

2017 final report

Review of OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism

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List of abbreviations

CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CS	Civil society
IEP	International Expert Panel
IRM	Independent Reporting Mechanism
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OG	Open Government
OD	Open Data
OGP	Open Government Partnership
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
Govt	Government

Executive summary

Introduction

The Open Government Partnership's (OGP) continuous growth over the years has had effect on the organization of the initiative, in particular on the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM). With 75 participating national governments and 15 subnational governments, the IRM has reviewed close to 2,000 OGP commitments. The IRM's activities within the OGP expanded over time with staff members playing a growing role in OGP organization-wide strategy, analysis and cross-country learning. On the national level, there are increasing expectations of communication work. At the same time, concerns are voiced in relation to the IRM not adequately addressing issues of scope in terms of time frame, broader policy context, or civic space. With the OGP's implementation of a Strategic Refresh in 2017-2018, the IRM in parallel is evaluating its role within the movement. On this premise, the IRM unit and the International Expert Panel (IEP) asked Blomeyer & Sanz to review the mechanism's performance.

Activities for this review took place from June 2017 to December 2017. The review assesses the IRM's relevance, effectiveness and efficiency on the basis of a set of review questions. The evaluators used desk research, surveys, interviews and field missions. Interview feedback was collected from a total of 23 Government (Govt) stakeholders, 19 Civil Society Organization (CSO) stakeholders, 11 IEP and former IEP members, 11 OGP staff members and 9 IRM researchers. Survey feedback was collected from 26 Govt stakeholders, 35 CSO stakeholders and 30 IRM local researchers. The scope of the assessment includes all activities of the IRM unit and the IEP, as well as the interaction with the OGP Steering Committee and other OGP support units.

Main findings on relevance

1. The mechanism reports on the development and implementation of National Action Plans (NAP) and provides input to the OGP's response policy which deals with concerns raised about civic space in participating countries. With this, the IRM's practices largely align to the OGP's Articles of Governance. However, the extent to which IRM findings influence decision-making by the Steering Committee is not clear.
2. On the national level, there are different expectations from the IRM as an accountability tool. Mostly Govts expect the IRM to be a "soft" tool to compel them to adhere to the OGP process but not to prevent Govts from continuing dialogue within the OGP framework. Mostly CSOs expect the IRM to be a "hard" tool to make sure poor performance is met with consequences.
3. IRM and OGP reporting requirements (i.e. IRM reports and government self-assessment reports) are considered relevant by stakeholders. However, Govts do consider the self-assessment and IRM data collection a burden. As such, there is support among OGP staff members and Govts for a gradual phasing out of the government self-assessment report, while keeping the IRM independent reporting in place.
4. Close interaction between CSOs and Govts strengthens the perception of the IRM's relevance to ensure accountability. At the same time, that interaction lowers the perceived relevance of learning from the IRM. CSOs and Govts learn mostly from working on a daily basis on open government issues. This affects the likelihood of being able to learn from the IRM. Instead, Govts stress the need for technical assistance on NAP development and implementation and expect the IRM to such practical guidance. CSOs stress the importance of aligning the IRM cycle with their respective advocacy agendas.
5. There is wide-spread country-level and OGP-level use of IRM products, internally within institutions or organisations and / or for external purposes such as communication and policy deliberations or concrete advocacy activities. More than a dozen different uses have been identified supporting the main IRM objectives. However,

this review clearly finds that it is hard for the IRM mandate to fully correspond to the needs and expectations of stakeholders considering the heterogeneous landscape of the OGP. Despite this, the IRM products do cater in many instances different needs, and the IRM has developed a product that meets many of the standards expected from its users.

6. The main strengths of IRM products are the credibility of the methodology, the availability of detailed technical content, and its independence as key factors enabling the use of reports. Most important obstacles for its use are the length of the reports, the difficulty of extracting key messages and the timing of the reports. The latter could seriously limit the IRM's usefulness, especially when not being able to influence the NAP development process. The IRM is expected to address these obstacles, however, management of IRM uptake is a shared responsibility between all OGP actors.

Main findings on effectiveness

1. Overall, the perceived impact of the IRM on wider OGP objectives (i.e. to promote accountability and learning, to ensure better co-creation between CSO and Govt, and to support open government reform) does not correspond with the expectations stakeholders have from the IRM. The IRM is considered more effective on goals that relate directly to ensuring better and effective implementation of NAPs.
2. The main factors that influence the effectiveness of the IRM are: a) the heterogeneity of the group of IRM users; b) the IRM's role as "honest broker", and c) the IRM methodology.
 - a. There are limitations to the possible impact of the IRM, given that CSOs are less homogenous compared to Govts. Addressing the needs of all CSOs involved on the national level would be an unrealistic goal for the IRM. In addition, stakeholders do not necessarily distinguish between the IRM and the OGP, which suggests that the effectiveness of the IRM cannot not be decoupled from the overall results of the partnership. Nonetheless, stakeholders do see a clear role for the IRM within the boundaries of the NAP development and implementation. Of particular importance are IRM recommendations concerning co-creation and the promotion of more transformative commitments in NAPs.
 - b. Different expectations from CSOs and Govts on co-creation present limitations to the IRM's effectiveness. Govts measure success on the basis of civil society consultation for NAP development, CSOs on the basis of uptake of their recommendations in a NAP or the frequency of interaction with the Govt. However, the IRM manages to successfully support better outcomes from the co-creation activities between CSOs and Govts due to its perceived role as "honest broker".
 - c. The IRM methodology contributes to the acceptance of IRM findings by stakeholders. However, acceptance is strongly affected by the frequency and length of interaction between the IRM researcher and national stakeholders, as well as the justification of the representativeness of the interview sample.
3. This review emphasises the importance of communication to improve uptake, however, finds that stakeholders are unclear about who is responsible for this. Nonetheless, the IRM unit has taken a proactive role in exploring lines of communication. This has resulted in the use of IRM data for communication by OGP staff, IRM staff, Govts and CSOs. The national researcher is a key actor in dissemination and communication on the IRM.
4. The use stakeholders give to reports affects the communication strategies. Govts are more inclined to discuss and disseminate findings given the IRM directly passes judgement over their work in relation to the OGP as well as their day-to-day activities.

5. This review finds that the IRM manages to reach stakeholders and can capture interest. However, its effect depends on the quality of interaction which is influenced by the degree of awareness on the OGP on the national level. Those most likely to respond to the IRM are Govts due to their direct involvement in the process.

Main findings on efficiency

1. This review concludes that the IRM input in terms of workflow, staffing and division of labour is justified given the effects that have been achieved. This does not mean that the IRM should not try to improve operational aspects in its work in order to allow for more efficiency as well as aim for more effectiveness. In addition, under the current status quo and with an eye on the growth of the OGP, sustainability of the efficiency of the IRM is under severe pressure which would require a strategic overhaul of the mechanism.
2. Time and resources for hiring and selection of IRM researchers are considered justified in order to ensure a group of quality researchers and increase the likelihood of better performance down the line. Nonetheless, the recruitment strategy and methods used result in few applications, lowering the probability of finding a suitable candidate for a specialised job.
3. Training and accompanying documentation offered by the IRM is considered of good quality. The IRM researchers value the interaction with their peers, IRM staff, and IEP members during the training activities.
4. Progress reports cause most problems in terms of timely delivery. The bottlenecks lie in the data collection phase and the report review / quality control phase. Delays are not the norm, but its impact is important and other OGP stakeholders consider this a problem. The IRM unit has taken a proactive approach to mitigating risks for delays, but shares the responsibility for delays with the IEP and IRM researchers.
5. Other factors contributing to risks for delays are the responsiveness of Govts and the size of the IRM reports. The latter affects various parts of the IRM process, as well as its uptake on the national level and on the level of the OGP. Big NAPs affect IRM data collection, analysis, report writing and reviewing of the reports.
6. IRM staff members are required to manage varying needs and expectations of OGP stakeholders throughout the IRM process. This in combination with periods of high and low workload related to the NAP reporting cycle, places pressure on most staff members, especially during the quality control process.
7. The IRM team is organised in a way to jointly work on the delivery of the IRM report. Each member leads a process from start to finish, making the team largely cross-functional with decisions taken on the basis of consensus and coordinated by the managers. There are short lines of communication between staff members and leadership, partially because the team is small and most staff members are physically present at the same location. This is considered a useful approach when working towards a common goal. In case the IRM opts for functional teams, meaning each staff member would be responsible for part of the process, the interaction penalty could be higher considering this would require more coordination and communication.
8. Cross-functionality makes it difficult for managers to extract best practices from the different approaches used by members of the IRM team, to test these practices and incorporate them into the IRM process. As a result, some IRM staff members feel that their concerns related to the workload and suggested changes to alleviate these are not addressed effectively. Related to this is the fact that the IRM workload is intrinsically linked to the OGP membership, but the IRM budget is not. In order to address resource constraints, the IRM depends on the OGP for sign-off.

Recommendations

This review presents a schematic overview of the internal and external environment of the IRM and prioritizes a series of recommendations divided by strategies. Each strategy is sub-divided between operational options and more strategic options.

	Internal strengths	Internal weaknesses
External opportunities	<p>Operational options in order to use strengths to take advantage of opportunities</p> <p>Promote that the IRM researcher at the start of co-creation process presents sample NAPs and good practices to all stakeholders involved.</p> <p>Maintain the current cross-functional team structure and the short lines of communication between staff and leadership.</p> <p>Consider input of the IEP on the level of the SC when taking decisions affecting the IRM.</p> <p>Include a standard reference to the way in which the IRM findings support OGP response policy recommendations.</p> <p>Prioritize working on the following user objectives over which the IRM has direct influence: to extract findings / key messages from NAPs / draw conclusions from multiple NAPs; to decrease length of the reports; to improve general understanding of IRM process.</p>	<p>Operational options in order to overcome weakness by taking advantage of opportunities</p> <p>Build an IRM researcher alumni roster to assist on NAP development and NAP implementation.</p> <p>Ask OGP Govts to ensure access of IRM researchers as observers to consultation during development of NAPs and during implementation of NAPs.</p> <p>Continue the development of the repository-based system for data collection.</p> <p>Consider real-time report reviewing which allows the IRM researcher to immediately respond to IEP comments. Decrease the number of comment periods for Govts and CSOs.</p> <p>Consider an online permanent public comment period which allows the public to directly engage in dialogue on the reports.</p>
	<p>Strategic options in order to use strengths to take advantage of opportunities</p> <p>Consider a major overhaul of the structure of IRM reports and place emphasis on those indicators valuable for dissemination and national uptake.</p> <p>Consider to include a formal role in the Articles of Governance to formulate and publish an IRM response to concern letters or to annex an IRM background document to OGP SC decisions.</p>	<p>Strategic options in order to overcome weakness by taking advantage of opportunities</p> <p>Discuss and determine on the level of Steering Committee how the IRM budget / resources can be linked to OGP membership.</p> <p>Work on the user objectives over which the IRM has shared responsibility with the OGP support unit and Govts: to ensure timely publication to feed into NAP development; to increase awareness on OGP; to ensure recommendations are practical and can be used in NAP implementation.</p> <p>Consider placing the responsibility of communicating IRM findings, disseminating reports, and preparing visualization of findings with the communications department at the OGP level.</p>

External threats	<p>Operational options in order to use strengths to avoid threats</p> <p>Increase the involvement of IEP members, IRM researchers and former PoCs during the initial IRM researcher training.</p> <p>Clarify the shared responsibility of the OGP support unit and IRM unit to manage expectations of CSOs and Govts in terms of IRM learning and accountability on the national level.</p> <p>Align IRM recommendations to OGP co-creation objectives relating to: the establishment of a permanent dialogue mechanism; the call for frequent or repeated interaction between CSO and Govt; the inclusion of wider CS (beyond those organisations dealing with transparency, access to information, anti-corruption, etc.); the expansion of the co-creation process to other governmental levels.</p>	<p>Operational options in order to minimize weaknesses to avoid threats</p> <p>Make sure IRM researchers and Govt PoCs liaise on streamlining data collection of IRM with that of the self-assessment.</p> <p>Consider a peer mentoring program in which IRM researchers are paired up for the duration of research phase.</p> <p>Allow the IRM researcher to clarify to Govts and CSOs the baseline expectations from the IRM on the national level. Providing the IRM researcher with some degree of flexibility on this allows for measurement of impact on the basis of national context.</p> <p>In order to better the quality of collected data from Govts, emphasise to targeted stakeholders for data collection the need for verifiable, concrete, publicly attainable evidence.</p>
	<p>Strategic options in order to use strengths to avoid threats</p> <p>Allow IRM researchers to play a constructive role in the development of NAP process providing safeguards are in place to ensure the independence of the researcher from the NAP process.</p> <p>Consider developing some form of IRM compliance procedure in response to poor NAP development and implementation performance.</p> <p>Prioritize the needs of the stakeholders that are most closely involved in the OGP process, namely OGP support unit, and Govts. CSO needs can indirectly be addressed through the OGP support unit.</p>	<p>Strategic options in order to minimize weaknesses to avoid threats</p> <p>Consider phasing out the Govt self-assessment reporting, but take into account a possible trade-off concerning data collection for the IRM.</p> <p>Delegate user objectives to other stakeholders, i.e. the OGP support unit, given this falls outside the sphere of influence of the IRM: to align NAP with the CS advocacy thematic focus; to adapt timing to political context; to match NAP cycle to policy cycle on the national level.</p>

Introductory note

This introductory note aims to facilitate the reading of the final report prepared by Blomeyer & Sanz for the OGP's IRM unit and International Expert Panel (IEP). This report has been prepared on the on the basis of desk research, stakeholder interviews and surveys.

Following the adoption of the OGP's strategic refresh, the purpose of this report is to present the OGP with evidence on the uptake of the IRM and plant seeds for discussion on structural changes as well as how to increase efficiency of the mechanism in order to enhance its effectiveness. This document is structured as follows:

1. Introduction to the IRM refresh;
2. Refresh methodology;
3. Main findings;
4. Conclusions and recommendations.

1 Introduction to the IRM review

After a public call for proposals to review the IRM, Blomeyer & Sanz was contracted by the OGP on 15 June 2017. Activities for this assignment started soon after and finalised by mid-December 2017.

The main driver behind this review is the continuous commitment of the IRM staff and IEP to improve and ensure evidence based decision-making within the framework of the OGP. The continuous growth of the OGP, including the involvement of new actors, stretches the IRM's human and financial resources. Also, IRM staff members have been playing a growing role in OGP organization-wide strategy, analysis and cross-country learning activities, and there is an increasing expectation of communication work at the national level. As a result, the IRM risks not being able to compel OGP governments to act in line with their OGP National Action Plans (NAP), leaving room for open-washing and free-riding.

