

Open Government Initiative in Edo State

FOSTERING AN ECOSYSTEM OF
COLLABORATION AND TRANSPARENCY

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This Note is intended to briefly describe the World Bank's experience supporting the development and implementation of an open government initiative in Nigeria's Edo State. It reflects upon the process of design and implementation of the first phase of the Edo State Open Government Initiative, which began in 2011 and sought to establish a broader framework for an Open Government ecosystem in the state. Phase 1 culminated with the launch of the Edo State Open Data Portal in September 2013, the first sub-national portal in Africa. Using this experience as a reference point, the note seeks to surface some lessons learned for effectively partnering with governments (both federal and state) on an open government agenda.

WHAT IS OPEN GOVERNMENT?

At its core, open government is commonly perceived as being comprised of three main pillars: participation, transparency and collaboration.

Participation is largely about citizen engagement and creating greater opportunities for people to directly engage and influence the process, decision-making and service delivery of government. Transparency concerns the ability of people to understand how government works and how it performs, from public expenditures and service delivery to procurement and regulations. Collaboration rests on the idea that government should not have a monopoly on decisions, policies or service delivery. Rather, government should act as a convener to partner with citizens, civil society and other stakeholders to co-create better policy and outcomes.



One key goal of open government—which should be enabled by greater participation, transparency and collaboration, including via various ICT platforms—is increased accountability of government. This means that citizens can hold their governments to account for their actions, policies and performance, and that there are consequences when government fails to deliver.

THE BANK'S GLOBAL EXPERIENCE IN OPEN GOVERNMENT

In approaching open government in Edo State, the World Bank drew on its significant experience working with governments around the world. The Bank partners with governments on various



aspects of open government, realized through a wide range of programs, activities and modalities. These range from helping develop new channels for citizen engagement and participation (such as participatory budgeting), creating sectoral performance dashboards, assisting with the development of National Action Plans in connection with the Open Government Partnership, supporting the implementation of open data initiatives by pioneering governments and many other areas.

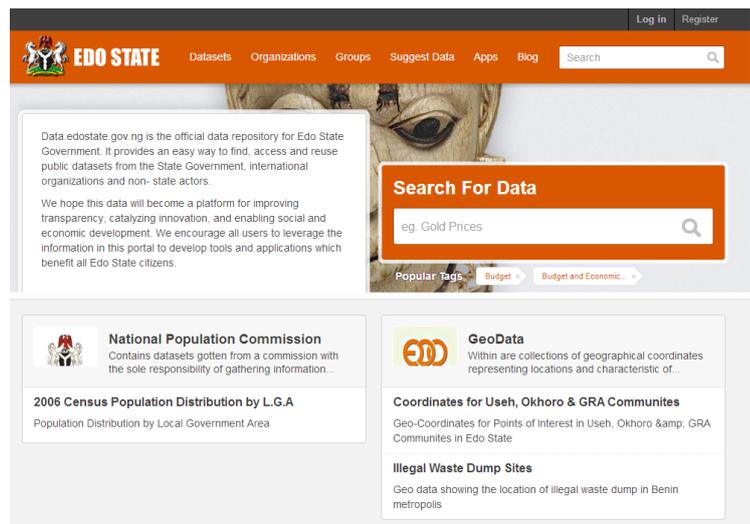
The World Bank's rich and varied experience working with governments on innovative open government efforts provided a strong foundation for its support to Edo State in its open government agenda.

THE BANK'S WORK IN EDO STATE IN OPEN GOVERNMENT

In recent years, the Edo State Government has made major investments in a reform agenda that are bringing visible improvements to the lives of its citizens. Building on these achievements and on a broader partnership with the World Bank, the Edo State Government began implementing an Open Government Initiative in 2011.

The strategic context for catalyzing an open government ecosystem in Edo State was the State's development strategy, as outlined in a report by the Vision 2020 Stakeholder Development Committee for Edo State. This report is the blueprint for Edo State's economic transformation, targeting not only sustainable economic growth but also good governance. Its objectives directly connect to open government:

- Increase citizen access to quality social services and basic infrastructure;
- Promote partnerships between government and the private sector;
- Increase the transparency and accountability of government;
- Strengthen prudent economic management (i.e., improved expenditure management); and
- Make governance more inclusive by expanding the use of broad-based consultative for all, especially for policy design and implementation.



