



Assessing the Evidence:

The Effectiveness and Impact of Public Governance-Oriented Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives

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Glossary of Acronyms

BIC	Bank Information Center
CoST	Construction Sector Transparency Initiative
CPI	Corruption Perception Index
CSO	Civil society organization
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
FDI	Foreign direct investment
FOI	Freedom of information
FOWG	Fiscal Openness Working Group (Open Government Partnership)
FPPPA	Federal Public Procurement and Property Administration Agency (Ethiopia)
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
GDP	Gross domestic product
GESOC	Gestión Social y Cooperación (Mexico)
GIFT	Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency
GIZ	German Federal Enterprise for International Cooperation
GPSA	Global Partnership for Social Accountability
GONGO	Government-organized non-governmental organization
IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative
IBP	International Budget Partnership
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IEP	International Expert Panel (Open Government Partnership)
IFAC	International Federation of Accountants
IFI	International Financial Institutions
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRM	Independent Reporting Mechanism (Open Government Partnership)
JSTOR	Journal Storage
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MSG	Multi-stakeholder group
MSI	Multi-stakeholder initiative
NCIC	National Construction Industry Council (Malawi)
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NRGI	Natural Resource Governance Institute
OBI	Open Budget Index
OCDS	Open Contracting Data Standard
OCPP	Open Contracting Partnership
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OKF	Open Knowledge Foundation

OGP	Open Government Partnership
OSIWA	Open Society Initiative for Western Africa
PEFA	Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability
PPP	Public-private partnership
PWYP	Publish What You Pay
RWI	Revenue Watch Institute
SAI	Supreme audit institution
SISOCS	Sistema de Información y Seguimiento de Obras y Contratos de Supervisión (Honduras)
SMART	Specific, measurable, actionable, relevant and, time-bound
TAI	Transparency and Accountability Initiative
TAP	Transparency, accountability, and participation
TI	Transparency International
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States
USD	United States dollars
WCD	World Commission on Dams
WGI	Worldwide Governance Indicators
WJP	World Justice Project
WRI	World Resources Institute

Executive summary

Transnational multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs) – voluntary partnerships between governments, civil society, and the private sector – are an increasingly prevalent strategy for promoting government responsiveness and accountability to citizens. While most transnational MSIs involve using voluntary standards to encourage socially and environmentally responsible private sector behavior, a handful of these initiatives – the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), the Construction Sector Transparency Initiative (CoST), the Open Government Partnership (OGP), the Global Initiative on Fiscal Transparency (GIFT) and the Open Contracting Partnership (OCP) – focus on information disclosure and participation in the public sector. Unlike private sector MSIs, which attempt to *supplement* weak government capacity to enforce basic social and environmental standards through partnerships between businesses and civil society, public sector MSIs ultimately seek to *bolster* public governance. But how exactly are these MSIs supposed to work? And how much has actually been achieved?

The purpose of this study is to identify and consolidate the current state of the evidence for public governance-oriented MSI effectiveness and impact. Researchers collected over 300 documents and interviewed more than two-dozen MSI stakeholders about their experiences with five public-governance oriented multi-stakeholder initiatives.

As of early 2015, there are still only a handful of studies on the effectiveness and impact of public governance-oriented MSIs. EITI is the oldest of the five MSIs reviewed and is the subject of over half of the documents collected. EITI is also the only initiative to have generated studies of deeper social impacts. Both CoST and the OGP have been operating for less than five years. Consequently, while both initiatives have generated some early studies of national level effects, they have not yet been subjected to a comprehensive review of effectiveness or impact. GIFT and OCP only recently formalized their transnational governance structures. As a result, these initiatives show only early outputs from promoting their agenda at the international level.

For each of the three MSIs where studies of national-level outcomes are available (i.e., EITI, CoST, and OGP), there is clear evidence that efforts to improve transparency are bearing fruit in at least in some participating countries. However, national-level stakeholders warn that the information being disclosed is often too technical to be comprehensible by citizens without additional translation and initiatives. Some countries are also experimenting with new venues for public participation, although there is little evidence that these spaces have the depth or leverage necessary (as yet) to allow civil society organizations to advance their priorities. There is also little evidence that improvements in transparency and participation have produced tangible increases in government accountability.

At this stage, evidence for the broader impact of public governance-oriented MSIs is weak or non-existent. Studies of EITI using large-N analysis suggest that participation in the initiative has statistically significant, but causally inconclusive, relationships with some socio-economic indicators (e.g., GDP per capita, FDI), but not others (e.g., perceptions of corruption). However, evaluators caution that these cross-national studies hide important variations between countries. Due to the young age of the other four MSIs, no evidence for longer-term social or economic impacts currently exists.

Looking across all five public governance multi-stakeholder initiatives, the evidence collected to date suggests that these initiatives are still operating within the early stages of their proposed results frameworks.¹ While public sector MSIs have made some notable progress promoting information disclosure and participation, there is little evidence thus far that these reforms have been effective at improving government accountability or achieving broader social, economic, and/or environmental impacts. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that many public sector MSIs are still in the process of debating and negotiating definitions of “success.” Some stakeholders suggest that this debate can be partially attributed to a transition from an early phase of MSI operation, where getting governments to participate was a high priority, to a newer phase, focused on improving performance. However, the ongoing nature of these debates also suggests that “success” remains a fluid concept that is being negotiated between and within participating countries on one hand and with donors on the other.

¹ A common expression for describing how interventions like MSIs are supposed to work is the “theory of change.” Indeed, we explore this concept in detail in the Conceptual Issues section and we highlight several MSI theories of change throughout the paper. Nevertheless, with regard to the overall effectiveness and impact of MSIs, we choose to use the expression “results frameworks” instead. Since several MSIs have yet to fully and/or explicitly articulate a theory of change, it would be inaccurate to conclude that they are all operating within the early stages of one.

In order for MSIs to produce high-quality evaluations in the future, stakeholders should specify how they will define and measure “effectiveness” – the extent to which an MSI has helped to change policy or facilitate public debate in participating countries – and “impact” – the extent to which these debates and policy changes have had measurable effects on the social, economic, or environmental conditions within or across participating countries. Indeed, without careful specification of the expected results framework, it becomes all too easy to confuse “outputs” (e.g., information disclosure) with outcomes and impacts.

Despite the current limitations of the evidence base, stakeholders across all five MSIs have identified a handful of key factors that are believed to drive better outcomes: high-level political will, mid-level government expertise, civil society interest, empowerment, and capacity, usage of strategic opportunity points, and goodness of fit with existing public interest constituencies. These factors can be succinctly summarized as “the right people, at the right time, with the right message.”

There is still much to learn about how to improve MSI effectiveness and impact. First, in many countries, the right of civil society to participate in public governance still faces serious challenges. MSI are currently seeking ways to mitigate the effects of closing civic space and to broaden participation across diverse segments of civil society. Second, there are remaining concerns about the relevance of MSI activities and outputs to existing domestic civil society priorities, as well as the ability of CSOs to adequately comprehend and disseminate the information being disclosed. Stakeholders continue to explore when and how civil society organizations are able to successfully leverage MSIs to pursue their existing objectives, and seek to identify new methods for building additional civil society capacity in data analysis, communication, and advocacy. Third, while consistent government support and interest is key for MSI effectiveness, many national multi-stakeholder groups struggle to expand enthusiasm for their work beyond a few key participants, leaving the work especially vulnerable to the election cycle and other personnel shifts. MSIs need strategies for expanding support for their work among various government actors. Finally, the private sector can provide a critical endorsement for good governance reforms, yet securing sustained private sector interest has been challenging for many MSIs. Some MSIs continue to explore how to build relationships with the business community. What ties all of these evidence gaps together is a critical need for MSIs to better understand and influence the distribution of power in participating countries. Exploring these areas in more detail should provide MSIs with more political levers to effect real change.

Public governance-oriented MSIs exhibit significant convergence at both the transnational and national level. Funder and partner organizations like DFID, the Ford Foundation, the Hewlett Foundation, the Omidyar Network, Transparency International, and the World Bank work closely with multiple MSIs. MSIs and funders also have relationships with one another. These connections are worth acknowledging and leveraging when possible. Additionally, around half a dozen governments are currently participating simultaneously in several different public sector MSIs. These points of overlap provide a unique opportunity for exploring possible synergies that could aid in national strategy development and help to reduce the burden of participation on domestic actors.

Secretariats, boards, and participating governments should work to strengthen national MSI implementation by broadening participation across branches of government, facilitating opportunities for government participants from different countries to build relationships with one another, and by providing templates and examples of good practice whenever possible. These stakeholders should also work to develop more sophisticated monitoring and evaluation efforts (including national baseline studies) in order to track their progress. Finally, these actors should encourage developed countries to “practice what they preach” by implementing MSI processes for open, participatory, and accountable governance.

Funders should work to strengthen broad coalitions of national-level actors that can engage directly with MSI agenda-setting, activities, and outputs, and link these efforts to existing domestic accountability ecosystems – the landscape of actors, institutions, mechanisms, and political dynamics between these various components, that serves to promote or inhibit good governance. This can be accomplished by supporting actors with strong ties to existing pro-accountability coalitions and investing in national “infomediaries” who can translate MSI outputs into actionable information. Funders should also support efforts to improve MSI learning by facilitating regular communication and knowledge sharing among MSIs and supporting comparative case studies that use process tracing to identify key factors driving outcomes and their links to longer-term impacts. Finally, funders should encourage MSIs to articulate comprehensive monitoring and evaluation strategies.

Ultimately, the effectiveness and impact of public governance MSIs will depend on the willingness and capacity of pro-reform actors to embed MSI activities and outputs within the efforts of broader national accountability coalitions. Pro-reform actors should expand processes for civil society consultation and participation beyond political and economic centers, customize national MSI agendas so that they resonate with broad civic and social constituencies, petition formal domestic accountability institutions to provide “teeth” to MSI processes, and embed newly released information on government activities into existing channels of public discourse and decision-making.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Public governance-oriented multi-stakeholder initiatives are still operating within the early links of their proposed results frameworks**
 - Strong empirical evidence that MSI-led information disclosure and public participation reforms leads to greater public accountability has not yet emerged
- **To date, evidence for effectiveness is uneven and evidence for impact is weak or non-existent**
 - Evidence for effectiveness includes early legislative and regulatory achievements by EITI, CoST, and OGP in a handful of countries
 - Only EITI – the public governance MSI with the longest track record – has generated studies of impact, and the results have been mixed or inconclusive
- **Definitions of MSI “success” remain debated and negotiated**
- **High-quality evaluations will require that MSIs specify how they define and measure “effectiveness” and “impact”**
 - It is easy to confuse “outputs” (e.g., information disclosure) with “outcomes” (e.g., increased accountability) and “impacts” (broader improvements in social, economic, or environmental conditions)
- **A set of shared factors that contribute to improved outcomes across all MSIs is slowly emerging from the existing evidence base and MSI stakeholder perspectives**
 - High-level political actors, mid-level reformers, and civil society need to be incentivized to participate (as outlined in the OGP theory of change)
 - MSIs can gain leverage from unique moments of strategic opportunity or crisis
 - Goals should be interpreted to fit within existing reform efforts unique to each country or region
- **Improving MSI effectiveness and impact will require increased emphasis on power analysis**
 - Civil society actors must be empowered, interested, and capacitated
 - Government and private sector support for MSIs must be expanded and sustained
- **There are opportunities for synergies between public governance-oriented MSIs to improve learning, support champions and identify significant points of resistance**
- **MSIs tend to draw on shared partner organizations and funders**
 - Several governments are simultaneously participating in multiple MSIs (e.g., Guatemala, Honduras, the Philippines, Tanzania, and Ukraine)

RECOMMENDATIONS

MSI secretariats, boards, and participating governments should:

- Broaden participation across branches of government
- Facilitate opportunities for government participants from different countries to build relationships with each other
- Provide templates and examples of good practice whenever possible
- Develop more sophisticated monitoring and evaluation efforts (including national baseline studies)
- Encourage developed countries to “practice what they preach” by implementing MSI processes for open, participatory, and accountable governance

Funders should:

- Support national-level actors with strong ties to existing pro-accountability coalitions
- Invest in national “infomediaries” who can translate MSI outputs into actionable information
- Facilitate regular communication and knowledge sharing among MSIs
- Support comparative case studies that use process tracing to identify key factors driving outcomes and their links to longer-term impacts
- Encourage MSIs to articulate comprehensive monitoring and evaluation strategies

Pro-reform actors should:

- Expand processes for civil society consultation and participation beyond political and economic centers
- Customize national MSI agendas so that they resonate with broad civic and social constituencies
- Petition formal domestic accountability institutions to provide “teeth” to MSI processes
- Embed newly released information on government activities into existing channels of public discourse and decision-making

I. Introduction

It's a familiar scenario for good governance advocates across the globe: A politician promises to build twenty-five new, low-cost homes for teachers. At the groundbreaking ceremony, the community is told that the houses will cost the taxpayers \$250,000 to build (everyone expects to have plenty of money on hand after discovering an untapped oil field) and will be ready in twelve months. Two years later, the houses still aren't finished and revenues from the oil field are much lower than expected. Finally, three years later, the politician returns to celebrate the completion of only nineteen houses at a total cost of \$500,000.

Good governance advocates believe that the citizens in this scenario deserve to know where their oil money went and why this housing project was delayed, modified, and over budget. But what's the best way to encourage governments to release more information to citizens? And how can citizens be empowered to use newly available information on public contracts, revenues, and expenditures to make government better? Despite rapid advances in information and communications technology over the past several decades, many countries still lack the political, institutional, and technical capacity to ensure that the public sector is operating efficiently and honestly.

An increasingly prevalent strategy for promoting government responsiveness and accountability to citizens is the formation of transnational multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs) – voluntary partnerships between governments, civil society, and the private sector. While most transnational MSIs involve using voluntary standards to encourage socially and environmentally responsible private sector behavior, a handful of these initiatives – the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), the Construction Sector Transparency Initiative (CoST), the Open Government Partnership (OGP), the Global Initiative on Fiscal Transparency (GIFT) and the Open Contracting Partnership (OCP) – focus on information disclosure and participation in the public sector. But how exactly are these MSIs supposed to work? And how much has actually been achieved?

Global governance theorists suggest that there is good reason to be optimistic about what multi-stakeholder initiatives can achieve. By facilitating communication and collaboration between government and civil society, MSIs have the potential to tap into the technical, social, and political information necessary to address problems and to facilitate deliberation, consensus building, and compliance with reform commitments.² Through a virtuous cycle of participation, information disclosure, and accountability, MSI architects expect them to provide empowerment, opportunity, training, and support to reformers across all sectors of government and society.

Indeed, public sector MSIs are already creating new opportunities for civil society participation in public governance reform. As part of the OGP action planning process, Georgia passed a new right to information law that was developed in close collaboration with civil society.³ In Liberia, the national multi-stakeholder group implementing EITI helped to pass new natural resource revenue transparency law.⁴ And in Guatemala, the CoST multi-stakeholder group successfully convinced the government to annul a large and inefficient public works contract for the reconstruction of the Belize Bridge in Guatemala City.⁵ Over time, advocates believe that good governance reforms like these will lead to increased government efficiency, reduced corruption, and more sustainable economic development.

However, close observers point out that MSIs also involve risks. The proliferation of actors and standards can overwhelm the capacity of governments and civil society groups and limit their ability to participate effectively.⁶ Given that the eligibility requirements for government participation in MSIs are intentionally minimal, the reform process might be coopted and used to bolster the international legitimacy of regimes that remain fundamentally closed and undemocratic (i.e., “openwashing”).⁷ In addition, although MSIs ostensibly increase access and standing for constituencies not represented in traditional interstate forums, most MSIs were created by traditionally powerful actors, and may reproduce structural imbalances that favor them.⁸ Perhaps most important of all, the pathways by which information disclosure might lead to greater accountability have been shown to be highly dependent on national socio-political factors, including civil society capacity, existing advocacy coalitions, and government incentives for reform.⁹ Yet, despite the importance of building the capacity, interest, and political clout of broad-based pro-reform coalitions, MSIs often focus on achieving fairly limited transparency goals and include only a handful of highly specialized and externally funded NGOs to represent citizens.

² For a discussion of MSIs as informative problem solvers, see Brinkerhoff (2002). For discussions of MSIs as deliberative consensus builders, see Risse (2000) and Bernstein (2004).

³ For details, see OGP's Four-Year Strategy 2015-2018 (2014b), pgs. 8 & 11 and the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information's Dec 23, 2013 blog post “Georgia as One of the Primary Examples of Successful Implementation of Proactive Disclosure” (<https://ogpblog.wordpress.com/2013/12/23/georgia-as-one-of-the-primary-examples-for-successful-implementation-of-proactive-disclosure/>).

⁴ For a brief description of the Liberia EITI Act, see EITI's July 17, 2009 web post “Liberia EITI Act Signed Into Law” (<https://eiti.org/news-events/liberia-eiti-act-signed-law>) and EITI's Impact of EITI in Africa (2010), pg. 5.

⁵ For details, see CoST's Impact Stories (2012), pg. 3.

⁶ For a discussion of the risks of participating in MSIs see Khadiagala (2014).

⁷ For consideration of a recent example where this seems to be the case, see Human Rights Watch's Aug 14, 2014 web article “Azerbaijan: Transparency Group Should Suspend Membership: Stifling Pressure on Activists Violates Commitments” (<http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/08/14/azerbaijan-transparency-group-should-suspend-membership>).

⁸ See Kahler (2013) and Khadiagala (2014).

⁹ See Fox (2007b), Fung, Graham, & Weil (2007), McGee & Gaventa (2010), and Gaventa & McGee (2013).

Global governance practitioners surveyed at a recent workshop on MSIs expressed guarded optimism about the progress MSIs are making towards their goals, but also gave MSIs poor marks for demonstrating impact. They even expressed moderate concern that there is “too much focus” on MSIs within the transparency and accountability field compared to other reform strategies.¹⁰ While MSIs are expected to have a valuable effect on government actions, according to one funder, “we don’t know if that’s actually working.”

Given the exciting possibilities and troubling risks of public governance MSIs, good governance advocates need to know more about how these initiatives define, track, and interpret their effectiveness – the extent to which they contribute to greater public transparency, participation, and accountability – and their impact – the extent to which they contribute to longer-term social, economic, and environmental outcomes. What kinds of evidence are out there? What can it tell us about strategies for success? And what can it tell us about shared challenges? Despite the recent popularity of multi-stakeholder approaches to governance challenges, especially within the international donor community, there have been no attempts to systematically evaluate the evidence for the effectiveness and impact of these initiatives until now.

This synthesis report seeks to identify and consolidate the current state of the evidence for public sector MSI effectiveness and impact. How do these MSIs define and identify their desired outcomes and longer-term impacts? To what extent have they achieved their stated outcomes? What are the key factors that seem to influence their achievements? And to what extent have these outcomes contributed to broader impacts in participating countries?

The report begins with a brief discussion of conceptual issues that inform the research. The second section describes the document collection and stakeholder interview processes that inform the findings of this report. The third section discusses each MSI’s key structures, processes and participants, their mechanisms for building an evidence base, and the evidence for each MSI’s effectiveness and impact. The fourth section provides a general synthesis of findings across all five MSIs and identifies a number of remaining research gaps that MSIs may wish to address in collaboration with each other. The final section provides a number of recommendations to MSI staff and participating governments, international donors, and pro-reform actors at the national level.

¹⁰ On February 12, 2015, following a workshop in Washington, DC, 42 MSI stakeholders – secretariat staff, funders, advisory board members, NGO observers and researchers, and country-level participants – were surveyed anonymously on their attitudes towards MSIs. Survey responses were given on a 10-point Likert scale, with higher values indicating optimism, satisfaction, or agreement and lower values indicating pessimism, dissatisfaction, or disagreement. Participants expressed guarded optimism about the progress MSIs are making towards their goals (Mean = 6) but gave MSIs poor marks for demonstrating impact (Mean = 4.6). Participants also expressed concerns that MSIs are being favored too heavily as solutions to TAP problems (Mean = 6.8).

II. Conceptual Issues

In this section, we discuss how public governance-oriented MSIs fit into the larger universe of multi-stakeholder initiatives, and articulate a clear set of inclusion criteria for the MSIs discussed in this report. We also consider the difference between measuring “effectiveness” – the extent to which these MSI have helped to change policy or facilitate public debate in participating countries – and “impact” – the extent to which these debates and policy changes have had measurable effects on the social, economic, or environmental conditions within or across participating countries. Finally, we discuss why accurately measuring either concept requires both the articulation of a “theory of change” – a compelling explanation for how each MSI’s activities and outputs contribute to achieving its medium and long-term goals – and the specification of a level of analysis – the transnational or national scope from which effectiveness and impact will be measured.

Transnational multi-stakeholder initiatives and public sector accountability

A multi-stakeholder initiative is a voluntary partnership between representatives of different sectors of society. Partnerships between government and the private sector are often referred to as “public-private partnerships” (PPPs), while partnerships between civil society and the private sector are often called “business-NGO” or “supply chain” partnerships. MSIs can exist at the local, national, and/or transnational levels. The current proliferation of transnational MSIs began in the 1990s, with the establishment of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the World Commission on Dams (WCD).¹¹ The FSC began as a partnership between non-governmental environmental organizations, and industry to address deforestation.¹² The WCD involved states, civil society groups, industrial interests, and multilateral organizations and produced recommendations for minimizing the social and environmental impacts of large dams.¹³

By all accounts, the number of transnational multi-stakeholder initiatives has skyrocketed over the past two decades.¹⁴ Global governance theorists explain this trend as an attempt to re-regulate an increasingly globalized market that has outgrown the jurisdiction of national laws and outpaced the establishment of international ones.¹⁵ They describe these types of initiatives as examples of “networked governance” that involve novel arrangements between state (i.e., government agencies) and non-state (i.e., multinational corporations, transnational professional associations, epistemic communities, and international NGOs) actors.¹⁶ They have also suggested that MSIs are intended to address three deficits in global governance: the regulation gap, the participation gap, and the implementation gap. MSIs address the regulation gap by providing opportunities for actors to collectively solve problems. They address the participation gap by including actors who are often unrepresented. Finally, MSIs attempt to address the implementation gap by improving the execution of strategic goals.¹⁷

Transnational MSIs have produced social and environmental standards for a variety of private commercial sectors, from fisheries (e.g., the Marine Stewardship Conservation Network), to mineral extraction in conflict zones (e.g., the Kimberly Process), to agriculture (e.g., the Roundtables on Sustainable Palm Oil and Sustainable Biofuels) to finance (e.g., the Equator Principles). Although less common, a handful of MSIs work to address public sector governance issues including natural resource revenues (EITI), construction sector practices (CoST), public contracting (OCP), budgets (GIFT), and broad open government practices (OGP).

Unlike private sector MSIs, which attempt to supplement weak government capacity to enforce basic social and environmental standards through partnerships between businesses and civil society, public sector MSIs ultimately seek to bolster public governance. While there is a wealth of scholarship on corporate social responsibility, public-private partnerships, and private sector MSIs, there are relatively fewer sources of information on the inner workings of public sector MSIs.

Defining the universe of cases

With the proliferation of MSIs throughout a variety of political levels and social sectors, it can be challenging to define exactly where public governance MSIs fit within existing areas of research and practice. The five initiatives reviewed in this report rest roughly at the intersection of three spheres of activity (See Figure 1). First, they are a subset of the larger universe of transnational multi-stakeholder initiatives. Second, they are a subset of efforts to improve government performance. Third, they are a subset of campaigns to promote social accountability via information disclosure and civic participation.

¹¹ Voluntary transnational corporate standards were first applied in the late 1970s, when American corporations that wanted to continue operating in South Africa despite rising civil society opposition to apartheid adopted the Sullivan Principles. See Seidman (2005) for details.

¹² See Conroy (2007), chapter 4.

¹³ For more on the World Commission on Dams, see Dubash et al. (2001), Khagram (2005), and Conca (2006).

¹⁴ See Fransen & Kolk (2007), Schäferhoff et al. (2009), Mena & Palazzo (2012), and Grayson & Nelson (2013).

¹⁵ See Khagram & Ali (2008).

¹⁶ See Khagram (2006), pg. 100, and Khagram & Ali (2008), pgs. 206-207.

¹⁷ See the Jackson School Task Force’s Review of best practices for Multi-stakeholder initiatives: Recommendations for GIFT (2012), pgs. 6-7.

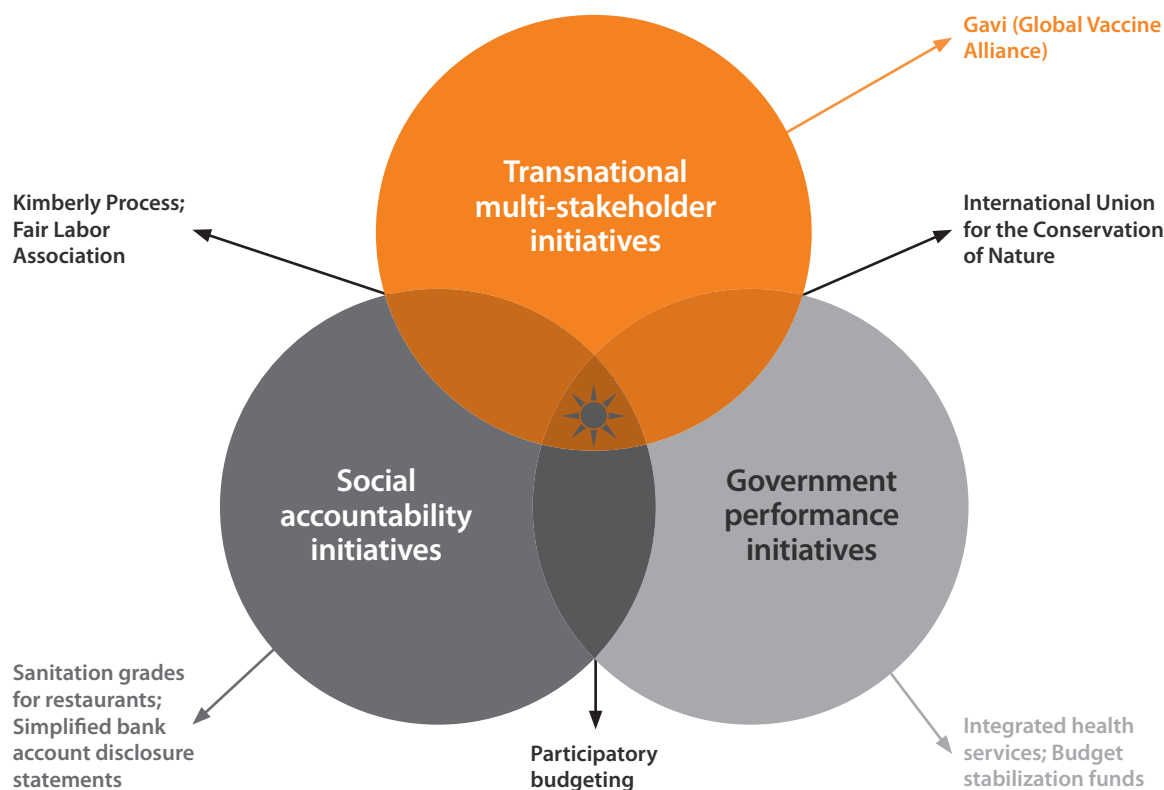


Figure 1: Public governance MSIs function at the intersection of three types of activities: transnational multi-stakeholder initiatives, government performance initiatives, and social accountability initiatives.

The governance-oriented multi-stakeholder initiatives reviewed in this paper – the Construction Sector Transparency Initiative (CoST), the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), the Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency (GIFT), the Open Contracting Partnership (OCP) and the Open Government Partnership (OGP) – meet five criteria that, when taken together, distinguish them from other efforts in these spheres:

1) Global reach:

MSIs can have local, national, or transnational scope, and calls for greater transparency, participation, and accountability can be made at any level of governance. What distinguishes the initiatives included in this review is that they bring together government, civil society, and (in some cases) private sector participants from across the globe to find solutions to governance challenges. While the details of implementation may vary, each of these initiatives has participants on most continents.

2) Voluntary:

One of the most important distinctions between MSIs and other attempts to address global social and environmental problems is the fact that the rules for participation are not encoded in international law. Unlike more traditional international agreements, which must be ratified by all members of a given multilateral organization, MSIs are voluntary coalitions that rely on soft power incentives including reputation and the promise of increased aid and foreign direct investment. As a result, compliance with an MSI's agenda is not based on international law, but on the establishment of non-legal norms. Public sector MSIs may seek to encourage the passage of national laws on information disclosure and participation. In these cases, while certain activities endorsed by the MSI may eventually gain the force of national law and cease to become voluntary, participation in the multi-stakeholder initiative itself remains optional.

3) Multi-stakeholder membership:

All MSIs included in this study draw their membership from multiple stakeholder groups, including national governments, civil society organizations, multilateral organizations, and private enterprise. However, while three initiatives included in this review (CoST, EITI, and OGP) also have formal arrangements for their own multi-stakeholder governance, two others (GIFT and OCP) are coalitions that have opted for less formal governance structures.

4) Strategic focus on transparency, participation, and accountability:

MSIs are used to address a range of different problems and utilize a variety of different change strategies. What distinguishes the MSIs included in this study is a shared strategic focus on information disclosure and public participation as a means for achieving greater public-sector accountability. Although the relationship between increased transparency and participation, and greater accountability is not yet fully understood, these strategies are often discussed as a possible corrective to market and governance failures.

5) Addresses national public-sector governance issues:

While most transnational MSIs focus on private sector accountability, the initiatives included in this report are distinguished by their focus on improving policy and decision-making by national governments. While there is significant overlap in the scope of these public sector MSIs, there are also important differences (See Figure 2). EITI and CoST focus on improving public governance in particular industries. GIFT focuses on fiscal transparent across all areas of government, while OCP focuses on making all public contracting more transparency and accountable. OGP has the broadest scope, covering everything from fiscal transparency and open contracting to service delivery and corporate social responsibility.

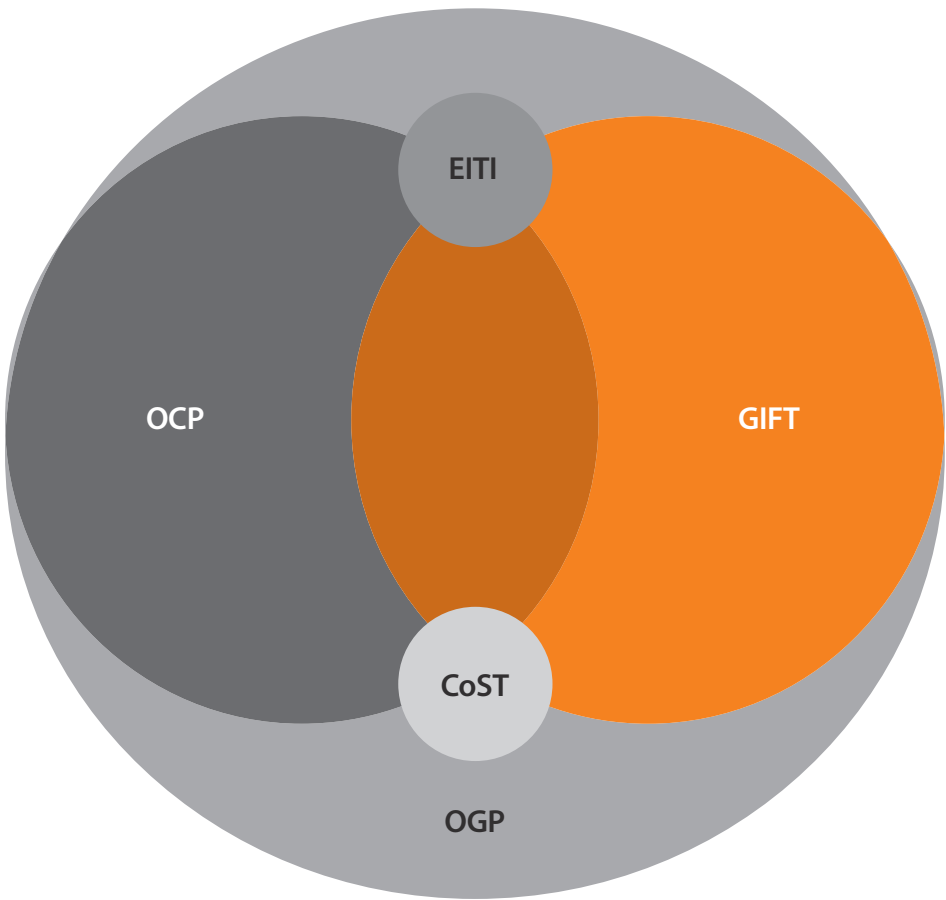


Figure 2: Public sector MSIs have clear overlaps, as well as some notable differences, in scope.