In 2016, the OGP Steering Committee initiated a review process to refresh the 2015-2018 OGP Strategy. As a result, the OGP prioritized for 2017-2018 a series of elements to support countries to undertake more transformative open government commitments, ensure credible implementation, and improve the lives of citizens^{1 2}. These priorities will demand action from all OGP's central actors, including the IRM. The midterm review and the Strategic Refresh of the OGP concluded that the IRM is widely considered credible and fact-based. For example, findings from the mid-term review show that the majority of consulted stakeholders felt that IRM reviews helped make better current NAPs and influence future NAPs. In other words, the IRM's learning function was considered successful, but questions were raised in relation to the larger impact of the IRM as accountability mechanism. Accountability would depend on countries' sensitivity to peer pressure from other OGP countries, but is also strengthened by external factors such as the reaction of the donor community.³ The authors of this review understand that this, together with the increase utility of the IRM within a growing OGP, drives the call for a review of the IRM's effectiveness and efficiency. In particular, it emphasises the important role of the IRM in the OGP Strategic Refresh. Through the IRM, the OGP should ensure that it incentivizes country performance on OGP standards in the short run, while working as an accountability mechanism and influencing policy change in the long run.⁴ More specifically, the authors of the Strategic Refresh understand that the IRM's methodology to assess commitments, the format and content of its reports, and the timing and report launch strategies have key implications for incentivizing country performance on the short run. The interaction between the IRM unit, IEP and other internal OGP stakeholders, as well as interaction with external beneficiaries (i.e. Governments (Govts) and civil society organisations (CSOs)), will contribute to longer term impacts such as government reforms, civil society advocacy and strategic communication of IRM recommendations into the wider policy dialogues.⁵

¹ See: http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/OGP_Strategic-Refresh_Dec2016.pdf

² Such as: deepen citizen-centred governance; broaden collective ownership domestically; strengthen capacity, coordination and coalitions for implementation; raise collective ambition globally; review OGP's rules of engagement and performance incentives; strengthen OGP's branding and communications.

³ See: http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/OGP_Strategic-Refresh_Dec2016.pdf, p.8

⁴ See: http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/OGP_Strategic-Refresh_Dec2016.pdf, p.22

⁵ See: http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/OGP_Strategic-Refresh_Dec2016.pdf, p.22

2 Methodology

2.1 Scope of the review

The scope of this review is not limited to a specific set of IRM activities. However, this review prioritises all activities of the IRM unit and the IEP. This includes the hiring and selection process of IRM researchers, support to IRM researchers during the NAP evaluation, IRM quality control / review phase, as well as any communication and outreach activities relating to the IRM. In addition, this review also assesses the interaction between the IRM unit and IEP, IRM unit and OGP Steering Committee, and the IRM unit and other OGP units. This review also covers activities of IRM researchers on the national level.

The scope of this review is not limited to a geographical area. As such, this is a global review which allows for inclusion of all OGP participating countries. The scope of this review has also not been limited to a specific period in time and hence includes experience since the start of the OGP. It has to be noted that most interviewed stakeholders from the national level (CSOs and Govts) provide feedback from recent experience covering the last NAP cycle of the country.

2.2 Reconstructed OGP theory of change

The theory of change (ToC) presented in the first OGP strategy document provides a good illustration of the objectives and intervention logic adopted by OGP. The mid-term review underlines that the ToC is sound as far as it goes, but would need to adapt to various ways to accommodate the varying realities of diverse societies across the globe.⁶ The mid-term reviewers particularly stress the importance for the IRM-based knowledge and experience to feed into this. The ToC should not only spell out appropriate and achievable goals for varying societies, but also identify important interim goals and agents for achieving them⁷. Another element highlighted by the mid-term reviewers is that it is important to reflect on how evidence from cases (i.e. IRM data) can be systematized and diffused through the OGP community in order to share knowledge and experience effectively. On the basis of the Four-Year OGP Strategy, and taking into consideration the OGP Mid-Term Review and the OGP Strategic Refresh, the authors of this review have reconstructed the ToC in order to underline our understanding of the approach used, as well as ability to underscore the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the IRM within wider OGP objectives.

This exercise points us to a set of **wider, specific** and **operational objectives** / goals the OGP aims to achieve in order to address the needs of relevant stakeholders (i.e. the needs of Govts, citizens, CSOs, and multilateral organizations (MOs)). In order to achieve these objectives, the OGP deploys resources (**inputs**) such as money, staff and technical expertise. For example, upon signing an Open Government Declaration, Govts receive technical assistance from the OGP support unit on the development and implementation of a NAP, and are subject to an IRM process (**outputs**).

This review maps the IRM activities and determines how **efficiently** resources are converted to outputs and results. In addition, this review aims to determine to which extent the IRM intervention, or work, achieved the relevant goals (**effectiveness**). Results or outcomes of the OGP activities can be **immediate**, for example creating a political space for reformers by targeting high-level political leaders, or collaborating with CSOs to support mid-level government officials or supporting advocacy of civil society organizations. An important immediate result from the establishment of the IRM is that data is made available that can be used to hold countries accountable on the basis of evidence. On the

⁶ See: http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/OGP_MTR-Report_Final-Jan26-2016.pdf, p. 15

⁷ See: http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/OGP_MTR-Report_Final-Jan26-2016.pdf, p.17

[intermediate](#) level this could promote further dialogue between civil society and governments and the implementation of meaningful reforms. On the [long-term](#), this contributes to more transparent and accountable governments.

Annex A includes an illustration of the reconstruction of this intervention logic.

2.3 Main review questions and indicators

On the basis of the Terms of Reference for this review (see Annex B), the authors include three review criteria to be applicable: relevance; effectiveness; efficiency.

Relevance⁸ looks at:

1. To what extent are IRM practices aligned with the Articles of Governance?
2. To what extent are the IRM Charter of the OGP Articles of governance still aligned with existing knowledge of OGP's challenges and the IRM's role in addressing those challenges?
3. To what extent do the IRM objectives correspond to the OGP's shift in objectives and alignment in response to the OGP's Strategic Refresh?
4. What use has been given to the IRM reports and to which extent do IRM reports and mandate correspond to the needs and expectations of beneficiaries (i.e. related to the twin mandate of accountability and learning)?

Effectiveness⁹ looks at:

5. To what extent have IRM objectives been achieved?
6. To what extent do the observed effects of the IRM mechanism correspond to the objectives?
7. To what extent can these effects be credited to the IRM mechanism?
8. Which factors contributed to the success or failure of certain objectives to be achieved?
9. Which alternative strategies can be emphasized in order for the IRM to drive for future effectiveness? And what are the organizational implications of alternative strategies?
10. How can consistency and quality of IRM communications be enhanced in order to ensure that decision-makers at the national level are better informed?

Efficiency¹⁰ looks at:

11. To what extents is IRM input (IRM workflow, staffing, division of labour) justified given the effects which have been achieved?
12. To what extent is this input proportionate to the benefits achieved?
13. How can governance arrangements further facilitate the process of strategic decision-making?

⁸ Relevance looks at the relationship between the needs and problems in a particular scenario and the objectives of the intervention. In the view of the authors, this criterion can address the review elements concerning [mission alignment](#) and [uses given to the reports](#).

⁹ Effectiveness looks at how successful the IRM mechanism has been in achieving or progressing towards its objectives. In the view of the authors, this criterion can address large part of the review elements relating the [usefulness of reports by different stakeholders](#) as well as elements under [effectiveness for implementing the strategy](#).

¹⁰ Finally, efficiency looks at the relationship between the resources used by the IRM mechanism and the changes generated by the intervention. According to the authors, this criterion addresses the review elements under the heading [effectiveness for implementing the strategy](#) as well as some elements concerning the [usefulness of reports by different stakeholders](#).

The assessment of the different review indicators provide the OGP with an [environmental scan and organizational capacities assessment](#) and an [IRM effectiveness framework](#). A series of recommendations inform the OGP audience on [strategic options and scenarios for the future of the IRM](#), including [suggestions for dealing with quantity of work and requirements related to adapting the scope of report coverage](#).

Annex C includes a detailed overview of the different review questions, judgement criteria, measurement criteria and data collection tools used for this review.

2.4 Data collection tools

Data collection for this review included: desk review; interviews; field missions; and surveys. Feedback has been collected from more than 60 OGP members (Figure 1).

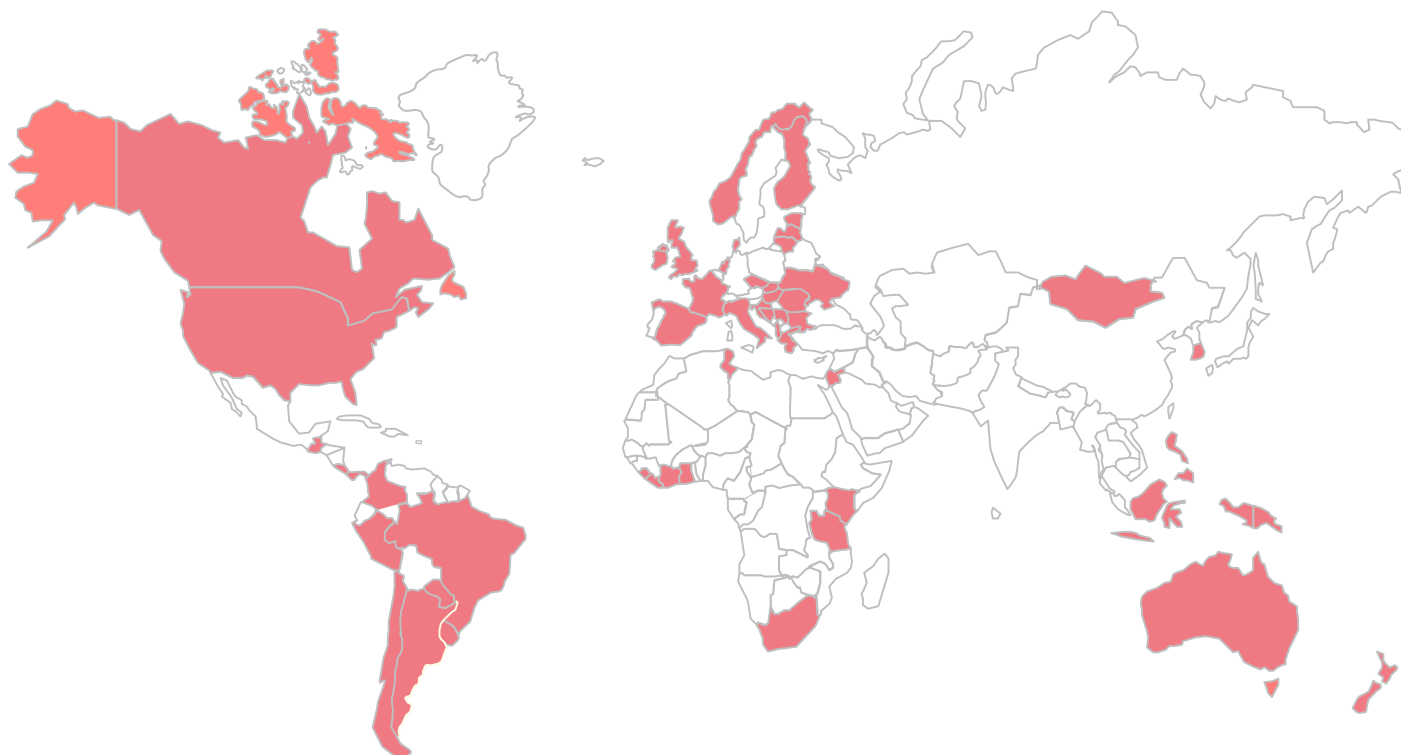


Figure 1 - Data collection world coverage

2.4.1 Desk research

Desk research included a wide range of internal and external OGP/IRM documents as well as external documentation of similar mechanisms. The aims of desk research were to (among other things): review reported activities, outputs, and outcomes; develop IRM timelines; identify linkages to relevant third party initiatives in order to identify strengths and weaknesses in the IRM as an accountability mechanism; develop initial answers to the review questions and identify issues of particular interest for more in-depth data collection.

The review team received documentation from the IRM team. This included information on: OGP and IRM leadership; governance and strategy; monitoring output, analytical output; IRM staffing; first inputs on expectations from the review coming from Govts; IRM essential documentation (i.e. report process calendar, procedures manual, style guide, work flow chart, CoI policy); budgets (2017) and work plan (2016).

A full list of documentation is included in Annex D.

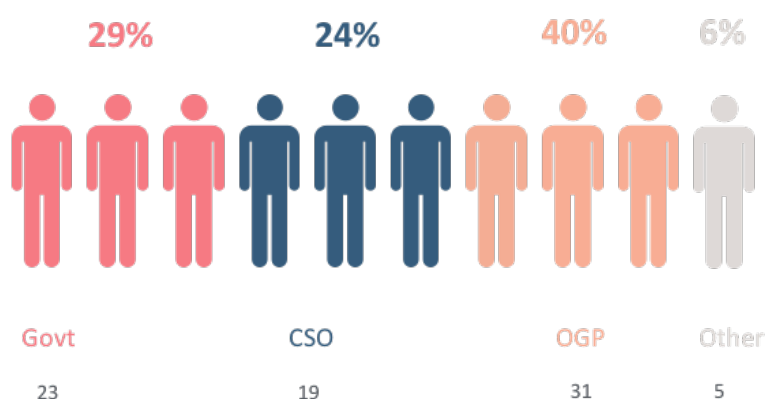
2.4.2 Interviews

Individual and focus group face-to-face and telephone/Skype interviews were conducted off-site and on-site, the latter through field missions in Washington D.C., Madrid and New York city. Interviews were semi-structured on the basis of the main review questions and subdivided along the line of the selected review indicators. Three interview rounds were held:

1. The first round included a series of interviews with OGP staff¹¹ and OGP Steering Committee members to collect information on expectations from the IRM and drivers behind the request for the review of the mechanism.
2. The second round of interviews aimed to collect the bulk of the review information on efficiency, effectiveness and relevance. The interviews targeted OGP stakeholders (i.e. IRM researchers and former IEP members), CSO stakeholders, OGP government points of contacts, and third parties (i.e. representatives from international organisations, independent consultants, academics).
3. The final interview round included follow-up interviews with OGP staff members (OGP IRM unit, support unit and IEP members) in order to discuss preliminary findings and recommendations. Specific focus for these interviews were questions concerning the efficiency of the IRM model.

The list of interviewees has been established in close cooperation with the OGP. In order to ensure a representative sample for this review, the review team made a distinction between “first- and second-line” OGP stakeholders. The former includes: OGP support unit staff, IRM staff, IEP members (including former), IRM researchers, and OGP Steering Committee members from civil society and governments. The latter includes OGP partners from civil society and government, primarily engaged in development and implementation of OGP NAP commitments.

Interview feedback was collected from a total of 78 individuals (figure 2). 29% of this corresponds to 23 Govt stakeholders, 24% to 19 CSO stakeholders and 40% to 31 OGP stakeholders. OGP includes 11 International Expert Panel members, 11 OGP staff members and 9 IRM researchers.



An additional 8 follow-up interviews have taken place in order to validate review findings.

Figure 2 – Interview responses

Annex E includes a list of stakeholders.

2.4.3 Surveys

Beyond the sample of stakeholders targeted for interviews, the review team launched three surveys:

1. The first survey targeted 45 IRM researchers and aimed to collect data on the way in which the IRM contributed to change on the country level. The survey also included questions on individual professional development, in

¹¹ i.e. IRM unit, IEP members and OGP support staff

particular on research skills and knowledge acquisition. The survey was launched on 11 August 2017 and was closed on 4 September 2017¹².

