Open Government Partnership (OGP): Combating Corruption, Regaining and Building Public Trust in the Government of Egypt

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to analyze and describe the importance of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) on both the government and citizen level while introducing indicators for measuring government openness. Egypt has gone through major economic downfall and severe political instability as a result of two revolutions, January 25th, 2011 and June 30th, 2013. The first revolution was in protest of the corrupt actions of entrenched politicians and crony businessmen. The second uprising was a revolt against the Muslim Brotherhood who came to power 2013. A series of events during previous regimes led to the breeding of mistrust of citizens towards the government. Regaining of citizen trust in the government of Egypt after the uprisings will be the focal point of this paper. Egypt's current government faces the challenges of culling the clean from the corrupt and seeking equitable relief as a result of the actions of the former leaderships, a process which continues to remain highly charged, highly politicized and increasingly unmanageable, resulting in the call for social justice, employment, freedom and democracy. **Research Problem:** Implementing the open government initiative will pave the path to a more democratic Egypt, combat corruption, institutionalizing a fair system across all government entities and help in regaining trust of citizens. **Methodology:** This paper is an exploratory study on Egypt with a comparative perspective, using primary and secondary data. **Findings**: The findings of this paper show that Egypt has started the path towards a more open system through the implementation of e-government. Egypt to date is not signatory to Open Government Partnership (OGP) and the freedom of information law has not yet been past. By being part of the OGP movement this will help regain and build citizen trust in the government. **Limitations of the study:** Due to the lack of awareness of the open government concept on both the government and citizen level, this is an exploratory study aiming to shed light on the importance of awareness and the implementation of the concept in Egypt. **Originality/Value**: This is one of few research papers focusing on OGP as a means of regaining and building trust in the Egyptian Government.

Keywords: Open government, Egypt, corruption, transparency, accountability, democracy, civic engagement

I. Introduction

In an information and technologically driven world governments have transformed the way they are operating. This transformation made way to the concept of Open Government which has been the focus of governments worldwide for the past decade. Governments have joined forces together as multi-stakeholders, forming what is also known as the Open Government Partnership (OGP). This collaboration was initiated to promote citizen empowerment, accountability, transparency, governance and the combating of corruption. The OGP is seen as means of public transparency, information sharing and holding governments accountable for their actions which leads to better management, decision making and more efficient and effective delivery of services.

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It is now widely acknowledged that greater openness and the sharing of information benefits both citizens and governments alike. The three main outcomes of this initiative when implemented by governments should be improved policy making, discouraging corruption and building public trust in the government. Egypt after January 25, 2011revolution and the uprising of June 30th, 2013 has been granted a new beginning. Egyptians must learn from past mistakes, and the government has to start righting the wrongs and begin building a future by combating corruption with transparency, civic engagement and accountability. By implementing the Open Government concept and calling for Egypt to become part of the Open Government Partnership (OGP), this will make way for a more accountable transparent government. The path to a more democratic Egypt has started with many important positive measures, including a willingness to institutionalize a fair system across all government entities. With this new beginning came a new constitution to back up the dreams of the Egyptian public, the Egyptian Constitution was passed in referendum in 2014. This paper is an analysis of the Open Government Partnership and an attempt to shed light on the open government ideology and its importance as being one of the major building blocks for Egypt after the uprisings in combating corruption and regaining back the trust of the public.

Open Government Ideology and its Evolution

The term "Open" in Open Government is based on data that can be circulated, freely used, reused and redistributed by citizens'. Open government ensures that citizens have the right to access documents and proceedings of the government which allows for effective public oversight (Lathrop, 2010). The concept of Open Government is said to have dated back to the European Enlightenment, Scandinavian countries claimed that they adopted the first freedom of information legislation, dating back to the eighteenth century (Habermas, 1989). OGP is seen as a symbol of democratic practice and is directly linked to the passing of freedom of information legislation. To ensure proper activation and implementation of the Open government concept, countries must pass freedom of information laws; Egypt has not passed a freedom of information law to date. Other countries who are signatory to OGP have freedom of information legislation, the United States passed its Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) in 1966. The access to Information Acts (AIAs) or equivalent laws were passed in Denmark and Norway in 1970, France and The Netherlands in 1978. Australia, Canada passed legislation in 1982, the United Kingdom in 2000, Japan and Mexico in 2002, India and Germany in 2005 (Alasdair, 2006).

