



**Institute for Governance  
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A research institute of the School of Government



# Reflections on the OGP Summit

**Mexico City**

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## Introduction

The OGP global summit was an intense three days. 27 October was the Civil Society Day (details here <http://ogpsummit.org/cso.html>) and the general summit ran on 28-29 October (agenda here [http://ogpsummit.org/img/Cumbre\\_agenda11\\_DIGITAL-MOBILE.pdf](http://ogpsummit.org/img/Cumbre_agenda11_DIGITAL-MOBILE.pdf)).

### Civil Society Day (27 Oct)

The very first ever Civil Society Day awards were contested between Costa Rica, Sierra Leone and Georgia, with Georgia winning out.

The first substantive session of the day was on evidence and research, in particular the thorny question of trying to assess impact. OGP already has pretty good tools for measuring *implementation* but not necessarily *impact*, which remains the Holy Grail for countries that are trying to justify their membership of OGP.

There was a really interesting conversation about this matter and a number of issues were raised:

- Difficulty of providing causal links
- Problems of distinguishing responsibility for outcomes
- Lack of transferability of many case studies
- Reliability of respondents
- How long is longitudinal data (i.e. when do we draw a cut-off point for an impact occurring or not)
- The nature of 'impact' itself

There were some great examples given that illustrated these tensions. One delegate from Montenegro claimed that since signing up to OGP, access to open data and government information had got substantially worse. The delegate could not identify exactly how it had got worse, however, nor whether or not this was *because* or *despite* of joining OGP.

Some delegates suggested various ideas for new methods, such as developing Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs); others favoured developmental impact case studies.

Clearly the debate will rage (and indeed it entered a number of different presentations throughout the three days) Political dynamics is clearly a contributory factor in success or failure.

The next session was the first public unveiling of new International Standards for Lobbying Regulation (<http://lobbyingtransparency.net/>), which was another really interesting discussion. Obviously there is a great deal of interest in this area, not least of which because NZ rejected the Bill for a register of Lobbyists last year.

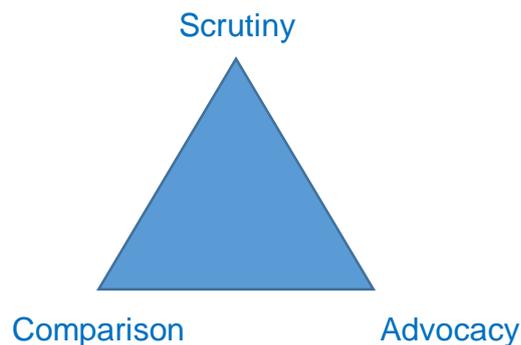
The presenters emphasised (rightly in my view) that lobbying is an essential practice in a thriving democracy but that it shouldn't go unchecked.

The standards are very sympathetic to lobbying and as you will see balance values and regulations, while also requiring commitments not just from lobbying groups but from governments and legislative bodies. If NZ were to endorse the standards it would need to re-asses how it governs itself (the need for a fuller MP and Ministerial Code of Conduct, for example, or clearer regulations around post-Ministerial appointments).

An inspirational example here has been set by Chile who have opened up a database of government meetings, which shows exactly who meets whom, and when. Remarkably it also contains details of each meeting (within reason of course). It is extremely far sighted and may well reduce the number of OIA requests that go to government departments. Have a look: <http://www.infolobby.cl/>

Obviously there would be costs associated with such a scheme but also extrinsic value in reducing the number of requests and intrinsic value of just being good for its own sake.

The final session of the day was run by Tim Hughes from *Involve*, the UK-based organisation that co-ordinates the CSO response and participation. The sessions imply highlighted a number of tools based on three principles:



Three tools were highlighted.

1. The *Open Government Guide* is an information sharing, web-based tool that allow members, especially newer members, to make some informed decisions. You can find it here: <http://www.opengovguide.com/>
2. The *Open Government Explorer* allows people to chart progress of every commitment in every single member country. It ties in with the discussion on implementation versus impact but it is certainly a useful site: <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/explorer/landing>
3. The *National Action Plan Review Tool* has been piloted (<http://www.ogphub.org/napreview-pilot/>) and is designed to allow members of Civil Society to continually assess progress of implementation. It is a survey instrument that is given out by a CS co-ordinator in a member country and there are some unanswered questions around where it gets sent; sample sizes; etc. Nonetheless it seem useful and if NZ were to go down this route it could always be adapted to fit our context.

## Day 2: OGP Summit

The day began with a pre-summit discussion between Minister Upston, the NZ OGP delegation and myself. It was an extremely encouraging and positive conversation and it was great to see that there was such enthusiasm for the days ahead.

The opening ceremony was, as you might expect, very long had a lot of plaudits. There were numerous political dignitaries on stage at various times but two things really stood out.

1. The official OGP/CSO awards were announced. The winners were Uruguay, with Indonesia and the UK taking second and third place respectively. Details of all the finalists can be found here <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/blog/munyema-hasan/2015/10/15/open-gov-awards-2015-revealing-years-top-initiatives>
2. NZ's very own Helen Clark took to the stage in her United Nations Development Programme capacity. She discussed the UNDP's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which OGP has aligned itself with and which various member countries have officially endorsed (albeit with non-binding obligations I believe). Of particular interest is that a number of the SDGs are very applicable to the NZ context (e.g. #1 No Poverty; #10 Reduced Inequalities; read them all here <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/mdgoverview/post-2015-development-agenda.html> ) and there was a special emphasis on *inclusivity* in its many forms. This is exactly the type of work that a number of government agencies (e.g. treasury; MSD; Education; etc.) and a whole host of CSOs are trying to tackle right now.