Reflecting on the broader universe from which these five cases have been selected suggests that this report's focus on public governance-oriented MSIs is only one way to slice the pie. Stakeholders may find it useful to think through whether comparisons with other transnational multi-stakeholder initiatives, other government performance projects, or other campaigns to promote disclosure, participation, and accountability would also be useful. For example, EITI may benefit from comparisons to private sector MSIs in the extractive industries, like the Kimberly Process or the Wolfsberg Principles. Similarly, OGP may benefit from comparisons to governance-related multilateral institutions like the Copenhagen Accords or the African Peer Review Mechanism. Such comparisons might provide novel insights into best practices and broader opportunities for collaboration.

Defining effectiveness and impact

Each of the five public governance-oriented MSIs discussed in detail define “effectiveness” and “impact” based on their unique missions and methods. Nevertheless, in order to assess the evidence, these concepts must also be clearly defined, so that evaluations of outcomes (effectiveness) can be discerned from impact assessment, and both can be distinguished from monitoring procedural achievements and other earlier “outputs” (See Figure 3).

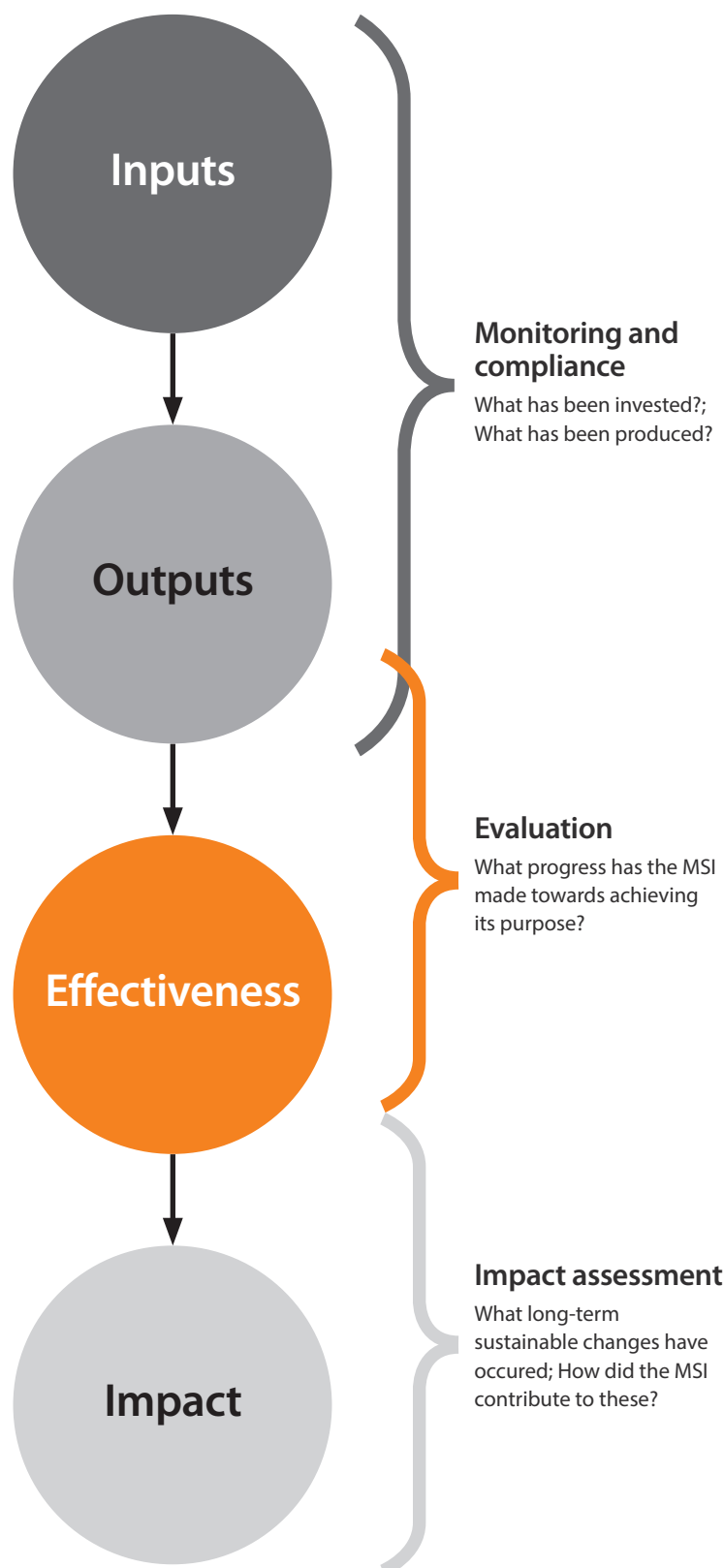


Figure 3: Assessments of effectiveness and impact occur further down the results chain than efforts to monitor inputs or outputs.

²⁰ In retrospect, a sixth initiative – the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) – also belongs to this universe of cases. Launched in 2008, IATI is a multi-stakeholder partnership between governments, civil society organizations, and multilateral organizations that seeks to improve the transparency of aid, development, and humanitarian resources in order to increase their effectiveness in tackling poverty. IATI is voluntary, has global reach and multi-stakeholder membership, promotes transparency and accountability, and focuses on public-sector governance issues. Although it was not examined as part of this research, it should be considered a public governance-oriented multi-stakeholder initiative.

Within a performance evaluation framework, the results chain of an MSI can be divided into inputs, outputs, intermediate outcomes – which we will refer to as “effectiveness” – and long-term outcomes or “impacts.”²¹ The global governance literature provides numerous suggestions for how one might choose to evaluate MSI “inputs” and “outputs.” “Inputs” of interest often include measures of inclusiveness (e.g., scope and quality of participation), transparency (e.g., media access; records availability), and accountability within MSI decision-making bodies (e.g., procedural fairness; monitoring and grievance mechanisms), because these features are believed to contribute to the legitimacy of – and ultimately compliance with – the initiative.²² “Outputs” of interest include measures of institutional effectiveness (e.g., leadership, goal formation, and policy coherence), the number of countries or private firms that agree to participate in the MSI, and compliance with the rules or standards of the MSI.²³ Recent examples of evaluations that consider MSI “inputs” and “outputs” include the Jackson School of International Studies task force report, *Review of Best Practices for Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives* (2012), commissioned by GIFT, MSI Integrity’s study of the EITI, *Protecting the Cornerstone* (2015), and the OGP’s Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) country progress reports (<http://www.opengovpartnership.org/independent-reporting-mechanism>).

The global governance literature also provides some guidance on assessing intermediate and long-term outcomes, but researchers tend to focus on the breadth of an MSI’s achievements across countries, rather than their depth in individual countries. For example, scholars have suggested looking at coverage (i.e., the number of firms or countries per industry or region), additionality (i.e. the extent to which new funding is generated for additional activities), and institutionalization (i.e., links between MSI goals and changes to multilateral agreements and national laws).²⁴ These types of outcome metrics are often used in official MSI progress reports, such as the OGP’s *Annual Report 2014* or the EITI’s *Progress Report 2014: Making transparency matter*. Yet, metrics such as these are often too broad to answer questions that are vitally important to good governance practitioners around the globe: Does the availability of additional information about government practice and the creation of additional opportunities for stakeholders to participate in dialogue and decision-making help citizens to demand better policies? How do these initiatives contribute to broader national efforts to promote more accountable governance? Do participating governments respond with tangible efforts to reduce the discrepancies and inefficiencies that these processes may reveal? And do these policy improvements actually lead to better social, economic, or environmental conditions? These questions help to define what “effectiveness” and “impact” mean in this report.

“Effectiveness” and “impact” differ from one another in two ways. First, they refer to the assessment of outcomes at different stages of the projected change process. “Effectiveness” is the extent to which an MSI has helped to change policy or facilitate public debate in participating countries. “Impact” is the extent to which these debates and policy changes have had measurable effects on the social, economic, or environmental conditions within or across participating countries. Consequently, “effectiveness” can be assessed long before “impact.” Second, these concepts differ in the extent to which they reflect internal and external influences during the change process.²⁵ While “outputs” are dependent on processes and actors that are largely internal to an MSI, “effectiveness” is contingent on a mix of MSI activities and external context, and “impacts” are largely dependent on factors beyond the direct control of the MSI. The increasing influence of external factors as the projected change process moves forward means that an MSI could have impeccable internal processes (i.e., inputs) and high levels of compliance (i.e., outputs), but still fail to be effective at achieving its goals or generating intended impacts. Alternatively, an MSI could find that while it is indeed effective at achieving its goals, these improvements to governance practices are not sufficient to trigger broader social, economic, or environmental benefits.

In order for MSIs to clearly define what they mean by “effectiveness” and “impact,” they must first articulate a theory of change that lays out their strategy for moving from inputs, through outputs, to medium and long-term outcomes. Additionally, since MSIs operate at both the national and transnational level, they must specify the level of analysis at which they expect to measure these concepts.

Theories of Change

Each MSI should be able to articulate a compelling rationale for why its particular approach is well suited to achieving its specific goals (See Figure 4). Each MSI discussed in this report has an implicit or explicit theory of change – the strategy or logic by which it expects to move through the results chain from inputs, to outputs, to medium and long-term outcomes. A theory of change requires a number of assumptions: For example, how will the inputs or activities of the MSI lead to the expected outputs? How will the different outputs work together to make the MSI effective? And what would an effective MSI generate in terms of wider impact, and how? When it’s time to evaluate effectiveness and impact, these underlying assumptions can, and should, be tested by gathering evidence that each step in the process is unfolding as anticipated.

²¹ This framework is adapted from Young (1999).

²² For comprehensive discussions of measuring inputs, see Dingwerth (2005) and Mena & Palazzo (2012). For a discussion of measuring inclusiveness, see Schäferhoff et al. (2009). For discussions on measuring accountability, see Keohane (2006) and Gulbrandsen (2008).

²³ See Bäckstrand (2006), Schäferhoff et al. (2009), and Mena & Palazzo (2012).

²⁴ For comprehensive discussions of measuring outputs, see Bäckstrand (2006), Dingwerth (2008), and Mena & Palazzo (2012).

²⁵ Adapted from Gutner & Thompson’s (2010) framework for reviewing international organization performance.

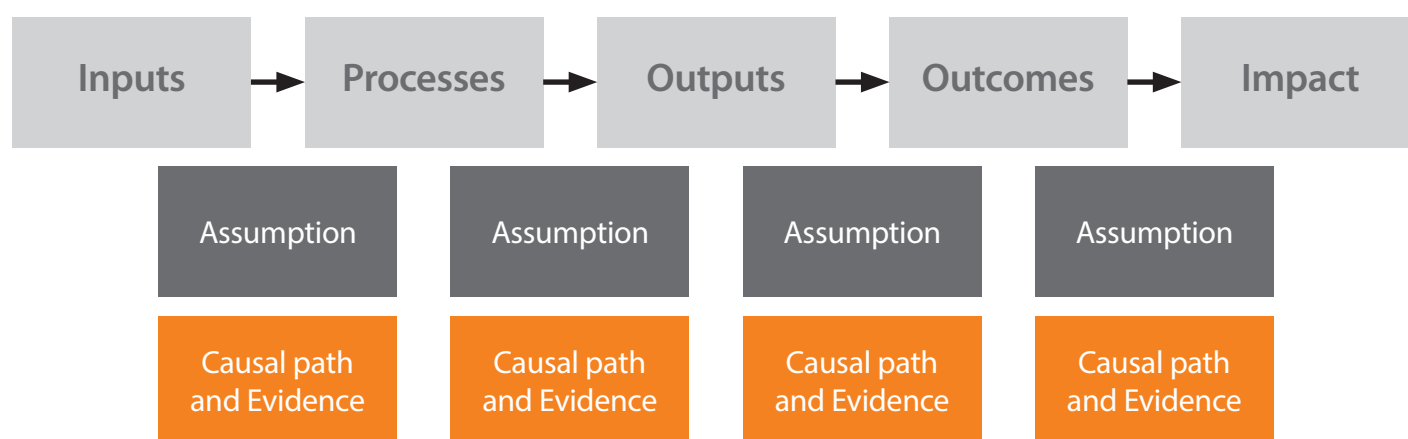


Figure 4: A theory of change can be tested by considering the assumptions behind each link in a result chain and then evaluating the evidence supporting those links (Source: the EITI Report from the Working Group on Theory of Change, 2012).

MSIs may also find it useful to distinguish between theories of change that describe how an accountability system might change – with or without the direct intervention of the MSI itself – and theories of action that describe how the MSI’s specific activities are expected to contribute.²⁶ Dr. Sanjeev Khagram, a leading global networks scholar-practitioner, has alternatively described this as the difference between a theory of change that animates an MSI and a theory of change of an MSI.²⁷

Articulating and periodically revisiting a theory of change is not just important for identifying performance metrics at different levels of output, outcome, and impact, but for strategic planning as well. A theory of change can help MSIs think through which stakeholders need to be involved and when. It can also help decision-makers identify which of their activities are worth expanding and which ones are having little to no effect.

There is no shortage of literature on theories of change that can help inform advocacy and policy change efforts, though transnational multi-stakeholder initiatives tend to involve complex combinations of different types of theories of change operating at different levels of analysis. For example, the Organizational Research Services’ Center for Evaluation Innovation identifies five global theories of change – 1) punctuated equilibrium (large leaps) theory, 2) agenda-setting (policy window) theory, 3) coalition theory, 4) power politics theory, and 5) regime theory – that are argued to be based on different (and fairly exclusive) worldviews.²⁸ However, the MSIs discussed below borrow from across almost all of these approaches. Similarly, Corelab identifies nine key theories of change argued to animate northern constituencies on global issues: 1) charity, 2) market-oriented aid funding, 3) mutual aid and cooperation, 4) behavior change, 5) building empathy and global citizenship, 6) social mobilization, 7) monitory democracy, 8) leadership and international networks, and 9) people-centered meta-movements.²⁹ Public sector MSIs simultaneously operate across many of these categories.³⁰

Levels of analysis

The MSIs discussed in this report operate at both the transnational and national level. As a result, there are both transnational-level and national-level inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impacts that require careful consideration in order to track results. Furthermore, one stakeholder’s “output” can be another stakeholder’s “input.” For example, one noteworthy “output” of CoST at the transnational level is the successful completion of assurance reports that provides findings on each construction project reviewed in each participating country. However, for the members of the national multi-stakeholder group, the assurance report is also an “input” that requires further translation, dissemination, and discussion amongst networks of national and local actors. Similarly, the Open Government Partnership’s Independent Reporting Mechanism produces progress reports on National Action Plan implementation. For the OGP as a global MSI, these reports are outputs, while for participating national CSOs and governments, these reports are inputs – intended to highlight reform progress, to identify implementation bottlenecks and to inform future national Action Plans.

Some MSIs discussed below have clear theories of change for how transparency and participation might stimulate accountability at the national level, but not their own transnational role in facilitating the process, while others have clear rules for how they work at the transnational level but prefer to remain agnostic about how their efforts might play out on the ground. However, in order for MSIs to successfully measure effectiveness and impact, they will need some way to test their strategies and assumptions at both levels.

²⁶ For a useful recent discussion, see Duncan Green’s April 16, 2015 blog post “Where have we got to on Theories of Change? Passing fad or paradigm shift?” (<http://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/where-have-we-got-to-on-theories-of-change-passing-fad-or-paradigm-shift/>).

²⁷ Dr. S. Khagram, personal communication, March 18, 2015.

²⁸ See Stachowiak (2013).

²⁹ See Miller-Dawkins (2014).

³⁰ Readers interested in learning more about how to use theories of change as part of monitoring and evaluation efforts are encouraged to consult the Overseas Development Institute’s Monitoring and Evaluation of Policy Influence and Advocacy (2014) and Innovations for Scaling Impact’s Next Generation Network Evaluation (2010).

III. Methods

The purpose of this study was to identify and consolidate the current state of the evidence for public governance-oriented MSI effectiveness and impact. To accomplish this, we collected over 300 documents and interviewed more than two dozen MSI stakeholders about their experiences with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), the Construction Sector Transparency Initiative (CoST), the Open Government Partnership (OGP), the Global Initiative on Fiscal Transparency (GIFT) and the Open Contracting Partnership (OCP). For a detailed methodology, see Appendix A.

Direct quotes drawn from stakeholder interviews are utilized throughout this report. Most quotes are presented without direct attribution. In these cases, sources are identified by stakeholder category, i.e., secretariat staff, advisory board member, international NGOs, funder, outside researcher, and country-level stakeholders from government, civil society, or the private sector. The conclusions and recommendations provided at the end of the report reflect an analysis of the *existing* evidence for MSI effectiveness and impact, along with related stakeholder perspectives, and should not be misinterpreted as based on *original* research on effectiveness or impact.

III. The current state of the evidence

The Construction Sector Transparency Initiative (CoST), the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), the Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency (GIFT), the Open Contracting Partnership (OCP) and the Open Government Partnership (OGP) all demonstrate notable, varying evidence of progress. The variations between them can be partially understood as a function of their differences in both structure and age. EITI has been operating continuously at the transnational level and within at least a handful of countries since 2003, providing a much larger window of opportunity – both for the activities of the initiative to be effective and impactful, and for researchers to gather evidence of these outcomes – compared to the other four initiatives. Both OGP and CoST have a multi-level structure similar to EITI, but have been operating for a shorter period of time. Consequently, while both should be expected to demonstrate some early transnational and national level effects, neither has yet been subjected to a thorough review of effectiveness or impact. Finally, GIFT and OCP have only recently formalized their transnational governance structures and have no unique national-level structures. As a result, these initiatives can only be expected to show early results in promoting their agenda at the international level.

The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI)

In the 1990s and 2000s, a variety of actors began calling attention to “the resource curse” – a phenomenon whereby developing countries with significant natural resources often suffer from poor governance, poverty, lethargic economic development, and conflict. In 1999, several NGOs interested in tackling the issue founded Publish What You Pay, a global campaign to push companies in the extractive industries to make their payments to governments available to the public. The effort was supported by some multinational corporations, but faced roadblocks in the form of national governments that prohibited the publication of natural resource revenue. In 2002, the British government called for governments to commit to extractive industry transparency and the Department for International Development (DFID) was tasked with overseeing a pilot program for the EITI. By 2005, the rules for participation had been laid out in the EITI Validation Guide. Governments wishing to participate promise to release basic information on the payments they have received from extractive sector companies. Extractive sector companies operating within these countries are also obliged to release their payment records, so that an independent expert can reconcile the two sets of numbers. Governments also promise to set up a national multi-stakeholder group to oversee the process and to consider and publicize the findings.

EITI's independent secretariat was established in Oslo in 2007. In 2009, the first batch of countries was certified as compliant with EITI requirements and the EITI Validation Guide was replaced with the EITI Rules, which were updated again in 2011 to clarify that information disclosure must be timely and regular. As more countries continued to join the initiative, some began to experiment with disclosure that went beyond these official EITI rules. Additionally, critics continued to point out that although the rules for participation had been strengthened, they still allowed countries to drag their feet on information disclosure and set no minimum standards for ensuring that the information being released was actually relevant or useful for informing public debate. In response, the EITI released an updated set of rules known as the “EITI Standard” in 2013. By 2015, the initiative had grown to 48 countries, with 31 certified as compliant under the older standard.

Key structures, processes, and participants

EITI policy is set by a multi-stakeholder board – comprised of representatives of government, private industry, and civil society – and carried out by an international secretariat that oversees the day-to-day operations. Each participating country also forms a national multi-stakeholder group – drawn from the same sectors – that works towards compliance with the EITI Standard. According to one representative of the EITI secretariat, problems in natural resource governance had been intractable because different stakeholders could not agree on how best to address them. EITI works by “getting the right people around the table and finding something they can do together,” he says. The goal of such collaboration is to find small areas of common ground between groups that usually do not have any. “You need Exxon next to Global Witness.”

Initially, EITI's diverse set of stakeholders could agree only to the public disclosure of governments' natural resources revenue, and to the notion that civil society should have an equal seat at the table. To be certified as compliant, each government had to release reconciled information on payments from extractive companies to the national governments and facilitate multi-stakeholder review of the findings. EITI would re-validate each country's efforts every five years. The EITI secretariat provides guidance to implementing governments and the World Bank's Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) provides technical support and funding. Additional funds come directly from the governments of developed countries, many of which participate in the EITI as “supporting countries” rather than “implementing countries.” To date among developed countries, the United States and the United Kingdom have started implementing EITI and only Norway has been validated as EITI compliant.

Despite its relatively narrow mission, EITI was initially promoted to potential participants as an initiative that would lead to increased foreign investment and economic development and reductions in poverty and corruption.³¹ In 2011, an external evaluation of EITI noted that it did not explain how compliance with its rules would lead to these macro-level impacts.³² Additionally, EITI's donors began to ask questions about what the initiative had achieved. In response, EITI formed the Working Group on Theory of Change (WGTOC), which attempted to outline the path by which financial transparency would lead to sustainable development and poverty reduction (See Figure 5).

What became clear through this exploration was that EITI's implicit theory of change relied on a number of processes that were not being clearly facilitated by the rules for participation. Indeed, a common critique of EITI's narrow focus on revenue transparency has been that "it's cough medicine when the patient is dying of cancer." However, for one EITI official, the process of moving from the EITI Criteria to the EITI Rules to the EITI Standard reflects EITI's strategy of "moving the consensus from the narrow to the meaningful." In this view, while revenue disclosure might be a "lowest common denominator" that allows stakeholders with different goals and different conceptualizations of fairness to do something small together, over time their conversations continue, mutual understanding grows, and a shared consensus broadens to allow for more meaningful activities.

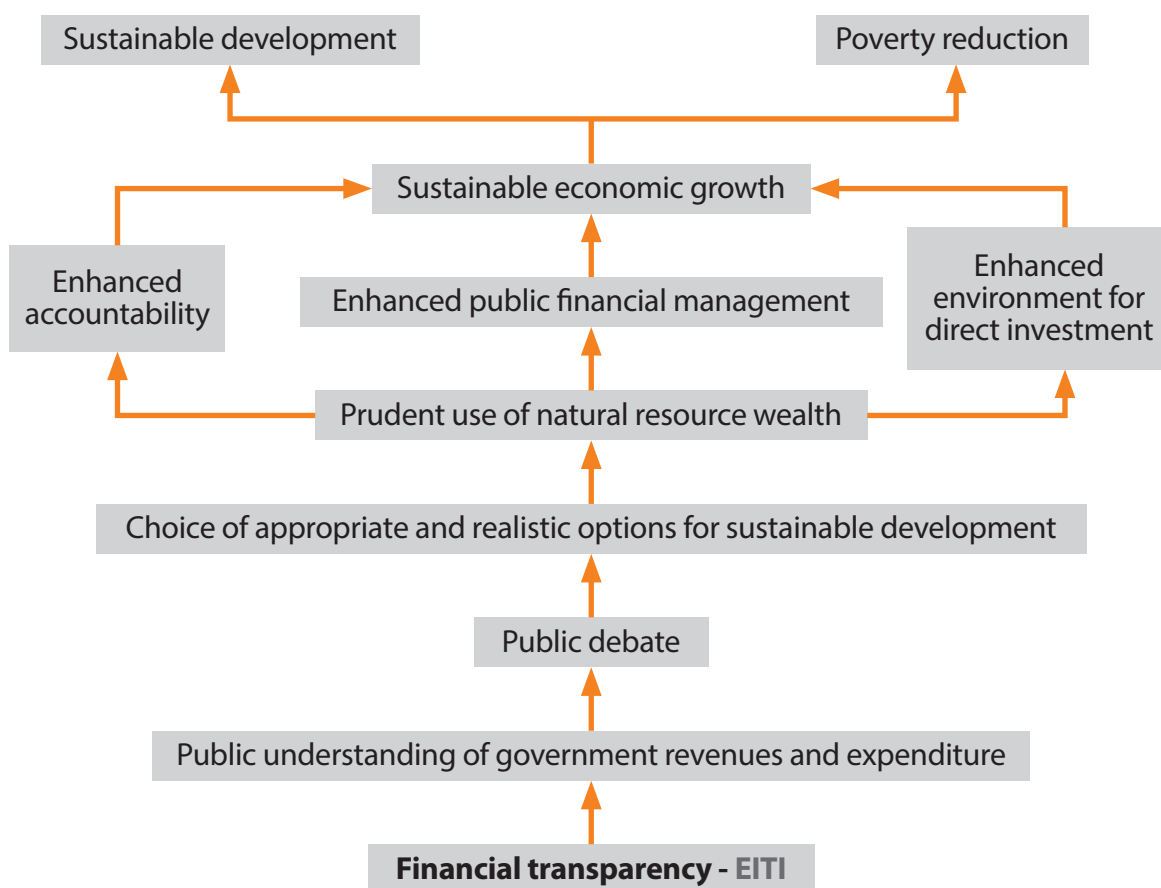


Figure 5: The EITI's implicit theory of change, based on the experience of the World Bank and MDTF, shows that progress towards broader impacts relies on processes not facilitated by participation in EITI alone. Source: DFID (2012) Report from Working Group on Theory of Change (WGTOC).

³¹ See DFID's Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative: Report of the International Advisory Group (2006), pg. 26.

³² See Scanteam's Achievements and Strategic Options: Evaluation of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (2011).

The findings of the WGTC were used to inform the new EITI Standard, according to an international NGO staffer with close ties to EITI. Nevertheless, a representative of the EITI secretariat insists that EITI has no unifying theory of change because “that implies that you can work out the route and that you have an end point.” Rather, EITI’s processes and results will look different in each country, because they face different challenges in their extractive sector. “We’re not sure what change we’re trying to bring about.” Across countries, the most that can be said of EITI’s theory of change is that compliance with the EITI Standard should result in “country-specific recommendations” that “inform public debate” and “change policy.”

Mechanisms for building the evidence base

Prior to the new standard, EITI devoted most of its resources for monitoring and evaluation to ensuring that quality information was being disclosed by participating governments and reconciled with company records. Although civil society participation has always technically been a part of EITI’s validation requirements, this aspect of the earlier rules for compliance was poorly defined and difficult to measure. The new EITI Standard provides new tools for monitoring compliance in the form of annual work plans and activity reports.³³ Additionally, countries will now be validated every three years, rather than every five. While the EITI’s independent validation process ensures that participants are following the rules, it will not necessarily provide any evidence for effectiveness or impact.

EITI has commissioned two external evaluations; one by Rainbow Insight in 2009 and one by Scanteam in 2011. “Evaluation reports every few years are useful,” says one secretariat staffer. It would also be useful to have aggregated information on EITI’s effects on a variety of longer-term impacts, including human rights, credit ratings, pricing, smuggling, artisanal mining, and global commodity flows, he says, but “we haven’t got the resources; we need more in-house capacity.”

EITI also works closely with multilateral organizations and NGOs that collect information on the effectiveness and impact of the initiative in at least some countries. However, according to one NGO staffer, aggregating national-level

findings and learning from them “has not really been part of [EITI’s] mandate.” The secretariat itself is limited in its ability to make adjustments, due to the formal multi-stakeholder governance of the initiative. For example, some evaluations have suggested that EITI implement a “pass” and “high pass” validation process in order to encourage innovation and more detailed disclosure. While the secretariat itself is said to favor this approach, the EITI Board resisted, fearing it would encourage ranking and other comparisons between countries that would be potentially perceived as unfair.

Evidence for effectiveness and impact

EITI has made great progress in improving the transparency of extractive industry payments to national governments. As of May 2014, 35 countries have produced reports disclosing payments covering 200 fiscal years and 1.2 trillion US dollars in government revenue.³⁴ In many cases, countries are disclosing this information for the first time.³⁵ EITI has helped to create and strengthen a global revenue transparency norm, paving the way for legislation that was intended to make extractive industry disclosure requirements mandatory in the US and EU.³⁶ EITI has also generated new spaces for dialogue and negotiation between government and civil society. However, the evidence also suggests that greater disclosure has yet to lead to tangible accountability reforms or improved efficiency in the distribution of national resources.

Process-oriented achievements

EITI has made quite a bit of progress on process-oriented goals. According to one donor, EITI’s rhetoric has shifted over the past 12 months from a focus on “dollar amount disclosed” to concepts like “trust” and “providing a platform for policy discussion,” suggesting that the EITI process has value independent from its outputs. EITI has brought together diverse international stakeholders as part of its governance structure, helped them to engage in dialogue, and provides an important network for learning.³⁷ In 2013 alone, 250 delegates participated in EITI training workshops.³⁸ EITI has also achieved significant uptake by governments and private interests. In just over a decade, EITI has grown from less than 10 countries to more than 40, and is currently supported by 88 major oil, gas, and mining companies.³⁹

³³ Under the EITI Criteria, annual activity reports were only required from compliant countries. This opened up an opportunity for “open-washing,” as countries could sign up to implement, but actually do very little.

³⁴ See EITI’s Progress Report 2014: Making Transparency Matter, pg. 19.

³⁵ See Caspary (2012).

³⁶ EU countries have until the end of 2015 to incorporate a 2013 EU directive on accounting and transparency standards into their national laws. In the US, a provision explicitly mandating the disclosure of extractive industry payments was passed in 2010 (as part of Dodd-Frank), but the US Securities and Exchange Commission has yet to produce rules for its implementation, due mainly to ongoing legal challenges from the American Petroleum Institute. The intensity of opposition to this mandate may be an indicator of its potential significance. With regard to theories of change and levels of analysis, mandatory disclosure was seen by US pro-transparency groups as a clear win – a tangible “output” from their efforts – yet, its relevance to pro-accountability coalitions was as an “input” that could help to improve campaigns pushing for more accountable public finance elsewhere.

³⁷ See Mejía Acosta (2014).

³⁸ See EITI’s Progress Report 2014, pg. 19.

³⁹ Ibid.

At the national level, through the creation of national multi-stakeholder groups (MSGs), EITI has created new opportunities for dialogue and learning between stakeholders, and helped to increase civil society capacity.⁴⁰ For example, in a 2015 assessment of EITI in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Liberia, the Open Society Initiative for Western Africa (OSIWA) reports that researchers assigned to all three case studies “unanimously cite the increase in transparency and in debate or dialogue among stakeholder groups as a positive development, directly stemming from the EITI process and its interaction with the broader governance environment.”⁴¹ Yet, while OSIWA and others suggest that EITI has led to increased dialogue between stakeholders, the extent to which national MSGs fully ensure an inclusive, fair, and efficient decision-making process has been called into question by MSI Integrity, a human rights NGO that evaluates the governance procedures of MSIs.⁴² In seven out of the 15 countries reviewed by MSI integrity, civil society representatives were selected through processes that raise questions about their independence from government or whether they were the best representatives for civil society.⁴³ Furthermore, EITI has no grievance mechanism where the concerns of local communities that have been excluded from the decision-making process can be heard.⁴⁴ One EITI official argues that these critiques of EITI “miss the point.” While it is true that “some national MSGs could and should be more representative,” EITI is “not about the procedures,” but about stimulating debate on “issues of substance,” including (in at least some countries) millions in missing revenue.