II. The Open Government Partnership (OGP)

The Launching of OGP and the Open Government Declaration

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) was launched in 2011 by the United States President Barack Obama and Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff during which the Open Government Declaration was endorsed. The inauguration was attended by heads of state from each of the eight founding governments (Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, Norway, Philippines, South Africa, United Kingdom, and United States) where each country announced their action plan. During this event 38 governments also joined this partnership, other member countries of the OGP are Canada, Israel, Indonesia, Turkey, Serbia, Italy, Kenya, Tunis, Romania, Malawi and Mexico, the list is long, reaching to date up to 54 participants. Egypt is not a member of the OGP and the only Arab country that is a member is Jordan (Clare, 2011). This partnership is a global community of government reformers, civil society leaders, and business innovators, together putting standards of good governance for the 21st century. The philosophy behind the initiative is that governments should be transparent, participatory and collaborative. The concept is meant to be mainstreamed across all the government agencies. OGP member countries must establish Open Government Web pages that can be accessed by the public for accessing information and feedback (Clare, 2011). Many countries have recently created websites that make public data available to every citizen on everything from crime statistics to political party financing, local budgets and government procurement and a detailed explanation on how public resources are being spent. These countries are Chile, Estonia, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Peru, Romania, Spain and Tanzania. Bulgaria, Croatia and Tanzania (Clare, 2011). This global culture of open governments empowers citizens, and advances the ideals of open and participatory governments which leads countries to be more prosperous, healthy and secure.

The Open Government Declarations

This global initiative also aims to enhance governmental performance, leading to more efficient and effective delivery of services. Citizens worldwide are calling upon governments to be more transparent, effective and accountable, empowering of citizens and the government responsiveness. This multi-stakeholder collaboration is supervised by a steering committee of member governments and civil society organizations.

(www.opengovpartnership.org) the steering committee is responsible promoting the initiative, calling for countries to commit and become members of this global initiative. As members of the OGP they are also committed to the principles stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Convention against Corruption, and other international instruments related to human rights and good governance. (www.opengovpartnership.org) For a country to become a member it must be signatory to the Open Government Declaration which will commit the country to:

1. Making **information about governmental activities available: I**ncreased access to information and disclosure about governmental activities at every level of government, systematically collecting and publishing data on government spending, procurement and performance of public services and activities. Countries must be proactive in providing information, including raw data, in a timely manner, in formats that are user-friendly and easily accessed. (www.opengovpartnership.org)

2. **Support civic engagement and participation:** Equal opportunity for public participation without discrimination, this includes participation in decision making and policy formulation. Public engagement increases the effectiveness and efficiency of the government performance, which in turn benefits people's knowledge, ideas and ability to provide oversight. Governments commit to making policy formulation and decision making more transparent, creating and using channels for public feedback, and deepening public participation in developing, monitoring and evaluating government activities. (www.opengovpartnership.org)

3. **Implement the highest standards of professional integrity throughout administrations:** Calling for high ethical standards and codes of conduct of public officials. Committed to combating corruption on all governmental levels, ensuring transparency in the management of public finances and government procurement. Establishing a legal framework to disclose information on the income and assets of national, high ranking public officials. In addition to enacting and implementing rules that protect whistleblowers. (www.opengovpartnership.org)

4. **Increase access to new technologies for openness and accountability: Acquiring** new technologies offers opportunities for better information sharing and public participation. Governments commit to developing accessible and secure online spaces as platforms for delivering services, engaging the public, and sharing information and ideas and committing to increased online and mobile connectivity. (www.opengovpartnership.org)

