

Independent Reporting Mechanism

Papua New Guinea
Co-Creation Brief 2024

Open
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Partnership



Independent
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Mechanism

Introduction

This brief from the OGP’s Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) serves to support the co-creation process and design of Papua New Guinea’s third action plan and to strengthen the quality, ambition, and feasibility of commitments. It provides an overview of the opportunities and challenges for open government in the country’s context and presents recommendations. These recommendations are suggestions, and this brief does not constitute an evaluation of a particular action plan. Its purpose is to inform the planning process for co-creation based on collective and country-specific IRM findings. This brief is intended to be used as a resource as government and civil society determine the next action plan’s trajectory and content. National OGP stakeholders will determine the extent of incorporation of this brief’s recommendations.

The co-creation brief draws recommendations from prior IRM reports for [Papua New Guinea](#), the [OGP National Handbook](#), [OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards](#), and IRM guidance on [the assessment of OGP’s minimum requirements](#). The brief aims to provide up-to-date recommendations with lessons from comparative international experience in the design and implementation of OGP action plans as well as other context-relevant practices in open government. The brief was reviewed by IRM senior staff for consistency, accuracy, and with a view to maximising the context-relevance and actionability of the recommendations. Where appropriate, the briefs are reviewed by external reviewers or members of the IRM International Experts Panel (IEP).

The IRM drafted this co-creation brief in November 2024.

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Section I: Action Plan Co-Creation Process

Since joining OGP in 2015, Papua New Guinea has implemented two action plans. The action plans addressed public participation, freedom of information, fiscal transparency, extractives transparency, digital government, and digital identity. However, none of the commitments were fully completed or produced strong open government results. Neither of the action plans' co-creation processes met the minimum requirements of the OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards. In the most recent cycle, stakeholder contributions to the co-creation process were not documented or provided with reasoned response prior to the action plan's publication. In addition, the OGP space for dialogue did not meet with sufficient frequency during implementation or make its basic rules publicly available, and the repository was not up to date.

To raise the ambition of Papua New Guinea's upcoming third action plan, there are opportunities to include government implementers and a broad range of civil society stakeholders in developing commitments that introduce a new focus on anti-corruption and build on previous initiatives on access to information and fiscal transparency. Renewed efforts on each of these areas could raise Papua New Guinea's [core OGP eligibility score](#).

To strengthen the co-creation process, the IRM recommends the following:

1. Refresh the National Steering Committee.
2. Establish a permanent OGP secretariat.
3. Strengthen participation in the commitment development process.
4. Regularly update the website and repository.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Refresh the National Steering Committee

For the third action plan, the IRM recommends refreshing the National Steering Committee to support regular engagement between civil society and government on the OGP process. Multi-stakeholder committees with varying members have met irregularly since Papua New Guinea became an OGP member. By implementation of the second action plan, the quarterly meeting schedule of the first plan's co-creation process had tapered off.

Moving forward, the Department of National Planning and Monitoring and Transparency International Papua New Guinea can begin by formalising the committee's role in co-creation, as well as implementation. This could ensure that a consistent group of government and civil society stakeholders remain engaged across the action plan cycle. Early involvement of government agencies and representatives with relevant decision-making powers in design of commitments could support a more effective implementation process. Providing funding support for civil society members could help maintain their participation. For instance, [New Zealand's Expert Advisory Panel](#) members receive daily fees for their meeting attendance.

In terms of frequency, returning to a quarterly meeting schedule could improve the quality of commitment design and raise the level of implementation, by providing regular monitoring and discussion of any necessary course correction. These measures could also strengthen the relationships between civil society and government members. At minimum, the IRM recommends the committee meets at least every six months.

In addition, publishing information about the committee's mandate, composition, and structure on the national OGP website would contribute to meeting the minimum requirements of

Standard 1 of the [OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards](#). The [OGP handbook on designing and managing OGP multi-stakeholder forums](#) also offers useful guidance.

