

OPEN GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP (OGP)

IMPACT STORIES OF THE CO-CREATION PROCESS

By Kwesi Amoak



STMA



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With special thanks to: Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly and the OGP Multi-Stakeholder Forum Members

PREFACE

The Sekondi Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly (STMA) is the first and only Assembly in Ghana and one of 4 local governments in Africa to be admitted into the global Open Government Partnership (OGP) initiative at the initial stage in 2016.

Prior to becoming a partner of the OGP however, STMA laid a solid foundation through its town hall meetings in the course of developing medium term plans. The first OGP action plan co-creation programme in 2016 was timely as it institutionalized what had been started by the assembly.

Following a good performance on the first OGP commitments which were piloted over a 1-year period (2017) and 2018-2020 which was later extended due to the COVID-19. The Assembly commenced its third OGP co-creation process of an action plan for 2022-2024. This is a documentation of impact or significant change stories of selected leading participants and actors of the co-creation process. These are 11 unique, inspiring stories and recommendations for best practice in open governance.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
FON	Friends of the Nation
GNA	Ghana News Agency
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
MMDAs	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies
OGP	Open Government Partnership
PM	Presiding Member
PRO	Public Relations Officer
PWD	Persons with Disability
STCC	Sekondi-Takoradi Chamber of Commerce
STMA	Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly
STMA- CSUF	Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Citywide Settlement and Upgrading Fund

RICHARD ADJOLOLO

Chamber of Commerce

“I’m in love with the OGP project because it is a good project. It’s a fantastic process,” declares Richard Adjololo, CEO of Big RKNA Ventures and Executive Council member of the Sekondi-Takoradi Chamber of Commerce and Industries (STCCI). He is the representative of the Chamber on the Open Governance Project at STMA whereby he plays an integral role on the 9-member working committee as well as a member of the multi-stakeholder forum.

Prior to setting up his business which among other things imports floor tiles and A4 paper, Richard had been a reputable banker with 22 years’ experience within the Sekondi-Takoradi metropolitan area. One of the projects he supervised before leaving the banking sector was the creation of a specialized loan facility for a slum-upgrade project within the STMA. It was his first direct engagement with the assembly. Returning to the STMA as a representative of industrial players on the OGP, he appreciates further his knowledge of the assembly and the transformation happening there since his first encounter with the assembly almost a decade ago.

“OGP has been an eye-opener. At the time I joined the concept was very new to me. And the question I asked myself was why haven’t we done this a long time ago? Development is for the people but how do you develop a people when they don’t know what you are doing for them? The OGP co-creation process makes absolute sense and it makes governance a truly two way affair. For instance, if I know what you are using my money for, it’s common sense that I pay my levies for the development of the assembly,” he says.

Key issues for industry

Levies and permits: these are the two paramount concerns of the STCCI.

“How does the assembly come about the levies they charge us? How are levies calculated?”

Richard questions, adding that, “The more people pay levies, the less the amount, hence it is in the interest of the business community that we get more people covered under levies. We need to move away from the situation whereby only a few people and organisations are charged levies.”

He anticipates the OGP implementation process to address this concern of industry so as to lessen the burden of a few entities by widening the tax net.

The second issue of concern for chamber of commerce is the unnecessary delay of issuance of development permits for building.

“Hitherto, if you went to STMA office for a permit, it would take a long time before you obtained it and even that you needed to know somebody within the assembly system,” Richard says, “I raised this issue from the initial stages of the OGP co-creation process and I am glad to say that the assembly has committed itself to issuing permits within a 40-day period. This is very assuring because without the necessary permits we won’t be able to build our offices and factories on time, so we can grow profitably. If we in industry make more money, government and the assembly benefit.”

Personal application of the OGP process

At the personal level, Richard has applied the lessons he obtained in stakeholder consultations through the OGP co-creation process in the management of his business.