2. The second and third survey targeted 177 CSO recipients and 74 Govt PoCs. Both surveys aimed to collect data on the way in which the IRM contributed to recipient's work and to change on the country level. Both surveys were launched on 1 August 2017 and were closed on 4 September 2017.¹³

The surveys complemented the findings derived from desk research and interviews, informing on whether the validity of findings for a small sample can be extrapolated to a wider group. Prior to launching the surveys, the authors sought the approval and assistance of the OGP support unit in order to guarantee full compliance with data protection regulations.

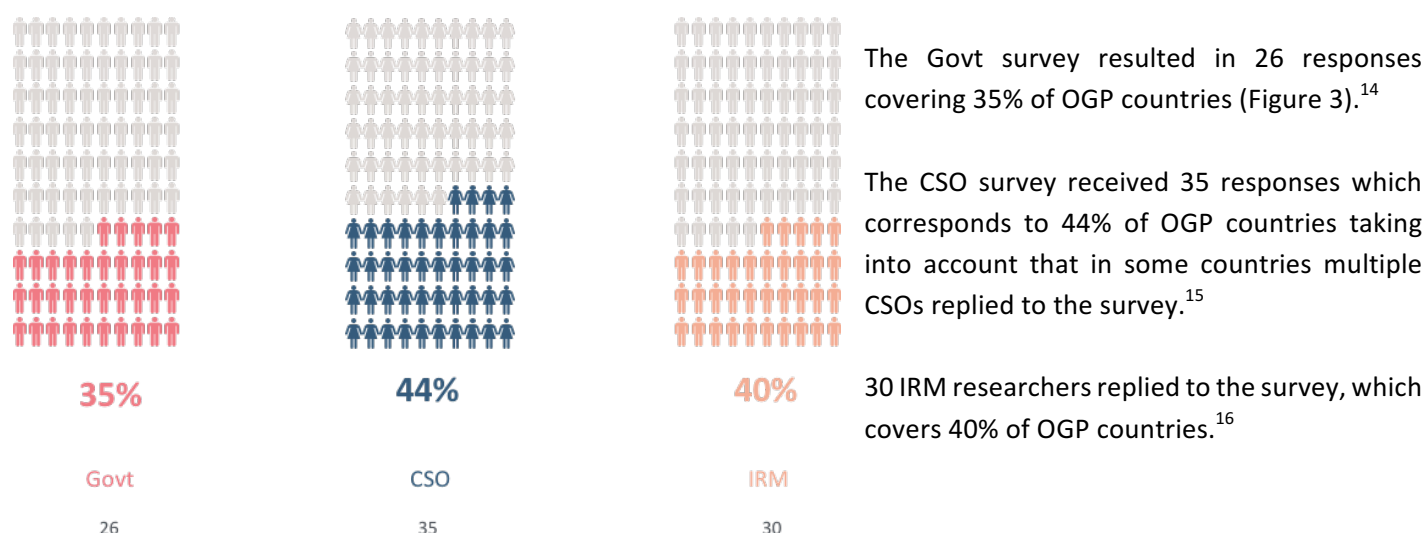


Figure 3 – Survey responses

For the purpose of this review, the response rate for the three surveys was considered sufficient in order to provide valuable feedback on the perception of OGP and IRM participants.

Annex F includes the survey templates. Rough survey data has been provided to the OGP.

2.4.4 Field mission

A total of three field missions have been carried out: fieldwork in Washington D.C. on 25-26 June 2017; fieldwork in Spain on 4-6 July 2017; and field work in New York City on 19-20 September 2017.

¹² Automatic reminders were sent to the the survey recipients by the evaluators on a weekly basis. An additional reminder was sent to the recipients by the OGP.

¹³ Automatic reminders were sent to the the survey recipients by the evaluators on a weekly basis. An additional reminder was sent to the recipients by the OGP.

¹⁴ A total of 74 invitations were send out. The survey ran from 1 August 2017 to 4 September 2017. Four reminders were send to the recipients by the authors of this review.

¹⁵ A total of 177 invitations were send out. The survey ran from 1 August 2017 to 4 September 2017. Four reminders were send to the recipients by the authors of this review as well as an additional reminder through the OGP support unit.

¹⁶ A total of 45 invitations were send out. The survey ran from 11 August 2017 to to 4 September 2017. Three reminders were send to the recipients by the authors of this review as well as an additional reminder through the IRM unit.

Concerning the field work in Washington D.C.¹⁷: This visit was used to familiarise ourselves with the OGP/IRM workflow and conduct first face-to-face interviews with IRM staff, OGP support unit and Steering Committee and IEP members. The main objectives were: to further detail the review methodology; to collect views from stakeholders on what they expect from the review; to collect information on expectations from the IRM.

The field work allowed the authors to consider first feedback on the mission alignment, as well as the review element on effectiveness for implementing the strategy (in particular the workflow review). Apart from face-to-face interview side-meetings (i.e. with OGP staff, IEP members, Steering Committee members), this mission also included one focus group meetings with CS Steering Committee members and a presentation of the review methodology to the CS sub-committee.

Concerning the field work in Spain: The field work in Spain took place alongside a visit of the IRM Program Director to Madrid. The evaluators conducted an IEP e-workshop for the review on 5 July 2017 and attended an OGP seminar in Madrid on 6 July 2017. Two additional meetings were held with the IRM Program Director and the IRM lead for the sub-national pilot program.

Concerning the field work in NYC: The field work in NYC took place alongside the OGP United Nations General Assembly meeting. The main purpose was to validate the draft final report findings together with civil society sub-committee members. Together with the IRM Program Director, the evaluators presented: a quick overview of the IRM progress and publications; an overview on the process for review; three preliminary or surprising early findings; and a roadmap for continuing inputs on the larger IRM refresh.

¹⁷ See: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1mCqE1wl-ct8yyq-3vd00hSEn8BvPXeKboOqJTj7fLOs/edit#>

3 Main Findings

3.1 IRM state of play

This chapter aims to contextualize this review which was issued against the backdrop of the OGP's strategic refresh.

The OGP as a multi-stakeholder and multilateral initiative pairs government partners with civil society to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption and harness new technologies to improve democratic governance. The OGP is overseen by a Steering Committee (SC) consisting of representatives of governments (Govts) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). Participating countries must endorse a high-level Open Government Declaration (OGD), deliver a National Action Plan (NAP), and commit to the OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM). Established in 2011, today the OGP includes 75 participating countries and 15 subnational governments that have made more than 2,500 commitments to make their governments more open and accountable. As of December 2016, the IRM covers 2,731 commitments made on the basis of 152 action plans. More than one out of two commitments are relevant to access to information, and roughly one out of three to public accountability as well as civic participation. The IRM oversees the production and publication of independent reports to monitor OGP progress in each participating country. The goal of the program is to produce high-quality, impartial reports on how well participating countries have met their commitments regarding development and implementation of NAPs.

The existing model for the IRM faces a series of demands. Continued growth of the OGP's membership has affected the IRM. With this, the IRM's role expanded with its staff playing a growing role in organization-wide strategy, analysis and cross-learning. With the OGP community looking forward, new paths are explored in order to use the model also for sub-national governments and parliaments. With strategic choices to be made by the OGP, the IRM also needs to consider a "refresh". In order to do this in a deliberate way, the OGP want to know what are expectations from the IRM, how has it performed to date, and what strategic options are available.

This review acknowledges that the current framework in which the IRM operates is largely defined by the OGP's Articles of Governance, the IRM Charter, and the OGP Four-Year Strategy. In addition, the IRM's operational details are primarily laid out in the IRM Procedures Manual.

3.1.1 OGP Articles of Governance

The OGP Articles of Governance outline what the OGP expects from participating governments and situates the IRM as an accountability tool to monitor the Govts OGP activities. It states that the SC¹⁸ might review a Govts' participation if *'the Support Unit or IRM process find that a participating government repeatedly (for two consecutive action plan cycles) acts contrary to OGP process or its Action Plan commitments (addenda B and C), and fails to adequately address issues raised by the IRM'*. As a result, the SC may upon recommendation of the CS sub-committee review the participation of said government in OGP.

The Articles of Governance further detail the role of the IRM in the OGP reporting process. It states that the IRM is to produce independent progress reports by the hand of *'well-respected governance researchers, preferably from each OGP participating country'*. It introduces briefly the IRM research methodology by noting that researchers are *'to use a common OGP independent progress report instrument and guidelines, based on a combination of interviews with local OGP stakeholders as well as desk-based analysis'*. It also sets the arrangements used for ensuring quality through

¹⁸ More precise the Criteria and Standards sub-committee of the SC.

a review and publishing process involving the International Experts Panel (IEP), the relevant OGP governments, and the researchers.

3.1.2 IRM Charter

The Articles of Governance point to the IRM Charter as the main governing document of the mechanism. The IRM Charter presents a brief overview of the IRM and includes two more detailed chapters on IRM governance and IRM reporting. In the overview, the Charter sets out expectation for the IRM such as:

- To promote strong accountability between participating governments and citizens;
- To allow stakeholders to track progress of OGP governments;
- To ensure credibility of the OGP;
- To serve a key role in cooperation between governments and civil society;
- To promote accountability for carrying out commitments outlined in national action plans;
- To ensure reports are credible and independent.

It describes how the IRM assesses each OGP Govt on development and implementation of NAPS and on progress in fulfilling OG principles, and how the IRM develops technical recommendations. The IRM is an independent body within the OGP and is guided by the SC. The IEP directly oversees the IRM.

The SC has three standing subcommittees to support its work, one of which also deals with the IRM, namely the Criteria and Standards (CS) Subcommittee. These subcommittees meet between SC meetings to carry out preliminary work and make recommendations to the full SC for decision. The CS subcommittee develops definitions and guidelines on OGP eligibility criteria, reporting requirements, and the implications of IRM findings (e.g. defining the consequences of a negative IRM report). The CS subcommittee provides input for the selection of members of the IEP and the hiring of the IRM Program Manager. The CS maintains a watching brief over the IRM to ensure that the IEP, IRM staff and national researchers are able to publish their reports, achieve objectives and that the reports maintain a high standard of quality and accuracy.

The IEP oversees the IRM in order to protect it from undue influence by OGP member countries and other participating actors. Experts are nominated through an open process and selected by the OGP SC¹⁹. The experts represent diversity of regions and thematic expertise. Five Technical Advisors (TAs) play a direct role in overseeing the quality control process for IRM report production. A smaller group of five Senior Advisors (SA) support international and regional outreach on IRM report findings and their implications²⁰. In practice the IEP organises its work through the use of small taskforces. These consist of various members and deal with specific tasks, i.e. ethics, standards, strategy and communication.

The IRM Charter states that the IEP has a series of responsibilities²¹, most importantly relating to the quality review of reports. IEP members collectively can withhold any IRM-branded report from being published. The IEP does not have the power to recommend and/or implement administrative changes to the IRM, this includes the appointment and

¹⁹ IEP feedback suggests this is done on a non-objection basis.

²⁰ The SAs have a steering and governance role within the IEP.

²¹ These are: Develop the overall reporting guidelines and reporting template for national researchers; Work with the IRM PM to identify nationally based researchers in each OGP country; Review draft country reports and work with national researchers to incorporate inputs from IEP and government review; Provide final approval for report publication; Aid the IRM staff in developing a robust and transparent system for addressing complaints from OGP countries and other stakeholders; Attend twice a year the IEP meetings.

dismissal of the Program Director. The IRM Charter specifies that CS subcommittee *‘provides input into the selection and vetting process for the IEP’*, which includes *‘identifying the selection criteria and having them approved by the Steering Committee, short-listing and interviewing nominees after an open nominations process, and providing a final set of recommendations on IEP panel members to the full SC for approval’*.²² Feedback from the IEP suggests that in practice the IEP makes the initial recommendations on the basis of CV review, written exercises and interviews, after which the CS approves the nominated candidates. IEP members stay on for two years with the possibility of one-year extension. The latter is a transition year where as *emeritus* reviewers IEP members pass on knowledge to new IEP members.²³ IEP members develop a set of transparent criteria for their own performance evaluation which will be applied annually by the IRM Program Director in consultation with the OGP support unit Executive Director. The results are communicated to the CS subcommittee. IEP members are compensated for their time and direct expenses.

The IRM Program Director and staff report directly to the IEP on content of the IRM, but depend for administrative and fiduciary issues on the support unit. There is no formal reporting relationship to the CS subcommittee but the IRM Program Director will keep the members up to date on progress. National researchers are hired (in consultation with and with the approval of the IEP) and managed by the IRM unit.

IRM reporting aims to promote stronger accountability between citizens and their governments and to ensure that Govts are living up to the commitments made in the NAPs, as well as OGP process requirements. According to the Charter the reports are to provide a “snapshot” view of the NAP development and implementation. Reports are prepared each year for each OGP Govt and are supposed to be published for comments 7 months after each implementation year. The IRM produces mid-term progress reports and end-of-term reports. The former aims to provide learning for the next iteration of the NAP, the latter to provide a final accountability check following the conclusions of each biannual OGP cycle. Guiding principles for the IRM are that:

- IRM reports are elaborated in a transparent, objective, non-intrusive, impartial and apolitical manner and researchers will have access to key decision-makers on the national level.
- IRM reports contribute to advancing OG internationally by encouraging dialogue between citizens and Govts, and by sharing best practices, achievements, and challenges in the implementation of country action plans among all stakeholders.
- IRM’s key measures of success will be public dialogue on IRM findings by Govts and CS and whether and how much progress was made on recommendations contained in previous reports.
- IRM reports will not define standards for use as preconditions for cooperation or assistance, or to rank countries.
- The IRM and IEP’s work in developing their methodology will be open and participatory.

The Charter also sets out the scope of IRM reports and introduces changes made over time as response to changing OGP needs. The scope of IRM reports includes the extent to which NAPs and commitments reflect OGP values of transparency, accountability and civic participation. It also reflects on actions beyond the NAP but of relevance to participation in the OGP. Key for IRM reports is progress made on NAP implementation and technical recommendations on how this can be improved. Recommendations on wider OGP value compliance are also included. Changes in the scope includes the assessment of country performance on OG eligibility criteria, as well as a more limited discussion on context surrounding progress or regress. The second year of assessment also should include follow-up recommendations.

²² IRM Charter, p. 36.

²³ IRM Charter, p. 35.

The reporting approach gives insight into the target audience for IRM reports by stating that they are meant to complement independent monitoring of the commitments by CSOs and to provide useful recommendations to enhance government performance. The Charter specifically states that reports will be produced in a form that facilitates easy monitoring and comparison over time and be written in a way that makes them easily understandable for the broader public. Executive summaries are a key tool for this.

3.1.3 Other strategic documents

Finally, there are a series of other tools and strategic documents that refer to the IRM. The OGP Four-Year Strategy 2015-2018 presents IRM operating principles²⁴ which go beyond and are more detailed than the Charter's Guiding Principles:

1. The IRM works through national researchers, who are carefully selected and trained in the use of the IRM research instrument and report guidelines. Researchers are required to disclose any active contracts or other vested interests in the results of their research.
2. The IRM is transparent about its research methodology and the process for selecting national researchers.
3. The IRM staff and the IEP ensure that local researchers have full independence by providing international cover and general protocols for the review of all documents.
4. The IRM uses a consistent methodology for all its reports to ensure that OGP participating governments are evaluated according to the same criteria, while allowing for diversity of national context.
5. All reports are subject to multiple layers of quality control, including review by the IEP. Where reports do not meet agreed-upon standards, the IRM team works with researchers to develop neutral, fact-based, constructive reports. If this is not possible, researchers are replaced.
6. Draft reports are shared with key in-country stakeholders for comment, but the IEP and the author have final say on the report content.
7. The IRM will work closely with the Support Unit to provide information on strengths and weaknesses of OGP in participating countries and stimulate dialogue at the national level. It will not rank OGP participating governments or encourage use of IRM reports to determine foreign assistance.