Evidence for effectiveness at the national level

EITI has successfully introduced a new standard for transparency in many countries where none existed before. Currently, 31 countries are “compliant” with EITI requirements and some have even voluntarily expanded the mandate of their national EITI program. For example, Liberia has expanded its EITI mandate to cover logging and plantation agriculture, Mongolia has extended its reporting to include environmental protection and rehabilitation payments, and both Kazakhstan and Ghana have mandated that subnational revenue payments be reported as well.⁴⁵

We evaluate effectiveness here by considering whether EITI compliance has informed public debate and changed policy. Based on this definition, there does appear to be evidence for the effectiveness of EITI in at least a handful of countries. Ghana, Liberia, and Nigeria have all enshrined their rules for revenue disclosure in national law, in 2011, 2009, and 2007, respectively. However, beyond passing laws that mandate future disclosure – which, one might argue, should be considered outputs rather than outcomes – there are only a few examples of sustained public debate or policy change. For example, OSIWA’s 2015 report on Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Liberia concluded that “each of the countries boast legislation supporting transparency and accountability, while lacking the institutions and decrees or means to implement these policies to effect change on the ground.”⁴⁶

Scanteam (2011) conducted a case study of three EITI countries: Nigeria, Mongolia, and Gabon. While they found that the EITI had led to increased dialogue and trust between stakeholders participating in the process, these improvements had not generated any effects at the societal level. In a case study of Liberia and Timor Leste, O’Sullivan (2013) found that while EITI generated a great deal of initial public interest, the national multi-stakeholder groups in both countries lost momentum shortly after completing the validation process. He suggests that the loss of momentum can be attributed to a combination of turnover among key MSG participants and the highly technical nature of the information being disclosed rendering it irrelevant to public debate. Wilson & Van Alstine (2014) found similar results in a comparative case study of Azerbaijan, Ghana, and Nigeria. In Azerbaijan – the first country to be EITI compliant – the government lost interest in the initiative as soon as the validation process was complete.⁴⁷ Even in Nigeria, where the EITI reports are considered a “gold standard,” they have produced limited benefits, due to a lack of political will to follow up on their findings.

⁴⁰ See Scanteam (2011), Ospanova, Ahmadov, & Wilson (2013), and Kluttz, Gbede, Barry & Nah (2015).

⁴¹ See Kluttz et al. (2015), pg. 4.

⁴² As evidence, EITI cites improvements in the average World Bank Voice and Accountability index score of African countries participating in the EITI from 1998 to 2008 (Impact of EITI in Africa, 2010, pg. 11). MSI Integrity’s critiques can be found in Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI): Evaluation Report (2013) and Protecting the Cornerstone (2015).

⁴³ See Protecting the Cornerstone (2015), pg. viii.

⁴⁴ Ibid, pg. xi.

⁴⁵ For details on the EITI in Liberia, see O’Sullivan (2013), pg. 10; for Mongolia, see EITI’s Progress Report 2014, pg. 25; for Kazakhstan, see Ospanova et al. (2013), chapter 4; for Ghana, see Wilson & Van Alstine (2014).

⁴⁶ See Kluttz et al. (2015), pg. 4.

⁴⁷ Azerbaijan now holds the ignoble distinction of being both the first country validated as EITI compliant and the first country to be demoted from compliant status back to candidate status as a result of concerns over government crackdowns on civil society.

Ghana stands out as perhaps the best example of policy change driven by EITI participation. Since joining the initiative, EITI reports covering ten fiscal years have been released. These reports showed that the country was failing to collect as much revenue as they could have and policymakers made significant royalty and corporate tax reforms.⁴⁸ “Causality is clearest in Ghana,” says one NGO researcher. A few other countries have identified discrepancies in extractive revenue payments using new information made available by EITI reports, but none have taken any significant actions as of yet. To date, Nigeria has uncovered \$9.8 billion in missing payments but has only been able to recover about a quarter of that amount (\$2.4 billion).⁴⁹ In their most recent report (covering 2011), the Democratic Republic of Congo uncovered \$88 million in missing revenue, but no funds have been recovered, despite a long investigation by the auditor general’s office.⁵⁰ Liberia conducted an audit of existing oil and mining contracts and found that over 90% of those reviewed did not comply with existing laws and regulations.⁵¹ Yet, these revelations have yet to translate into any policy changes. The 2015 OSIWA report sums up the state of the evidence nicely: “case studies do not present evidence that [EITI’s] potential has translated into positive change in the lives of citizens, or into improved development outcomes for the countries’ populations.”⁵²

Thirty-one countries are fully compliant with EITI, yet only a handful of these countries have been subjected to impartial reviews of the EITI’s effectiveness in facilitating public debate or changing policy (see Table 1). The evidence that is available suggests that joining EITI may empower some civil society actors and encourage public debate, creating a window of opportunity for policy change, but that the information being disclosed thereafter has yet to drive additional reform. However, without a systematic review of all EITI countries, there is no way to know how widespread national-level effects have been. Scanteam has cautioned that there has been a bias towards documenting only positive results without acknowledging where the initiative has failed to deliver.⁵³

TABLE 1: EITI COMPLIANT COUNTRIES DISCUSSED IN COLLECTED EITI DOCUMENTS

Country	# EITI Documents
Azerbaijan	5
Cameroon	1
Côte d’Ivoire	1
Ghana	3
Gabon	1
Guinea	1
Iraq	1
Kazakhstan	2
Liberia	5
Mali	1
Mongolia	2
Mozambique	1
Nigeria	24
Peru	1
Timor-Leste	1

Large-N impact studies

A number of studies have endeavored to examine EITI’s broader social and economic impacts via statistical analysis of large-N datasets. Thus far, the findings from these studies have been largely indeterminate, due in part to two inherent weaknesses of large-N statistical analysis: its inability to establish causation and its propensity for washing out important cross-case variation.⁵⁴

Some researchers have found promising correlations between EITI and indicators of good governance, development, and investor confidence. For example, Aaronson (2008) compared countries implementing EITI to non-implementing countries and found that EITI participation (as of 2007) had a statistically positive relationship with perceptions of business climate and scores on the World Bank’s Voice and Accountability index. Similarly, Corrigan (2013) analyzed panel data from 200 countries and found that EITI participation (as of 2009) had a positive relationship with GDP per capita, and with Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) measuring perceptions about the rule of law and perceptions about the capacity of governments to make sound policy. Finally, Schmaljohann (2013) analyzed panel data from 81 countries and found that EITI candidacy (as of 2011) was correlated with a 2 percentage-point increase in FDI to GDP ratio. While these results are encouraging, they do not rule out other explanations for the observed relationships. For example, it could also be the case that improvements in the rule of law or increased foreign investment prompt countries to join EITI, rather than the other way around. A comprehensive review of individual case studies could help to disentangle issues of causality.

⁴⁸ See Wilson & Van Alstine (2014), pg. 32.

⁴⁹ See the “Innovations” section of EITI international secretariat’s web page on NEITI (<https://eiti.org/Nigeria>).

⁵⁰ See EITI’s Progress Report 2014, pg. 23.

⁵¹ Ibid, pg. 29.

⁵² See Kluttz et al. (2015), pg. 4.

⁵³ See Scanteam (2011), pg. 35.

⁵⁴ For a discussion of the methodological challenges in evaluating EITI using large-N statistical models, see Scanteam (2011), pg. 32-33.

Not all large-N statistical findings have been quite so encouraging. Thus far, researchers have been unable to find a correlation between EITI and indicators of corruption. Aaronson (2008) found no relationship between countries implementing EITI (in 2007) and Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI). Similarly, Corrigan (2013) found no relationship between EITI (in 2009) and WGI indicators measuring perceptions of democracy, political stability, or corruption. Ölcer (2009) also failed to find a relationship between EITI and perceptions of corruption, measured using both the 2008 CPI and the 2007 WGI. In fact, he noted that EITI countries actually performed worse on WGI's control of corruption measure in 2007 than they had in 2002.⁵⁵

Nevertheless, other researchers point out that negative findings such as these may also be an artifact of the large-N statistical approach. For example, Scanteam (2011), which also reported inconclusive results from their analysis of "big picture" indicators (including the CPI and WGI indicators), suggests that statistical aggregation "washes out" individual country performance, hiding the real stories of interest.⁵⁶ Additionally, in an EITI web post examining country performance on the CPI, Valverde (2014) argues that although finding a direct relationship between the EITI and CPI ranking is challenging, the general trend is positive. In 2013, the average EITI country score had climbed five positions over four years. In 2014, the CPI shows that EITI countries on average climbed another two positions on the index. For compliant countries (as opposed to countries still in the process of implementing), this average increased to just under 2.5 positions. On average, EITI countries improved their score by one point vis-à-vis the previous year.⁵⁷ At best, it would seem that EITI is correlated with reduced perceptions of corruption in some places, but not others.

Scholars and practitioners have offered two explanations for why evidence for EITI's broader impacts has not been stronger. Some argue that not enough time has passed for EITI to generate macro-level societal impacts and suggest reexamining the relationship between EITI and governance indicators in 5-10 years.⁵⁸ Others argue that EITI needs to identify performance indicators that more clearly align with its core national-level activities.⁵⁹ Yet, the majority opinion by far is that the EITI itself is in need of improvement.

At a minimum, the evidence suggests that EITI's pre-2013 revenue payment disclosure standard was too limited to generate social impacts. If the EITI is supposed to improve governance, EITI disclosure should include the whole extractive industries value chain – from preliminary studies and discussions about whether to extract, through the initial contracting process, to tax payments, to how the government spends the revenue it receives.⁶⁰ In order to be useful to local civil society groups, the information disclosed should also be disaggregated by project.⁶¹

However, a broader criticism suggests that expanded transparency alone would still fail to generate greater accountability. In order for citizens to be able to use technical data on revenue payments to improve their own position, it needs to be translated into useable, actionable information.⁶² Additionally, revelations from EITI reports need to be embedded into broader national conversations around reform.⁶³ As one EITI official put it, "people respond to a news article about a pileup, not a report on highway safety." Critics suggest EITI can encourage these improvements in two ways: First, the international secretariat and its partners should directly fund and support civil society capacity building.⁶⁴ Second, the international secretariat should link the use of EITI data to other broader social reform efforts or multi-stakeholder initiatives.⁶⁵

⁵⁵ See Ölcer (2009), pgs. 10 & 12.

⁵⁶ See Scanteam (2011), pgs. 32-34.

⁵⁷ For more details, see Valverde's Dec 16, 2014 EITI web post "The 2014 Corruption Perception Index. How have EITI countries fared?"

⁵⁸ See Haufler (2010) and Corrigan (2013).

⁵⁹ See Rainbow Insight (2009), Scanteam (2011), EITI's Report from Working Group on Theory of Change (WGTOC) (2012), Mejía Acosta (2014), and Locke & Henley (2013).

⁶⁰ See Mainhardt-Gibbs (2010), Scanteam (2011), Desai & Jarvis (2012), and O'Sullivan (2013).

⁶¹ See Publish What You Pay & Revenue Watch Institute (2006), Mainhardt-Gibbs (2010), Ospanova et al. (2013), O'Sullivan (2013), and Wilson & Van Alstine (2014).

⁶² See Gillies (2011), Ospanova et al. (2013), O'Sullivan (2013), Wilson & Van Alstine (2014), and Mejía Acosta (2014).

⁶³ See Kluttz et al., 2015.

⁶⁴ See Publish What You Pay & Revenue Watch Institute (2006), Ölcer (2009), Desai & Jarvis (2012); Hudson & Lay (2013), Etter (2014), Ospanova et al. (2013), O'Sullivan (2013), and Wilson & Van Alstine (2014).

⁶⁵ See Ölcer (2009), EITI's Report from Working Group on Theory of Change (2012), World Bank's Implementing EITI for Impact (2012), Ospanova et al. (2013), Wilson & Van Alstine (2014), and Kluttz et al. 2015.

The new EITI Standard: A sign of improvements ahead?

Essentially all of the currently available evidence for the effectiveness and impact of EITI pre-dates the implementation of the 2013 EITI Standard. The new standard made several key adjustments to the rules for country participation that may help to address some of the limitations noted here, and potentially improve EITI's performance in future evaluations. First, national multi-stakeholder groups (MSGs) now have to submit annual work plans and activity reports. The expectation is that these additional reporting requirements will encourage MSGs to think through what they hope to do with the disclosed payment figures once they have them. Second, EITI reports now must include revenue allocation by region, subnational transfers, and other types of disaggregated reporting which could make the reports more useful for local communities seeking to understand whether they are benefitting from the extractive sector. Third, all governments now have to submit annual activity reports (previously, only compliant governments had to do so) and have to be revalidated every three years as opposed to every five.⁶⁶ These two adjustments close significant loopholes that permit "openwashing," whereby an implementing or recently validated country might do little for several years, while continuing to reap the reputational benefits of membership.

The new EITI Standard does not address all of the criticisms levied against the older EITI Rules. EITI still doesn't require the disclosure of government expenditures or environmental impact and mitigation plans, and while contracts disclosure and beneficial ownership information are "encouraged," they are not mandatory. Indeed, it is unclear whether or how the "encouraged" aspects of the new standard will matter at all. EITI validation is still "pass/fail," rather than having a performance gradient that would designate innovative countries as "high pass" and countries doing the minimum as "compliant." Since countries that do decide to include additional disclosures (e.g., logging payments, expenditures) are not assessed based on their own agenda, but on the minimum standard, it is difficult to see what incentives there are for governments to go beyond the minimum. Indeed, a member of the multi-stakeholder group in one highly ambitious country reported that they were told by a major provider of EITI funding and technical support that they should "aim for the minimum first," and a staff member at an international NGO with close ties to EITI expressed concerns that EITI has not made it clear that the new standard "should be a floor not a ceiling."

In an assessment of the first 22 EITI reports produced under the new Standard, the Natural Resource Governance Institute (NRGI) found that countries are indeed producing more useful information on licenses, political affiliations of company owners, and local revenues, among other things; however, no government has successfully applied every part of the new standard. NRGI noted several areas of concern: most EITI work plans are not closely linked to national policy priorities, the information being released is two years old on average, many countries are not publishing data in a machine-readable format, few countries are producing any analysis of the data, and only around half of the annual activity reports explicitly considered whether EITI was having the desired effect on the governance of the extractive sector. Furthermore, uptake of the "encouraged" elements was minimal. NRGI recommended that national MSGs work to disclose contracts, beneficial ownership information, and project-level data, and to improve data on state-owned enterprises, subnational revenues, and the overall yearly value of extractive resource production.⁶⁷

The ability of the new standard to deliver improved results will be critical for EITI's future, but evidence on the impact of these improvements is likely years away. An NGO staffer said that the new standard is essentially like "resetting the clock" when it comes to measuring effectiveness and impact. Since countries are likely to struggle to fully comply with the new information disclosure requirements for the foreseeable future, this staffer estimates that "it will take three, five, ten years before we're looking at long-term data trends."

The Construction Sector Transparency Initiative (CoST)

The UK Department for International Development – which had overseen the EITI from 2002 to 2006 – developed the Construction Sector Transparency Initiative (CoST) to "see if EITI could work in construction," explained one board member. According to representatives of the CoST secretariat, mismanagement in the construction sector is thought to result in investment losses of up to 30%. Inefficiency and corruption in earlier development projects had left international funders disappointed at the return on their investment and only served to exacerbate the already adversarial relationship between public procurement agencies and civil society in many countries. In this climate, DFID introduced the idea of an international initiative that would facilitate information disclosure and civil society participation in the construction sector, much like EITI had done in the oil, gas, and mining sector. DFID funded a three-year pilot project in eight countries and selected the UK NGO Engineers Against Poverty to oversee it.

⁶⁶ For a summary of major changes in the new EITI Standard, see Jonas Moberg's May 10, 2013 web post, "Charting the next steps for transparency in extractives" (<https://eiti.org/blog/charting-next-steps-transparency-extractives>).

⁶⁷ See Westenberg & Wagner (2015) *From reporting to reform: Eleven opportunities for increasing EITI impacts*.

The CoST pilot program, which ran from mid-2008 through 2010, required each participating country to establish a national multi-stakeholder group (MSG) comprised of representatives from government, private sector, and civil society.⁶⁸ Each MSG conducted a baseline study of the national construction sector, including current laws, institutions, and initiatives supporting transparency and good governance. Next, each MSG selected a sample of current construction projects for inclusion in the project. Assurance teams would then request contract and project information from the relevant procuring entities, verify the data they received through a process of expert review, and report their findings back to the MSG. Finally, the MSG produced an assurance report – summarizing the results for all selected projects and identifying areas for concern – and released the findings to the public. When the pilot program concluded, the international secretariat worked to analyze the results and design an improved initiative. However, “for the countries that had participated,” said one representative of the secretariat, “everything stopped.”

In October 2012, CoST was officially re-launched as a global program with the support of the World Bank. Major changes from the pilot include new baseline study reporting requirements that provide details on political challenges and opportunities, a specific recommendation of 40 data points that should be disclosed for each construction project (now called the Infrastructure Data Standard), and a redesigned process for disclosure that requires procuring agencies to proactively disclose this information directly to the public, often via an online portal. Under the revised process, the Assurance team conducts an in-depth review of a sample of these disclosed projects (usually around 20-30 projects) to identify discrepancies, inaccuracies, and other areas for concern. If the Assurance team finds that proactive disclosure has been inadequate to inform a thorough review, they follow-up with procuring entities to provide additional information.⁶⁹

Unlike EITI, which requires all extractive companies that operate within a participating country to disclose payments, governments participating in CoST maintain discretion over which construction projects will be examined.⁷⁰ CoST recommends that each participating country have a multi-sectoral scope for disclosure whenever possible, but the extent to which this is possible depends on the purview of the specific government agencies working with CoST.⁷¹ As of April 2015, 14 countries have joined CoST.

Key structures, processes and participants

Like EITI, CoST has formal multi-stakeholder governance structures at both the transnational and national level. At the transnational level, board members are drawn from the government, civil society, industry, and the donor community. At the national level, the multi-stakeholder group is also drawn from government, civil society, and industry, with donors often attending as non-voting observers. Although one board member acknowledged that CoST “inherited the MSI approach” from EITI, representatives from both the board and international secretariat also believe that bringing civil society and industry into the decision-making process helps to develop relationships between stakeholders, facilitate better coordination across agencies and companies, and improve the efficiency of projects, through civil society monitoring.

CoST’s international secretariat is housed within the UK NGO Engineers Against Poverty. The role of the international secretariat is largely to offer learning, support, and guidance to participating countries, raise funds, and encourage additional countries to join. While they have also been successful at securing the “rhetorical and political support” of global institutions like the G20, as well as multinational companies and associations, one CoST official admits that they have struggled to translate that support into funding. This has somewhat limited their ability to commission research, conduct in-person training, or monitor progress to date, another representative of the secretariat adds.

According to a representative of the international secretariat, participation in CoST involves four key activities: 1) multi-stakeholder collaboration at the national level, 2) disclosure of key contract and project information (i.e., Infrastructure Data Standard) by government procurement agencies, 3) assurance (verification), and 4) “using information for accountability,” which can take many forms, but must involve disseminating the information in a way that encourages public debate. For example, one country-stakeholder explained how in Malawi, the information from the assurance report is synthesized into easy-to-understand talking points and then discussed by a panel – in both Chewa and English – on live radio. Unlike EITI, CoST does not certify participating countries as “compliant” with these activities.⁷²

⁶⁸ According to a representative of the international secretariat, a special condition was made for Tanzania to disclose project information in January 2011, as they had unused funds.

⁶⁹ According to representatives of the international secretariat, the pilot version of the assurance process, which does not rely on proactive disclosure of data, continues to be used in Ethiopia and Malawi, due to serious limitations in public disclosure processes.

⁷⁰ EITI does allow participating countries to set a “materiality” threshold, which Van Alstine (2014) argues has been misused to exclude significant payments from disclosure requirements.

⁷¹ According to a representative of the international secretariat,

disclosure should begin with at least one procuring entity, but should be scaled up over time to include all publicly funded infrastructure projects across all procuring entities.

⁷² According to a representative of the international secretariat, CoST is currently testing a “CoST Infrastructure Transparency Index” (CITI) that measures the percentage of construction projects in compliance with the CoST standard in each country.

The national multi-stakeholder groups (MSG) have significant autonomy in developing their program of activities. They work with government procurement agencies to identify projects for review and even identify nationally based independent experts (i.e., engineers, architects, and other consultants) to serve on the Assurance team. “There’s no real science” as to how many projects should be included to start with, says one representative of the secretariat, although the minimum allowed is ten. According to one CoST official, perhaps the most important role of the MSG is to use “gentle persuasion” to encourage the government to disclose information. Since there is no certification process, it is largely up to members of the MSG to make the case that more projects should be included and more information should be disclosed. The international board and secretariat can provide advice, but CoST countries are expected to develop their own action plan for scaling up the initiative.

Following the conclusion of the pilot, CoST refined their theory of change and released a proposed results chain that identifies the intended intermediate and longer-term outcomes of the initiative, as well as the projected impacts (See Figure 6). CoST’s theory of change is that once projects are more transparent, citizens can use that newly available information to demand changes and improvements to individual projects and to the procurement process itself. Collecting and disclosing information should also improve government self-regulation. These intermediate outcomes should lead to more efficient delivery of assets and greater integrity and fairness in the business process. These outcomes in turn drive impacts that include better infrastructure, cost savings to the government, and greater public confidence in the construction industry.

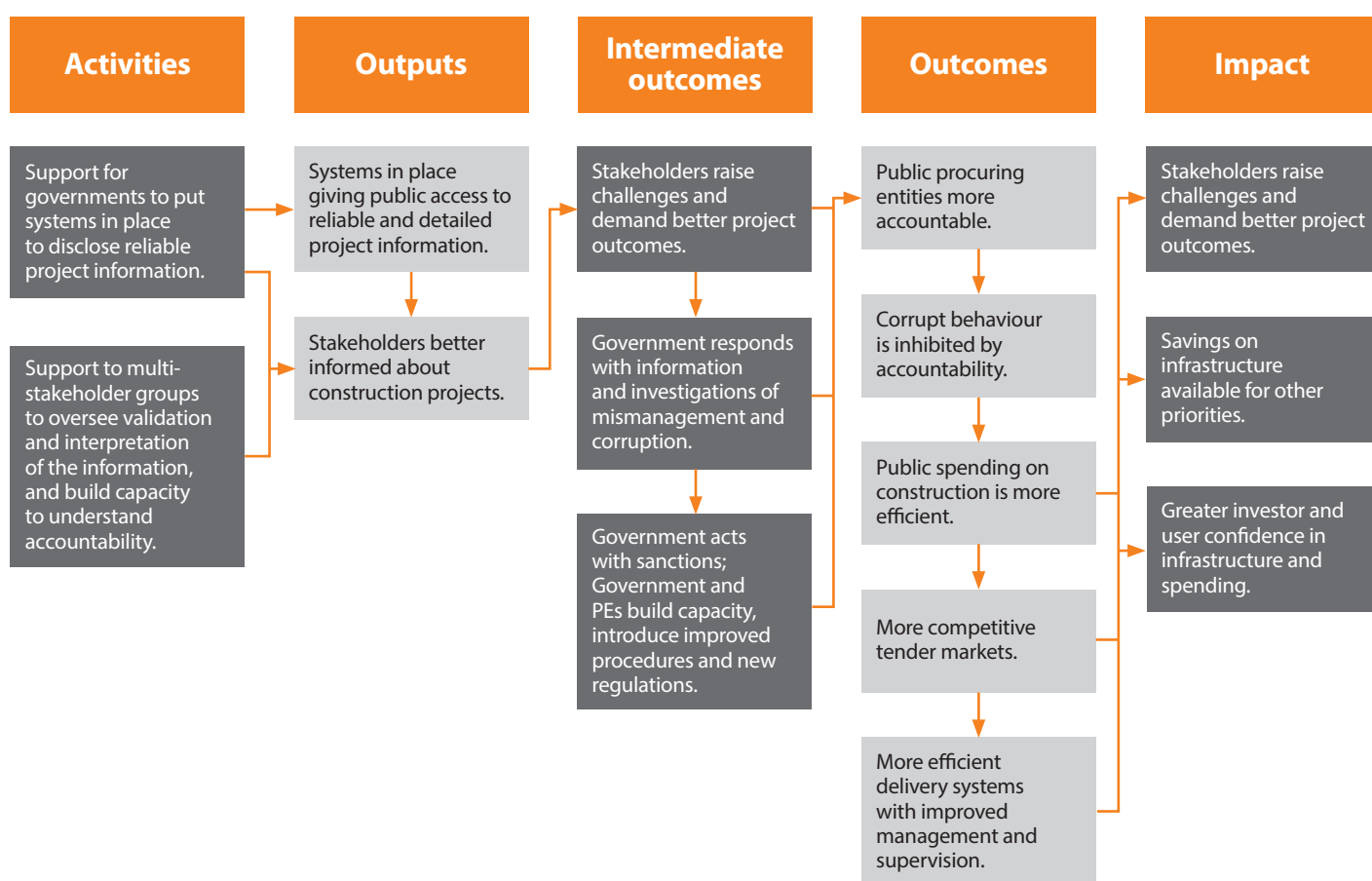


Figure 6: The CoST results chain distinguishes between outputs, intermediate and final outcomes, and impact. Source: CoST International Secretariat (2012) Construction Sector Transparency Initiative Programme Summary.

Unlike EITI, which initially tried to incentivize governments to implement the standard by suggesting that public disclosure of extractive revenue would lead to society-wide reductions in poverty and increases in development, CoST initially focused squarely on improvements within the infrastructure sector, while acknowledging that the initiative is “part and parcel of a much broader reform.”⁷³ The goal is to build “islands of integrity” explains one CoST board member, and hope that after the next election, “at least some of it remains.” Not only did this approach keep CoST from having to demonstrate links between its modest achievements and broader social impacts, but it also resonated with industry stakeholders who believed that CoST “shouldn’t be both the prosecutor and the judge,” when it comes to how project information is used after it has been disclosed. CoST’s role is simply to provide the information.

More recently however, CoST has widened its theory of change to encompass broader developmental improvements that are hypothesized to result from its work.⁷⁴ In essence, since infrastructure is vital for development (i.e., roads and buildings provide access to markets, healthcare, education, etc.), better infrastructure helps to deliver better development outcomes. These additional impacts have yet to be added to CoST’s official results chain, but they are discussed in clips posted to the initiative’s website (<http://www.constructiontransparency.org>).⁷⁵

Mechanisms for building the evidence base

CoST’s small international secretariat staff oversees progress in all participating countries, but limited resources have prevented them from implementing a robust monitoring and evaluation framework. According to one CoST official, the secretariat’s efforts are currently transitioning from monitoring transparency (i.e., formal disclosure requirements, coverage of procurement agencies) to monitoring the effects of transparency. Examining this phase of the causal chain is “very difficult” because the effects of greater disclosure “could be any number of things.” The secretariat is in the midst of consultation with participating countries in order to identify the right indicators, but concerns remain that “metrics don’t tell the whole story.” They plan to pilot their new monitoring and evaluation efforts in a few countries that have made the most progress on project disclosure.

“We get a lot of guff from donors to demonstrate impact,” says one CoST secretariat staffer. Indeed, in the past, funders have stepped in to provide some additional capacity for monitoring and evaluation. DFID conducted an independent evaluation of the pilot program and the World Bank is currently evaluating the performance of CoST’s host organization, Engineers Against Poverty. One CoST board member is hopeful that additional sources of funding will allow the secretariat to bulk up their capacity for monitoring and evaluation, but at the moment, admits that “it’s the weakest part of CoST.”

Evidence for effectiveness and impact

CoST’s diagram of its results chain (see Figure 10) provides an excellent jumping off point for evaluating the evidence for effectiveness and impact. While the current incarnation of CoST (2012-present) has started to yield some promising outputs, the bulk of the evidence for CoST’s effectiveness and impact currently comes from reviews of the 2008-2010 pilot.

CoST 2012-present

A key output in the CoST results chain is to put “systems in place giving public access to reliable and detailed project information” (see Figure 10). CoST shows significant progress on this output metric, with formal disclosure requirements already being put into place in Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, and Vietnam to facilitate participation in CoST.⁷⁶ If national legislation and regulatory changes can be considered lasting legacies of MSIs, then CoST’s results are already on par with EITI. Yet, a representative of the international secretariat admits that CoST “doesn’t do enough to publicize” these types of procedural victories.⁷⁷ “We’re hard on ourselves; we want to see how lives are being improved.”

⁷³ See DFID’s EITI Report of the International Advisory Committee (2006), pg. 26.

⁷⁴ B. Fernz, CoST International Secretariat, personal correspondence, May 26, 2015.

⁷⁵ For Guatemala, see <https://youtu.be/Bno1T3-lvMM>; for Ethiopia, see <https://youtu.be/ha1nT2lmVNw>.

⁷⁶ According to the International Secretariat, disclosure requirements in Ethiopia took the form of a series of proclamations, regulations, and directives that occurred during the CoST pilot; in Guatemala, they were included in regulations regarding the national budget; in Honduras, they were the product of a presidential decree; and in Vietnam, they were included in the Construction Project Management law.

⁷⁷ Like EITI, CoST has likely facilitated dialogue between stakeholder groups and provided a platform for policy discussions at both the transnational and national level. However, no studies were found that detail these procedural outputs.

Several CoST countries are currently scaling up efforts to disclose project information online. Guatemala has already disclosed over 1,200 projects on the Guatecompras web portal and aims to reach 6,000 by the end of 2015.⁷⁸ Similarly, Honduras began disclosing information “in a comprehensive and thoughtful way” only five months after joining the initiative, according to a representative of the international secretariat. Currently, over 140 projects are disclosed on the Sistema de Información y Seguimiento de Obras y Contratos de Supervisión (SISOCS) web portal.⁷⁹ Ethiopia is also building an online disclosure portal and has already trained project engineers on how to publish information online.⁸⁰ “Disclosure is becoming routine,” she says, “so we can refocus on changes on the ground.” Nevertheless, the disclosure of project information does not mean that these projects were scrutinized using the full CoST assurance process. For example, while Guatemala may have disclosed information on over 1,200 projects, CoST assurance team reports included only 18 projects in 2013 and 24 projects in 2014.⁸¹

Effectiveness and impact of the CoST pilot

The CoST pilot demonstrates intermediate outcomes in a handful of countries. CoST’s anticipated intermediate outcomes are: 1) Stakeholders raise challenges and demand better project outcomes; 2) Government responds with information and investigations of mismanagement or corruption; and 3) Government acts with sanctions; Government and procuring entities build capacity, introduce improved procedures, and new regulations” (see Figure 10). Of the eight countries that participated in the pilot, two – Guatemala and Ethiopia – have each generated government sanctions on a mismanaged project, and one – Malawi – has implemented broader reforms within the construction sector as a whole.

Project-level outcomes of the CoST pilot are reported in Guatemala and Ethiopia. In Guatemala, the CoST disclosure and assurance process revealed that the contracting process for the Belize bridge project was improperly conducted under “emergency procedures.” The work being proposed was not necessary and would have actually made the bridge less safe. After these facts came to light, the contract was cancelled. In Ethiopia, the CoST process revealed a “non-optimal design” in the proposed Gindibir to Gobensa Road project, which led the Ethiopian Road Transport Authority to suspend the private consultant who had designed the project for two years. While changes to individual construction projects that are mismanaged or dangerous are important, it is important to remember that CoST countries maintain discretion over which projects (and how many of them) will be subjected to review. Consequently, the overall effect that project-level changes have had on the construction industry is hard to determine. “We have reason to believe it is working” says one representative of the secretariat, “but it’s fairly anecdotal.”