Open Government Standards

In pursuit of applying the open government concept, there are standards adopted by the OGP countries, these standards define the measures that different governments must adopt in order to advance and become Open Governments. Functioning as Open Governments and the ability to reach the outcomes behind the initiative, governments must adopt the following standards. The standards that are adopted or gradually adopted by all the members of the OGP are transparency, disclosure, accountability and civic empowerment and engagement. (www.opengovpartnership.org)
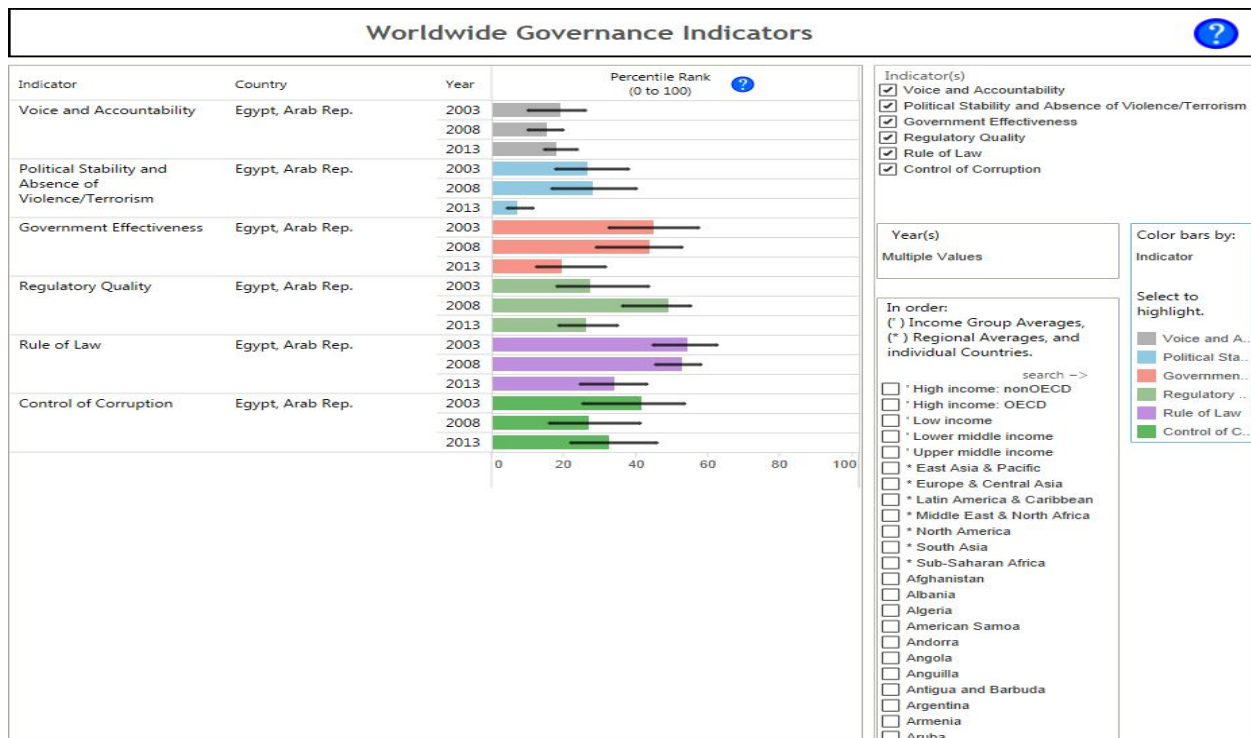
1. Transparency and Disclosure

Transparency means the availability of information about government activities which is made available to the public, in a timely manner, in open data formats and without restrictions on use and reuse. Transparency mechanisms must include the disclosure of information in response to requests from the public and proactive publication by public bodies. Transparency generates government accountability allowing citizens to undergo control of their government, in return this means possible reduction of government corruption and bribery. An open, transparent government also allows for the dissemination of information, which helps produce greater knowledge and in turn societal progress. Through transparency and the discloser of information citizens are empowered to confront, control and engage with their government (Lathrop, 2010). A World Bank study of the impacts of transparency on governance found that greater access to information could, among other things, improve risk management, economic performance and bureaucratic efficiency in governments.

