



Open Climate Governance Primer

INTRODUCTORY NOTE: This primer describes the benefits of a 'whole of society' approach to climate governance, providing illustrative examples from a range of countries. It is intended for both government officials and representatives of civil society organizations to use as a resource when engaging with their counterparts on climate governance issues. It has been developed for members of the Open Government Partnership (OGP). As Open Government Partnership (OGP) co-chairs in 2016-2017, the Government of France and World Resources Institute made climate change and sustainable development core priorities for their chairmanship. The OGP's Paris Declaration, adopted in December of 2016, included three collective actions on climate action and sustainable development, laying the foundation to leverage open government reforms to strengthen climate action. Since 2015, 15 countries have made 20 climate commitments in their OGP National Action Plans, but can also be used by all stakeholders seeking to build support for these approaches in their domestic context.

What is open climate governance?

- **Open climate governance** refers to a transparent, participatory and accountable approach to developing and implementing policies and actions to tackle climate change. Policies and actions may include laws, regulations, decrees, directives, plans and programs as well as fiscal instruments to address climate change mitigation or adaptation. Ultimately, open climate governance aims to promote the legitimacy, effectiveness, equitability and sustainability of climate policies and actions.
- **Transparent:** Promoting proactive disclosure and access to information and data on climate-relevant activities. This includes information relevant to mitigation and adaptation as well policy responses such as legislation, long-term strategies, Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), national adaptation plans and detailed budget information. Proactive disclosure refers to information made public at the initiative of the public body.¹ Best practices include the disclosure of information in a timely fashion and in a range of formats that are accessible to users with different technical abilities. In addition, information on opportunities for participation is also disclosed in a way that the public can easily locate, understand and use in a timely fashion.

EXAMPLE: In its 2016–2018 OGP National Action Plan, Chile committed to lead regional negotiations to strengthen environmental democracy. This commitment builds transparency into its process by communicating all negotiation news and official documents on a dedicated webpage. The negotiations, except for select events, are also open to the public.²

- **Participatory:** Providing early, adequate and accessible opportunities for the public to engage, while ensuring a breadth of consultation that includes vulnerable communities. This encompasses reporting back to those consulted on how their inputs were taken into account, and ensuring that these instances of participation have a bearing on decision-making.

EXAMPLE: Costa Rica made public consultations an integral part of its INDC drafting process, holding a series of stakeholder workshops that became the basis for the draft. The government later circulated the finalized draft widely and gathered feedback through workshops, presentations and meetings with relevant groups, such as the press and indigenous groups.³

- **Accountable:** Beginning with a precise determination of an institution's objectives and the identification of measurable indicators of successful performance. Accountability originates from standards and systems to ensure that power is exercised responsibly, that environmental and social safeguards as well as fiduciary standards are enforced, and that independent grievance redress mechanisms are in place when these are violated.⁴

EXAMPLE: In its 2016–2018 OGP National Action Plan, Honduras committed to design a National Climate Change Plan with citizens' input and participation. The government has built an online platform where citizens can submit and vote on proposals for specific actions to be included in the plan. The resulting draft will be presented with detailed explanations for the inclusion or exclusion of proposed actions.⁵



How will open climate governance support the implementation of climate goals?

It Builds Public Support for Climate Action:

- Under the Paris Agreement, countries must report their progress on mitigation and adaptation actions and progressively increase the ambition of their national climate actions over time. Increased access to information and participatory decision-making will help governments demonstrate transparency in reporting and build the public trust that is necessary to scale up ambition.

EXAMPLE: *Engaging in a participatory process to open greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions data through OGP enabled the Macedonian Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning to draw the attention of high-level public officials in other sectors. This contributed to building awareness of climate actions among decision-makers and raising the political profile of the climate agenda. This is not only significant for Macedonia's current climate commitments, but also for the fact that, as a European Union candidate country, Macedonia will have to continue assuming higher standards for climate action and reporting. Additionally, by developing and promoting the use of robust GHG inventories, the Macedonian government was able to identify areas where the ambition of climate action could potentially be increased.*⁶

- Strengthening transparency and accountability mechanisms can help safeguard climate finance from corruption and mismanagement. This is important because investments in climate resilience and low-carbon technology must be made rapidly. Yet the mechanisms through which these funds are starting to flow are new and relatively untested. The risk of misuse, including corruption, is further magnified by weak governance and institutional frameworks, highlighting the need for reinforced public accountability.⁷ Ultimately, this helps ensure that funds are reaching the most vulnerable communities and effectively supporting local decision-making.⁸

EXAMPLE: *Climate finance flows have surged in recent years, but many countries still face challenges in adequately monitoring climate finance, including a lack of appropriate institutional arrangements.⁹ This endangers the safe delivery of funds where they are needed. In the Philippines, a group*

*of civil society organizations launched a comprehensive investigation on the spending of climate funds. They discovered that, while \$880 million had been committed from 2010–2013, only \$396 million had been disbursed, and only a fraction of this money was destined for local communities. The Oversight Committee on Climate Change was subsequently established by the Philippine parliament.*¹⁰

- Strengthening transparency and public participation can foster legitimacy and cooperation from the public and civil society, helping officials mobilize support for national climate goals.

