

OPEN GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP
Second Action Plan of the Republic of Armenia
(2014-2016)

INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Armenia, proclaimed as a democratic country by the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, is constantly striving to achieve effective democracy via reforms. In contemporary world, societies require their governments to be open, accountable and effective, expecting more active civic participation in state governance processes.

Based on this imperative, the Government of the Republic of Armenia continues to keep its focus on increasing the effectiveness of the public administration system. It is obvious that on this path our country could not stay apart from the "Open Government Partnership" (hereinafter OGP) process. And in the fall of 2011, Armenia's decision to join the OGP initiative was an indication of Armenia's readiness to ensure the highest level of transparency and accountability in public service. OGP process comprises important part on the Government's agenda being under the direct oversight of the RA Government's staff.

The initiative is an excellent opportunity to have such institutions that promote active citizen participation in decision-making and policy-making processes. The Republic of Armenia has fulfilled its commitments under the OGP-Armenia first Action Plan for 2012-2013. The main provisions were mostly focused on the improvement of the public administration system effectiveness, transparency and accountability, particularly public resource management efficiency, the development of e-government system, improvement of internal audit system, improvement of public procurement processes and transparency, improvement of the quality of public services, further development of freedom of information, transparency of tax administration, fight against corruption, etc.

In this context, it should be stated with confidence that in both volume and implementation of its commitments Armenia remains in a leading position. In this process, the assistance and support of all partners within the framework of implementation of Armenia's obligations are highly valued. The above-mentioned results are summarized in the OGP-Armenia annual self-assessment report, which was published in the fall of 2013.

It should be noted that during these two years Armenia has significantly improved its position by a number of indicators. According to the "Perception of Regulations for SMEs for 2014" report published on 29 October 2013, ranking of "Doing business" of the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation, amongst 189 countries Armenia occupies 37th, improving its position by three points compared to the last year. In August 2013 "Moody" Ranking agency assessed Armenia's rank as "stable" Ba2 instead of the "negative" of the last year.

OPEN GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO DATE

The Government of the Republic of Armenia remains loyal to its commitment for being more transparent and accountable to its citizens, as a result bringing the governance system in line with their needs and aspirations.

Strengthening state institutions and effective governance system are state priorities, and during the last decade Armenia's authorities have implemented a number of measures in this direction, in particular:

In the participatory and more transparent governance field

- Availability of Government's draft decisions on the internet page even in the period of discussions
- Online broadcasting of Government sessions for journalists
- Availability of oversight results of the Control Chamber of the Republic of Armenia at www.e-gov.am
- Publication of declarations of high-ranking officials on the webpage (www.ethics.am) of the Ethics Commission of High-Ranking Officials
- Review of regulatory normative legal acts (Regulatory "Guillotine" program), easing the burden of regulations on businessmen and citizens by at least two times reducing operational costs

In introducing new principles and approaches to ensure accountability in the state governance system

- Any measure or plan of measures, introduced by a state body should consider clear formulation of program's results, and these results must be measurable
- Government agencies regularly submit performance reports, based on which their work and work of every single employee is estimated

In the field of improving the quality and effectiveness of services

- Extension of country of origin certificate and expertise: now persons exporting up to 2.5 tons of agricultural products shall submit only four documents and get certificate in one working day
- Opportunity of online payment of state fees, local fees, fees charged for services provided by state or local government bodies or administrative fines and taxes prescribed by law
- Reduction of the cumulative period of urban development permissible procedures, in defined cases of building residential houses, removal of requirement for order of design task, design documents and examination
- Operation of "Armenia's Real Estate Information System" electronic system (www.e-cadastre.am) for the conduct of real estate cadastre from 1 January 2012
- In the field of road police: reforms aimed at the introduction of electronic system for the registration of transportation means, for the submission of driving licenses, fines and payments
- A system with a "one-stop shop" principle for the extension of certificates of drugs' imports and exports has been introduced to facilitate the procedure of issuing import certificates of drugs and drug substances, to ensure the efficiency and quality of services provided to citizens
- Expansion of e-services, improvement of taxpayer service as a result of implemented major reforms in tax administration sphere.