Edo's open data portal was launched in September 2013.

Before starting formal work on open government in Edo State, the Bank already had in place three major engagements through Bank investment operations or Bank-executed trust funds—The Development Policy Operation (DPO), the State Employment Expenditure for Results (SEEFOR) and The Community Based Urban Development Project. The open government program built upon these experiences, as the World Bank Open Data team was able to build on existing relationships, dialogue and experiences from previous and ongoing work of the World Bank in the state.

Under this Open Government Initiative, an Edo Open Government Framework and Action Plan were produced by Edo's ICT Agency (ICTA) with contributions from multiple agencies and civil society organizations in Edo State, while incorporating global best practices and input from international experts.

The Initiative aims to change the way Edo's citizens' access and engage with their government. The Initiative conceived government as a "platform" that enables many stakeholders—MDAs (ministries, departments and agencies), civil society and individual citizens—to directly engage in public activities such as delivering public services (especially ICT enabled services), reusing government data, monitoring government spending and performance, participating in policymaking and reporting problems with public services.

Elections in 2012 returned the Governor for a second term with an increased majority in an election widely touted as relatively free and fair.

The Framework for Edo State's Open Government Program is visualized on the chart below. It was designed based on a series of consultations with MDAs, CSOs and other key stakeholders. The initiative was conceived as five platforms, composed of supporting activities that were sourced from the stakeholder consultations.

The platforms include: an Open Data Platform, a Citizen Engagement Platform, an Innovation Platform, a Public Service Platform and an Institutional Platform.

The initial framework was designed to be both overarching in scope and allowing for flexibility in implementation. Its "modular" structure enables the government to easily remove or add components as Edo's needs and priorities changed over time.

Key activities under two platforms (Open Data and Citizen Engagement) were identified as immediate priorities through consultations with MDAs and CSOs. Under the Open Data Platform, the team focused on the Open Data Portal and Government Digitization. Within the Citizen Engagement Platform, the government and World Bank teams explored novel approaches to