EXAMPLE: *In the Sinazongwe district of Zambia, which has suffered chronic and devastating droughts, the government centrally initiated a dam and irrigation project with very measured participation of local communities. The community consequently resisted the construction of the dams and the irrigation projects were delayed.*¹¹

Open Data and Access to Information Can Drive Innovation:

- Open data empowers non-state actors to innovate and drive the shift to a low-carbon future.

EXAMPLE: *Initiatives like C3¹² in France and Climate-KIC's Climathons¹³ bring citizens together to develop crowdsourced solutions to specific climate challenges with the use of open data. The success of C3 in 2015 led the French Ministry of Environment to launch the GreenTech Incubator, a program that fosters start-ups working on issues such as energy transition, biodiversity and sustainable cities through the reuse of open data.*¹⁴

- Increased access to information allows the private sector to identify investment opportunities to drive transformation.

EXAMPLE: *OpenForests, a consulting company that supports sustainable forestry projects and connects them with investors, collects and manages its clients' forestry data and reports them in a transparent manner. This allows projects to identify opportunities for improvement, show best practices and build trust among investors and stakeholders.¹⁵ In this case, it is a private company that is producing and disclosing data in favor of informed investments, but the same effect could be expected from government-generated data.*

- Open data allows the most vulnerable countries to use the best available tools to adapt to climate impacts, assess risks and make robust decisions in a changing climate.

EXAMPLE: *NASA's DEVELOP Program and the Rwanda Environment Management Authority have started a joint project to map land change over time in Rwandan wetlands and pinpoint critical areas for enhanced protection. This project uses NASA's open data to advance wetland conservation efforts, help safeguard local biodiversity, mitigate changes in climate and increase food security.*¹⁶

It Supports Efforts to Enhance Resilience to Climate Impacts:

- Enhanced public participation in adaptation planning at the national and subnational level helps ensure that strategies are locally relevant, accurately reflect the community's needs and make efficient use of resources. Additionally, it builds public awareness and support for the plans.

EXAMPLE: *The use of a community-based tool for risk assessment in Ghana resulted in greater knowledge of risks and adaptation opportunities among both policymakers and the affected communities. The coastal municipalities subsequently developed contingency plans, and citizens remained involved in their socialization and implementation. This helped ensure the plans were relevant to the affected communities.*¹⁷

- Increased access to climate and environmental data enables local decision-makers to adequately plan adaptation and resilience projects.

EXAMPLE: *Officials in Accra, Ghana, are using a portal of open water sanitation data developed by Resilience.io to strengthen resilience in this sector.*¹⁸

How does open climate governance support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

- Climate change poses the greatest threat to those who are the most socially and economically vulnerable, further exacerbating existing inequities. Meanwhile, both mitigation and adaptation interact with broader equity issues involving livelihoods, health, food security and energy access.¹⁹ Creating opportunities for public participation in decision-making helps officials develop more effective, socially equitable policies, with benefits for the achievement of SDG 10.

EXAMPLE: *Vietnam's coasts have lost more than 80 percent of their mangrove forests since the 1950s, magnifying the impact of storm surges. This in turn endangers the agricultural, water resources and aquaculture sectors as a result of floods and rising sea levels. In southern Vietnam, mangrove restoration projects took local communities' needs into account, protecting their right to access the forests and use their resources. The restoration projects therefore not only protected against storms, but they also provided economic benefits and preserved the economic activities of women. This won the communities' continued cooperation and strengthened the projects' long-term viability.*²⁰

- By inviting greater public participation and transparency in decision-making, governments can build up the inclusivity and responsiveness of their institutions in support of SDG 16.

EXAMPLE: *In its 2016 OGP National Action Plan, Honduras committed to design a National Climate Change Plan with citizens' input and participation. The government has built an online platform where citizens can submit and vote on proposals for specific actions to be included in the Plan. The result of this online consultation will be presented in open meetings to prioritize actions, following which the government will give detailed explanations for the inclusion or exclusion of proposed actions.*²¹ *If successfully implemented, this commitment will ensure that the National Climate Change Plan reflects an inclusive and responsive creation process.*



How can the OGP drive progress on climate action?

- OGP brings governments and civil society together around a collaborative action plan creation process, providing a space for capacity-building and cooperation. Additionally, OGP provides targeted technical support through its Support Unit and thematic working groups. These resources can simultaneously support implementation of the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- OGP provides opportunities and platforms for peer exchange and learning across many levels — geographical, institutional and sectoral.
- By integrating the OGP process with their ongoing climate initiatives, governments can build political momentum behind these initiatives, buttress the legitimacy of plans at home and demonstrate their efforts internationally.