“The most important thing is the involvement of your stakeholders,” he says, “Your stakeholders would determine the success of anything you want to do. And once they buy into the picture of what you want to do, then it is easy. They realize that their interests are taken care of. Stakeholders should not be overlooked.”

His views about the crucial aspect of stakeholder engagement became clearer as he and the OGP moved from one community to the other.

“There was a lot to learn from the communities. Whenever we went to any community, the people opened up once they realized that we have their interests at heart,” he says.

Richard has 4 employees and he employs extra hands from time to time.

“I have carried some lessons from OGP on to my own business. At times, I give my staff some leverage to take decisions and it helps to let them take responsibility. I notice they are happy to participate in the process of the business. They come closer and bring new ideas,” he reveals.

Sustaining measures

“The bottom line of everything we are doing under OGP is performance. If we do very well, it would not be just talking it would be based on performance. Processes are in place for the performance to be monitored so that when beneficiaries talk, it would be evident of the work we would have done. If the OGP is carried through in STMA and replicated in other districts, then governance at the top shouldn't be difficult,” Richard declares with optimism.

MILDRED SIABI MENSAH

Media

Mildred Siabi Mensah is a Chief Reporter for the Ghana News Agency (GNA) in the Western Region. She serves as a member of the multi-stakeholder platform and the 9-member working group of the OGP.

According to Mildred, “The introduction of OGP has been very revealing. It has opened governance to the citizenry. The citizens are now able to participate in the plans of STMA. Formerly, the assembly was quite open through the formulation of the medium term development plans. But now, I find STMA far more open and they have been able to put in shape their client-service unit.”

Key lessons

“I have learnt a lot, particularly the engagement between state actors and the citizenry. It is one of the key things we have to do in building upon our democratic credentials as the hope of democracy in Africa. Getting citizens engaged calms down tensions in society. The people get to know what their monies are used for. They are better able to suggest and ultimately influence government policies,” Mildred reiterates.

She has equally gained knowledge about the assembly system. “I have a good and fair idea of local government activities,” says Mildred, “I have knowledge to speak on issues such as fee fixing, budgeting and development of medium term plans about the local governance system to educate others.”

On the multi-stakeholder platform, Mildred is usually tasked with writing the reports.

Implementation

“Openness of the administration, accountability and fairness are for me the crucial tenets we have to keep our eyes on,” says Mildred who has been a journalist for 15 years now.

In order for the implementation phase of OGP to succeed, Mildred sees the need to strengthen the process for monitoring and evaluation.

“The OGP is a good thing, so we should all work towards making it work. We ought to make it work. As a journalist, I am a watchdog to the society so I have to constantly follow up and check on the assembly. I have a bigger role to play to educate citizens on the 5 commitment areas so they help us monitor and help the assembly grow,” she says.

ISAAC AIDOO

OGP point of contact

Isaac Aidoo is the indefatigable focus person of the OGP. Eight years ago, he entered the STMA as a national service personnel. He was retained after national service and has since served as a development planning officer in charge of social accountability issues. He led the assembly to compete and win the OGP membership.

“This is one project an area which has given the assembly international exposure. To be able to lead STMA being the only assembly in Ghana and among only 4 in the whole of Africa, is a big achievement for me and it makes me feel proud. To lead my city to chalk this success,” he says, beaming with smiles.



Isaac Aidoo. Photo: Kwesi Amoak/Mpuntusem

“One of the key things that I am impressed with is the composition and work of the multi-stakeholder forum; how we have been able to work together with government and CSOs to co-create the development plan is a source of joy,” says Isaac.

He played a pivotal role in getting those from the marginalized groups to become part of the co-creation process and the multi-stakeholder forum. Among such marginalized groups were people living with HIV, the aged, Persons with Disability (PWD) and representations from slum communities.

In leading the OGP process at STMA, Isaac has gained and improved in some interpersonal skills. “I have improved greatly in mobilizing different groups to work as a team. I have gained lobbying skills and the ability to motivate team members,” he says.

