Open Government Partnership in Nigeria: An Examination of its Strategies, Achievements, Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract

Open Government Partnership (OGP) was founded in September 20, 2011, it is a multilateral initiative that leverage on diverse experiences to stimulate progress and advance common goals towards an open government global agenda of sustainable development. There are strategic partners who are leading advocates of Open Government related activities. In the Nigerian context, who are these Strategic partners? What do they promote? What are their strategies, achievements and challenges? What are the future prospects of OGP in Nigeria? This paper will examine these germane questions, and provide empirical responses. The paper utilizes the integration theory as a theoretical perspective for analysis; while qualitative data provides the research resources that gave valuable insights on the Problematique. The study relates OGP's activities with a component of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and concludes that OGP enable key stakeholders to participate in government decision-making processes which leads to more trust in government, and facilitates productive democratic dividends for citizens. The study suggests that all developing economies must as a matter of necessity embrace OGP, as it empowers under-represented citizens regardless of gender, race, tribe, faith, or sexual orientation, to engage actively with governments to ensure just, fair and more equitable governance.

Keywords: *National Action Plans, Nigerian Economic Summit Group, National Steering Committee, Open Government Partnership, Sustainable Development*

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Background to the Study

The Open Government Partnership(OGP) was formally launched on September 20, 2011 on the side lines of a United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) meeting during which Heads of State from eight founding governments of Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, Norway, Philippines, South Africa, United Kingdom, and the United States of America, endorsed the Open Government Declaration and announced their countries Action Plans, along with an equal number of Civil Society Organizations' (CSOs) leaders (the OGP' https://www.whitehouse.gov/open/partnership).OGP was founded on strong belief that open governments performs better for the citizens they serve. It harnesses collective wisdom, builds mutual trust in government, encourages public action and it is essential for democratic consolidation. It helps build stronger societies and safer communities, and contributes to citizen well-being and prosperity. These shared values and firm belief in open government drives the participation of many governments and CSOs in OGP; and has resulted in the rapid growth of the partnership (UN World Survey, 2019). Since its creation, OGP has succeeded in obtaining over 3,000 Commitments from over eighty (80) participating countries, covering a third of the World's population (About UK OGP, 2019).

The OGP is an international multi-stakeholder initiative focused on the improving transparency, accountability, citizen participation and responsiveness to citizens through technology and innovation. Member Countries must meet minimum eligibility criteria that cover fiscal transparency, access to information, public officials' asset disclosure, and citizen engagement (Predhan, 2019). As a multilateral organization, it aims to secure concrete commitments to promote open government, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. In the spirit of multi-stakeholder collaboration, OGP is overseen by a Steering Committee including representatives of governments and CSOs; it brings together stakeholders united in their belief in the power of transparency, with participation from multi-faceted sectors and/or campaigners. The OGP's current four-year strategy states thus: "OGP's vision is that more governments become more transparent, more accountable and more responsive to their own citizens, with the ultimate goal of improving the quality of governance, as well as the quality of services that citizens receives". OGP intends to be the "home of reformers" around the World who avidly desire to reshape and strengthen citizen-state relations in the pursuit of implementing transformative open government reforms that tackle the toughest challenges facing society to make a profound and positive impact on citizens' lives. The OGP at the global level encourages Strategic refresh which is a process of learning from OGP's successes and challenges to date, and has identified some priorities to assist/support OGP member Countries to undertake more transformative open government commitments, ensure credible implementation, and improve the lives of citizens (All Africa, 2016).

Consequently, OGP's successes are measured not only by the increase in the number of countries or commitments but by the extent to which ordinary citizen's benefits from governments becoming more transparent, participatory, responsive and accountable. This requires a greater focus on supporting government and civil society reformers' efforts in OGP Countries to build national and global movements for open government, and ultimately

demand reforms on issues they prioritize. It was reported that in OGP's first five years, evidence shows that the national OGP process has helped countries establish robust institutional mechanisms that give continuity and legitimacy to open government reforms, made dialogue and co-creation regular features of the interactions between OGP reformers, and initiated reforms that change or transform the status-quo and benefit citizens (World Bank's Country Survey, 2019).

