

OPEN PARLIAMENT CONVERSATIONS IN AFRICA

*An Assessment of the
Political Will to Advance
Open Parliament in
Africa*



DIRECTORIO
LEGISLATIVO

STRENGTHENING
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IN LATIN AMERICA

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Acknowledgements

This document is the outcome of a process that sought to engage stakeholders – parliamentary monitoring organizations (PMOs), staff and members of parliament (MPs), public sector workers and civil society activists – from Ghana, Kenya and Uganda to assess the level of implementation of Open Parliament commitments in these countries and to make recommendations on enhancing implementation through effective co-creation.

The project was made possible through collaboration between Parliamentary Network Africa (PNAfrica) and Directorio Legislativo (both working across Africa and Latin America respectively) and under the strategic direction and leadership of the Executive Director of PNAfrica, Sammy Obeng and the Global Executive Director of Directorio Legislativo/2020-2021 OGP Global Steering Committee Co-Chair, María Baron. This initiative was coordinated by Benjamin Opoku Aryeh, Senior Program Officer at PNAfrica with immense support from Michelle Volpin and Juan Francisco Krahl, Coordinators of the Citizens and Government Institutions Program at Directorio Legislativo. Many thanks to the support of the staff from both partner organisations during the implementation of this initiative.

We are grateful for the cooperation and the contributions from partners within the selected countries – Mzalendo Trust, Kenya, Parliament Watch, Uganda – and other stakeholders who participated in the process including Members of Parliament (MPs), parliamentary staff, public sector officials and local civil society activists.

About the Project

Since July 2020, Directorio Legislativo and Parliamentary Network Africa have been working closely to promote open parliament across Africa at a time when democracy is facing many challenges on the continent and democratic institutions are faltering. Despite the outbreak of COVID-19, the two parliamentary monitoring organizations (PMOs) have leveraged on technology and other innovative means to advance open parliament on the continent.

The Open Parliament Conversations in Africa was initiated as part of efforts to assess the political will to advance parliamentary openness in Africa. The initiative began with a scoping exercise to identify countries in the region that were, at the time, going through the process of co-creating Action Plans as part of their Open Government Partnership (OGP) memberships or those that have the potential of implementing initiatives that seek to enhance parliamentary openness within their countries.

Six countries – South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda and Sierra Leone – were selected to be part of the regional conversations, although only three of them (Kenya, Ghana and Uganda) were part of the first phase of the project, which is the focus of this document. In January 2021, the two partners began engaging MPs, parliamentary staff, public sector officials and CSO representatives in a series of virtual conversations to adequately understand how open parliament commitments are being implemented and what kind of support may be provided to overcome challenges that prevent them from successfully achieving transparent, accountable, inclusive and active citizens participation in the national parliaments.

This document, therefore, captures the processes and outcomes of these conversations and puts forward recommendations on the best practices and policies that African countries can adopt to enhance implementation of open parliament commitments in the region.

About Partners

Directorio Legislativo is an independent, non-profit organization working to strengthen democracy and make law- and policy-making in Latin America more transparent, representative and participatory. We achieve this by promoting access to public information and fostering dialogue and consensus-building between different actors: public, private, academy and civil society. We are headquartered in Buenos Aires, Argentina and Washington D.C., United States.

I am more than grateful and honoured to be a part of this process and of this partnership with PNAfrica, which has allowed us to shed light on the challenges that Open Parliament still faces in the region but, most importantly, it has also been an incredible opportunity to share and showcase the accomplishments that these Legislative Branches have achieved thus far. As a longtime advocate for the openness of Parliaments all over the world, I am confident that these initial conversations will become the solid foundation upon which we will build a strong and lasting south-south partnership.

- María Baron, Global Executive Director of Directorio Legislativo/2020-2021 OGP Global Steering Committee Co-Chair



Parliamentary Network Africa (PNAfrica) is a civil society parliamentary monitoring organization (PMO) promoting Open Parliaments across Africa. We achieve this by strengthening parliamentary institutions, convening networks of PMOs on the Continent, providing media support and promoting access to parliamentary information, in a bid to ensure that African Legislatures are transparent, accountable, inclusive and promote citizens participation in their work. We are headquartered in Accra, Ghana.