The IRM team, alongside with the IEP and the CS subcommittee are currently preparing a detailed Charter to clarify outstanding governance, accountability and methodological issues²⁵.

More practical tools are the IRM Style Guide which gives clear guidance to IRM researchers on a range of areas that aim to improve the quality of reports²⁶. The IRM Procedures Manual is an extensive document divided in three sections: IRM foundations; the IRM process and IRM Research Guidance. The Manual is the IRM's omnibus for OGP stakeholders, in particular the IRM researchers that would want to refer to the internal processes and standards for producing reports.

Finally, the OGP's support unit and IRM 2016 Objectives and Work plan²⁷ determine the annual strategy of the mechanism. For 2016, two overarching priorities were set, namely: ambitious open government reform commitments; and better co-creation. The support unit states it will support Govts and CSOs in the 50+ OGP countries which are

²⁴ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/OGP%204-year%20Strategy%20FINAL%20ONLINE.pdf>

²⁵ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/OGP%204-year%20Strategy%20FINAL%20ONLINE.pdf>

²⁶ Categorised under titles: ideas, organization, voice, syntax, diction, mechanism and word list.

²⁷ See: https://docs.google.com/document/d/12mSOKSbqu_pkhNKAvpGeBjjoT2Hp0YrYZWc1f158_E/edit

producing new NAPs in 2016 to make ambitious and relevant open government reform commitments, including on the Sustainable Development Goals agenda. In order to raise ambition levels and impact, between 10-15 countries would be prioritised for in depth support. In order to ensure better co-creation, the support unit would support the creation of more, and better, permanent dialogue mechanisms. These priorities would be supported, inter alia, by ensuring the publication of IRM reports in early 2016 in order to improve the development and content of national action plans.

The IRM Program Objectives for 2016 focus primarily on the production of reports on each Govt. Subsequently, the OGP would seek *“to inform a country-level dialogue on results, with the goal of promoting both learning and accountability”*. The IRM team would in addition publish disaggregated data on each commitment or action and support in-house and external use of the data for analysis. The priorities for 2016 were the production and publication of 28 mid-terms reports and 39 end-of-term reports. In addition, the IRM would prioritise the publication of a second major technical paper.

In essence, the IRM focuses in its work plan on producing and publishing reports (IRM reports and technical papers), and releases all of its data in OD format²⁸. The uptake of this is largely the responsibility of CSOs and Govts. However, this is mostly voluntary and therefor requires engagement of the OGP as a whole.

²⁸ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/about/independent-reporting-mechanism/ogp-explorer-and-irm-data>

3.2 Relevance of IRM

This chapter looks at the relationship between the needs and problems concerning open government and the OGP, and the objectives of the IRM. This primarily addresses two review elements requested in the terms of reference of this review: the mission alignment; and uses given to the reports.

3.2.1 Mission alignment

KEY FINDINGS

- Decisions by the OGP Steering Committee on poor performance of Govts are rarely based on information provided by the IRM.
- Stakeholders have different expectations from the IRM as an accountability tool. Govts prefer the IRM to be a “soft” tool to make sure consequences do not prevent OGP members from continuing dialogue within the OGP framework. CSOs prefer the IRM to be a “hard” tool to make sure poor performance is met with consequences.
- Govts and CSOs warn for “report overkill” in the OGP process but respectively see as an added value compared to Govt self-assessment reports the independence and methodology used of the IRM reports.
- CSOs and Govts can perceive their participation in the OGP reporting process as a burden, particularly when frequently being asked for information.
- There is no support under Govts and CSOs for phasing out the IRM from the OGP process but there is interest in phasing out the Govt self-assessment report. This does mean that NAP development and implementation information should be secured to enable data collection for the IRM.
- Govts particularly consider the IRM relevant in order to promote accountability and to ensure better co-creation between civil society and government.
- CSOs particularly consider the IRM relevant to support open government reform and emphasize the potential role of the OGP platform to exert political influence.
- Govts consider internal politics as the main driver behind open government reform as opposed to the IRM playing a key role as a driver for reform.
- CSOs primarily expect the IRM to support their advocacy agenda. However, the technical nature of the IRM and its holistic NAP approach are not always aligned to the advocacy agendas of CSOs and their narrow thematic focus.

Two specific areas of interest in relation to the Articles of Governance have been identified in this review. One relates to the expectations from the IRM as an accountability tool. The second element is more of an operational nature and refers to expectations from the OGP and IRM reporting process.

3.2.1.1 OGP response policy and the IRM

The OGP as a multi-stakeholder initiative resembles characteristics of a principle-based collective action initiative.²⁹ OGP members agree on shared principles, train and exchange best practices and advocate internally and externally for principle-based behaviour. This in turn should lead to leveraging the voice of the group in the promotion of appropriate government conduct and ultimately pushing for reform. The degree of enforcement for principle-based collective action initiatives is dependent on the willingness of its members to uphold an ethical commitment to a set of agreed principles. This is also the case for the OGP, where its members jointly decide through the SC on how to

²⁹ See:

https://www.globalcompact.de/wAssets/docs/Korruptionspraevention/Publikationen/fighting_corruption_through_collective_action.pdf

respond to poor OGP performance by Govts. However, the OGP has through the use of the IRM build in another tool to ensure enforcement of the initiative. The IRM as partially independent within the OGP ensures a level of external enforcement of adherence to the OGP principles. As such, the OGP Articles of Governance clearly point to an area of potential impact of the IRM, which relates to the OGP's response to poor performance by Govts. This response can be based on three issues: failure of countries to meet OGP eligibility criteria^{30 31}; repeated failure to comply with the OGP process or IRM findings; failures to adhere to OGP values and principles.

Failure to comply with the OGP reporting process

Rules concerning failure to comply with the OGP process or follow-up on IRM findings are not detailed in the OGP Articles of Governance. Instead, the OGP website details the role for the IRM relating to the OGP reporting process concerning the rules in case of delays of country deadlines.³² OGP countries are requested to deliver their NAP and self-assessment report on time. The IRM cannot accommodate delays from countries by modifying or rearranging IRM product deadlines. In case countries fail to comply with on-time delivery, the IRM report will make note of this. In case countries deliver new NAPs or self-assessment reports more than four months late, the IRM will document this and together with the OGP SU refer the case to the CS subcommittee. The CS subcommittee will issue a notification letter.

There are dozens of letters published on the OGP website that refer to notification in relation to OGP reporting delays (**Error! Reference source not found.**) . As a result, these delays will also be documented in subsequent IRM reports.

Table 1 - Failure to comply with the OGP reporting process

Letter due to delays in NAP submission	
Trinidad and Tobago	April 2014 ³³
Mongolia	April 2014 ³⁴
Malawi	November 2015 ³⁵
Kenya	November 2015 ³⁶
Montenegro	November 2015 ³⁷
Ireland	November 2015 ³⁸
Bosnia-Herzegovina	November 2015 ³⁹
Montenegro	January 2016 ⁴⁰
Montenegro	August 2016 ⁴¹
Bosnia-Herzegovina	November 2016 ⁴²
Tanzania	November 2016 ⁴³
Trinidad and Tobago	November 2016 ⁴⁴

³⁰ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/resources/eligibility-criteria>

³¹ For example the case of Papua New Guinea in 2016:

https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/OGP_LettertoPapuaNewGuinea_Feb92016_1.pdf

³² See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/country-dates-and-deadlines>

³³ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/OGP%20Letter%20-%20Trinidad%20and%20Tobago.pdf>

³⁴ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/OGP%20Letter%20-%20Mongolia.pdf>

³⁵ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/OGP%20Letter%20-%20Malawi%20-%20Nov.%2015.pdf>

³⁶ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/OGP%20Letter%20-%20Kenya%20-%20Nov.%2015.pdf>

³⁷ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/OGP%20Letter%20-%20Montenegro%20-%20Nov.%2015.pdf>

³⁸ See: <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/LateLetterNovember2016-Ireland.pdf>

³⁹ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/OGP%20Letter%20-%20Bosnia%20-%20Nov.%2015.pdf>

⁴⁰ See: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/OGP_Montenegro_Letter_Jan72016%20%281%29.pdf

⁴¹ See: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Montenegro_Dr-Vujica-Lazovic_August2016_1.pdf

⁴² See: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/LateLetterNovember2016-BiH_1.pdf

⁴³ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/LateLetterNovember2016-Tanzania.pdf>

⁴⁴ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/LateLetterNovember2016-Trinidad.pdf>

Montenegro	November 2016 ⁴⁵
Spain	November 2016 ⁴⁶
Cabo Verde	November 2016 ⁴⁷
Moldova	November 2016 ⁴⁸
Croatia	November 2016 ⁴⁹
Papua New Guinea	November 2016 ⁵⁰
Denmark	November 2016 ⁵¹
Brazil	November 2016 ⁵²
Ukraine	November 2016 ⁵³
Ireland	November 2016 ⁵⁴
Sweden	November 2016 ⁵⁵
Australia	November 2016 ⁵⁶
Letter due to delays in self-assessment submission	
Azerbaijan	April 2014 ⁵⁷
Greece	March 2016 ⁵⁸
Tanzania	March 2016 ⁵⁹
New Zealand	April 2016 ⁶⁰
Malawi	March 2016 ⁶¹
Trinidad and Tobago	March 2016 ⁶²
Trinidad and Tobago	November 2016 ⁶³
Mexico	March 2017 ⁶⁴
Mongolia	March 2017 ⁶⁵
Bulgaria	March 2017 ⁶⁶
Trinidad and Tobago	March 2017 ⁶⁷
Letter due to shift NAP cycle to next year	
Tanzania	January 2017 ⁶⁸
Kenya	January 2017 ⁶⁹
Trinidad and Tobago	January 2017 ⁷⁰
Montenegro	January 2017 ⁷¹

⁴⁵ See: <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Montenegro%20-%20Vujica%20Lazovic%20-%20November%202016.pdf>

⁴⁶ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/ogp-letter-spain-regarding-late-action-plan-november-2016-0>

⁴⁷ See: <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/LateLetterNovember2016-CaboVerde.pdf>

⁴⁸ See: <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/LateLetterNovember2016-Moldova.pdf>

⁴⁹ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/LateLetterNovember2016-Croatia.pdf>

⁵⁰ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/LateLetterNovember2016-PNG.pdf>

⁵¹ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/LateLetterNovember2016-Denmark.pdf>

⁵² See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/LateLetterNovember2016-Brazil.pdf>

⁵³ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/LateLetterNovember2016-Ukraine.pdf>

⁵⁴ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/LateLetterNovember2016-Ireland.pdf>

⁵⁵ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/LateLetterNovember2016-Sweden.pdf>

⁵⁶ See: <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Australia%20-%20Steven%20Kennedy%20-%20November%202016.pdf>

⁵⁷ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/OGP%20Letter%20-%20Azerbaijan%20.pdf>

⁵⁸ See: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/OGP_Greece_Letter_SAR_03212016_1.pdf

⁵⁹ See: http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/OGP_Tanzania_Letter_SAR_03212016.pdf

⁶⁰ See: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/OGP_Letter_NZ_04042016_1.pdf

⁶¹ See: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/OGP_Malawi_Letter_Jan72016_0.pdf

⁶² See: http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/OGP_TandT_Letter_SAR_03212016.pdf

⁶³ See: <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/LateLetterNovember2016-Trinidad.pdf>

⁶⁴ See: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Denmark_Claus-Hjort-Frederiksen_January-12-2017_2.pdf

⁶⁵ See: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Mongolia_Late-SAR-letter_2017_0.pdf

⁶⁶ See: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Bulgaria_Late-SAR-letter_2017_0.pdf

⁶⁷ See: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Trinidad-Tobago_Late-SAR-letter_2017_0.pdf

⁶⁸ See: http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Tanzania_Angellah-Kairuki_January-12-2017.pdf

⁶⁹ See: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/OGP_Kenya_Letter_Jan72016_0.pdf

⁷⁰ See: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Trinidad-Tobago_Maxie-Cuffie_January-12-2017_2.pdf

⁷¹ See: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Montenegro_Vujica-Lazovic_January-12-2017_2.pdf

Cabo Verde	January 2017 ⁷²
Malawi	January 2016 ⁷³
Papua New Guinea	January 2017 ⁷⁴
Croatia	January 2017 ⁷⁵
Spain	January 2017 ⁷⁶
Bosnia-Herzegovina	January 2017 ⁷⁷
Denmark	January 2017 ⁷⁸
Letter due to decision to designated inactive	
Montenegro	February 2016 ⁷⁹

Failure to comply with the IRM process

Clear examples where countries have been held accountable on the basis of IRM findings are Turkey⁸⁰, Malta⁸¹ and Lithuania⁸², which received letters in 2014 from the OGP regarding the IRM report. The CS subcommittee decided on the basis of IRM findings that the countries acted contrary to the OGP process in its NAPs. The IRM report could not be produced due to lack of activity on the NAP as well as lack of engagement of the Govt to collaborate with the research. A similar letter was issued to Paraguay⁸³, Dominican Republic⁸⁴, Spain⁸⁵, Guatemala⁸⁶, South Korea⁸⁷. The letters referred to findings from the IRM concerning the failure to co-create the NAP with civil society.

Failure to adhere to OGP values and principles

This response comes from the OGP SC, through the CS sub-committee, and can be based on IRM findings. While the reviewing of OGP Govt participation happens in practice, interview feedback from SC members suggests that these decisions are rarely made on the basis of the information provided by the IRM. Instead, recommendations are made on the basis of political development in countries, for example deliberate governmental actions to reduce democratic space in a country. In other words, practice does not align with the Articles of Governance.

This does not mean that the IRM does not contribute to decision-making during the response policy period. The OGP website section on the response policy shows that the IRM is mentioned in 10 out of the 27 uploaded documents (**Error! Reference source not found.**). Most of the times, reference to the IRM is made by the OGP SC. More concrete reference to IRM findings is made in "OGP SC concern review reports". As such, also the OGP SC's proposal includes the call for the OGP members to: follow-up on specific IRM recommendations; or cooperate with the IRM in order to

⁷² See: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Cabo-Verde_Emilio-Rodrigues_January-12-2017_2.pdf

⁷³ See: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/OGP_Malawi_Letter_Jan72016_0.pdf

⁷⁴ See: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Papua-New-Guinea_Rimbink-Pato_January-12-2017_2.pdf

⁷⁵ See: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Croatia_Sandra-Pernar_January-12-2017_2.pdf

⁷⁶ See: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Spain_Elena-Collado-Martinez_January-12-2017_2.pdf

⁷⁷ See: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Bosnia-Herzegovina_Josip-Grubesa_January-12-2017_2.pdf

⁷⁸ See: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Denmark_Claus-Hjort-Frederiksen_January-12-2017_2.pdf

⁷⁹ See: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/LettertoMontenegro-Feb2017_0.pdf

⁸⁰ See: <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/OGP%20Letter%20-%20Turkey.pdf>

⁸¹ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/OGP%20Letter%20-%20Malta.pdf>

⁸² See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/OGP%20Letter%20-%20Lithuania.pdf>

⁸³ See: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/Country_Letter_Paraguay_SP.pdf

⁸⁴ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/Country%20Letter%20Dominican%20Republic%20SP.pdf>

⁸⁵ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/Country%20Letter%20Spain%20SP.pdf>

⁸⁶ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/Country%20Letter%20Guatemala%20SP.pdf>

⁸⁷ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/OGP%20Letter%20-%20South%20Korea.pdf> and

http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/South-Korea_Hong-Yun-sik_September2016.pdf

See: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/South-Korea_Hong-Yun-sik_September2016_1.pdf

ensure effective evaluation. Noticeable is that when CSO concern letters make reference to the IRM, also Govt responses and OGP SC decisions mention the IRM. Out of the five response policy cases, only in two instances CSOs and Govts refer to the IRM.