Continuous training

The assembly is saddled with human and financial resource constraints. Going into the future, Isaac considers continuous capacity building as crucial.

“There is the need for continues training,” he says, “The staff turn-over at the assembly is high, so we should have succession plan in place so that if someone is not there, others can fit in to continue, otherwise, whatever we have started may come to naught. But once the system is in place, then we shall make progress.”

Usually soft projects such as capacity building workshops are not given a priority because political heads of the assembly typically want to see physical projects. But as Isaac indicates, “It is the soft skills and training which help sustain the physical projects.”

Having a system of regular capacity building in place is quite an imperative for the OGP process to succeed because even with assembly members, when their 4year tenure ends and they are not voted into office, what do you do with the new ones who come in? This could also be the situation for members of the multi-stakeholder forum: when some members move on to other callings in life and leave the jurisdiction, what do you do?

The OGP process at STMA is attracting a lot of attention. Recently, Friends of the Nation (FoN) mobilized technocrats and political heads of other districts visited STMA to learn about OGP. These included the other coastal districts in the Western Region. At the national level, Isaac usually gets invited to speak on platforms organized by the national secretariat of the OGP to enable other MMDAs buy into the OGP concept.

AZIZ MAHMOUD

STMA-CSUF

The Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Citywide Settlement and Upgrading Fund (STMA-CSUF) was formed in 2008 as a partnership between STMA, Ministry of Works and Housing and UN Habitat. It was set up primarily to upgrade the living conditions of the urban poor in the Sekondi-Takoradi metropolis. The STMA-CSUF has been one of three civil society partners on the OGP process.



Aziz Mahmoud. Photo: Kwesi Amoak/Mpuntutsem

The project manager for STMA-CSUF, Aziz is a member of the 40-member multi-stakeholder forum, representing the interest of the marginalized group that he works with.

“My constituency is the slum dwellers,” declares Aziz, “Over 70 percent of communities within STMA classified as slums in light of UN Habitat’s definition/standards, that is, communities which lack basic household toilets, portable water, no security of tenure on land, highly populated and temporal buildings. These tend to be marginalized.”

Interestingly, of the 10 communities which were visited during the co-creation process, about 80 percent of such communities were slums. The second commitment of Sanitation under STMA’s OGP Action Plan for 2022-2024 is largely borne out of the interaction and feedback from the slum communities.

A different approach to sanitation

STMA usually arrests people for defecating in the open. But Aziz does not see arresting people as the best solution to the problem. “It is a nuanced approach to tackling that problem,” he says, suggesting a long term approach that, “Because we are dealing with low-income people, how we get them to construct household toilets even if it means meeting them half-way with funding is the way to go.” There have been some concrete results to that effect.

“Early this year, we partnered with the assembly on a subsidized household toilet pilot project which is demand driven targeting 100 households. The beneficiaries contributed their quota by providing the structure (room) and the assembly supplies the toilet bowl and bio-digester. Over 60 of the toilets have been completed so far,” Aziz reveals, “The bio-fill technology is the best that we can deploy. We are looking at building on these user cases to sell/scale up the idea into a metro wide project.”

Through the OGP co-creation process, the communities now feel that the assembly cares about them.

“These communities are now very involved with the assembly. Community members are looking to seeing the changes that we have been talking about through the OGP process. They want to see how the assembly would be to create the enabling civic space for them to be actively engaged,” says Aziz.

The information gap

In assessing the OGP co-creation process, Aziz deems the lack of access to information on projects undertaken by the assembly for communities.

“In all the communities that we visited, there was a big gap of how to close the feedback loop. There had been concerns that they (community members) have been engaging the assembly and civil society partners on a number of platforms. They tell us their needs, we proffer solutions but we don’t get back to them about where we’ve gotten to in addressing an issue or issues.”

“The assembly itself needs to be open. How does it make sure that the process sinks into the fabric of the assembly system?”