Achieving this important milestone of coordinating Open Parliament conversations in multiple countries during a period of global pandemic shows how collaborative efforts can lead to greater things irrespective of the obstacles. We cannot thank our friends at Directorio Legislativo, Mzalendo Trust and Parliament Watch Uganda enough for working with us every step of the way to document this incredible journey. There is a wave of change in Africa on how PMOs are mobilising to work with National Parliaments to promote openness. We are proud to be part of this movement, and we hope that the lessons from this report will inspire PMOs and Parliaments across Africa to work towards a Continent where all legislatures are transparent, accountable, inclusive and promotes citizens participation.

- Sammy Obeng, Executive Director of Parliamentary Network Africa



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I. Executive Summary

The Open Parliament Conversations in Africa is an initiative that was undertaken by Parliamentary Network Africa (PNAfrica) and Directorio Legislativo (DL) to assess the political will to advance Open Parliament in Africa and to enhance effective delivery of sustainable open parliament reforms by pursuing greater legislative support in selected countries (Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Sierra Leone and Uganda) in Africa. These conversations with stakeholders within the open parliament space in Africa are part of the efforts to strengthen and showcase the work that government and CSOs are already doing both locally and globally. They are also meant to identify the challenges and opportunities to enhance implementation of OGP plans and to ensure that Open Parliament gains momentum and becomes impactful on the continent. Over the years, Parliaments have taken several legislative actions in support of OGP commitments and these actions must be augmented and sustained to achieve a true open parliament culture in Africa.

Between January and May 2021, a series of virtual engagements were held with stakeholders from three countries in Africa: Kenya (14 April), Uganda (22 April) and Ghana (20 May). These conversations enabled PNAfrica and Directorio Legislativo to discuss ways of enhancing effective implementation of open parliament commitments for National Parliaments as part of the OGP National Action Plan (NAP) and to secure the commitment and support of stakeholders to ensure effective implementation of the principles of open parliament.

During each convening, the project team, together with MPs, Open Parliament champions, parliamentary staff, and government implementing agencies, discussed the actions being taken towards promoting parliamentary openness in each country. In Kenya, they had just finalized their work on the fourth OGP NAP for 2020-2022. The National Assembly had put in place several mechanisms to promote transparency and CSOs had had a very critical role in ensuring that the public understood the work of Parliament to be able to actively participate in the process. Mzalendo Trust led the efforts made by CSOs to develop a number of digital tools that enabled public participation in the legislative process.

Uganda is not currently a member of OGP; yet, the Parliament of Uganda has proactively undertaken several measures to promote OGP principles. They have implemented initiatives to ensure that youth, women and other minority groups are represented in the Legislative branch, they have embarked on a

parliamentary outreach strategy to interact with citizens and receive their feedback, and they have maintained strong partnerships with parliamentary monitoring organisations (PMOs) to enhance parliamentary openness and increase citizen participation in the legislative process.

In the case of Ghana, a decade after joining OGP, it has implemented three NAPs and is currently implementing its fourth. The Parliament of Ghana, however, has yet to develop and implement an Open Parliament Action Plan after they received support from the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) in 2020 to inaugurate an Open Parliament Task Team to spearhead its development and adoption. Stakeholders called for the strengthening of the Open Parliament Task Team to materialize Open Parliament Action Plan.

Stakeholders from the three countries proposed several actions and initiatives that must be adopted by Parliaments to ensure transparency, accountability and citizen participation in the legislative process. Some of them include reaching out to the public and encouraging participation using digital technology, developing Open Parliament Action Plans to promote parliamentary openness, and maintaining stronger partnerships with PMOs in the co-creation process of the OGP NAP and open parliament reforms.



II.

KENYA

1. Introduction

Kenya has been a member of the OGP since 2011 and has recently concluded the development of the fourth National Action Plan for the period 2020-2022.

The virtual conversation was held on Wednesday, April 14, 2021 between stakeholders within the Open Parliament space in Kenya. The meeting was attended by senators, parliamentary staff and civil society actors who discussed the implementation of Open Parliament to enable partners to understand the nature and commitments of the country towards an Open Parliament Action Plan and to propose effective ways of ensuring delivery of Open Parliament commitments within the National Assembly of Kenya. The meeting secured the commitment of senators and parliamentary staff in charge of monitoring the implementation of Open Parliament on what they would do to promote open parliament.