With a sound and secured foundation, OGP as a globally recognized and respected international initiative works to consolidate the roles of CSOs, encouraging greater collaboration with governments to forge more innovative and open ways of working (Maude, 2012). In an era of hyper connectivity, accountability, openness and transparency, citizens' participation and collaboration are increasingly viewed as essential components of good governance, the thematic goals of OGP are mostly centered around Citizen Action and Responsive Government towards the implementation and actualization of the Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) sixteen(16), which made case for the "Promotion of Peaceful and Inclusive Societies" (UN, 2018).As an intergovernmental organization, OGP has unique characteristics, it has mechanisms and work patterns that involve the general public as part of the comprehensive process, so that the role of civil society groups is critically needed in carrying out Open Governments functions (Wetzel, 2018).

This is reflected in the process of registration as a member of OGP, in which participating countries must endorse a high-level Open Government Declaration, delivering a country's Action Plans developed with a public consultation, and committed to independent reporting on their progress. The OGP provides the platform for reformers within and outside governments globally to initiate and developed a strategy that encourages transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. It provides the fertile grounds and/or conducive environment for the construction of a diverse coalition of Civil Society Actors from a variety of disciplines, sectors or areas. It aims to secure concrete commitments from national and sub-national governments that drive open government reforms and innovations in a bid to upscale efforts and push countries further in the areas of transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement. It is a voluntary partnership that countries opt for membership, through which Civil Society Organizations, in collaboration with government, can advance initiatives that are in compatibility with their reform agendas. It facilitates support and encouragement to countries around the world as they champion ambitious new reforms and deliver on their promises in the 'Spirit of the Social Contract Theory', under the watchful eyes of citizens (Dudman, 2012).

The Community of reformers in OGP is meant to "offer assistance to those in government that are willing to create a world-wide-web where the conversations among governments and civil societies can occur". In this direction, it is note-worthy to emphasize that the symbiotic relationship between government and civil society is the cornerstone of OGP; consequently, governments are anticipated to seriously collaborate with the CSOs when initiating, drafting, developing and implementing Country Commitments, as well as when reporting on and monitoring developmental efforts. The OGP process requires governments to consult with

civil society and citizens, and the Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) assesses the quality of this consultation. The ground norm of the OGP are as enshrined in its declaration (https://www.opengovpartnership. org).This Declaration lucidly enunciated the basic Principles of OGP which participating countries must strictly adhere to. Nigeria joined many African countries to become a member of OGP in July 2016; Nigerians who represented the Country at that inaugural meeting were drawn from the Federal Ministry of Justice, the Extractive Industries, and Transparency International etc. How has the country fared in meeting the principles of OGP? How has She kept to her Commitments, how have the citizens benefitted from their country being member of the OGP? It is from this backdrop that the Problematique was deduced.

Clarification of Concepts
The Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG)
The Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) is a private sector led think-tank organization that promises sustainable growth and development in the Nigerian economy. The group is a non-profit organization with a mandate to promote and champion the reform of the Nigerian economy into an open, private sector led economy that is globally competitive on a sustainable basis. Over the years, it emerged as the leading platform for public-private dialogue in Nigeria. The NESG in collaboration with OGP usually hold stakeholder's validation retreat to finalize actions on Nigeria's Open Government Partnership National Action Plans (NOGP-NAPs). According to the National Coordinator of OGP, Nigeria, Okolo (2018), the NAPs reinforces the commitment of the NESG and other stakeholders to eliminating all forms of corruption prone system. He said the NAPs is the product of co-creation and the capacity to deliver will be dependent on the ability of the public, private and civil society sectors to collaborate. The partnership in Nigeria gave birth to a strong participatory process which inspired a communication strategy that enabled both government and the citizens to take complete ownership of the plan (NESG, 2019).

National Action Plans (NAPs) of OGP-Nigeria
The National Action Plans (NAPs) covers a two-year period and consist of set of commitments that advance transparency, accountability, participation and technological innovation. The details are here under expatiated:
   i.   **Transparency:** All information on government activities and decisions must be in open, comprehensive, timely and freely available to the public, and meets the requirements of basic open data standards,
   ii. **Accountability:** The existence of Rules, Regulations, and Mechanisms that requires governments' Actors to justify their actions, act upon criticisms or requirements made of them and accept responsibility for failure to perform,
   iii. **All Inclusive Government:** All OGP Members must promote inclusiveness in governance; in this regard, governments seek to mobilize citizens to engage in public debates on programmes and projects, provide inputs, and make and/or harness contributions that lead to more responsive and effective governance.
   iv. **Technology and Innovation:** Governments encourages the aggressive adaptation of relevant technologies to drive researches, innovations and developments; hence,

governments embrace the importance of modern trends in technologies in facilitating innovations, providing citizens with open access to technology, and increasing their capacity to adapt, transfer and utilize technology for the improvement of life, growth and sustainable development; this in tandem with the theoretical framework of the study.