Other studies have shown how increasing government openness can contribute to a higher rate of GDP growth, reduce the incidence of corruption and raise standards in public management and service delivery (Lathrop, 2010).

2. Government Accountability

An accountable government is when a government answers to the public, upholding standards of behavior and integrity, and both explaining and taking responsibility for its decisions and actions. Accountability requires that rules, regulations and mechanisms be in place governing the exercise of public power and the spending of public funds (Lathrop, 2010). These measures are required to reduce risk of corruption also to identify and prevent potential conflicts of interest. There are six dimensions or indicators of governance that attempt to clarify and control the acts of governments; they include voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, and regulatory quality, rule of law and control of corruption (Lathrop, 2010).

Figure 1: World Wide Governance Indicator

3. Citizen Engagement, Participation and Empowerment

When governments allow public participation this means that the public can engage directly in the consideration of policy options and decision making, and can contribute ideas that lead to policies, laws and decisions which best serve societal needs and democracy. When applying the Open Government concept, governments should actively seek to engage citizens in public debate and consultation. Citizen engagement is one of the core concepts behind open government; active citizenship is the link between transparency and accountability. For the government to meet the needs of citizens and exercise good decision-making, feedback from the public is required and this is done through civic engagement. Implementation of certain decisions requires consent and public support (Giordano, 2012). Citizens worldwide are calling for engagement beyond their role during general elections. It is important that citizen engagement is well designed and properly executed accompanied by a genuine desire by the government to involve the public and take their input into consideration.

Good citizen engagement which is considered a collective source of change that supports the effective functioning of democracy, the successful implementation of policy and supporting the achievement of intended social outcomes. Disengaged citizen practices can lead to poor decision making contributing to the lack of citizen trust towards the government (Giordano, 2012). Overcoming public disengagement and effectively responding to citizens requires a culture change in how governments interact and cooperate with the public. Civic engagement is classified into three categories civic, electoral, political voice.

Table 1: Categories of Civic Engagement

Civic	Electoral	Political voice
Community problem solving	Regular voting	Contacting officials
Regular volunteering for a non-electoral organization	Persuading others to vote	Contacting the print media
Active membership in a group or association	Displaying buttons, signs, stickers	Contacting the broadcast media
Participation in fund-raising run/walk/ride	Campaign contributions	Protesting
Other fund-raising for charity	Volunteering for candidate or political organizations	Email petitions
Run for Political office	Registering voters	Written petitions

Citizen Relationship Management (CRM) and OGP

Governments working with an "Open" mindset must be responsive and take into consideration the needs of their citizens' thus making Citizen Relationship management (CRM) another concept connected to the OGP. OGP government members are establishing a growing effort at all levels of government to respond quickly and accurately to citizen requests or inquiries for answers to questions about general information about policies, practices, and procedures. On-going feedback of citizens regarding societal issues is of utmost importance for the success of the OGP initiative. Ultimately, the goal of CRM is to foster closer, more effective and efficient relationships with the government, to better anticipate and meet citizen needs (Garsten, 2008).

