

The Open Government Partnership :

A How-To Guide for Members of Parliament



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Acknowledgement

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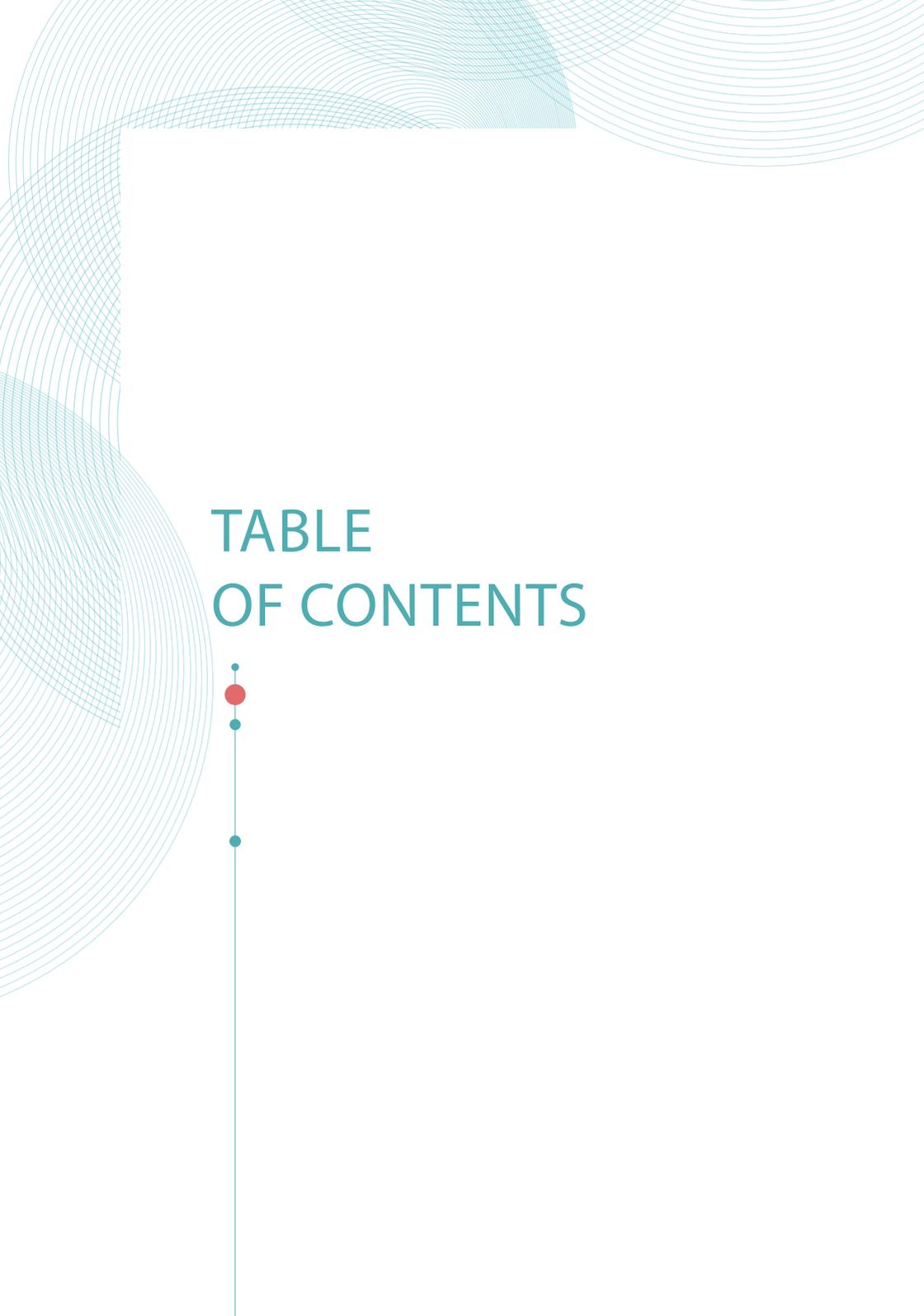


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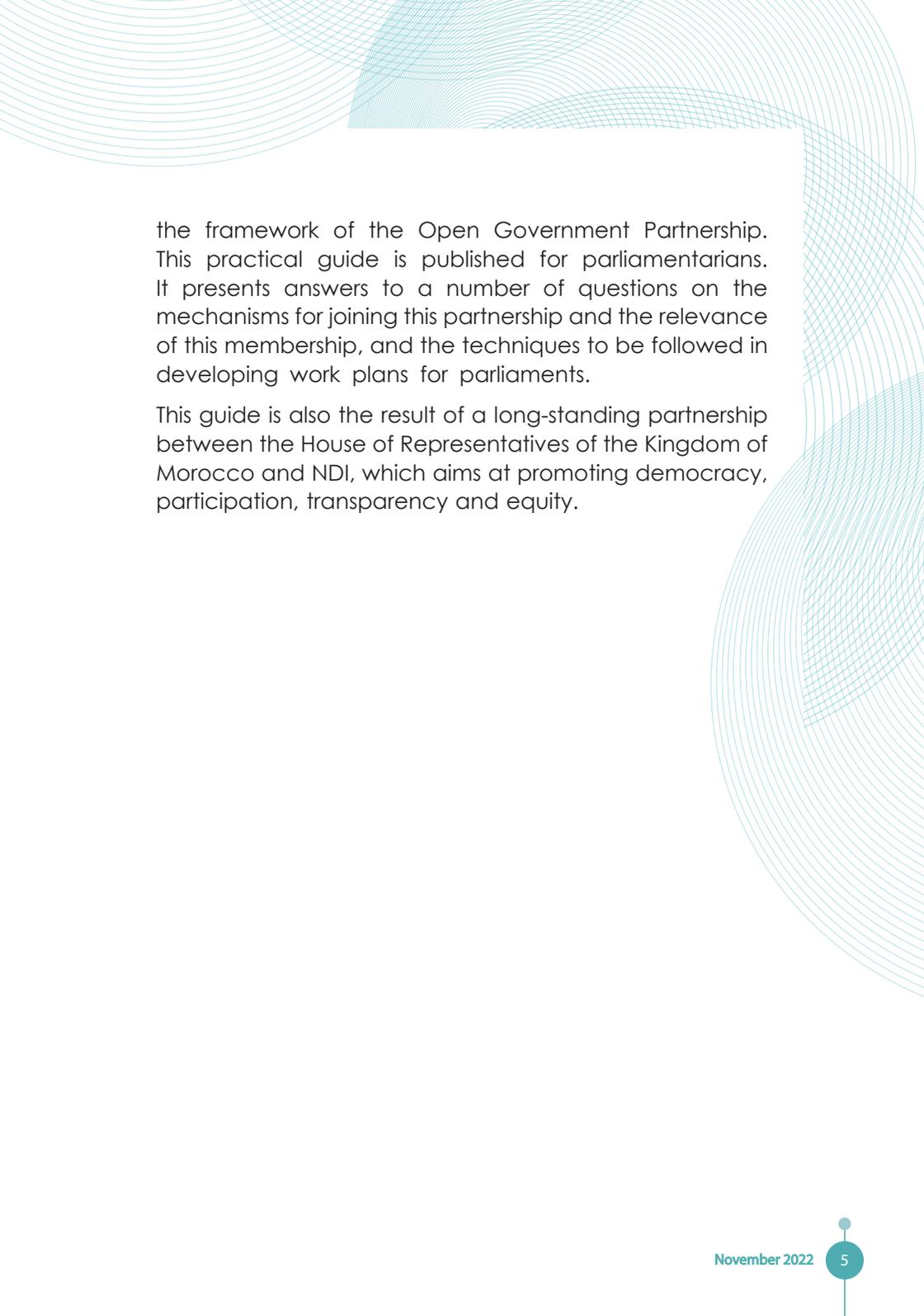
Introduction

The initiators of the Open Government Partnership were aware of the crucial role that parliaments can play in promoting the values, principles and philosophy of OGP, which are at the heart of democracy as a concept and as a system. Beyond their competence in oversight and legislation and in the evaluation of public policies, representation of citizens and parliamentary diplomacy, parliaments are the ideal setting for the expression of diversity of ideas and an ideal framework for advocating transparency and good governance, and guaranteeing the right of access to information and services, as well as the elaboration of budgets that take into account the criteria of equity.