2. What is Happening?

The Kenyan OGP process and Open Parliaments process: the civil society perspective

- Mzalendo, which is a major parliamentary monitoring organisation (PMO), has been involved in the OGP process since Kenya joined in 2011.
- In the 2nd NAP, legislative openness was included as a commitment within the larger OGP commitment, which required the development of tools to enhance legislative openness.
- Mzalendo, between 2016 and 2018, started developing a toolkit for OGP called Dokeza to enhance public participation in the legislative process in Kenya. Bonga na Mzalendo (SMS) platform was also created to promote public participation, especially in rural and marginalized communities.

- In addition, Mzalendo facilitates live coverage of parliamentary proceedings for both the Senate and the National Assembly; and developed an open source platform that accesses parliamentary information from the National Assembly.
- Mzalendo leads the CSOs that have taken part in the co-creation process of the NAP. This process has already ended and has begun its implementation phase.
- Mzalendo is moving towards the institutionalization of OGP by regularly publishing scorecards on the performance of legislators; setting up an OGP Desk to coordinate OGP activities; and co-creating the Open Parliament Action Plan with support from the Westminster Foundation for Democracy.
- One of the greatest achievements of the 4th NAP is that it has incorporated a Legislative Openness element in the Public Participation Commitment. This will allow Mzalendo to track milestones that directly enhance transparency.
- One of the key areas in Mzalendo's Strategic Plan is to promote the strengthening of PMOs on the continent for peer-to-peer learning and information sharing.
- Locally, the National Assembly has been open to information sharing.
- Developing civic engagement tools;
- Enacting the Public Participation and Civic Education bills;
- Developing a bill tracker to enable citizens to contribute to the legislative process, especially during COVID-19.
- In the future, the Parliament seeks to strengthen the partnership between the State and non-State actors to promote open government in Kenya.

3. Open Discussion

- Directorio Legislativo (DL) has a Latin American agenda, working in 19 countries on the continent. DL focuses on three main pillars: anti-corruption; civic space; and digital government.
 - In order to foster the debate on Open Parliament, Directorio Legislativo created the Latin American Legislative Transparency Index, which is one of the reasons for their partnership with PNAfrica, who consider it may be replicated in Africa.
 - The importance of these discussions lies in the need to understand what Kenya has done, how their work may be strengthened going forward and how it may be showcased so as to incentivise others to do the same.
 - In 2021, the OGP Steering Committee, with María Baron as its Lead Civil Society co-chair, led a Call to Action that allowed countries to showcase what they have done in terms of open government to encourage others to follow suit.
 - The COVID-19 pandemic has shed light on the severe impact of corruption in government. In this regard, OGP may serve as a platform that can be leveraged upon to ask governments to raise their ambitions in this topic during the response and recovery processes.
 - Kenya has the opportunity to showcase what it has done in terms of implementation of OGP commitments since it became a member to encourage other regional organizations to also share their experiences and aim higher in their commitments.
 - The progress Kenya has made towards achieving
- The National Assembly**
- Parliament has been complying with the Constitution of Kenya in ensuring public participation and access to public information.
 - Many public bodies/institutions have been included in the OGP process to ensure effective implementation of Open Parliament Plans (OPPs).
- Towards an Open Parliament**
- In order to advance open parliament in Kenya's National Assembly, the Senate is carrying out the following actions:
- Reviewing legislation to enhance openness and public participation;

an Open Parliament needs to be showcased globally. Local areas would also benefit from the decentralization of the process, as it would enable citizens to gain a better understanding of OGP and its impact on civic rights.

- It has been a challenge to document the progress that Kenya has made in implementing its OGP NAPs. It is important to discuss how to build resilience within the OGP space and how to enhance the dissemination of the progress achieved
- Provide an enabling environment for sharing lessons on progress made on OGP and Open Parliament both locally and internationally.

Next Steps

Commitments

In order to strengthen the dissemination of information on Open Parliament, the Parliament should:

- Ensure that it remains part of the process of OGP through new Action Plans.
- Commit to passing regulations to facilitate effective implementation of access to public information.
- Create and strengthen partnerships to disseminate information on social media to promote digital governance.
- Leverage the use of social media.
- Develop a Parliament magazine/newsletter to showcase Parliament's work.
- Organise roundtable meetings for CSOs and government to discuss how to enhance OGP implementation – as part of the Speaker's Roundtable planned under the Action Plan.
- Demystify Parliament and demonstrate that it is open to public participation through actions that include thematic discussions between CSOs and MPs, public hearings and digital platforms to comment on bills.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The avenues for the future in Open Parliament in Kenya include:

1. Convening a broader platform for PMOs across the globe to share knowledge and experience in Open Parliament.
2. To achieve a sustainable delivery of government reforms, there's a need for partnerships, such as south-south collaboration due to similar historical challenges.
3. This conversation is part of a series of exchanges we are hoping to have on the continent and we are glad that Kenya is the first, since it has made a lot of progress in the implementation of OGP.
4. These virtual conversations will help the platform identify how to enhance legislative transparency and what the role of legislators may be in promoting open governance.