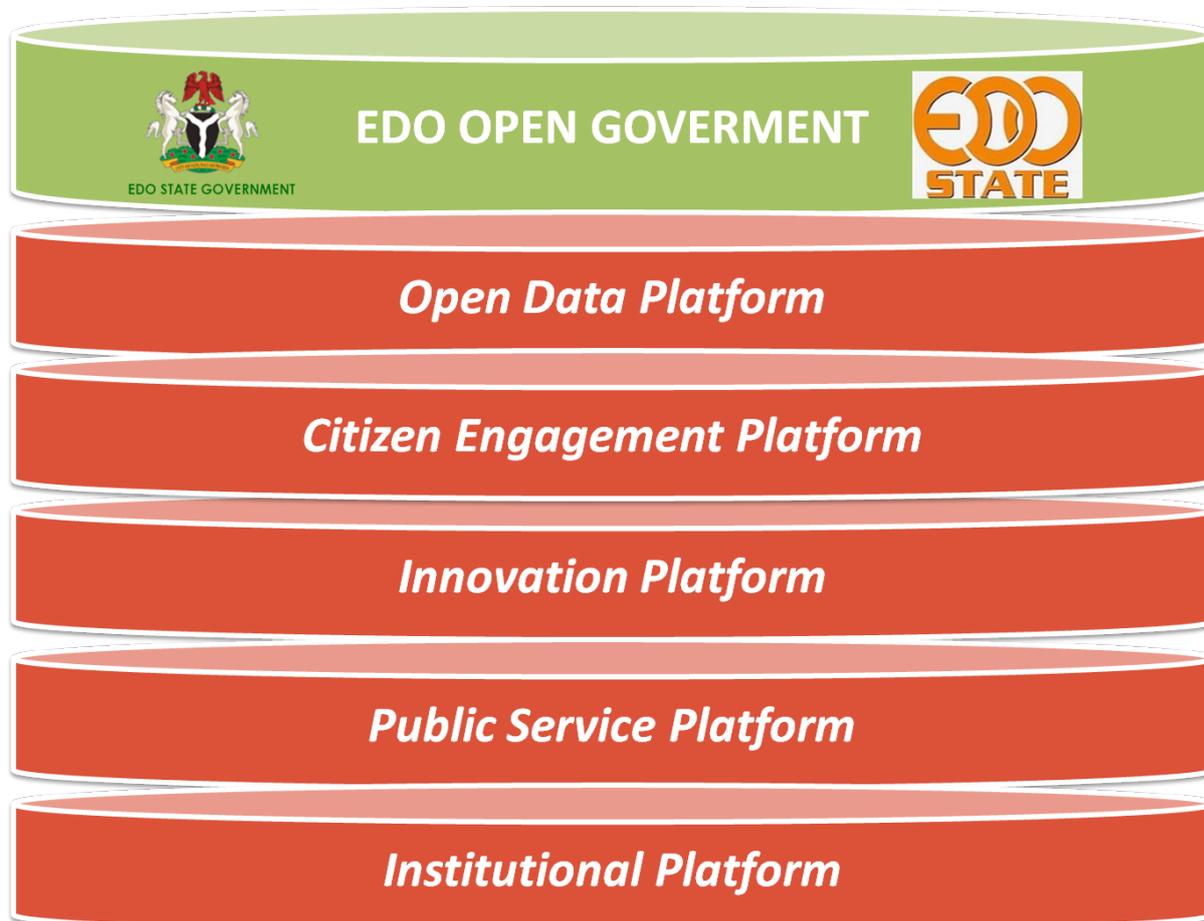


Figure 1: Edo Open Government platforms

addressing the challenges of Budget Transparency, Teacher Absenteeism and Urban Upgrading. These activities represented the first Phase of the Edo Open Government Program, and their implementation already began in late 2012.

Edo State launched an Open Data Portal (data.edostate.gov.ng) in September 2013, providing citizens with free access to high-value government data. The Edo Open Data portal is the first Open Data portal in Nigeria and the first by a sub-national government in all of Africa.

Since the public unveiling of Edo Open Government Program through the launch of the Open Data Portal, the Edo State Open Data Management team has become a strong advocate for the open data in Nigeria, access to information and the greater usage of data-driven decision making within government service delivery. The Edo Open Data team participated in the Federal Open



A participant reads the announcement of the Open Data Portal at the Edo State Technology Days

Data Stakeholder workshop discussions, worked with CSOs and academia from across Nigeria in utilizing Edo's published data, and also continue to engage with the Edo State developer community and those in other parts of Nigeria.

ONGOING ACTIVITIES AND NEXT STEPS

As part of the follow up to the launch of the Open Data portal, the World Bank and Edo Open Data Management Team had planned a sequence of activities to sustain

public engagement.ⁱ One of the key activities was the publication of a new collection of open government data and/or data visualizations. Specifically:

- **New Datasets** – New dataset collections of digitized government data are being selected and released regularly by the open data portal manager.
- **New Data Visualizations** – The World Bank team, the Open Data Portal manager and the broader technology community is collaborating to release new data visualizations each month highlighting novel approaches to extrapolating value from existing data sets.

Subsequent to the launch of the Open Data Portal, the Open Data and World Bank teams reflected on the first phase of the Open Government Initiative, and the direction of the work

ⁱ All three citizen engagement pilot activities were scoped, however none were scaled beyond initial context scoping as early analysis suggested that all three required policy reforms that fell beyond the scope of the project. While this process highlighted the limitation of Open Data to solve some more structural issues in service delivery, these low-cost, just in time efforts provided valuable knowledge on the ways in which these sort of initiatives can trigger discussions on reform. In order to put that knowledge to use, the diagnostic work was shared with other Bank teams in order to inform reform processes financed under SEEFOR, the Education PIL and the NDSA projects.

