**DRAFT**

**Minutes**

**Meeting of civil society members on OGP, 18th June 2013, 14:00-16:00**

**Present:** Mark Carpenter,Ivan Cooper, John Handelaar,Nat O’Connor, Sarah O’Neill, Denis Parfenov, Tom Stewart, Jane Suiter, Martin Wallace

**In attendance:** Nuala Haughey (in the new role of consultant to DPER), Angela Long (providing web support to consultancy with civil society)

**1.       Minutes of previous meeting of *ad hoc* civil society OGP group [for agreement] and matters arising**

The Minutes of the last meeting were agreed. There were no matters arising from the Minutes not covered in the Agenda.

**2.    Discussion of OGP consultation process**

Nuala Haughey presented on her role as consultant to DPER. Transparency Ireland has won the tender to undertake a 12-week consultation with civil society on behalf of DPER. Her role is to identify civil society actors, engage with them and compile a ‘wish list’ of civil society’s preferred actions as well as suggestions for models of participation to sustain direct engagement between civil society and DPER/Government beyond the initial 12-week process.

Nuala stressed that her role is to co-ordinate and administer a consultative process with civil society, not to manage civil society itself.

Nuala announced two dates: 10th July (kick-off meeting) and either 7th or 8th August (precise date to be confirmed). Minister Brendan Howlin will speak at the 10th July event. Paul Maassen (OGP civil society co-ordinator) will participate in the July event by Skype and should be present at the August event. The July event is likely to focus on civil society engagement and the August meeting is likely to focus on the future process beyond the consultancy. An invitation will be circulated and Nuala asked all participants to use their email lists and networks to get the invitation out to the widest possible audience.

ACTION 1: Nuala to circulate invitation to 10th July event

ACTION 2: Participants asked to disseminate the invitation and promote the event

Nuala asked whether participants at the meeting would agree to play roles at the events, such as speaking to developments in Ireland to date and to the five grand challenges.

Angela Long spoke about her role in setting up the OGP Ireland website, which will provide a hub for the consultation. Its URL will be<http://www.ogpireland.ie>

The consultants are open to suggestions about the best technical means for allowing the general public to add material to the site (e.g. blog, wiki). It is hoped that the site will generate a repository of material that will be useful beyond the 12-week consultancy period.

Nuala noted that William Beausang has asked to meet the group again, and Nat O’Connor undertook to arrange a meeting time for next week.

ACTION 3: Nat to circulate meeting times for Monday-Wednesday 24th-26th June

<http://www.doodle.com/6e3qgaxc6ev74k9w>

The group had a robust discussion of the consultation process. The following salient points emerged from the discussion:

·         There was consensus that the group would like to ask William Beausang whether the Government will finalise its Action Plan for the end-October deadline that was discussed previously.

·         There was consensus to know more about what happens when the consultation process ends; i.e. are civil society’s ideas merely being submitted for some form of Ministerial approval? (An approval process was not considered to be in line with the OGP ethos of on-going public participation and engagement between civil society and the Government).

·         There was consensus among those present that the short 12-week process was sub-optimal. However, there was general agreement to accept and work with the process, as better than nothing.

·         It was suggested that the Irish process runs a number of risks, such as being rushed and failing to raise wider public awareness let alone buy-in, being solely focused on Dublin and including a range of already committed actions by the Government, against OGP best practice.

·         Conversely, it was suggested that civil society should anticipate a two to three-year process and judge the success of OGP in Ireland based on milestones such as genuine Government engagement around civil society’s wish list when drawing up the initial Action Plan, implementation of the initial Action Plan, engagement around the second Action Plan, new and ambitious actions in the second plan, and continuity of the OGP process and Action Plan commitments by the next Government after the general election.

·         There was general agreement that voting had a limited role as part of the process of identifying open government actions from civil society, and that voting in the absence of deliberation was unfavourable. It was suggested that, at best, voting (including consensual voting) can help identify priorities or give weight to different actions, but there was general agreement that any proposed OGP action suggested should be recorded in some way.

·         Aside: the existence of consensual voting systems was noted. Unlike conventional adversarial voting systems, systems like the Modified Borda Count are designed to help groups aggregate their preferences and come up with a genuinely ‘most preferred’ outcome. See for example:<http://www.deborda.org/faq/voting-systems/what-is-a-modified-borda-count.html>

·         There was general agreement that irrelevant, vexatious or narrowly politically motivated actions should be filtered out, on the basis that the OGP Action Plan should be about actions that create more open and transparent government (i.e. ‘how’ government works) rather than potentially partisan suggestions about the content of public policy (i.e. ‘what’ government does). Nat O’Connor agreed to draft a short statement of principle about this, for circulation and approval by the group.

ACTION 4: Nat to circulate draft statement of principle for amendment and approval.

·         There was general agreement that (based on the group’s knowledge) no online platform had yet been invented that permits effective public deliberation via the Internet. However, some references were mentioned, including liquid democracy (e.g.<http://liquidfeedback.org/>) and ‘adhocracy’ (e.g.<https://github.com/liqd/adhocracy>).

·         Ivan Cooper noted that The Wheel had submitted an unsuccessful but well-received tender for the consultancy role and he shared a few key ideas from their thinking on this: that the consultancy process itself needs to be a model of openness and transparency (with all documents and notes from every working group to be put online) and that the process should be deliberative and iterative in how the Action Plan is developed.

·         The group also discussed, without conclusion, the establishment of working groups. It was suggested that five working groups or contact persons should be identified to provide a point of contact for each of the five OGP grand challenges. It was also suggested that another group could be usefully formed to look at the detail of process and stakeholder engagement and at the proposals for the Action Plan about sustaining engagement post the 12-week consultation. It was suggested that the best structure for a steering group would be to have at least one person representing each working group.

·         In order to progress the issue of working groups, Nuala Haughey was asked to write up Terms of Reference for contact persons/moderators who could collate material from working groups and/or take a lead role in co-ordinating working groups.

ACTION 5: Nuala to circulate Terms of Reference for working group contact persons.

·         It was noted that there will be a need for policy experts to advise the various working groups on existing practice and the feasibility of proposed actions that may emerge from civil society.

·         It was suggested that the working groups and action plan items would need to engage with and be organised by OGP’s four concrete commitments: Transparency; Citizen Participation; Accountability; and Technology and Innovation.<http://www.opengovpartnership.org/ogp-participation>

·         There was not agreement on the establishment of a steering group, partially based on a desire to avoid self-selection by those present at the meeting without a mandate from wider civil society or the public to take on such a representative role. Likewise, there was not agreement about imposing a structure in advance of wider civil society/public participation in the OGP process.

·         There was general agreement that the ad hoc civil society group could continue to grow for some time as an ‘interest group’ or ‘reference group’ with respect to OGP before the need for a smaller steering group would emerge based on the manageability of the numbers present at meetings.

·         There was consensus that the group should issue a joint statement in relation to the initiation of the OGP process, to seek maximum civil society and public engagement in it.

ACTION 6:  Nat to draft call for public participation for circulation and approval.

·         The meeting also discussed getting private sector involvement and buy-in. It was noted that, for the purposes of the consultancy, ‘civil society’ was taken to mean non-profit entities, although it was suggested that employers’ groups, professional bodies and trade unions fitted that definition, even if individual companies did not.

·         The next Open Data Ireland’s meetup (20th June, 7pm) on the topic of OGP was noted:<https://tito.io/open-data-ireland/meetup-8>  This meeting will seek volunteers for the future working groups.