III.

UGANDA

1. Introduction

Uganda has not signed on to OGP; however, there are a number of efforts being made by the Parliament of Uganda to promote parliamentary openness and enhance citizens participation in the legislative process. The virtual conversation was held on Thursday, April 22, 2021 between stakeholders within the Open Parliament space in Uganda. The meeting was attended by legislators, parliamentary staff and civil society actors who discussed the progress that the Ugandan Parliament has made in promoting parliamentary openness and how to incorporate those gains into a future National Action Plan or Open Parliament Plan.

2. What is Happening?

Progress towards Open Parliament in Uganda

The Parliament of Uganda has undertaken several initiatives that aim at enabling the public to access parliamentary information and to be able to understand the work of legislators and ensure inclusiveness. The following are some of the initiatives that have been undertaken:

- Accrediting journalists from all media houses to cover and report on Parliamentary business and access all public information in the Parliament.
- Holding annual legislative sector reviews that provide an accountability of parliamentary performance and take concerns from the public on that matter. In 2021, the Monitoring and Evaluation Office produced a legacy report where it accounts for the 5-year performance of the 10th Parliament performance.
- Having representation of interest groups like youth, women, persons living with disabilities and the elderly.

- Maintaining effective partnerships and collaborations with development partners, civil society and private sector in order to promote the Open Parliament agenda.
 - Signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Parliament and external actors (civil society) to have a sustained working relationship with them.
 - Enabling the public to have daily access to the Order Paper and key reports tabled in the house. The Parliament's website and social media platforms are important tools for sharing information with the public.
 - Organizing Parliamentary Outreach Programs for communities to identify problems to be discussed on the Parliament floor.
 - Allowing open participation in Committee Meetings for the public.
 - Developing the Bungeni App to help the public participate in the legislative process by contributing to bills and debates in the House.
 - They work on case-study identifications.
- Through the initiatives above, the Parliament of Uganda has achieved the following:*
- Increased involvement and participation of different stakeholders in the parliamentary process including, for example, youth groups that take part in the Annual National Youth Parliament.
 - Increased networking and collaboration with external actors. For instance, Parliament hosts the Science, Technology and Innovation exhibition week where over 800 local innovators are able to seek government intervention and funds.
 - Increased awareness of the role and functions of Parliament. An example worth mentioning is Public Parliament, an event that takes place as part of Parliamentary Week and that aims at giving the public an opportunity to meet and to engage with their Members of Parliament and to participate in a plenary sitting to discuss issues of concern.
 - Improved social accountability of the Ugandan Parliament to the public, for example through the Annual Legislative Sector Reviews.

Multi-actors' contribution to Open Parliament

The work of Parliament is strongly complemented by other actors in Uganda who play an important role in ensuring that there is openness in the Parliament and that citizens have the information they require to have an active participation. Some of the roles they play may be found below:

- CSOs play a critical role in the enactment of bills, in the budgetary process and in policy analysis.
- They help to build the capacity of MPs and parliamentary staff.
- They participate in parliamentary events - such as Parliament Week - that help to connect Parliament to the public.
- They submit petitions and position papers on matters of public interest.
- They help increase social media engagement.
- They carry out actions on Post-Legislative Scrutiny.

Presentation

- The Latin America Legislative Transparency Index has been the foremost achievement for Directorio Legislativo in the past years.
- The index helps to settle the debate on who is more transparent and encourages a parallel conversation between CSOs and legislators.
- There is a conversation with Parliamentary Network Africa (PNAfrica) to assess the possibility of having a similar tool for Uganda.
- Even though Uganda is not a member of OGP, the Open Parliament community involves Parliaments that are not necessarily in the partnership, mainly because some Executive Branches (government) may be against the legislature signing on to the partnership.
- PNAfrica pushes for the tracking of the implementation of Open Parliament Plans.
- The process of co-creating an OGP NAP is more

significant than the product itself. This also applies to the creation of Open Parliament plans.