EXAMPLE: *Argentina has recently implemented mechanisms for public participation in climate policy and used OGP's forum to further formalize this initiative. While these efforts may strain public resources, the goal is to ensure coordination within government and with civil society and lend legitimacy to its climate change strategy for more effective outcomes.*²²

Commitments on climate and sustainable development through OGP

The following thematic areas provide examples of commitments that OGP members, both national and subnational, can integrate into their current or future NAPs:

- Transparent and participatory development of climate and sustainable development policies at the subnational and national levels, including (but not limited to) climate plans, mid-century low emission strategies and other national submissions requested under the new transparency framework:
 - **Create public participation processes** that are gender- responsive and that provide early, adequate and accessible opportunities for the public to engage
 - **Ensure a breadth of consultation** with relevant ministries, civil society, scientists, trade unions, marginalized and vulnerable groups, local authorities and the private sector
 - **Build trust by publishing public inputs and government responses** to these processes in formats and media that are accessible to the wider public.
- Track and publicize climate-relevant policy implementation and results:
 - **Develop, track and publish nationally-relevant milestones and indicators** of climate and sustainable development policies, such as those associated with Nationally Determined Contributions, 2020 pledges, long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies and green growth/sustainable development strategies relevant for the SDGs. In cases where capacity is limited, an open process could help determine which policies would be prioritized for tracking.

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- Provide greater transparency of information on climate and sustainable development in national budgets:
 - **Improve the consistency, comprehensiveness and comparability** of timely and public reporting by all providers of climate finance, including information on the status, sources, financial instruments and thematic focus of financing provided to developing country partners.
 - **Implement cross-government budget systems and processes** that enable the identification, tracking and regular reporting of domestic resources mobilized for low- and high-emission activities. This can align revenue and expenditure decisions with low-emission, climate-resilient national development strategies.
 - **Map the receipt, use and outcomes of international and domestic climate change financial resources**, ensuring transparency and enabling the monitoring of collective global goals.
 - Disclose climate-related investment risks and corresponding mitigation measures:
 - **Require national financial institutions and private sector investors, insurers and banks to publicly disclose relevant information** on the climate and natural resources-related financial risks of their investments, measures adopted to manage these risks and investments that contribute to climate solutions. This can help align public and private financial flows with a zero-carbon and climate-resilient development trajectory, while also increasing companies' and investors' integration of climate and natural resource risks, related commodity price volatility and other shocks into decision-making. The French example of the law on energy transition, with Article 173 related to the mandatory disclosure of climate-related information by companies, offers a good practice to be shared more widely.
 - Open up data to meet user needs for sustainable development and climate risk resilience:
 - **Open up the most relevant climate and development related datasets** that can enable innovation, improved mitigation and adaptation planning and accountability. This data can include in-depth sectoral information on a country's energy, industry, transport, agriculture and forestry sectors as well as impact, climate risk and climate scenario information. Data can go beyond emissions to include information on a country's power sector, satellite imagery and transport infrastructure.
 - **Develop the necessary legal, regulatory or institutional mechanisms** to enable the collection, management and proactive disclosure of climate and sustainable development data.
 - **Make datasets publicly available in open data formats** with an accessible explanation of uncertainty levels to help educate, empower and engage all stakeholders. When it is possible to do so without violating citizens' privacy, governments should disclose, in open data format, available data used to undertake gender-disaggregated assessments of vulnerability.

