OPEN DEVELOPMENT: THE ENGINE FOR UGANDA'S ADVANCEMENT

Press statement to commemorate the International Right to Know Day

Kampala 28th September – Today is the International right to know Day. The International Right To Know Day began on September 28, 2002, in Sofia, Bulgaria at an international meeting of access to information advocates who proposed that a day be dedicated to the promotion of freedom of information worldwide. The goal of RTK Day is to raise global awareness of individuals' right to access information and to promote access to information as a fundamental human right. It seeks to highlight the benefits of open, transparent and accountable governments.

On 11-12 September, representatives of diverse civil society organizations (CSOs), government, development partners, private sector, academia and citizens, met at Hotel Africana in Kampala for the Open Development Stakeholders Workshop with the objective of **Understanding the Open Development landscape and issues in Uganda, and proposing a programme focus, strategy and design.**

Open development is where organisations are using Information technologies, among other information sharing channels, to provide and share information. Open Data enhances transparency and accountability about resources that are available to be invested in development, how those resources are invested and what results they achieve. In the end, all the stakeholders involved in this information sharing chain benefit from this mutually reinforcing ecosystem.

Recognising the positive steps that the Uganda government has taken in Promoting transparency and good governance as enshrined in the Constitution and other regulatory and policy frameworks, the delegates nevertheless underscored the importance of putting in practice the several statutory pronouncements that government has into the access to information act, the constitution, and other government documents. The workshop further highlighted the importance of civil society, development partners and private sector opening up as well; as these efforts work better when all stakeholders with sharable information pull their efforts together.

The conference ended with the establishment of the Uganda open development collaboration and the partners agreed to establishment of a web portal where all sorts of development information; on Agriculture, Health, education, energy, will be displayed so that anyone who needs the data can access it. It will espouse robust data collection, access and use techniques as well as a feedback mechanism that allow interface with the producers and users of information.

The conference also ended with a call to action to all stakeholders to fast track openness as a way of promoting transparency and accountability, thereby improving development outcomes:

The call was to:

(a) The Uganda government to:
- implement Article 41 of the Uganda Constitution and the Access to Information Act, 2005, both relating to information access;
- review and repeal policies, regulations, legislation and practices that are restrictive or inconsistent with the above provisions and with regional and international open data standards and that interfere with access to information and development;
- prioritise the development of capacity and awareness, among stakeholders to facilitate open development, access to and dissemination of data and information
- sign on to, and apply the principles of, the Open Government Partnership;
- ensure transparency of, and access to, public information;
- ensure that the process of data access involves a wide cross-section of stakeholders, including civil society organisations, private sector, and development partners;
- develop and support partnerships with civil society organisations on specific open development initiative.

(b) Uganda's development partners to:
- Openly share information on funding availability and disbursements in line with the provisions of the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI)
- Promote collaboration and networking with civil society organisations and governments in promoting open development
- Recommit to adoption of the Paris principles on aid effectiveness and the Accra protocol;
- Support efforts that are aimed at promoting transparency of all resources, including budgets, aid, resources about extractive industries, and about private flows.

(c) Civil society organisations in Uganda to:
- Adopt transparency principles as stipulated in the Civil Society Quality Assurance Mechanism (QuAM);
- Strengthen support and collaboration to develop a network of ogranisations that actively advocate for and implement open development;
- Create and use clear feedback mechanisms of engagement in identifying and addressing citizens needs
- Facilitate community and or citizen documentation of evidence on what works (or not).
- Facilitate partnerships with development partners and government
- Encourage the development of technologies and applications that innovatively engage citizens and promote community participation in governance and account ability;
- Participate actively in positively influencing uptake of open data and open development policy and governance issues at national, regional and international level.

(d) The private sector, think-tanks and academia in Uganda to:
- Encourage research and innovation creating applications that can promote Open development in Uganda through innovative applications; Create partnerships and collaborations in developing open data platforms
- Invest in the process of developing open development and open data processes;
- Contribute to analysis of primary data for ease of access to citizens; and,
- Explore opportunities for making communication products accessible and at reason able cost to users, in particular communities.

In the spirit of the international right to know day, and in support of the above proclamations, therefore, partners:

(a) Agreed to collaborate in an Open Development Initiative that brings together stake holders in data access, analysis, and use, as well as developers of applications;
(b) Reiterated the need for a multi stakeholder approach to open development building on previous and current experiences and expertise, to minimize duplicating efforts, promote effective resource utilization, and enhance coordinated partnerships; and,
(c) Recognized that openness at the national, regional and global levels is essential for development, democratisation and empowerment.

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