Recommendation 2: Establish a permanent OGP secretariat

The OGP process would benefit from a permanent secretariat that is adequately equipped to carry out its functions. The interim secretariat, housed within the Department of National Planning and Monitoring, is currently staffed by personnel seconded from other divisions within the department. The lack of dedicated in-house staff to manage its website, for example, means OGP content must be sent to the Department of Information, Communication, and Technology for updates, which makes keeping the website current difficult. A permanent OGP secretariat with portfolio leads would have better capacity to raise awareness about OGP commitments among implementing agencies, particularly at the management level—ensuring leadership buy-in and fostering ownership of the initiatives. It would also have better resources to support the National Steering Committee, including providing timely information about the OGP process and posting meeting schedules. For example, [the Philippines](#) and [Nigeria's](#) secretariats offer useful models.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen participation in the commitment development process

The third action plan's co-creation process could strengthen mechanisms for civil society and government implementers' participation in designing commitments. During the previous co-creation process, consultation was limited by a tight timeline. Commitment recommendations were gathered at a two-day conference. A consultant drafted the action plan which was then validated by a multi-stakeholder committee.

A longer co-creation timetable could allow for a more participatory commitment development process. In addition to a conference in Port Moresby, the process could gather commitment proposals through thematic consultations, like those from the first action plan cycle, as well as regional consultations. For example, the [Philippines organised consultations](#) in each of its major islands and regions. An online survey could also provide a wider group of stakeholders with the opportunity to submit proposals.

To meet minimum requirements of Standard 4 of the [OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards](#), the IRM advises documenting and publishing all commitment proposals on the national OGP website and providing reasoned response to these proposals before the end of the co-creation period. [Canada's What We Heard report](#) offers a useful model for this practice.

Members of the National Steering Committee could assess submissions and agree on a process for the joint selection and finalisation of action plan commitments. It is essential to include all government implementers and relevant ministers in this process as well to ensure budget allocation and buy-in for implementation. The final steps in action plan development are critical for gaining joint ownership of the completed plan and subsequent commitment to participate during implementation.

Recommendation 4: Regularly update the website and repository

Papua New Guinea launched its first OGP website in 2022. However, it is not regularly updated with information on action plan co-creation and implementation of commitments. It would be valuable to regularly publish information like meeting minutes, opportunities to participate in the process, and updates on progress under the action plan in a dedicated repository on the website. For instance, the repository could be established as a linked Google

Drive or Dropbox folder. This could improve the transparency of the process, public engagement, and accountability on implementation. An up-to-date OGP website and repository are necessary to meet minimum requirements of Standards 2 and 3 of the [OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards](#) and will facilitate the country's ability to meet the remaining standards. The IRM recommends the following for the website and repository:

- **Publish the multi-stakeholder forum's basic rules**, including its mandate and structure, as well as evidence that it meets at least every six months. For examples, see the OGP websites of [Australia](#), [Morocco](#), and [New Zealand](#).
- **Update the repository** at least every six months to ensure that information on action plan implementation and co-creation processes is up to date. For examples, see the repositories of [Australia](#), [Jordan](#), [New Zealand](#), and [the Philippines](#).
- **Publish the co-creation timeline** and an overview of participation opportunities at least two weeks before the action plan development process begins. For examples, see the timelines published by [Romania](#) and the [Netherlands](#).
- **Publish documentation of all input** received from stakeholders on the action plan, as well as detailed feedback on how these contributions were considered. For examples, see the documentation published by [Canada](#), [Finland](#), and [Morocco](#).

Section II: Action Plan Design

AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMITMENTS

Some areas of opportunity for the third action plan include anti-corruption, freedom of information, and fiscal transparency. Renewed efforts on each of these areas could raise Papua New Guinea's core OGP eligibility score, as the country has [failed to meet the OGP Core Eligibility Criteria](#) for four consecutive years.

AREA 1. Anti-Corruption

The third action plan could introduce a new focus on anti-corruption and engage the Independent Commission Against Corruption in the OGP process. In 2023, [Papua New Guinea's Corruption Perception Index](#) score dropped to 29/100—lowest in the Pacific—with 96% of the population considering corruption in government a big problem. Beyond the OGP platform, the government has [enshrined](#) asset disclosure and conflict of interest requirements in Papua New Guinea's Leadership Code, along with other steps towards combatting anti-corruption.

The next action plan could put those anti-corruption reforms into practice. Commitments could ensure that all asset declarations and conflict of interest regimes become fully operational and could support passage of the Unexplained Wealth Bill. Public disclosure of income and assets for elected and senior public officials is essential to anti-corruption and open, accountable government, and would raise Papua New Guinea's core OGP eligibility score. Anti-corruption commitments could also build on the 2021 amendment of the National Procurement Act, address illegal extraction of natural resources, or support implementation of the beneficial ownership register mandated by the new Company Act. The OGP platform could offer the Central Bank and the Department of Justice the opportunity to collaborate with civil society experts, technologists, and journalists to develop the register, verify information, and use the data to detect corruption. Ambitious commitments under this thematic area can also be submitted to the [Open Gov Challenge](#).

