Short Session Report

Session Title: My Society and online civic engagement
Date & Time: Dec 2, 2016
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PLEASE INCLUDE BEST QUOTES!

Experts:

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Moderated by: Bruce Kay, USAID
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Main issues raised in kick off remarks. What’s the focus of the session?

Digital tools for online civic engagement make it easy for people to ask governments for information and to hold them to account.

What initiatives have been showcased? Briefly describe the Game Changing strategies/ ideas (if applicable)

- WhatDoTheyKnow – FOIA software – used worldwide to search govt data on procurement, other govt services
- **TheyWorkForYou.com** – parliamentary monitoring software – open source and free – helps voters formulate opinions of elected officials
- **EU Transparency Initiative** – information on 98 web sites is scraped daily to gather lobbying data to help analyse policy formation
- **Dio Aqui Guate** – Tool used by legal advice clinic to create legislative proposals. Via cell phone one can download app and report corruption or an electoral crime

Briefly describe the highlights including the thematically interesting questions and ideas that were generated from the discussion or from the floor, and session quotes.

- The UK has some very strong tools for citizens to monitor lawmaker voting patterns, etc and other information for making judgments about public spending.
- It’s easy to build tools that look great but getting people to use them is much harder.
- You poison the well if you do this badly. If you don’t update a web site or it’s hard to use, it ruins the experience of others and the overall perception of these web sites.
- In the post-truth world (citing the US election) where data and facts do not matter – what do you do?
  - Google and Facebook have big civic engagement teams so we are not tackling this problem of fake news alone.
- **Q** – How do you get message across that this is for citizens?
- **A** - In some situations this doesn’t bring about the change that is wanted. And lawmakers say no one looks at this anyway so why do we need to collet this info. So work closely this investigative journalists, data journalists – that is the next challenge. In Ukraine smart systems needed to analyse the data and expose cases that need to be exposed.
- **Q** = When reporting a public official in corruption – how deal with safety issues and e-traceable complaints?
- **A** = No public official has access to the app and we use security and info protocols. We know risks in Guatemala and try to manage them very carefully.
Q. Sierra Leone - we used to go after big fish and then we turned to these apps and targeted police bribes and small fish and the public complained we were not going after the big fish.

A – We take information on bribes etc and track that to see the bigger picture. We had a case where 20 judges were indicted that was tracked thru many smaller complaints.

What are the key recommendations, follow-up Actions (200 words narrative form)

The moment people stop caring is the moment we lose the fight and we can no longer change the way politics work.

We take information on bribes etc and track that to see the bigger picture. We had a case where 20 judges were indicted that was tracked thru many smaller complaints.

Online tools for citizens require a certain level of societal functioning. State capture can make these tools not very good.

The potential for citizen empowerment – but also has some limitations. And some risks when reporting acts of corruption and exposing themselves to retaliation.

We are much farther along in this space than 20 years ago when all you could do was write a letter to your political representative.

These web sites and apps can gather enough information on bribes etc and create an image of a much larger corruption pattern and network. They can turn small fish into big fish.

Key Insights that could be included in the IACC Declaration

Digital tools for online civic engagement make it easy for people to ask governments for information and hold them to account.

We are much farther along in this space of online corruption reporting and transparency than 20 years ago when all you could do was write a
letter to your political representative.

Rapporteur’s name and date submitted

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