

Multi-Stakeholder Forum Read-out

Thursday 22nd June 2023

Aim of the meeting

The aim of this Multi-Stakeholder Forum (MSF) was to review recent progress on the implementation of the Fifth National Action Plan for Open Government (NAP5) and launch the co-creation of the Sixth National Action Plan on Open Government (NAP6). This included verbal updates by civil society and government leads on NAP5, followed by a session co-chaired by Kevin Keith (UK OGN Chair) and Parliamentary Secretary for the Cabinet Office, [Alex Burghart MP](#) on themes to progress to the next phase of co-creation of NAP6.

Attendees

There were a total of 38 attendees, of which 21 were government representatives and 17 from civil society.

Slide-deck

A comprehensive slide-deck was used to facilitate this meeting, which contains a substantial amount of information which will not be duplicated in the read-out. The slide-deck is available in PDF format.

Welcome

The first part of the meeting was co-chaired by Sue Bateman, Interim Chief Data Officer from CDDO (Central Digital and Data Office, part of the Cabinet Office), and Kevin Keith, Chair of the UK Open Government Civil Society Network (UK OGN). Minister Alex Burghart joined the meeting to co-chair the second part, and provided opening remarks and closing comments on the launch of NAP6 co-creation.

Part One: Updates on NAP5 progress

Civil society and government leads worked together to provide updates on NAP5 commitments.

Commitment 1: Open Contracting

Primary legislation is in the final stages of its passage through the Commons and the civil society-government UK Open Contracting Advisory Group continues to meet to discuss plans for secondary legislation. The importance of releasing more transparency data in due course was emphasised by civil society.

Commitment 2: Open Justice

Good progress is being made across all commitments, alongside progress outside of NAP5 for a [call for evidence](#) on a range of topics covering open justice, access to data, and the transparency of the court and tribunal services. Whilst this progress was welcomed, it was noted by civil society that courts need to do more to reduce barriers to access and rectify infrastructure issues.

Commitment 3: Algorithmic transparency and accountability

Civil society has asked for clarity regarding work on appeal mechanisms for algorithm-assisted decisions. CDDO has been in touch with the relevant team for an update.

Commitment 4: Health

DHSC and NHS have made recent changes to the team responsible for health objectives 1 and 2 and CDDO is engaging with new staff. Civil society has asked for more information on the implementation of the [Data Saves Lives](#) strategy and public engagement opportunities for data-sharing practices. Good progress is being made across all other health commitments under objective 3, including ongoing discussions about how best to conduct compliance activities related to clinical trials run in the UK.

Commitment 5: Anti-corruption and international illicit finance

Implementation is ongoing and good progress is being made, with further civil society engagement planned through the [UK Anti-Corruption Coalition](#). Civil society highlighted concerns regarding progress by British Overseas Territories on implementing publicly accessible registers of company beneficial ownership by the 2023 deadline, and also expressed a desire to hear more about future plans on asset recovery and return.

Commitment 6: Aid transparency

Implementation is ongoing and good progress is being made in several areas, with further improvements to aid project descriptions in the near future. Civil society emphasised positive aspects of their collaboration with FCDO leadership - though noted that FCDO's current pause on publication was challenging.

Commitment 7: Diversity and inclusion

Work to pursue this area is ongoing and progressing. Since April 2023, members of the Diversity and Inclusion Working Group have co-written a Terms of Reference and set out feasible objectives for October 2023, with more substantive objectives for early 2024.

Commitment 8: Freedom of Information

Implementation is ongoing, with the Information Rights User Group now formed and due to host their first meeting on 4th July.

Local Transparency

DLUHC have made recent changes to the team responsible for this commitment and CDDO is engaging with new staff to provide an update in due course.

Comments on verbal updates to monitor NAP5 implementation

Attendees welcomed the opportunity to exchange updates between government and civil society counterparts in a collaborative manner. It encouraged open and positive dialogue and showed there was a productive relationship within stakeholder groups.

The value of sharing knowledge and experience on approaches to open government between civil society and governments in the UK - including HMG, the devolved administrations and local government - was noted and encouraged.

Part 2 - launching NAP6 co-creation

Introduction

Kevin Keith welcomed Alex Burghart MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Cabinet Office, to his first Multi-Stakeholder Forum. Kevin paid tribute to the UK's role in Open Government, including on the international stage, its membership on the OGP Steering Committee, and the importance of ministerial support for the co-creation process.

Minister Burghart reflected on the importance of Open Government, and noted the positive UK legislative efforts in improving transparency, accountability and public participation. He noted his recent meeting with the CEO of OGP Sanjay Pradhan, his intention to lead the UK delegation at the OGP Summit in Estonia this September, and his interest in hearing the progress in launching the development of the Sixth National Action Plan for Open Government.

Analysis of outreach and discussion of themes

The NAP6 outreach phase is part of an agreed approach to implementing the OGP co-creation and Action Plan Development framework in a way not previously done in the UK. This approach aimed to address feedback from civil society and government representatives, as well as in the OGP co-creation brief, regarding the NAP5 process, focusing on ensuring that our aspirations were balanced by the available resources to carry-out the process. The OGP co-creation brief called for 'a co-creation process that enables meaningful dialogue, while also being realistic and accounting for resource constraints,' and an honest assessment of capability to engage in the process.

We aimed to provide a process with clear aims and mechanisms for each stage, and which enables meaningful dialogue. Civil society outreach was led by UK OGN, primarily through the use of a Google Form. Government outreach was led by CDDO through internal communications. The outreach was assessed for relevance to open government, the potential for significant commitments, and whether both civil society and government capability existed to engage in NAP6 co-creation on each theme in the available time.