Open Government Performance Indicators

Assessing the extent that governments are carrying out the open government initiative requires looking into indicators and applying benchmarks. All OGP members are required to establish an action plan that is monitored by the OGP steering committee, each member country is monitored using Open Government Performance Indicators. The steering committee analyzes the fulfillment of the goals associated with the initiative; this includes levels of transparency, accountability as well as the minimization of corruption. The existing open government indicators tend to focus either on the presence of key laws, institutions and citizens' perceptions of government performance (Mayo, 2007). There are indicators related to law (legislation) on access to information and documents, Freedom of Information Laws (FOI). The activation of FOI promotes openness, allowing for open records and giving citizens the right to access information. This law calls for proactive publication of information which is the actual publication of information to be accessible on government web pages, giving citizens' the ability to search, use and re-use information. Requiring governments' to meet citizens' demand for information and ensuring the access of information and documents for all citizens equally without discrimination (Mayo, 2007). Another indicator of the proper application of open government is government appointment of an ombudsman and information commissioner. The ombudsman and Information Commissioner must be an independent body that promotes and endorses the freedom of information. The ombudsman and Information commissioner provides equal access to its reports and services for all citizens equally (OECD, 2005). The commissioner also receives and investigates complaints from anyone who has been refused access to any information requested. In addition, indicators relating to consultation policies, public bodies are required to consult with citizens or other stakeholders concerning certain decisions (OECD, 2005). Therefore, to sum up the proper implementation of the initiative calls for Open Data which is the offering of government data in a more user friendly format to enable citizens, the private sector and non-government organizations to access and use the data in innovative and value-added ways. Also calling for open information which is proactively and periodically releasing of information to the public concerning government activities.

Finally, open dialogue or debate empowering citizens and giving them a stronger say in government policies and priorities and eventually expanding civic engagement (OECD, 2005). Complying by the Open Government performance indicators means governments will be delivering on its commitment to greater openness and accountability, thus eventually resulting in the regaining of the trust of citizens'. If implemented correctly, open government will be a platform that gives citizens' a voice and provides new channels for governments and citizens to work together. In the 21st century the most significant divisions among nations will be whether they are open or closed societies. Countries with open governments, open economies and open societies will flourish and prosper, becoming healthier, secure, and more peaceful countries.

III. Canada: Leading Pioneer in Open Government Initiative

The Government of Canada is considered a pioneer in the field of Open Government and a benchmark. The Canadian government is currently implementing its action plan which involves open information sharing, citizen and stakeholder engagement. The Canadian Government announced in its three year action plan (2014-16) commitment to enhance transparency and accountability and the expansion of Open Government (open.canada.ca, 2015). The Government is continuously working to give Canadians the opportunity to access public information in more useful and readable formats enabling greater insight into the inner workings of the Government and empower citizens to participate more directly in the decision-making process (open.canada.ca, 2015). Canada has historically led the way in providing accessible information to citizens, being one of the first countries to enact access to information legislation almost three decades ago, and is significantly expanded coverage through the *2006 Federal Accountability Act.* Canada has also demonstrated leadership in proactively disclosing information about contracts, grants, contributions, and even posting government hospitality and travel expenses on the Web. The Action Plan on Open Government is a continuation of Canada's long history in enhancing transparency, disclosure and government accountability (Birchall, 2011). The Open Government Action Plan was developed to direct and coordinate federal Open Government activities, committing to Open Data, Open Information and Open Dialogue. Open Data makes government data available in machine-readable formats for all Canadian citizens, private sector organizations and not-for-profit organizations to use and reuse. Canadians citizens can explore data sets to find information that is of value to them. The Open Data portal now has more than 272,000 data sets from 20 participating organizations, up from 10 at the launch of the portal (OECD, 2006).

Open Data initiatives fosters innovation, job creation and improved community services for Canadians, and helps create new businesses and research opportunities. Allowing citizens data access to gain knowledge about and participate in Government decision making. With the use of the Canadian Governments portal Open Information makes government information available to Canadians on a proactive and ongoing basis, it is about sharing knowledge and ensuring accountability (Birchall, 2011). Open Dialogue is about engaging Canadians and giving them a strong say in Government policies, programs and priorities. This will be supported by expanding engagement and interaction through Web 2.0 technologies, providing Canadians with greater opportunities to participate in the democratic process. The following are examples from the Canadian Open Government Initiative incorporated in the three year action plan 2014-16 (open.canada.ca, 2015):

Proactive Disclosure: Information is disclosed proactively by Government departments.

Access to Information and Privacy: Information about federal court cases and statistics of requests made under the *Access to Information Act* and the *Privacy Act.*

Completed Access to Information Requests: List of summaries of completed Access to Information requests processed by government institutions.