It is expected that commitment number 4 which is aimed at promoting public participation would address the feedback loop through public notice boards, making the medium-term plan easily accessible among other strategies.

Personal growth moments

Aziz has a degree in Development Planning and recently obtained an MBA in Strategic Project Management. He's been the project manager of STMA-CSUF for 8 years now. Through the OGP co-creation process, his perspectives have evolved.

“My organisation is a special purpose vehicle that links slum dwellers to commercial banks. We tend to look at the business side of projects. However, it is clear to me now that I have to play the role of an advocate to the communities. It is important to play the advocacy role to make sure that the assembly focuses and dedicates some resources to tackling problems in slums.

“Some projects like communal drains may not be bankable, so through the OGP process I have come to see the need to advocate for such services. We should not only be looking at how financially feasible a project is but how to advocate for community projects that are not necessarily bankable,” Aziz declares.

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ISHMAEL BRAVO

Assembly member

Ishmael Bravo is the former elected member for Bakaekyir Electoral Area. He serves in the Development Planning Sub-Committee. Prior to being elected an assembly member, he had entered STMA as a Unit Committee member. Hence, he knows the assembly system quite well and notices some important changes since the inception of the OGP.



Ishmael Bravo. *Photo: Kwesi Amoak/Mpuntusem*

Significant changes

“Unlike the olden days that people can accuse leadership of the assembly of an offence without basis, we hardly find that now because with the OGP, whatever the assembly does, it takes it to the doorstep of the community,” says Bravo, “The OGP co-creation process has taken away the animosity and perception that public officials are corrupt and thieves. It is also easy for any community member to walk to the assembly and demand to know which contractor is contracting a road or any project and at what sum.”

The co-creation process has enhanced citizens’ participation in the assembly.

“Now as we take the assembly to the people; to the market women, artisans, people are now beginning to pay attention to the work of the assembly and upholding their civic responsibilities in terms of paying of taxes and levies.”

According to Bravo, the OGP process is eliminating all the bottlenecks within the system. “The technocrats are now abreast with the system and are bent on ensuring that we keep the OGP standards. Permits, for instance are now fast to obtain.”

To make the permitting process even faster, Bravo proposes the use of technology. “I have proposed that we develop an app which will alert you as soon as you apply for a permit. You get alerted when the application is approved. The data is then sent to the revenue department for them to rate the property. I have sold the idea to the accounting department.”

His idea requires the eliminating the human factor in the process as much as possible so that payments can be made electronically. “I want to champion this idea before I leave,” he avers.

Dealing with corruption

Although the system may be opening up in terms of the OGP, there is still a pervasive notion that when someone becomes a public official, the person becomes rich. This according to Bravo, who suffers the consequence of this perception, has to change; it has to be dealt with if we are to eliminate corruption.