Broader sector-level outcomes occurred in Malawi. The initial CoST baseline study revealed average project time overruns of 97 percent and average cost overruns of 6 percent on sampled projects. Malawi’s Parliament subsequently approved a reform package aimed at improving management capacity and ensuring more efficient delivery of public sector construction projects.⁸²

The pilot program also produced two opportunities to realize longer-term impacts. In Guatemala, the cancellation of the Belize bridge project resulted in potential cost savings up to \$4.5 million. Similarly in Ethiopia, the assurance process revealing flaws in the Gindibir to Gobensa Road project resulted in potential cost-savings of up to \$3.8 million dollars.⁸³ If these cost savings were to be truly realized, i.e., if money was rerouted from these projects to other priorities, or at the very least to superior infrastructures projects, these results would be classified as impacts according to CoST’s results chain (i.e., “Savings on infrastructure available for other priorities”).

Since CoST recently decided to expand its theory of change to include broader developmental impacts as part of its results framework, it must be noted that no evidence currently exists that links CoST pilot performance to improvements on any indexes of development. The initiative’s expanded scope may help to generate increased interest, but it cannot be said to be “evidence-based.”

Perhaps due to the short length of the pilot program, no independent evaluations of CoST’s effectiveness exist. As a result, most evidence comes from internal “success story” briefs, notably CoST’s Impact Stories (2012) briefing note. Yet, despite limited resources for monitoring and evaluation, CoST has also been the subject of a unique examination of their causal effects: a book chapter written by Calland and Hawkins (2012) for the Basel Institute on Governance. In this study, the researchers break the CoST theory of change into its individual components and then trace whether and how each component contributed to outputs and outcomes in each country. What makes the work especially unique is that the authors go one step further by attempting to trace whether these results would have happened without CoST, were due to CoST but not specifically due to the influence of the national multi-stakeholder group, or were directly due to the influence of the MSG. They conclude that the influence of the MSG was critical for some outputs (i.e., improved disclosure laws in Ethiopia and Malawi) and outcomes (i.e., the redesign of specific construction projects in Guatemala and Ethiopia), but not others (i.e., regulatory reform in Malawi was triggered instead by the baseline study). Stakeholders from any MSI wishing to explore whether and how their work is driving results across cases are highly recommended to review this study.

⁷⁸ Disclosed projects in Guatemala can be viewed on the Guatecompras web portal (<http://www.guatecompras.gt/>) by using the advanced search function (“búsqueda avanzada de concursos”) to search by category (“categoría: Construcción y materiales afines”). CoST-Guatemala’s year-end target was provided by the international secretariat.

⁷⁹ Disclosed projects in Honduras can be viewed on the SISOCS web portal (<http://www.insep.gob.hn/sisocs/>) by using the citizen module (“módulo e información ciudadana”) or the map of projects (“mapa de proyectos”).

⁸⁰ The CoST international secretariat’s web page on Ethiopia (<http://www.constructiontransparency.org/ethiopia>) explains that project disclosures will be made on the Federal Public Procurement and Property Administration Agency (FPPPA) website (<http://www.ppa.gov.et>). The site currently includes tools to search for awards and bid disclosures, but as of July 2015, only two awards appear to have been published.

⁸¹ See the CoST international secretariat’s web page on Guatemala (<http://www.constructiontransparency.org/guatemala>).

⁸² CoST’s Impact Stories (2012).

⁸³ Ibid.

The Open Government Partnership (OGP)

The Open Government Partnership was formed in 2011, after the White House hosted a multi-stakeholder meeting to exchange ideas for encouraging open government practices around the globe. “Countries were doing amazing things by themselves,” explains one government official who has been involved with OGP since the beginning, “the question was, could these innovations be scaled up and shared between countries.” Participants agreed that because open government is often politically controversial, a high-profile international initiative could help generate commitments from leaders who might otherwise be reluctant to provide the space for civil society and government reformers to operate.

Unlike EITI or CoST, which provide a sector-specific information disclosure standard to participating countries, OGP provides a platform for many different types of action in five key areas: 1) Improving Public Services, 2) Increasing Public Integrity, 3) More Effectively Managing Public Resources, 4) Creating Safer Communities, and 5) Increasing Corporate Accountability. Participating countries are expected to work with national representatives of civil society to “co-create” a two-year national action plan that addresses several of these areas. OGP provides support in creating and implementing these action plans as well as a periodic independent assessment of progress.

In September 2011, eight founding countries officially endorsed the Open Government Declaration, and announced their first action plans. By 2014, the OGP had grown to 65 countries, 29 countries had submitted their second action plans, and 270 commitments had been fully implemented.

Key structures, processes, and participants

OGP’s transnational steering committee consists of 11 representatives of government and 11 individuals with ties to civil society, with two rotating chairs for each stakeholder group. Initially, there were no civil society co-chairs, but OGP’s leaders felt it was important to model the “principle of parity” they expect participating countries to emulate in their collaborations with representatives of civil society. The investment and participation of both groups of stakeholders is seen as critical for OGP’s success. “Open government is politically challenging, so you need government. You want it to improve life for citizens, so you need civil society,” explains one representative of the OGP secretariat.

While there are no eligibility requirements for countries to join EITI or CoST, before joining OGP, countries must first meet basic requirements for fiscal transparency, access to information, public officials asset disclosure, and citizen engagement.⁸⁸ The indicators used to assess eligibility are produced by a variety of international actors. The International Budget Partnership’s Open Budget Index is used to measure fiscal transparency. Access to information is assessed using a survey produced by the Open Society Institute Justice Initiative and Access Info Europe. Public official asset disclosure is measured using the World Bank’s Public Officials Financial Disclosure database. Citizen engagement is assessed using the 2012 Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index.

OGP governments determine their action plan commitments, ostensibly in consultation with their national CSO counterparts. Unlike EITI or CoST, OGP does not propose a specific set of open government standards; action plans are supposed to respond to national agendas. One funder calls this “standard-setting from below.” They can include pre-existing initiatives, provided they fall into one of the core issues areas of the initiative and are not yet complete. According to one representative of the international secretariat, OGP is a “platform for action” – an “accelerant” – rather than as an initiative with an agenda of its own. “OGP looked like it would complement what we were doing anyway,” says one government official who was charged with developing anti-corruption and good governance initiatives. Since OGP is a broad, flexible initiative, it “allows CSOs well positioned to step in to do so,” adds an international NGO staffer.

The OGP maintains a small permanent secretariat, the OGP Support Unit, hosted by the Tides Center, in San Francisco, CA. The staff of OGP’s Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM), which is responsible for producing regular assessments of governmental progress on action plan commitments, are located in Washington, DC. For each participating country, the IRM contracts with locally based researchers or journalists to produce assessments of progress on each action plan commitment after one year and then again at the end of the two-year action plan cycle, following a set of criteria designed to be sufficiently flexible to account for widely varying country differences. An International Expert Panel is responsible for the IRM’s methodology, and reviews the country reports for quality control and consistency. In 2014, the OGP’s Independent Reporting Mechanism introduced the idea of “starred commitments” to help to encourage governments to be more ambitious in their action plans. Starred commitments are those that are evaluated by IRM to be: 1) Concrete (“medium” or “high” specificity); 2) Ambitious (projected to have “moderate” or “transformative” potential impacts, if completed); 3) Clearly relevant (relevance to one of three

⁸⁴ For a diversity of OGP founder perspectives, see OGP’s *Innovating Government on a Global Stage* (2013).

⁸⁵ According to a representative of the OGP Support unit, OGP plans to retire the use of these “grand challenges” to frame the work of the initiative in the near future.

⁸⁶ See OGP’s *Four-Year Strategy* (2014b), pg. 1.

⁸⁷ There appears to be some disagreement over just how much parity stakeholders really have in OGP. One funder points out that stakeholders do not, in fact, have equal ownership in OGP, because governments join the initiative, while civil society doesn’t. However, an OGP staffer points out that civil society has more influence in OGP than in other MSIs, particularly because private foundations provide substantial funding for the initiative.

⁸⁸ CoST and EITI do require countries to make a formal public request, identify who will fill key positions in the multi-stakeholder group, and provide a rough plan for implementation before they are allowed to join.

core OGP values – Access to information, Civic participation, Public Accountability); and 4) Complete (“complete” or “substantial” progress) by the end of the action plan cycle.⁸⁹

“The IRM is the global accountability mechanism,” explains one OGP staff member, “and civil society is the domestic accountability mechanism.” At the national level, OGP encourages “regular consultation” between civil society and government to develop an action plan, implement it, and monitor progress. While this requirement for consultation does not explicitly call for the creation of a national multi-stakeholder group (which is the case for both EITI and CoST), one representative of the international secretariat interprets this requirement to mean that some sort of semi-permanent multi-stakeholder working group should exist. Indeed, while several countries – including Mexico, Peru, Costa Rica, the US, the UK, Ghana, Liberia, Georgia, Sierra Leone, the Philippines and Indonesia – have established multi-stakeholder bodies to oversee OGP design and implementation, the IRM’s 2014 Technical Report, based on the second cohort of participating governments, found that few countries were meeting all of the OGP’s expectations for consultation with civil society.⁹⁰ OGP has tried to address this by providing additional guidance specifying that “regular consultation” can best be achieved through a “permanent dialogue mechanism.”

Of the five MSIs reviewed as part of this synthesis, the Open Government Partnership has articulated the clearest link between its activities, its overall theory of change, and its metrics for evaluating progress. “We work with a lot of assumptions [in our theory of change]” says one representative of the international secretariat, “which is fine, as long as we acknowledge what they are.” First, OGP identifies three key groups that have an important role to play in opening up the government. High-level support by presidents, prime ministers, or ministry heads creates the political space necessary to innovate and collaborate. Mid-level bureaucrats within the government have the technical expertise and knowledge necessary to carry out reforms. Civil society organizations create the outside pressure necessary to push governments toward greater transparency. “The government needs to know that people are watching,” she explains. As these three groups work together to design and implement a national action plan, a virtuous cycle develops: as meaningful reforms facilitated by OGP begin to take root, all three groups become increasingly invested in making the next action plan better than the last (See Figure 7).

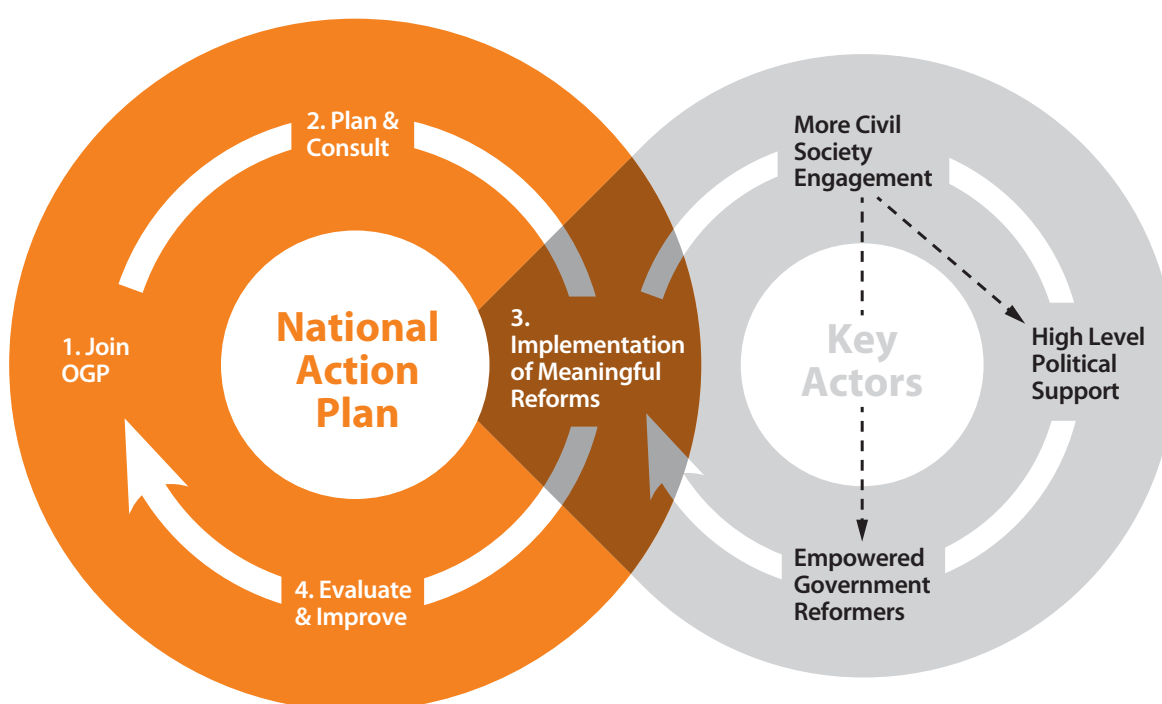


Figure 7: OGP’s theory of change includes a virtuous cycle between key actors at the national level and the national action plan cycle. Source: Open Government Partnership (2014b) *OGP Four-Year Strategy 2015-2018*, pg. 13.

⁸⁹ See Foti (2014), chapter 3, pg. 21. Following a review of the first phase of applying stars to recognize ambitious commitments, the International Expert Panel recently decided to raise the bar for starred commitments, such that only commitments projected to have “transformative” potential impacts, if completed (as opposed to either “transformative” or “moderate”) will qualify. IEP members found that many commitments projected as having moderate potential impacts were insufficiently ambitious to warrant such a designation. Full disclosure: One of the co-authors is a member of the IEP. The new IRM assessment process will go into effect beginning August 2015.

⁹⁰ See OGP’s Annual Report (2014a), pg. 1, and Foti (2014), pg. 24-28.

Based on this theory of change, OGP has developed a unique set of activities targeted at each group (See Figure 8). High-level support is obtained by convening summits and other high-profile events to put the spotlight on leaders and encourage them commit to reform. Mid-level reformers benefit from technical support and peer-learning opportunities that provide them with valuable introductions to other reformers. Finally, civil society can be supported through capacity building and outreach to ensure they understand their rights to participate in OGP decision-making processes. Driving this process is the OGP national action plan process, which allows the international secretariat to provide guidance and the IRM to provide an independent assessment of cycle.



Figure 8: OGP has identified different activities that help key actors remain invested in the process. Source: Open Government Partnership (2014b) OGP Four-Year Strategy 2015-2018, pg. 17.

Mechanisms for building the evidence base

While OGP has ambitious goals, “there has to be clarity about what we can realistically achieve in the short and long term,” says one OGP official. The OGP Support Unit has been tasked with identifying indicators to measure progress on each strategic objective as well as measuring country-level results.⁹¹ Since the release of the OGP’s Four-Year Strategy Paper, which outlined the basic framework for monitoring and evaluation, around 90% of concrete short and long-term indicators have been finalized. Each indicator will have ownership within OGP’s 20-person support staff. Each indicator will be updated annually or biennially, so the Support unit also hopes to develop a “dashboard” to track country progress. Short-term and country-level indicators will be built using data gathered by national liaisons. Longer-term indicators (e.g., “expanding the space for dialogue”) will rely mostly on existing outside metrics. According to the OGP Support unit, six additional research projects – two internal and four external – that will identify key factors driving OGP implementation are currently in various stages of implementation.⁹² Finally, OGP also plans to contract with external evaluators to conduct an independent evaluation of strategic objectives in 2016 and an assessment of longer-term results in 2018.⁹³ The mid-term evaluation will be used for internal learning purposes, allowing OGP to adjust its theory of change if necessary. “This is not something we’re doing only for donors,” says one OGP staffer, “we’re doing this for our own purposes. Even if we don’t have an [external] evaluation coming up, we’re going to evaluate ourselves.”

In addition to the Support Unit, the OGP’s Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) also provides some additional capacity for building an evidence base, though its primary function is to track compliance with the National Action Plan cycle. In the first IRM Technical Report, Foti (2014) lays out a results chain for the OGP, broken into domestic and international levels of analysis (See Figure 9). Foti notes that while the IRM is well placed to assess national-level implementation of action plan commitments (“outputs”) and preliminary evidence of how reforms are being used at the national level (“outcomes”), it does not assess broader social impacts. Since the IRM is designed to allow countries to track their own progress, but not to compare their progress with that of other countries, IRM staff only occasionally aggregate country-level data into metrics on the OGP as a whole. Additionally, since all OGP countries are only in their first or second action plan cycle, it will be years before there is enough data for meaningful trends to emerge.

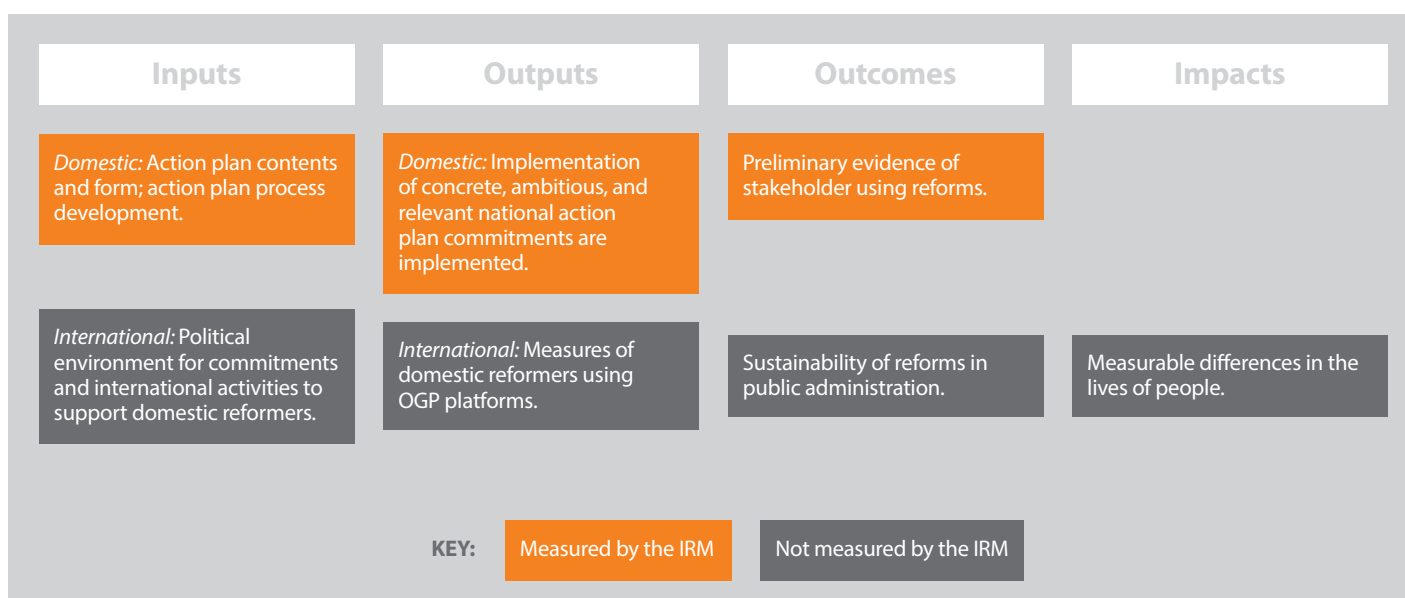


Figure 9: The IRM may be able to provide some national-level data on outcomes, but is not designed to assess the broader effectiveness or impact of the OGP. Source: Foti (2014) *Independent Reporting Mechanism Technical Paper 1*, pg. 110.

⁹¹ See OGP’s Four-Year Strategy (2014b), chapter 7, pgs. 30–31.

⁹³ See OGP’s *Four-Year Strategy* (2014b), chapter 7, pgs. 28–29.

⁹² See Appendix 2 in the OGP Support Unit’s *A Forward Looking Research Agenda* (2014).

Nevertheless, the IRM data, which is released publicly, makes it possible to explore structure and process-oriented questions about OGP outputs, including, which types of commitments are most likely to be implemented, which types of commitments generate the most public attention, or which ministries tend to develop the strongest commitments.⁹⁴ Even here, however, the quantitative IRM data on commitments only provides a jumping-off point, insofar as most of the underlying evidence of commitment-by-commitment progress is qualitative (e.g., progress can be rated as “limited,” “substantial,” or “complete”). Indeed, each IRM country report dedicates a succinct 2-3 pages to assess progress on each commitment.

Evidence for effectiveness and impact

So far, little independent research on the OGP has been completed, but most of what is available has focused on country compliance with OGP rules for public participation and action plan quality. A second phase of OGP research currently underway seeks to identify key drivers of successful action plan implementation. OGP can point to its contributions passing freedom of information laws and stimulating national dialogue around public procurement, although some policy areas identified as key issue areas (i.e., safer communities, improving public services) remain relatively unaffected. Finally, although three large-N studies were identified that purport to examine the relationship between OGP membership and other metrics of open government, only one relies on a truly independent measure of openness in order to make the case for causation.

Compliance studies

Compliance studies provide insights into early links in the results chain, although they cannot speak to effectiveness or impact directly. OGP action plans are published online, so any interested party can assess the quality of the commitments being made. For example, in 2012, Global Integrity looked at the extent to which action plan commitments to date were “SMART” (1) Specific 2) Measurable 3) Actionable 4) Relevant and 5) Time-bound), and published their findings in a blog post. They found that nearly 70% of commitments reviewed met at least four of those five criteria. However, fewer than half of countries outlined metrics for assessing their progress and 40% did not have clear timelines for implementation.⁹⁵ In the years since the blog post, OGP has provided additional guidance to countries on how to write “SMART”er commitments.

Following the completion of the first OGP action plan cycle, the IRM released a technical paper providing insights into the implementation of action plan commitments, the quality of these commitments, and government compliance with OGP processes.⁹⁶ The report found that implementation of action plan commitments was uneven across countries. A small group made significant progress, but a larger group completed less than half of their commitments. Twenty-five percent of commitments made by OGP’s second cohort of 35 countries were evaluated as “starred.” IRM found no correlation between the number of commitments evaluated to be potentially “transformative” and the number of commitments completed, suggesting that more ambitious plans were implemented just as frequently as less ambitious plans. Only 36% of commitments were evaluated as “new,” though there was wide variation between countries. A majority of action plans also had a number of “filler” commitments – defined as those evaluated by IRM to have low specificity, no potential impact, or unclear relevance to OGP values. In another report looking specifically at action plan commitments on public participation in Latin America, the IRM found that while a third of Latin American commitments (34%) focus on improving public participation, over half of these encouraged only shallow forms of participation (e.g., “inform,” “consult”), rather than more transformative ones (e.g., “involve,” “collaborate,” “empower”).⁹⁷

While the IRM itself did not rank and compare the performance of individual countries, others have used publicly available IRM data to compare countries on their OGP performance. For example, Alberto Abella of the Open Knowledge Foundation used IRM data to rank countries by the quality, ambition, and implementation rate of their action plan commitments. He found that the overall highest performers were Slovakia, Moldova and Croatia. Countries with limited ambition but strong implementation included Paraguay, Denmark and Czech Republic. Countries with great ambition but poor follow-through included Estonia, Romania and Greece.⁹⁸ Similarly, the Ukraine chapter of Transparency International looked at OGP progress in Eastern European countries and divided them into “champions” (Georgia and Moldova) and “slowpokes” (Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Ukraine).⁹⁹

The IRM also found that many countries failed to follow the OGP’s rules for consultation with civil society. For example, compliance with consultation requirements during the design phase of the action plan cycle ranged from 23% (making a timeline available to the public) to 74% (in-person consultations). That means nearly a third of OGP countries did not hold a single in-person meeting to discuss the action plan before it was finalized. During the implementation phase, less than half of OGP countries held regular forums to discuss progress.¹⁰⁰ Newer, preliminary assessments by the IRM suggest that country compliance with this requirement has improved dramatically. Nevertheless, an increase in the *quantity* of CSO engagements does not necessarily mean that the *quality* of these engagements has improved as well.

⁹⁴ See the OGP Support Unit’s A Forward Looking Research Agenda (2014).

⁹⁵ See Anand’s June 2012 Global Integrity blog post “Assessing OGP Action Plans” (<https://www.globalintegrity.org/posts/ogp-action-plan-assessments/>).

⁹⁶ See Foti (2014).

⁹⁷ See Whitt (2014).

⁹⁸ See Abella’s August 2014 blog post “An experiment with data from the open government partnership: Ranking countries” (<http://gobemos.com/2014/08/19/an-experiment-with-data-from-the-open-government-partnership/>).

⁹⁹ See Presniakov & Wolanskyj (2012). Russia is also examined in this paper, as it was expressing interest in joining OGP at the time the research was conducted.

¹⁰⁰ See Foti (2014).

While most OGP countries are only on their first or second action plan cycle, there is some anecdotal evidence to suggest that government-civil society collaboration does indeed “deepen” over successive cycles. In Brazil, during the first action plan cycle, a ministerial committee on open government charged with drafting the action plan consulted with CSOs as part of the process. For the second action plan, members of the committee actually formed an ad-hoc working group with ten CSO organizations to draft the action plan. For the third action plan, according to one government official, CSOs are seeking to further institutionalize this working group and include representatives from the private sector and academia. Similarly, in Mexico, the first action plan was drafted with little input from civil society, but the second action plan process was described as “very collaborative” by one CSO representative. Although these are promising developments, there are currently no empirical studies that examine whether and how greater CSO participation influences action plan design or implementation.

Key factors for successful action plan implementation

Although OGP allows participating governments to commit to a variety of different activities, the initiative also seeks to share best practices across its members to help them achieve results. OGP has “the ability to scale up [reform] quickly, if we know what’s working,” says one steering committee member. IRM and other independent researchers work to identify common factors leading to quality action plan commitments and their successful implementation across high-performing countries. They also seek to identify shared bottlenecks that prevent other countries from doing the same. In the Presniakov & Wolanskyj (2012) study of Eastern Europe, for instance, the researchers conclude that “slowpoke” countries experience some unique challenges like political turbulence, lack of financial resources, and limited civil society capacity, yet share other bottlenecks with “champion” countries, including society capacity, poor collaboration between stakeholders, and limited demand among citizens.

The IRM also attempted to examine possible correlates of success, without naming countries. Foti (2014) found that new commitments were no more or less ambitious than existing commitments and that specific and measurable commitments were just as likely to be completed as vague ones. Following certain procedural steps – specifically, making a timeline and publishing a list of civil society inputs – were also related to higher completion rates. Foti also found that commitment completion was not related to any institutional differences in the government-OGP interface, including a change in the executive, multiple-agency involvement, the involvement of the foreign ministry, or the involvement of the president or prime minister’s office. However, since the IRM looked at data across all OGP countries, it is likely that important differences were washed out in the statistical model. Comparative case studies might be better suited to provide additional insights.

National policy reforms

There are currently no evaluations of the OGP’s overall effectiveness or impact. Indeed, because each government maintains discretion over what it commits to do as part of OGP and because action plans can include existing projects or policies as commitments, any such evaluation will be difficult to do. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that OGP has helped to facilitate national policy reforms. For example, many observers attribute the Brazilian government’s decision to push through its first access to information law to its founding membership in OGP and its role hosting the first global OGP summit. Since joining OGP, Croatia and Georgia have also passed new right to information laws and Hungary has published information on all public contracts.¹⁰¹ According to one current steering committee member, OGP has also been successful in encouraging governments to sign up to EITI (e.g., the UK and US) and to release information on beneficial ownership in the extractive sector (e.g., the UK).¹⁰² “Pushing for these types of wins is easier with OGP,” she says. Indeed, five countries – Sierra Leone, Malawi, Tunisia, Senegal, and Myanmar – reformed their open governance practices just to be eligible to participate.¹⁰³

While there is no official data available on the number of countries that are currently using the OGP platform to make substantive improvements, a representative of the OGP secretariat estimates that “about half” of all OGP countries have committed to politically difficult, challenging reforms. “If one-third to one-half of countries are delivering success, that’s a meaningful impact,” says another staffer. “[OGP] is moving the needle in small, quiet ways,” agrees one former steering committee member. “It’s up to country-level stakeholders to decide whether OGP’s theory of change is working or not.” Although progress will likely continue to be uneven, messy, and incremental across countries, he suggests that researchers should consider history as a counterfactual: “This is not the same sort of progress we’ve seen before.”

¹⁰¹ See OGP’s *Four-Year Strategy* (2014b), pg. 8.

¹⁰² The US and UK both committed to implementing EITI in 2013 as part of their second OGP National Action Plans and both became EITI “candidate countries” the following year. The UK also committed to creating a public registry of company beneficial ownership in their 2013 OGP plan. The new requirement for company reporting goes into effect January 1, 2016.

¹⁰³ See OGP’s *Four-Year Strategy* (2014b), pg. 8.

Large-N correlations

Although national-level outcomes of OGP participation are likely to vary, one might expect to find that broader metrics of open government show trends across countries. However, two of the three large-N statistical studies examine the relationship between OGP and the Open Budget Survey and its composite, the Open Budget Index. Harrison & Sagoyo (2014) found that submitting an OGP action plan had a limited but positive, relationship with some measures of transparency (measured as the content of the budget), accountability (measured as the timely release of comprehensive budget info) and participation (measured as public engagement with supreme audit institutions) on the Open Budget Survey data. This relationship was stronger for lower-GDP countries, where these types of good governance mechanisms may not have been in place otherwise. Similarly, Petrie (2014) compares OGP countries' scores on the Open Budget Index to non-participating countries located in the same region and found that OGP countries are more transparent and participatory than other Asian countries, but less transparent than other European countries. The problem with these two studies, however, is that since the OGP uses the OBI as part of its eligibility criteria, it is not a convincing indicator for evaluating OGP effectiveness. If the OBI is both an independent and a dependent variable, a correlation does not demonstrate causality (i.e., endogeneity). In other words, these studies used the same metric as both part of the input (i.e., OGP membership) and as a measure of its outcomes. Nevertheless, these studies are relevant insofar as they raise the possibility that groups of OGP countries may already differ from one another in important ways that limit the usefulness of large-N analysis for measuring their performance in the aggregate later on.

Alternatively, the World Justice Project (2015) recently released a large-N study that finds that OGP membership is correlated with open government, but based on an independent index. The WJP's Open Government Index is built from 78 variables drawn from more than 100,000 household surveys and in-country expert questionnaires collected for the WJP Rule of Law Index. These variables are grouped into four dimensions of open government: publicized laws and government data, right to information, civic participation, and complaint mechanisms. Perhaps most notably, the index incorporates actual citizen experiences with exercising their information rights. WJP found that OGP countries are likely to score higher than non-OGP countries on their new Open Government Index and that countries in their second action plan cycle tend to score higher than countries in their first action plan cycle. While WJP's findings are encouraging evidence for causation, the WJP study cannot be interpreted as conclusively demonstrating that participation in OGP leads to good governance. An alternative explanation is also plausible, that founding OGP countries already had better open government practices than countries that joined later. Additional research will be required to address these two divergent explanations.

The Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency (GIFT)

By the early 2000s, the issue of fiscal transparency had become a topic of significant interest to international financial institutions (IFIs) and international NGOs concerned about the mismanagement of public funds, corruption, and poor returns on development investments. The World Bank, the IMF, and NGOs – most notably the International Budget Partnership – began encouraging countries to make their budgets more transparent. Multi-stakeholder initiatives like EITI, CoST, and the International Aid Transparency Initiative emerged to promote fiscal transparency in specific sectors. While improvements in budget transparency were steadily taking place around the world, they were not happening as quickly as some expected and seemed to be stagnating following some early successes, according to one representative of GIFT. Another GIFT official suggests that these early efforts were inadequate in part because “the supply of information [was] disconnected from the needs of citizens.” When the global financial crisis occurred, it also became clear that gaps between existing standards for fiscal transparency would need to be addressed as well. “Governments have a huge deficit on trust and legitimacy.”

In 2011, a group of IFIs, NGOs, and national governments, formed the Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency (GIFT) in order to promote and harmonize international standards for fiscal transparency and public participation in the budgeting process. Although initially operating with only part-time staff working out of Innovations for Scaling Impact (iScale), a small think-tank specializing in global networks, GIFT achieved early visibility when the United Nations General Assembly adopted their High Level Principles in late 2012. By 2014, after securing new funding from the World Bank and the Hewlett Foundation, GIFT was able to hire a full-time network director and transitioned into a new project hosted by the International Budget Partnership.