- It is interesting to learn that Uganda has been successful in engaging the public in its parliamentary work.
- When Open Parliament plans are created, they provide the opportunity to engage the international community and communicate to them what we want our Parliament to be like, who we want to engage and why.
- It is beneficial to share not only the strategies that have worked but also those that haven't.

3. Open Discussion

Stakeholders made the following contributions during the open discussion session:

- The concept of Open Parliament simply means keeping the door open for both MPs, parliamentary staff and the public that we serve. Can citizens feel free to participate?
- Open Parliament is critical for legislators because, in order for the people to have confidence in the work that they do, it must be made publicly available for them to understand.
- It also encourages accountability knowing that the public will hold legislators accountable for the decisions they make.
- The work of PMOs is critical for Parliament, especially because it serves as a link between Parliament and the citizenry.
- There is a need to build a network of champions, especially among MPs and parliamentary staff, to promote Open Parliament.
- Some of the initiatives carried out by Parliament have the potential of being regionalised and communicated to the public for all citizens to have access through community meetings, radio talk shows and activities such as Parliament Week and Public Parliament.
- Measuring the performance of Parliament will go a long way for the institution to assess itself and the work it has accomplished.

- A partnership between Parliament and PMOs is necessary for lesson learning within the Open Parliament space.

- Besides all the laws and avenues for openness, the governance architecture also determines how feasible and easy it is to share information within government with Parliament and the public. Even with laws such as the Access to Information Act, in Uganda, certain pieces of information are not available to the MPs or to the public and this jeopardizes the effectiveness of oversight tasks.

- It is critical for Parliament to adopt innovative digital means for engaging the public and receiving feedback on its work.

- There is an important need to make legislators understand that Open Parliament is also inured to their benefit, especially when it comes to their re-election. Through Open Parliament, citizens can understand the work parliamentarians do, allowing MPs to earn their trust.

- Open Parliament plans: MPs have expressed their will to show more of what Parliament is doing to engage communities and incorporate them in an Open Parliament plan.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The avenues for the future in Open Parliament in Uganda include:

1. Agenda setting: engagement of CSOs and other partners in creating the themes of Open Parliament plans.

2. Identify MPs and staffers that have the potential to become champions of the Open Parliament agenda.

3. Increased access to information for all including MPs is critical for Parliament to carry out its mandate. This information can be from government, academia and civil society.

4. Parliament should adopt new strategies and initiatives, that include post legislative scrutiny, as a means of enhancing policy and legislation impact in Uganda.



IV.

GHANA

1. Introduction

Ghana joined OGP in 2011 and has since delivered its 4th National Action Plan (NAP) after the 3rd one ended in 2019. The third action plan focused greatly on initiatives that aimed to address corruption through the disclosure of information in different sectors, enacting new legislation and promoting citizen feedback at the local level. Ghana has a National OGP Steering Committee made up of government institutions and CSOs who are in charge of decision and policy-making for OGP processes. The Parliament of Ghana is represented on the Steering Committee by two MPs who contribute to ensuring effective oversight of the implementation of the National Action Plan. In 2020, the Parliament of Ghana, with support from the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), inaugurated an Open Parliament Task Team comprising parliamentary staff to spearhead the development and adoption of an Open Parliament Action Plan. Despite efforts to enhance the achievement of Open Parliament commitments, the Parliament of Ghana has not yet been able to adopt its own Action Plan.

This conversation enabled stakeholders to understand the current state of affairs and to look into the future of OGP and Open Parliament in Ghana.

2. What is Happening?

- The commemoration of the OGP Week in 2019 with the Parliamentary Training Institute (PTI) revealed that MPs lacked understanding of concepts related to OGP and Open Parliament.
- The benefits of Open Parliament in Ghana are visible in the opening up of some committee meetings and legislative (bill) memoranda to the public, the provision of a certain level of access to committee reports and the availability of translation services for the hearing impaired, among others. These actions have helped bridge the gap between the public and the information generated in Parliament.

