

Minutes of the Steering Committee Meeting on Wednesday 16th February 2022.

AGENDA

1. Opening Prayers
2. Introduction of Participants
3. Presentation by SLEITI National Coordinator
4. Review and validation of NAP IV
5. Closing Remarks

The meeting was called to order by Mrs. Hannah Jimmy, OGP National Coordinator on behalf the Chairman, NaCCED and called for individual prayers. She informed us that the chairman was unavoidably absent as he was attending the funeral of the mother of the Minister of Information and Communications, who is the ministerial lead of the OGP process.

Going forward, she informed the steering committee members about the meeting that was held the week before with the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) Global Secretariat attended by Michael Uzoigwe, Country Manger Anglophone and Asia countries and Edwin Warden together with a team from the Sierra Leone country office (SLEITI) headed by Mr. Mohamed B. Koroma, the National Coordinator.

The purpose of the meeting with the EITI delegation was to see how OGP and SLEITI could collaborate in their activities as there is so much partnership between the two bodies at the global level. The other reason for their visit was to see how a commitment on extractives could be factored into the upcoming NAP IV as SLEITI will be validated in April this year and that will help to further boost their credentials on the global stage. "This is why the National Coordinator has been invited to make a presentation on Open Extractives to this committee" to see if it could be incorporated into the NAP IV, she concluded. She then invited the National Coordinator to make his presentation.

Mr. Mohamed B. Koroma, National Coordinator, SLEITI, took us through their mandate and all what they have been doing so far. He brought out the need for collaboration between OGP and SLEITI as both of them are working on ensuring openness in the activities of government. He informed the committee that the two entities had earlier been collaborating but this got stalled somewhere along the line, thus the need to revive that partnership.

The National Coordinator, in power point presentation went further to present their proposed commitment on Open Extractives that they want incorporated into the NAP IV. The commitment entails working together with relevant agencies and stakeholders to enhance transparency in the extractive sector, for disclosure of data related to its management, legal frameworks, licenses, contracts, beneficial ownership of companies, exploration, production and export, payments by companies and receipts by government and all transactions across the sector's value chain.

On comments from his presentation, Mr. Charles Kamara, an SC member from Education for All said the OGP has been monitoring the mining companies on extractives and that the just concluded NAP III even had a commitment on Beneficial ownership and that SLEITI should tap into that to see what development was made and the challenges faced.

Mr. Ishmail kamara from the NRA, informed the SC that the payment of surface rent is marred by lots of issues. He said there are no records from the Paramount Chiefs to show how it is distributed especially when it is paid in their names, same with that paid for chiefdom development, MP's, Local Councils and that of community development funds.

Mr. Wilfred Bangura from the ACC asked if SLEITI has any plans for prosecution on misuse of such funds by the givers (companies) and receivers (PC's, Councils MP's) etc. His reason was that they receive these funds on behalf of the communities. Rev. Alusine Diamond Suma said that it was laudable that SLEITI has again entered the OGP space but was only concerned about how much collaboration there was with the supervising ministry.

In his response, the National Coordinator responded that there was so much collaboration with the Ministry of Mines and Mineral resources and that there was even a Mines and Minerals Development Bill currently before Parliament for enactment. He went on to say that to come up with the bill, so much consultation was done with mining companies to have their input.

On the SLEITI Bill, he said it is a document to push the EITI agenda. The bill is currently at the EITI global Secretariat for their perusal especially when Sierra Leone is going to be validated in April and was optimistic that with the alliance with the OGP, the country will come out with high scores. He also informed us that surface rent and other royalty payments was another problematic area that would be addressed in the new Act when passed. For now, the formular to distribute the surface rent does not favour the land owners as they receive a paltry 50% and the PC 15%, chiefdom 10%, council 15% and MP 10%. This, he said is unjust to the landowners who are disposed of their land forever and that this has been captured in the new bill which will give 70% percent to the landowners and the 30% to rest.

For prosecution he said, SLEITI intends to have an MOU with the ACC because as at now, they have no prosecutorial powers but with the MOU they will now have teeth to bite. The new bill, he said recommends that all such payments be made through the banks to ensure easy tracking. Community and other development funds are paid but how it is used, remains another ball game altogether.

On the validation of NAP IV, the Rev. Diamond Suma took us through the draft. They include, Open Parliament, Open Elections and Access to Justice. Open Parliament according to Rev. Diamond Suma is a roll over commitment into the NAP IV. He informed us that although so much was achieved in the last NAP but there was still more to do. This new commitment will entail building better relationship between CSO and Parliament. It will aim to get CSOs to be less confrontational and more collaborative. He also said it will further create awareness among citizens the roles of Parliament and also create feedback mechanism for citizens to effectively participate in the work of Parliament.

The second commitment, is Open Elections, which is a new one and very key as we are about to enter into a new electoral cycle. This commitment, he informed us, will promote the guiding principles of the commission with a view to promoting the tenets of good democracy and governance structure in Sierra Leone. It will help to deliver elections in a credible, transparent and accountable manner through the use of modern technology that meets current trends and best practices. Finally, it will also help to improve the transmission of election results through technology and making them available on line in an open data format.

The third commitment, Access to Justice is also a roll over into NAP IV with an overall objective of "Equal Access to Justice for All". He said, this will facilitate a platform for improved interface between the justice sector and the public. It will ensure that all citizens benefit from a fair, impartial and effective justice sector through enabling increased access to justice, expedition of justice, protection of human rights and equal opportunities for economic development, he concluded.

After some deliberation, it was suggested that the commitment on Open Extractives be adopted and incorporated into the NAP IV. On the whole the up coming NAP IV has four SMART commitments that was validated and ready for cabinet hearing and presentation to OGP global.

In her closing remarks, the National Coordinator, thanked the SC members for their time and invaluable efforts in the development of the NAP IV and sought the cooperation of all in its' implementation. Mr. Charles kamara moved that the meeting be adjourned and seconded by Mrs. Lavina Banduah. The meeting was therefore adjourned to the first Tuesday in March.

In attendance were:

1. Mohamed Baimba. Koroma
2. Alhassan Sesay
3. Charles Kamara
4. Wilfred Bangura
5. Lavina banduah
6. Ishmail Kamara
7. Rev. Alusine Diamond-Suma
8. David K. Biandoma
9. Hannah H. Jimmy