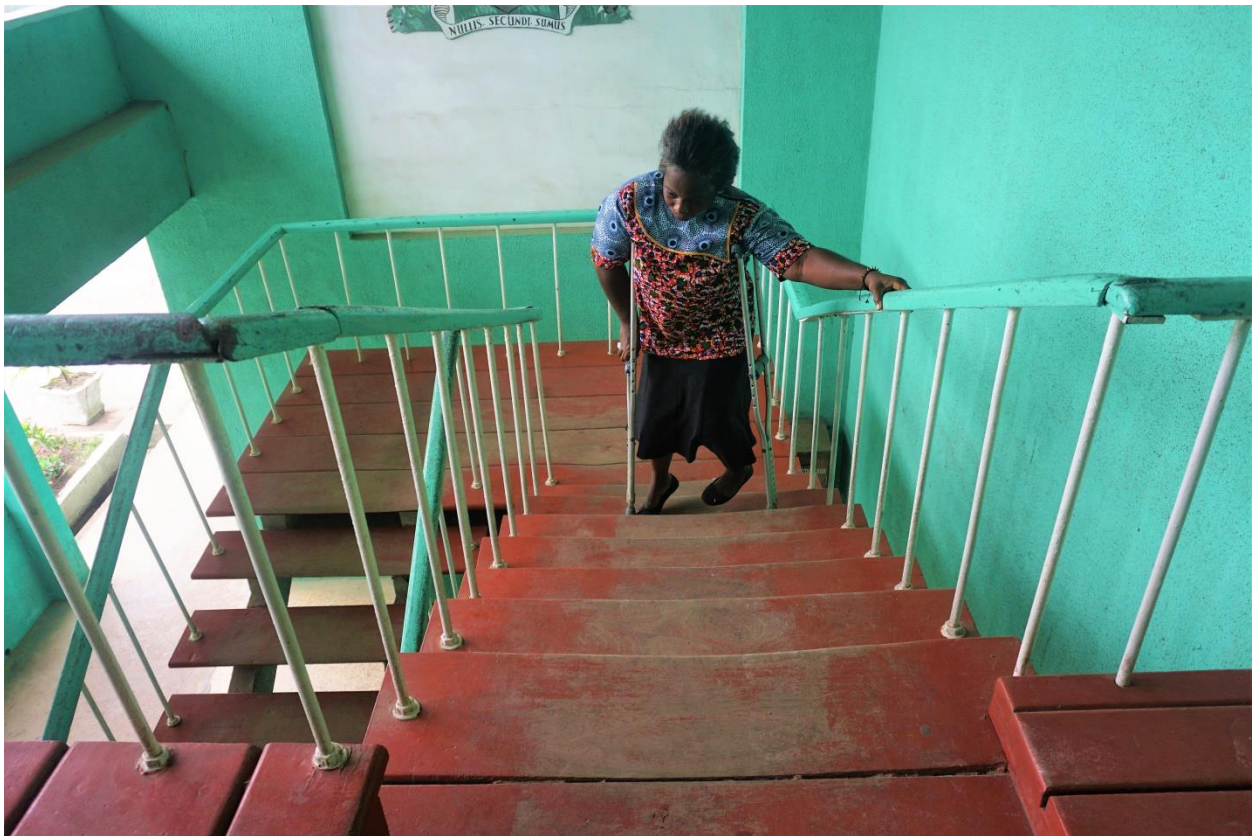
“There has to be extensive education to change the mindsets of the citizens, from the bottom...it is the voters who make the politician corrupt,” he says.

Although Bravo has been a very proactive assembly member, he has resolved not to contest for a second term. That notwithstanding Bravo pledges to champion the tenets of the OGP as he expects to still work for his community and the assembly in different capacities going into the future.

“I’m a strong believer of the OGP process and look forward to supporting the process even when I leave office,” he states.

“When the local government system is open enough PWDs can be assured that their needs and concerns would be addressed,” states Mrs. Christiana Efua Quansah, an appointed representative of persons with disability (PWD) at the STMA.

It’s the second time Christiana is serving at the assembly, having been appointed earlier from 2007 to 2009. She had previously also served as the national Public Relations Officer (PRO) of the Women’s Wing of Ghana Society for the Physically Disabled. She brings her experiences to bear on the social services and development planning committees at the assembly.



To get to the conference room of STMA, Christiana has to climb this stairs which is not disability friendly. It is expected that this will be rectified soon.

Photo: Kwesi Amoak/Mpuntutsem

Accessible facilities

STMA has a lot more to do in terms of creating accessible spaces for PWDs.

“There is hardly any budgetary allocation to create alternative routes for persons with disability. I’m in social services committee, so I know what’s going on. In fact, the social welfare department itself is not accessible to some persons with disability,” says Christiana.

Through the OGP co-creation process and persistent lobbying however, there have been some improvements, such as the assembly’s youth centre has recently made accessible to PWDs.

“I would say that the OGP has contributed immensely to this because going through communities, PWDs are now able to voice out their concerns and grievances,” Christiana indicates, stressing that, “Sometimes, you need to channel your grievances through the right channel. For us, the OGP has created the avenue for us to express our needs. Formerly less attention was given to those of us with disabilities, but the situation is changing, thanks to OGP.”