Clearly the next NAP cannot pledge to tackle these huge issues without massive effort, co-ordination and no small amount of national discussion. Yet what is interesting is that the OGP is no longer simply about accountability, transparency and integrity – it is about public policy and service delivery.

The possibilities here for OGP development are therefore enormous – myriad policies can be attached to OGP without any added cost at all. In fact, we could use the global OGP community to look for evidence for future NZ initiatives.

Again there could be a medium/long term approach. In the medium term commit to establishing an inclusivity strategy or an inclusivity board, made up of various bodies. This effectively already exists I might add in the form of the governance group for the joint inclusivity event that was held in Te Papa in July. Other joint bodies such as the Living Standards Framework teams are all in this same space as well. It's not only viable, it is already happening.

I think this is especially helpful because while it is good to be involved in, and to respond to, the UNDP we do not want to cede ownership or simply look like we are doing the work of other agencies. Our OGP commitments should be our own and should be created by the people of NZ. The fact that they dovetail with other plans is great but we should retain our own identity, even in future partnerships.

In the longer term (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> NAPs) specific commitments can be made regarding detailed elements of NZ inclusivity, which could be housing; education; disability; community development; age; etc. At least committing to a structure and an organising body allows us to develop things in an emergent and evolving pattern, all within the auspices of the OGP.

The next couple of sessions looked at legislative bodies. There was a discussion around yet another declaration, the Declaration on Parliamentary Openness, (<http://www.openingparliament.org/declaration>) which New Zealand has not yet signed up to. As you will see if you read the link member countries work, again, in collaboration with private-sector groups and CSOs and it may well be worth considering signing up to in the next NAP. This was followed by a session on the World Justice Project which was informative but not wholly relevant to the situation in New Zealand.

### Day 3: OGP Summit

The day began with a really interesting discussion on political party finance, and the *Declaration Political Finance Openness* by the Sunlight Foundation. It was the launch of the declaration so will need to be considered in much more depth but is certainly an area that could be of interest to future NAPs, especially as it ties in so well with discussion under the TINZ, *Integrity Plus* report which is already in the current NAP. The declaration can be found at <https://sunlightfoundation.com/blog/2015/10/27/new-draft-of-declaration-on-political-finance-openness-released/>

This was followed by the session at which I spoke (details below):

**ADVANCING THE OPEN GOVERNMENT REFORM AGENDA: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS**  
**ADB HOSTED PANEL AT THE OPEN GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP GLOBAL SUMMIT**  
**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29. 12:00PM - 1:00PM. ROOM: C1 AT PALACIO DE MINERIA**

**Objectives of the Session:**

The aim of this session is to bring together government and civil society leaders from the Asia Pacific region to discuss 1) the successes and failures of open government reforms undertaken so far and the next generation of reforms required to advance the open government agenda, 2) opportunities and challenges for bringing in new countries, actors and topics into the conversation, 3) the role regional actors, including the ADB, can play in supporting open government champions in delivering reforms and broadening the base.

**Panelists:**

1. **Mr. Gurgen Dumanyan,**  
*Armenia Government--First Deputy Minister, Chief of the Government Staff*
2. **Mr. Krishna Hari Baskota,**  
*Chief Information Commissioner, National Information Commission, Nepal*
3. **Ms. Raden Siliwanti,**  
*Indonesia Government-Director, Ministry of National Development Planning. Member of OGP Steering Committee*
4. **Mr. Muhammad Ilham,**  
*Program Director, Transparency International Indonesia*
5. **Dr. Michael Macaulay,**  
*Director of Institute for Governance and Policy Studies, Victoria University Wellington*

**Moderator:**

**Ms. Claudia Buentjen,**  
*Principal Governance Specialist, Asian Development Bank*

The session produced a really interesting discussion. What was very apparent – not for the first time might I add – is that

1. OGP can play a substantial role in NZ providing leadership in the Asia Pacific Region
2. Other countries are crying out for our involvement.

To be truthful, both of these points have been clear for a long time and they are the same messages that came from the 2014 Summit in Bali.

It was useful, however, to have them reiterated so clearly here and especially by countries who are trying to make their way in OGP: Nepal, Vietnam, etc; not to mention our Pacific Island neighbours: I had extensive discussions with PNG delegates who were absolutely committed to NZ helping them in any way we can.

The afternoon was given over to meetings, especially with my colleagues from ADB. There was a fascinating session on sporting governance, which may be something that we can consider down the line, and there was a session on devolving OGP into local government. This was interesting but was contingent on there being strong local (which actually translated as Municipal) government.

All of which points to an important area – how will OGP involve local government? We have great links with organisations such as LGNZ, SOLGM, etc. and there are many possibilities:

- create an info pack with all relevant links and send directly to councils (we can do the same for CSOs)
- go and meet local authorities directly, to get out of Wellington
- incentivize community engagement through an OGP local award – local authorities pick a couple of community projects we can then bring together in a national ceremony
- crowdsource ideas for the next NAP, again which we can bring together in some events to discuss, debate and help decide

### **Concluding remarks**

I hope and believe that the Mexico summit was a great success and has clearly demonstrated that:

1. OGP needs New Zealand
2. New Zealand will benefit from OGP membership
3. None of it is an additional burden
4. We can be as broad as our imaginations and budgets allow

I look forward to discussing these reflections with IGPS audiences. Please come along to our next meeting on **December 1<sup>st</sup>, 17:30-18:30 in GBLT 1.**