National Steering Committee (NSC)

The Nigeria's OGP is a Multi-stakeholder forum, its National Steering Committee (NSC) made up of 42 members was set up with equal membership from government and non-state actors, with a governance arrangement consisting of two substantive co-chairs (state and non-state actor), and two incoming co-chairs reflecting the principle, practice and spirit of co-creation that embodies the open government process. The NSC has the mandate to undertake a refresh of OGP's strategies which identifies what parts of the existing strategy needed to be deepened to achieve greater impacts and/or set objectives. The principal drivers for the strategic refresh are the need to adapt and learn from the successes or failures of previous strategies, (the analysis from trends), and to position OGP as a powerful countervailing force for openness in a geopolitical context marked by increasing citizens distrust in government, elites' manipulations and capture, marginalization, and shrinking democratic space in many countries (CIVICUS Monitor, 2016). The National Steering Committee serves a "Think-Tank" for the OGP-Nigeria, and it works hand-in-gloves with all stakeholders to ensure a more open and transparent government that delivers the equitable and sustainable development that improves service delivery for all Nigerian citizens.

Theoretical Perspectives

The theoretical framework for this paper is anchored on the Development theory of Modernization. As a social science concept, development has acquired diverse meanings and interpretations from different scholars like Amartya Sen, Todaro, Coralie Bryant etc. Development is defined by Todaro and Smith as a multi-dimensional process that involves major changes in social structures, popular attitudes, and national institutions and the eradication of absolute poverty (Asirifi, 2018). Most of the Development theories focused on how Development can be facilitated and achieved, and how it is impeded. The Modernization theory elaborates on two broad categories of social formations in the world, namely and modern societies. Theorists argued that the traditional societies are entangled by norms, beliefs folklores, and values which are hindering their development process (Wallerstein, 1974). Therefore, they must adapt the modern idiosyncrasies, and concentrates on capital accumulation and industrialization. In essence, the modernization theory seeks to improve the standard of living of developing societies, that is, their economic growth to acquire basic and secondary necessities of life (Todaro and Smith, 2012) The theorists in this group argued that the introduction of modern technology and economic strategy will galvanize development in the Global South (Amartya, 1993). Modernization theorist, Rostow, also proposed swift machineries of transition for traditional societies to develop; these transitional epochs are preparation to take-off, take-off, drive to maturity, and the period of mass consumption. That these transitional epochs, position traditional societies on the path of development. Despite the perceived limitations of the theory, it succeeds in the idea that

norms, values beliefs of a society can affect the positive social transformation of that society (Asirifi, 2018). Thus, the relevance of the theory to this study can therefore be never over emphasized.

Methodology
The paper adopted ex-post facto research design. Qualitative method of data collection was applied to generate information from documentary evidence of secondary source. This method is considered the appropriate tool to collect data because bulk of the activities preceded the study, and the elements cannot be changed or influenced by the author. Maina (2019) opines that a qualitative approach emphasizes the qualities of entities, processes and terminologies that are not experimentally examined or measured in terms of quantity, number, amount, intensity or frequency. Nworgu (2006) observes that in ex-post facto design, the researcher attempts to link some already existing effects or observations to some variables as catalysts or causative agents. At the commencement of the study, the phenomenon existed in a categorized and/or classified manner in various levels of the variables whose effects are being investigated and cannot be manipulated. Maina (2020) observes that casual comparative studies describe how a phenomenon that is not influenced has probable impact on another phenomenon. It is on this premise that the research design is adopted for this paper, while content analysis method was applied.

Principles of OGP
The Declaration Document of the OGP enumerated some basic Principles to guide member states; these are as follows:
  i.   To acknowledge that people all around the world are demanding more openness in government. They are calling for greater civic participation in public affairs, seeking ways to make their government transparent, responsive, accountable, and effective,
  ii.   In recognizing that countries are at different stages in their efforts to promote openness in government, and that each of us pursues an approach consistent with our national priorities and circumstances and the aspirations of our citizens,
  iii. To accept responsibility for seizing this moment to strengthen our commitments to promote transparency, fight corruption, empower citizens, and harness the power of new technologies to make government more effective, efficient and accountable,
  iv.   To uphold the value of openness in our engagements with citizens to improve services, mange public resources, promote innovations, and create safer communities. We embrace principles of transparency and open government with a view towards achieving greater prosperity, well-being, and human dignity in our own countries and in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent Cosmos (The Economist, 2016).