Funds for progress

In Christiana’s view, there has been a lot of transparency and accountability in recent years at the STMA. “The assembly has a common fund for PWDs. In previous years it was difficult to access the funds. But through the OGP process, now this has been opened for people to access. It’s easy to obtain application forms. I’m very glad because it’s working now in our interest.”

Those funds are for business, training, health and education. The assembly does not give out money directly to applicants. Rather, it makes payment in relation to the need applied for. So for instance, if a parent who has disability applies for assistance with school fees of a child, the assembly would make payment directly to the child’s school.

Christiana is a fashion designer by profession. In 2018, she applied for and got an industrial sewing machine from the assembly. This has been a game-changer for her.

“There is a lot of difference now in my work. The machine is very fast so I’m making more profits. At first I could only sew 2 dresses in a day, but now with the machine, I can sew 5 dresses a day,” reveals Christiana, the mother of 2 boys.



Christiana Efua Quansah. *Photo: Kwesi Amoak/Mpuntutsem*

“I would say that other districts should include PWDs during the creation of the medium plans as the OGP has done,” she recommends.

JOHN KWESI BUCKMAN

Presiding Member & OGP Co-chair

John Kwesi Buckman, the former assembly member for Kweikuma electoral area is the Presiding Member (PM) of STMA. A professional Mathematics teacher at the Fijai Senior High School, he serves as the co-chair of the multi-stakeholder forum of the OGP.



John Kwesi Buckman in class. *Photo: Kwesi Amoak/Mpuntutsem*

“The OGP process actually started around 2015,” Buckman recalls, “when we had a lot of interaction with the communities under the leadership of madam Charlotte Odoom, who worked had with my predecessor to bring the assembly to the doorsteps of the people. It was with that engagement that we were able to get into the OGP.”

Improved processes and benefits

“One area I can talk about is the issuance of permits. People didn’t have permits and we could not have their houses valued so we lost out on the revenue. Now with a spatial committee and with that, the maximum time to spend on it would be a maximum of 45 days. This is a direct result of the OGP and has helped because most people were circumventing the law by building anyhow.”

The involvement of citizens in the assembly has translated in the increase of revenues.

“Our revenues have gone up over the past two years. 4.4 percent increase last year. We had planned to get 8.4 million and we ended the year with 8.8 million of Internally General Funds (IGF).”

A better leader

At the personal level, the OGP co-creation process has greatly impacted his life. “It has broadened my horizon and given me a lot of exposure to a lot of people beyond STMA,” Buckman reveals, “Working with my constituents, I have now come to see the importance of feedback which I rely on a lot. I’m more open and get more feedback on whatever I do. It doesn’t matter if it is negative feedback, it is worth having.”



“At the assembly, I have also learnt to be more tolerant with my colleague assembly members and the concerns they express. My job as a presiding member includes Public relations and Complains- the co-creation process enabled me to perform that function. OGP has made me a better leader. As a presiding member, I more or less have the responsibility to make sure that the OGP succeeds. I have to nurture it to grow and succeed,” he declares.

Buckman became the assembly member for Kweikuma since 2011 and step down in 2019 and later appointed/elected as the Presiding Member.

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KWAMENA THOMPSON

NAP+

79 year-old Kwamena Thompson is the Western Regional chairman of the Network of Associations of Persons Living with HIV (NAP+). He is an Ex-Serviceman of the Ghana Air Force.

“At the initial stages of the OGP I was contacted to gather some members of our association. We met at the Catholic Church premise where the OGP concept was introduced to our group. It was stated that the process would let members of our association get involved and know whatever the assembly is doing so we hold them accountable,” says Kwamena.



Kwame Thompson. *Photo: Kwesi Amoak/Mpuntusem*

Empowered

Being a member of the multi-stakeholder forum, Kwamena has learnt a lot on the OGP process and has taken upon himself to ensure that a facility meant health personnel is not completely abandoned.