Key structures, processes, and participants

GIFT approaches the challenge of fiscal transparency by “bringing some of the most important actors at the global level around the table,” explains one official. In addition to its founding stewards – the governments of Brazil and the Philippines, the IMF and World Bank, and the IBP – GIFT has expanded its governance to include an additional group of stewards – currently, the US Government, the OECD, Fundar (Mexico), the Institute of Public Finance (Croatia), the Global Movement for Budget Transparency, Accountability, and Participation (BTAP), the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) and the Omidyar Network – that help to define the mission and strategies of the network. Because fiscal transparency and public participation are complex issues, he says, no single actor can address them on their own. Working through a multi-stakeholder network allows these actors to leverage their capacities and resources into new forms of collective action and improve their existing portfolios of work, explains another GIFT advisor.

According to one funder, GIFT “coordinates best practices to prompt action.” Unlike EITI, CoST, or OGP, which have formal rules for participation and set up national multi-stakeholder groups to implement their agenda, GIFT is an “action network” that works primarily at the transnational level and offers technical assistance to any national-level actors who are interested, sometimes piggybacking on other public sector MSIs. There are advantages to both approaches. EITI’s formal multi-stakeholder governance ensures that the initiative only does what all stakeholders – government, private sector, and civil society – can agree to do together, facilitating compliance by all parties. A representative of OGP suggests that the “principle of parity” between different stakeholders allows the organization to model the change it wants to see at the national level. On the other hand, “a multi-stakeholder action network can do things pretty quickly compared to a partnership,” says an advisor to GIFT. Beyond simply speed, he points out that a more formal “secretariat model” risks allowing governments to rely too heavily on a centralized MSI staff. As a result, government actors may become less engaged and less energetic. Finally, as another GIFT advisor pointed out, the formation of yet another national MSG would risk creating redundancies between different MSIs, “there are too many [national MSGs] already; I’m not sure what we’d add.”

GIFT has four primary activities: 1) developing and promoting global fiscal transparency and public participation norms; 2) knowledge creation; 3) facilitating peer learning; and 4) exploring open government technology. The first line of work proceeds through the development of high-level principles for both fiscal transparency (completed) and public participation (still in progress), which are then used to harmonize member organizations’ individual standards and metrics. The goal, according to one advisor, is “a set of norms and standards that are ambitious, and aligned, and adopted by multiple international organizations.” The second line of work proceeds through commissioning and conducting research, currently with a specific focus on cataloguing the benefits of public participation and budget transparency in order to increase actor incentives to adopt these practices. The third line of work proceeds largely through the OGP’s Fiscal Openness Working Group (FOWG), which provides a forum for sharing best practices on fiscal transparency and participatory budgeting with OGP member countries. The final line of work on open government technology is still largely in development, according to GIFT representatives.

GIFT has articulated a broad theory of change for how a global network, improved norms on fiscal transparency and public participation, and better use of technology might eventually lead to more efficient governance and economic development (See Figure 10). However, this theory of change does not articulate how the specific activities of the initiative listed in the previous paragraph are expected to contribute to this process. According to one GIFT official, it is “too early to make an assessment” as to GIFT’s more specific theory of *action*. He believes that an evaluation of their initial efforts must happen first. Another GIFT advisor agrees, suggesting that without a track record of national level results, “it’s hard to sell a compelling story of change.” Very broadly, he describes GIFT’s influence on other actors as “moral suasion.”

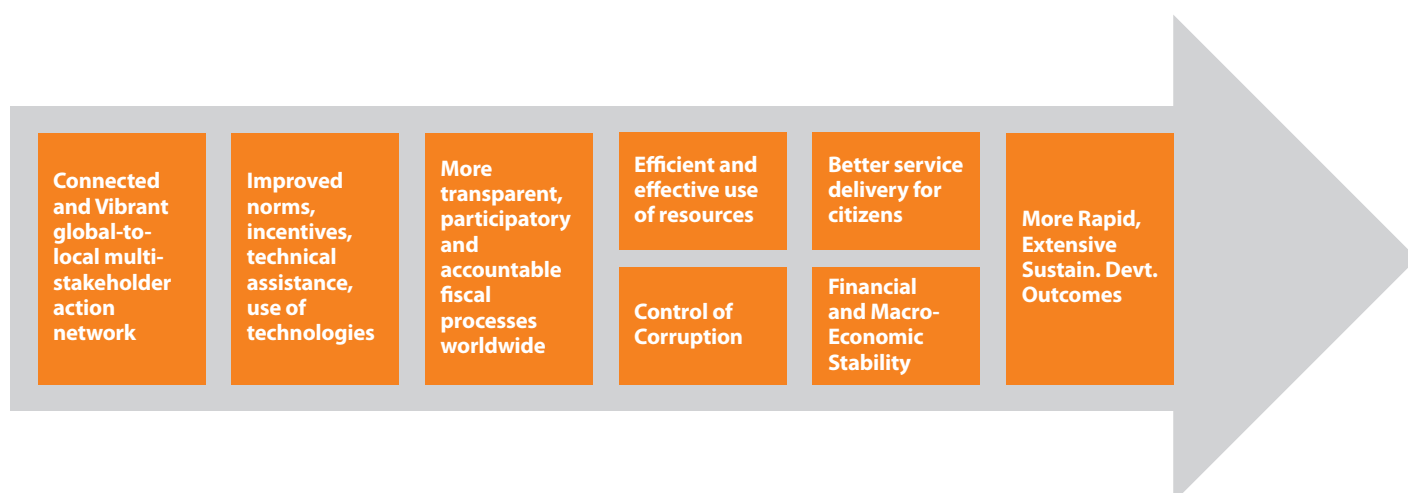


Figure 10: GIFT’s broad theory of change does not articulate how the specific activities of the initiative are expected to contribute to the change process. Source: Petrie (2012) *Towards Stronger Incentives for Increased Fiscal Transparency, Participation, and Accountability*, pg. 30.

Nevertheless, GIFT's representatives have started to think about how they might measure outputs and outcomes. For example, one advisor suggests that to measure peer learning, they could examine OGP Fiscal Openness Working Group participation and output. To demonstrate harmonized global norms, they could examine whether fiscal transparency metrics are more comprehensive and consistent across international organizations. Another official says that GIFT also plans to track longer-term outcomes within countries, using new and existing metrics of fiscal transparency and participatory budgeting, compiled by a variety of international organizations, including the IMF, the IBP, and the Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA). However, he says, GIFT has no plans to try to demonstrate specific links between its activities and these broader metrics, believing that progress will ultimately be the result of combined efforts by government reformers, IMF loans, and various other factors. "No organization can do it alone...our contribution is modest."

With the norms harmonization work bearing fruit far more quickly than anticipated, GIFT now finds itself with social capital to spend, according to one advisor. Current transnational efforts focus on nesting the new fiscal transparency norms in a variety of international and regional institutions, completing high-level principles on participatory budgeting and incorporating them into global standards, continuing to build an evidence base on the benefits of transparency and participation, facilitating peer learning, and identifying countries – largely through the OGP – that are ready to implement reforms.

Mechanisms for building the evidence base

GIFT is hosted by the International Budget Partnership.¹⁰⁴ In addition to the network director, there are two people on staff "almost full time" and two part time technical advisors. Since the organization has limited internal research capacity, they contract out to researchers who help to build the evidence base for the benefits of fiscal transparency and participatory budgeting. Local-level case studies examining whether greater public participation might improve the budget process are currently underway in Croatia, Mexico, South Africa, Kenya, and Canada. GIFT has also produced an analysis of OGP action plan commitments on fiscal transparency and participation, using Open Budget Index (OBI) scores as a baseline (Petrie, 2014). However, while GIFT has commissioned research to explore fiscal transparency and public participation practices, it has not commissioned any to explore GIFT's unique role in promoting those practices. Indeed, there are currently no evaluations of the effectiveness or impact of GIFT. While there is some work being done internally to catalogue GIFT's outputs and intermediate outcomes, opinions seem to differ as to when GIFT should commission its first independent evaluation (e.g., "in a year or so," "3-5 years," "when the time comes").

Evidence for effectiveness and impact

GIFT can already demonstrate tangible outputs across three lines of work – developing and promoting global fiscal transparency and public participation norms, knowledge creation, and facilitating peer learning – as well as some intermediate outcomes with respect to norms harmonization.

Promising Outputs

GIFT's work to develop and promote global fiscal transparency and public participation norms got off to good start when the United Nations adopted the high level principles for fiscal transparency in 2012.¹⁰⁵ This endorsement served as a powerful signal to stakeholders across all sectors that they should support the implementation of fiscal transparency reforms. Additionally, one representative noted that GIFT has formed a partnership with a group of private investors who have agreed to support fiscal transparency and public participation principles, providing an opportunity to engage directly with the private sector.

GIFT has also leveraged the Open Government Partnership (OGP) to provide guidance to countries working to implement open and participatory budgeting reforms as part of their national action plans. There are currently 318 OGP action plan commitments on fiscal transparency and public participation.¹⁰⁶ While GIFT may not work directly with many of the governments implementing reforms, their position anchoring the Fiscal Openness Working Group (FOWG) allows them to disseminate their recommendations. These recommendations include releasing documents already produced for internal use, creating a citizen budget, prioritizing commitments around legislative oversight and supreme audit powers, designating an agency to implement each commitment, and identifying opportunities for "quick wins" on public participation. According to one official, the OGP FOWG also provides GIFT with an opportunity to facilitate peer learning between reformers.

Finally, with respect to knowledge creation, one GIFT advisor claims the initiative has generated a "range of products" on fiscal transparency and participatory budgeting, although to date only a handful of papers appear on the GIFT website. One study, "Participation, Transparency, and Accountability: Innovations in South Korea, Brazil, and the Philippines," identifies four types of participation (Voice; Veto; Vet; Vote) and looks at national sociopolitical factors (civil society configuration; state capacity; presidential support; geopolitical direction of reform) that explain which types of participation came to be institutionalized in each of the three countries. Another, "On Incentivizing Useful Budget Transparency," provides a literature review on actor incentives and recommendations for supporting and rewarding the disclosure of useful information.¹⁰⁷ A third, "Surmounting Obstacles to Fiscal

¹⁰⁴ IBP was established in 1997 within the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), an American think tank that analyzes the impact of federal and state budgets. IBP is currently in the process of becoming independent from CBPP.

¹⁰⁵ See UN Resolution 67/28 "Promoting transparency, participation and accountability in fiscal policies" (http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/67/218) adopted Dec 21, 2012.

¹⁰⁶ See Petrie (2014), pg. 5.

¹⁰⁷ See Kosak, 2015.

Transparency” reviews intrinsic and constructed obstacles to transparency and provides suggestions for how GIFT might help actors to tackle them.¹⁰⁸ Finally, a fourth study, “The Impacts of Fiscal Openness” reviews the evidence for macro-fiscal outcomes, resource allocation and service delivery outcomes, governance outcomes, and development outcomes of fiscal transparency and public participation across 38 studies.¹⁰⁹

Intermediate outcomes

Prior to the efforts of GIFT, international financial institutions and development NGOs had different standards for measuring fiscal transparency, which allowed countries to “norm shop,” and pushed each standard towards the lowest common denominator. One of GIFT’s more notable achievements to date is aligning the standards and metrics across these organizations so that they are based on the same high-level principles. Most notably, GIFT has encouraged these organizations to agree that public participation is a key factor that should be measured as part of any fiscal transparency standard. While one GIFT official admits that there were “some brutal conversations,” he is pleased that they have managed to get “a wide variety of actors to at least engage in dialogue.” Thus far, according to one GIFT official, the Open Budget Index, OECD guidance for governance on budget, and the IMF fiscal transparency code have all been updated to include metrics for public participation.

GIFT’s collaboration with the IMF is particularly notable because advisors originally anticipated its representatives would be skeptical of promoting greater public involvement in fiscal matters. The new IMF code sets standards for the disclosure of information on governments’ financial positions, prospects and risks, built around four pillars: fiscal reporting, fiscal forecasting and budgeting, fiscal risk analysis and management, and resource revenue management. Public participation has been incorporated into the principles for budget deliberation, and GIFT is currently working to add a similar principle to the standards for resource revenue management as well.¹¹⁰ The assumption is that IMF support for open budgeting could bolster domestic open government advocates in government and civil society.¹¹¹

The Open Contracting Partnership (OCP)

The Open Contracting Partnership (OCP) is the newest of the five MSIs explored in this research. OCP is the result of a collaborative process that included more than 200 stakeholders from government, industry, and civil society over the course of two years. The goal of the initiative is to promote transparency and accountability in public contracting, which represents around US\$9.5 trillion per year, and to support the work of reformers and practitioners across the globe.¹¹² “Public monies should be spent responsibly,” explains one funder, “we need openness in contracts, why compartmentalize by sector?” Stakeholders embraced the idea of establishing a central partnership as a platform for collective action, coordination, and learning. A steering committee consisting of the Construction Sector Transparency Initiative (CoST), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Integrity Action, the governments of Colombia and the Philippines, Oxfam America and Transparency International was formed to further develop the Partnership, with the World Bank Group serving as interim coordinator. The Open Contracting team – at this time, still housed within the World Bank – began to implement its agenda within a handful of partner countries and the concept of “open contracting” gained traction with an international audience. In October 2012, the steering group convened the first Global Open Contracting Meeting in Durban, South Africa, with over 150 stakeholders in attendance. Participants created an agenda for the OCP, prioritized the development of global principles, and agreed that the World Bank should transfer the coordination function to an independent host over the following 18 months. In late 2014, the OCP established an advisory board to replace the interim steering committee. OCP hired its first executive director in January 2015 and continues to build a small central support team. These moves may have come just in time, as the World Bank was criticized in early 2015 for restricting access to its own “post-procurement review” reports.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ See Heald, 2015.

¹⁰⁹ See de Renzio & Wehner, 2015.

¹¹⁰ For details see IMF’s August 2014 web article “New Fiscal Transparency Code to Improve Policies and Accountability” (<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/survey/so/2014/POL080714A.htm>) and GIFT’s March 2015 web post “Comments on the draft resource revenue management pillar of the IMF’s fiscal transparency code” (<http://fiscaltransparency.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/GIFT-Submission-IMF-FTC-Pillar-IV.pdf>).

¹¹¹ Currently, this proposition is being tested in Ghana, where the IMF recently approved a 3-year, \$918 million program that includes provisions for greater budget transparency. For details, see Ortez’s April 2015 post on Oxfam’s Politics of Poverty blog: “IMF’s Lagarde: Ghana program will improve budget transparency” (<http://politicsofpoverty.oxfamamerica.org/2015/04/imfs-lagarde-ghana-program-will-improve-budget-transparency/>).

¹¹² See Center for Global Development (2014), pg. ix.

¹¹³ For details, see McIntosh’s February 2015 web article, “World Bank Denies Access to Procurement Review Reports” (<http://www.freedominfo.org/2015/02/world-bank-denies-access-procurement-review-reports/>).

Key structures, processes, and participants

The Open Contracting Partnership endeavors to be “multi-stakeholder in spirit but not in structure,” according to representatives of the initiative. At the transnational level, OCP has an advisory board comprised of representatives of government, private sector, local and international NGOs, and think tanks. However, OCP does not have a formally balanced multi-stakeholder governance structure in place to ensure equal voting rights or seats to each stakeholder group. At the national level, OCP promotes multi-stakeholder solutions without setting up formal multi-stakeholder requirements for membership. Much like GIFT, OCP seeks to plug into existing multi-stakeholder efforts. As a new, small initiative, this informality allows OCP to “go where the momentum is,” says one advisory board member, and work with reform-minded agencies, sub-national governments, private companies, or civil society groups in countries that may not be eligible to join more formal MSIs.

Similar to GIFT, OCP does not envision itself as a “stand-alone” initiative. Rather, OCP seeks to contribute to the development of open contracting norms at the transnational level, and to strengthen the implementation of open contracting projects – efforts to increase disclosure and participation in the public procurement process – at the national, regional, and local level (See Figure 11). At the transnational level, OCP’s leaders seek to promote the uptake of open contracting practices by securing the endorsement or incorporation of open contracting principles into other international bodies, including multilateral organizations, international financial institutions, NGOs, or other MSIs. For example, OCP plans to use Open Government Partnership action plans as a key mechanism for encouraging national governments to commit to open contracting practices.¹¹⁴ Another key component of OCP’s work at the transnational level is the development and promotion of the Open Contracting Data Standard (OCDS), a technical data standard that provides guidance on what information should be disclosed for each public procurement project. The OCDS format allows data to be comparable across projects, sector, and countries.

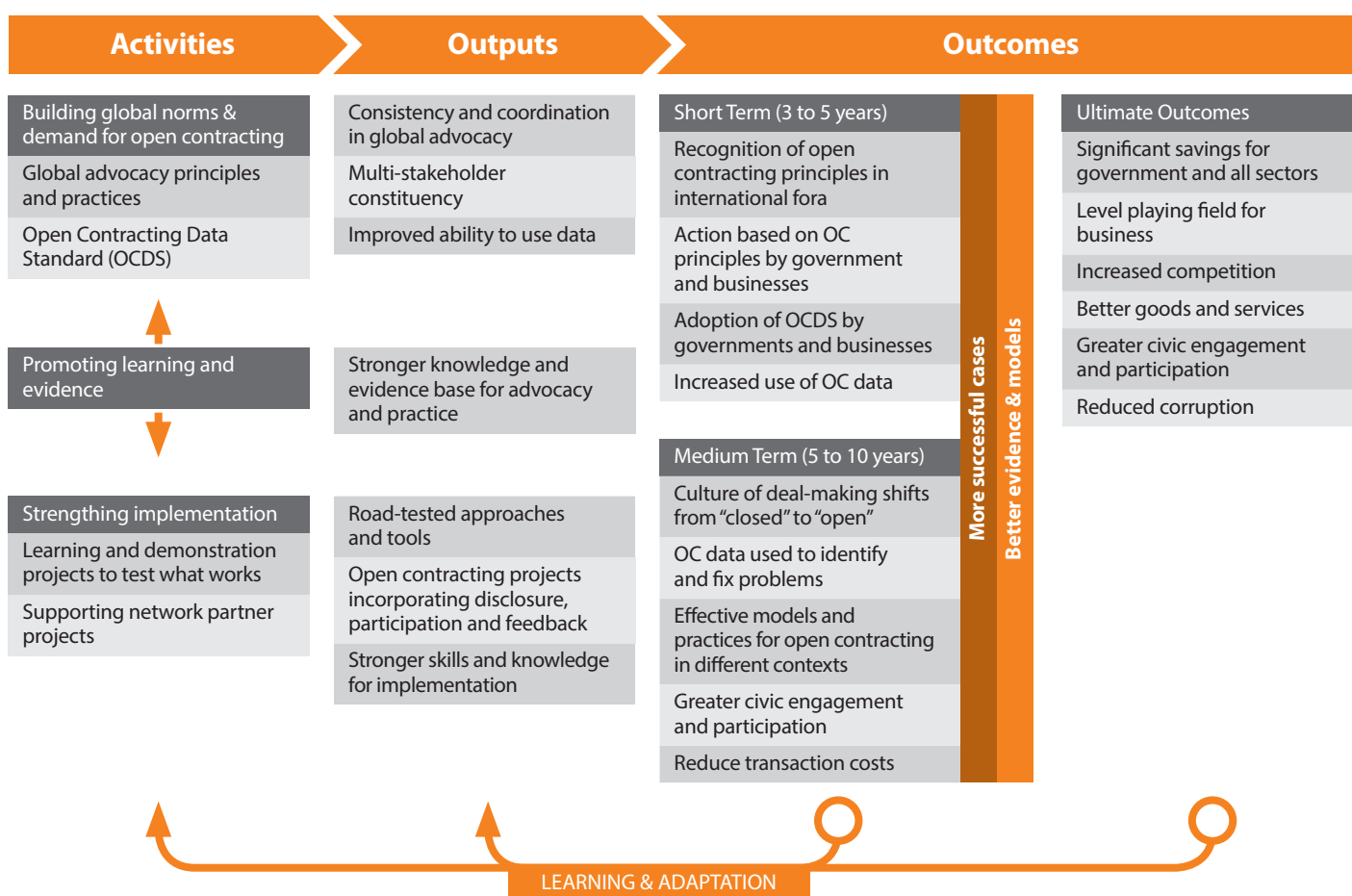


Figure 11: OCP’s new theory of change shows how the activities and outputs of the initiative will drive progress towards short, medium, and long-term goals. Source: OCP Draft Strategy and Theory of Change, provided to the authors by K. Frauscher, OCP, personal correspondence, May 14, 2015.

¹¹⁴ OCP also hopes to provide technical assistance to EITI and CoST multi-stakeholder groups that are pursuing open contracting as part of their agenda.

OCP also seeks to strengthen the implementation of open contracting practices at the national, regional, and local level in two ways: first, by overseeing a handful of open contracting “demonstration projects,” in order to build a knowledge base that can inform future implementation; second, by providing knowledge, technical assistance, and funding to partner organizations that are implementing open contracting projects.

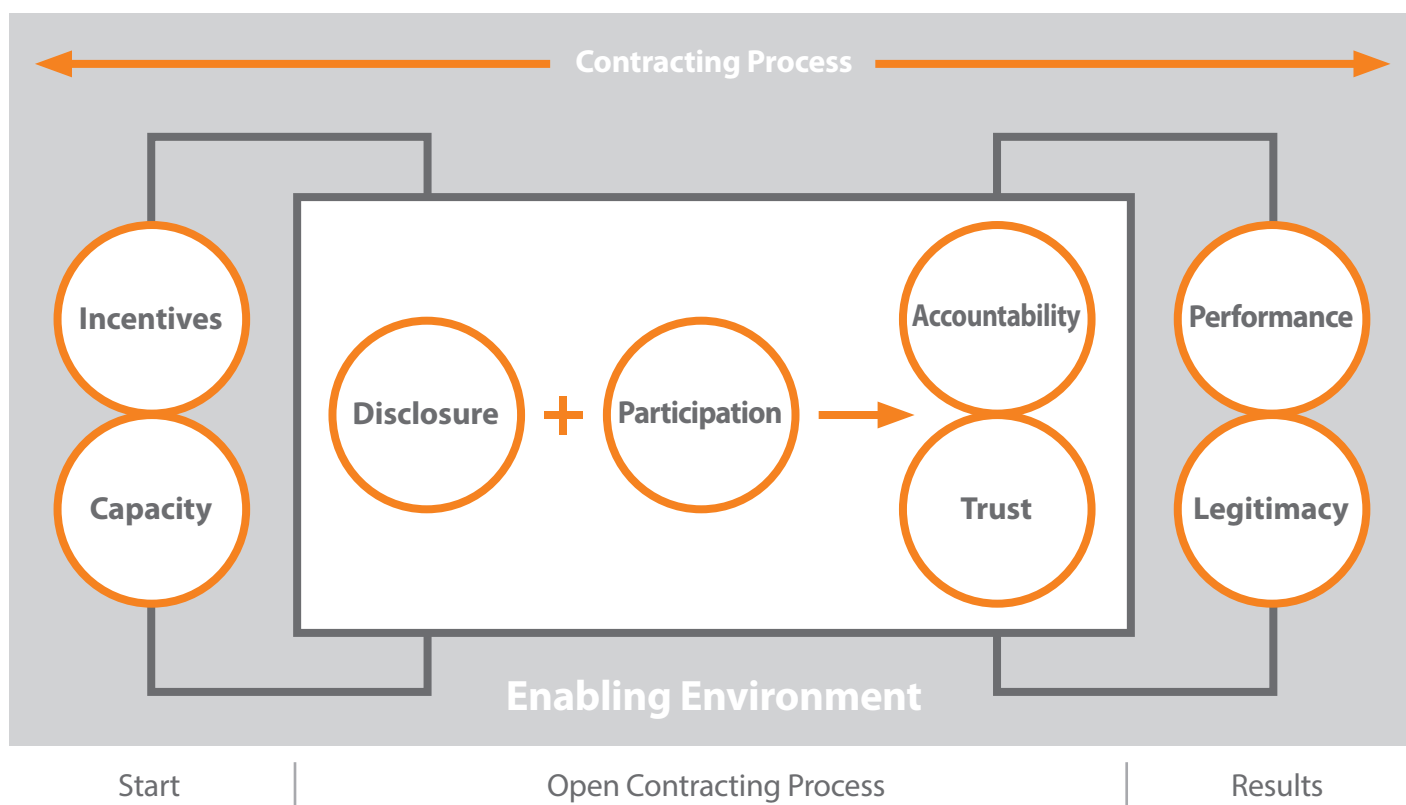


Figure 12: OCP has outlined how “open contracting” works to improve the public contracting process. Source: World Bank Institute (2013) *Open Contracting: A Guide for Practitioners*, pg. 9.

Prior to the launch of OCP itself, the community of practice had already developed a theory of change for how open contracting adds value to national practices. Open contracting works by creating “virtuous cycles” between the process of information disclosure and public participation, and the enabling environment (See Figure 12). In order for disclosure and participation to generate accountability and trust – the key purpose of open contracting – there must be a certain level of existing public incentive and capacity to make use of the information. But the open contracting process itself also builds incentive and capacity. Similarly, greater levels of accountability and trust will drive improvements to project management and serve to further legitimize the open contracting process. These outcomes will, in turn, help to build greater accountability and trust.

OCP’s leaders know it will be important to demonstrate progress in the short, medium, and long term, and have identified outcomes that they expect to see in 3-5 years, 5-10 years, and beyond (See Figure 11). They also plan to develop a baseline assessment for open-contracting practices at the national level, for use in their demonstration projects. Although the OCP theory of change posits that open contracting can lead to broad social impacts like reduced corruption, greater civic participation, and better service delivery, OCP’s leaders acknowledge that they will need to prioritize tracking more proximate outcomes, including the implementation of open contracting principles and the adoption of OCDS by businesses and governments. One medium-term metric OCP leaders are particularly interested in tracking is the “fix rate,” a concept introduced by Integrity Action. The fix rate tracks how often particular activities or policies – things like public hearings, information portals or access to information laws – lead to desired outcomes like the resolution of citizen complaints or improvements in public service delivery.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ For a thorough discussion of the fix rate, see Galtung (2013).

Mechanisms for building the evidence base

OCP is currently in the process of building a five-person team to handle communications, support the Open Contracting Data Standard, and oversee learning from their efforts to implement open contracting in a handful of test cases. OCP is also looking for funding to gather additional empirical evidence on the benefits of open contracting, including the cost savings to governments and businesses. OCP maintains close ties to the World Bank's Governance Global Practice and anticipates that they, and other partner organizations, will help to track outcomes. However, they also plan to engage with consultants in order to develop plans for internal monitoring and evaluation efforts in the future.

Evidence for effectiveness and impact

While it is far too early to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the Open Contracting Partnership itself, the open contracting effort as a whole can point to some promising outputs.¹¹⁶ In 2014, the UN Global Compact, in partnership with Transparency International and the World Bank, launched "Call to Action: Anti-Corruption and the Global Development Agenda," asking governments to promote anti-corruption and good governance via fair and transparent public contracting.¹¹⁷ 280 private sector companies signed the call to action.¹¹⁸ While 24 countries are currently in discussions with partner organizations including the World Bank, Global Integrity, Oxfam, GLZ, and Integrity Action to implement open contracting in one or more sector, most of these projects are in the early stages.

For its part, OCP is currently tracking 43 OGP commitments to publish general or sector-specific contracting data and 15 commitments to citizen participation in contract monitoring. Six commitments make direct reference to the Open Contracting Global Principles and four endorse them. Thirteen governments have expressed interest in piloting the recently released Open Contracting Data Standard. Six countries have been identified as potential sites for OCP demonstration projects, although they expect to only implement 2-5 per year.¹¹⁹ Finally, over 700 people have signed up to the Open Contracting learning community. Only time will tell whether these early signs of progress bear fruit.

The evidence collected to date suggests that open contracting helps to reduce costs and may also contribute to reductions in corruption and improvements in service delivery. A 2012 literature review by U4 and Transparency International considered the evidence for the benefits of open contracting across a variety of national contexts and concluded that these practices result in more efficient allocation of resources for governments and lower investment risks for providers.¹²⁰ A 2014 review by the Center for Global Development's Working Group on Contract Publication reached a similar conclusion.¹²¹ With regard to the relationship between open contracting and corruption, U4 and Transparency International conclude that the literature presents a more complicated picture. While there is evidence that greater transparency in public procurement is correlated with reduced perceptions of corruption, there is also evidence that the benefits of transparency on procurement costs – already fairly modest – are further reduced in highly corrupt settings.¹²² As a result, the benefits of open contracting may not outweigh the costs of implementation, particularly in highly corrupt societies. Finally, U4 and Transparency International also conclude that there is only indirect evidence thus far to suggest that open contracting improves service delivery. Numerous studies have found a relationship between broad measures of transparency (e.g., World Bank voice and accountability metrics) and improvements in service delivery, but no studies thus far have included measures of transparency that are more specific to the contracting process.¹²³

Ultimately, like other transparency initiatives, the impact of open contracting is likely to vary by country. For example, 2014 World Bank case study of open contracting projects in Nigeria, Ghana, Mongolia, and Uganda found that while all four countries had taken important procedural steps to facilitate disclosure and participation, new information was only disclosed in Nigeria and Mongolia. At the time of the case study, neither country had made changes to any projects, nor was there evidence for broader sectoral reforms.¹²⁴ Overall, considered in light of its theory of change, open contracting has produced some promising inputs (including its "brand"), but few outputs, and even fewer clear outcomes so far.

¹¹⁶ Several observers have suggested that the "uptake" of the open contracting "brand" should itself be considered a success. Indeed, prior to the efforts of the World Bank Governance Global Practice, the term did not exist. The GGP staff "identified a gap and a field developed around it." In a surprisingly short period of time, "open contracting became an actual thing."

¹¹⁷ To view the UN Global Compact's anti-corruption call to action, visit: https://www.unglobalcompact.org/Issues/transparency_anticorruption/call_to_action_post2015.html.

¹¹⁸ To view a searchable list of signatories, visit: [https://www.unglobalcompact.org/what-is-gc/participants/search?utf8=&search\[keywords\]=&search\[initiatives\]\[\]=181&search\[per_page\]=10&search\[sort_field\]=&search\[sort_direction\]=asc](https://www.unglobalcompact.org/what-is-gc/participants/search?utf8=&search[keywords]=&search[initiatives][]=181&search[per_page]=10&search[sort_field]=&search[sort_direction]=asc); to download a static list, visit: https://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/issues_doc/Anti-Corruption/Call_to_Action_Global_Development_Agenda_Signatories.pdf.

¹¹⁹ Data provided to the authors by Kathrin Frauscher, OCP.

¹²⁰ See Chêne (2012).

¹²¹ See Center for Global Development (2014).

¹²² See Chêne, 2012, pg. 3.

¹²³ Ibid, pgs. 3-4.

¹²⁴ See Nkrumah, Mensah, Bradley, and Cabansag (2014).

V. Synthesizing the Evidence

In this section, we look across the evidence collected on all five public governance-oriented MSIs in order to draw general conclusions about their progress towards stated objectives, discuss the components of high-quality evaluations, identify key factors driving outcomes and remaining research gaps, and acknowledge transnational and national-level convergences between MSIs.

Progress on stated objectives

The evidence suggests that public governance multi-stakeholder initiatives are still operating within the early stages of their proposed results frameworks. While these initiatives have made some notable progress promoting information disclosure and participation, there is little evidence thus far that these reforms have been effective at improving government accountability or achieving broader social, economic, and/or environmental impacts. At present, there are still only limited sources for evidence of effectiveness and impact. Evidence for effectiveness is uneven, evidence for impact is weak or non-existent, and definitions of “success” remain debated and negotiated.

There are limited sources for evidence

As of early 2015, there are still only a handful of robust studies on the effectiveness and impact of public governance-oriented MSIs. This should come as no surprise, given that the MSIs reviewed in this report are – with the exception of EITI – less than five years old.

