



WFD

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Pursuing openness and transparency at a local level in Nigeria

Executive summary

Working with the parliament in Edo State, WFD has been supporting the adoption and implementation of the Open Government Partnership at a local level. This programme has practiced openness from the start, by inviting local civil society to participate in the development of the state action plan, would be jointly implemented by state and non-state actors for the common good of all citizens.

July 2020

Programme:	IAP Nigeria
Programme outcome:	Improved accountability through more robust scrutiny of government performance.
Outcome indicator:	Number of examples of civil society successfully using evidence-based advocacy to influence policymaking or to scrutinise performance with evidence of WFD contribution. ¹
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Context

Nigeria joined the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in 2016 following the London Anti-Corruption Summit organised by the then Prime Minister David Cameron. Nigeria's [OGP National Action Plan \(NAP\)](#) was submitted in Paris in 2016, while the country began implementation of the NAP in January 2017 with a completion date in June 2019. In the years that have followed, progress towards the 16 national commitments has been mixed. However, at the sub-national level, of the 36 states in Nigeria, only 11 have currently (as of January 2020) embraced the OGP, some of them without appreciably completing the process of generating a State Action Plan (SAP) or completing the implementation.

WFD observed this low level of engagement at the sub-national level and determined that the Inclusive and Accountable Politics (IAP) grant could make the greatest impact on the transparency agenda at state level, focusing on citizen engagement in the OGP process. At the initiation of the IAP programme, only eight of Nigeria's 36 states had joined the OGP. In line with Commitment 12 of Nigeria's OGP Action Plan, WFD Nigeria's IAP programme contributes to the development of a 'permanent dialogue mechanism on transparency, accountability and good governance between Edo State citizens and government to facilitate a culture of openness'. Edo State made the initial commitment to join OGP in September 2018 but lacked a formal plan by which the government could track its progress and be held accountable by citizens - a key requirement of OGP membership. To move the process forward, WFD signed an MOU with the Edo State Government and the Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice (ANEEJ) to implement specific activities which will advance the OGP process, particularly the realisation of the State Action Plan. As such, it was value for money, within the available budget, for WFD to advance a process that had already started in Edo State, rather than starting an OGP process afresh in a new state.

What's changed?

In partnership with the Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice (ANEEJ) and the Government of Edo State, WFD supported the advancement of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in Edo state, Nigeria. In a WFD-facilitated joint effort between CSOs and state officials, a new OGP State Action Plan was co-created, developing policies and programmes which would be jointly implemented by state and non-state actors for the common good of all citizens.

This kind of collaboration between CSOs and the government on issues of transparency was rare in Edo State. The Deputy Director of ANEEJ, Mr. Leo Atakpu, articulated the importance of the change in process:

This multi-stakeholder initiative, as it were, takes away dictatorship from state actors and reinforces citizens' confidence in governance. It gives citizens and government stakeholders the opportunity to come together to prioritise development programmes that would enhance the welfare of citizens and the public at large. It deliberately creates opportunity to address the problems of marginalised and vulnerable groups amongst us and give them greater sense of belonging while their issues are taken on board the state's development agendas.'

Deputy Director of ANEEJ, Mr. Leo Atakpu

1. This programme is working under the Inclusion and Transparency outcomes. However, while the focus of this case study is the openness of state government, we felt that the important element of the change was in the involvement of CSOs in the process.

Broadening the scope of OGP beyond the government is an important step forward for openness and transparency in Edo. WFD also ensured that the planning process included the State House of Assembly and the State Judiciary, emphasising the importance of their roles in monitoring and overseeing the implementation of the plan.

Prof. Yinka Omorogbe, Commissioner for Justice and Attorney-General of Edo State said:

'The level of enthusiasm shown by government and civil society stakeholders and the effort at co-creating the OGP process in Edo state is laudable and points to the will of the people at making the government more open and transparent.'

Prof. Yinka Omorogbe, Commissioner for Justice and Attorney-General of Edo State

WFD will also facilitate a review session with youth, women and disability-focused CSOs to further strengthen the capacity of the CSOs to advocate for the purpose of ensuring and sustaining inclusivity and transparency in governance.

IAP/DFID Contribution

A series of activities aimed at making government more open in Edo State was held between June and August 2019 including a sensitisation workshop for government and CSO stakeholders and a three-day retreat for both government and CSO stakeholders to develop the Edo State Action Plan (SAP). Each of these events was attended by over 70 government participants, non-state actors and the private sector. IAP/DFID also supported the validation of the draft State Action Plan by key stakeholders in Edo State.

Strength of evidence

While the government of Edo State was clearly committed to the principles of OGP in advance of WFD's arrival, their engagement with civil society around the issue was minimal. While we cannot disprove the counterfactual that the government would have engaged in a co-creation process around the OGP without WFD's support, all available anecdotal evidence suggests that relations between the two were not conducive to working together without WFD encouragement and support. With regard to the activities themselves, we have significant evidence of the effectiveness of WFD support through tweets from OGP Nigeria and feedback from participants. All this points to WFD as having been instrumental in connecting the government and civil society around the OGP State Action Plan, giving the document a more inclusive and representative approach to the benefit of all Edo residents.

Significance of change

Outcome indicator 3.2 speaks to examples of CSOs being supported to influence policymaking or scrutinising government performance. In this example, we see aspects of both. WFD facilitated the relationship between CSOs and the government of Edo State around the OGP State Action Plan, providing both individualised capacity support and sensitisation on openness and transparency issues, as well as structured moderation of the co-creation of the State Action Plan, ensuring inputs from all sides. This ensured that CSOs were able to influence the content of the State Action Plan and that the interests of government were scrutinised before the final document was agreed.