- There is a low level of MP–Constituent interaction, along with lack of non-partisan constituency offices for engagement with citizens and lack of a dedicated parliamentary office to interact with civil society organisations (CSOs). Most CSOs have relied on informal relationships with parliamentary staff to ensure successful parliamentary engagement.
- Engaging MPs and parliamentary staff often comes with a cost (both administrative and mobility-related). Thus, it deters CSOs from organizing meetings with them to discuss policy and development and reduces the level of public engagement overall.
- The asset declaration regime is shrouded in secrecy, considering that it is kept under seal at the Office of the Auditor General. Asset declarations, therefore, are not available to the public, preventing CSOs and others from monitoring and verifying assets and liability declarations made by public officials.
- Parliament has passed transparency laws, including the Right to Information (RTI) Act, through the OGP process. Beneficial Ownership commitments, included in the National Action Plan have also seen legislative action, emphasising the relationship between the OGP and Open parliament.

With the objective of promoting a culture of openness, improving access to information through digital means and making parliamentary information more transparent, officials of the Parliament highlighted the following actions as having been undertaken by the Parliament of Ghana:

1. Promoting a culture of openness:

- Recognised public ownership of parliamentary information leading to the passage of the RTI Act, making information easily accessible to the public through publishing such materials such as the parliamentary agenda, minutes of sittings of the House among others, using the Website and mobile applications of the Parliament .
- Advanced public participation in legislation. Citizens are able to contact committees in parliament to offer contributions and share recommendations on bills.
- Ensured physical access to Parliament by adding or adapting infrastructure for the benefit of

persons with physical challenge and providing sign language interpretation for the hearing impaired.

- Enhanced oversight of Government, through the work of parliamentary committees such as the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and the Committee on Government Assurance.
- Ongoing processes to revise the rules and procedures (Standing Orders) of Parliament to increase public participation in committee proceedings.
- Promotion of civic education in informal settings and tertiary institutions to connect Parliament and citizens and to communicate on its work.
- Regular dissemination of information through social media to enhance citizens’ sense of ownership of parliamentary information and to reduce ill perception about Parliament.

2. Easing access to parliamentary information using electronic communication:

- Use of new and traditional media and plain language to share legislative information.

3. Making parliamentary information more transparent:

- Use of press briefings to inform citizens about the agenda of Parliament.
- Publication of records on committee meeting and plenary proceedings in reports and on social media streaming;
- Protecting the integrity of MPs and demystifying the perception of Parliament as a corrupt and detached institution by making information easily accessible to the public using both traditional and new media.
- E-Parliament infrastructure, intended to enable MPs to access parliamentary information digitally (using tablets) and help them participate in proceedings have commenced in Parliament. This is, however, yet to be fully completed. E-petitioning on the e-Parliament platform, when completed, will also enable citizens to participate in the legislative process where they can share their concerns with their representatives and the Speaker.

3. Open Discussion

Global perspectives to enhance parliamentary openness in Ghana:

- Ensure legislative action to enable Parliament to collaborate with civil society in the implementation of NAPs.
- Maintain effective parliamentary oversight of the implementation of the NAP. This could be done through special legislative committees, an MP taskforce or informal interaction with interested MPs.
- Promote dialogue between Parliament and actors within the OGP ecosystem to enhance sensitization and public participation.
- Foster collaboration between Parliament and PMOs to enhance the adoption of an Open Parliament Action Plan.
- Engage with MPs from different blocs to build cross-cutting political will to develop an Open Parliament Action Plan.
- Create commitments to increase transparency and accountability within the Parliament of Ghana.
- If the Parliament of Ghana could reinvigorate the Task Team and incorporate the ideas co-creation to develop an action plan, it would be a great opportunity for them to showcase what Parliament has done and the innovative approach it has achieved to the global community.
- Parliament's Task Team should regularly engage communities to inform citizens about what Parliament is doing to promote Open Parliament.
- Parliament has not yet been able to adopt the principles on parliamentary openness.
- Even though Parliament has set up a Task Team to help strengthen parliamentary openness, its output has not been encouraging.
- The Task Team should co-create with PMOs/CSOs and lead the process of parliamentary openness. Setting up a Steering Committee with equal numbers of parliamentary staff and MPs on one side, and CSOs on the other side, is necessary to promote openness.
- Parliament should develop its own Action Plan while aligning with the OGP NAP and the new OGP Memorandum on Parliamentary Engagement.
- The lack of transparency and openness in Parliament contributes to the high attrition rate as citizens do not feel connected with their MPs after elections are held.
- Parliament must ensure that Ministries will allocate the necessary resources to enhance public education on OGP. This may also apply to the Task Team, as it would be beneficial for it to take upon awareness programs to educate MPs on OGP and Open Parliament.
- The Parliament of Ghana should provide resources to the Parliamentary Press Corps for it to be able to educate and inform the public on the role of legislators and avoid conflicting perspectives over this issue.
- Parliament should leverage more on new communication tools to reach the public.