It is noteworthy that the OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism (hereinafter the IRM), highly valued the steps of Armenia, particularly, in introducing program budgeting, procurement process improvement, transparency of declarations of property and income, standardization of official website contents, improvement of knowledge and skills for public servants regarding the freedom of information, promotion of transparency and objectivity in the tax administration, as well as for anti-corruption measures.

Taking into account the IRM's encouragement aimed at the further development of these steps, and the unprecedented experience gained as a result of the development and implementation of the first program, the Government of the Republic of Armenia, jointly with civil society representatives, has developed the OGP-Armenia second Action plan.

It should be noted that the summary and the final approval by the Government of the Republic of Armenia (RA) coincided with the resignation of the RA Government led by the Prime Minister and the formation of the new Government. Therefore, the slight twist in the established schedule for the RA Government approval and submission is due to the above-mentioned fact.

SECOND ACTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Continuing its efforts to ensure the effectiveness of the governance system, from late 2013, the Government of the Republic of Armenia initiated the OGP's second Action Plan (hereinafter the Plan) development process. The Plan was developed on the basis of the fundamental principles of the OGP initiative, as well as lessons learned from the OGP-Armenia first Action plan. The Plan was drawn up based on the recommendations of both the Government and the civil society, including areas such as mining, health, education, local self-government, freedom of information, etc.

Given the fact that the improvement of public services, efficient management of public resources and promotion of public confidence are the main challenges of the OGP, the Government of the RA in developing its second OGP Action plan was guided by the principle of overcoming the above-mentioned challenges.

Every commitment included in the Plan is a target and is selected as a result of comprehensive discussions. The project's draft version was developed based on the recommendations submitted by state agencies. Consequently, in order to obtain civil society feedback and to raise public awareness, the draft was made available at www.ogp.am web page. In parallel, on several occasions it was discussed during the relevant working group sessions (in particular, on 9 September 2013, 26 November 2013).

To move on with public discussions, on 5-6 April 2014 in Aghveran, the RA Government jointly with the "Freedom of Information Center" NGO and by the financial support of the United States Agency for International Development and the United Nations Development Program organized a seminar "OGP-Armenia: Transparency and Accountability. Partnership between the Government and the civil society". During the event, both the draft Plan and the new proposals submitted by state agencies and non-governmental organizations were discussed.

At the same time, to include new proposals in the Plan and to ensure public awareness, "Asparez" (Arena) Journalists' Club of Gyumri has organized a series of meetings, as a result of which a number of NGOs also submitted recommendations to the RA Government. For consideration and further clarification of the above mentioned recommendations, on 5 June 2014 a working meeting with representatives of state agencies and civil society was organized at the Staff of the Government. The final draft was discussed and approved during the working group session on 15 July 2014 based on the Decision of the Prime Minister No 656 of 15 July 2014.

The final public discussion of the Plan was held on 18 July 2014 in Yerevan in the scope of the event organized jointly by the Government of the Republic of Armenia and the "Freedom of Information Center" NGO with the financial support of the OSCE Office in Yerevan. The workshop, besides the members of above-mentioned working group, was also attended by several civil society and international organization representatives.

The proposals not complying with the OGP values and format are not included in the Plan. The proposals requiring development and adoption of new draft laws, as well as making amendments to the existing laws have not been included in the Plan as well, as the laws of the Republic of Armenia are adopted by the RA National Assembly, and the Government cannot guarantee the adoption thereof. Despite that fact, the Government of the Republic of Armenia has expressed its readiness to discuss with the civil society the possible mechanisms of implementation of the proposals not included in the plan beyond the OGP initiative.