OPEN DATA

COUNTRY	COMMITMENTS
2018 France	Give citizens the means to engage in decision-making regarding the ecological transition and sustainable development: • Following the guidelines established by the National Counsel on the Ecological Transition, incorporate citizens' participation in monitoring of the national adaptation plan; establish inter-ministerial coordination to support the implementation of the national adaptation plan and uptake of SDGs. • Inventory and publish datasets produced by the Ministries of Environment and Territories; open up data related to waste and pesticide sales; improve access to environmental impact assessments; disclose data on construction permits in open format.
2017 Costa Rica	Through participatory spaces, structure and standardize a method for the disclosure of data on climate change and climate finance in a format that is open, neutral, interoperable, and sustainable; with the goal of facilitating and promoting its access, reuse, and redistribution for an improved approach to climate change actions.
2017 Argentina	Official information on climate change will be centralized at the national and provincial levels on an online, open access platform... [that] will include current and historical GHG inventories, as well as indicators and maps of climate change risks. The format will be open access and interactive, and it will be downloadable for reuse.
2016 Macedonia	Provide open access to GHG inventory at national and local levels and improve data collection.
2016 Sierra Leone	Providing user friendly data and information regarding climate related action: Creating a user friendly public tool to track policy implementation with critical milestones in specific sectors. Country and national actors could commit to track policies through a central database that showcases progress on commitments, including toward specific greenhouse gas targets, renewable energy, and forest restoration, clean mobility, green buildings, and other policy goals and targets. 4 consultations with civil society, local councils, and MDAs will be carried out during the design phase.
2016 Mexico	Reduce the vulnerability and risks associated with climate change by creating and disseminating updated, comprehensible, and open information for decision-making. (Information will include "climate change data, land use change permits, risk assessments").
2016 Tunisia	Enhance transparency in the environment and sustainable development sector (open data platform with datasets on climate change, air quality, waste, SDG indicators, etc.)
2015 France	Open data and models related to climate and sustainable development
2015 United States	Promote Open Climate Data around the globe: by (a) working with other arctic council member countries to "inventory relevant government data and publish a list of datasets that are public or can be made public"; (b) stimulating partnerships and innovation by leveraging climate-relevant open data to support national climate change preparedness; (c) filling critical data gaps such as the publicly available high-resolution Digital Elevation Model of the Arctic and (d) creating a National Integrated Heat Health Information System, a heat early-warning system that will enable public preparation and response.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

COUNTRY	COMMITMENTS
2018 France <i>(same commitment referenced above)</i>	Give citizens the means to engage in decision-making regarding the ecological transition and sustainable development: • Following the guidelines established by the National Counsel on the Ecological Transition, incorporate citizens' participation in monitoring of the national adaptation plan; establish inter-ministerial coordination to support the implementation of the national adaptation plan and uptake of SDGs. • Inventory and publish datasets produced by the Ministries of Environment and Territories; open up data related to waste and pesticide sales; improve access to environmental impact assessments; disclose data on construction permits in open format.
2017 Costa Rica <i>(same commitment referenced above)</i>	Through participatory spaces, structure and standardize a method for the disclosure of data on climate change and climate finance in a format that is open, neutral, interoperable, and sustainable; with the goal of facilitating and promoting its access, reuse, and redistribution for an improved approach to climate change actions.
2017 Germany	Strengthening citizen participation in environmental policy and urban development. Promoting citizen participation at federal level, among other things by expanding informal participation processes, e.g. update of the Climate Action Plan 2050, resource efficiency programme ProgRes III, implementing the Integrated Environmental Programme 2030 (IUP), participating in the 2017 UN Climate Conference (inviting young people, including school children); by organizing new dialogues to advise policy-makers on relevant decisions in the 19th legislative term; by participating in networks and bodies; by carrying out events.
2016 Honduras	Development of resilient communities with citizen participation and technological innovation. (Joint risk assessment and monitoring by citizens, local authorities, and COPECO (national disaster prep agency). Digital awareness-raising campaign, early warning systems, and capacity-building programs on risk reduction for various community groups.
2016 Honduras	Participatory design of the National Climate Change Plan (creation of an online forum to collect proposals for the National Climate Change Plan, with follow up planned).
2016 Kenya	More transparent and participatory development of climate policies at the national and subnational level (develop a robust, transparent multi-stakeholder consultative process to operationalize the Climate Change Act).
2016 Macedonia	Developing climate policies at national level in a transparent and participatory manner. Elaboration of Second bi-annual audited report on climate change through participation of all relevant parties in working groups, public debates and other forms of consultation. Ensuring private sector accountability and involvement in national climate change action.
2016 Jordan	Develop transparent and participatory policies regarding climate change challenges.
2015 France	Involve civil society in the COP21 conference and promote transparency regarding the agenda and negotiations. Initiate new collaborations with civil society to develop innovative solutions to meet the challenges of climate and sustainable development.

MONITORING AND REPORTING

COUNTRY	COMMITMENTS
2017 Israel	Establishing a reporting and control system on the implementation of the measures in the National Plan for the Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions. The establishment of a system to control and report the progress towards the targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions (MRV - Measurement, Reporting, and Verification). The system will be based on annual monitoring of the implementation of the measures to reduce greenhouse gases, on procedures for evaluating the quality of the efforts, and on submitting reports to the government and to the UN.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

COUNTRY	COMMITMENTS
2017 Philippines	Improve Institutional Mechanisms for Immediate and Effective Disaster Response. ...the DSWD is committed to improve its institutional mechanisms by the establishment and implementation of the DROMIC Virtual OpCen (Disaster Response Operations Monitoring and Information CenterVirtual Operations Center), to provide the general public with access to a comprehensive collection of data and information on the agency's disaster preparedness and response efforts through information and communication technologies that facilitate transparency, accountability, citizen engagement, and good governance.
2016 Guatemala	Transparency in the managing of disaster risk. Disclose information on the use of funds and resources for disaster risk management.

Endnotes

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