitaries in attendance. The participants made statements on behalf of their institutions; amongst them, the Minister of Information and Communications, Development Director for the UK who represented the British High Commission, the Director General of Parliament, the Anti-Corruption Commissioner, the Mayor of Freetown, and host of others. A total of 111 participants attended, of which 77 were males and 34 were females.

2.0 Symposium Objectives

As set out in the details of the OGP Symposium Concept Note, the goal was to achieve the following specific objectives:

- To showcase some good governance reforms through OGP NAP implementation
- Identify key challenges in NAP co – creation and implementation processes

- Ensure that citizens are well-informed and involved in NAP co-creation and implementation for meaningful and inclusive participation
- Improve government responsiveness to OGP NAP priorities
- Encourage citizens to play a more effective role in monitoring government's implementation of OGP NAP Commitments

3.0 Deliverables & Outcomes



Mrs. Hannah Hamida Jimmy, the OGP National Coordinator called the event to order and introduced the Chairperson of the occasion. In her opening statement Ms Valnora Edwin, Chairperson of the morning session, emphasized that the OGP process creates the platform for robust citizen's engagement and participation in the development of policies and programs of state institutions. This was followed by a welcome address from the Mayor of Freetown, Mrs. Yvonne Aki Sawyer. Her Worship, the Mayor encouraged partners to achieve a transparent and accountable society and share her condolences to those who lost their lives during the August 10th Violent Protest.

Giving an overview of the event, the Chairman of NaCCED Mr. Kalilu I. Totangi reminded the audience that "Sierra Leone became the 66th member of Open Government Partnership (OGP) in 2013, since then, we have done three complete National Action Plans." He went on to say that, "National Action Plans(NAP) are formulated and derived from five key principles, improve public service delivery, creating safer communities, effective management of public resources , increase public integrity and increase corporate accountability." Mr. Totangi added that, "Since I became Point of Contact (PoC) for OGP in Sierra Leone, we have developed two National Action Plans. Second National Action Plan that we developed, we didn't do very well; we were only able to achieve two of the commitments. In the third NAP, we have eight commitments and 46 milestones. I am happy to report that we have made some progress." The Chairman pointed out some of the focus areas in the plan: access to justice, education, duty wavers and tax exemption, beneficial ownership, access to information and gender. He maintained that a Parliament that had 146 members with only 18 women, despite them being over 50% of the country's population, is a call for

concern. However, the Chairman said that they have seen signs of commitment from the side of the government to improve that situation. He said that that government has shown some commitment to advancing gender equality and to minimize gender-based violence. In addition to the progress made in the Open Parliament Commitment, he made mention of the importance of Parliament in the development of this nation. “They make rules and represent all of us”, he said, “and for OGP to succeed in this country, we needed Parliament onboard.” “We wanted to see more responsive democratic institutions with increased civil society engagement,” he noted. He also spoke about the commitment which has to do with records and archives management which promote transparency, accountability and access to information. Mr. Totangi lamented the lack of commitment from most government representatives. Nevertheless, he lauded the support of the Chief Minister, ACC, Office of the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service, Ministry of Information and Communication. He cited the good work that Parliament is doing and how it brought accolade to the country. The crowning jewel, he said, was the collaboration with Civil Society which he said, shows the good work we are doing in good governance and democracy. Concluding he said, “We have called you here today, so that this would be a beginning of a National Action which addresses commitments, including Open Elections and Access to Justice. After these deliberations we can now have concrete advice for government on these issues. “

The event, he said, was organized to showcase some good governance reforms through OGP National Action Plan implementation, identify key challenges in NAP co-creation and implementation processes. Evidently, the symposium would ensure that citizens are well-informed and involved in National Action Plan co-creation and

implementation for meaningful and inclusive participation and improved government's responsiveness to OGP National Action Plan priorities.