Table 2 - Response policy assessment

OGP response policy

The OGP response policy is triggered when the SC, chair of the CS subcommittee, or the OGP support unit receives a letter of concern regarding a situation of relevance to OGP in a participating country from: a fellow SC member, a multilateral partner or Working Group co-anchor; or a civil society, not-for-profit organisation, or media organization involved in the OGP at the national level. The OGP highlights a series of issues that in the past have been raised in concern letters. This includes the:

- Introduction of new/revised policies or actions that significantly reduce access to information for citizens and civil society / reduce the space for non-governmental organizations to work independently, voice critiques, and/or receive funding from domestic or international sources (e.g. new NGO laws).
- Manipulation of the OGP process by governments in terms of civil society participation (e.g. only inviting GONGOs to participate in consultations).
- Introduction of new/revised policies, laws, or practices, or actions, that significantly reduce enjoyment of fundamental freedoms, notably freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly, and freedom to associate.
- Introduction of new/revised policies or actions that significantly reduce online or offline media freedom, or threaten media ownership and independence.

Upon receipt of the letter, the CS subcommittee, together with the OGP support unit, collects feedback and formulates a response, *inter alia*, on the basis of feedback from IRM researchers and IRM reports.

The OGP website lists currently requested responses from letters in five OGP countries: Azerbaijan; Hungary; Israel; and Turkey. The following table presents an overview of the documentation relating to the cases and indicates which documents make reference to the IRM (✓).

OGP response policy case			
Azerbaijan	Letter of concern	CSO	✓ ⁸⁸
	Govt response letter	Govt	✓ ⁸⁹
	Report Concern Review team	OGP SC	✓ ⁹⁰
	Outline of Proposed Action Points for the Government of Azerbaijan	OGP SC	✓ ⁹¹
	CS subcommittee Resolution on Azerbaijan	OGP SC	✗ ⁹²
	Azerbaijan rebuttal letter	Govt	✗ ⁹³
	Final Resolution on Azerbaijan	OGP SC	✗ ⁹⁴
	Pre SC decision letter	CSO	✗ ⁹⁵

⁸⁸ See: <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/OGP%20enquiry%20request%20letter%20-%20PWYP%20CIVICUS%20ART19.pdf>

⁸⁹ See: <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/Letter2%281%29.pdf>

⁹⁰ See: http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Azerbaijan_Final-Report_Concerns-Filed_May2015.pdf

⁹¹ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/response-policy>

⁹² See: <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/CS%20resolution%20on%20Azerbaijan.pdf>

⁹³ See: <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/RebuttalfromGovernmentofAzerbaijan.pdf>

⁹⁴ See: <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/OGPSteeringCommitteeResolutiononAzerbaijan-2.pdf>

⁹⁵ See: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Azerbaijan_ART19-CIVICUS-HRW-PWYP_May2017.pdf

	Azerbaijan consolidated report	Govt	✗ ⁹⁶
	Resolution on extension inactivity	OGP SC	✗ ⁹⁷
	Draft updated recommendations	OGP SC	✗ ⁹⁸
	Final recommendations	OGP SC	✗ ⁹⁹
Hungary	Letter of concern	CSO	✓ ¹⁰⁰
	Background document on concern	CSO	✗ ¹⁰¹
	Govt response letter	Govt	✗ ¹⁰²
	Report Concern Review team	OGP SC	✓ ¹⁰³
	OGP CS proposal for dialogue	OGP SC	✓ ¹⁰⁴
	Govt response	Govt	✓ ¹⁰⁵
	OGP CS response	OGP SC	✗ ¹⁰⁶
	Media briefing	OGP SC	✓ ¹⁰⁷
Israel	Letter of concern	CSO	✗ ¹⁰⁸
	Letter of concern	CSO	✗ ¹⁰⁹
	Response letter	OGP SC	✗ ¹¹⁰
Australia	Letter of concern	CSO	✗ ¹¹¹
	Response letter	Govt	✗ ¹¹²
	OGP review and decision	OGP SC	✓ ¹¹³
Turkey	Letter of concern	CSO	✗ ¹¹⁴
	Response letter	OGP SC	✗ ¹¹⁵

⁹⁶ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/government-of-azerbaijan-consolidated-report-may-2017>

⁹⁷ See: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Azerbaijan_final-inactivity-resolution_June282017.pdf

⁹⁸ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/august-2017-draft-updated-recommendation-government-of-azerbaijan>

⁹⁹ See: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Azerbaijan_Final-Recommendations_Sept2017.pdf

¹⁰⁰ See: <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/OGP%20Hungary%20response%20policy%20letter.pdf>

¹⁰¹ See: <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/OGP%20Hungary%20response%20policy%20background%20document.pdf>

¹⁰² See: <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/OGP%20Response%20Policy%20-%20Hungary%20-%20final.pdf> ; http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/OGP%20response%20policy%20-%20Hungary%20letter_BM_14404_2_2015.pdf

¹⁰³ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/response-policy>

¹⁰⁴ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/response-policy>

¹⁰⁵ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/response-policy>

¹⁰⁶ See: http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Response-to-Official-Position-of-Hungary_Nov2016.pdf

¹⁰⁷ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/about/news-and-events/media-briefing-government-of-hungary-withdraws-open-government-partnership>

¹⁰⁸ See: <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/AIC-letter-july16.pdf>

¹⁰⁹ See: <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/PASSOP-letter.pdf>

¹¹⁰ See: <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/PASSOP-September-2016.pdf>

¹¹¹ See: http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Australia_Concern_Sept16.pdf

¹¹² See: http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Australia_Response-Policy_Letter-Government20161031.pdf

¹¹³ See: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Australia_RP-Report_August2017.pdf

¹¹⁴ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/response-policy>

¹¹⁵ See: http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Turkey_KYM_letter_RP_letter.pdf

3.2.1.2 IRM response to poor performance

This review finds that stakeholders do consider the accountability element important and repeatedly stress that the IRM “lacks teeth”. The OGP is a collective action initiative that prioritises constructive dialogue between its members in order to work towards a common agenda. The IRM is supposed to support this process and incentivise actors to behave in line with the OGP shared principles. From the perspective of OGP staff and interviewed Govts, the IRM is seen to be more of a soft-tool, meaning its consequences should not prevent OGP members from continuing dialogue within the OGP framework. The emphasis lies on learning as a way to push for change. Interviewed CSOs voice different expectations from the IRM. While mostly using the IRM for learning, the CSOs would like to see the IRM working as an accountability tool. Lack of consequences from IRM reporting is hence seen as a weakness. This review finds that this largely has to do with the difficulty of attributing consequences to the IRM. For example, stakeholders have identified a series of (un) intended consequences of poor OGP performance detected by the IRM: bad publicity could lead to negative public perception on government performance; identified flaws in NAP implementation could lead to internal questions on performance to NAP implementers; negative IRM finding could lead to negative perception among government peers on the international level.

The data collected partially provides evidence on these consequences. Interviewees highlight that bad publicity could lead to negative public perception on government performance and primarily evidence this by referring to low levels of public trust in governments. However, attributing the IRM to impact on low levels of trust is difficult and interviewees do not present clear evidence on this. IEP members also discard the causal relationship between the IRM and low levels of trust. In fact, arguably the diminishing of trust in public institutions has led to a number of responses, one of which is the OGP itself. Important is also that Govt and CSO interviewees note that the IRM does not generate high levels of visibility on the national level. One reason is the perceived lack of interest from the wider public. In fact, it is suggested that the OGP appeals largely to Govts and CSO, as well as a handful of OG experts in each country. In other words, in order for the IRM to impact public opinion, stakeholders primarily point to CSO being able to use the reports. When asked about the use of the reports, CSO interviewees do note that the reports provide for quality insight into the OGP performance of Govts. However, they highlight that the main weakness of the IRM report is the timing which is (if not delayed) linked to the OGP cycle and not always aligned with policy cycles on the national level. As a result, CSOs feel they cannot easily use the IRM reports in their own advocacy efforts. It could be argued that the potential impact of the IRM to influence public opinion is reduced due to its failure to engage CSOs in using the reports for advocacy purposes. However, this review also wants to stress the need to reflect and better understand the limitations of the IRM.

To sum up, the review considers that the Articles in Governance adequately point to the IRM as a way to help the SC shape a response to the poor performance of OGP members. This is also the way Govts and OGP staff see the IRM contribute as a “soft” accountability tool in collective action. It is illustrated by including in IRM reports cases of Govts failing to comply with OGP reporting process (**Error! Reference source not found.**) as well as the OGP letters to Govts that fail to comply with the IRM process. However, it is unclear to which extent the IRM is used for shaping decisions related to the OGP response policy concerning failure to adhere to OGP values and principles (**Error! Reference source not found.**). From this perspective it would be valuable to improve the uptake of the IRM within the SC. At the same time, this review also acknowledges that particularly CSOs on the national level expect the IRM to be more a “hard” accountability tool. In other words, their expectations do not necessarily fall in line with the Articles of Governance. The question is how the OGP and IRM could deal with this and why does this gap persist after six years of IRM. On the former, one way would be to do this through the Articles of Governance, for example by developing a formal IRM response policy. This would however mean that the IRM becomes a “hard” accountability tool, which could undermine OGP collective action. Instead, the OGP could also facilitate ways in which CSO can make use of the IRM and use this

on the national level in the way they see fit (assuming they can use the IRM as an accountability mechanism on the national level). This means that the OGP should consider the limits of the IRM's reach while at the same time consider how to empower CSOs in using the IRM. On the latter, feedback from IEP members and the IRM staff points to this being a "messaging problem" rather than a fundamental design issue. For example, one IEP member in response to this report points out that the IRM generates data, and that the OGP SC can use this in a "soft" and "hard" way. It is not the role of the IRM to deliver consequences to poor performance, but instead its role is to ensure that integrity and trust in the review process is protected. The expressed "hard versus soft" position of stakeholders points, according to the IEP member, to a simplistic and poor framing of the role of the IRM. As such, stakeholders should be moved away from this dichotomy.

3.2.1.3 OGP's reporting process and the IRM

The following aspect of the mission alignment concern more operational aspects of the OGP reporting process. It concerns the requirement of Govts to issue self-assessment reports throughout the process.

The Articles of Governance detail the role of the IRM in the OGP reporting process. One element that stands out is the emphasis that the IRM progress reports are to be written to complement the participating Govts self-assessment reports. It is understood that the development of the guidelines for this fall under the CS sub-committee. The relation between the two reports (IRM report and the Govt self-assessment report) has frequently been highlighted by stakeholders that have expectations in terms of complementarity.

From the data collected we get different views on this. Complementarity of the two reports is more often confirmed by CSOs than by Govts. The latter highlights that the added value of the IRM report is the confirmation of a Govt's own self-assessment findings. At the same time, Govts also warn for "report overkill" from the OGP. CSOs highlight that the added value compared to Govt self-assessment reports is the independence and unbiased nature of IRM reports. Stakeholders also note that the IRM's methodology allows for a more analytical assessment, contrary to that of the self-assessment which risks becoming a "tick off the box" exercise.

Apart from the complementarity of the two reports, Govt interviewees particularly stress the overlap between the data collection activities, sometimes requiring Govts to produce similar information twice¹¹⁶. This can be perceived as a burden. To mitigate this, IRM researchers and Govt PoCs have collaborated to harmonise data collection. In fact, IRM staff and IEP members confirm that the self-assessment done by Govts ensures that relevant data is collected which makes the IRM research easier. Another issue raised by stakeholder is that the IRM findings do not always present new information, especially in countries where co-creation mechanisms between CSOs and Govts work properly. It has to be noted however, that at the same time, Govt interviewees also responded surprised about certain findings, wishing they had informed earlier. This is mentioned frequently in light of the assessment of NAPs.

Finally, interview feedback also pointed to the fact that in the past some CSOs produced shadow reports. In the past, the OGP support unit stimulated this, but currently it seems that this is not a widespread activity. The issue of "report overkill" has frequently been highlighted by interviewed CSOs, not only referring to those reports coming from the OGP (i.e. Govt self-assessment, IRM report, CSO shadow-reports), but also those coming from other international (non) governmental organisations. Clearly, stakeholders consider the OGP reporting activities valuable but do warn

¹¹⁶ The data collection burden of the OGP reporting process also was mentioned together with other international obligations for organisations such as those from the OECD, Council of Europe, UN and the European Commission.

that this can be a burden both in term of contributing to data collection as well as being able to process the information coming out of this work. Section 3.2.2 below will further discuss the usability of the reports.

A more structural debate that comes out of this is that stakeholders point out the possible need for IRM varieties. The need for an IRM report is perceived different when Govt self-assessment reports are of high quality. This has been pointed out in the case of a few countries where such reports were a product of deliberation between Govt and CSO. During interviews this raised the question on whether there should be a phasing out of the IRM once OGP countries reach a certain level of co-creation and advanced open government. Most interviewees pointed out that an OGP without an IRM would not be desirable, however, did support the idea to reflect on varieties of IRM reporting. From the side of the OGP and the IRM this was met with some concerns, particularly relating to the operability of IRM varieties and the ability to compare findings across the OGP. In addition, changes in Govts would also require the OGP to re-evaluate which IRM variety would apply. Nonetheless, interviewees were not dismissive of the idea to establish criteria against which the IRM could deploy different models. Govts particularly highlighted the need for IRM reports to be practical for public administrations. Similar views were given by CSOs. Practicality relates here to being able to use its findings immediately and not post-intervention which is currently the case with having a mid-term and end-of-term evaluation. Real-time monitoring was frequently mentioned by CSOs. Govts highlight the need to be informed early in order to be able to adjust implementation of NAPs. Govts also highlighted that being able to interact on a frequent basis with peers is considered valuable due to mutual understanding on NAP implementation challenges. Feedback from an IEP member emphasises the summative approach of the IRM, doing an ex-post review of NAP implementation. Involving the IRM researcher in monitoring could undermine performing this role in an independent way. Stakeholders acknowledged this, but do mention that the IRM researcher on the ground was often their main OGP face-to-face interlocutor. Thus in practice, the IRM also takes on a formative approach allowing for learnings during the development and implementation of the NAP. In fact, arguably this formative function is also embedded in the objective of the mid-term review of the IRM, which allows NAP implementers to adjust activities in order to better comply with the NAP objectives. More information on IRM varieties is given in Annex I on Strategic options and scenarios.