In addition, parliaments are in an institutional position to initiate and lead ambitious reforms related to open government, beyond the competencies they are recognized to have, through the adoption of related bills and legislative initiatives, or through the monitoring of government action and commitments related to the open government partnership, or through the evaluation of related public policies and programs.

In addition to the principle of co-creation, parliamentary projects must meet the criteria of internal and external evaluation and operability, and be accompanied by a timetable for implementation.

In this perspective, the House of Representatives of the Kingdom of Morocco, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the U.S.- Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), have collaborated in the drafting and publication of this practical guide in the objective to clarify the vision of parliamentarians on membership and action within



the framework of the Open Government Partnership. This practical guide is published for parliamentarians. It presents answers to a number of questions on the mechanisms for joining this partnership and the relevance of this membership, and the techniques to be followed in developing work plans for parliaments.

This guide is also the result of a long-standing partnership between the House of Representatives of the Kingdom of Morocco and NDI, which aims at promoting democracy, participation, transparency and equity.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This *How-To Guide for Members of Parliament* introduces the Open Government Partnership (OGP). It outlines how parliaments can lead on open government reforms by 1) advancing the co-creation and implementation of their country's OGP action plan; 2) advancing the co-creation of open parliament reforms in their own institution; and 3) joining forces with the global community of open government reformers. A list of resources and contact details is provided to help members of parliament connect with the relevant partner organizations.

Introducing open government: why it matters

In the face of many global challenges, from climate change to public health and democratic backsliding, an effective government strategy demands the participation of citizens. In particular, democratic parliaments that have embraced open governance understand that people must be at the heart of parliament and that governance must be responsive to citizens.

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) allows civil society, governments and parliaments to join forces, to commit to reforms to open up government, and together ensure that our public institutions work for citizens. Letting citizens see how decisions are made, and holding elected officials to account by making information and participation open to everyone, especially vulnerable communities, leaves parliaments better placed to tackle the challenges ahead.

OGP is a platform to co-create innovative solutions and share information across the globe. In this light, Morocco's House of Representatives in partnership with NDI, and with support of MEPI, presents this guide to share information with members of parliament (MPs) in Africa, the Middle East and from all over the world, showcasing open governance.



1. The Moroccan House of Representatives in the Open Government Partnership

The Moroccan government [joined OGP in April 2018](#). A year later, in 2019, the Moroccan House of Representatives joined the process to improve and promote its democratic practices, and submitted an addendum to [Morocco's first OGP action plan \(2018 - 2020\)](#).

Parliament's addendum to the action plan included six new commitments, one of which was aimed at implementing the provisions of the constitution and legislation related to participatory and citizen-centered democracy. With this in mind, Morocco's House of Representatives created a commission, with majority and opposition MPs, in charge of receiving petitions and motions. A practical guide was also developed on how to use these participatory mechanisms, and an online platform with the government was created for civil society and citizens to submit their petitions and motions.

In their first action plan, the Moroccan House of Representatives took great strides in engaging citizens in the legislative process by publishing, on their website,

all draft legislative texts and proposals for citizens to comment. The suggestions and observations of citizens are then collected and presented to the presidency, permanent committees and parliamentary political groups when reviewing and adopting these laws.



In August 2022, the House of Representatives submitted its second OGP action plan (2022-2023). This action plan counts seven commitments, including one on strengthening the partnership of the House with civil society organizations (CSOs) by involving the latter in the implementation of OGP principles, and one on increasing the Parliament's public engagement efforts by ensuring that the principle of "Proximity Parliament" prevails, through opening wider the parliament's door and listening more to citizens, and inciting more parliamentary activities at a territorial level.

The submission came after the parliament opened an in-person and an [online consultation for civil society](#), to secure their feedback and comments on the draft action plan. Upon the closing of the consultation, the parliament

included some of these inputs from civil society and submitted the final commitments to OGP. Additions made following civil society inputs include:

- The creation of a democratically elected steering committee that engages civil society. The creation of the steering committee will take into account the thematic (e.g. human rights, environment and climate justice, local development, governance and transparency, etc.), geographical and gender dimensions of the plan.
- To ensure the durability of its actions and measures related to the implementation of its OGP commitments, the House will include them in the documents forming the legislative framework (internal rules of procedure) and the policy framework (Orders and decisions of the House of Representatives, frame of reference for evaluating public policies, frame of reference for the organization and working of information missions).

Beyond implementation of its own commitments, the House of Representatives will monitor government actions related to OGP and will adhere to any legislative initiative of the Government that aims to reinforce public consultation.

Through this action plan, the House of Representatives also aims to disseminate and consolidate parliamentary and democratic culture; further open up the Parliament to the public; and further involve citizens in parliamentary work, such as in oversight, in the legislation process and in the evaluation of public policies.



2. The Open Government Partnership (OGP)

2.1 Introducing OGP

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is a global initiative that brings together reformers from governments, parliaments, subnational governments and civil society to advance transparent, participatory, inclusive and accountable governance.

Launched in 2011, OGP now counts **77 countries and 106 Local members**. Together, they have co-created more than 4,000 open government commitments, all of which contribute towards a single aim: **“to foster a global culture of open government that empowers and delivers for citizens, and advances the ideals of open and participatory 21st century government.”**

=> WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

Take a look at this short introduction video on [OGP](#): *Building a better, more open world together.*



MORE VIDEOS

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CC BY YouTube

OGP reformers work across a growing range of policy areas, all of which relate directly to the core open government values. The top policy areas for commitments that include legislative action - ie: **where legislative change is required, and parliamentary support is therefore critical** - are anti-corruption, access to information, fiscal openness, money in politics, SDGs, justice, private sector, civic space, public services, extractives, participation in law-making, gender, and open contracting.

WHAT YOU CAN DO || Review [the list of OGP countries to see if you are a member](#).

If you are a member, take a look at your country's webpage, which will list the action plan and the official OGP Point of Contact (POC), typically a senior government official. If your parliament has a separate action plan,

and a parliament liaison, you will be able to find those details on the OGP web site.

If your country is not yet a member, take a look at the OGP website to find out if you meet the eligibility criteria and, once you do, how you can join the Partnership. Note that OGP membership must formally sit with a lead ministry or agency in government - it is not possible for parliament to join independently.

If your country does not (yet) meet the OGP eligibility criteria, or if your parliament lacks the support from government for formal OGP membership, there are still opportunities for your parliament to engage - and for you to be involved as an MP. For more details, please turn to section on parliamentary engagement beyond the OGP platform.