3.1 Statement Highlights

Maureen Karuiki

The OGP Africa and the Middle East Coordinator noted that partners should take ownership of the OGP, and that will give it a lasting result. She stated that there is no magic in open government and pinpointed that because we have an action plan does not mean that it should stop there but to implement the Action Plan even during this challenging times. She elaborated on how the pandemic has worsen the global trend of declining democracy and civic space but asked that partners should keep working to credibly implement the Action Plan to reflect on the challenges OGP partners faced and must rallies their allies in Sierra Leone to achieve this. She mentioned that the last few years of Open Government in Sierra Leone have shown that OGP Sierra Leone have supporters through society with political will and commitments to keep pushing on and at the global level, the OGP community is there to support Sierra Leone. She recognized the effort of Sierra Leone and want to show case the achievements of OGP Sierra Leone in a special event in Morocco in which she shared and open invitation to OGP partners in Sierra Leone.

Mr. John Sumaila

The Secretary to Cabinet and Head of Civil Service shared their commitment to support the OGP Secretariat by ensuring the active participation of Ministries, agencies and departments in the implementation of the OGP National Action Plan. He further commended the National Council for Civic Education and Development for steering the OGP process through the development and implementation of two National Action Plans.

Thomas Joe Freeman

A representative from the office of the Attorney General and Minister of Justice who speaks on behalf of the Minister on the topic impact of Open Government partnership on access to justice. He stated that the access to justice is a legal of every individual and it is important that ordinary citizens are able to obtain competent legal advice and representation to protect those rights. He mentioned some of the notable milestones the OGP has created in promoting access to justice.

Mrs. Finda Frazer

Director General of the Parliament of Sierra Leone started her statements by highlighting key issues that the parliament have address to support parliamentary openness and shared some of the achievements and performance of Parliamentary Openness in the Global index.

Mr Mohamed Rahman Swaray

The Minister of Information and Communication Mohamed R. Swaray before making a statement, asked everybody in the auditorium to observe a minute of silent prayer for

the security officers killed on duty during the August 10th riot. The Minister said this was an attack on our democracy by bloody insurrectionist whose aim was to topple a democratically elected government. He said, “An independent broad based committee has been put together, made up of the finest Sierra Leoneans to investigate the matter. This is an example of good governance and openness,” Mr. Swaray pointed out. He thanked the Chairman for the great work he is doing at NaCCED on the OGP process. He spoke about the TRC recommendations, saying that President Bio’s government has implemented more TRC recommendations than any other government before it. The Minister then cited the following: repeal of the criminal libel law, abolition of the death penalty, enacted laws that protect the rights of women and empowered more women in elective positions, among others.

Mr Francis Ben Kailfala

The Anti-Corruption Commissioner Francis Ben Kaifala said that when he was appointed as Commissioner, he made it clear that he would not like to fight corruption in hiding. According to him, he believed in engaging, “because it is only when you engage that you bring the people along and you are more likely to create the impact that you need.” The Commissioner cited how he has been part of the OGP since 2013, citing his participation in a town Hall meeting held in Kailahun as example. “I came here as somebody who already have a strong relationship with OGP, OGI. Our representatives at ACC have been very active with the work of the OGP to ensure we engage and open up in what we do. We have been a strong partner with NaCCED and OGP to ensure that transparency is achieved.”

Mr Ibrahim Tommy

The Executive Director for Center for Accountable and Rule of Law (CARL) Ibrahim Tommy Said, OGP promotes a healthy partnership between government and Civil Society Organizations. He thanked NaCCED for organizing the symposium. “It is the only framework that I know where government and CSOs have equal powers,” he said. He said their role as Civil Society representatives in the OGP process is very critical.

Emma Spicer

The Director of Development at the British Embassy Emma said,” we support financially and provide advice. We find Sierra Leone as a steadfast friend. We have a lot in common.” She said in their support, priority has been given to education and women’s right adding that Sierra Leone has a progressive foreign policy. Emma said the United Kingdom is pleased for the adoption of the 4th NAP adding that parliament is open and accessible to all Sierra Leoneans. “Now is the time to keep the broadness of the democratic space. UK has a strong belief in the people of Sierra Leone.”