To sum up, the current reference in the Articles of Governance to the IRM reporting in relation to the OGP reporting falls in line with expectations from OGP and IRM staff. The IRM is seen as a complementary report to Govt self-assessments. IRM staff considers the self-assessment reports particularly helpful for IRM researchers in order to collect data. Govts do consider the self-assessment report data collection and participation in the IRM data collection a burden. In order to reduce the administrative weight related to the IRM and OGP reporting processes, synergies could be explored on data collection. Across the spectrum there is no support for a phasing out of the IRM from the OGP process, however there is room for reflection on varieties of IRM models. However, priority should be given to the operability of such a distinction. There is more support among OGP staff members and Govts for phasing out of the self-assessment report. The IRM does stress that this should go hand-in-hand with effort to facilitate IRM data collection. The practices used in the current sub-national pilot program seem promising.¹¹⁷ This includes for example an online document depository for Govts to provide easy access to documentation. Another identified risk is that if the self-assessment reports disappear, Govts could feel alienated from the OGP/IRM reporting process. The self-assessment can be, in comparison with other programmes, an interesting asset of the OGP as it allows for Govts to self-regulate compliance with the OGP. However, this largely falls outside the scope of this review and should be further studied in detail.

¹¹⁷ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/subnational-pilot-program-background-and-information>

3.2.1.4 Strategic refresh and the IRM

The Strategic Refresh emphasises the role of the IRM as a learning and accountability mechanism¹¹⁸. The OGP Mid-Term Review found that 70% of survey respondents felt that IRM reviews helped improving on-going NAPs and directly influence future NAPs. On that basis the learning function of the IRM was considered successful. The accountability component was considered less influential, mainly due to its dependence on sensitivity to peer pressure from fellow OGP partners and reactions of the donor community. The Strategic Refresh emphasises the role of the IRM to incentivize country performance in the short run and work as an accountability mechanism and influencing policy change in the long run¹¹⁹. Key components of the IRM to incentivize country performance are: the IRM methodology to assess commitments; the format and content of reports; and the timing and report launch strategies. The Strategic refresh calls now for effort to ensure that the IRM findings translate into country actions through: Govt reformers, CS advocacy; and strategic communications. One focus area according to the Strategic Refresh could be the early assessment of the NAPs, as well as a longer-term assessment of country trajectories after several action plans. The challenge to implement this is primarily a resources issue for the OGP.

For this review, CSO stakeholders and Govt stakeholders were surveyed and interviewed on the relevance of the IRM objectives. Survey recipients were asked to rate overall how relevant the IRM is in order to promote learning and accountability, as well as to ensure better co-creation between CS and Govts and to support OG reform (Q4).

Overall Govt respondents rated the relevance of the IRM positively (Figure 4)¹²⁰. The relevance of the IRM to promote accountability¹²¹ and to ensure better co-creation¹²² stand out particularly. The promotion of learning and the support to OG reforms received slightly higher levels of “neither relevant nor irrelevant”. Survey feedback also points for the latter to higher irrelevant rating¹²³, which according to interview data can be attributed to the perception from Govts Points of Contacts (POC) that OG reforms are largely politically driven and possibly out of reach for the IRM. More insight on the learning component is given in section 3.3.3.

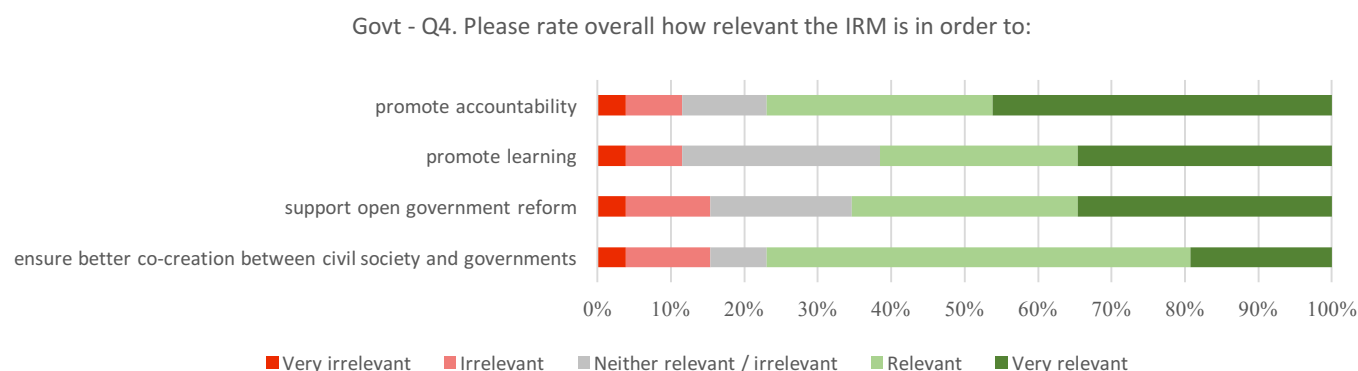


Figure 4 – Govt rating on IRM relevance

Also CSO respondents rated the relevance of the IRM positively (Figure 5)¹²⁴. In this case, particularly the IRM support to OG reform stands out as relevant (54%/19) and highly relevant (23%/8). In line with Govts, CSOs also consider that

¹¹⁸ See: http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/OGP_Strategic-Refresh_Dec2016.pdf, p. 8

¹¹⁹ See: http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/OGP_Strategic-Refresh_Dec2016.pdf, p. 22

¹²⁰ 3,9 on a Likert scale from 1 very irrelevant to 5 very relevant.

¹²¹ 31%/8 relevant and 46%/12 very relevant.

¹²² 58%/12 relevant and 19%/5 very relevant.

¹²³ 11%/3 irrelevant and 4%/1.

¹²⁴ 3,7 on a Likert scale from 1 very irrelevant to 5 very relevant.

OG reforms are politically driven, but that in fact the IRM can help support the OGP as a whole to exert political influence over this process.

CSO - Q4. Please rate overall how relevant the IRM is in order to:

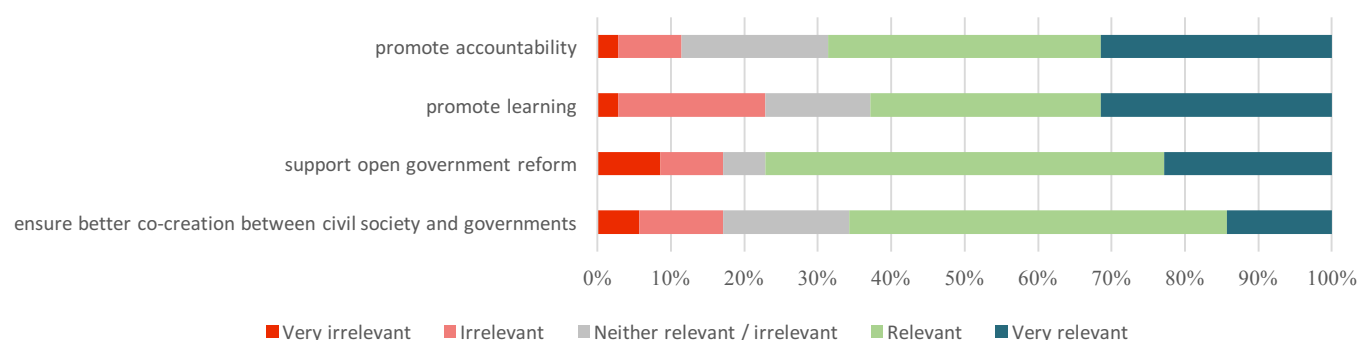


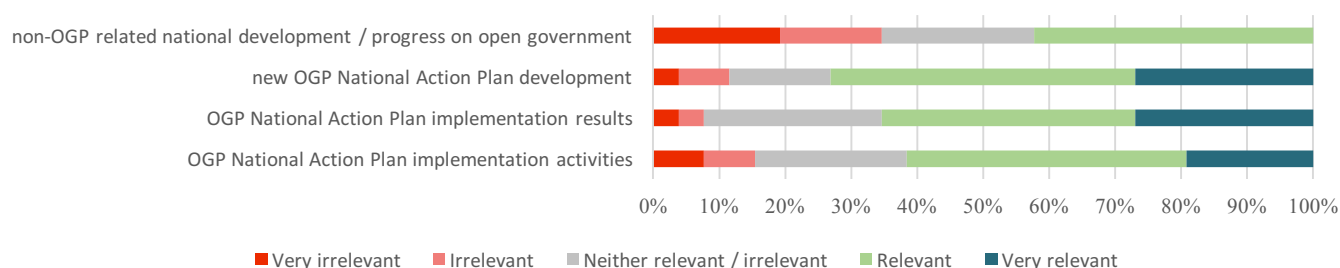
Figure 5 – CSO rating on IRM relevance

CSO and Govt survey recipients were also asked to rate the relevance of the IRM for country-level dialogue (Q5) (Figure 6). It is noticeable that both groups rate the relevance weak on country-level dialogue on non-OGP related national development / progress on OG. While most Govt recipients rated the IRM relevant¹²⁵ on this (42%/11), a significant group rated the IRM as irrelevant (15%/4) or very irrelevant (19%/5). Importantly is also that almost one out of four Govt respondents rate this element as “neither relevant nor irrelevant” (23%/6). Compared to Govt respondents, a larger part of the CSO respondents consider the IRM irrelevant (26%/9) or very irrelevant (12%/4) on this issue, and 32% (11) considers the IRM neither relevant nor irrelevant. Almost one out of three CSO respondents rated the IRM relevant (24%/8) or very relevant (6%/2).

The IRM’s relevance on country-level dialogue is rated strong by both groups of survey recipients. Govts consider the IRM particularly relevant for country-dialogue on new NAP development, but also rate relevance positively on NAP implementation results and activities. CSO respondents are slightly more reserved on these elements, particularly on dialogue on NAP implementation activities. Interview feedback on this suggests that CSOs in general do not have strong expectations from the IRM apart from supporting their advocacy agendas. The NAP-focused technical nature of the IRM is not always considered in line with that agenda. This relates, on the one hand, to the fact that the NAP cycle is not always aligned with national policy cycles of relevance to respective CSOs. On the other hand, this relates to the fact that the IRM reports cover all NAP implementation activities and results, while CSO’s often follow specifically those commitments relevant to their thematic focus (i.e. anti-corruption, access to information or policy thematic areas such as agriculture or education).

¹²⁵ None rated this as highly relevant.

Govt: Q5. Please rate how relevant the IRM is for country-level dialogue between your government and CSO on:



CSO: Q5. Please rate how relevant the IRM is for country-level dialogue between your CSO and government on:

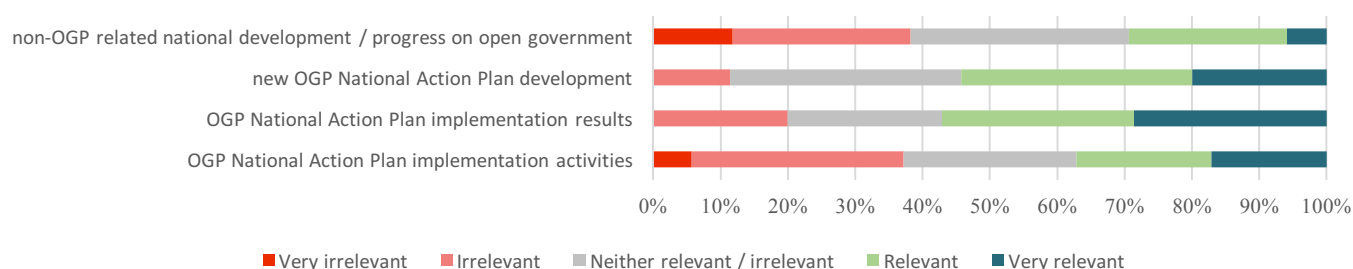


Figure 6 – Govt and CSO rating on relevance country-dialogue

To sum up, this review finds that to a large extent IRM objectives correspond to the OGP's Strategic Refresh's shift of objectives. Stakeholders consider the IRM's relevance to promote accountability slightly higher than to promote learning. This is most likely attributed to the close nature of interaction between CSOs and Govts, which is focused on accountability. Results are more long term, thus less visible, and therefore perceived more relevant. Results from learning are more visible in an environment of close interaction, and thus perceived less relevant. In other words, the close interaction between CSO and Govt, particularly during co-creation, limits the learning potential from the IRM. This is illustrated by the fact that CSOs rated the IRM relevance slightly higher than Govts. The reason for this could be the fact that Govts are working on a daily basis on the implementation of NAPs. As discussed above, Govts repeatedly stressed the need for technical assistance on implementation of NAPs. At the time the IRM reports come out, the Govts most likely already had addressed the issues (for better or for worse). This also affects for Govts the IRM relevance to promote learning.

The OGP Strategic Refresh's call for effort to ensure that the IRM findings translate into country actions, falls in line with the mandate of the IRM. However, some questions can be raised on whether the twin mandate of accountability and learning should be placed alongside each other. In fact, as discussed above, the IRM might be faced with some accountability limitations, particularly in the case IRM findings are not taken up by Govts or CSOs, or even the OGP's SC. Perhaps, the emphasis of the IRM should lie in promoting uptake in terms of learning. These learnings could subsequently be used by stakeholders for accountability. CSOs that learn from IRM findings can use this as evidence in order to hold the Govt accountable. Govts that learn from IRM findings can use this evidence to internally hold line ministries involved in NAP implementation accountable.

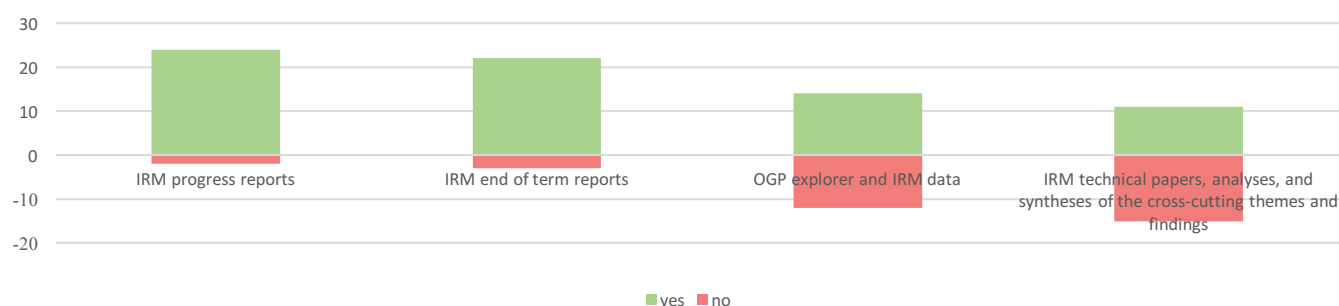
3.2.2 IRM report use

KEY FINDINGS

- The most popular IRM products are the progress and end-of-term reports but stakeholders' needs and expectations do not always correspond with these products.
- Stocktaking suggests more than a dozen different uses for IRM products.
- For CSOs and Govts the most important obstacles are the length of the reports and the difficulty of extracting key messages. Another major obstacle is the timing of the reports.
- The will to inform the wider public seems to be mostly an interest of Govts or the OGP/IRM itself.
- Bad timing of report publication seriously limits the IRM's usefulness, especially when not being able to influence the NAP development process. Delays in publication are an area in which the IRM shares a significant part of the responsibility.
- Bad timing because a NAP cycle does not match a policy cycle on the national level is not the responsibility of the IRM and shows the limitations of its usefulness.
- The difficulty to draw conclusions from multiple NAPs limits the usability of the IRM reports by the OGP SC. The uptake by the OGP support unit is primarily challenged by the length of the reports.
- Stakeholders point to the credibility of the methodology, the availability of detailed technical content, and its independence as key factors enabling the use of reports.
- Govts value the branding of the IRM reports as part of the OGP. CSOs play a different role within the OGP compared to Govts and thus benefit less from the OGP "membership label".
- Management of IRM uptake is a shared responsibility between all OGP actors. The degree of responsibility differs with the IRM playing a central role in coordinating this.