An Examination of the Impacts of OGP in Nigeria: Achievements, Challenges and Future Prospects.
President Muhammadu Buhari's ascension to power in 2015 was hinged on two campaign assurances, a promise of change, and a direct mandate to fight corruption. It therefore did not come as a surprise when Nigeria joined the OGP in July, 2016, committing to an alliance for

domestic reforms devoted to making government open, accountable, and responsive to citizens. The alliance is a partnership between government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), working in collaboration with the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) on specific commitments. It is focused on the core areas of the National Action Plan (NAP) developed by stakeholders, and is geared towards fiscal transparency, public finance, anti-corruption, access to information and citizens engagement. Being part of the OGP creates an opportunity for the Government of Nigeria together with the CSOs, Private Sector, the Media, and Citizens to raise the collective ambition and transformative power of the OGP to collectively tackle the biggest societal challenges facing the country at the moment like poverty, inequality, exclusion, corruption, human rights violations, and poor service delivery (NESG, 2019).

Nigeria was formally admitted into the OGP as its 70th member, five years after it was launched as a global mechanism to provide an international platform for domestic reformers to make their governments more open, inclusive, proactive, accountable and responsive to the general public. Since independence, Nigeria has been experiencing the challenge of effective use of resources to support equitable economic growth, effective and efficient service delivery and social cohesion. It has been noted that one of the major driving forces for development blockade in Nigeria is the lack of openness, transparency and accountability in governance (Hudak, 2019). Thus, the point is that in tandem with the development theory, if government and citizens embrace open government principles in a tailored stakeholder engagement, then the constraints or barriers to national development will have been dealt with, and reforms will take place that will lead ultimately to effective policy, effective budget and effective implementation and management (FGN, 2019). Nigeria is currently implementing sixteen (16) commitments from her 2019-2021 Action Plan. These Action Plan feature commitments related to fiscal transparency, anti-corruption, extractive sector transparency, inclusiveness, and public service delivery. The NSC usually identifies priority areas to undertake robust comprehensive open government commitments, in the quest for thorough implementation towards the betterment of lives of the citizenry (NESG, 2018). As a precondition for OGP Membership, the Nigerian government in collaboration with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) developed a National Action Plan (NAP), which contained concrete commitments with milestones and timelines. Onyebuchi, (2018), confirmed that open data, accountability, citizen participation and the use of technology are visible across all the 16 commitments in the NAP. The commitments are embedded in the OGP Principles, and are very pivotal for attaining milestones, and key-impacts for improved service delivery and social accountability. In a broad context, they are as follows:

Fiscal Transparency Commitments
    i. To ensure more effective citizen's participation across the entire budget circle,
    ii. Full implementation of Open Contracting and adoption of Open Contracting Data Standards in the public sector,
    iii. Work together with all stakeholders to enhance transparency in the extractive sector through a concrete set of disclosures related to payments by companies and receipts by governments on all transactions across the sector's value chain.

iv. Adopt common reporting standards and the Addis Tax initiative aimed at improving the fairness, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of the tax system.,

v. Improve the ease of doing business and Nigeria's ranking on the World Bank Doing Business Index.,

Anti-Corruption Commitments:

vi. Establish a Public register of Beneficial Owners of Companies,

vii. Establishing platform for sharing information among Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs), Anti-corruption Agencies (ACAs), National Security Adviser (NSA) and financial sector regulators to detect, prevent and disrupt corrupt practices.,

viii. Strengthen Nigeria's asset recovery legislation including non-conviction-based confiscation powers and the introduction of unexplained wealth orders.

ix. Take appropriate action to co-ordinate anti-corruption activities; improve integrity and transparency and accountability.

Access to Information Commitments

x. Improved compliance of public institutions with the Freedom of Information Act in respect of the annual reporting obligations by public institutions and level of responses to requests.,

xi. Improved compliance of public institutions with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) with respect to the Proactive disclosure provisions and stipulating mandatory publication requirements.

xii. Develop a Permanent Dialogue Mechanism on transparency, accountability and good governance between citizens and government to facilitate a culture of openness,

xiii. Defending Journalists and Human Rights Activists.

Citizen Engagement and Empowerment Commitments:

xiv. Government-Civil Society to jointly review existing legislations on transparency and accountability issues and make recommendations to the National Assembly. Policy processes and governance must also be inclusive of women and youths from all geo-political zones,

xv. Adopt a technology-based citizens' feedback on project and programmes across transparency and accountability.

Oversights:

xvi. Governments at all levels, the CSOs, and the Media must actively collaborate and participate in reporting, monitoring and evaluations of projects and programme deliveries (Achonu, 2018).

