

# RECORDS, OPEN GOVERNMENT AND HISTORICAL ACCOUNTABILITY

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# Open Government

- Open Government Declaration:
  - Increase the availability of information about governmental activities.
  - Support civic participation.
  - Implement the highest standards of professional integrity throughout our administrations.
  - Increase access to new technologies for openness and accountability.

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- Records for Current Accountability
  - Records for Historical Accountability
    - FOI
    - Open data

# Records for Current Accountability

Freedom of Information

Code of Practice on Records Management under s 46

“Freedom of information legislation is only as good as the quality of the records and other information to which it provides access. Such rights are of little use if reliable records are not created in the first place, if they cannot be found when needed or if the arrangements for their eventual destruction or transfer to an archives service are inadequate.”

# Records for Current Accountability

Open Data

Provenance

Contextual metadata (archival bond)

Audit trails (documented custodianship)

Data citation practices

Use in civic technologies

<https://www.theyworkforyou.com>

# Records in the UK's OGP NAP

## Second NAP (2013-15)

- The UK government will manage and capture digital records and there will be a comprehensive, accessible and timely paper and digital record of UK government available to the citizen. (Commitment 5)
- Commitment 8 (Police Records)

## Third NAP (2016-18)

No records commitments

# Records in Other NAPs

- Kenyan NAP made a commitment to enhance 'right to information by strengthening records management and access to information'. The Kenyan commitment is particularly detailed, including the development of minimum technical requirements for digital records management systems, the establishment of a central digital repository for government records, and policies and procedures and capacity building programmes.
- Ghana made a commitment on records management under 'Technology and Innovation'. Ghana's commitment to technology and innovation starts by stating 'Government commits to improve records management by providing a framework for all public institutions to manage information so that they can efficiently provide information when the RTI law is passed'. It goes on to describe actions around infrastructure, policy and capacity, each connecting digital technology, records and data. Maybe contextualize these examples a bit? Do they have different priorities for a reason? How do they relate to each other?
- Sierra Leone made a commitment on records and archives management. Sierra Leone's commitment states that 'Without proper records management systems of key government documents, they cannot be publicly disclosed. Effective records management is also important for accountable and transparent operation of public institutions.' The NAP commits Sierra Leone to bringing records management, FOI and open data into alignment through the harmonisation of information laws.

# Records for Historical Accountability

- Tunisia has used the OGP process to commit to 'enhancing access to the archive'.
- Police records in the UK
- *Paper Cadavers: The Archives of Dictatorship in Guatemala*, Kirsten Weld, 2014
- Gacaca courts in Rwanda
  
- It is the evidential and process-bound nature of these records that allows them to perform their accountability function



# Conclusion

- Records and archives need to be part of the OGP agenda
- And broader open government agenda
- The professional ethics and integrity of record-keepers is crucial to archival openness
- Move to presumption of openness
- Ties in to larger questions about what is the state and who does it serve
- Citizen archivists and counterveillance / personal record-keeping