The activities were important mechanisms for unveiling the core service delivery bottlenecks that led to each problem. In all cases, that original hypothesis that access to information was a dominant constraint on improving delivery outcomes did not hold true. Subsequently, the World Bank team was able to offer specific advice to the Government and sister World Bank project teams on how to tackle the issues. However, these solutions went beyond the scope of this Open Government project and therefore were linked with appropriate Bank initiatives and Units that offered a better opportunity to address them, such as the Education (i.e. Education PIL, SEEFOR and NDSA).



moving forward. The results of these reflections are documented in the lessons learned selection at the end of this note.

The Edo State Open Data team made the decision to focus their efforts and skillsets supporting data-driven decision making within government priority areas. Based on previous experiences, the team strategized that through targeted engagements, they could gain prioritized access to the data of government stakeholders, align team capacity building with specific government needs and outcomes, and showcase their value in enabling data-driven decision making in core government operations. Building on this revised theory of change, they hypothesized that the momentum and outcomes gained from these types of engagements would provide a more sustainable foundation on which to institutionalize Open Data within the Edo State Government.

Box 1: Ongoing activities

Each month a new collection open government data and/or data visualizations is released to the public to support ongoing interest in the data portal:

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NEXT STEPS AND GOOD PRACTICES TO ENGAGE WITH GOVERNMENTS

1. A shared approach

In Edo State, the World Bank aimed to work closely with the state government to build an open government initiative from “the ground up”, meaning that we engaged a wide range of stakeholders across government and across civil society.

The incentive behind this approach was to avoid simply importing open government solutions from elsewhere, and instead focusing on a shared approach to defining a vision for open government in Edo State that could then be translated into an agenda that reflects specific priorities of Edo stakeholders.

2. Baseline assessment

Open government work in Edo State began in November 2011 with a baseline assessment. The assessment exercise had three main objectives: (i) to take stock of any existing activities or initiatives related to open government that are being led by the government itself or by Bank teams managing investment operations or Trust Funds; ii) to identify synergies between Bank

and governments priorities and initiatives to identify possible financing options; and (iii) to begin socializing open government within government, with a particular focus on open data and citizen engagement/participation.

The initial exercise concluded with a wrap-up workshop to provide a wider audience with an introduction and orientation to open government. In this case, the wider audience included CSOs sitting together with a selection of ministry representatives ranging from Permanent Secretaries down to lower officials. The presentation sparked a spirited discussion of the prospects and potential priorities and value proposition for open government in Edo State.

Importantly, the assessment set a precedent that would continue throughout the Bank's open government engagement in Edo State. Specifically, this precedent involved engaging government agencies and civil society organizations as partners in the discussion, design and planning of an Open Government Framework for Edo State. State Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, lower level officials and NGOs all had a seat at the table to participate in defining and prioritizing Edo's open government agenda.

3. Building from the “ground up”

The design of Edo State's Open Government Framework began with few assumptions. The approach was to use information and perspectives gathered during the baseline assessment to drive a dialogue among stakeholders about what open government in Edo State should look like.

Meetings to discuss potential high-impact projects were held with individual MDAs. These often focused on possible activities in specific sectors such as education (teacher absenteeism), health (combining open data from disease surveillance system with real-time, crowdsourced information) and sanitation (mapping locations of illegal waste dumps).

Major decisions about Edo's Open Government Framework were tabled at multi-stakeholder workshops that included senior government officials (often State Ministers and Permanent Secretaries), mid-level officials and civil society organizations. Such workshops were held during 2011 and 2012 to agree on Edo's vision for open government, the design of the Open Government Framework and the selection of priority projects for the initial implementation phase.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM EDO STATE

There are a number of lessons that can be distilled from this experience to inform the Bank's



involvement in the Open Government agenda in other states of Nigeria or elsewhere in the world. The team has tried to summarize them below.

1. Importance of building political support and leadership from beginning

The management of Edo's open government efforts was led by the State's Directorate of ICT, which reports directly to the Governor. The Program received critical support from the State Secretary General (SSG) who, among other things and on behalf of the Governor, directed MDAs to make available data for release on the then-forthcoming Edo State Open Data portal. Direct and personal involvement by the senior-most leaders in Edo State was an important factor in seeing open government move from paper to action.