“Through the OGP concept, I have had the courage to follow up on the construction of a staff’s quarters which was started by the previous government and has been abandoned since 2016.”

He went to the Presiding Member who directed him to the hospital administrator. Unfortunately, the hospital administrator who is new to the place had no knowledge of contractual engagements.

“I keenly continue to follow up on that project due to my knowledge of the OGP programme. Formerly this was not possible. I could not know who to approach anyone at the assembly. But now I am able to do so. I am bent on making sure that the building which is about 80 percent complete would be fully complete,” Kwamena declares.

HIV/AIDS matters

Dealing with the assembly on the OGP, we concern ourselves with availability and accessibility of drugs.

Through the OGP, member of NAP+ are fully engaged by the assembly in the organisation of activities and events on HIV/AIDS such as World AIDS Day celebrations.

The assembly allocates 0.05 percent of its annual funds to persons living with HIV and AIDS. Part of this amount (50 cedis per every quarter) is allocated to persons referred to as Models of Hope, that is, people who openly come out about the HIV status- like Kwamena Thompson- who inspire others to live healthy lives with the virus. The assembly also uses the same amount for HIV/AIDS outreach programmes.

“We wish that the assembly would assist us more. When our association wants to have an outreach programme for instance, the assembly can fund such activities. The assembly can also support us with a cover/endorsement letter to enable us seek funding from other organisations,” says Kwamena.

Moving forward on the OGP, Kwamena has a major concern which needs to be addressed. “My concern with OGP is where to carry your complaints and to follow-up to the legitimate end. We need to provide feedback and ensure that when a problem is brought from any of the communities, we are proactive in finding solutions,” he states.

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VICTORIA ARABA DENNIS

OGP Co-Chair

Victoria Araba Dennis the Executive Director of African Women International is the Co-Chair of the OGP Multi Stakeholder Forum.

“The OGP is indeed a very open process. In other projects that we undertake as NGOs, you are usually restricted to some aspects, but in OGP you are open to all sorts of dimensions and what I find very important is the involvement of the local people (indigenes),” Victoria says, reflecting on the co-creation process.

Coming from a women-led organisation, she always put the interest of women first. “Most of the time when we go to the community and there are issues, it is women who are able to give much

information about it. The women are able to tell you what benefit the entire community. So most of the time we involve the women a lot,” says Victoria.



OGP Co-chair Victoria Araba Dennis makes a point during a Multi Stakeholder meeting. Photo: *Kwesi Amoak/Mpuntusem*

Key factors for sustainability

“What we need to do to ensure the success of the project. It must be the involvement of the people. When the people own the project the understanding is there. We must let the people own it, so that it continues with or without the assembly’s direct involvement,”

As a result, Victoria suggests the creation of a stronger monitoring mechanism.

“We have to come up with a monitoring team, comprising members from the community, the Multi Stakeholder Forum and technical people at the assembly. It should be a team of about 7 or 9 people,” she proposes.

SOLOMON KUSI AMPOFO

Friends of the Nation

“In all, about 1000 persons from different backgrounds were directly engaged on the OGP, co-creation process, so for me, what stands out as distinguishing features of the OGP is the level of inclusion; the total commitment by the local authority (the assembly), is also worth mentioning” declares Solomon Kusi Ampofo is the Programmes and Campaigns Manager at Friends of the Nation, a civil society organisation partner to STMA that has played a pivotal role on the OGP co-creation process.

“The OGP is one of the most exciting things that I have undertaken in my career so far,” Solomon reveals, “Dealing with multiplicity of stakeholders at the same time and trying to get them to see the need to participate in governance and getting them to prioritise things that they believe could bring good governance, transparency, better service delivery. It’s exciting. Doing

all this process, we are touching base with ordinary citizens, fishermen, PWDs, market women, high level public officials, media, and persons with HIV. In fact, but for the OGP, I would not have known that there is a well-organized body of persons living with HIV/AIDS. It's been an eye-opener.”