EITI deserves recognition for commissioning two substantial external reviews, one completed by Rainbow Insight in 2009 and one completed by Scanteam in 2011. While the former focuses primarily on EITI’s structures and process, the latter explores the effectiveness of EITI in opening up resource governance in a handful of countries and examines EITI’s relationship to several macro-level social and economic metrics. The Scanteam evaluation (Achievements and Strategic Options) found that: “little impact at the societal level can be discerned ... largely due to [EITI’s] lack of links with larger public sector reform processes and institutions.” The report’s findings have been influential within the EITI research community, as well as within the EITI itself.¹²⁵ The study is widely cited in other reviews of EITI and is credited for driving some of the changes found in the new EITI Standard.¹²⁶

The effectiveness of EITI within specific countries has also been explored by a number of NGOs and think tanks, but no one has yet produced a systematic assessment across all EITI countries. A handful of academic papers explore the relationship between EITI and broader impacts, but the large-N dataset used in the statistical models found these studies is often too old to give a good sense for the current state of affairs. For example, Schmaljohann (2013) provides the most recent assessment of impact, using data from 2011. However, the majority of documents reviewed focus on incentives for participation and membership (e.g., Schuler, 2012), or governance structures and procedures to encourage fairness and compliance (e.g., MSI Integrity’s “Protecting the Cornerstone” 2015).

Fewer sources of evidence exist for CoST and OGP. Neither MSI has yet to commission an external evaluation, although the World Bank is currently evaluating the performance of CoST’s secretariat, and OGP is scheduled to commission its first external review next year.¹²⁷ To date, the majority of evidence for the effectiveness of CoST and OGP comes from internally produced reports (e.g., CoST’s Impact Stories, 2012; Foti, 2014) and from other interested parties (e.g., Global Integrity; Transparency International). Only one peer-reviewed academic journal article addresses the OGP (i.e., Harrison & Sagoyo, 2014) and no academic articles have been written about CoST.

Currently, no evidence exists for the effectiveness or impact of GIFT or OCP, although representatives from both initiatives say that they are committed to monitoring and evaluation.

Evidence for effectiveness is uneven, evidence for impact is weak or non-existent

Evidence for the effectiveness of public-governance oriented MSIs is patchy across countries. For each of the three MSIs – EITI, CoST, and OGP – where evidence for outcomes is available, there is clear evidence that on-the-ground efforts to improve transparency are bearing fruit in some countries. Since joining EITI, Nigeria, Liberia, and Ghana have passed new extractive revenue disclosure laws and 35 countries have released at least some information on oil, gas, and mining payments. Since joining CoST, Honduras, Vietnam, Guatemala, Ethiopia, and Malawi have put new public construction project disclosure requirements in place. Finally, since joining OGP, Brazil, Croatia, and Georgia have passed FOI laws and Hungary has disclosed published contracts. Indeed, five countries improved their performance on established measures of open government just to be eligible to join OGP.¹²⁸ However, national-level stakeholders across all three initiatives warn that the information being produced is often too technical to be comprehensible or useable by citizens without additional translation or contextualization. Indeed, by focusing chiefly on laws and procedures for disclosure, MSIs may risk encouraging “isomorphic mimicry” – the reproduction of formal structures of governance in the absence of other key sociopolitical conditions that enable these structures to serve their intended purpose – among participating governments.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Scanteam (2011), pg. 1.

¹²⁶ See the EITI web article “History of EITI” (<https://eiti.org/eiti/history>).

¹²⁷ Evaluation schedule information obtained from interviews with CoST’s international secretariat staff and from OGP’s *Four-Year Strategy* (2014b).

¹²⁸ See OGP’s *Four-Year Strategy* (2014b), pg. 10

¹²⁹ For a good discussion of the risks of isomorphic mimicry, see Pritchett, Woolcock, & Andrews (2013).

It also seems clear that at least some countries are experimenting with new venues for public participation as part of these initiatives, although there is little evidence that these spaces have depth or leverage (as yet) to allow civil society organizations to fully advance their priorities. All 31 EITI compliant countries have had to demonstrate at least some multi-stakeholder consultation in order to be validated, however, MSI Integrity criticized the quality of multi-stakeholder participation in 15 countries where they conducted in-depth case studies.¹³⁰ Similarly, while all eight original CoST pilot countries were required to form multi-stakeholder groups in part to help facilitate the information disclosure process, the Vietnamese government decided to release the information itself, rather than collaborating with the MSG.¹³¹ While the OGP nominally requires regular consultation with civil society, and some countries – Mexico, Peru, Costa Rica, the US, the UK, Ghana, Liberia, Georgia, Sierra Leone, the Philippines and Indonesia – have fashioned new multi-stakeholder bodies to oversee the design and implementation of the national action plan, many participating governments have failed to comply with OGP requirements for public consultation during action plan development.¹³²

Finally, looking across public governance MSIs, their numerous improvements in transparency and participation have yet to lead to many tangible outcomes in terms of increased government accountability. EITI helped to uncover over \$8 billion USD in missing extractive industry payments in Nigeria, but only a quarter of those funds were subsequently recovered.¹³³ To date, similar evidence of mismanagement uncovered by EITI reports in DRC and Liberia has yet to result in any reform. Only Ghana has pursued sector-wide reforms beyond information disclosure, reforming its royalty and corporate tax code. Similarly, while CoST played a role in revisiting individual mismanaged projects in both Guatemala and Nigeria, only Malawi has passed broader reforms within the public construction sector. Finally, with regard to OGP, 37% of commitments made in the first 43 National Action Plans were assessed by the IRM to address government accountability, and 52% of these accountability commitments have been entirely or substantially completed. In other words, only 19% of OGP commitments made thus far are even on track to produce accountability gains.¹³⁴

Ultimately, a comprehensive assessment of MSI transparency, participation and accountability gains will require balanced research that explores cases of failure as well as success. Yet, to date, many of the documents produced by MSIs and reviewed here privilege success stories (e.g., EITI's Impact of EITI in Africa, 2010; CoST's Impact Stories, 2012; and OGP's ongoing "Inspiring Stories" series) that skew the overall body of evidence towards more favorable cases.¹³⁵ Even independently produced studies (mostly of EITI) base their conclusions on a handful of country cases that have been studied in greater depth than most (e.g., Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, and Azerbaijan). They may or may not reflect the experiences of other participating countries.

At this stage, evidence for the broader social, economic, and or environmental impact of public governance-oriented MSIs is weak or non-existent. Large-N impact studies of EITI suggest that participation in the initiative has statistically significant correlations with foreign direct investment, GDP, and perceptions of good governance, but they are causally inconclusive. However, both Ölcner (2009) and the Scanteam evaluators (2011) caution that macro-level statistical models hide important variations between countries. Scanteam (2011) recommends that EITI focus on country-specific metrics of impact, which produce more useful insights about best practices, even if their transferability is limited.¹³⁶ Due to the young age of the other four MSIs reviewed here, no evidence for longer-term social or economic impacts currently exists.

¹³⁰ See MSI Integrity (2015).

¹³¹ See Calland & Hawkins, 2012, pg. 162.

¹³² See OGP's Annual Report (2014a), pgs. 1 & 6, and Foti (2014), pgs. 25-27.

¹³³ See the "Innovations" section of EITI international secretariat's web page on NEITI (<https://eiti.org/Nigeria>).

¹³⁴ Author's July 2015 analysis of the IRM's OGP Commitments and Actions database (<https://docs.google.com/a/opengovpartnership.org/spreadsheets/d/1BA3QySglrawbuHblx0EbSCQyNSlu2mLnSaalYgykMig/edit#gid=1253091469>), version 2.0. A detailed guide to IRM's databases is available at: <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BwD0jnz8k5PQRG1IRTRCTWdEdkU/edit>

¹³⁵ See Scanteam (2011), pg. 35.

¹³⁶ Ibid pgs. 34-35.

ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON MSI IMPACT

The research collected and reviewed here predominantly rests on the assumption that existing public governance-oriented MSIs might facilitate broader social impacts. However, there are other perspectives, outside the scope of this research, that suggest evaluating MSI effectiveness and impact in this way is misguided. These perspectives can be grouped into three categories:

MSIs as shallow interventions: MSIs focus too heavily on formal institutional changes (e.g., laws, public forums for dialogue), while allowing underlying governance deficits and power dynamics to continue uninterrupted. For example, one observer noted about CoST countries: “it’s impressive what they’ve achieved, in the face of still being fairly undemocratic.” Because MSIs are ill equipped to fundamentally remake power dynamics (e.g., they rarely challenge, or even identify, opponents of open government), they cannot drive broader social change..

MSIs as tools of the powerful: MSIs cannot have meaningful social impacts because they weren’t designed to do so. MSIs are tools that strengthen capitalist neoliberal hegemony by providing technocratic information that only corporations establishment NGOs can use, and also by shifting blame for corruption and poverty onto governments of developing countries. A less conspiratorial version of this argument acknowledges that MSIs were indeed launched by powerful northern institutions (e.g., World Bank, DFID, the White House) and asks whether and how they can transcend these origins to represent the interests of the most vulnerable across the globe.

MSIs as intrinsically valuable: Transparency and participation are human rights in and of themselves, regardless of whether they lead to other types of social change. Therefore, MSIs automatically have a social impact, simply by facilitating information disclosure, citizen participation, and new spaces for negotiation and trust building between stakeholders. A more instrumental version of this perspective – common among open data advocates – is that newly available information can be scraped, combined, and manipulated to provide novel insights into the needs and desires of citizens, allowing governments to improve their performance accordingly. As a result, more data is always preferable, as long as it is standardized and machine-readable.

Despite being largely beyond the scope of the current research, the issues raised by these alternative perspectives deserve serious consideration. Readers interested in exploring some of these questions in greater depth are referred to TAI’s recent think piece entitled “From Openness to Real Accountability: The Role of MSIs.”¹³⁷

Definitions of “success” remain debated and negotiated

Overall, our review suggests that MSIs are still in the process of defining how they will measure success. While it is not surprising that newer MSIs like GIFT and OCP are currently in the midst of critical discussions about what exactly they plan to do and how they will know whether they are making progress, older MSIs like EITI and CoST are also still debating how to define their intended outcomes. “There’s a disconnect” says one staff member at an international NGO with close ties to EITI, “between what’s in the EITI principles and what people think it’s supposed to do.” Indeed, EITI is often perceived as an anti-corruption or pro-development initiative, when, in fact, the initiative’s modest goals are to facilitate the disclosure, reconciliation, and public discussion of information about the extractive sector. While EITI attempts to temper expectations about its broader impacts, CoST is in the process of expanding its own theory of change to encompass broader developmental improvements as anticipated impacts of its work to improve infrastructure. Indeed, how to best define success has been “a point of contention,” says one CoST official.

Some stakeholders suggest that these ongoing debates can be partially attributed to a transition from an early phase of MSI operation, where getting governments to participate was a high priority, to a newer phase, focused on improving performance.¹³⁸ Indeed, early evaluations of EITI focus almost exclusively on transnational and national-level outputs (often mischaracterized as “impacts”) including membership growth, number of press hits, and number of EITI country reports generated. However, the ongoing nature of these debates also suggest that “success” is still a fluid concept that is being negotiated between and within participating countries on one hand and with donors on the other. Setting performance benchmarks that are both meaningful and politically palatable matters for keeping governments interested in participating. In addition, setting benchmarks that are achievable matters for keeping donors interested in supporting these initiatives.

Ongoing discussion and debate about how to define success is healthy for MSIs. These initiatives face unique challenges and opportunities in almost every country where they operate and need to remain flexible in what they seek to achieve. Nevertheless, the fluid and negotiated nature of MSI success also makes evaluation especially challenging. Evaluators need to explicitly articulate their working definitions of effectiveness and impact before beginning their assessment or they risk compromising their efforts at objective analysis by allowing these debates to influence their findings. Evaluators should follow clear and transparent methodological procedures, capture voices that may be critical, and provide sufficient protections to enable honest input from stakeholders.

¹³⁷ <http://transparencyinitiative.theideabureau.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/MSIs-and-Accountability.pdf>

¹³⁸ For a discussion of how global action networks change over time, see Waddell, 2011.

Producing high-quality evaluations of effectiveness and impact

Transnational MSIs are complex, multi-layered, time-intensive interventions. As such, it is no surprise that stakeholders report that gathering evidence for their effectiveness and impact is a difficult task. Below we discuss some of the key challenges in producing high-quality evaluations.

First, stakeholders need to determine how they will define and measure “effectiveness” and “impact.” There is currently no shared terminology for these terms and many MSIs have yet to fully define these terms internally. For example, EITI evaluations purporting to look at “impact” have measured everything from membership numbers, to report quality, to perceptions of corruption, to the ratio of foreign investment to GDP. Additionally, since MSIs operate across a variety of different country contexts and most allow for significant national differences in terms of the scope and content of activities, the specific metrics used to evaluate progress will vary by country. Nevertheless, while measuring medium and long term effects will be more difficult than tracking compliance with reporting requirements, moving down the causal chain will be essential for demonstrating effectiveness and impact.

Donors, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders want to see hard evidence on national outcomes, rather than just outputs – dollars saved, rather than dollars disclosed; pre- and post-assessments of the quality of roads and schools rather than the number of project disclosures; citizen satisfaction surveys rather than the number of action plan commitments – that will help to justify their continued investment. This is no small task, particularly because many important MSI outcomes are essentially intangible. For instance, one funder commented that the EITI’s greatest achievement to date has been in “shifting the global norm” towards revenue disclosure as a default. Additionally, EITI’s national multi-stakeholder groups in countries like Myanmar may be “the only platform for civil society,” argues one NGO researcher. “Technocratic solutions are easy to track,” she says, but they may not be as meaningful. Indeed, measuring outcomes like “linking pro-reform actors,” “preserving spaces for civil society and government interaction,” and “building trust among coalition actors” is a challenging task. Nevertheless, stakeholders increasingly believe that these types of MSI outcomes are important goals in and of themselves.

Once metrics for effectiveness and impact are agreed upon, stakeholders have to decide which actor (or actors) will be responsible for tracking these performance metrics. While some stakeholders suggest that national-level actors are best suited for measuring national-level outcomes, others argue that requiring them to participate in monitoring and evaluation would place too heavy a burden on them, and that M&E should be centralized with either the secretariat or an international partner organization.

Stakeholders should consider the structures and resources of the MSI, as well as those of international and national-level partners, before making this decision.

Ultimately, donors, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders want to know what effect MSIs have – relative to other actors, advocacy efforts, and events – on desired outcomes in each participating country. This challenge is referred to in both legal and economic impact circles as the “but for” question. Once sufficient evidence has been gathered, MSIs should be well positioned to make a compelling case for how their activities contribute to outcomes. For example, since Nigeria would not have identified billions of dollars in missing tax payments if they had not been compelled to reconcile government and corporate records as part of the EITI standard, it is fair to say that they would not have recovered any money but for participation in EITI. While this example is fairly straightforward, providing a compelling case for causation often requires detailed process tracing, especially if the outcomes of interest are less tangible, like “increased participation by civil society,” require aggregation up to the national level, like “increased public accountability,” or are further away on the results chain, like social or environmental impacts.

Additionally, evaluators should also consider the *unintended* consequences of MSI activities. Over the course of implementation, evaluators may find that MSIs have achieved positive or negative outcomes that were not anticipated. For example, an MSI may provide additional protections for reformers or help spur legislation outside of its main agenda. However, an MSI could also inadvertently suffocate other existing national or local reform efforts or provide new means for government to monitor or “manage” civil society (e.g., by favoring more technical CSOs over more politically-oriented CSOs). Indeed, when it comes to assessing outcomes, evaluators should consider a broad range of possibilities.

Over time, stakeholders may also wish to examine the performance of MSIs across all participating countries in order to determine where the MSI is performing well, where it is falling short, and whether it is meeting expectations.¹³⁹ Looking at results across countries can be time consuming, difficult, and expensive. As a result, some researchers choose instead to look only at macro-level indicators, using statistical analysis of large-N datasets compiled as part of preexisting international data collection efforts. While the search for correlations can offer some broad insights, it also risks washing out important differences between countries.¹⁴⁰ Large-N analysis may tell stakeholders whether MSI participation is related desired outcomes, but it cannot explain how or why. Such causal explanations require in-depth empirical research on each country case, followed by cross-country comparisons that help to identify common drivers of success.

¹³⁹ The evidence suggests that progress is likely to be patchy across countries, and stakeholders agree that not all countries that participate in an MSI will produce results; indeed, many stakeholders welcome tangible progress in a significant minority of participating countries.

¹⁴⁰ A common weakness found in the large-N studies to date is the treatment of MSI participation by governments as a binary variable (i.e., member/non-member). In practice, the quality and degree of participation by member countries varies widely. While this is not an inherent weakness of large-N analysis, treating MSI participation as a categorical or continuous variable does require more sophisticated modeling techniques.

Key factors driving MSI outcomes

Despite the limitations of the current evidence base, stakeholders interviewed for this project identified a number of factors believed to be key drivers of MSI outcomes. Those factors that appear to be shared across all five MSIs can be succinctly summarized as: “the right people, at the right time, with the right message.”¹⁴¹

The right people

Stakeholders agree that one of the most critical drivers of success for MSIs is the participation of influential, capable, and persuasive representatives from each stakeholder group. It is not enough simply to sign on to participate in a multi-stakeholder group, individual actors need to have the access, the influence, and the disposition to deliver results. For example, a variety of stakeholders identified the active engagement of champions representing multilateral organizations within GIFT as a key reason they were able to quickly harmonize fiscal transparency norms across the IMF, IBP, and OECD. “GIFT is a network of organizations and a network of individuals,” said one GIFT advisor. Committed individuals are able to convince others within their organization of the value of each MSI’s goals.

The Open Government Partnership has explicitly identified high-level political actors, mid-level reformers, and civil society as key groups where the right people need to be incentivized to participate.¹⁴² Stakeholders across other MSIs shared similar sentiments. For example, one national-level participant in CoST Malawi explained that the project owes its success to a mix of high-level support from the Vice President, diligent work by technocrats within the National Construction Industry Council (NCIC), and a “very committed team” on the national MSG. “Their hearts are in good governance.”

High-level political support provides the space for reformers in civil society and government to operate. For example, in Brazil, a presidential decree to institutionalize open government established a ministerial-level committee charged with the design, implementation, and monitoring of the OGP national action plan in consultation with civil society organizations. In countries where there is no high-level buy-in, MSI-facilitated reforms can struggle to gain traction. For example, representatives of the CoST international secretariat attribute the lack of progress in Zambia to “a revolving door of ministers.” Similarly, in the Philippines, civil society organizations were initially wary of participating in EITI because, according to one representative, they “didn’t trust the president.” Even now, with the election of a president committed to governance reform, continued progress on EITI “depends on what level of representative comes from each agency.” It’s important to have “high level folks” who can “make decisions.”

Of course, even once high-level political support is obtained, cautions a CoST board member, “politics are never far away.” Because of their voluntary nature, MSIs are vulnerable to national election cycles. EITI, CoST, and OGP have all experienced sudden shifts in momentum due either to new reformers coming to office (e.g., the Philippines for EITI, Malawi for CoST) or old champions losing power (e.g., Australia for OGP, Indonesia for OGP, Mexico for CoST and OGP). “The challenge” according to one representative of the OGP secretariat, “is to be creative on how to re-activate [the MSI] again” in the face of these types of changes.

Gaining the support of mid-level reformers is equally important, since their technical expertise is often required to actually carry out reforms. In Malawi, for instance, technocrats in the National Construction Industry Council (NCIC) were able to overcome early resistance to CoST on the part of procuring agencies. Procuring agencies were initially skeptical of CoST and maintained total discretion over which construction projects would be reviewed. As a result, “it was very difficult to get anything going” recalls one CoST board member. Eventually, NCIC – the government oversight body where CoST is housed – found a regulatory loophole that granted them the power to review and improve projects of their choosing and were able to compel agencies to submit projects to review. Over time, according to one country-level stakeholder, the procuring agencies themselves have started “to cooperate and coordinate more of their own free will.”

MSIs give participating government bureaucrats more visibility, which can allow them to undertake politically sensitive reforms, but their higher profile does not necessarily deliver the administrative capacity or technical expertise they need to carry out reforms. For example, in the Philippines, where both the private sector and a reform-minded president have committed to the EITI, the lack of capacity within the government has significantly slowed progress. According to one country-level stakeholder, the government has been slow to digitize the information that needs to be released and there has been a lack of coordination between agencies.

Indeed, even when reform champions are identified within government, there is a risk that a “tragedy of the commons” will develop, such that a successful reformer becomes a victim of his or her own success and becomes overwhelmed by new responsibilities. Alternatively, a successful national reformer may “go international” and leave the country-specific efforts to their less enthusiastic colleagues.

¹⁴¹ Similarly, Barkhorn, Huttner, & Blau (2013) recently identified nine conditions widely viewed by researchers and practitioners as critical for a successful policy campaign: 1) a functioning venue for adoption, 2) an open policy window, 3) a feasible solution, 4) a dynamic master plan, 5) strong campaign leaders, 6) an influential support coalition, 7) a mobilized public, 8) powerful inside champions, and 9) a clear implementation path.

¹⁴² See OGP’s Four-Year Strategy (2014b), pg. 14.

Finally, civil society organizations also need to have the capacity to understand newly disclosed information, disseminate it effectively to their base, and organize coherent demands for reform. In the Philippines, for example, a representative from a civil society group participating in EITI explained that she and her colleagues “really studied the standard,” as well as existing natural resource governance policies, so that they could effectively participate in debates. “CSO preparation is key,” she says. Her organization coordinates with other civil society organizations in an “insider/outsider” strategy of civil society engagement. Some organizations, like hers, play the “inside game” in order to facilitate the disclosure of information. They lobby for more civil society participation in mining sector decision-making and help to train other civil society organizations so that they have the capacity to read contracts. Meanwhile, other organizations take the data that is released and use it to advocate around human rights, environmentalism, and anti-mining. These organizations put pressure on the government to improve its performance in areas including environmental monitoring and rehabilitation, and informed consent. Although not planned, a similar insider/outsider division among civil society organizations has also developed in Mexico according to one country-level stakeholder, with organizations like GESOC and other CSOs working inside the OGP and the Accountability Network criticizing both the government and the OGP from the outside.

At the right time

MSIs often benefit from exploiting unique moments of strategic opportunity or crisis. For example, in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, GIFT was able to successfully call attention to incomplete and inconsistent standards of fiscal transparency. Since the IMF was already in the process of revising their code, there was a clear opportunity to harmonize across different standards. Similarly, CoST failed to gain traction in Malawi until the Cashgate scandal brought renewed attention to corruption in the public construction sector. Indeed, one EITI official says the initiative tends to be most successful “when there’s real conflict in the country” because “real disagreement creates a reason for everybody to be at the table.” There needs to be “fire and anger” on the part of civil society, he said, which creates incentives for the private sector and the government to manage conflict by participating. “Perpetual conflict is the fuel that keeps the wheels of an MSI moving,” wrote EITI’s leaders.

Not only can MSIs take advantage of existing moments of strategic opportunity, they can create new ones as well. One representative of the OGP’s international secretariat explained that by putting the spotlight on political leaders during regularly scheduled high-level “action-forcing” public events, governments like Brazil and the UK were induced to increase the depth of their commitment to OGP – indeed, both launched new open government reforms at their respective summits. Observers wonder whether the Mexican government will follow suit when it hosts the next OGP Summit in October 2015.

With the right message

The information disclosed through MSI processes is often highly technical. In order for it to generate meaningful discussions among citizens, it must be disaggregated, translated, and interpreted to fit within a broader public narrative unique to each country or region. “We have to do what we can to make [the findings] relevant,” said one EITI official. He admits that the relevance of EITI findings to national debates has been “patchy” across countries. For some – like Nigeria, DRC, and Myanmar – “it’s been really central to the debate.” For others where it should be just as relevant – like Guinea – “it’s just box-ticking.” “We need to get [citizens] excited.”

The extent to which MSIs can orient their outputs to each country’s existing civic and social constituencies helps to drive whether broader progress is achieved. For example, prior to OGP, Brazil had been implementing transparency initiatives under the umbrella of anti-corruption/good governance. OGP helped reformers to expand support for these initiatives and complete an online portal where citizens can request information from the government, an online forum for the public discussion of government policy and the publication of information on Federal government credit card spending. In the Philippines, EITI outputs have been tied to existing human rights, environmental, and anti-mining movements. In Malawi, the Malawi Economic Justice Network, an NGO that participates in the national CoST MSG transmits its findings to their affiliates around the country. The work of the initiative “needs to fit within a political narrative between government and the people,” explains one CoST official.

MSIs are currently working to provide guidance to civil society organizations on how to interpret highly technical information and how to develop a communication and advocacy strategy. For example, in 2013, OCP released ‘Open Contracting: A Guide for practitioners by practitioners,’ which offers civil society organizations seeking to better understand and influence the public procurement process a clear “how to” manual. Similarly, in 2012, EITI and the World Bank released ‘Implementing EITI for Impact,’ which provided specific guidance to each EITI stakeholder group and in 2013 GIZ released ‘Talking Matters,’ a communication strategy guide for use by EITI’s national multi-stakeholder groups.

¹⁴³ See Moberg & Rich’s May 2014 World Bank blog post “Governance of the last resort? When to consider a multi-stakeholder approach” (<http://blogs.worldbank.org/governance/governance-last-resort-when-consider-multi-stakeholder-approach>).

MSIS AND THE DOMESTIC ACCOUNTABILITY ECOSYSTEM

Recent work by T/AI and others suggests that for global accountability initiatives to have their desired effect on domestic governance, they must provide new points of leverage for reformers within the existing “accountability ecosystem” – the landscape of actors, institutions, mechanisms, and political dynamics between these various components, that serves to promote or inhibit good governance.¹⁴⁴ MSIs are intended to strengthen, not replace, existing domestic mechanisms within the accountability ecosystem. MSIs “should not be reinventing the wheel,” says one NGO researcher, they should be a “value added.” However, some stakeholders have expressed concerns that the presence of MSIs might actually weaken the existing accountability ecosystem by failing to effectively interact with or support it. For example, in a recent review of EITI in West Africa, Kluttz et al. (2015) write that EITI’s interaction with existing country-level revenue management systems “has not worked as projected, especially with regards to impacting on accountability outcomes and citizens’ development needs.” The researchers conclude that the adoption of global mechanisms without deliberate and sustained efforts at integrating them into existing domestic governance “portends great danger for these mechanisms (especially the EITI) becoming isolated.”¹⁴⁵

MSI officials are keenly aware that their work should complement rather than supplant the work of domestic actors and institutions. Indeed, if MSIs are not able to strengthen good governance practices within the core structures of government, one EITI official worries that national MSGs “may never actually fall away.”¹⁴⁶ To address precisely this concern, CoST redesigned its process for disclosure and validation because the assurance team was believed to be taking on too much responsibility for disclosure. Previously, the CoST assurance team would collect project information from government agencies and then verify it by reviewing a sample of projects. According to a representative from the international secretariat, this model was “unsustainable,” because “it essentially turned the assurance team into a new agency... We don’t want to create parallel processes and duplicate work.” Under the new model, the government has to collect the information requested by the assurance team and proactively disclose it. This requires “better buy-in from agencies, institutionalizing disclosure in the government system.”

Despite the inherent challenges, the best outcomes are likely to occur when the activities and outputs of global MSIs are strategically linked to the broader accountability ecosystem they seek to strengthen.¹⁴⁷ Indeed, Kluttz et al. (2015) found that stakeholder groups in West Africa did report increases in transparency, debate, and dialogue “directly stemming from the EITI process and its interaction with the broader governance environment.” The researchers write that, “EITI does have the potential to catalyze and reinforce synergies between national institutions and relevant mechanisms to address governance challenges and to leverage transformational change.”¹⁴⁸ For MSIs to realize this potential, they will need to learn how to think and work within the broader political context.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ For recent discussions of the accountability ecosystem, see T/AI’s April 2015 think piece “Mobilizing accountability: Citizens, movements, and the state” (<http://www.transparency-initiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Movements-and-Accountability-Final.pdf>) and Brendan Halloran’s April 2015 blog post “Accountability Institutions and Accountability Ecosystems: From Evidence to Practice” (<https://politicsgovernancedevelopment.wordpress.com/2015/04/27/accountability-institutions-and-accountability-ecosystems-from-evidence-to-practice/>).

¹⁴⁵ See Kluttz, et al., 2015, pg. 1.

¹⁴⁶ There appears to be at least some tension between the concern that MSIs are supplanting domestic accountability mechanisms and the desire – expressed by several country-level stakeholders – to establish national MSGs as independent legal entities. Advocates suggest that there are several potential benefits to establishing national MSGs as legal entities. First, legal status would give the work of MSGs the force of hard law and protect against changing political priorities. Second, legal status might improve MSGs’ ability to protect reformers from retaliation by powerful interests. (“These issues are controversial, contentious, and sometimes even dangerous,” says one country-level representative of CoST. Private sector participants risk being blacklisted by procuring entities and reformers of all stripes face threats of physical violence.) Third, MSGs might be able to attract funding from actors who would otherwise be skeptical of funding work embedded within the government. (Adequate funding at the national level has been identified as a key factor for successful outcomes by a variety of stakeholders, particularly from within CoST.) Finally, independent status would also protect institutional knowledge because national MSGs would control their own materials.

¹⁴⁷ See Fox (2014)

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, pg. 4.

¹⁴⁹ For further discussion, see T/AI’s May 2014 think piece, “Thinking and working politically in the transparency and accountability field” (<http://www.transparency-initiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Thinking-and-Working-Politically-May-2014.pdf>) and Gaventa & McGee (2013). For examples, see the Asia Foundation’s report, *How Civil Society Organizations Work Politically to Promote Pro-Poor Policies in Decentralized Indonesian Cities* (2011) and the Developmental Leadership Program’s paper *From Political Economy to Political Analysis* (2014).

Remaining evidence gaps

There is still much to learn about how to improve MSI effectiveness and impact. Stakeholders across all five MSIs agree that additional research in four key areas would help them to better incentivize key actors to participate in meaningful ways. First, in many countries the right of civil society to participate in public governance still faces serious challenges. There are also concerns about whether the organizations that do participate in national multi-stakeholder groups are truly representative of civil society. New research could explore successful practices for mitigating the effects of closing civic space and for broadening participation across diverse segments of civil society. Second, even in countries where civil society organizations have won the right to sit at the table, there are remaining concerns about the rest of civil society's interest in MSI activities, as well as the ability of CSOs to adequately comprehend the information being disclosed and disseminate it to a broader array of stakeholders. Additional research could explore when and how civil society organizations are able to successfully use MSIs to pursue their existing objectives and identify methods for building additional civil society capacity in data analysis, communication, and advocacy. Third, while consistent government support and interest is key for MSI effectiveness, many national multi-stakeholder groups struggle to expand enthusiasm for their work beyond a few key participants, leaving the work especially vulnerable to the election cycle and other personnel shifts. Research could explore strategies for expanding and maintaining support among various government actors. Finally, the private sector could provide a critical endorsement for good governance reforms, yet securing sustained private sector interest has been challenging for many MSIs. Fresh research could help to identify successful strategies for incentivizing private sector involvement.

What ties all of these evidence gaps together is a critical need for MSIs to better understand and influence the distribution of power in participating countries. How is each stakeholder group really organized? Who are the champions of governance reform in government, civil society, and the private sector, and who are the opponents? What are each actor's incentives for devoting time and resources to the work of an MSI? What are their existing capacities? Where are there points of opportunity and opposition for working more effectively with each group? Exploring these evidence gaps in more detail should provide MSIs with more political levers to affect real change. Indeed, two reviewers explicitly suggested that this discussion of the evidence should focus more on power analysis, including the nature of the opposition to transparency and accountability reforms. Yet, the relevance of power analysis rarely came up in the document review or during numerous interviews with stakeholders. This suggests that the lack of power analysis by public governance MSI strategists is itself a significant evidence gap.