Perspectives on the missing link in parliament's engagement in OGP

- Laws that enhance transparent regimes have been passed by Parliament; however, the missing link is the lack of parliamentary oversight of the various commitments included in the NAP.
- Parliament's internal rules allow Parliament to be open. The adoption of revised Standing Orders will further enhance openness and transparency within Parliament.
- The national Steering Committee organized a series of consultative engagements with stakeholders both in-person and virtually before the validation meeting that took place at the end of June 2021. This process has led to the delivery of the [4th National Action Plan](#), which captures critical commitments to Open Parliament for the Parliament of Ghana.
- The OGP Country Secretariat for Ghana lacks the resources to undertake the critical activities

The state of the 4th National Action Plan and the role of Parliament

and responsibilities that are expected from them. Therefore, Parliament should intervene to allocate enough resources to the Secretariat for implementation of its activities and commitments.

- There is a need for legislative action to pass laws such as the Affirmative Action Bill, which enhances inclusiveness in the legislative process and governance in the country.
- Parliamentary representatives on the National Steering Committee should show commitment to participating in the activities this body organizes.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The avenues for the future in Open Parliament in Ghana include:

1. The Open Parliament Task Team should be proactive in its bid to lead the processes towards the adoption and implementation of an Open Parliament Action Plan. This Task Team should move towards co-creating open parliament declaration and Action Plan with CSOs to ensure support for effective implementation.
2. Parliament should provide interpretation of parliamentary information into several local languages apart from English in order to enhance public participation in and understanding of the legislative process.
3. Parliament improving and resourcing its in-person educational engagement with students in second cycle and tertiary institutions.
4. Parliament should ensure regular communication through online, traditional and social media, and infographics to share information with the public.
5. Parliament should engage PMOs regularly through institutional conversations and public hearings to ensure that there is enough collaboration between them and citizens.
6. Parliament representatives on the National OGP Steering Committee should play an active role in the OGP process as they have not been very active in representing on the committee.

V. ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this document has been to assess the level of implementation of Open Parliament commitments in Kenya, Uganda and Ghana, and to make recommendations on enhancing implementation through effective co-creation. In doing so, it has provided an analysis of the current state of parliamentary openness in these countries, their achievements and remaining challenges, which have been identified thanks to the input received from parliamentary monitoring organizations (PMOs), staff and members of parliament (MPs), public sector workers and civil society activists.

In the last decade, Kenya, Uganda and Ghana have all made progress towards achieving an enhanced culture of parliamentary openness in their Legislative branches, and their processes serve as clear examples of diverse paths with an array of challenges and opportunities. Both similarities and differences may be drawn as a result of the conversations that have taken place; however, it is in the spirit of this document that these comparisons will be the foundation upon which to build a regional cooperative force to enhance transparent, accountable, inclusive and active citizen participation in the national parliaments.

Kenya has been a member of OGP since 2011 and is currently implementing its fourth NAP (2020-2022). According to the conversations that have been held, Parliament has been complying with the Constitution of Kenya in ensuring public participation and access to information and many public bodies/institutions have been included in the OGP process to ensure effective implementation of Open Parliament Plans (OPPs). However, one of the main challenges that still remains relates to the need to showcase Kenya's progress on this matter and make these achievements public to further engage the Kenyan citizens in the legislative work. Additionally, Kenya would benefit from the development of partnerships, such as south-south collaboration given similar historical challenges.

Uganda, on the other hand, is not currently a member of OGP but has nevertheless advanced its agenda on Open Parliament by undertaking initiatives to promote parliamentary openness and enhance citizens participation in the legislative process. It has also come a long way in creating spaces for cooperation with non-state actors, which allow them to play several roles in ensuring that the Parliament of Uganda is open and that citizens have the information required for active participation. Nevertheless, the conversations that were held shed light on the challenges that remain, such

as the need to build a network of champions, especially among members and staff of Parliament, to promote open parliament and make information accessible to MPs and citizens to increase accountability, public participation and transparency in the Legislative Branch.