2.2 Introducing the OGP action plan

OGP brings together reformers from governments, parliaments and civil society to co-create open government commitments, which are formally adopted as part of an **OGP action plan**. That action plan has a fixed timing - typically two years, but longer plans are possible - and its commitments are reviewed by the Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM). The findings from one plan will feed into the next one, allowing reformers to build an open government infrastructure across action plans while learning from, and sharing with, OGP's global community of open government reformers.



Source: [2021 OGP Global Summit, Korea](#)

OGP's action plan approach provides members of parliament with **an opportunity to demonstrate to the people you represent that you are working on their behalf**. Parliamentary processes are often slow, making it difficult to show day-to-day progress on issues people care about, from citizen-centered public services, fighting corruption and inclusion. OGP encourages meaningful but manageable reforms, delivered in a fixed timeframe. By achieving results commitment by commitment, plan by plan, you can point to real progress as you continue to work on behalf of your constituents.

=> WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

Further details on the OGP action plan process can be found in the [OGP National Handbook – Rules and Guidance for Participants \(2022\)](#), available in **English, French and Spanish**.

You may also reach out to Rosario Pavese, Senior Parliamentary Advisor at OGP, for further information: rosario.pavese@opengovpartnership.org

WHAT YOU CAN DO || Bring your country's OGP process into parliament

Consult your OGP Point of Contact to find out where your country currently is in the OGP action plan cycle. Are you in the co-creation stage, or has an action plan just been adopted? Is parliament involved in any of the planned reforms, and are relevant committees, working groups or individual MPs aware of the commitments made?

Consult with the relevant groups and people in parliament, and explore if and when an introduction to OGP might be appropriate. It is strongly recommended that you consult the OGP Point of Contact in government, to ensure information is shared and to help align expectations.

SPOTLIGHT: North Macedonia

In North Macedonia, the OGP Point of Contact was invited to introduce OGP to the parliament in an effort to familiarize MPs and staff with North Macedonia's OGP activities. These initial exchanges developed into sustained engagement thanks to shared interests on the part of the parliament, the executive, and a proactive POC. This resulted in North Macedonia delivering the very first parliamentary chapter in their OGP national action plan in 2018.

Extract from OGP's Parliamentary Engagement in National OGP processes : Menu of Options, 2022

2.3 OGP's Participation and Co-creation Standards

"At the House of Representatives, we consider civil society organizations to be partners in the implementation of participatory democracy, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco. To that end we, at the Presidency, in the Bureau of the Chamber, with

the Presidents of the parliamentary groups and groupings, and with the Presidents of the Standing Parliamentary Committees, desire to institutionalize relations with social actors on the basis of engagement, consultation, and strict respect for our respective roles and responsibilities."

M. Rachid Talbi El ALAMI, Speaker of the Moroccan House of Representatives

Members and staff of parliament will value the importance OGP attaches to the 'how' of its action plan cycle. As in legislative institutions, much of **OGP's strength lies in its process. The integrity of that process, and the resulting action plan, is protected by a set of standards.** With the inputs of its stakeholders, and fine-tuned over hundreds of action plan cycles, OGP has distilled **5 Participation and Co-Creation Standards:**

- .. **Standard 1:** Establishing a space for ongoing dialogue and collaboration between governments, civil society, parliaments and other non-governmental stakeholders.
- .. **Standard 2:** Providing open, accessible and timely information about activities and progress within a members' participation in OGP.
- .. **Standard 3:** Providing inclusive and informed opportunities for public participation during co-creation of the action plan.
- .. **Standard 4:** Providing a reasoned response and ensuring ongoing dialogue between government, parliament and civil society and other non-governmental stakeholders as appropriate during co-creation of the action plan.
- .. **Standard 5:** Providing inclusive and informed opportunities for ongoing dialogue and collaboration during implementation and monitoring of the action plan.

Reformers are encouraged to be creative and innovative, but they are **required to uphold these standards throughout the OGP process. This applies to parliaments also.** While the rights and privileges of parliament and MPs should be respected at all times, be mindful that when you choose to engage in OGP, you commit to complying with these standards.

Concretely, this means that **parliament will be asked to provide a space for dialogue and collaboration with civil society, and will be invited to - within reason - provide information and feedback at certain points in the OGP process.** Experience shows that parliamentary participation can fully align with, and indeed strengthen, parliament's role as a representative institution: parliaments have built successful working mutual engagements with government and civil society stakeholders on every continent. It can take time, however, for parliamentary procedure and practice to accommodate such arrangements. A step-by-step approach, whereby parliament moves from informal engagement to more formal participation over the course of two or three action plans, can provide the necessary time for reflection and adjustments.

=> WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

To learn more about how these standards support the development, implementation and oversight of OGP action plans, and to consider the guiding principles that underpin them, review the full *OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards* in **English**, **French** and **Spanish**.

WHAT YOU CAN DO || Making OGP work for you and your parliament

OGP offers unique and important opportunities for you and your parliament. Parliamentary participation is key to many of the most important open government reforms, but doing so requires significant political will and an unwavering commitment to engaging in dialogue with civil society.

With these points in mind, you should carefully consider when and how you opt into an OGP process. Is your parliament able and willing to comply with OGP's Co-Creation and Participation Standards, and to cooperate with the Independent Reporting Mechanism? What challenges do you foresee, and how could these be managed successfully?

As you work through these questions, whether alone or with like-minded reformers in your parliament, do not hesitate to reach out to others. The OGP Support Unit can help you navigate these questions, as can the Open Parliament e-Network (OPeN) and other partners - and, of course, your peers in OGP parliaments (see page 45 for contact information). Where possible, you may also want to consider joining a regional or global OGP event to 'see' the partnership in action and take your first steps from there.

SPOTLIGHT: **Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)**

The partnership between government, parliament and civil society is at the heart of OGP's approach. While they each have distinct roles and responsibilities, CSOs play an increasingly important role in our societies and are key to the health of our democracies.

Within OGP, collaboration with civil society can take the following forms:

- CSOs bring new ideas and areas for reform to the table throughout the action plan process, from the initial co-creation phase to the final wording of commitments. In doing so, they broaden the scope of the reforms under consideration and help reach more citizens.*
- The experience and expertise CSOs bring to the table can help clarify what 'ambition' might look like in a specific policy area. Importantly, CSOs can often provide the necessary technical support to make such reforms possible.*
- CSOs have their 'ear to the ground' and can help source inputs from, and share information with, communities beyond the capital. In doing so, they can play a part in making the OGP process more representative and more participatory.*
- CSOs contribute to the implementation of open government reforms by contributing their know-how and by, often literally, doing much of the legwork on the ground. Especially where resources are limited, civil society support can be critical to effective implementation.*

2.4 Building inclusive democracies

Open government is about making government work for all citizens, regardless of their age, gender, race or socio-economic background. In recent years, the open government community has started making a concerted effort to better include different voices in the co-creation of reforms, with a particular focus on women and youth.

Reformers agree: inclusive practices lead to better commitments that respond more closely to the lived realities of citizens, and that are more likely to enjoy the support they require for maximum impact. At the institutional level, open government provides broader access to information, programs and services and reduces opportunities for corruption. At the sociocultural level, an open government addresses gender norms and allows for diverse groups of women and young people to participate in and have access to information and services provided by local government. At the individual level, an open government provides resources needed by women and young people so that they can engage with local decision-makers and institutions.