Interviewees and survey recipients were asked about their use of the IRM products and how useful these are considered to be for their work (Q6) (Figure 7). Clearly the most used products are the IRM progress and end-of-term reports. 92% (24) of Govt respondents noted that they use the progress report and 88% (22) the end-of-term report. 83% (25) of CSO respondents use the progress reports and 97% (27) the end of term report. The "OGP explorer and IRM data" is roughly used by half of the respondents¹²⁶. Finally, the "IRM technical papers, analyses, and syntheses of the cross-cutting themes and findings" are more used by CSO than by Govt respondents. 67% (20) of the former uses these reports as opposed to less than half of Govt respondents (42%/11).

Govts - Q6. Please indicate whether your government uses the following IRM products



¹²⁶ 54%/14 Govts and 53%/16 CSOs

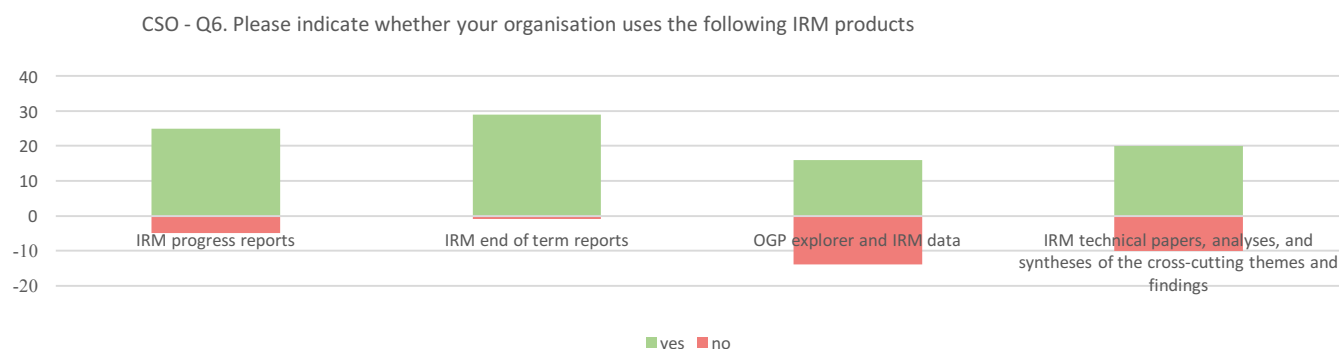
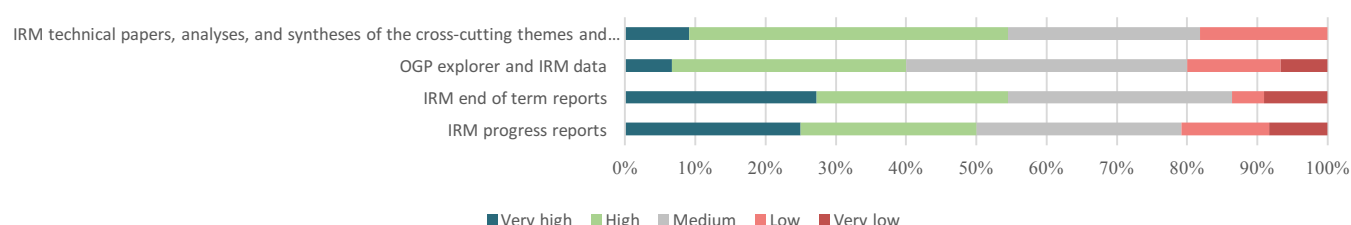


Figure 7 – Govt and CSO use of IRM products

The views from those users on the usefulness of the IRM products varies, particularly suggesting this is an area where needs and expectations do not always correspond with the products (Figure 8). Half of the Govt users consider the IRM reports useful¹²⁷. One out of three consider usefulness “medium”¹²⁸ and roughly one out of five consider progress reports¹²⁹ and one out of six end of term reports¹³⁰ not useful for their work.

Govt: Q6. Please rate the usefulness of the IRM products to your work:



CSO: Q6. Please rate the usefulness of the IRM products to your work:

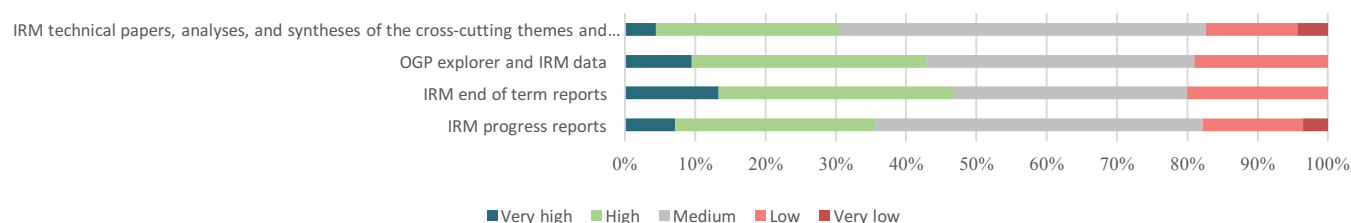


Figure 8 – Govt and CSO usefulness IRM products

3.2.2.1 Types of uses

Interview and survey feedback identify a series of country-level and OGP-level uses of IRM products. Stakeholders use IRM products internally within institutions or organisations and/or use IRM products for external purposes such as communication and policy deliberations or concrete advocacy activities. IRM products are used by CSOs, Govts, other OGP stakeholders (IRM researchers, OGP staff and IEP), as well as third parties¹³¹ such as MOs and academia. The identified uses of the products support the main IRM objectives. The following table presents an overview of the

¹²⁷ for progress reports 25%/6 high and 25%/6 very high, for end of term reports 27%/6 high and 27%/6 very high

¹²⁸ 29%/7 for progress reports, 32%/7 for end of term reports

¹²⁹ 13%/3 low and 8%/2 very low

¹³⁰ 5%/1 low and 9%/2 very low

¹³¹ The full extent to which IRM products are used by third parties is unclear.

identified uses of IRM products. The main identified strengths and weaknesses of the IRM products are discussed in more detail below (Table 3).

Table 3 – Overview uses to IRM products

Use	Target use	Objective	Identified weaknesses	Identified strengths
Civil Society Organisations				
IRM products are used by staff dealing with or following OGP to learn about NAP implementation activities and results	Internal use	To learn/inform	Length of the reports Difficult to identify to key messages	Detailed technical content Credibility of the methodology
IRM products are used to help shape CSO advocacy agendas	Internal use	To learn/inform To support OG reform	NAP cycle does not match policy cycle on the national level Weak alignment of NAP with the advocacy thematic focus	Evidence-based findings support need for advocacy
IRM products are used to inform CSO colleagues on NAP activities (results, activities and future development	Internal use, but also external, for example in the case where a network represents CSO in dialogue with Govt on OGP	To learn/inform To ensure better co-creation	Length of the reports Difficult access to key messages	Detailed technical content Credibility of the methodology
IRM products are used in dialogue with governments	External use	To ensure better co-creation	Lack of novelty findings Bad timing in case of overlap with NAP development dialogue	Detailed technical content Credibility of the methodology Independence of the findings
IRM products are used to inform wider public	External use	To hold accountable	Length of the reports Poor visualization of findings Too technical content	-
Governments				
IRM products are used by OGP Govt PoCs to hold NAP implementers accountable	Internal use	To hold accountable	Length of the reports Difficult to identify to key messages Weak alignment of recommendations with NAP implementation practice Poor general understanding of IRM process among NAP implementers	Credibility of the methodology Independence of the findings Reports carry the stamp of the OGP as an international multi-stakeholder initiative
IRM products are used by OGP Govt PoCs to push for OGP political will within the Govt	Internal use	To support OG reform	Length of the reports	Reports carry the stamp of the OGP as

			Difficult to identify to key messages Bad timing of publication in relation to political context (i.e. election period)	an international multi-stakeholder initiative
IRM products are used by OGP Govt PoCs to help NAP implementers	Internal use	To learn/inform	Weak alignment of recommendations with NAP implementation practice	Detailed technical content
IRM products are used by OGP Govts to present to other governments on work (local, regional, national and international level)	External use Internal use	To learn/inform To support OG reform	Lack of awareness on OGP	Evidence-based findings support advocacy
IRM products are used by OGP Govt PoCs to help determine future NAPs	Internal use External use	To learn/inform To support OG reform	Bad timing in case of overlap with NAP development dialogue Bad timing of publication in relation to political context (i.e. election period)	Recommendations are the result of multi-stakeholder consultation
IRM products are used in dialogue with CSO	External use	To ensure better co-creation	Lack of novelty findings Bad timing in case of overlap with NAP development dialogue	Detailed technical content Credibility of the methodology Independence of the findings
IRM products are used to inform wider public	External use	To hold accountable	Length of the reports Poor visualization of findings Too technical content	Reports carry the stamp of the OGP as an international multi-stakeholder initiative
OGP				
IRM products are used by OGP SC members to decide on response policy	External use within the context of the OGP	To hold accountable	Difficult to extract compliance conclusions from multiple NAPs	Findings provide country level context
IRM products are used by OGP SC to recommend on eligibility criteria	External use within the context of the OGP	To support OG reform		Credibility of the methodology
IRM products are used by support unit staff members to inform on NAP developments	External use within the context of the OGP	To learn/inform	Length of the reports	Findings provide country level context
Third parties				
IRM products are used by academia and International Organisation for research purposes	Internal use	To learn/inform	-	Access to large data sets Detailed technical content

3.2.2.2 Strengths and weaknesses

Stakeholders list conditions for the use of IRM products and provide this way a view on its limitations.

For CSOs, the main obstacles relate to the presentation of findings and arguably are areas that can be addressed directly by the IRM. This review finds that the most important obstacles are the length of the reports and the difficulty of extracting key messages. CSOs also mentioned poor visualization of findings and the too technical nature of reports, which would be an obstacle for CSOs to inform the wider public. However, the will to inform the wider public seems to be more present with Govts or the OGP/IRM itself. Other obstacles identified by CSOs are more difficult for the IRM to directly affect. This concerns for example the timing of the report. OGP staff perceived the bad timing as a major obstacle for the IRM's usefulness, especially in case of overlap with the NAP development dialogue. This review confirms that this is a missed opportunity to influence this process. Delays in publication are an area in which the IRM also shares a significant part of the responsibility. More on this can be found in section 3.4.3. At the same time, it should be mentioned that the use of IRM reports for this purpose is one out of a series of uses identified during this review. The fact that a NAP cycle does not match a policy cycle on the national level is an obstacle that, according to OGP staff interviews, is difficult to overcome. This should therefore be seen as a limitation of the potential usefulness of IRM products. However, needs of CSOs could be addressed through the OGP explorer database, which allows for analysis of commitments on the basis of a selection of thematic tags (i.e. on public integrity measures, public finance, citizen engagement, procurement, access to information, etc.). It could be useful to explore how the data can be aligned with policy areas on the national level and how this information can be used by CSOs on the national level.

Obstacles for Govts largely align with those for CSOs. Also here the length of the reports is seen as an obstacle, as well as the possibility to extract key messages. Another obstacle is the timing of the reports. Important is here the difficulty to use the IRM in case the political context changes. Using IRM products to push for OGP political buy-in within the Govt is difficult when leadership is otherwise engaged, for example during electoral campaigning. Also, the use of IRM products to influence NAP development in case a Govt changes can be challenging. On the upside, new Govts could be interested in taking up lessons learnt from previous NAPs¹³². Finally, one particular area of interest for the IRM in order to ensure better uptake on the national level is raising awareness of the IRM process among NAP implementers. Some Govt interviewees emphasized during interviews that large part of their work in terms of coordination of NAP implementation also concerned creating general awareness across administrations on the OGP, as well as the IRM. The IRM researchers on the ground could play an important role in this.

Concerning the usability of the IRM reports by the OGP, the main obstacle identified for the SC is the difficulty to draw conclusions from multiple NAPs when dealing with response policy cases on the basis of received letters of concern from CSO in OGP countries. The Articles of Governance asks the SC to assess OGP countries on the basis of performance / behavior during two consecutive action plan cycles. The IRM reports are to be used for information, however they evaluate one NAP cycle at a time, which cannot easily be compared to previous cycles due to the changing nature of these. For OGP support unit staff the uptake is primarily difficult due to the length of the reports.

In terms of strengths, CSO stakeholders point primarily to the credibility of the methodology, as well as the availability of detailed technical content, which allows for different uses of IRM reports. Also Govt stakeholders highlight these strengths and place emphasis on the independence of the IRM. Govts in particular value the OGP brand that comes with the IRM reports. Participation in the OGP reflects on a Govt's image towards the wider public and the international community. It has to be noted that this element was not particularly emphasized by CSOs when using

¹³² Interview feedback also suggests this happens in practice.

reports to inform the wider public. Apart from their position in the OGP Steering Committee, CSOs play a different role within the OGP compared to Govts. The “membership label” sticks primarily to the Govts which impacts the usefulness of the OGP brand attached to the IRM. Finally, the usefulness of IRM recommendations to feed into the NAP development is also perceived differently between CSOs and Govts. The latter in particular sees more value in the IRM recommendations considering these are based on views from multiple stakeholders. This means that if new NAPs are compliant with IRM recommendations, Govts consider the outcome of the co-creation successful. CSOs do not always share this idea, especially in case their demands/wishes are not or partially taken up in the new NAPs. Interviews pointed repeatedly to the fact that not all stakeholders were happy with the outcome of co-creation activities. While being positive about having a seat at the co-creation table, Govts and CSOs acknowledged that not all parties were always happy with the outcome. This particularly affects the CSOs given the diversity of organisations at the table compared to the Govt mostly speaking with one voice.

Looking at the obstacles and strengths should allow the IRM to better understand how to manage expectations and cater the needs of the users of the IRM. A traffic-light view at the obstacles shows a series of objectives to forward national uptake. The “green” objectives are those where the IRM itself could play a leading role, the “orange” objectives are those where the IRM needs to collaborate with other actors, and the red objectives are predominantly affected by external factors limiting the role of the IRM. The numbering of objectives indicates the priority given to each.¹³³


- | | |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To extract findings / key messages from NAPs / draw conclusions from multiple NAPs 2. To decrease length of the reports 3. To improve general understanding of IRM process 4. To improve visualization of findings 5. To reduce technical content |  |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To ensure timely publication to feed into NAP development 2. To increase awareness on OGP 3. To ensure recommendations fall in line with NAP implementation practice 4. To present novelty findings | |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To align NAP with the CS advocacy thematic focus 2. To adapt timing to political context 3. To match NAP cycle to policy cycle on the national level | |

Figure 9- Traffic-light objectives for IRM national uptake

To conclude, this review has identified a series of objectives that can directly be addressed by the IRM and would facilitate users to take up the reports. The IRM should, however, consider possible upsides and downsides from doing so. In particular, some efforts could imply more work. More reflection on this is given in section 3.4.3. Also, reducing the lengths and technicality of the reports could undermine its value. It is fair to say that while stakeholders frequently emphasised the credibility of the methodology, at the same time used this methodology to voice discontent on the findings of the IRM. In other words, even though the IRM can take steps to address these issues, the effect of it can depend on the willingness of stakeholders to work with this.