Government Expenditures reporting: information about financial and non-financial planning and performance information of individual departments and the Government as a whole. (www.opengovpartnership.org, 2015) Canada has also pledged to implement the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI). This pledge requires the reviewing of all IATI requirements and publishing its plan, making information about the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) activities available and accessible (open.canada.ca, 2015). The Canadian Government is delivering on its commitment to greater openness and accountability, strengthening its democratic reform agenda and driving innovation and economic opportunities for all Canadians (oecd.org, 2014).

IV. Public Mistrust: The Government of Egypt:

The reasons behind the mistrust of the public towards the government of Egypt goes back a long way, covering a period of more than sixty years. During the period of sixty years and three regimes Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak, Egyptians were constantly dissatisfied with government performance. This dissatisfaction was due to the deteriorating quality of life, leaving than 60% of Egyptians living under the poverty line, a surging 40% illiteracy rate and sky rocketing unemployment rates coupled up with the lack of proper health care and education (Aziz, 2014). The main source of these debilitating problems was and is government corruption, which eventually leads to the January 25, 2011 revolution, all Egyptians collectively calling for freedom, social equity, democracy and employment. The January revolution or uprising was a collective stand against sixty years of government corruption. The current government is facing the challenge of culling the clean from the corrupt and seeking equitable relief for the ills borne of the actions of the former leaderships. Righting the wrongs of the past is a task that will be neither easy nor quick; tracing corruption to its roots will require discernment and perseverance.

Several types of corruption occurred through the actions and failings of the past regimes which eventually lead to public mistrust:

1. Privatizations were commonly rigged for the benefit of insiders, and in many instances, these insiders were granted loans or "free" collateral from state banks to accomplish the sale. Public assets were sold well below market value to pre-identified buyers. (Aziz, 2014)
2. State bank liquidity was also misused to finance insiders' purchases and projects. This was usually accomplished by granting an individual a loan, with little or no collateral, only to have the loan written off within a short period of time. (Aziz, 2014)
3. By transmitting payments from insiders, allowing these insiders to circumvent making deposits at private banks, state banks were also used to "clean" funds from dubious sources. In fact, the lack of antimony laundering legislation and several other deficiencies caused Egypt to be identified in June 2001 by the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering as non-cooperative "in the fight against money laundering" (Aziz, 2014).
4. Finally, members of government sanctioned egregious acts of theft by acting as guarantors – in name only – to uncollateralized private bank loans; loans which often went unpaid.

Another example which led to the breeding of the mistrust of the government of Egypt was, for decades, the Egyptian government touted successful growth in key economic indicators: gross domestic product (GDP) grew at a 156% compound average growth rate for five years. Government also reporting that foreign direct investment (FDI) increased forty-fold from 2004 to 2008, and the market capitalization of listed companies on the Egyptian Exchange more than tripled over that same period (Aziz, 2014). By all appearances, the economy was burgeoning; the Egyptian leadership appeared to have generated impressive growth. And why shouldn't we believe such fantastic results? With those who would ordinarily question the government's progress benefiting from the deception as insiders, no one raised any contradiction to the government's claims. In actuality, if we apply a simple comparative analysis to the figures, we find that the picture is instead quite grim. The Egyptian economy is simply too small to create employment prospects or wealth-generating opportunities for the population as a whole. Egypt requires an extraordinary economic transition even to sustain basic living conditions for its people, let alone generate a higher standard of living.

Egypt and Corruption Ranking

Egypt is currently going through a period of change and transition and this transition was triggered by the need for democracy, freedom of speech and social justice for Egyptian people. This calls for empowering uses of information and communication technologies (ICTs) by both government and citizens. According to Transparency International and its The Corruption Perception Index Egypt is ranked 37/100 (transparency.org, 2015). This ranking is based on how corrupt a country's public sector is perceived to be, on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean). Transparency International's annual Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) also indicates 37 is highest that Egypt has reached since the survey first launched in 1995 (transparency.org, 2015). This ranking is a sign of widespread bribery, lack of punishment for corruption as well as lack of response to citizens' needs.