Parliaments, as representative institutions, have much expertise to share with the open government community, and can play a pivotal role in strengthening the legal framework for the participation of diverse groups. At the same time, parliaments recognise that they can and should take further steps to open their own doors, and to make their institution and its members more representative of the people they serve.

SPOTLIGHT: Morocco

Morocco's first action plan included a commitment aimed at increasing opportunities for citizens to visit the legislature, with a particular effort to be made for improved engagement of young people.

In implementing this commitment, the House of Representatives created a range of educational materials (comics, booklets and leaflets), redesigned the website, and established a Public Relations Unit. A further engagement to create a "Mobile Parliament" was taken, allowing MPs to travel to rural areas for in-person engagement, is under consideration.

=> WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

Gender equality matters for both the legitimacy and the effectiveness of the Open Government Partnership (OGP). To support reformers as they co-create and implement commitments, OGP provides a **Toolkit for More Gender-Responsive Action Plans**. The use of the tools can be facilitated by an OGP government or civil society stakeholder, a third-party facilitator, or a resource person with gender expertise. For further information on OGP's work on gender and inclusion, please **visit the OGP gender pages**.

A growing number of OGP members are including young people in commitments, both as co-creators and as beneficiaries of open government reforms. To learn more about good practices, and for further details on possible reforms, please **consult the 2022 OGP Youth Toolkit**.



3. The roles of parliament in OGP

3.1 The evidence: parliamentary action and impact across OGP

Parliaments are uniquely placed to initiate and lead on ambitious open government reforms. OGP's 2021 [*Parliamentary Engagement in OGP: Learning from the Evidence*](#), a deep dive into 10 years of parliamentary participation in OGP, came to the following core conclusions:

- 1. Parliaments are increasingly acting as implementers of reform by taking legislative action in support of open government reforms.** *Since 2011, parliaments have supported the implementation of OGP commitments and open government reforms. This important trend can be accelerated with improved guidance on the engagement of parliaments in the national OGP process for all stakeholders – parliaments, governments, and civil society.*
- 2. Despite their evident importance, OGP commitments related to oversight and accountability functions lag behind.** *Effective parliamentary oversight of the executive branch is key to the integrity of democratic systems and, by extension, to the open government agenda. However, parliamentary oversight, in OGP, is an area for growth. Moving forward, more commitments could address this.*

- 3. More ambition and credible implementation would further strengthen efforts to open up parliaments.** *A growing number of open parliament champions are working with civil society advocates to make legislative institutions more transparent, accountable, and inclusive. Stronger co-creation and improved implementation would deepen the impact of these commitments.*

Underlining the indispensable support parliaments have provided to date, and recognising their pivotal role in delivering open government reforms, OGP strongly encourages their engagement with the OGP process. **Concretely, OGP calls on parliaments, and members of parliament, to consider four key roles: 1) taking legislative action; 2) ensuring parliamentary oversight; 3) opening up parliamentary processes; 4) and creating space for dialogue.**

3.2 How Members of Parliament can support OGP reforms

WHAT YOU CAN DO || Supporting OGP reforms through parliamentary action

- 1. Take legislative action: You can champion open government values by introducing, reviewing and ratifying legislation relevant to open government or approving budgets for open government reform.**

Members of parliament can draw on their legislative powers to ensure that open government reforms are enshrined in law, making them more secure, more sustainable and more impactful. Several parliaments have strengthened their legal frameworks on access to information as part of their OGP work, or have taken decisive action on the regulation of extractive industries. MPs are uniquely positioned to

table these reforms, secure cross-party support, and help adjust executive and legislative calendars to ensure timely implementation of commitments.

SPOTLIGHT : Morocco

In 2018, the Moroccan House of Representatives adopted framework legislation on access to information (Law No 31.13). This ensured that Morocco met the OGP eligibility criteria, paving the way for its formal membership later that year.

SPOTLIGHT : Nigeria

In Nigeria, domestic OGP stakeholders working on beneficial ownership transparency recognized that legislative action was needed to ensure the collection and publication of beneficial ownership information. Established lines of communication between the Multi-Stakeholder Forum and key champions in parliament enabled a good flow of information for all involved, from the role of the executive to the expectations of civil society and the parliamentary calendar. The beneficial ownership commitment was successfully implemented with the support of parliament, which passed critical legal provisions.

Extract from OGP's Parliamentary Engagement in National OGP Processes : Menu of Options, 2022

2. Ensure parliamentary oversight: Hold governments accountable for open government reforms and opening up their own oversight processes to public scrutiny.

Concretely, members of parliament can help ensure that parliament takes note of OGP activities and helps provide the necessary information (by commissioning reports or

asking parliamentary questions, for example); monitors implementation of adopted commitments by the relevant ministries; helps strengthen the existing oversight mechanisms, both within its own institution and beyond (for example by making public parliamentary inquiry reports, or by empowering and making more systematic use of audit institutions); and helps secure the required budgetary support for reforms, among others.

SPOTLIGHT : Ghana

=> *Ghana's 2023-2021 action plan notes that parliamentary oversight of OGP activities has been a missing element in the parliament's OGP engagement. It cites that Ghana's constitutional mandates place parliament in a strategic position to support open government efforts in the country and outlines the potential impact of legislative oversight (public hearings are mentioned as a possible tool) and budgeting support to facilitate effective implementation.*

Extract from OGP's Parliamentary Engagement in National OGP Processes : Menu of Options, 2022

3. Open up parliamentary processes: Adopt open government principles – transparency, accountability, participation and inclusion – in the parliamentary institution and processes.

Many parliaments find such 'open parliament' commitments both easier to co-create, as they do not typically require consultation with the executive and can be handled 'in house', and challenging to implement, as parliamentary procedure and practice do not lend themselves to 'quick fixes'. Here too, working with parliamentary monitoring organizations can help build a step-by-step approach, allowing you to strengthen your citizen engagement over time.

SPOTLIGHT: Estonia & Argentina

Estonia's parliament will further improve institutional transparency by publishing information on plenary hearings and committee meetings in machine-readable format. In Argentina, asset declaration legislation resulted in opening up information on asset disclosures of MPs.

Extract from OGP's Parliamentary Engagement in National OGP Processes : Menu of Options, 2022

4. Create space for dialogue: Foster cross-party dialogue and support needed to advance and institutionalize open government reforms.

Parliaments have significant convening power, and members of parliament have extensive prerogatives to speak and be heard. As such, they are well positioned to foster dialogue on political reforms, both within their institution and across their borders. Parliaments have made strategic use of the opportunities the OGP platform offers to set and advance the open government agenda, and to bring new and much-needed voices into the open government space.