Civil society empowerment and inclusiveness

The protection and expansion of civic space is at the core of all public governance-oriented MSIs. Yet, in some countries that participate in these MSIs, civic space appears to be shrinking rather than expanding. For example, in Hungary, the government has used financial audits and criminal investigations in an attempt to intimidate NGOs that have been critical of its efforts to restrict public access to information.¹⁵⁰ Similarly in Azerbaijan, the government has frozen the bank accounts of civil society organizations and imprisoned dozens of activists.¹⁵¹ And in Mexico, recent human rights abuses – including the killing of 43 student activists in Iguala – have called into question the relative significance of the government's progress on open data and budget transparency.¹⁵² This disturbing trend has resulted in both EITI and OGP recently taking steps to improve their ability to respond to problems. EITI has issued new guidance to validators for determining whether countries are meeting their obligations for civil society participation.¹⁵³ For its part, OGP has established a new response policy that authorizes it to investigate allegations of human rights abuses or restrictions on civil society by participating governments.¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, stakeholders report that MSIs still need to identify effective practices for protecting reformers from retaliation by entrenched interests. More efficient response mechanisms require better and faster ways to measure the health of civic space. For example, although OGP's eligibility requirements include a measure of basic civil liberties taken from the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index, the measure is based on data that is three years old.

An alternative approach to addressing concerns about civic space in participating countries proposed by some stakeholders would be to simply raise the minimum requirement for participation. Currently, all MSIs take a "big tent" approach to membership: poor performers should be given the tools and support necessary to improve, rather than being left out. However, a "big tent" is also a "low bar." Poorly performing governments are allowed to reap reputational and financial benefits while doing very little to improve the lives of their citizens. Additional research could help to clarify whether and how a "big tent" approach is preferable to imposing stricter rules and sanctions. Specifically, how does participation in an MSI influence whether national governments support or repress civil society? For MSIs that do not have eligibility requirements, stakeholders report that additional research might also help them to identify a minimum civic space requirement necessary for their agenda to be effective.

¹⁵⁰ For a good summary of recent events in Hungary, see Júlia Keserű's July 2015 Sunlight Foundation blog post, "Watchdogs call for OGP investigation into crackdown on Hungarian civil society" (<https://sunlightfoundation.com/blog/2015/07/09/watchdogs-call-for-ogp-investigation-into-crackdown-on-hungarian-civil-society-2/>).

¹⁵¹ For a good summary of recent events in Azerbaijan, see Mina Muradova's April 2015 Central Asia-Caucasus Institute field report, "Azerbaijan Demoted to EITI Candidate" (<http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/field-reports/item/13183-azerbaijan-demoted-to-eiti-candidate.html>).

¹⁵² In a January 2015 OGP blog post (<http://www.opengovpartnership.org/blog/civil-society-organisations-mexico/2015/01/16/civil-society-organizations-demand-expanding>), Mexican civil society organizations proposed that current national OGP priorities be revisited to more directly address human rights issues.

¹⁵³ The EITI Board endorsed the new civil society protocol at its Myanmar meeting in October 2014 and the protocol came into force on the 1st of January 2015. For details, see EITI's web page on the new standard (<https://eiti.org/document/standard>).

¹⁵⁴ See Powell's October 2014 OGP blog post "OGP Steering Committee agrees new response policy" (<http://www.opengovpartnership.org/blog/joe-powell/2014/10/27/ogp-steering-committee-agrees-new-response-policy>).

MSI stakeholders also report some concerns about whether the organizations participating in national multi-stakeholder groups are truly representative of civil society. In Azerbaijan, for example, OGP found that the government's consultation with civil society in designing the national action plan was restricted to government-organized NGOs (GONGOs). Similarly, in a study of 15 countries participating in EITI, MSI Integrity found that the government had some involvement in picking CSO representatives in seven countries. Additionally, national multi-stakeholder groups draw most of their civil society participants from capital cities or other urban areas, calling into question whether these groups adequately represent rural populations or populations most affected by their work (e.g., citizens living in regions where oil, gas, and mining projects actually take place).

Stakeholders report that they want to know more about how the rules for civil society participation are interpreted and enforced at the national level. They also wish to be able to better specify the benefits of broadening public participation to governments, funders, and other stakeholders, who might otherwise be less committed to achieving it. Other observers suggest that a political economy analysis is needed to map the potential winners and losers from broadened participation – in contrast to the assumption that significant potential allies simply need more information about the projected benefits of more public participation. Finally, national multi-stakeholder groups also need to explore practical ways for consulting a broader array of civic organizations – including those that represent rural communities and indigenous peoples organizations – in order to make MSI outputs more demand driven.

Civil society interest and capacity

The decision to participate in an MSI is often made by a small group of influential national actors, with encouragement from international donors. As a result, stakeholders report that these initiatives are expected to operate in countries where there may be little initial interest from civil society. Even in countries with a thriving civil society, the activities and goals of an MSI may simply not resonate with citizens, which in turn, limits the effectiveness of new transparency and participation requirements to generate greater accountability. "It's difficult to earn and sustain buy-in from diverse civil society actors," says one representative of OGP's secretariat. An advisor to GIFT agrees, saying that while all stakeholders agree that addressing international fiscal transparency norms requires an MSI and a vibrant civil society coalition, "the MSI has been easier."

MSI stakeholders suggest that researchers should explore the degree of fit between existing civil society reform efforts and MSI activities and outputs, in order to better understand when and how civil society organizations are able to use MSIs to successfully pursue their objectives. If MSIs can better demonstrate that they are capable of improving the relationship between government and civil society in ways that encourage real change, they may be able to make inroads with skeptical civil society groups. The underlying challenge is a chicken-and-egg problem. Insofar as most MSI outputs (mainly information disclosure) have yet to be leveraged into more tangible accountability outcomes, many civil society organizations may be wary of investing their limited political capital in MSIs; yet, until national MSI coalitions broaden and strengthen their base, it will be difficult for them to gain the civic clout needed to make accountability gains.

One explanation that stakeholders offer for the limited usage of MSI outputs among civil society reformers is that the information being disclosed is too technical or insufficiently disaggregated to be actionable. Indeed, O'Sullivan (2013) found that civil society groups in Liberia and Timor Leste that were initially enthusiastic about EITI eventually lost interest as it became clear that the information being released was not contributing to broader debates about natural resource governance. "MSIs should release reports that look how communities want them to look," says one NGO official. Yet, often it is left up to civil society organizations to develop the capacity to analyze information and communicate their findings to citizens. Fresh research could track how newly disclosed information is being translated, communicated, and used, in order to share good practices.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, research could focus on identifying what types of actors are best suited to turning government data into actionable information (i.e., who are the right "infomediaries?"). Finally, since MSIs have been aware of civil society capacity issues for several years, research should also examine whether existing strategies for building interest and capacity are working.

¹⁵⁷ Similarly, Barkhorn, Huttner, & Blau (2013) recently identified nine conditions widely viewed by researchers and practitioners as critical for a successful policy campaign: 1) a functioning venue for adoption, 2) an open policy window, 3) a feasible solution, 4) a dynamic master plan, 5) strong campaign leaders, 6) an influential support coalition, 7) a mobilized public, 8) powerful inside champions, and 9) a clear implementation path.

Government support and the political cycle

Public sector MSIs also require significant support by government actors. They must agree to and facilitate information disclosure, as well as authorize new forms of public participation in decision-making processes. High-level public officials are needed to provide political support and mid-level bureaucrats are needed to actually carry out reforms. If the government does not have both the political will and the capacity to carry out agreements, MSIs will struggle to produce results. For example, in the Philippines, the president has offered his support to an ambitious agenda for information disclosure that goes well beyond the requirements of the EITI standard by including data on expenditures. Yet, according to one country-level EITI stakeholder, government officials have struggled to release all of the information that has been promised. Agencies have been slow to digitize the information that needs to be released and agencies are failing to coordinate their efforts. As a result, no expenditure data was disclosed in the first EITI report. According to another country-level stakeholder, MSI success depends on knowing “who owns the initiative within the government. What are there incentives? What are there limitations?” Stakeholders suggest that new research could help to identify stronger incentives for both high-level and mid-level government actors to support reforms. Research could also help to identify which ministries tend to be the most successful at implementing reforms and why.

Finally, stakeholders report that MSIs often struggle to expand support for their agenda beyond a few key participants within the national government, leaving their work vulnerable to the election cycle and other changes in leadership and priorities. Commitment to MSIs is often “quite personalized,” says one funder. EITI, OGP, and CoST have all experienced unexpected setbacks resulting from changing domestic political realities, although stakeholders are largely unwilling to name names.¹⁵⁸ In order to minimize these occurrences in the future, stakeholders suggest that research could help to identify good practices for expanding involvement from one agency to many. For example, according to one country-level stakeholder, Brazil’s hosting of a high-level OGP event served as a catalyst for enlisting the support and participation of additional ministries who had previously not participated in the national action plan process. Stakeholders also report that they want research that explores strategies for preserving momentum across an election cycle or other shift in governmental priorities. For example, Ethiopia was able to maintain steady progress on CoST during a change in presidential leadership, thanks to the efforts of a key minister who participated in the multi-stakeholder group. Ultimately, as one board member put it, MSIs want to know “are there more reformers in government than there were when we started?”

Private sector participation

EITI and CoST, the oldest public-governance oriented MSIs, were both conceived of as tripartite initiatives that would help government, civil society, and the private sector work together to improve public governance. Newer MSIs have had more limited engagement with the private sector. OGP does not include private sector representatives in its governance structures, despite identifying corporate accountability as one of five “grand challenges.”¹⁵⁹ Indeed, few OGP National Action Plan commitments address corporate accountability. GIFT has attempted to engage with ratings agencies, banks, and private equity firms with only limited success, according to one advisor. OCP’s leaders hope to distinguish themselves from other MSIs by having a “different approach to business,” that brings the private sector into the process of designing key work streams, principles, and the open contracting data standard. While they suspect that the private sector might be the biggest user of newly disclosed contract information, facilitating this level of participation has proved to be a challenge. Unlike government and civil society representatives, who want to be involved at all stages of MSI development, OCP has found that private companies only want to weigh in on particular activities and projects.

MSI stakeholders suggest that research on the impact of private sector involvement on MSI processes and outcomes could help decision-makers think through the advantages and disadvantages of pursuing greater industry involvement. For example, in the Philippines, the opportunity for civil society organizations to collaborate with the private sector has served to reduce long-standing tensions between the two sectors. “Originally, there was a lot of mistrust,” says one country-level stakeholder, but regular dialogue during the EITI multi-stakeholder group meetings “showed we have the same objective.”

Additional research on the incentives of the private sector to participate in MSIs could also help these initiatives make fresh overtures to business. “The private sector doesn’t participate in CoST because of corporate social responsibility,” says one board member, “they do it for the bottom line.” The private sector “wants implementing agencies to do what they are paid to do,” says one private sector MSI participant. Greater information disclosure not only provides a “level playing field for competition” but also helps to “remove suspicion and propaganda.” Nevertheless, private interests are often still skeptical of MSIs. For example, in Malawi, only a single representative of the private sector currently participates in the CoST national multi-stakeholder group. He says that additional outreach is needed to convince others that “CoST is not about witch-hunting or finger pointing... it’s about good practice.” Nuanced political economy analysis would be useful to identify both those private sector actors with a stake in raising transparency and accountability standards - and those that stand out as bottlenecks.

¹⁵⁸ Stakeholders interviewed for this project were more willing to discuss political developments that kept countries from joining, than political developments that slowed momentum in member countries. For example, both Mexico and Thailand were in talks to join CoST, but an election in one and a coup in the other scuttled these earlier discussions. Political changes in Australia may have also slowed the country’s decision to join OGP.

¹⁵⁹ See OGP’s web page on action plans (<http://www.opengovpartnership.org/how-it-works/action-plans>).

IS THERE A RISK OF MSI FATIGUE?

Participation in an MSI involves significant opportunity costs, particularly for national-level actors. MSIs require time, energy and resources that cannot be invested elsewhere. In February 2015, following a workshop in Washington, DC, 42 MSI stakeholders – secretariat staff, funders, advisory board members, NGO observers and researchers, and country-level participants – were surveyed anonymously on their attitudes towards MSIs. Responses to three questions were given on a 10-point Likert scale, with higher values indicating optimism, satisfaction, or agreement and lower values indicating pessimism, dissatisfaction, or disagreement. 160 Participants expressed guarded optimism about the progress MSIs are making towards their goals (Mean = 6) but gave MSIs poor marks for demonstrating impact (Mean = 4.6). Participants also expressed concerns that MSIs are being favored too heavily as solutions to TAP problems (Mean = 6.8). These survey results are consistent with comments made during a number of stakeholder interviews that suggest “MSI fatigue” may be setting in.

As MSIs continue to proliferate despite limited evidence of effectiveness or impact, some donors may increasingly wonder what exactly they are investing in.¹⁶¹ According to one funder, newer initiatives like GIFT and OCP are being asked to provide a clear theory of change upfront to show that they have a “viable business model.” Older initiatives like EITI have had to rethink their activities and expected outcomes in the face of increased scrutiny. “We don’t know if it’s leading to good outcomes,” said one NGO official. “People are really, really skeptical” said another, “it’s at risk.” EITI is not alone. Questions are also being raised about whether CoST and OGP can be sustained. “Some civil society organizations are giving up [on MSIs],” cautioned one MSI board member.

While MSIs can certainly improve how they demonstrate the value of what they are already doing, the only real way to address the risk of “MSI fatigue” is to find new and better ways to go beyond outputs to outcomes. After all, public governance-MSIs are intended to fundamentally shift the national distribution of power away from a status quo that favors entrenched political and economic interests. It should not be surprising that these powerful opposing forces have not collapsed overnight. In this context, more explicit political economy analysis of the “structure of the problem” – to identify the strengths and vulnerabilities of the potential opposition to transparency and accountability reforms – could help to inform the targeting of MSI efforts. To shift the balance of power, MSIs need to activate strong national political allies, to identify potential swing constituencies, and to offset adversaries aligned against reform. Moreover, there is a chicken-and-egg relationship between power shifts and the transition from transparency to accountability. On the one hand, power shifts are needed to use transparency to leverage accountability. On the other hand, successfully extracting accountability from transparency can weaken vested interests and encourage virtuous circles towards governance reform.¹⁶² In brief, MSIs need to leverage power shifts to move down their results chain from transparency to accountability, governance reform, and tangibly improved development outcomes.

¹⁶⁰ The three survey questions were: “How optimistic are you about MSIs making substantial progress towards their stated objectives over the medium term?” (1 = Not at all optimistic, 10 = very optimistic), “Do you think we know enough about how MSIs work to increase the impacts of these initiatives?” (1 = not enough evidence, too many big questions; 10 = We don’t need any more studies, we know enough already), and “How do you feel about the amount of focus being put on MSIs in the transparency and accountability field?” (1 = not enough focus, 10 = too much focus).

¹⁶¹ At the same time, it is worth acknowledging that the proliferation of MSIs was made possible in the first place by donor interest in supporting this approach.

¹⁶² For further discussion of reciprocal interaction as a driver for governance reform, see Fox (2007a; 2014).

Transnational and national-level convergence of MSIs

The five MSIs reviewed here demonstrate significant convergence in terms of funder and partner organizations, as well as some notable overlap in terms of implementing countries. At the transnational level, organizations like the World Bank, Transparency International, and the Omidyar Network work closely with multiple MSIs (See Table 2). Additionally, MSIs and funders also have existing relationships with one another. OGP, for instance, already has a working relationship with EITI, GIFT, and OCP. Similarly, CoST already serves on the OCP advisory board. These relationships are worth exploring, acknowledging, and exploiting when possible.

TABLE 2: FUNDER AND PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT TWO OR MORE PUBLIC SECTOR MSIs.

	OGP	EITI	CoST	GIFT	OCP
Ford	X			X	
DFID	X	X	X	X	
G20		X	X		
Hewlett	X			X	X
IBP	X			X	
Integrity Action			X		X
NRGI	X	X			
OECD		X		X	
Omidyar	X			X	X
One			X	X	
TI		X	X		X
World Bank	X	X	X	X	X
WRI	X		X		

Newer initiatives like GIFT and OCP are actively exploring ways to leverage the reputation, momentum and national-level ground game of older initiatives like EITI, CoST, and OGP. At the same time, there are also opportunities for more established MSIs with formal multi-stakeholder governance structures to leverage these newer, more nimble multi-stakeholder networks.

Around half a dozen countries are participating in several different public sector MSIs (See Table 3). These points of overlap provide unique opportunities for MSI synergy. Within these countries, MSIs might be able to share insights on political climate and the enabling environment that can help each of them to identify potential champions and significant points of resistance. Additionally, greater coordination across MSIs in these countries might help to reduce the burden on government and civil society capacity and allow these stakeholders to participate more effectively.

TABLE 3: COUNTRIES PARTICIPATING IN TWO OR MORE PUBLIC SECTOR MSIs*

	OGP	EITI	CoST
Colombia	X	X	
Guatemala	X	X	X
Honduras	X	X	X
Philippines	X	X	X
Tanzania	X	X	X
Ukraine	X	X	X
UK	X	X	X
US	X	X	

*Countries do not join GIFT or OCP in order to implement them.

VI. Recommendations

MSI secretariats, boards, and participating governments, MSI funders, and pro-reform actors within civil society all have an important role to play in improving the effectiveness and impact of public governance-oriented multi-stakeholder initiatives. Below, we offer recommendations for each stakeholder group, derived from our synthesis of the evidence base.¹⁶³

Recommendations for MSI secretariats, boards, and participating governments

Public sector MSIs can improve their odds of achieving meaningful governance reform by developing and supporting broad coalitions of government reformers that can effectively oversee national implementation of MSI activities. These coalitions can be strengthened in several ways. First, MSIs should work to generate interest and secure commitments from parliaments, supreme audit institutions, and a broad base of ministries. For example, according to representatives from their respective secretariats, EITI recommends that national multi-stakeholder groups prepare extractive industry information packets for use by members of parliament, and OGP is currently working to encourage national action plan commitments that are housed outside of the executive branch. By building a broad coalition of supporters throughout the government, MSIs can protect momentum across elections and other shifts in priorities.

Second, MSIs should facilitate opportunities for mid-level government reformers from different countries to meet one another and share strategies and concerns. While representatives of civil society usually have no shortage of opportunities to speak openly and freely about their work with MSIs, stakeholders report that government reformers are often willing to do so only in private. By creating opportunities for honest, off-the-record conversations between government officials, MSIs can build what one funder has called an “alumni network” of reformers who can offer support and share tips for success. While prior “peer learning” efforts have often focused on providing technical assistance, one MSI board member suggests that greater attention needs to be paid to “relationship-building.”

Third, stakeholders suggest that MSIs can achieve significant improvements in national performance simply by providing templates and examples of good practice whenever possible. For example, when OGP found that early action plans commitments were not specific, measurable, assignable, realistic, and timed (i.e., “SMART”), they decided to provide a template for how to write action plan commitments. “We thought it might be ignored,” admits one OGP official, “but countries use it.” The template “got countries to think about a results framework” and “dramatically improved the form and content of action plans.” MSIs should provide templates for work plans, activity reports, disclosure forms, and other types of outputs that will help participants think through what they are trying to accomplish by participating in the initiative. MSIs can also provide examples of good practice for overcoming a variety of logistical challenges – including how to keep a multi-stakeholder coalition working, and how to weather political changes – and provide introductions to other reformers who have successfully implemented these practices.

In addition to strengthening coalitions of government reformers, MSIs also need to develop more sophisticated monitoring and evaluation practices that establish coherent links between their strategic objectives, their activities, and their medium and long-term metrics of progress. While some stakeholders have cautioned that articulating a coherent theory of change is impossible because the path to change will differ for every participating country, the OGP’s four-year plan clearly demonstrates that this is not the case. Indeed, of the three public sector MSIs with formal national level processes, the OGP provides participating countries with the most discretion in defining their own unique goals and objectives; yet, the strategic plan outlines a clear path towards progress that combines diverse national-level commitments with consistent transnational accountability and support. In addition to developing a coherent results framework, MSI secretariats, boards, and participating governments should seek to integrate a greater emphasis on monitoring and evaluation into their organizational culture by designating internal staff to monitor ongoing MSI progress, and by encouraging regular independent evaluations conducted by credible experts.

Making enhancements to monitoring and evaluation practices can have significant benefits for strategic planning, beyond simply tracking results. For example, MSIs should encourage or conduct political baseline assessments in all participating countries. These studies serve two equally important functions. First, they provide a point of comparison for later evaluations seeking to determine whether improvements in governance have taken place. Second, they provide strategic guidance on the best ways to achieve these improvements. Baseline assessments can help identify potential champions, both within key ministries and outside the executive branch. They can also help to identify existing advocacy efforts and social movements that are complementary to the efforts of the MSI. They can help map out a timeline for national progress that takes into account elections and other strategic opportunities. Perhaps most importantly of all, they can identify potential sources of resistance to the goals of the initiative, both within and outside government. Extractives and infrastructure are “big money,” said one secretariat staff member. MSIs will not succeed if they ignore the entrenched interests aligned against them.

¹⁶³ The scope of these recommendations is bounded by the principal goal of this project: to assess the current state of the evidence (i.e., the documentary record, augmented with stakeholder interviews). As such, these recommendations are rooted in common problems and potential solutions identified solely within this evidence base. The authors have taken some license with regard to specifying how each stakeholder group might contribute to addressing what are largely shared challenges.

CoST is currently the only public sector MSI that requires baseline studies.¹⁶⁴ During the pilot phase, these reports contained predominately technical information on the construction sector, however CoST has since revised the scope of these studies to include more information on political and social context, according to representatives of the international secretariat. The OGP national action plan cycle and EITI's new annual work plans present clear opportunities for the incorporation of baseline assessments. Some national EITI multi-stakeholder groups, notably the Philippines, have also taken it upon themselves to conduct baseline studies. OGP's IRM reports currently include a section on country-level trends in governance and accountability, but these reports are produced after an action plan has already being implemented.¹⁶⁵ If done correctly, baseline studies could serve as both a first point of measurement and a guide to strategic opportunities.

Finally, OECD governments should themselves be encouraged to meet MSI governance reform standards, rather than simply fund MSIs. While developed countries may not face the same challenges as developing and transition countries, they can help to stimulate increased demand for open government by implementing innovative and ambitious agendas. Thus far, uptake by developed countries has been mixed. While OGP was originally designed to promote parity among implementing countries, EITI makes a distinction between "implementing" and "supporting" countries, the latter of which is comprised of a group of funder countries that do not have to comply with the EITI Standard. This distinction is slowly being set aside, as Norway has fully implemented EITI, the US and UK are both in the process of implementation, and France, Germany, and Australia are all considering implementation. Indeed, joining EITI was one of the few "potentially transformative" OGP commitments in the US National Action Plan, according to the IRM. CoST lies somewhere in the middle; the UK is a founding and implementing member, but other developed countries have yet to join the initiative. Ultimately, developed countries should "practice what they preach," if they truly wish to advance open, participatory, and accountable governance as a global norm.

Recommendations for funders

Funders seeking to increase MSI effectiveness and impact should work to strengthen broad coalitions of national pro-reform actors that can engage directly with MSI agenda-setting, activities, and outputs and link these efforts to domestic accountability ecosystems.¹⁶⁶ Stakeholders report that it can be challenging to sustain participation from diverse civil society actors – including rural communities and indigenous peoples – that may not have the resources to attend regular meetings or otherwise contribute to MSI planning and implementation. Funders can help by providing direct support to national-level civil society organizations that wish to participate in these activities. Special priority should be given to CSOs with strong ties to existing domestic pro-accountability coalitions, in order to ensure that MSI activities and outputs directly address notable public priorities. Funders should also

invest in national-level "infomediaries" who can translate highly technical MSI outputs into relevant and actionable information. Stakeholders report that early enthusiasm for MSIs is often lost because pro-reform actors are unable to use newly disclosed information to draw clear conclusions about public governance or make targeted demands for improvement. Funders can help by supporting national actors with the technical capacity and cultural familiarity to turn raw data into useful knowledge.

In addition to providing support to national-level actors, funders can also support efforts to improve MSI learning at the global level by facilitating regular communication and knowledge sharing among MSIs and by supporting comparative case study research. The initiatives reviewed here have significant overlap in terms of transnational and national-level actors, transparency, participation and accountability strategies, and issue areas, yet prior to the Wilton Park meeting in 2014, MSI secretariats had not met together to share their experiences. "There's a lot of value in bringing MSIs together to share their stories," says one secretariat staffer. Funders should provide MSI staff and board members with regular opportunities to learn from one another. In doing so, funders can help to expand access to the amalgamated MSI knowledge base and encourage stakeholders to think through innovative strategies that leverage one another's efforts.

Funders can also commission comparative case study research to help MSIs better understand their performance across countries. In particular, funders should support research that uses process tracing to identify key factors driving outcomes, and investigate the link between outcomes and longer-term impacts. Recent examples of this type of research (produced since the seminal 2011 Scanteam evaluation of EITI in Nigeria, Gabon, and Mongolia) include the Open Society Initiative for West Africa's (OSIWA) report on EITI in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Liberia, the International Institute for Environment and Development's (IIED) reports on EITI in Ghana, Nigeria, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, O'Sullivan's study of EITI in Liberia and Timor Leste, and the Ukrainian Institute for Public Policy's report on OGP implementation in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine.¹⁶⁷ These types of studies can help provide compelling causal narratives that explore the contribution of MSI activities and outputs to both good governance outcomes and to broader economic, social, and environmental impacts.

Finally, while it will be up to MSIs to internally develop more comprehensive monitoring and evaluation strategies, funders should encourage these efforts by incentivizing MSIs to identify strategic objectives, explain how they plan to track progress, and set key benchmarks. For some objectives, quantitative metrics of progress might be readily available, but for many others – relationship and trust building, defusing new ideas and norms – alternative techniques for assessing progress will need to be identified. Ideally, funders would encourage MSI staff to specify their plan for evaluation upfront, but they should also encourage them to periodically reassess this plan based on what ongoing experiences suggest is both relevant and measurable in practice.

¹⁶⁴ OGP's Support Unit is currently working to establish baseline readings for their indicators of progress whenever possible, but these efforts are still fairly ad hoc.

¹⁶⁵ Since OGP action plans are conducted on a two-year cycle, information on context found in one IRM report could be used to improve successive action plans.

¹⁶⁶ This dynamic recalls the important role of "national problem coalitions" in the first decade of the transnational advocacy campaigns to raise the World Bank's minimum social and environmental policy standards (Brown & Fox 1998).

¹⁶⁷ See Kluttz et al. (2015), Wilson & Van Alstine (2014), Ospino et al. (2013), O'Sullivan (2013), and Presniakov & Wolanskyj (2012), respectively.

Recommendations for pro-reform actors

Public governance MSIs exist to give pro-reform actors – civil society groups, government champions, and international NGOs – new tools to push for greater transparency, participation, and accountability in the public sector, within a collaborative space that has been legitimated by global actors. Ultimately, the effectiveness and impact of these initiatives will depend on the extent to which pro-reform actors are able to successfully embed MSI activities and outputs within broader national accountability coalitions. To accomplish this, pro-reform actors should first seek to broaden MSI processes for civil society consultation and participation beyond political and economic centers. While it is often easier for MSIs to work with highly specialized NGOs operating in capital cities, sustainable governance reform will require that MSIs build the trust and enthusiasm of rural communities, indigenous peoples' organizations, and other highly vulnerable or disproportionately affected groups.

Second, pro-reform actors should seek to customize national MSI agendas as much as possible, so that they resonate with broad civic and social constituencies. In OGP, this might mean insisting on national action plan commitments that address issues of pressing public concern. In CoST or OCP, it might mean pushing for disclosure on highly visible projects that capture the public's interest and disseminating this information in ways that make it understandable and actionable. In EITI, it might mean expanding the work of the national MSG beyond the EITI Standard to cover additional links in the extractive industries' value chain or additional sectors. For GIFT, it might mean targeting fiscal transparency and public participation reforms to address the most tangible and compelling areas of the budget, including highly visible issues like education, sanitation, or emergency services.

Third, pro-reform actors should petition formal domestic accountability institutions to provide "teeth" to MSI processes. In doing so, MSIs can be used to help strengthen the domestic accountability ecosystem. The World Bank's Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA) recommends that good governance CSOs engage directly with national Supreme Audit Institutions (though the conditions under which SAs can gain both autonomy and capacity to sanction are not yet clear).¹⁶⁸ Similarly, pro-reform actors seeking to embed MSIs more securely within the state should work to educate Supreme Audit Institutions and parliaments on the importance of MSIs. Reformers can also directly petition these institutions to monitor and support national compliance with MSI guidelines.

Finally, once MSIs facilitate the release of information on public contracts, revenues, expenditures, or other government activities, pro-reform actors should work to embed this information into existing channels of public discourse and decision-making. Pro-reform actors at the national level possess the cultural knowledge and homegrown connections necessary to facilitate this process. For example, civil society organizations in the Philippines have used EITI report data to stimulate debate around mining payments to indigenous groups and the elimination of certain tax incentives. Pro-reform actors should develop clear communication and advocacy strategies that maximize their ability to link MSI outputs to broader national narratives.

¹⁶⁸ See Cornejo & Mendiburu (2015).

VII. Conclusion

Public governance-oriented multi-stakeholder initiatives are still relatively new contributors to global governance. This review of the evidence for their effectiveness and impact thus far suggests that these initiatives are still operating within the early stages of their proposed results frameworks. While these initiatives have made some notable progress towards their goals of promoting information disclosure and participation, the evidence base does not yet confirm a core proposition underlying the theory of change at the heart of these initiatives: that global MSIs are an especially effective driver for converting transparency into accountability. The MSIs reviewed here are either quite new or have recently implemented significant changes to their core mission. As a result, it is simply too soon to expect meaningful evaluations of effectiveness or impact.

The evidence collected thus far suggests that the process by which greater information disclosure and public participation drives greater social accountability is a complex and recursive one. Disclosure and participation can help to empower pro-reform actors within the domestic accountability ecosystem, but the existing interests and capacities of these actors also mitigate the extent to which disclosure and participation will be effective drivers of public governance reform. The evidence base also suggests that definitions of MSI “success” remain debated and negotiated. Most MSIs need to develop greater conceptual clarity regarding expected outcomes and impacts, as well as the roles of various stakeholder groups at both the transnational and national level. These efforts will serve to strengthen each MSI’s theory of change and help them identify when and how to measure their effectiveness and impacts.

There are persuasive reasons to be optimistic about what public governance-oriented MSIs might accomplish in the coming years. These initiatives facilitate new forms of collaboration and consensus building between government and civil society, and provide access to information that can empower national reformers. Indeed, several countries have already achieved promising regulatory and legislative reforms. Yet, public sector MSIs also involve risks. They can overwhelm actors in both government and civil society, prioritize and legitimate shallow reforms, and reproduce existing power imbalances. While it may be years before these MSIs can accurately assess their deeper impacts on the public sector, future progress is likely to depend on their capacity to overcome opposition by broadening and strengthening their national coalitions for reform.

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Acknowledgements

We thank our valued colleagues at the Transparency and Accountability Initiative for their support, and particularly Brendan Halloran for his guidance and input throughout the research and writing process. Special thanks to Michael Jarvis and his team at the World Bank for their engagement throughout the process, particularly in supporting the February 2015 workshop on the evidence of the effectiveness of public governance MSIs.¹⁶⁹ We also thank everyone who participated in that workshop to share their expertise and experiences working in, with, and around MSIs. Most importantly, we would like to thank everyone who contributed their time and insights to this research and its subsequent review: Kevin Bohrer, Tom Carothers, Joe Ching'ani, Amelia Evans, Bernadine Fernz, Joe Foti, Kathrin Frauscher, Linda Frey, Alejandro Gonzalez, Juan Pablo Guerrero, Munyema Hasan, Gavin Hayman, John Hawkins, Michael Jarvis, Suneeta Kaimal, Sanjeev Khagram, Asmara Klein, Carey Kluttz, Warren Krafchik, Aroa de la Fuente López, Cielo Magno, Subarna Mathes, Petter Matthews, Araddhya Mehtta, Diego de la Mora, Haydée Pérez, Christiaan Poortman, Rakesh Rajani, Roberta Solis Ribeiro, Eddie Rich, Liliana Ruiz, Claire Schouten, Martin Tisne, and Erica Westenberg.

