

Remarks by Honourable Mathias Chikawe, MP Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs

Open Government Partnership citizen views competition
Dar es Salaam, 12 December 2012



Twaweza colleagues,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen:

Good morning and thank you for being here today.

I am pleased to join with you to launch this competition because it reflects, in so many ways, the core principles, spirit and intention of Tanzania's commitment to the Open Government Partnership (OGP).

Let me explain.

First, the competition focuses on basic education, health and water. As a country we have chosen these as focus areas in our OGP Action Plan because that is where citizens come into most direct contact with government, in the delivery of basic social services. It is easy, sitting in Dar es Salaam or Dodoma, to think that government is about central ministries or plans or speeches. But for most people in Muleba or Babati or Nachingwea, and across our vast country, what matters most about government is whether there is a decent dispensary, school and water source nearby.

Now the government has made important advances in providing service delivery in the past decade. We are bringing health facilities to every ward, we have overseen a massive expansion of primary and secondary schooling, and we are investing heavily in water. We are proud of these achievements. But we are also acutely aware that services are not just the infrastructure and better qualified staff, but how these resources in fact provide better learning, better health care and cleaner water for people. These measures – about the *quality* of service delivery – is what makes a difference for people; it determines whether a child leaves school literate, skilled and confident; whether a mother delivers safely or dies; whether the water we drink gives life or makes us sick. And we know that the quality of basic services in our country needs to improve.

Second, the important part about the OGP is that the government does not pretend that it has all the answers on how to strengthen service delivery. We believe that the wananchi, who live through and experience these things every day, can tell us not only the truth of what works and what doesn't, but also propose practical ideas on what should be done. The competition we are launching today is all about asking citizens for their ideas – great ideas – on how the government can do better. It is easy to complain, but that doesn't help move us forward. What we are asking for are ideas that your government can practically and realistically use to improve the situation. It is about collaboration between the government and the people to achieve a more effective service delivery.

Ladies and gentlemen:

The ideas that we receive will be systematically compiled and reviewed to inform how we work. We will also publish them so that everyone can see and evaluate them. When President Kikwete asked me to lead our OGP effort, he told me, Bwana don't just look at official reports, ask the people. They will tell you the truth of what is going on, and they will help you make government better.

That brings me to my third point. To deliver better services we need adequate financial resources, and we still do not have enough resources to meet our needs. That is why we need to leave no stone

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unturned to get full value for money, to make sure that every shilling of the limited resources we have is spent well and accounted for. The OGP provides a platform by which we can strengthen the transparency and accountability of the use of public resources – in the formal systems and books in government, the ones that the Controller and Auditor General audits – but also in what the wananchi know and can do. If you look at our OGP Action Plan, we have made bold commitments to ensure that every citizen knows the vital information about basic service delivery – about the capitation grants reaching schools, about the entire supply chain of essential medicines from the Medical Stores Department (MSD) to the clinic in the village, and about the functionality of every public water point in our country. We hope that this competition will help raise interest and spread awareness about the OGP commitments across the country, so that people can ‘follow the money’ more closely, help government make sure it is well used, and hold us all accountable.

In that light let me highlight a few concrete actions of the government to enable the wananchi to participate more fully. Working in partnership with Policy Forum, a civil society coalition, the Ministry of Finance has issued a popular citizens budget in Swahili. (By the way I suspect it will also help the MPs as much as the citizens!). The Prime Minister’s Office Regional Administration and Local Government (PMO-RALG) has recently issued a circular detailing which local government documents should be made freely available to civil society in the councils. Our e-government agency is developing a website called ‘Nifanyeje’ which will provide clear information on how a citizen can get basic things done – such as register a birth, get a driver’s license, obtain a title deed.

And there are others specifically related to education, health and water that should go live soon, and be accessible both on the internet and on an ordinary mobile phone. We will make use of new technologies, for they provide unprecedented opportunities to reach and hear from millions of citizens, but we will not forget the older ones, for radio and old fashioned notices on walls are still valuable. And so as to create a solid legal basis for these sorts of commitments, my ministry is working with the Ministry of Information to prepare a robust bill on the right to information. We intend to leverage the OGP network fully in this endeavor, so that we can learn from the experiences and best practices of South Africa, India, Mexico and other countries to ensure that we have a world class law. We also need to enshrine these principles in our constitution making process, as has been done by South Africa, Kenya and others.

Ladies and gentlemen:

The competition we are launching today is an important step in the process of engaging the public. I understand that it is going to be publicized through four million popular booklets, which will be distributed through public schools across our country, so as to reach as many people as possible. We seek views from all people – including young people who are the majority of our population – and their parents and families. I urge all of you, especially the media fraternity, to publicize the competition widely so that we can have the widest possible participation. And I am pleased to see that the best ideas will be rewarded with laptops, that will go to both the authors of the ideas and to a school of their choice, because it creates a powerful incentive, and because increasingly computers can help spur innovation and progress.

In closing I want to thank Twaweza for collaborating with the Government in helping design this competition, and helping the entire OGP initiative get off the ground both globally and in our country. Their leadership has been critical. Civil society is equal with government in the OGP

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structure, because we recognize that governments need people to do their job more effectively. We also thank REPOA and the Media Council of Tanzania who are the other civil society members of the OGP committee in Tanzania that is led by Susan Mlawi, the Deputy Permanent Secretary at Ikulu, and that includes key government ministries.

Ladies and gentlemen:

A few days ago we celebrated the 51st anniversary of our independence. We fought for independence because we wanted freedom and a better life. The OGP is a platform that can help us improve our quality of life and strengthen our freedom. The Tanzania OGP commitments are ambitious, but together, if we are serious and committed, we can deliver them.

Indeed we all have a choice. Whether we are in government or civil society or an ordinary citizen, we can choose to sit on the sidelines and go on with business as usual, wait for someone else to take action, just complain about things or wish they were better. Or we can each make a choice to make a difference. Let us make that choice.

Thank you for listening.