SPOTLIGHT: Morocco

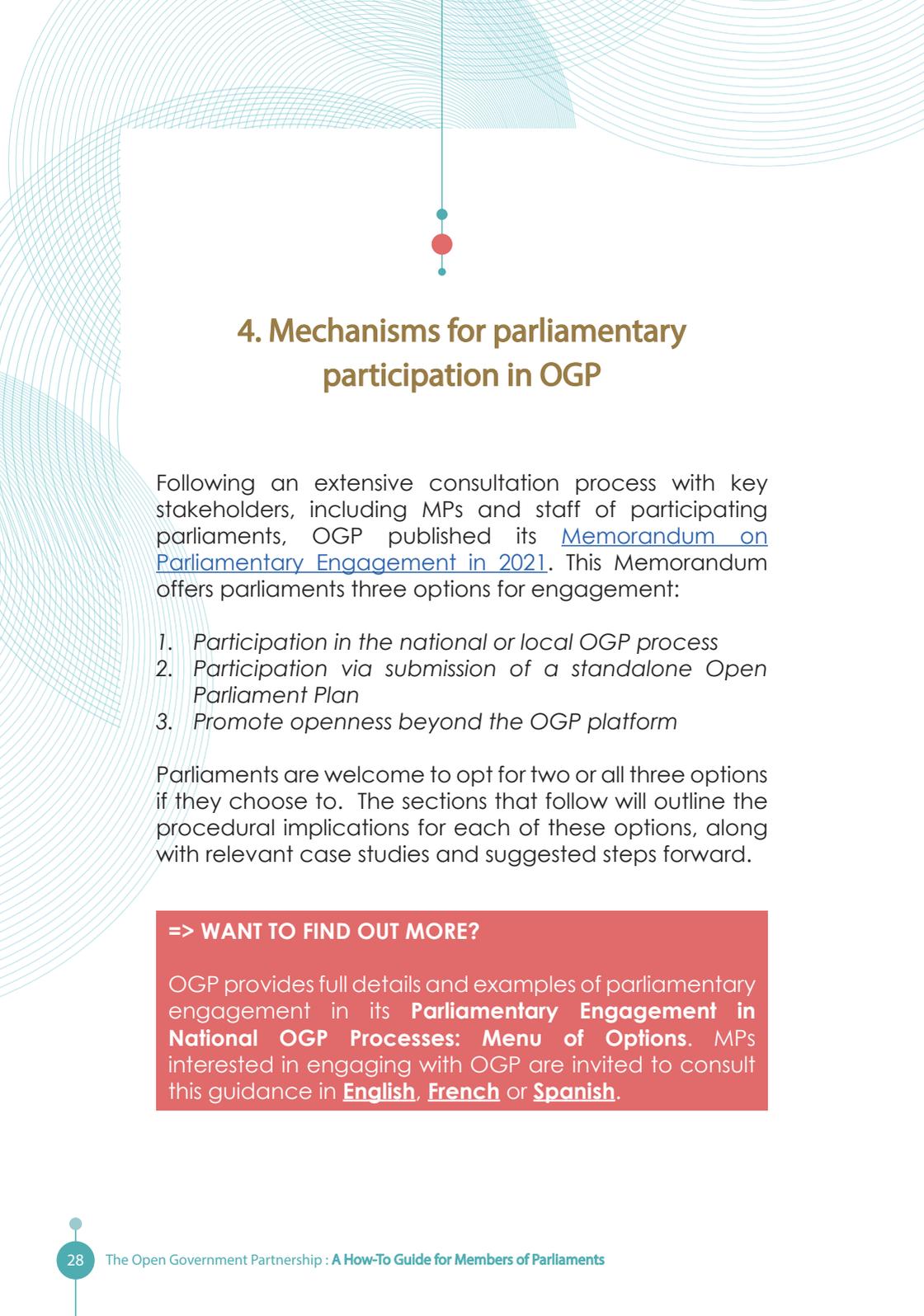
In November 2022, the House of Representatives hosted a regional meeting for the open parliamentary community at the occasion of the Africa and the Middle-East OGP Regional Meeting. The participation of high-level parliamentary actors from across the region provides important opportunities for formal and informal exchanges, allowing parliaments to reflect on, and advance, their open government and open parliament actions.

SPOTLIGHT: Parliamentary Network Africa (PNAfrica)

Parliamentary Network Africa (PNAfrica) is a convener and connector of parliamentary monitoring organizations and journalists with the aim of promoting Open Parliaments across Africa. Based in Accra, PNAfrica is a non-profit and non-partisan organization with a regional focus. Since 2015, PNAfrica has emerged as a leading open parliament voice in the region through partnered projects, training, publications, events and speaking engagements.

In addition to working with parliamentary actors (CSOs, journalists, MPs, business associations and so on) from almost all countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, PNAfrica has directly supported the participation of parliaments in several OGP action plan cycles.

For more information on PNAfrica, please [visit their website](#) or find them on twitter at @PNAfricawatch. You can reach the team at info@parliamentafrica.com.



4. Mechanisms for parliamentary participation in OGP

Following an extensive consultation process with key stakeholders, including MPs and staff of participating parliaments, OGP published its [Memorandum on Parliamentary Engagement in 2021](#). This Memorandum offers parliaments three options for engagement:

1. *Participation in the national or local OGP process*
2. *Participation via submission of a standalone Open Parliament Plan*
3. *Promote openness beyond the OGP platform*

Parliaments are welcome to opt for two or all three options if they choose to. The sections that follow will outline the procedural implications for each of these options, along with relevant case studies and suggested steps forward.

=> WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

OGP provides full details and examples of parliamentary engagement in its **Parliamentary Engagement in National OGP Processes: Menu of Options**. MPs interested in engaging with OGP are invited to consult this guidance in **English**, **French** or **Spanish**.

4.1 Participation in the national OGP process

4.1.1 Rationale

Participation in the national OGP process is the recommended approach, and the preferred option for the majority of parliaments involved in OGP. Experience shows that commitments in national action plans benefit from legislative support, and that the integration of open parliament commitments in these plans leads to better results. In other words: **participation in the national OGP process is the most effective route for parliament to help deliver ambitious, sustainable open government reforms.**

Concretely, this means that a representative from parliament - a Member, or a member of the administration - joins, or keeps in close contact with, the Multi-Stakeholder Forum that coordinates OGP activities. How that takes form in practice is for each parliament to decide, but it is recommended to align with, or at least inform, the Government Point of Contact of parliament's intention to participate in OGP. Doing so creates lines of communication and collaboration that allow parliamentary engagement with the process, while preserving the rights and privileges of parliament as an independent institution.

SPOTLIGHT: Sierra Leone

In Sierra Leone, the Parliamentary Working Group on Open Government, chaired by Hon. Quintin Saliah Konneh, was set up to facilitate parliamentary engagement with OGP. That engagement was actively sought by both the executive and parliament in Sierra Leone's 2021-2019 action plan: "The absence of parliament in Sierra Leone's earlier action plans made it very challenging for many of the OGP commitments to be fully implemented. The Parliamentary Commitment on OGP in this third National Action Plan has paved the way for parliament to provide annual reports on their operations to demonstrate leadership in accountability and transparency." Sierra Leone's resulting commitment on including more women and vulnerable groups in parliamentary business has been flagged as a promising "commitment to watch."

Extract from OGP's Parliamentary Engagement in National OGP Processes : Menu of Options, 2022

WHAT YOU CAN DO || Parliaments have much to gain from participation in the national OGP process. Consider the following ways in which involvement in OGP can strengthen your position and work as a member of parliament:

- First and foremost, OGP provides you with **a unique opportunity to advance open government reforms**. It is increasingly difficult for individual MPs to weigh on the legislative agenda of their institution, or even their political party or group. By joining forces with like-minded reformers in government, civil society and beyond, you can help deliver meaningful and lasting change across these policy areas.