OGP COMMITMENTS

I. ENSURING TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

1. Digitization and publication of data in the “Republican Geological Fund” SNCO		
Lead agency		Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources of the Republic of Armenia
Other involved actors	Government	
	Civil society, Private sector	USAID (upon consent)
Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed		The geological exploration studies of subsurface collected in the "Republican Geological Fund" SNCO, as well as the geological and other information gathered during the exploitation of minerals in the form of relevant documents (certificates, reports, drawing materials, etc.) is stored in hard copies, which restricts the availability of geological information to the public.
Main objective		It is planned to fully digitize the information of the fund, at the same time ensuring the digitization of new materials (maps, financial and non-financial reports and other documents). The program is expected to digitize over 12,000 geological reports on approximately 750 mines and 600 mineral occurrences and 8,000 mapping and drawing packages, to create a website where all the materials will be posted (in PDF, JPG, EXEL and other formats), using the information search principle. Besides, site interactive map will be created to facilitate the exploration of materials posted on the website and the materials will be pinned to the respective RA areas. The following information will also be posted on the above-mentioned website: on the issued mining

	rights of subsurface for the purpose of extracting minerals, mining rights to extract minerals from the geological study of subsurface rights, on mining rights for the extraction of underground mineral waters and metal minerals map, which is now published on the website of the RA Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources (http://www.minenergy.am). Thus the access to information for the public will be improved.			
OGP challenge addressed by the commitment	Improvement of public services, More efficient management of public resources.			
Is it relevant to the advancement of:	Transparency	Accountability	Public participation	
	v			
Verifiable and measurable milestones to fulfill the commitment	New or ongoing commitment		Start date:	End date:
1. To digitize at least 15-20% of the fund, create internet page and post already the digitized information on that page.	New		December 2014	June 2015
2. Studies with the relevant 2-4 employees of the fund (in parallel with the digitization).	New		December 2014	June 2015
3. To digitize 100% of the fund.	New		December 2014	From December 2016 on
4. Public awareness campaign on the project will be organized, including printing and distributing brochures, presentation of the webpage with relevant stakeholders and other events.	New		May 2015	Continuous
5. Digitization of newly received geological and other information.	New		December 2014	Continuous

2. Ensuring transparency in mining				
Lead agency		Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources of the Republic of Armenia		
Other involved actors	Government	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the RA, Ministry of Justice of the RA, Ministry of Economy of the RA, Ministry of Finance of the RA		
	Civil society, Private sector			
Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed		The current situation in the mining sector does not meet the contemporary requirements presented by the state and the society, particularly, the level of accountability of mining companies and the state on expenses and revenues needs improvement.		
Main objective		Joining the initiative will increase the transparency in the sector, will ensure high level of accountability, as well as improve the investment environment.		
OGP challenge addressed by the commitment		Improvement of public services, More efficient management of public resources.		
Is it relevant to the advancement of:	Transparency	Accountability	Public participation	
	V	V	V	
Verifiable and measurable milestones to fulfill the commitment		New or ongoing commitment	Start date:	End date:
Launch of the process of joining Exporting Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI), particularly, holding discussions, negotiations and other necessary preparatory works.		New	October 2014	December 2016

3. Ensuring public awareness about health care financing			
Lead agency		Ministry of Health of the Republic of Armenia	
Other involved actors	Government		
	Civil society, Private sector		
Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed		There is a huge gap amongst the existing developments in the health care financing system; the citizens do not know their rights and are not able to manage their rights in a variety of health care system sectors, inter alia receiving hospital care and primary health care services. Within some standards of organizing and financing the treatment those processes are described, but there are dynamic and transparent systems revealing the developments of those relations.	
Main objective		To create healthcare system financial portal where people, professionals and the public may obtain information on the state-guaranteed funding, on the basic package of services, when the payment for services is due for the patient, and when not, how they can get recipes subject to state-guaranteed payment, on financial and non-financial reports and other information.	
OGP challenge addressed by the commitment		Improvement of public services, More efficient management of public resources, Increasing public integrity	
Is it relevant to the advancement of:	Transparency	Accountability	Public participation
	V		V

Verifiable and measurable milestones to fulfill the commitment	New or ongoing commitment	Start date:	End date:
Creation of financial portal of health care system • Over 25 reports for public • Professional areas over 1500 users • For the public all the internet users	New	September 2014	September 2015