Solomon Kusi Ampofo. *Photo: Kwesi Amoak/Mpuntutsem*

Sustaining the OGP

Funding has been a big challenge for the OGP implementation at STMA. The commitments are well articulated but usually the assembly does not have the funds to carry out those commitments. But there is some level of hope. According to Solomon, “The OGP is creating avenues to fund some of the commitments- one commitment in an action plan.”

In order to overcome the challenge of funding, Solomon proposes that, “The OGP process should be fully integrated into the assembly’s medium term plan so that budgets are allocated to such commitments, with the annual action plans. That’s one sure way to sustain the project.”

Apart from finding funding for the implementation of the OGP it is equally crucial to sustain the project through regular engagements of stakeholders. “The working group and the multi stakeholder forum have to be engaged constantly. There should also be constant engagement between the assembly and the communities,” says Solomon.

A flagship project

The OGP is undoubtedly one of the major projects the Friends of the Nation (FoN) has worked on in recent years. “First of all, the STMA is the first and the only district in Ghana to have been part of the 1st cohort of OGP around the world. It has also given us a global exposure as we share the experiences at the international level. It is indeed one of our flagship projects,” Solomon reveals.

Consequently, Solomon assures that Friends of the Nation will continue to engage in the process and to leverage on this to support other assemblies to implement things in accordance with the principles of the OGP.

“I am looking forward to having the current action plans well implemented because they are very transformative in nature. It will affect many lives and put the assembly on a high pedestal,” Solomon says in anticipation.

NANA KOFI ABUNA V
Representative of Nananom

Before the inception of the OGP, one person was usually noted for calling for transparency of governance during workshop organized by STMA. That person was Nana Kofi Abuna V, the female chief of Essipon, a traditional area under the metropolitan assembly.



Nana Kofi Abuna V. *Photo: Kwesi Amoak/Mpuntutsem*

“The OGP has been a good process. OGP is the meaning of governance,” says Nana, “Things are now becoming open, unlike previously when a few leaders at the assembly decided behind the scenes on behalf of people. Some years back I kept advocating for community participation in the making of budgets for the assembly. We are the grass root so we know what the people go through. The grass root gives you the best input you need. I am glad this is happening now as governance is brought to the door step of the people.”

Nana serves on the 9- member working committee, representing Nananom and plays a key role as a member of the 40-member Multi Stakeholder forum.

At Essipon, Nana has been practicing openness since she became chief almost 20 years ago. The OGP co-creation process came to complement what she was doing on the ground. “My community was part of the community engagements that we had. It was an amazing experience for both the assembly and the community. Community members are very active, finding out about projects from the assembly and who is responsible for what.”

Long term strategy

“With this OGP we have to own it,” says Nana, “We should not allow the political parties to destroy. We should not allow any change of political party to change our focus and own it. Beyond the support of the World Bank and the civil society groups we should have a long term. And we should turn it into some sort of a documented instrument or law so that we don’t change things with a change of government. We must have a long term strategy.”

To have a long term strategy, Nana believes, “There is the need for education and display of projects on social accountability notice boards.”

In light of the emerging openness at the assembly, Nana -from the perspective of a traditional leader- continues to push for more transparency especially when it comes to the use of funds from stool lands paid annually to the local government as stipulated by law.

“Within the Sekondi Takoradi area there about 22 traditional councils; when you go to the constitution, 55 percent of stool land money goes to the local government, but no one is able to

account for it. I am expecting that we are open about how this money is spent. Any time I ask about it, I am told the money goes to the consolidated fund of the state, but whatever the case may be, I expect that how those funds are used should be published. That is transparency. Why must we pay monies to the assembly and struggle to get projects?”

“I have learnt so many things during the co-creation process. Above all, I am emboldened to continue with my advocacy on openness and accountability,” Nana reiterates.

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