Initiatives by the Egyptian Government to Combat Corruption

A number of initiatives to combat corruption have been launched by the government in recent years, such as the establishment of the National Committee to Combat Corruption in 2008 and the Transparency and Integrity Committee, set up within the Ministry of State for Administrative Development in 2007 with the aim of diminishing corruption in the public sector (Aziz, 2014).

However, it was a widely held perception that former President Mubarak controlled all existing anti-corruption initiatives and agencies, and that they served as tools for Mubarak's personal political agenda. This explains why corruption scandals involving the sale of public companies at under-valuated prices to affiliates of Mubarak have had few consequences for the parties involved. Furthermore, it seems that in cases where action has been taken against high-ranking officials involved in corruption, the officials in question had already fallen out of the government's favor. Accountability of the government and Parliament is generally weak, despite the fact that there are regulations to govern conflict of interest and asset disclosure for members of government and the head of state. Currently Egypt is being managed without a parliament, next parliament elections to be held before the end of 2015.

Egypt and the OGP Initiative

To be able to combat government corruption and regain citizen trust, the Egyptian government must take part in OGP movement. Being a member country in the OGP the government must take part in the implementation of the open government initiative and changing the mindset of the government by mainstreaming openness, transparency and accountability in all its operations. There are four key elements to this:

1. An Enforceable and Effective Right to Freedom of Information Law

The freedom of information law is currently nonexistent in Egypt, to be able to activate the Open Government initiative it must be complimented with the freedom of information law. This law is an indispensable tool in supporting the transparency of government decisions, accountability and also increasing citizen and even investor confidence in Egypt's economy. The Egyptian government has proposed a draft for the freedom of information law, but this draft excludes national security agencies from public scrutiny (Lamble, 2002). The freedom of information law will contribute to greater confidence and trust in government. Along with legislation, Egypt's Parliament should also require the executive branch to voluntarily publish a broad range of information to Egyptian citizens. This disclosed information should include operational information relating to the activities and procedures of government agencies, and budget information including salaries and other benefits of government officials. This information must be available in a format readily accessible for Egyptians to retrieve, use and reuse (Aziz, 2014). Without accurate information, Egyptians cannot adequately stop the rising corruption rate that is debilitating the nation's economy and political system (Aziz, 2014). The least corrupt societies tend to be the ones with the longest history of openness and having right to information laws, a good example being Sweden which introduced a form of Right to Information Law in 1976. In the developing world India with the Indian Right to Information Law of 2005 (Lamble, 2002).

2. Proactive Government Regular and Open Publication of Information

A right to information law guarantees a reactive right for people to ask public officials for information about what they are doing and any documents they hold and the right to receive an answer. This needs to be balanced by a positive obligation of public bodies to provide, publish and to disseminate information about their activities, budgets and policies so that the public can know what they are doing, participate in public affairs, and challenge corruption. A benefit of proactive ongoing disclosure in countries such as Egypt as it moves towards democracy is that many of the vulnerable sections of society will be fearful of making information requests but if the information is available publically they can access it anonymously. Proactive disclosure also requires good information systems – something that many have identified as a significant weakness in Egypt (Lamble, 2002).

3. Effective Audit and Regulation Bodies with Autonomy

As the current experience in Egypt shows, laws and regulations are meaningless unless they are enforced. This will mean overhauling the existing State oversight institutions and if necessary creating new institutions – rooted in the new parliament, a reformed judiciary and with a revamped anticorruption agency. It will also involve improved accounting practices – publishing accurate accounts which are then open for scrutiny and debate. It will also involve timely financial management and regular reporting (Aziz, 2014).

4. Active and Engage Civil Society and Media

Media and civil society play an important in combating corruption in Egypt, investigative reporting in the local media is crucial in opening up large scale corruption. This creates disincentives for those engaged in corruption by threatening them with exposure.