4. Ensuring transparency of asset and income declarations of the RA high-ranking officials		
Lead agency		Ethics Commission of High-Ranking Officials (upon consent)
Other involved actors	Government	Ministry of Justice of the RA, Ministry of Finance of the RA
	Civil society, Private Sector	“Freedom of Information Center” NGO (upon consent), “Transparency International” anti-corruption center (upon consent)
Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed		The list of data of declarations on property and income of high-ranking officials subject to publicity established by the Government Decision N 1835-N of December 15, 2011 does not provide a fully transparent list of all operations of property of high-ranking officials and their affiliated persons included in the declarations. In particular, those are restricted by the price thresholds of operations. The Commission plans to reduce such restrictions and want to expand the list of available data to public and thus increase the accessibility of declarations to the public.
Main objective		Ensuring transparency of declarations of property and income of the RA High-ranking officials

OGP challenge addressed by the commitment	Increasing public integrity			
Is it relevant to the advancement of:	Transparency	Accountability	Public participation	
	v			
Verifiable and measurable milestones to fulfill the commitment		New or ongoing commitment	Start date:	End date:
1. Development and discussion by the civil society representatives of RA Government of the draft decision on «On making amendments to the RA Government Decision N 1835-N of December 25, 2011”		New	September 2014	February 2015
2. Conformity of the Plan with stakeholder agencies and the adoption of the RA Government decision.		New	March 2015	June 2015

5. Online broadcasting of the State Procurement Appeals Board sessions		
Lead agency		Ministry of Finance of the RA
Other involved actors	Government	
	Civil society, Private sector	

OGP challenge addressed by the commitment	The monitoring results of the organization certify that the decisions of the Procurement Appeals in many occasions give way to concerns, to address which only making them public is not enough, and it is also necessary to indicate how they were adopted during the board sessions.		
Main objective	Ensuring transparency of Procurement Appeals Board decision-making		
OGP challenge addressed by the commitment	Improvement of public services, Increasing public integrity.		
Is it relevant to the advancement of:	Transparency	Accountability	Public participation
	v	v	
Verifiable and measurable milestones to fulfill the commitment	New or ongoing commitment	Start date:	End date:
1. Negotiate with private companies, clarify the scope of relevant works	New	September 2014	December 2014
2. Develop technical task and launch procurement process	New	January 2015	March 2015
3. Procurement Appeals Board sessions' are broadcasted online via www.gnumner.am webpage.	New	June 2015	To be continued

II. PROMOTION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

6. Community microsurvey introduction in 10 communities	
Lead agency	RA Marzpetarans (Regional administrations) , RA communities (upon consent)

Other involved actors	Government	Ministry of Territorial Administration of the RA		
	Civil society, Private Sector	UNDP (upon consent)		
Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed		Through short messages community residents get involved in local government decision-making process. Via short messages (SMS) community residents receive one or several questions about the community problems with variants of possible answers. Within 24 hours, residents are responding to inquiry by sending an SMS stating their preferred option.		
Main objective		Community micro surveys are an affordable and unique tool that will strengthen communication between the community and local self-governance bodies and will ensure the transparency in the decision-making process.		
OGP challenge addressed by the commitment		Increasing public integrity, More efficient management of public resources.		
Is it relevant to the advancement of:	Transparency	Accountability	Public participation	
	V		V	
Verifiable and measurable milestones to fulfill the commitment		New or ongoing commitment	Start date:	End date:
1. "Community micro survey" program has been introduced in 10 communities.		New	February 2015	June 2016
2. In all 10 communities SMS surveys have been conducted and the results have been published.		New	July 2016	December 2016