- .. Second, the national OGP process provides MPs with an opportunity to **engage in meaningful dialogue with civil society and citizens**. From identifying areas of interest to specifying the required reforms and adopting the final commitments, you will have opportunities to engage directly with committed citizens who share a deep concern for open government principles.
- .. Third, direct involvement in the action plan enables **close collaboration with relevant reformers in government**. It is often challenging for members of parliament to build constructive relationships with government officials. Participation in OGP can open new lines of communication and strengthen existing ones, providing MPs with opportunities for alliances and partnerships in shared areas of interest.
- .. Fourth, participation in OGP offers parliaments, and individual MPs, an opportunity to **participate in law-making on critical trends and challenges in politics**. This is especially interesting for countries where parliament plays a limited role in the early stages of the legislative process. By engaging in discussions on (elements of) the proposals the government is considering, MPs can help shape new or revised legislation before it reaches parliament.
- .. Finally, the OGP process provides MPs with a high profile platform to **demonstrate their commitment to the core values underlying democracy: transparency, participation, accountability and inclusion**. The launch of the co-creation process, the adoption of the action plan, and the publication of reports by OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism all place a public spotlight on the commitment of parliament, and individual MPs, as they help lead the process.

4.1.2 Participation in the national OGP process: in practice

OGP has outlined a sub-set of approaches that parliaments may wish to consider as they set out to participate in the OGP process. These approaches have proven to work for parliaments already participating in OGP, and have shown to deliver results. It is important to stress, however, that parliaments are under no obligation to adopt any or all of these, and that this is not an exhaustive list:

- .. *Parliamentary representatives (members, staff or both) can participate in the action plan consultations as well as other co-creation and implementation activities. Ideally, the scope of their participation includes consideration of commitments parliament can make, but also ways in which parliament can support the commitments made by the executive branch.*
- .. *Parliamentary representatives can participate in the national or local multistakeholder fora – or similar spaces – to ensure a consistent dialogue with civil society. Where formal MSF representation is not possible, other coordination mechanisms can be explored.*
- .. *Where broader collaboration is feasible, parliaments can consider engaging relevant parliamentary committees and staff members in thematic working groups and discussions; organizing briefings for relevant parliamentary groups during action plan development; and organizing implementation and IRM launches to enable parliamentary oversight, among others.*
- .. *Parliaments can support commitment design and implementation by providing a 'legislative scan'. This scan would encourage dialogue and consensus-building amongst those proposing and adopting commitments by prompting them to consider the role the parliament might need to play, whether by advancing supporting legislation, codifying reforms, or allocating resources for implementation.*

- .. *Parliaments can appoint parliamentary liaisons for ease of communication and coordination with the executive branch, other OGP stakeholders, and the Support Unit. This allows for efficient information exchange on action plan development and implementation, events, and peer exchange opportunities.*
- .. *Parliaments can advance open government reforms by monitoring the implementation of OGP commitments, allocating budgets, or obtaining critical information via parliamentary questions and reports.*

For full details on the conditions for engagement, please consult [the OGP Memorandum on Parliamentary Engagement](#).

SPOTLIGHT: Kenya

In Kenya, designated focal points for OGP in the parliament are key to the smooth coordination between government and parliament on OGP. Both the House of Representatives and the Senate have a formal OGP Focal Point among their members of staff. Consistent high-level engagement has resulted in the co-creation of open parliament commitments and coordination on broader action plan reforms.

Extract from OGP's Parliamentary Engagement in National OGP Processes : Menu of Options, 2022

4.2 Participation via submission of a Stand-alone Open Parliament Plan

4.2.1 Rationale

OGP offers parliaments the option to submit a stand-alone Open Parliament Plan, either alongside or separate from parliament's participation in the national action plan. Where this option is chosen, parliament is responsible for the coordination of the open parliament plan, and is

encouraged to comply with the Participation and Co-Creation Standards in doing so (see page 15).

Evidence shows that open parliament plans are not as effective in delivering open parliament results: on the whole, open parliament commitments that are integrated in national action plans tend to perform better. However, **stand-alone open parliament plans can prove valuable, in particular in countries where direct participation by parliament in the national action plan is not (yet) politically or practically possible.** Moreover, parliaments may wish to pursue a stand-alone Open Parliament Plan to deepen certain parliamentary commitments, should the space for doing so be limited in the national action plan.

It is strongly recommended that, when opting for a stand-alone open parliament plan, parliament keeps in close contact with the Government Point of Contact for OGP. This allows for synergies to emerge across the national and parliamentary plans, for parliamentary support to be invited where needed, and for the future integration of the open parliament plan into the national action plan to be considered when appropriate.

4.2.2 Approaches for Stand-alone Open Parliament Plans

The Open Parliament Plans delivered within the OGP framework to date suggest a range of possible approaches for consideration by parliament, including (but not limited to) the following:

- ** Parliaments can adapt existing mechanisms and spaces for dialogue for their OGP co-creation process, especially if they have established practices in place. However, parliaments should ensure that the minimum criteria for co-creation are met.*
- ** Parliaments can establish mechanisms for communication and coordination with their*

counterparts in the executive-led process. This will allow them to consider inputs emerging from public consultations relevant to parliament, to explore how the open parliament process and actors can support the executive-led plan, and to share information with civil society actors that are likely to have interest in both processes.

- Parliament can seek high-level political support for the agenda and explore cross-party collaboration through existing committees or special working groups.

For full details on the conditions for engagement, please consult the OGP Memorandum on Parliamentary Engagement and the [Guidance for Stand-alone Open Parliament Plans](#).

SPOTLIGHT: Georgia

In Georgia, the parliament has championed OGP through the co-creation of a parliament chapter in the country's 2019-2018 OGP action plan. To strengthen mutual awareness and understanding between the two branches, representatives from parliament will be invited to observe all meetings of the government's OGP Council going forward. Such coordination, while relatively light touch, should help align calendars and opportunities, in particular in areas that require legislative reform.

Extract from OGP's Parliamentary Engagement in National OGP Processes : Menu of Options, 2022

5. OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism

OGP members are supported in their work by the Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM), which plays a pivotal role in tracking progress and facilitating learning. Its staff and researchers explore a range of questions pertaining to both the *content* of the action plan (the commitments' potential for results, the level of completion and early results) and the *process* of the action plan (the quality of the co-creation process, the collaboration between relevant OGP stakeholders, the potential or need for bringing in additional actors and so on). In doing so, the IRM is an invaluable tool for reformers who want to co-create and deliver ambitious reforms.

=> WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

The IRM is OGP's accountability arm and the main means of tracking progress in participating countries. The IRM provides independent, evidence-based, and objective reporting to hold OGP members accountable and support their open government efforts. This is done through reports and timely recommendations during key moments in the action plan cycle:

HOW THE IRM & OGP PROCESSES FIT TOGETHER



To learn more about how OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism works, and to consult the reports it produces, please visit the IRM platform [here](#).

The IRM offers an opportunity for OGP stakeholders to take center stage by demonstrating how they are advancing open government reforms, and by sharing their experience and expertise with others through regional and global peer exchanges. Equally, the IRM provides OGP stakeholders with an opportunity to illustrate and explain the steps that were taken (or, as may be the case, not taken), so that course corrections can be implemented as early as possible. **For parliaments, IRM findings are particularly interesting with regard to their oversight role:** for example, where implementation of commitments is not progressing as planned, or where civil society is not given sufficient opportunity to voice its needs or concerns.