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¹⁶⁴ Insights and lessons from this workshop can be found here: <http://www.transparency-initiative.org/news/a-workshop-on-multi-stakeholder-initiatives-and-governance-what-did-we-learn-and-where-to-go-from-here>

IX. Appendix A: Methodology

Document collection and review

In order to identify as many documents that might speak to the current state of the evidence for MSI effectiveness and impact as possible, we designed a six-phase document collection process. First, we performed a thorough search of each MSI's official website. Next, we conducted Google Scholar and JSTOR searches to identify academic work on each MSI. We also designed a custom search engine for each MSI that returned results from the websites of partner and funder organizations. We also conducted a standard Google search for each MSI to identify blog posts, investigative journalism, and outsider reports of interest. Finally, during stakeholder interviews, we inquired about evaluations that may not have been made public. The goal of this process was to cast a wide net that could be refined at a later stage of review. Ultimately, this process returned 338 documents across 5 MSIs.

Once the documents were collected, they were vetted for their relevance to the goals of the study. Slightly less than half (46%) of the documents collected were single-country case studies. These documents were not reviewed in depth as part of this study, due to time constraints.¹⁷⁰ Single-country case studies, while a valuable source for country-specific evidence of effectiveness and impact, would require additional processing and meta-analysis in order to provide broader assessments of an MSI as a whole. Evaluations based on multiple country cases were included in this review, on the assumption that they included some analysis across cases that might have broader import for the MSI.

However, since many of the evaluations based on multiple country cases do not provide a methodological rationale for the specific cases included, this assumption must be taken with a grain of salt. Researchers and practitioners seeking to further explore MSI activities and outcomes across all participating countries would greatly benefit from conducting a meta-analysis of single-country case studies in order to aggregate their findings. Finally, an additional 77 documents were discarded because they did not provide information on the achievements of the five MSIs of interest. This left 107 documents to be reviewed in depth (See Figure 13).

Document collection process results

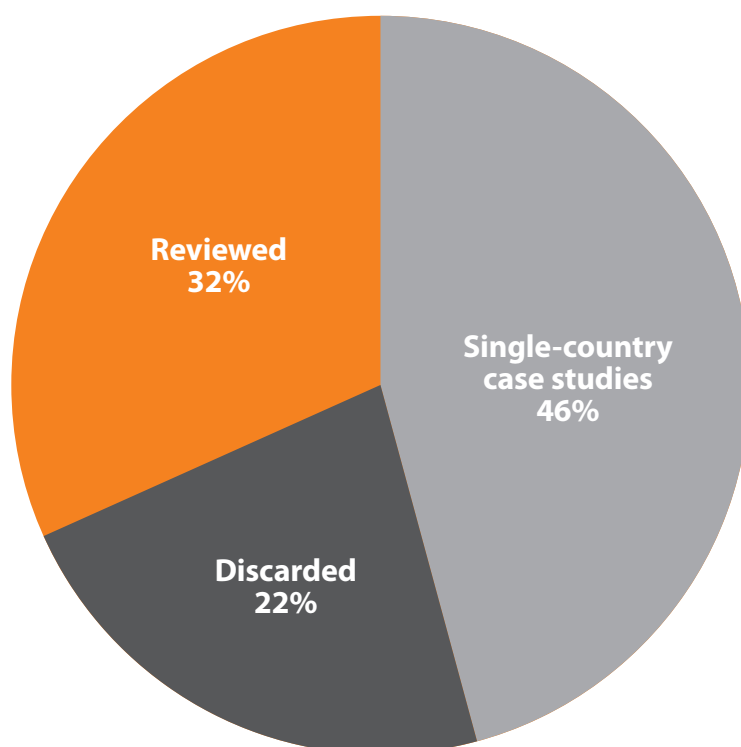


Figure 13: Of the 338 documents that were initially collected, 107 of them were found to be relevant to the effectiveness and impact of the MSIs in question and reviewed in depth.

¹⁶⁴ Documents that focus on a single country include internal MSI compliance reviews (e.g. OGP-IRM reports, EITI validation reports, and CoST assurance team reports), internal MSI case studies (e.g., OGP's "Inspiring Stories," "EITI stories," and some CoST briefing notes), civil society reports (e.g., OGP-Hub Civil Society progress reports), academic articles and books, news articles, and blog posts.

During the final document review, 79 documents were consolidated into the final evidence base from which the findings and conclusions of this report are drawn (see Appendix B). Over half of these documents (N = 41) focus on EITI, with far fewer discussing the other four MSIs (See Figure 14). This distribution of relevant documents is at least partially a function of the age of each initiative. EITI has been operating continuously in some capacity since 2003, while other public governance-oriented MSIs have been fully operational for five years or less.¹⁷¹

Relevant documents by MSI



Figure 14: Of the 79 documents that comprise the final evidence base for the findings discussed in this report, over half focus on EITI. Far fewer documents consider the other four MSIs of interest. (Note: Some documents address more than one MSI.)

What types of evidence are available?

There are many different types of documents that might contain evidence of the effectiveness or impact of a multi-stakeholder initiative. An MSI may release a report that chronicles recent achievements for public consumption, an NGO may release a report bringing attention to the patchy implementation of an MSI across a number of different countries, or an academic may try to develop a statistical model of the relationship between MSI membership and macro-level social or economic changes. The documents reviewed as part of this study can be divided into four categories:

- 1) **MSI strategy documents** produced for either an internal or external audience:

Examples:

- * OGP: *A Forward-Looking Research Agenda* (2014)
- * OCP: *Open Contracting Guide for Practitioners* (2013)
- * EITI: *Report from the Working Group on Theory of Change* (2012)

- 2) **Multi-country studies** that report or evaluate progress across a number of countries and draw broader conclusions about the initiative as a whole across these cases:

Examples:

Internally produced reports

- * OCP: "Winter 2014 update" (2014)
- * EITI: *Progress report* (2014)
- * CoST: *Report on information disclosure and assurance team findings* (2011)

Commissioned research

- * Wampler's "Participation, Transparency, and Accountability: Innovations in South Korea, Brazil, and the Philippines" (produced for GIFT) (2013)
- * Scanteam's *Achievements and Strategic Options: Evaluation of the EITI* (2011)

Independent reports

- * IDB: *Civic Participation in Latin American OGP Commitments* (2014)
- * IIED: *EITI and Sustainable Development: Lessons from the Caspian Region* (2013)
- * PWYP & RWI: *Eye on EITI: Civil society perspectives and recommendations on the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative* (2006)

¹⁷¹ The CoST pilot began in 2008, but the project essentially went on hiatus when the pilot ended in 2011, until the MSI was officially launched in 2012. The open contracting agenda has its roots in a 2012 meeting in Durban, South Africa, but OCP was officially launched as an independent initiative in 2014.

Academic research

- * Etter (2014) "Breaking the resource curse: Transparency in the natural resource sector and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative"
- * Aaronson & Brinkerhoff (2011) "Limited partnership: Business, government, civil society and the public in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative"

3) **Large-N quantitative studies** that examine the impact of MSIs in the aggregate:

Examples:

Internally produced reports

- * OGP: *Technical Report 1* (2014)

Independent reports

- * BIC: *Survey of civil society participation in EITI* (2010)

4) **Cross-initiative studies**

Examples:

- * OKF: *Joined-up data: Building blocks for common standards: A cross-initiative scoping study* (2013)
- * ODI: *The possible shape of a land transparency initiative: Lessons from other transparency initiatives* (2013)
- * Jackson School Task Force: *Review of Best Practices for Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives: Recommendations for GIFT* (2012)

Each of these types of documents has the potential to provide important information on MSI structures, processes, and actors, existing mechanisms for building an evidence base, and the current evidence effectiveness and impact. Strategy documents can tell the researcher a great deal about explicit or implicit theories of change. Multi-country studies can provide a deeper understanding of implementation at the national level, including what has been successful across countries and what has not.

Large-N studies give a sense for whether MSI participation has any relationship to changes in social and economic conditions at the macro level. And cross-initiative studies, though rare, can help to identify common challenges and research gaps faced by a variety of different MSIs. Taken together, these documents provide a multi-faceted perspective on MSI activities, achievements, shared knowledge, and challenges.

Stakeholder interviews

Document analysis was augmented with stakeholder interviews intended to further explore theories of change, learn about existing mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation, uncover additional sources of evidence, discuss key factors believed to help or hinder each initiative, and identify shared challenges and research gaps. Between January and March of 2015, 38 individuals in 12 countries were contacted in order to request a 40-60 minute interview. Twenty-seven participants were eventually interviewed via phone, Skype, or in person (71% success rate).

Interview participants were selected based on their representation of one of several types of MSI stakeholder: MSI secretariat staff (N = 10), MSI advisory board members (N = 5), international NGOs (N = 3), funders (N = 4), outside researchers (N = 1) and country-level stakeholders from the government (N = 1), civil society (N = 2), or private sector (N = 1) (See Figure 15). However, significant overlaps exist between these categories that is not captured by these numerical breakouts. MSI advisory board members represent NGOs and funders, secretariat staff often have ties to NGOs and funder organizations, and several country-level stakeholders have also worked closely with the international secretariats. Reasonably balanced gender representation was achieved across stakeholder categories, with 59% men and 41% women.

Interviews by Stakeholder Type

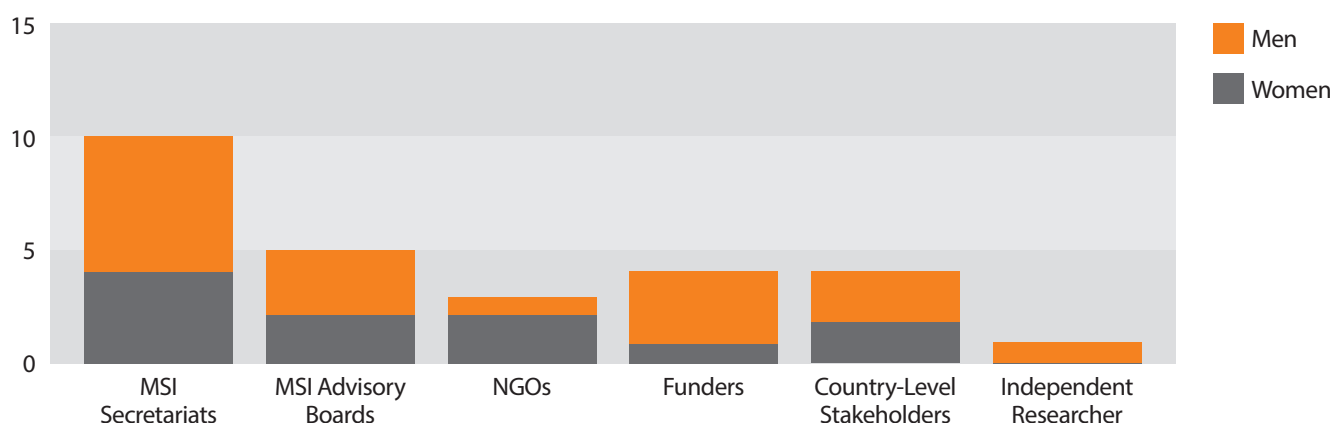


Figure 15: Interviews were conducted with 27 stakeholders representing MSI secretariats, advisory boards, NGOs, funders, and country-level government, private sector, and civil society representatives.

Of those interview participants with current official ties to specific multi-stakeholder initiatives, pluralities represent OGP (N = 7) and CoST (N = 5) and fewer participants represent OCP (N =3), GIFT (N=2), or EITI (N = 2) (See Figure 16). While both GIFT and OCP are relatively new initiatives with small staffs and no country-level stakeholders, it is harder to explain the limited representation from EITI, which has a staff around the same size as OGP and country-level multi-stakeholder groups in 48 countries. Luckily, the wealth of EITI documents collected and reviewed as part of this research helps to assuage any concerns that the shortage of interviews might limit the external validity of this report’s findings and conclusions about EITI effectiveness and impact.

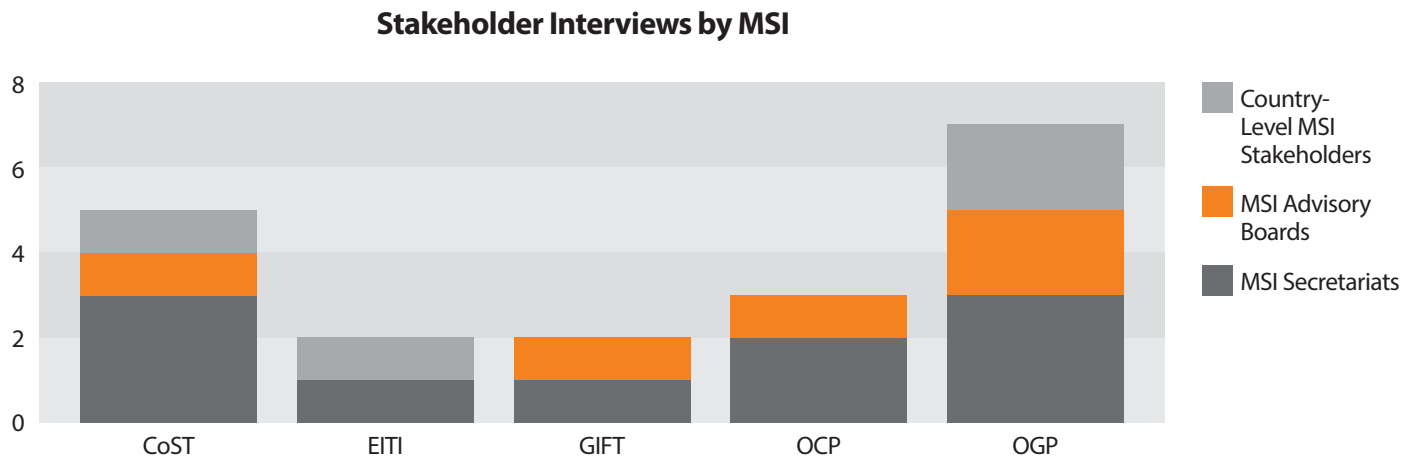


Figure 16: Interviews were conducted with secretariat staff in all five MSIs, advisory board members in all but EITI, and country level stakeholders in all three MSIs with country-level multi-stakeholder groups.

X. Appendix B:

Index of MSI effectiveness and impact documents reviewed

Document Title	Date	Publication Information	Author	Relevant MSI	Public URL
Converting Natural Resources into Development: From Transparency to More Efficient Natural Resources Management	2015	A study commissioned by the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA)	Carey Kluttz, Johathan Gbede, Aliou Barry, and Thomas Nah	EITI	http://www.osiwa.org/publication/view/assessing-eiti-process-in-west-africa-moving-forward/
Draft strategy and theory of change	2015	Presentation slides provided to the authors by Kathrin Frauscher, OCP	Gavin Hayman & Kathrin Frauscher	OCP	
From reporting to reform: Eleven opportunities for increasing EITI impacts	2015	Published by NRGi	Erica Westenberg & Max George-Wagner	EITI	http://www.resourcegovernance.org/sites/default/files/nrgi_FromReportingtoReform.pdf
Protecting the cornerstone: Assessing the governance of Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative multi-stakeholder groups	2015	Published by MSI Integrity		EITI	http://www.msi-integrity.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/MSI-Integrity-Protecting-The-Cornerstone-Report.pdf
On incentivizing useful budget transparency	2015	Published by GIFT	Stephen Kosack	GIFT	http://fiscaltransparency.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Useful-Budget-Transparency_Stephen-Kosack.pdf
Open Government Index: 2015 report	2015	Published by the World Justice Project		OGP	http://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/ogi_2015.pdf
Surmounting obstacles to fiscal transparency	2015	Published by GIFT	David Heald	GIFT	http://fiscaltransparency.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Surmounting-Obstacles_David-Heald_.pdf
The impacts of fiscal openness: A review of the evidence	2015	Published by GIFT	Paolo de Renzio and Joachim Wehner	GIFT	http://fiscaltransparency.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Impacts-of-Fiscal-Openness.pdf
A forward-looking research agenda	2014	Published by OGP	OGP Support Unit	OGP	http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/OGP%20Research%20Agenda_0.pdf
An experiment with data from the open government partnership: Ranking countries	2014	Blog post, published on gobernamos.com and by OGP	Alberto Abella	OGP	http://gobernamos.com/2014/08/19/an-experiment-with-data-from-the-open-government-partnership/
Annual Report 2014	2014	Published by OGP		OGP	http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2014%20OGP%20Annual%20Report.pdf

Document Title	Date	Publication Information	Author	Relevant MSI	Public URL
Breaking the resource curse: Transparency in the natural resource sector and the extractive industries transparency initiative	2014	Resources Policy 40: 17-30	Caitlin C. Corrigan	EITI	
Building Demand II: From transparency to accountability	2014	Presentation slides provided to the authors by John Hawkins, CoST International Secretariat	CoST International Secretariat	CoST	
Can transparency reduce corruption? Evidence from firms in Peru and Mali on the impact of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) on corruption	2014	Conference paper from the Feb 2014 "Doing Business" Conference at Georgetown University, Washington, DC	Luca Etter	EITI	http://www.doingbusiness.org/special-features/conference/~media/GIAWB/Doing%20Business/Documents/Miscellaneous/Conference2014/S8-2.pdf
Civic participation in Latin American OGP commitments	2014	Published by the OGP Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM)	J. Preston Whitt	OGP	http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/LatAm%20Participation%20Web.pdf
Fiscal transparency in OGP countries and the implementation of OGP commitments	2014	Background paper prepared for the OGP-GIFT Fiscal Openness Working Group (FOWG) regional meetings; provided to the authors by Juan Pablo Guerrero, GIFT	Murray Petrie	GIFT; OGP	(earlier version) http://fiscaltransparency.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/GIFT-OGP-FOWG-Dublin-May-2014-final-2-May.pdf
Four-year strategy 2015-2018	2014	Published by OGP	Linda Frey, Joe Powell, Paul Maassen, Joseph Foti, Munyema Hasan, and Jack Mahoney	OGP	http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/OGP%204-year%20Strategy%20FINAL%20ONLINE.pdf
General considerations on the governance structure and network dimensions	2014	Prepared for a meeting of the GIFT lead stewards; provided to the authors by Juan Pablo Guerrero, GIFT	Juan Pablo Guerrero	GIFT	
Global and regional mechanisms for governing the resource curse in Africa	2014	Published by Southern Africa Resource Watch (SARW) in Resource Insight #12	Gilbert M. Khadiagala	EITI	http://www.sarwatch.org/sites/sarwatch.org/files/Publications_docs/resource_insight_12_final_ver3abstract.pdf

Document Title	Date	Publication Information	Author	Relevant MSI	Public URL
Improving open contracting processes at the country and global level	2014	World Bank report chapter from "Cases in Outcome Harvesting: Ten pilot experiences identify new learning from multi-stakeholder projects to improve results" (59-68)	Yvonne Nkrumah, Julia Mensah, Marylou Bradley, and Jilliane T Cabansag	OCP	http://wbi.worldbank.org/wbi/Data/wbi/wbicms/files/drupal-acquia/wbi/Cases%20in%20Outcome%20Harvesting.pdf
Independent Reporting Mechanism technical paper 1	2014	Published by the OGP Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM)	Joseph Foti	OGP	http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/Technical%20paper_Sept%202014_final.pdf
Localising transparency: Exploring EITI's contribution to sustainable development	2014	Published by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)	Emma Wilson & James Van Alstine	EITI	http://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/16555IIED.pdf?
Open Contracting - what is it and how good is it?	2014	University of Twente bachelor's thesis	Justus Gätjen	OCP	http://essay.utwente.nl/65272/1/Gatjen_BA_MB.pdf
Open Contracting update – Winter 2014	2014	Document provided to the authors by Kathrin Frauscher, OCP		OCP	
Progress Report 2014: Making transparency matter	2014	Published by EITI	Anders Tunold Kråkenes (editor)	EITI	https://eiti.org/files/EITI_ProgressReport_2014_En_Web_Interactif_r.pdf
Publishing Government Contracts: Addressing Concerns and Easing Implementation	2014	Published by the Center for Global Development	CGD Working Group on Contract Publication	OCP	http://www.cgdev.org/publication/ft/publishing-government-contracts-addressing-concerns-and-easing-implementation
The 2014 Corruption Perception Index. How have EITI countries fared?	2014	Blog post, published by EITI	Pablo Valverde	EITI	https://eiti.org/blog/2014-corruption-perception-index-how-have-eiti-countries-fared
The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative: Impact, effectiveness, and where next for expanding natural resource governance?	2014	U4 Brief	Andrés Mejía Acosta	EITI	https://eiti.org/files/The%20EITI%20-%20Impact%2C%20effectiveness%2C%20and%20where%20next%20for%20expanding%20natural%20resource%20governance.pdf
The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative: State of play	2014	Briefing published by the European parliament	Gisela Grieger	EITI	http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/bibliotheque/briefing/2014/140758/LDM_BRI(2014)140758_REV1_EN.pdf

Document Title	Date	Publication Information	Author	Relevant MSI	Public URL
The impact of open government on innovation: Does government transparency drive innovation?	2014	Georgetown University master's thesis	Anjelika A. Deogirikar	OGP	https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/bitstream/handle/10822/709375/Deogirikar_georgetown_0076M_12547.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
Transparency in Energy Governance: The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and Publish What You Pay Campaign	2014	Book chapter from <i>Global Environmental Governance: Critical Perspectives</i> (249-270)	James van Alstine	EITI	
Transparency, participation, and accountability practices in open government: A comparative study	2014	<i>Government Information Quarterly</i> 31: 513-525	Teresa M. Harrison & Djoko Sigit Sayogo	OGP	
Winds of Change: The Progress of Open Government Policymaking in Latin America and the Caribbean	2014	Inter-American Development Bank technical note #629	Álvaro Ramírez-Alujas & Nicolás Dassen	OGP	http://publications.iadb.org/bitstream/handle/11319/6400/ICS%20TN%20Winds%20of%20Change.pdf?sequence=4
EITI and sustainable development: Lessons from the Caspian region	2013	Published by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)	Saule Ospanova, Ingilab Ahmadow & Emma Wilson	EITI	http://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/16531IIED.pdf?
Enhancing Foreign Direct Investment via Transparency? Evaluating the Effects of the EITI on FDI	2013	Discussion paper #538 from the Department of Economics at the University of Heidelberg	Maya Schmaljohann	EITI	http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/14368/1/Schmaljohann_2013_dp538.pdf
Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI): Evaluation Report (Working draft)	2013	Published by MSI Integrity and the International Human Rights Clinic, Harvard Law School		EITI	http://www.msi-integrity.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/EITI-Working-Evaluation-Report-FINAL.pdf
Extractives revenue transparency helps overcome the resource curse in Africa	2013	Published by One	Alan Hudson & Katherine Lay	EITI	https://app.box.com/s/q73r1hh8itg5c0mzdn8/
Innovating government on a global stage	2013	Sponsored supplement of the <i>Stanford Social Innovation Review</i>		OGP	http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/SSIR.png
Joined-up Data: Building blocks for common standards: A cross-initiative scoping study	2013	Published by the Open Knowledge Foundation (OKF)	Neil Ashton	CoST; EITI; GIFT; OCP	http://devinit.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/JUD-scoping-study-final1.pdf
Open Contracting: A Guide for practitioners by practitioners	2013	Published by the World Bank Institute on behalf of OCP		OCP	http://www.open-contracting.org/open_contracting_guide

Document Title	Date	Publication Information	Author	Relevant MSI	Public URL
Open Contracting: A New frontier for transparency and accountability	2013	Published by the World Bank Institute on behalf of OCP	Lindsey Marchessault	OCP	http://www.opengovguide.com/standards-and-guidance/open-contracting-new-frontier-transparency-accountability/
Participation, transparency, and accountability: Innovations in South Korea, Brazil, and the Philippines	2013	Report commissioned by GIFT	Brian Wampler	GIFT	http://fiscaltransparency.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/GIFT-Participation-Overview-2013DecWampler.pdf
The possible shape of a land transparency initiative: Lessons from other transparency initiatives	2013	Published by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI)	Anna Locke & Giles Henley	CoST; EITI; OCP	http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8599.pdf
What's the Point of Transparency? The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and the governance of natural resources in Liberia, Timor Leste and other countries	2013		Diarmid O'Sullivan	EITI	http://publishwhatyoupay.org/sites/publishwhatyoupay.org/files/What%27s%20the%20point%20of%20transparency%20April%202013.pdf
A club theory approach to voluntary social programs: Multinational companies and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative	2012	<i>Business and Politics</i> 14(3): 1–24	Douglas A. Schuler	EITI	
Assessing OGP action plans	2012	Blog post, published by Global Integrity	Nicole Anand	OGP	https://www.globalintegrity.org/posts/ogp-action-plan-assessments/
Governance and accountability in extractive industries: Theory and practice at the World Bank	2012	<i>Journal of Energy & Natural Resources Law</i> 30(2): 101-128	Deval Desai & Michael Jarvis	EITI	
Impact stories	2012	CoST guidance note 1		CoST	http://www.constructiontransparency.org/documentdownload.axd?documentresourceid=20
Implementing EITI for impact: A handbook for policy makers and stakeholders	2012	Published by the World Bank	Anwar Ravat and Sridar P. Kannan	EITI	https://eiti.org/files/EITI%20Impact%20in%20Africa.pdf
Lessons of transparency from EITI: A report for Focus on the Global South	2012	Focus on the Global South occasional paper #12	Kees Visser	EITI	http://focusweb.org/sites/www.focusweb.org/files/occ12.pdf
Report from Working Group on Theory of Change (WGTOC)	2012	Published by the UK Department for International Development (DFID)		EITI	https://eiti.org/files/DFID%20ToC.pdf

Document Title	Date	Publication Information	Author	Relevant MSI	Public URL
Review of best practices for multi-stakeholder initiatives: Recommendations for GIFT	2012	Prepared by the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies Task Force		EITI; GIFT; OGP	https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/bitstream/handle/1773/19669/M%20Khagram%20Task%20Force%20Final%20Report.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
The benefits of open contracting	2012	U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre Expert Answer document prepared by Transparency International	Marie Chêne	CoST; OCP	http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/pdf/outputs/U4/exeprtanswer-328.pdf
The Construction Sector Transparency Initiative (CoST): promoting public accountability through multi-stakeholder collective action	2012	Book chapter from <i>Collection Action: Innovative Strategies to Prevent Corruption</i> , published by the Basel Institute on Governance	Richard Calland & John Hawkins	CoST	
The OGP Process in EaP Countries and Russia: Where are we now and where do we go further?	2012	Published by the Ukrainian Institute for Public Policy	Ivan Presniakov & Lidia Wolanskyj	OGP	http://www.ogphub.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/OGP-Process-in-EaP-Countries-and-Russia.pdf
Towards stronger incentives for increased fiscal transparency, participation and accountability	2012	Discussion paper prepared for GIFT lead stewards	Murray Petrie	GIFT	http://fiscaltransparency.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/GIFT-Towards-Stronger-Incentives.pdf
Achievements and strategic options: Evaluation of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative	2011	Scanteam evaluation commissioned by EITI	Torun Reite, Arne Disch, David Gairdner (Scanteam) & Audun Gleinsvik (Proba Research)	EITI	https://eiti.org/files/2011-EITI-evaluation-report.pdf
Defining the technical content of global norms: Synthesis and analytic review (phase 1)	2011	Published by GIFT	Murray Petrie	GIFT	http://fiscaltransparency.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/GIFT-Defining-the-Technical-Content-of-Global-Norms-Synthesis-and-Analytic-Review.pdf
Defining the technical content of global norms: Synthesis and analytic review (phase 2)	2011	Published by GIFT	Murray Petrie	GIFT	http://fiscaltransparency.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/GIFT-Defining-the-Technical-Content-of-Global-Norms-Towards-a-New-Global-Architecture.pdf
Innovations in globalized regulation: Opportunities and challenges	2011	World Bank Public Sector Governance Unit policy research working paper #5841	Brian Levy	EITI	https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/3607/WPS5841.pdf?sequence=1

Document Title	Date	Publication Information	Author	Relevant MSI	Public URL
Key lessons from a new generation of transparency initiatives the Construction Sector Transparency Initiatives: (CoST), the Medicines Transparency Initiative (MeTA) and the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI)	2011	Presentation slides provided to the authors by Claire Scholten, International Budget Partnership (IBP)	CoST International Secretariat	CoST	
Limited partnership: Business, government, civil society (NGOs) and the public in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI)	2011	<i>Public Administration and Development</i> 31: 50-63	Susan A. Aaronson & Jennifer Brinkerhoff	EITI	
Report on information disclosure and assurance team findings: International comparison	2011	Published by CoST		CoST	http://www.constructiontransparency.org/documentdownload.axd?documentresourceid=41
Success stories from the CoST pilot project	2011	CoST briefing note 12		CoST	http://www.constructiontransparency.org/documentdownload.axd?documentresourceid=66
What do the numbers say? Analyzing Report Data	2011	Revenue Watch Institute briefing	Alexandra Gillies	EITI	http://test.revenuewatch.org/archive_2011/files/EITI_numbers_2011-02-23.pdf
Disclosure as Governance: The EITI and Resource Management in the Developing World	2010	<i>Global Environmental Politics</i> : 10(3): 53-73	Virginia Haufler	EITI	
Impact of EITI in Africa: Stories from the ground	2010	Published by EITI	Christopher Eads & Anders Kråkenes (editors)	EITI	https://eiti.org/files/EITI%20Impact%20in%20Africa.pdf
Natural resource governance: New frontiers in transparency and accountability	2010	Published by the Transparency & Accountability Initiative (TAI)	Sefton Darby	EITI	http://transparencyinitiative.theideabureau.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/natural_resources_final1.pdf
Survey of civil society participation in the EITI and the role of the World Bank	2010	Published by the Bank Information Center (BIC)	Heike Mainhardt-Gibbs	EITI	http://www.bicusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/EITI_CSO_Participation.pdf
The demand for transparency: An empirical note	2010	<i>The Review of International Organizations</i> 5: 177-195	Hans Pitlik, Björn Frank & Mathias Firchow	EITI	
Evaluating the EITI's impact on the transparency of natural resource revenues	2009	Rainbow Insight evaluation commissioned by EITI	Rainbow Insight	EITI	https://eiti.org/files/Rainbow%20Insight%20Report.pdf

Document Title	Date	Publication Information	Author	Relevant MSI	Public URL
Extracting the Maximum from the EITI	2009	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Centre Working Paper #276	Dilan Ölcer	EITI	http://www1.oecd.org/dev/pgd/42342311.pdf
Hiding conflict over industry returns: A stakeholder analysis of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative	2009	Brooks World Poverty Institute (BWPI) working paper #91	Sarah Bracking	EITI	http://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sarah_Bracking/publication/46464785_Hiding_Conflict_over_Industry_Returns_A_Stakeholder_Analysis_of_the_Extractive_Industries_Transparency_Initiative/links/0c9605279f66a7fd80000000.pdf
Is Transparency the Key to Reducing Corruption in Resource-Rich Countries?	2009	World Development 37(3): 521-532	Ivar Kolstad & Arne Wiig	EITI	
Oil and the public interest	2008	Blog post, published on VOX (CEPR Policy Portal)	Susan A. Aaronson	EITI	http://www.voxeu.org/article/can-transparency-extractive-industries-break-resource-curse
Eye on EITI: Civil society perspectives and recommendations on the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative	2006	Published by Publish What You Pay and the Revenue Watch Institute		EITI	http://www.resourcegovernance.org/sites/default/files/EyeonEITIRreport.pdf
Report of the International Advisory Group	2006	Published by the UK Department for International Development (DFID)		EITI	https://eiti.org/files/document/eiti_iag_report_english.pdf

