Using beneficial ownership data in Armenia

Workshop for civil society organisations and journalists

Background

Armenia is a [world leader](#) in beneficial ownership transparency. Since 2021, Armenia has been collecting and publishing beneficial ownership information in a well-structured, open data format in a [public Business Register](#). Starting with extractive companies' data, the country subsequently expanded reporting requirements to public utility and media firms during 2022, and is anticipated to have gathered beneficial ownership data for firms across the entire economy in 2023.

This data [is published](#) in line with the [Beneficial Ownership Data Standard](#) (BODS) to ensure data is interoperable, easily reusable, and high quality, and it uses the [BODS data visualiser](#) to help the Register users to understand how ownership structures operate through simple visualisations.

Additionally, since 2017 Armenia is an implementing country of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), and has since then published three EITI reports covering four fiscal years. The reports contain information about the extractive sector legislative base, licensing process and operations, including tax proceeds disclosure and reconciliation, and beneficial ownership data from extractive companies.

However, to date, civil society use of the data in the Business Register and EITI reports has not been especially extensive. This is due, in part, to limited levels of awareness of the scope and availability of these datasets, but is also a result of limitations in local technical capacity and in the expertise that are required to analyse data on company ownership structures which are often highly complex.

With this in mind, the [Opening Extractives (OE) programme](#)[1], a global initiative aiming to transform the availability and use of BO data for effective governance in the extractive sector, organised a [three-day online workshop in December 2021](#), which aimed to engage with Armenian data users to get the country's data analysed based on local challenges and conceptual and practical knowledge-sharing.

Building on that successful experience, and with the objective of engaging with a broad range of stakeholders that aim to explore beneficial ownership information for improved natural resources governance, the OE programme in partnership with the Freedom of Information Center of Armenia (FOICA), is organising an in-person workshop to delve deeper into the key concepts and explore how the data could be used practically for investigative projects and advocacy purposes.

The workshop

The OE programme, in collaboration with the Freedom of Information Center of Armenia (FOICA), invites civil society organisations (CSOs) and journalists to learn about the importance of quality and timely beneficial ownership data, and share skills, tools and methodologies to analyse and use the publicly available data. **In a three-day worksop, we expect to strengthen the capabilities of course**

---

[1] Jointly delivered by Open Ownership and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI)

participants to analyse and utilise BO data, which will improve natural resources advocacy and governance in Armenia.

Objectives

- Raise awareness amongst local stakeholders on the importance of accessible and timely BO data, and build local capacity in advocacy and data analysis;
- Train journalists, CSOs and activists on BO concepts, definitions and thresholds, the current data available and how it could be used for investigations;
- Contribute to the strengthening of a network of interested stakeholders who use BO data for their work and research; and
- Provide practical user-focused feedback to the government and Armenia EITI national secretariat on the options for strengthening high-quality data collection and improving useability of BO data disclosure.

Expected outcomes

- CSOs, journalists and activists familiarise themselves with Armenia's legal framework for beneficial ownership transparency (BOT) and key concepts, and are able to use the Business Register data;
- Workshop participants conduct research and/or advocacy projects using the skills and tools shared, combining beneficial ownership information with other data sources for improved governance in the extractive and environmental sector.

Outline

The workshop will be run over three days, between 30th September and 1st October. Sessions will be led by the Opening Extractives and FOICA teams, and with expert support from experienced journalists and research/advocacy analysts.

- **Day 1 (30th September): Armenia's progress in beneficial ownership transparency**. This session will set the scene for beneficial ownership transparency (BOT) in Armenia, introduce Armenia's Business Register and how to understand a company declaration form, discuss the global momentum for BOT in the world, and showcase case studies where BO data (and other sources) has been used to dismantle opaque companies ownership structure.

- **Day 2 (1st October): Towards data-driven projects: how to use other data sources for investigation and advocacy.** This session will introduce further data sources where useful information can be found for complementary analysis; present varied research methodologies, techniques, and tools that can be used for data gathering and analysis;

encourage participants to come up with solid projects for investigation or advocacy purposes; provide feedback on how to pitch interesting ideas and select sources of information; and introduce a mentorship schema for the next few months for selected projects

All materials will be in English and Armenian, and live interpretation will be provided as some trainers do not speak the local language.

Course logistics

The training will be delivered in-person in a special venue in the city of Aghveran. Participants should arrive on Thursday 29th September in the evening, where a courtesy dinner will be provided to meet other participants and workshop trainers, and leave after the workshop is finished in the afternoon of Saturday 1st October.

We will provide reimbursement for travel costs, and meals and accommodation for those who choose to stay at the venue before and during the training. Please note that we will not be providing participation stipends.

Transport reimbursements will have a fixed amount (to be shared with attendees one the venue is confirmed).

COVID protocol

We will follow COVID-19 protocols. We will require participants to wear face masks when needed, use hand sanitizers, regularly wash hands and socially distance in order to keep everyone safe. We will provide hand gel and additional face masks for those needing them. We will ensure that the venue is not only warm enough for the time of the year but also properly ventilated and allows for air renewal.

Things you should bring

- Please bring your laptop as there will be exercises to complete, which will require you to access the internet. The training centre will provide free WiFi.
- We encourage you to bring background materials, or things you would like to share with other participants or trainers, based on your past work or your ongoing projects.

We will provide you with any other materials you need during the sessions.

Certificates of attendance

We will provide certificates of attendance to those who participate in all three in-person sessions. We will use the information you submitted on your application form for your certificate. If you did not provide your correct or full name, please email it without delay to agustina@openownership.org.