

CAC/IT/NO.:85546

**To:** Abubakar Malami SAN, Co-Chair, National Steering Committee, OGP Nigeria  
Edetaen Ojo, Co-Chair, Co-Chair, National Steering Committee, OGP Nigeria  
HMS Zainab Ahmed, Incoming Co-Chair, Co-Chair, National Steering Committee, OGP Nigeria  
Lanre Jaiyeola, Incoming Co-Chair, Co-Chair, National Steering Committee, OGP Nigeria  
Members of the National Steering Committee, OGP Nigeria  
**From:** Oluseun Onigbinde  
**Date:** November 24, 2017  
**Subject:** OGP Working Structure and Other Concerns

## **Memo to The OGP Co-Chairs, OGP National Steering Committee Abuja, Nigeria**

### **1. Introduction**

Six months ago, I committed to a one-week knowledge exchange program with the Republic of France Government, causing my regrettable absence at this National Steering Committee Meeting. While stakeholders have shown commitment and the current secretariat, with limited human and financial resources, has worked tirelessly to coordinate the implementation of OGP, a few gaps remain that require firm support from the National Steering Committee. Considering the importance of this meeting and certain issues that I believe should not be left unresolved, I plead for the opportunity to make the following submissions for the consideration of the Steering Committee as it is important to the success of OGP in Nigeria. These are stated below:

### **2. Coordination of the OGP**

The Open Government partnership principles provide that a country's open government activities should be put under the coordination of the National Secretariat and to be headed by an Executive Director with support from other staff including the Civil Society Adviser, Government Adviser and Sub National Adviser.

Few months ago, the Open Alliance worked with the state actors and development partners to develop a memo that establishes the guidelines in hiring required staff and setting up the secretariat. While we commend the process so far and support from development partners, I believe the vacant position of an Executive Director must be quickly occupied by a competent and experienced person with the understanding of public reform and the open government partnership. I believe this should be openly advertised with every capable individual - within and outside government - given a fair chance by a committee set up by the National Steering Committee.

### **3. Situation of the OGP Secretariat**

Based on neutrality that comes with the establishment of the OGP National Secretariat, it is important that following the recruitment of the Executive Director for the National Secretariat, the secretariat should be moved out of the premises of the Ministry of Justice. The current setting of the secretariat puts forward a confusing scenario where letters that ought to be sent with details of the Secretariat are solely sent with the letterhead and signature of the Honourable Minister of Justice. In another sense, the unconscious message sent here is that the government controls the coordination and affairs of the OGP which negates the basis of the equal partnership between government and civil society. The bond of OGP is formidable when both state and non-state actors understand that they have to relinquish power in certain areas and work together on one goal – improving governance. Based on the framework proposed, the Executive Director leads the secretariat and all forms of communication and coordination emanates from the office. As previously proposed, certain decisions will require the concurrent approval of the co-Chairs or the National Steering Committee. The current OGP governance through the secretariat is not right and does not guarantee sustainability considering our fluid political system.

#### **4. Representation in the National Steering Committee**

Kindly note that the initial position on the structure of the NSC was to have only 20 members equally distributed between the state and non-state actors. However, the number was increased to its current 42-member steering committee. The OGP Principle recognises two partners - Government and Civil Society. Civil Society in this instance includes CSOs/NGOs and Private Sector groups. In the understanding of the OGP, the selection of Steering Committee members from government will be done by the government using any selection criteria agreed to, and the same applies to the civil society. The current option on the table to increase the number of the members in the NSC conflicts the provision on the formation of the NSC. Nigeria already has a bloated NSC and should refrain from adding to the number. Perhaps as the new cycle begins, a rotation amongst other state and non-state actors could be considered. I don't believe the OGP is a jamboree that every unit must be considered but it must be painstaking assembly of key partners working towards transparency and accountability. New organizations are free to join/lead working groups and actively work towards fulfilment of commitments in National Action Plan.

#### **5. Working Groups**

The OGP working groups coordinate the thematic areas, implementation and review. The working group mandate is clear in the OGP provision. The idea of creating a sub-working group within the working group is a new approach which is not in the books of the OGP. We are however against this with the submission that such will bring about unnecessary sub-units within the working groups. We must maintain that the focus is around implementation of actionable commitments, improving culture of governance and service delivery. I believe we have not done enough in properly constituting the working groups and I recognise the challenge of funding as related to these working groups. I believe the OGP NSC should strengthen the working groups through increased funding. Open Alliance (currently managed by BudgIT) is committed to support working group with funding in 2018, as provided by our development partners.

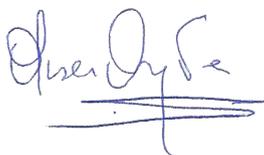
#### **6. Budget**

As current constituted, it is still unclear if there's a budgetary provision for the OGP. The Nigerian Government needs to invest resources to ensure this unique partnership is sustained. While we acknowledge the support of development partners, it is imperative Nigeria puts more funds in the management of the secretariat, support for working groups and also the National Steering Committee engagements as needed.

#### **7. Conclusion**

I hope this meeting will consider my memo which has woven around the points stated above and that all parties will accept that this is written in good faith and progress towards the implementation of the National Action Plan. I wish you all successful outing.

Best regards,



Oluseun Onigbinde  
Lead Partner, BudgIT  
Member, National Steering Committee, OGP Nigeria