In turn, this assumes that there is an independent media sufficiently robust to stand up to government or private intimidation. This requires strong support for freedom of speech to enable people to speak out and expose those engaged in corrupt practices as well as laws that secure the rights of whistleblowers. In many countries civil society have played a crucial role in underpinning greater openness, public pressure, and sources of advice and support (Kolstad, 2009). Governments need to integrate anti-corruption actions into all aspects of decision-making. They must prioritize better rules on lobbying and political financing, make public spending and contracting more transparent, and make public bodies more accountable and this can only be achieved through the open government initiative. The types of corruption described herein are standard practices in many developing countries, and when brought to light, it is not uncommon for the people to disengage from their path to capitalism and to retrench as a nationalist society. (Kolstad, 2009). The present is a critical time for Egyptians and the new government to take corrective and investigative measures in dealing with government corruption. Therefore, Egypt must join forces with the international community and become signatory to the OGP. Becoming part of this movement will not only give Egypt a means to start fighting corruption but being a part of the OGP will also send a message to citizens and to foreign investors that their trust in the Egyptian Government was not misplaced.

E-Government in Egypt

Egypt has invested in several e-government projects launching its way in 2004 towards the Open Government Initiative, but has still has a long way to go, senior policy makers in Egypt understand that e-government is about more than putting public services online. Microsoft was in charge of e-government implementation and the Government Gateway; the Egyptian government especially admired the UK Gateway technology (egypt.gov.eg, 2015). The first services offered to the public were the payment electricity, telephone bills and traffic fines. This was a result of insufficient attention to the specific benefits of using ICTs to achieve higher efficiencies across the whole public administration and particularly for what concerns full scale implementation of national projects as well as being considered when implementing Open Government initiative. Egypt has made important achievements in the field of e-government and is increasingly using ICTs to support policy making and online service delivery, this project was led by the Ministry of State for Administrative Development (MSAD) and the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MCIT) in 2004 (egypt.gov.eg, 2015). Without acknowledging the added value of using ICTs, Egypt might not fully exploit the potentials of e-government to support the transition process in key areas such as improved service delivery and open government policies. Egypt has achieved a high ranking in the UN Online Service Delivery index; however, the wide use of e-participation opportunities is not integrated with the administrative processes, hence limiting the impact of citizens' inputs in public sector reforms. (egypt.gov.eg, 2015). Ensuring coherence with, and integration of, the use of ICTs in the traditional government processes still constitutes an important challenge for Egypt, including the need to prioritize the shift from simply informational to fully transactional on line services and information sharing with citizens'. The open government initiative in Egypt will be fully successful only by building a strong national information infrastructure (NII). Accompanied by a strong NII and strategy, the capacity building and enhancing the skills of the personnel involved is also crucial to the proper implementation and success of open government initiative.

V. Conclusion

For Egypt to achieve sustainable democracy, many reforms remain to be implemented, the most important of which is public access to information that permits meaningful government accountability and the re-gaining of trust in the government. There is compelling evidence that properly implemented and enforced open government frameworks can support a number of benefits for governments and societies. The greater access to information could improve risk management, economic performance and bureaucratic efficiency in governments also contributing to a higher rate of GDP growth, reduction of corruption and most important raising standards in public management and service delivery. Studies of the impacts of access to information legislation in several countries have found that the knowledge that documentation will eventually be made public can be sufficient to drive up standards of decision-making and record-keeping procedures among public officials. Egypt's current political transformation requires the proper implementation of the Open Government ideology. Findings show that citizens and the government in Egypt agree on basic principles of information sharing and that both sides are largely comfortable with using social media for information and opinion sharing. However, findings also reveal a significant demand for guidance and support in understanding the data and information provided, underlining the need for a continuous reflection of the actual citizen context as to support the information sharing within any open government initiative.

The success of open government initiatives depends on understanding the informational needs of the concerned citizens and other stakeholders as prerequisite for open access to relevant data and information. However, it has not been studied yet how such informational needs can or should be identified to build a common ground between the people and their governments to be able to regain confidence and trust in the government.

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