Useful resources:

- Transparency International: [Corruption and Money Laundering in the Pacific](#) and [Recommendations on Asset and Interest Declarations for OGP Action Plans](#)
- Open Ownership: [Verification of Beneficial Ownership Data](#)
- International Monetary Fund: [Unmasking Control: A Guide to Beneficial Ownership Transparency](#)
- OGP: [Open Gov Guide: Anti-Corruption](#), [Beneficial Ownership Fact Sheet](#), and [Beneficial Ownership Leadership Group](#).
- Related commitments: Ukraine (2014–2016), Cote d'Ivoire (2020–2022), Indonesia (2018–2020), Albania (2020–2022), and Nigeria (2019–2022)
- Partners that can provide technical support: [Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative](#), [UN Development Programme](#), [Transparency International](#), [Financial Action Task Force](#), [G20 Anti-Corruption Working Group](#), and [Open Ownership](#)

AREA 2. Access to Information

Papua New Guinea's two action plans to date included commitments on the Access to Information Act, which has not yet passed. An access to information law that guarantees the public's access to government data is essential to the spirit and practice of open government and would raise Papua New Guinea's core OGP eligibility score. Seven of the world's [ten top-rated countries](#) for right to information legislation improved their legislation or its implementation through the OGP process.

For Papua New Guinea, a commitment could build from the National Right to Information Policy drafted during the previous action plan cycle to ensure participatory drafting and passage of the act during the third action plan cycle. A thorough consultation and feedback process can bolster the quality of the legislation. It would also be advisable to involve the Constitutional Law Reform Commission and the First Legislative Drafting Council during consultation phase. In the interim, a commitment could also focus on practically implementing freedom of information requirements under Section 51 of the Constitution, in the wake of the [landmark Supreme Court ruling](#) in November 2023. Commitments could directly involve the Minister of Information and Communication Technology as a champion for these reforms in the National Executive Council and Parliament. Ambitious commitments under this thematic area can also be submitted to the [Open Gov Challenge](#).

Useful resources:

- The National Research Institute: [Barriers to the Use of Data to Drive Policy Decisions in Papua New Guinea](#)
- The Carter Center: [Implementation Assessment Tool](#)
- OGP: [Open Gov Guide: Right to Information](#) and [Right to Information Fact Sheet](#)
- Related Commitments: Kenya (2016–2018), Ghana (2017–2019), and Brazil (2016–2018)
- Partners that can provide technical support: [Article 19](#), [Centre for Law and Democracy](#), and [the Carter Center](#)

AREA 3. Fiscal Transparency

Both action plans to date have pursued commitments to improve fiscal transparency, albeit with minimal progress. The timely publication of essential budget documents forms the basic building blocks of budget accountability and an open budget system. Publication of annual audit reports would raise Papua New Guinea's core OGP eligibility score.

Commitments in the third action plan could take up the goals pursued in the previous action plans. They could provide the Auditor General with the necessary resources to audit all entities that receive public money and reform the Audit Act to ease the process for publishing reports. They could implement the recommendations on the budget process gathered from public consultations organised by the Consultative Implementation and Monitoring Council in 2024 as well as pilot mechanisms to engage the public in formulating and monitoring the budget. They could also ensure that financial reports on state-owned enterprises as well as provinces and districts' services improvement program funds are submitted to the Treasury—potentially through legislation. They could enact the Planning and Monitoring Responsibility Act. Commitments that plan for legislative changes could involve the Constitutional Law Reform Commission and the First Legislative Drafting Council during consultation phases. Implementers could also directly engage the Ministers for Treasury and Finance as champions for these reforms in the National Executive Council and Parliament. Ambitious commitments under this thematic area can also be submitted to the [Open Gov Challenge](#).

Useful resources:

- International Budget Partnership: [Papua New Guinea Open Budget Survey 2023](#)
- OGP: [Open Gov Guide: Open Budgets](#) and [Fiscal Openness Fact Sheet](#)
- Related commitments: Lithuania ([2018–2020](#)), Finland ([2017–2019](#)), the Philippines ([2017–2019](#)), Sekondi-Takoradi of Ghana ([2018–2020](#)), and Guatemala ([2016–2018](#))
- Partners that can provide technical support: [International Budget Partnership](#), [Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency](#), and [Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability Program](#)