The FRN's decision to join the OGP is therefore commendable, the National Action Plan was approved by the President in December 2016, and the implementation commenced in January 2017.Onyebuchi (2018), observed that the open contracting commitment under the fiscal transparency theme of the OGP is currently being implemented by the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP), a government agency responsible for building an efficient country

procurement system that meets international best practices. The BPP in its aim to leverage on the power of technology through partnership with CSOs has created the Nigerian Open Contracting Portal (NOCOPO) which was live during the OGP Week, held on the 7th of May, 2018.The Portal to a great extent addresses the inadequacies associated with manual manipulations in Contracting by providing citizens with timely access to public finance related data required for tracking public resources (Okolo, 2018). Furthermore, data related to receipts and expenditure are proactively published by government agencies, while integrating data standards into record keeping. It was noted that at the sub-national level, Kaduna State was the first State that signed into OGP, other States that have also signed includes Kano, Ebonyi, Anambra, Niger, Abia, and Enugu. While, Kogi, Jigawa and Bauchi States have indicated their interest to sign into the OGP (Igbuzor, 2018).

Further to these operational Principles, Oyegbade (2019), argued that stakeholders in the OGP Nigeria, have integrated the Buhari's administration three top priorities of Security, Economy and Fighting corruption into the OGP grand norms in Nigeria. That this is compatible with OGP's drive to enhance good governance by promoting openness and curtail secrecy in government businesses and activities. It was noted that the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), is significant in driving the process, because its objective is to facilitate access to information and open data in all spheres of governance in the Country. Information is a key asset in the pursuit of good governance since it increases trust among citizens. Akinbo (2018), said it is work-in-progress, and expatiated the progress made in access to public records, hecited the efforts of the 'Access to Information Working Group (AIWG)' on the matter, and added that the Freedom Of Information (FOI) Unit of the Federal Ministry of Justice (FMOJ) is developing a mandatory reporting scheme for all Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) for uniformity and accountability. On the proactive disclosure of public sensitive data, the Public Private Development Centre (PPDC), Spokesperson, Onyebuchi (2018) opined that, the commitment of the FGN to access of information contained in the NAP will ensure timeliness and compliance of public institutions with the FOIA. She further observed thus, "From our experience in ranking the MDAs based on their responsiveness and compliance with the FOIA annually, we have progressively witnessed improvement in compliance especially in regard to proactive disclosure. Similarly, MDAs have continued to request for trainings on access to information to help improve their proactive disclosure mechanism". Lastly, she disclosed that Desk Officers of most MDAs in the country have been trained on the relevance of the FOIA, to upscale their understanding on the legality of the information to be provided and the consequences of non-compliance. However, she was quick to observe that 'it is not yet Uhuru', as the reality of the effect of these training differs from the experience of some citizens who have been denied access to information on issues of national interest in some cases.

Commenting on the significance of Nigeria joining the OGP, Igbuzor (2018), opined that, reformers have developed initiatives that entrenched transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption and harness new break through (innovations) to strengthen governance. References were made to the institution of Government Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS), Integrated Personnel Payment Information System (IPPIS),

Anti-Corruption and Transparency Unit (ACTU) and SERVICOM. Contributing on the same matter, Achonu (2018), averred that signing into the OGP would attract many benefits to national and sub-national structures, and facilitate good governance. In his words, "Good open government reforms can transform the way government and public services work and/or functions, ensuring that they are properly responsive to citizens, while improving their efficiency and effectiveness, and preventing abuses or mis-uses of scarce resources and power" (Achonu, 2018). He further states that, this will ensure that No One is left behind, and all the stakeholders including women, youths, persons with disabilities and all citizens and actors are appropriately engaged. He was of the opinion that the CSOs and the Media are very critical in working as partners, and collaboratively with Government and other stakeholders to embrace OGP so that they are not seen as adversaries of Government.

In his opinion, Zasha (2018),buttressed that OGP has the tendencies to bring several opportunities and gains to institutions that joins the it; he said the CSOs and the Media should actively engage government and other stakeholders with finesse and work to develop an OGP Chatter of Demands. It is apparent that for success to be achieved with OGP initiative, Member- States' CEOs must be actively engaged to get their buy-in, and to ensure the Will Power to drive the implementation and delivery. This can easily be done with commitment and active citizens' involvement. He emphasized that OGP focuses on Transparency, Accountability and participation, and that there was a major need for active citizens' engagement and openness on the part of government. He noted that there have been robust commitment to drive OGP principles through lead Ministries, Department and Agencies MDAs that will be charged with OGP responsibilities and appropriately coordinate the implementation of OGP Ideals; noting that the OGP is the simple but powerful idea that would enable governments and institutions work better for citizens when they are transparent, engaging and accountable (Zasha, 2018). This conversation concurs with the theoretical framework of this paper.