7. Ensuring open, transparent, participatory and accountable process of state policies and legislative reforms

Lead agency		Staff of the RA Government
Other involved actors	Government	Ministry of Justice of the RA
	Civil society, private sector	«ARAZA» charitable NGO (upon consent)
Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed		Independent research results show that the managing process of the RA public agencies sometimes has an informal nature because of the perception of the fundamental values of open governance and legal problems. This gives rise to public mistrust and civic apathy towards the country's governance and oversight. Therefore, the issue of the formation of the efficient, transparent and accountable civil society is necessary in the process of policy and legislative amendments.
Main objective		Making amendments in the agenda of the boards/councils of Ministries of the RA established by the protocol decision N 47 of November 20, 2008 of the RA government decision , that will: • Separate and clarify the functions of boards and councils, will further specify the list of participants, their rights and responsibilities, • Define open and transparent formation procedures and activities of councils, as well as the standards of CSO representation and professional qualification, Determine the introduction of electronic accountability system on the official websites of the RA Government and Ministries for making transparent and available the public proposals and official comments thereon, the annual reports of participatory and consultative bodies.
OGP challenge addressed by the commitment		Improvement of public services, Increasing public integrity.

Is it relevant to the advancement of:	Transparency	Accountability	Public participation	
	V	V	V	
Verifiable and measurable milestones to fulfill the commitment		New or ongoing commitment	Start date:	End date:
1. Implement studies of working procedures and international practice,		New	September 2014	December 2014
2. Develop the proposals of changes to legal acts/ agenda,		New	January 2015	March 2015
3. Organize public discussions, collect new proposals, amend the package of proposals and submit to the approval of the Government,		New	April 2015	June 2015
4. Adoption of legal acts/ agenda changes.		New	July 2015	August 2015

8. Public awareness on the lawmaking activity of state governance bodies		
Lead agency		RA Government Staff
Other involved actors	Government	Ministry of Justice of the RA
	Civil Society , Private sector	

Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed	The draft legal acts are being developed by the RA agencies about which the public is sometimes not sufficiently informed. As a result, the public does not have the opportunity to get acquainted with the draft versions until their adoption, as well as to propose recommendations to responsible agencies, and thus to contribute to the amendment process.		
Main objective	General online forum for the publication of draft normative legal acts developed by the government agencies to inform the public about the normative legal acts being developed by the agencies (including, by a subscription principle). The civil society will be given the opportunity to propose recommendations on the draft versions, as well as be informed about their status (i.e. whether it has been adopted or not, how it is edited, as well as the justification for non-adoption).		
OGP challenge addressed by the commitment	Increasing public integrity		
Is it relevant to the advancement of:	Transparency	Accountability	Public participation
	v		v
Verifiable and measurable milestones to fulfill the commitment	New or ongoing commitment	Start date:	End date:
1. Organizing discussions on technical solutions, setting tasks 2. Creation of legal basis for the published draft normative legal acts 3. Ensuring training for the responsible specialists of agencies 4. Publication of draft legal normative acts being developed by the agencies on the created forum	New	September 2014	December 2016

III. STRENGTHENING PUBLIC INTEGRITY

9. Ensuring transparency of the election of Governing Boards of the RA general secondary education institutions and of the annual budget planning and expenses of RA general secondary education institutions		
Lead agency		Ministry of Education and Science of the RA
Other involved actors	Government	
	Civil society, Private sector	«World Vision Armenia» charitable organization (upon consent)
Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed		- The representation nature of the governing boards of the RA General education institutions (SNCOs) is sometimes violated, because there are cases when in the Governing Board a parent, who is meanwhile a pedagogue of the institution, is being elected. In that case the parent cannot be impartial, because, he/she also being a pedagogue, also works under the management of the institutions' director. In this case, the governing board is not able to operate efficiently because of the vertical and the horizontal ties existing between the members. - For the purpose of ensuring proportionality among the Governing Boards of the RA general education institutions, an amendment will be done to the procedure of the election to the Governing Board, according to which persons who are involved in the given school's pedagogical staff will not be nominated. - Quite often the information on the annual budget planning and execution of the RA general education institutions is not available to the people receiving educational services of the general secondary education sector, which has a negative impact on the confidence-building environment and parent-school effective cooperation.
Main objective		- Making amendments to the election procedure of the Governing Board of the RA general secondary education institutions, - Ensuring transparency and accountability of the budget planning of the general education services