Based on this analysis, each theme was rated Red, Amber or Green by CDDO. This [analysis of the NAP6 outreach phase](#) was circulated ahead of this MSF as a basis for structured discussion, and should be read alongside these notes which include an agreed way forward on each theme as set out below.

Acknowledgements were made of the efforts in producing this report in a short space of time to inform this MSF. It was also noted that the NAP process is about working in good faith, in a collaborative manner on areas of mutual endeavour to develop significant open government commitments, which meant the MSF would need to be mindful of selecting appropriate areas to take forward into co-creation. There was a general view that the outreach phase, including the analysis, would have benefitted from more time to enable greater collaboration to underpin informed decision-making. An opportunity to review the public outreach process was suggested as an important follow-up from the MSF, which will help to inform planning the Seventh National Action Plan for Open Government (NAP7).

Anti-Corruption & Integrity - Open Contracting

There was strong support to proceed with Open Contracting, building on several years of involvement with NAPs, with great potential to strengthen the implementation of legislation. This theme will proceed to NAP6 co-creation led by the Open Contracting Advisory Group.

Budget Transparency

There was strong support to proceed with a focus on Aid Transparency, with a positive experience noted during NAP5. There was particular interest in working with local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to see how they could contribute to developing Aid Transparency work. This theme will proceed to NAP6 co-creation with the lead civil society stakeholder group being the Bond Transparency Working Group.

Anti-Corruption & Integrity - General

This theme had both clear government and civil society interest in developing commitments to feed-in to the new UK Anti-Corruption Strategy, but further conversation around potential scope was needed in-light of available government resources and current efforts. A follow-up conversation will take place before taking the decision to engage in NAP6 co-creation.

Anti-Corruption & Integrity - Beneficial Ownership

This theme had both clear government and civil society interest in developing commitments on beneficial ownership, but further conversation around potential scope was needed in-light of available government resources and existing current efforts. A follow-up conversation will take place before taking the decision whether to proceed to NAP6 co-creation.

Digital Governance

There was a strong desire to pursue this theme, especially from civil society MSF attendees, but there was concern about the government's capability to develop meaningful commitments within the NAP6 process given existing extensive activity on this theme within

government. It was agreed that this theme should be followed-up in parallel to the NAP6 process, with a view to future commitments in NAP7.

Inclusion

The distinction between the current NAP5 diversity and inclusion commitments around the NAP process was contrasted with the NAP6 outreach submission which focused on the wider topic of inclusion. It was agreed that inclusion was an important area to develop in the lead into NAP7, either to harness existing capacity or develop the relevant stakeholder group to support the process.

Justice

The current “Open Justice: the way forward” [Call for Evidence](#) (CfE) was recognised as a priority activity to build on NAP5 work. As such, Open Justice will be revisited at a later date to reassess whether the outcomes from the CfE could feed into a planned amendment to NAP6 during 2024.

Right to Information

There was strong support to proceed with developing a commitment in this area, but the relevant government team needed more time to scope the ambition so it is achievable and reflects the resources available both to government and civil society.

Anti-Corruption & Integrity - Political Integrity

Civil society representatives were of the strong view that this area was of great importance to overall open government efforts, and that lack of government capability to include this in NAP6 was disappointing. It was agreed that discussion around this theme could be pursued in parallel to the NAP6 process, with a view to potential inclusion in NAP7.

Civic Space, Natural Resources, and Open Parliaments

Whilst there were clearly important issues in these areas, all three themes lacked contributions through outreach. They were considered important areas to develop in the lead into NAP7, either to harness existing capacity, or develop the relevant stakeholder groups to support the process.

Public Service Delivery

The only element of this theme covered in detail at the meeting was on health, specifically clinical trials. However, it was clear that embedding existing open health related commitments in NAP5 needed to remain the focus before developing new commitments in NAP6. Ongoing dialogue was welcomed on this topic.

Next steps

A summary of the NAP6 timeline was presented, including stages of co-creation, and an overview of the Action Plan Development phases. Phase 1 will lead to the drafting of commitments on a theme-by-theme basis through 4 distinct steps between now and

mid-October. Phase 2 will be a centrally coordinated effort to finalise commitments and publish NAP6 before Christmas. The MSF was reminded that co-creation is time-limited, requiring government and civil society to engage with one another constructively over a short period of time. Further information would follow after the MSF, including briefing packs for themes proceeding to co-creation.

Reflections and thank you

Reflections centred around the positive exchange of updates between government and civil society counterparts, and the promise of further candid discussions through the NAP6 co-creation effort. There was recognition that developing commitments on 4 or 5 themes is a welcome opportunity to agree on NAP6 in a full, ambitious and timely manner. Moreover, for themes that are not taken forward as part of NAP6 co-creation, there remains potential to engage in discussions ahead of NAP7.

The MSF was reminded that analysis of NAP6 outreach considered issues of relevance, significance, and capability to progress NAP6 co-creation based on the NAP6 outreach phase. Further engagement between civil society and government outside of the NAP6 process was encouraged. A shift from stand-alone commitments to embracing a “network of networks” approach was highlighted as an opportunity to harness the efforts of existing communities where government and civil society already interact, or develop these where necessary.

Minister Burghart thanked everyone for their attendance and noted the interesting breadth of the discussion. He emphasised that the democratically elected government is looking to work with civil society where there are synergies, and encouraged efforts to be focused in these areas.