The promise or role of Technology is critical to the actualization of the OGP principles to better engage citizens in civic space and work together to make on and offline connections more open, accountable and inclusive. It was observed that in the face of an unprecedented rise in authoritarianism, shrinking civic space and new digital threats to democracy, it is great for reformers to actively join governments to reinvigorate and consolidate democracy and give power back to the people through OGP; because Open Government is fundamentally a means of building trust in institutions through open dialogue with an informed public participation in decision making, and providing superior outcomes that includes all citizens (CIVICUS Monitor, 2018). Thus for the nation to demonstrate and to move forward as an OGP member, we need to acknowledge that we often leave people by the sidelines, we need to promote the marginalized communities in all aspects of government and civil society life, we must build the system that will let us thrive together for the betterment of humanity (https://allafrica.com/stories). Stakeholders are agreeable that being part of the OGP creates an opportunity for the government of Nigeria together with CSOs, private sector and Citizens to raise the collective ambition and transformative power of OGP to collectively tackle the biggest societal challenges facing the country at the moment like poverty, inequality, corruption, human rights violations, and poor service delivery (NESG, 2018).

Apart from the aforementioned general impacts, here below are some of the priority areas of success, which are considered "Silver Linings" of OGP in Nigeria.

i.   The Review OGP's Rules of Engagement and Performance Incentives: Reformers in OGP in Nigeria have been given the required appropriate support in term of legality and regulations for operations; in this direction, the rules and guidelines governing OGP operations always reflects that needs and aspirations of citizens. This informed the occasional review of the NAP by the National Steering Committee (NSC) in compatibility with exigencies. Other instruments that are also occasionally reviewed includes Action Plan Cycle (APC), Starred Commitments (SCs), IRM Report, Response Policy and Co-Creation Guidelines (RPCGs) etc. OGP's incentive structure in Nigeria encourages innovation and ambitious activities (risk-taking), while discouraging inactivity and lack of ambition. These have strengthened the rules and guidelines for effective compliance (Baesens and Foti, 2016).

ii.   To Deepen Citizen-Centered Governance in the Country: This is a participatory process that aggregates citizens' feedbacks on programmes of government. This is to seek and ensure genuine and inclusive co-creation in the management and organization, enabling citizens and civil society, including the marginalized groups, to advocate for commitments that reflect the most pressing issues impacting citizens' lives. For examples, the agitation for resource control in the Niger-Delta, the quest for inclusive governance by IPOB, and the agitations for Restructuring of the Country, and the establishment of State Police by well-meaning Nigerians. Others includes the demands by the citizenry for robust anti-corruption fights, better health-care, housing, quality education, and the improvement of infrastructure, to mentioned but a few. The objective of all these, according Achonu (2018), is in the overall interests of the citizens, as there will be the expansion of bureaucracy, developments of "Think-Tanks", and Strategic Committees for participatory and all-inclusive governance. Through OGP Nigeria, CIVICUS Monitor (2018), argued, Citizens participation have become more institutionalized in decision-making, for instance by amplifying the voice of citizens in shaping policy; leveraging on digital platforms to crowd source citizens feedbacks on government performance, and incentivizing governments to respond. It is essential to note that Governments, CSOs, and the Media are providing leadership to protect and enhance the necessary civic space for transformative reforms to succeed.

iii.   OGP Nigeria, Propels or Raise Collective Ambitions Nationally and Globally: This is to foster collective action across OGP's Clients at sub-national, national and international levels; the rationale is to scale up reforms in thematic areas, regarding issues that governments have been increasingly keen to learn from each other, and adapt as domestic or regional reforms. Such issues include the beneficial ownership, political corruption, open data, open contracts, women participation, provision of jobs and reducing unemployment, citizens' engagement in budgets, and Service Charter. OGP in Nigeria serve as a vehicle to use transparent and inclusive approaches to advance implementation of related global initiatives like Right Sizing, Human Capital Development, and Collective Bargaining for Industrial peace, the Treasury Single Account (TSA), Sustainable Development Goals, enhance participation of the vulnerable group, and the fight against Climate Change (Mohammed, 2019).