The notion of an independent mechanism 'reporting' on the work being done may sit uneasily with some legislators. It is important to reiterate that OGP remains a voluntary initiative: parliaments are free to decide whether to engage in the partnership, and in what capacity. Should OGP's Standards and IRM requirements prove problematic, Parliament may choose to engage solely as an observer, for example by taking note of the action plan and relevant reports, or by inviting OGP stakeholders to share updates on reforms of interest. Parliaments that choose to actively participate in the OGP process are encouraged to welcome the IRM's insights and reports for what they are: opportunities for open government reformers to reflect, to learn, and to move forward together.

6. Promoting openness beyond the OGP action plan

Because the OGP action plan offers a tried and tested model for achieving results, OGP and its partners invite and encourage direct parliamentary participation in its action plans. However, many parliaments and MPs find themselves outside of the official OGP framework. In Africa, OGP counts 15 countries and 23 local governments among its members.

=> WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

The following countries and local governments in Africa and the Middle East are members of OGP:

National members: Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Jordan, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Tunisia.

Local members: Abuja, Nigeria; Anloga District, Ghana; Béni Mellal-Khénifra, Morocco; Carthage, Tunisia; El Kef, Tunisia; Elgeyo Marakwet, Kenya; Greater Karak, Jordan; Greater Salt, Jordan; Kaduna State, Nigeria; Ketu South, Ghana; Kigoma-Ujiji, Tanzania; Makhanda, South Africa; Makeni, Kenya; Nairobi, Kenya; Nandi, Kenya; Plateau, Nigeria; Regueb, Tunisia; Sekondi-Takoradi, Ghana; Shama, Ghana; Tangier - Tétouan - Al Hoceima, Morocco; Tarkwa-Nusauem, Ghana; Tétouan (Municipality), Morocco; and Wassa Amenfi East, Ghana.

For more information on what each of these OGP members is currently working on, please visit the member pages [here](#).

Fortunately, OGP membership is not a requirement for action: every Parliament, and every MP, can help advance open government reforms. **If your parliament is not (yet) able to formally participate in OGP, there are still ways for you to help set the agenda, co-create reforms, and deliver results.** The final section of this publication illustrates what steps you can take.

6.1 The Open Parliament e-Network (OPeN)

The Open Parliament e-Network (OPeN) is a consortium of organizations that promote and support parliamentary institutions, and their MPs and staff, as they work towards open government and open parliament reforms. The OPeN members are:

- [Directorio Legislativo](#)
- [National Democratic Institute](#)
- [OSCE-ODIHR](#)
- [ParlAmericas](#)
- [Transparencia Legislativa](#)
- [Westminster Foundation for Democracy](#)

The OPeN members work across OGP countries and local members and have collectively built a wealth of expertise, in particular on - but not limited to - open parliament reforms. OPeN regularly organizes exchanges, learning opportunities and network meetings at national, regional and global level and actively includes parliaments from non-OGP member countries and locals in its activities.

To learn more about OPeN, please [visit the OPeN website](#).

SPOTLIGHT: Directorio Legislativo

Directorio Legislativo works to strengthen Latin American democracies by promoting institutional accountability and access to public information in order to foster open, responsible governance. A parliamentary monitoring organization, Directorio Legislativo's core areas of focus are citizen participation, anti-corruption, open parliament and political analysis.

Directorio Legislativo has been at the core of OGP's work on open parliaments from the very beginning, identifying and supporting open parliament champions across the Americas and beyond. Its Global Executive Director, Maria Baron, served as the OGP Co-Chair from 2020 - 2021, alongside the Government of Korea.

To learn more about Directorio Legislativo's work, please [visit their website](#) or get in touch with the team in Buenos Aires (+54 11 5218 - 4647) or Washington D.C. (+1 (786) 828-0675).

6.2 Open Parliament Plans outside of OGP

Parliaments can choose to co-create and implement Open Parliament Plans outside of OGP. While they will not have access to the OGP Support Unit and IRM, OGP partners and stakeholders are well placed to inform and advise where needed (see section on OPeN, and the remainder of this section for examples).

SPOTLIGHT: Open Parliament Plans outside of OGP

The parliaments of Kosovo, Sri Lanka and others have developed open parliament plans outside of the OGP platform. They have typically done so with the support of the OPeN partners, including NDI, and have made use of peer exchanges and relevant OGP events where possible.

6.3 Parliamentary diplomacy: the global OGP community

OGP and its partners strongly believe in the value of peer exchanges. The open government community has been built from the ground up: by committed reformers at local and national level who pilot reforms and share what they have learned along the way; by government officials and parliamentary actors who are open to learning from others; and by those in power who are willing to champion promising ideas and initiatives when they come their way. Peer exchanges have been, and will continue to be, at the heart of much of the progress made.

At the same time, parliamentary diplomacy has become increasingly important, because dialogue among parliaments can help identify shared interests, ease tension, and strengthen opportunities for collaboration. Ideally, parliaments engage in such activities with the support of their country's diplomatic services, so that they are properly briefed and - where possible - aligned with their government counterparts.

What sets parliamentary diplomacy apart is that members of parliament are not diplomats: their role as independent representatives affords them a level of freedom in their engagement with foreign peers that government officials do not enjoy. For that reason, whether through bilateral engagements, parliamentary friendship groups, regional assemblies or global convenings, parliamentary diplomacy is now recognised as a valuable and creative tool in an increasingly complex political landscape.

OGP offers avenues for parliamentary diplomacy through its convening power, and the Support Unit typically reserves space for bilateral meetings between parliaments at OGP events. To keep informed of OGP convening opportunities, both digital and in person, please sign up for the relevant OGP channels ([see page website](#)) and get in touch with OPeN (see point 6.3).

SPOTLIGHT: *Peer Exchanges on Open Parliament*

In June 2022, NDI hosted an international knowledge exchange in Copenhagen to support Open Parliament planning and implementation with legislatures and civil society representatives. Through bilateral dialogue and exchanges with politicians and activists from Sweden, Latvia, Estonia and Denmark, participants identified a number of salient lessons for building resilient democracies. Details on the event are available [here](#).