Mr Jacob Jusu Saffa

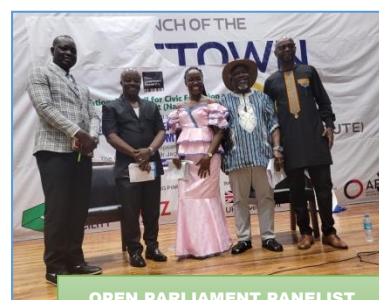
The Chief Minister Mr. Jacob J. Seffa who served as keynote speaker said open civic space is essential to governance. “Open governance requires credible and trustworthy institutions based on accountability and transparency”, he said. The Chief Minister

further said budget is being put together for Civil Society Organizations so that they would be engaging citizens to know what government is doing and why. He said CSO'S can work as counterpart with government. He acknowledged the fact that most of the violence that occur in the country is due to lack of civic education and engagement. Speaking about the vulnerability of unemployed youth, he noted, "Politically motivated persons are misusing the youth because they want to create chaos and the only solution to this youth violence, is to constantly engage them." He expressed disappointment over the low participation of Ministries, Departments and Agencies in the OGP process. He said as a country we have made great stride in implementing National Action Plans. Earlier in his speech, Mr. Saffa recalled that a year ago, Sierra Leone submitted its National Action Plan on Access to Justices, Open Parliament, Extractive Industry, Transparency Initiative and Fair Election Processes," adding that, "Sierra Leone has made tremendous efforts in implementing action plans commitments." The Chief Minister maintained that national action plans are embedded in key government priority areas and pointed out that they have made steady gains in establishing the Peace and National Cohesion Commission to help foster peace and unity across the country.

3.2 Deliberations & Discussions

The event was organized to have a panel discussion to address various topics and participants presented their successes, challenges, prospects and lessons learnt in the

topics. During the symposium, the WFD Country Representative, Alusine Diamond-Suma alongside Network Movement for Justice and Development National Coordinator, Abu Brima participated in a panel discussion on OGP and Parliament in order to address how legislators and other parliamentary actors can be effectively engaged to play active role in Open Parliament.



Another panel discussion centered around Access to Justice. Moderated by Sahr Kendema, Project Manager, Campaign for Good Governance, the Session Speakers were Path Finders, Senior Project Officer, Themba Mahleka, Coordinator Justice Sector Coordinating Office, Mr. Shahid Korjie, Programs Director, Ms. Eleanor Thompson, and Executive Director, Centre for Accountability and the rule of law, Mr. Ibrahim Tommy. The session looked at the importance of the OGP in promoting access to justice, access to justice reforms and their efficiency and how access to justice commitments are developed. The third session looked at Free fair and open elections with Mrs Marcella Samba Sesay, Executive Director, Campaign for Good Governance, Mr Andrew Laval, Executive Director, Institute for Governance Reforms Dr Richard Klien Director of Elections Programs, National Democratic Institute moderated by Ms Yeama Thompson, Executive Director, Sierra Leone News Agency.

4.0 Results & Action Points

During the symposium, several deliberations and discussions were held, thus, leading to some positive results. It is expected that the event will empower citizenry to take an active role in key open governance reforms, effectively participate and monitor OGP NAP co-creation and implementation processes as well as an increased interest and citizen ownership of OGP process. In that light, post media engagement activities were conducted in which the team participated in media programs on national radio and television stations and promoted knowledge on key open government partnership National Action Plan commitments, achievements, challenges and share plans for completing milestones. There were key actions set aside to enhance continuous engagements, among which are; follow up with the Head of Civil Service and Secretary to Cabinet to ensure participation of relevant MDAs, subsequent engagement through Radio and Television programs, town hall meetings to update citizens on progress being in National Action Plan commitment implementation, use of social media to disseminate OGP progress stories and solicit both technical and financial support from development partners to enhance our work.