iv. OGP-Nigeria, Broaden Collective Ownership Domestically: This is to establish beneficial ownership registry nationwide; a key priority is to expand collective ownership and coordination of national OGP processes across cabinet and Line Ministries to reach broader groups of CSOs. It also welcomes, and integrates new actors, such as the States, Local Governments, Legislators, the Private Sector, the Media, and the Youth. This openness is imperative for critical governance and for the deliveries of societal priorities domestically; some few examples are the advocacies for Anti-corruption, Public Hearings, Improved Investment Capital, and the provision of basic social amenities, which galvanizes the spirit of collective ownership of Public Utilities, which reinforces the commitment of reformers in governments, CSOs, NGOs, and other critical stakeholders (Tisne, 2016).

v. OGP-Nigeria Drives to Invigorate its Branding and Communications: This is in regard to improve compliance with the Freedom of Information Bill(FOIB), with reference to record management and accessibility to vital information, or better still, improved compliance with mandatory Publication Provisions Requirements (PPRs). OGP's communications strategy supports the sharing of best practices, encourages and convey encomiums when transformational reforms are implemented, and encourages OGP reformers internationally, nationally and locally. It is anticipated that in no distant time, OGP in Nigeria would ascend a pivotal position to jump-start all open government reforms in all the sectors of the economy to the vantage of the citizenry (Osinbajo, 2019).

vi. To Strengthen Capacity, Coordination and Coalitions Strategies for implementations: This is to address the implementation gaps that may constrained potential OGP commitments to fail. Consequently, OGP-Nigeria improves national coordination efforts and providing dedicated technical and financial support to stakeholders facing implementation problems. It also involves forging multi-stakeholder coalitions to overcome political challenges and other obstacles that prevent transformative reforms from being implemented. In doing all these, it also leverages on digital technology, the automation of facilities in MDAs, and for providing legal instrument to strengthen SERVICOM for effective and efficient service delivery (NESG, 2019).

In what can be liken to a general paraphrase of the achievements or successes of the OGP-Nigeria, Mohammed (2020), posited that since the country joined the international alliance, there have been great conversations and pragmatic actions on the following: Fiscal Transparency, corrupt-looted funds returned are being channeled for national development, Contracting systems have been open; important public data are now accessible to the general public in line with the Freedom of Information Bill (FOIB); the "Not-Too-Young-To-Run-Bill" was passed, thus, many young people are elected in the National Assembly and States' Houses of Assemblies, many of them are also appointed in important positions in governments at sub-national and national levels, the Ministry of Youth was also established; there is a greater involvement of Women, they have been significantly mainstreamed in government, and governance in tandem with the "Affirmative Action";many CSOs, NGOs, and the Media have been up-streamed in policy processes, and programmes and project deliveries; the electoral processes are being sanitized, and probed, as the election victories have been up-turned, and/or reversed by the Courts; and there is a visible separation of powers amongst the various arms of governments to mentioned but a few.

Challenges or Critique of OGP in Nigeria

In charting the way forward, evidence suggests that despite the Silver Linings (Achievements and successes) in the above areas, some stakeholders, and reformers in OGP Nigeria recognized that its reforms are not panacea to all the problems and challenges in the country; they observed that the process of opening government is fraught with challenges, and it is difficult and rarely predictable (The Economist, 2018). They observed that often times, the OGP Theory of Change, guided by strategic and thematic action plans, couldn't be clearly communicated, and effectively implemented to the Citizenry, CSOs, Media, and the Sub-national governments, who are the major stakeholders towards actualization its objectives (Akinbo, 2018). Similarly, commenting on Nigeria's participation in the international alliance under the Buhari's administration, Shamsudeen (2017), opined that the inability of the OGP's regime in Nigeria to officially release an Action Plan for the National Anti-corruption Strategy, a move that is significant to meeting part of the core commitment of the OGP, three years into Buhari's administration does not argue well for the country's effort in meeting the commitments of the OGP alliance.