For its part, Ghana shares various similarities with Kenya, as it is also an OGP member since 2011 and is currently delivering its 4th NAP. However, some differences stand out, such as the creation of its Open Parliament Task Team comprising members and staff of Parliament to spearhead the development and adoption of an Open Parliament Action Plan. But Ghana faces its own set of challenges, as conversations portrayed the lack of understanding that some MPs have regarding Open Parliament concepts and actions and the difficulties that the Parliament is currently facing in terms of parliamentary oversight of the commitments included in the NAP.

For an effective exercise of Open Parliament, MPs, parliamentary staff, PMOs and citizens must be willing and able to learn and practice the main components that make up this culture. And to increase this willingness and ability, shared experiences may serve as a useful push.

Along these lines and taking into account the areas of expertise of both PNAfrica and Directorio Legislativo, two main takeaways from these discussions are worth highlighting, as they may lay the groundwork for multi-actor partnerships with these two organizations:

- First, the need to establish and further promote regional networks between Parliaments, MPs and parliamentary staff among African countries. This will allow for participants to learn about what their colleagues are doing and what is working (or not) for them in terms of parliamentary openness, exchange ideas on how to tackle similar challenges and brainstorm innovative solutions that will bring citizens closer to the legislative process and its daily work.
- Second, the importance of implementing a standardized tool to assess in a more meticulous way the progress that each Parliament has achieved in terms of Open Parliament. Such a tool will allow for advances to be reflected in more precise terms, enabling actors to have a clear understanding of the progress they have made and the areas where there is still room for improvement.

Directorio Legislativo and PNAfrica, as civil society organizations advocating for Open Parliaments, have

both the experience and the skills to contribute to the effective opening of Parliaments in Africa. Directorio Legislativo has spearheaded the process by which Latin American Parliaments are being measured using the Latin American Legislative Transparency Index. This is an objective, periodic and independent measurement tool on the existence and effectiveness of transparency and openness policies and mechanisms in Latin American legislatures. It is coordinated by the Latin American Network for Legislative Transparency, a mechanism for networking, communication and collaboration among civil society organizations that actively promote transparency, access to information and accountability in the region's Congresses. The Network was founded by DL in collaboration with other regional organizations more than a decade ago, and today comprises 32 CSOs in 15 Latin American countries.

A partnership between Directorio Legislativo, PNAfrica and other actors interested in Open Parliament, such as MPs, parliamentary staff and other PMOs, would provide the African continent with a collaborative space for dialogue and exchange. The Latin American experience may serve as a useful basis on which to work on parliamentary openness in Africa, drawing from experience both in setbacks as in opportunities. Additionally, members would also benefit from this network as a platform for the dissemination of their actions. PNAfrica could play a fundamental role in this process, mainly due to its existing network with other African PMOs and its profound knowledge of parliamentary work in African legislatures.

The conversations that were held as part of this process have made it clear that the African continent has great potential to further enhance its work on Open Parliament. Thus, both Directorio Legislativo and PNAfrica have expressed their willingness to collaborate and become allies in these developments in order to achieve a culture of transparent, accountable, inclusive and active citizens participation in the African national parliaments. In order to do so, a series of recommendations have been put forward:

- Engage actors interested in Open Parliament (MPs, PMOs, parliamentary staff and others) through a coordinated network that will provide them with spaces for dialogue and exchange on how to improve/enhance their Parliament's openness.
- Develop a methodical tool to assess the openness of national Parliaments. When applied, this tool will allow for a better understanding of what could be improved in each Legislative branch and, when

sharing the results with fellow African Parliaments, learn best practices.

- Enhance communication to the public regarding Open Parliament actions, both through traditional and digital means of communication. Education is key, and Parliaments can -and should- play an important role in highlighting the importance of transparency and accountability in government and showcasing their efforts to achieve a true Open Parliament.
- Foster Open Parliament actions among MPs and identify champions who may lead processes within the legislatures. MPs are the visible faces of Parliament and their actions (or inactions) often determine or condition the level of trust that the citizenry expresses in its democratic institutions. Working towards an Open Parliament is not only beneficial for citizens, but is also in the interest of MPs who seek public trust.
- Make Open Parliament a priority in the legislative agenda. Open Parliament should be a cross-cutting issue in every action, decision and process carried out in the legislature. Open Parliament champions will play a key role in this, pushing for a review of existing Parliament dynamics and promoting a more transparent approach to daily legislative work.



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