It is important to note that, in many cases, opening up data is a political decision. Therefore, it is important to garner sufficient buy-in and stakeholder engagement for opening up challenging data. Failure to do this can put information on the portal at risk as well as significantly undermine trust and willingness to open up further information.

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2. Building a strong delivery team on the Bank's side

It was important to build a strong coalition which included: a multi-disciplinary delivery team comprised of social development experts who understand local context and nuances of working in Nigeria and Edo state in particular; a strong technology team that was able to effectively engage with the local technology community; global open government and open data experts who were able to bring in perspectives from other countries; and a dedicated TTL who was able to connect the dots needed to integrate open government -related work with other Bank funded activities.

3. Exposing leaders of Edo state internationally

Being able to refer to examples of other countries and positioning Edo State as the first in Nigeria to pursue an open government agenda helped gain political support. The political support was sealed when the Governor was invited to Washington to attend and speak at Global Conference on Citizen Engagement for Enhanced Development Impact.

4. Using multi-stakeholder dialogue to shift how government engages



The effective use of regular, multi-stakeholder dialogues helped served as a foundation for how Edo’s citizens access and engage with their government. The Framework that emerged from these dialogues conceived Government as a “platform” enabling many stakeholders—MDAs, civil society and citizens—to directly engage in public activities such as partnering in delivery of public services, reusing government data, monitoring government spending and performance, participating in policymaking, and reporting problems with public services.

5. Effective sequencing that allowed sufficient time to socialize ideas and create government’s buy-in

The entire process of defining and finalizing an Open Government Framework in Edo State took some time—more than two years. While this might strike some as excessively long, in reality the

Multi-stakeholder dialogues helped serve as a foundation for citizens to access and engage with their government.

time was a good investment. It enabled activities to be sequenced with sufficient time to socialize concepts and create buy-in from a wide range of government and non-government stakeholders. This not only included key MDAs but also a variety of civil society organizations, development partners and software developers.

Importantly, stakeholders had the time to consider each step and absorb many new ideas as the initiative progressed from concept note and program design to a fully elaborated Open Government Framework and agreement on priority projects and budgeting.

6. Raising awareness at every step and bringing in CSOs to put pressure

In the context of Edo’s open government efforts, it was important to retrace ground (i.e., meetings) and review material that was already covered in order to continue building awareness about open government and to identify new opportunities to link it with priorities of various MDAs. Over time, this not only reinforced the “buy-in” from early movers—like the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Works and Ministry of Environment & Public Utilities —but also enabled progress to continue with MDAs despite changes in their top political leadership.

The value of regular awareness-raising applied equally to non-government stakeholders. NGOs participated in every open government workshops held during 2012-2013. This was important to enable their engagement, contributions to the Open Government Framework and create dialogue with (and place pressure on) government to continue moving forward.

7. Capacity building as a public good



Specific skill sets around data – such as data visualization, data cleaning/ analysis, and application development – are not only valuable to stakeholders across government involved in Open Government Initiative, but are also important for stakeholders outside of the government in accessing and utilizing the information being published. Capacity building skills development played an important and a consistent role throughout the first phase of the Edo’s Open Government Initiative, as the ICTA’s Open Data team was trained to oversee the Initiative’s activities themselves.

However, thanks to the leadership of ICTA, all the training and workshops organized for the team, such as those by leading Open Data Organization the Open Knowledge Foundation, were also opened up beyond the immediate ICTA team. All the technical workshops that took place in Phase 1, included participation from focal points in other government agencies, as well as members of the public, such as developers and NGOs. This decision extended the notion of the “public goods” the open government initiative was seeking to create, beyond just its outcomes, to also include the process that led to it.

The “public goods” that the open government initiative sought to create were extended beyond just outcomes to include the process as well.

8. “Connecting the Dots” – Linking Open Government to other Bank financed initiatives

The World Bank in Nigeria, through the leadership of the Task Team Leader for the Open Government Program, ensured that the Bank’s support for open government in Edo State directly connected to and leverages the three major Bank-supported initiatives mentioned earlier – the DPO, SEEFOR and the Community-Based Urban Development Project. Identifying synergies among these projects and exploring how they could increase the resources, engagement and impact of open government efforts – especially the initial priority projects in the Open Government Framework – had a visible and positive impact.