WHAT YOU CAN DO || Promoting open government reforms beyond the OGP action plan

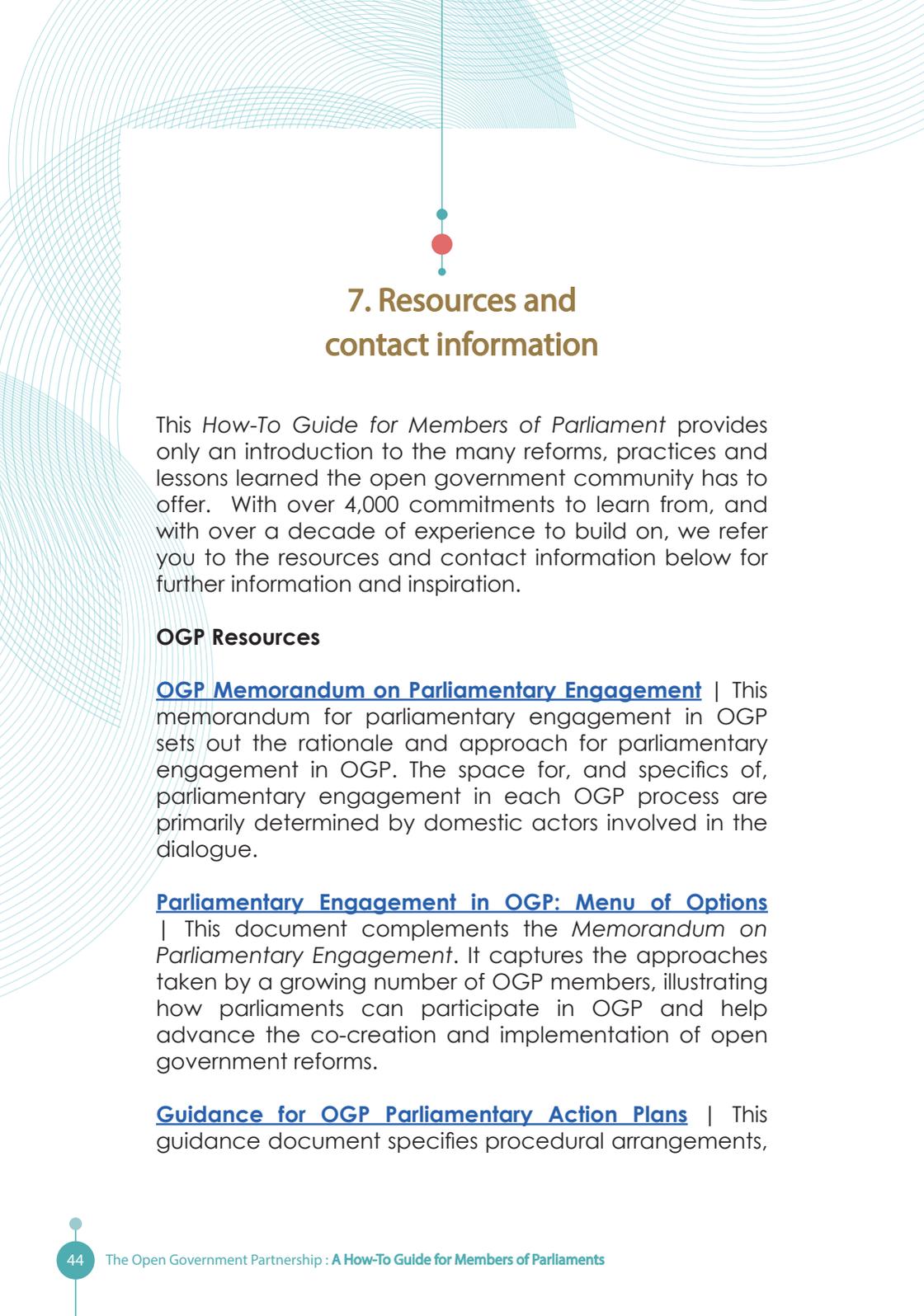
The open government community provides MPs with a range of options for parliamentary engagement, regardless of available institutional or political resources. These steps can be taken alongside, or in preparation of, your parliament's formal participation in OGP:

- Reach out to civil society organizations working on issues of relevance to your parliament. Find out what they look to parliament for, and explore how you can establish a shared agenda for reform(s). Is there scope to work towards collective ambitions, possibly - though not necessarily - in an Open Parliament Plan? How might you, and your parliament, adopt the open parliament principles in your day to day work?
- Invite the relevant OGP partners to provide parliament - at committee or working group level, as you see fit - with an introduction to open parliament and OGP. Such an introduction can help identify entry points for engagement, and can lead to further activities (a peer exchange with a partner well versed in OGP, for

example, or a consultation with civil society on possible areas of reform).

- Participate in a digital or in-person OGP gathering. Whether at national, regional or global level, attending OGP events will help you understand how the partnership works in practice, what emerging issues you could work on, and whom you might look to for further information and support.

Note that these are suggestions only, and that this is of course not an exhaustive list: your parliament's institutional and political infrastructure may present additional or different opportunities for action.



7. Resources and contact information

This *How-To Guide for Members of Parliament* provides only an introduction to the many reforms, practices and lessons learned the open government community has to offer. With over 4,000 commitments to learn from, and with over a decade of experience to build on, we refer you to the resources and contact information below for further information and inspiration.

OGP Resources

[OGP Memorandum on Parliamentary Engagement](#) | This memorandum for parliamentary engagement in OGP sets out the rationale and approach for parliamentary engagement in OGP. The space for, and specifics of, parliamentary engagement in each OGP process are primarily determined by domestic actors involved in the dialogue.

[Parliamentary Engagement in OGP: Menu of Options](#) | This document complements the *Memorandum on Parliamentary Engagement*. It captures the approaches taken by a growing number of OGP members, illustrating how parliaments can participate in OGP and help advance the co-creation and implementation of open government reforms.

[Guidance for OGP Parliamentary Action Plans](#) | This guidance document specifies procedural arrangements,

minimum requirements, guidance, and templates for the co-creation and implementation of OGP parliamentary action plans, where these are not co-created as part of a coordinated national action plan process. It is intended for national OGP members only.

[Parliamentary Engagement in OGP Local: Menu of Options](#)

| This Menu of Options lays out how parliaments can engage in the OGP Local action plans, from including a single commitment to full co-creation.

[Parliamentary Engagement in OGP: Learning from the Evidence](#)

| This paper draws on data from the Open Government Partnership (OGP) commitments database, reports from the Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM), findings from the OGP Support Unit, and insights collected through a range of formal and informal conversations with OGP stakeholders since 2011. Its key conclusions informed the Memorandum on Parliamentary Engagement in OGP.

[OGP Global Report: Democracy Beyond the Ballot Box](#)

| This report provides a thorough and honest review of progress made by OGP member countries in the first eight years of the partnership (2011 - 2019). In determining its findings, the report examines a vast amount of the world's governance data, across multiple dimensions of democracy and openness.

Building resilient democracies

*The Open Government Partnership (OGP) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) produced a series of three policy briefs identifying concrete openness and oversight measures that help build resilience against covert, foreign-sponsored influences. **Each brief highlights the critical role parliaments can play, in particular with regard to oversight.** The table below illustrates what this might look like:*

POLICY BRIEF

OGP COMMITMENT

Cover foreign political finance brief: Covert foreign political finance is often secretly channeled to parties and candidates through proxies to interfere in political and electoral processes. This brief was developed in partnership with Transparency International.

Foreign opaque debt brief: Global sovereign debt is at a -50 year record high. Opaque lending arrangements often use national wealth and public goods as collateral, creating preferential treatment for authoritarian governments.

Foreign-Sponsored Information Manipulation brief: Foreign-sponsored information manipulation has become a feature of political life around the world and a threat multiplier in other domains.

Romania has committed to publish in an open format the information provided by political parties on their sources of financing and expenditures, as provisioned by law.

Parliament of Georgia has leveraged the OGP process by including debt-related commitments, for the first time, within its 2022-2021 Open Parliament Plan:

- ** Strengthen the capacity of parliament regarding public debt through awareness raising and effective use of oversight mechanisms;
- ** Increase access to public debt related information and ensure transparency.

Croatia has committed to ensuring greater transparency and independence of the media industry in its third OGP action plan. Milestones for the commitment include:

- ** drafting legislation to increase media transparency
- ** establishing a beneficial ownership register for the media industry
- ** increasing public trust in the media and improving media literacy.

Contact details

If you are currently involved in an OGP process, or would like to consider getting involved, please do not hesitate to contact the following team members for information on next steps:

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