While the government appears to be set on the path of progress in leveraging technology for citizen engagement, the same cannot be said of the commitment to the fiscal transparency agenda of the OGP. Oftentimes, the amounts spent on the execution of projects are often not easily accessible. Although, the Budget Office of the Federation, releases implementation report but it is usually not the implementation report of each MDAs. Assessing Nigeria's OGP's commitments, Akinbo, (2018), a Programme Officer with BudgIT, who coordinates the Open Government Alliance revealed that the Global Open Budget Survey Index (GOBSI) puts Nigeria at a low score of 90 on the 2017 ranking. Nigeria dropped from its initial score of 85 to 90. The grading or ranking pattern of the GOBSI is from the lowest to the highest denomination. This shows that Nigeria needs to do more in improving the openness of its budget details to the people, because it goes beyond pushing out the huge figures in the budget; the capital components of the budget should also be made lucid for the general public. There should be specific disclosures on the capital projects funded by the releases. Furthermore, the Procurement Open Contracting Laws must function optimally, there should be openness in the allocation that went into funding each project (Akinbo, 2018). On the maximum operations of the FOIA, and the accessibility to Public data, Shamsudeen (2017), observed that it is left to be seen how the access to information commitment upheld by the NAP would be effective in a nation where issues of public interest are often shrouded in secrecy. Similarly, in fulfilling the OGP's mandate, a formidable challenge identified with compliance, is knowledge, capacity, and sabotage on the part of some critical stakeholders, particularly, those in Governments' MDAs.

Generally, it has also been observed that the OGP-Nigeria is facing the following significant challenges amongst others:
  i.   Inadequate Ambitions,
  ii.   Going beyond Transparency Reforms,
  iii. Corruption fighting back,
  iv.   Scaling up Learning to Encourage Ambitions,

v. Lack of political will,
vi. Financing Strategic Commitments,
vii. The challenge of Automation,
viii. Governments' non-commitment to CSOs ideals etc.

Consequently, Country level reformers (OGP-Nigeria) need support to navigate the complexities surrounding major reform agenda in country by fostering collective actions at both national and international levels to bolster institutional supports for far reaching engagements.

Future Prospects

Despite the above challenges, stakeholders observed that since governments at national and sub-national levels are fully committed to the ideals of OGP, collectively, they will utilize OGP's strategies and principles for proactive, inclusive and responsive governance; the immediate indicators will be the expansion of the Civic space, access to vital information, good standard of living, poverty alleviation, and the provision of employments; in sum, the delivery of democratic dividends to the citizens. In doing this, visibly, Governments at all strata in Nigeria will be more accountable, transparent and responsive; this wise, there will be greater, and developmental roles for the Media and CSOs in policy initiation, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in the country for productive management of common wealth, towards equitable deliveries of qualitative programmes and projects nationally. This agrees with the main thrust of the development theory, which underscores its adoption for this study. Similarly, the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Development Partners and International collaborators, in liaison with national or sub-national governments, or both, would be more supportive in addressing the barriers of growth and development towards the realization of an integrated global quest for Sustainable Development in a Post Covid-19 new World Order; where more compassion, more empathy makes us more amiable humans, where the more use of technologies and digital platforms will bring and propel more innovations for safety, food, health, and economic security for the prosperity of mankind, and posterity.

Recommendation and Conclusion

As evidenced in the above conversation, Open Government Partnership (OGP) with its emphasis on transparent, accountable and responsive government is uniquely well-placed to be the home of reformers around the world, which want to reshape and strengthen citizen-state-relations. OGP offers a platform that allows fairness, equity, and opportunities for citizens in policymaking, including those from marginalized groups, and an ongoing voice in political processes beyond that of voting in elections. Nigeria as OGP member must demonstrate a model of governance marked by deeper citizen engagement and responsive government willing to undertake reforms that tackle elite dominance, and overcome citizen distrust. OGP reformers must shift from being the preserve of freedom of information campaigners and tech leaders to become a defining set of catalysts for governments committed to engagements, ideas and reforms.

In the context of national and global challenges, OGP must serve as a potent antidote and countervailing force; it must have the potential for more greater impacts, and its processes need to have meaningful outcomes. The ambitions of National Action Plans (NAPs must increase because the success of a country's OGP rests in the quality of commitments and their implementation. Thus, to realize OGP's full potential as a platform for change in Nigeria, National Action Plans (NAPs) must include transformative reforms within the context of the development theory, which ensure national resources are spent judiciously to provide solutions to serious national challenges. In this regard, it can be guaranteed that public policymaking and service delivery respond to core concerns of citizens, especially the poorest of the poor (Hudak, 2016). In as much that OGP reforms are not a panacea for all ills in the country; the paper concludes that it is indeed a mechanism for transparent, accountable and responsive governance; and that with a genuine desire to listen, engage, and solve problems collaboratively, it will empower reformers inside and out of government to have the greatest impact on societal policies and programmes. Collectively, OGP Nigeria has led powerful movements for transparent, participatory, responsive, and accountable governance, as demonstrated in its achievements to make a measurable difference in the lives of citizens (The Economists, 2016).

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