	(annual draft budget) and annual financial expenses on the web pages of secondary schools and in the corner of the announcement boards.		
OGP challenge addressed by the commitment	Increasing public integrity, More efficient management of public resources		
Is it relevant to the advancement of:	Transparency	Accountability	Public participation
	V	V	V
Verifiable and measurable milestones to fulfill the commitment		New or ongoing commitment	Start date: End date:
1. Creation of a working group with the participation of the representatives of the RA Ministry of Education and Science, as well as of the civil society.		New	September 2014 October 2014
2. Amendments to the election procedures of the Governing Boards of the RA general secondary education institutions and development and approval of the “Procedure of the annual budget planning and report on the budget expenses of the RA general education institutions”.		New	December 2014 March 2015

IV. PROMOTING ACCESS TO INFORMATION

10. Knowledge and capacity building of public servants in the freedom of information and anticorruption field		
Lead agency		Civil Service Council of the RA (upon consent)
Other involved actors	Government	Ministry of Territorial Administration of the RA

	Civil society, Private sector	«Freedom of Information Center» NGO (upon consent) «Young Lawyers Association of Armenia» NGO (upon consent)		
Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed		At present, many state servants do not possess enough knowledge and skills in the sphere of fight against corruption and of freedom of information to act openly and transparently. The recommendation will help bridge the gap of information and knowledge of the officials.		
Main objective		Knowledge of 200 public servants on the fight against corruption, integrity and freedom of information will be improved, as well as the skills on the application of legislation on the freedom of information. The trainings will help the public servants to work openly and transparently, guided by the ethics rules for public servants.		
OGP challenge addressed by the commitment		Improvement of public services		
Is it relevant to the advancement of:	Transparency		Accountability	Public participation
	V		V	
Verifiable and measurable milestones to fulfill the commitment		New or ongoing commitment	Start date:	End date:
1. 10 trainings will be organized 2. 200 public servants will be trained 3. 400 questionnaires will be completed (200- at the beginning of the training, 200- at the end of) 4. Two analyses will be conducted based on the questionnaires		Ongoing	February 2015	December 2015

11. Ensuring transparency of local self government bodies of large communities

Lead agency		RA Marzpetarans (Regional administrations), RA communities (upon consent)		
Other involved agency	Government	Ministry of Territorial Administration of the RA		
	Civil society, Private sector	“Asparez” (Arena) Journalists’ Club NGO (upon consent)		
Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed		Some large communities of Armenia have websites, others not, they are being updated on a quite irregular basis, LSG decisions are being published not on all websites (decisions of Community Council, orders of the community heads) or they are being published partially. The awareness raising on public discussions, hearings, sessions of the Community Council is being done improperly. The sessions of the Community Council is being broadcasted online only in the cities of Vanadzor and Gyumri, and even in some communities because of the lack of sufficient space for halls it is sometimes impossible to ensure the participation of all interested persons in the sessions of the Community Council.		
Main objective		The creation and update of internet pages, the publication of all legal acts adopted by the community authorities, the notification about the sessions of the Community Council, public discussions and hearings, as well as the online broadcasting of the sessions of Community Council will be ensured for the communities of Armenia with the population of 20, 000 and more.		
OGP challenge addressed by the commitment		Improvement of public services, Increasing public integrity.		
Is it relevant to the advancement of:		Transparency	Accountability	Public participation

	V	V	V	
Verifiable and measurable milestones to fulfill the commitment	New or ongoing commitment	Start date:	End date:	
1. Fundraising for the technical equipment of online broadcasting the sessions of the Council of Elders, public discussions and LSG conferences, for reequipping the existing or creating new websites for communities with population of 20, 000 and more. Ensuring purchase process of services for creating technical equipments and websites	New	October 2014	July 2015	
2. Creation of internet information sites for communities with population of 20,000 and more with the possibility of public comments.	New	August 2015	March 2016	
3. Organization of trainings for the respective specialists of the communities	New	September 2015	February 2016	
4. Launching website, online broadcasting the sessions of the Council of Elders of targeted communities and LSG conferences	New	April 2016	To be continued	