9. Aligning activities with government priorities and service delivery bottlenecks

While the release of government data to the public and greater engagement with citizenry in governance represent public goods in themselves, resource constraints, government inertia and changing political priorities can hinder progress in explicit ways (non-participation in workshops) and implicit ways (delays in releasing reports). Moreover, because open data is new and its perceived value as a public good can be difficult to quantify, open data can at times be seen as a risk, increasing government’s exposure to critique without significant gain. The concerns often hindered the open data team’s ability to do work.



However, the skills that enabled the Edo open data team to clean, analyze, and visualize information in accessible ways for the public, can also be of significant value to the government in supporting their service delivery responsibilities and decision making. The Edo open data team found that when government stakeholders understood their value as a unit to accomplishing their own goals, this significantly decreased the team's friction in accessing that agencies information, and ultimately releasing the data (or subsets of it) to the public. Moreover, aligning with specific priorities ensured that the team had ready access to primary user groups of the visualizations and applications they created, and increased the likelihood that the outputs would more likely be utilized.

It was this lesson that most influenced the Edo open data team's decision to change their approach as a team after the launch of the portal, to focus on becoming an effective service provider in the usage of information for decision making.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The World Bank's engagement with the Edo State Government in establishing of an Open Government Framework and moving open government ideas forward has resulted in a number of tangible outcomes and public goods. These include the launch of the Edo State Open Data Portal, which contains more than 100 data sets, most of which had not been previously digitized or released to the public before. This data is now being reused by the developer's community and are providing citizens of Edo with free access to high-value, government data. The government created two special units: a data digitalization unit, and a GIS unit.

The digitization team was tasked with identification of data, scanning/digitalization, cleaning up and sustaining these processes beyond Bank's support. This team subsequently evolved into



the Open Data Management Team, and now oversees the Government's Open Data Portal, lead government and public engagement, and drives the implementation of the initiative. They have defined themselves as a core service provider to the government in the management of government data and the goal of supporting data-driven decision making within service delivery.

The personnel of the GIS Unit were trained in collection of geo-referenced information that would enable the creation of digital maps based on government information. They subsequently became the core of the recently formed Ministry of Urban Development & Housing.

The case of Edo presents a valuable knowledge sharing opportunity around creating an open government ecosystem and moving this agenda forward in a complex environment. As public goods, these achievements have created a foundation for a dialogue on which the way information is accessed and used both within the public discourse, as well as with the Edo State government itself. Measuring the full extent of this value is not singularly possible in the immediate usage, but, as has been seen in the case of many other open government initiatives elsewhere in the world, in use cases and applications that one could not predict.

In Phase 2 of the Edo's open government, the period following the launch, the Edo State Open Data team, with support from the World Bank and the firm Reboot (WB vendor), have increased their investment in working with Government agencies to supporting data-driven decision making within priority service delivery contexts. The experiences of this approach will be documented in a follow up note

This note was developed to benefit the World Bank staff working on similar activities in other states of Nigeria and at the federal level as well as for colleagues working on open government in other countries. ●

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This note reflects on the work undertaken by a larger team from the TWICT and Social Development Units. Both units joined efforts to implement the activities planned for the project described in this note. The team was comprised by: Caroline Sage, Merrick Schaefer, Lyudmila Bujoreanu, Jeff Kaplan, Paula Andrea Rossiasco, Rosa Maria Martinez, Matthew McNaughton, Samhir Vasdev, and Ayo Rotibi.

This Briefing Note was cleared by Ian Bannon, Sector Manager, AFTCS, Africa Region, The World Bank.

This essay is one of several that comprise the series “Perspectives on Social Development: Briefing Notes from Nigeria”. These briefing notes highlight the World Bank’s cross-disciplinary, adaptive and context-specific approach to social development in Nigeria. Topics include gender, social inclusion, violence prevention, social accountability and community-driven development. They are written by members of the World Bank social development team working in Nigeria.

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