This is particularly the case for the objectives highlighted in yellow. This is where the IRM “shares management of uptake”. For example, ensuring timely publication of IRM reports depends largely on the IRM (the IRM researchers,

¹³³ This traffic light approach is meant to help the IRM team and IEP to better target efforts in order to improve the uptake of IRM reports. Addressing only the “green objectives” does not mean the usability of the report cannot be undermined by the remaining obstacles. Once having addressed the “green”, the remaining “orange and red objectives” could move up on the priority scale. The responsibility of addressing these obstacles remains shared between the IRM and other actors.

the IEP and the IRM staff members) but is affected by collaboration of other stakeholders such as the CSOs and Govts' willingness to share information with IRM researchers, as well as the OGP support unit's ability to allocate sufficient resources to the IRM. More reflection on this is given in section 3.4.3. Also, improving the general understanding of the IRM process is largely the IRM's responsibility, but this objective should not be decoupled from the general OGP awareness creation activities. Here the OGP support unit staff members play an important role. Further, the IRM's ability to present findings in its reports perceived by NAP stakeholders as "new or innovative"¹³⁴ can partially be linked to the understanding and knowledge of the IRM researcher. At the same time, as pointed out earlier, it is difficult to surprise the Govts and CSOs when they are so closely involved in the NAP process. This also affects the usability of IRM recommendations. In addition, an IRM researcher might not have the technical expertise to fully understand challenges NAP implementers are facing when working on OG reforms. One way to tackle this would be to set up activities that focus on IRM recommendation co-creation, closely involving Govt and CSO practitioners¹³⁵.

This brings us to a more fundamental challenge in ensuring uptake which is the dependency of the IRM on NAP cycles. Interviews frequently point to the limited follow-up on progress beyond the NAP. *De facto* this is considered to be left up to the CSO stakeholders on the ground. It is challenging for the IRM, and the OGP as a whole, to engage these stakeholders for different reasons. Important are the limited resources of many CSOs on the national level. In fact, concerns are raised with the intensity of CSO involvement within the OGP process. CSOs are repeatedly consulted on NAP development, NAP implementation, IRM reviewing, etc. In addition, the OGP hopes CSOs to carry on advocacy activities beyond the NAP cycle. IEP feedback warns about the assumption of CSO engagement in the OGP's Theory of Change, which hence also reflects on the IRM. The same can be said from the Govt. Repeatedly stakeholders describe the OGP process as resource intensive with the development of the NAP involving internal consultation with different Govt agencies and externally with CSO, business and academia, and OGP support unit staff. Subsequently, Govt teams (which sometimes are few people dealing with multiple tasks) coordinate implementation, directly implement NAP activities and are requested to report on progress made. The latter is done through the self-assessment which requires data collection, analysis and reporting, but also includes participation in the IRM process. The IRM process is in some instances considered a burden when Govt PoCs need to also provide active support to IRM researchers to ensure access to Govt stakeholders, apart from just being available to speak to them or provide documentation. Interview stakeholders repeatedly highlighted the need to find synergies in data collection for the self-assessment report and the IRM report. More reflection on this is given in section 3.4.3.

¹³⁴ The reviewers could not identify a common interpretation from interviewed stakeholders on what constitutes new or innovative findings. In some instances, stakeholders refer to findings that are practical, in other cases to findings that attract the attention of the wider public. Stakeholders generally refer to findings that they did not already know or thought they knew themselves. In other words, stakeholders refer to the expectation of an element of surprise or creativity in the findings and recommendations coming from the IRM.

¹³⁵ In order to ensure that neutrality, objectivity and credibility of the IRM process is not undermined, such a process could be held in the form of a focus group meeting moderated by the IRM researcher. The objective would be to come to a set of recommendations over which the NAP participants can take ownership. The final decision on the set of recommendations should remain with the IRM researcher.

3.3 Effectiveness of IRM

Effectiveness looks at how successful the IRM mechanism has been in achieving or progressing towards its objectives. This section aims to develop an IRM effectiveness framework that defines its dimensions and alternatives to assess them.

The following sections will discuss the effectiveness in more detail. An overview of the complete rating on effectiveness is included in Annex G.

3.3.1 Support to co-creation activities

KEY FINDINGS

- Stakeholder generally consider the IRM an “honest broker” to ensure better outcomes from the co-creation activities between civil society and governments.
- IRM recommendations concerning the co-creation are often picked up, in particular: the establishment of a permanent dialogue mechanism; the call for frequent or repeated interaction between CSO and Govt; the inclusion of wider CS (beyond those organisations dealing with transparency, access to information, anti-corruption, etc.); the expansion of the co-creation process to other governmental levels.
- Different expectations of co-creation outcomes likely explain why CSOs perceive the IRM less effective in supporting this process. Govts measure success on the basis of CS consultation for NAP development, CSOs on the basis of uptake of their recommendations in a NAP or the frequency of interaction with the Govt.
- The IRM methodology contributes to the effectiveness of the IRM in supporting co-creation activities but acceptance of findings is strongly affected by the frequency and length of interaction between the IRM Researcher and stakeholders, as well as the justification of the representativeness of the interview sample.

An important factor that contributes to the co-creation support by the IRM relates to its accountability function. Linked to this is the positive rating of Govt respondents on the IRM’s effectiveness to ensure accountability between government bodies and to allow CS to hold Govts accountable (Figure 10) (see section 3.3.3. below). Interview feedback points to the IRM being considered an “honest broker” or “arbiter” to ensure better outcomes from the co-creation. Govt interview feedback suggests that IRM recommendations concerning the co-creation process are often picked up. These recommendations relate for example to: the establishment of a permanent dialogue mechanism; the call for frequent or repeated interaction between CSO and Govt; the inclusion of wider CS (beyond those organisations dealing with transparency, access to information, anti-corruption, etc.); the expansion of the co-creation process to other governmental levels.

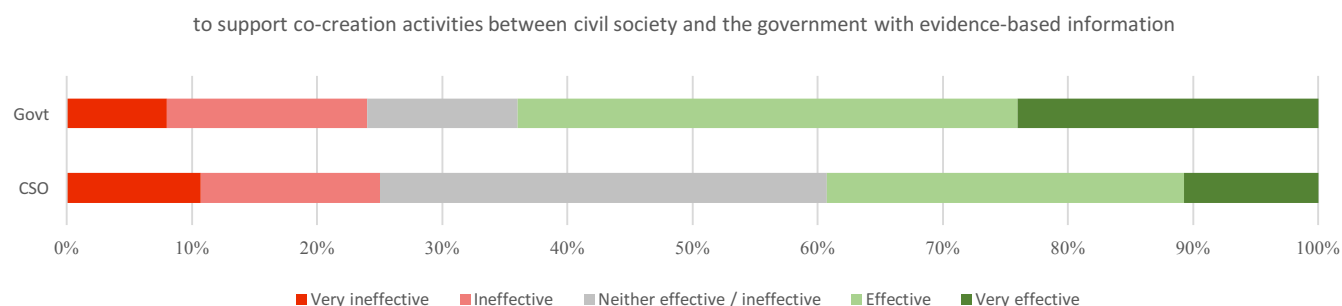


Figure 10 – CSO and Govt rating on effectiveness to support co-creation activities

The limits of the effectiveness of the IRM in supporting co-creation activities are shown when looking at the responses from CSO (Figure 10). As opposed to Govt respondents, CSO rate the effectiveness lower¹³⁶. From the interview feedback it is difficult to determine with certainty the reasoning behind this. However, one could attribute this to a possible difference in expectations from co-creation activities. In some countries where interviews were conducted with Govt and CSO, there were different views on whether the co-creation process was succesful. For example, a Govt would point to success because they consulted CS in the development of a NAP, while CSO would point to failure due to either limited interaction or disliking because the commitments they advocated for were not (fully) included in the new NAP. Both parties to the co-creation process would apply a different baseline to determining the effectiveness.

Another important factor that contributes to the effectiveness of the IRM is the methodology used. Generally, stakeholders consider this strong which allows them to accept findings. Nonetheless, some Govt interviewees voice concerns over the frequency and length of interaction with the IRM researcher, as well as the sample of collected views. Stakeholders have difficulty taking ownership of the IRM findings if they feel that the interaction with the IRM researcher was too little. Also, when stakeholders perceive the sample of views collected as not representative of the society, findings are less likely to be accepted.

3.3.2 Quality of future NAPs and effective implementation of OGP commitments

KEY FINDINGS

- Effectiveness of the IRM to enable that Govts can effectively implement commitments is limited in the eyes of CSOs due to its periodical review as opposed to real-time monitoring.
- Govts and CSOs consider the effectiveness of the IRM to influence future NAPs high. IRM findings are also used by the OGP to advice Govts on NAP development. Delays in IRM publications can seriously undermine this.
- Govts use OGP online guidance on NAP development and seek additional guidance from the IRM reports as well as IRM researchers.
- The effect of the IRM on governmental reform cannot be detached from the participation of Govts in the OGP as a whole. While CSOs consider the IRM potentially important to push for reform through the OGP, there is a perceived lack of effectiveness.
- Starred Commitments could lead Govts to race to the top but risk leaving more vulnerable countries behind and generate a multi-speed OGP.

¹³⁶ 29%/8 effective and 11%/3 very effective

In terms of influencing the quality of future NAPs and the effective implementation of OGP commitments, Govt rate the IRM's effectiveness positively (Figure 11). In the eyes of CSOs, the IRM is considered less effective in ensuring Govts can implement commitments effectively. The main point of concern identified is the periodical reviewing of the IRM (mid-term and end-of-term) as opposed to real-time monitoring of this implementation. CSOs consider this more their task as being the ones continuously present on the ground.

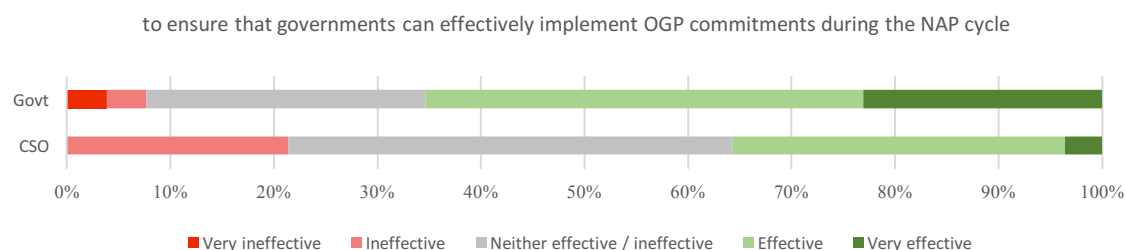


Figure 11 – CSO and Govt rating on effectiveness to ensure that governments can effectively implement OGP commitments

It is noticeable that CSO stakeholders as well as Govt stakeholders rate the influence of the IRM on the NAP development more positive (Figure 12). This also explains why stakeholders consider delays in publication of IRM report a missed opportunity as this from a time perspective often conflicts with the NAP development process. As a result, the IRM cannot always have the desired effect. The extent to which the IRM influences NAPs is difficult to determine. For example, it is unclear to which extent Govts follow-up on recommendations. However, the IRM's focus seems to have a clear influence on the NAP development in particular when guiding debates on the national level in terms of relevance to OGP values, specificity and measurability, as well as potential impact of commitments. Feedback from OGP staff also suggests that the IRM measurement is used to advice Govts on the creation of NAPs. In fact, interview feedback also suggests that here the IRM could be particularly effective. CSOs are encouraged to partake and Govts are incentivized to initiate co-creation for the development of NAPs and receive OGP guidance on this. This guidance can be provided by the OGP support unit in a tailor-made fashion but this depends largely on the unit's availability of resources. As a result, OGP members are also dependent for guidance on the online documents provided by the OGP. Govt feedback suggests that as a result they seek additional guidance on this from the IRM. In practice this means that Govts consult previous IRM reports, as well as directly seek feedback from IRM researchers. For example, IRM researchers are frequently invited to attend co-creation activities. In some instances, IRM researchers are also asked for more detailed advice on how to develop a NAP. This scenario is "red flagged" by the IRM as a possible independence breach. IRM researchers are trained on dealing with such situations at the start of their mandate and seem to frequently consult with the IRM unit for advice. The IRM promotes the attendance of IRM researchers as observers to such events and, if needed, recommends researchers to limit their interaction to explaining the IRM process. In practice researchers are also asked for more tailored advice. Some researchers mentioned that apart from independence disclaimers to Govts, they would also ensure full disclosure on their interaction with OGP stakeholders on the ground.

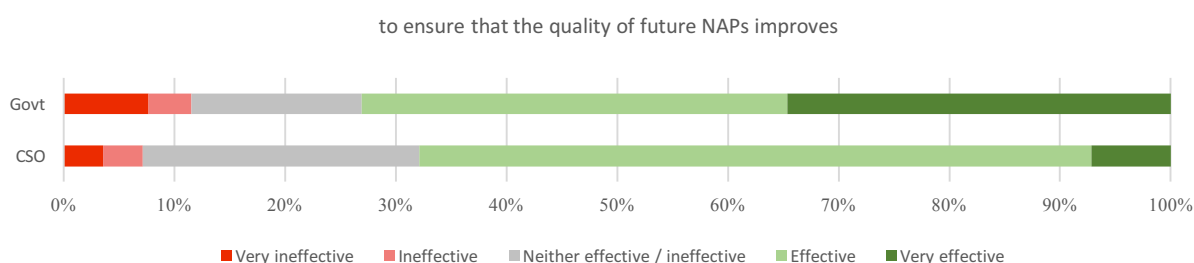


Figure 12 – CSO and Govt rating on effectiveness to ensure that quality of future NAPs improves

Beyond influencing the NAP process, survey feedback suggests also that the IRM has effect on governmental and policy reform (Figure 13). However, it is important to highlight that this element is considered more a long-term effect of the IRM and cannot easily be detached from Govt participation in the OGP all together. CSOs do not clearly see the effectiveness of the IRM in pushing for reform. This is interesting in light of earlier findings on relevance that do suggest the IRM as way to support government reform. Interviewees highlighted in particular the role the OGP could play to push on the political level for reform. From the effectiveness findings it is suggested that the OGP does not capitalize on this. A forum where the IRM could play an important role is the OGP Steering Committee. Interview feedback from SC members suggests that as OGP's leading body it should reflect more on how to strategically use the IRM. One obstacle for the SC is the ability to extract key messages from IRM data.

Finally, one important initiative by the IRM to push for OG reform is the introduction of “Starred Commitments”. Interview feedback suggest there is awareness of this initiative this despite the limited number of stars awarded to NAPs across the OGP. Some concerns are expressed relating to the criteria needed, in particular the element of transformative potential impact which is difficult to define. At the same time, stakeholders point to the different OG starting lines for countries with some potential transformative commitments being perhaps too ambitious and therefore countries could fail in its implementation. In other words, the race-to-the-top approach should not leave the more vulnerable countries behind. This could generate a multi-speed OGP and have a negative effect on the collective action within the movement.

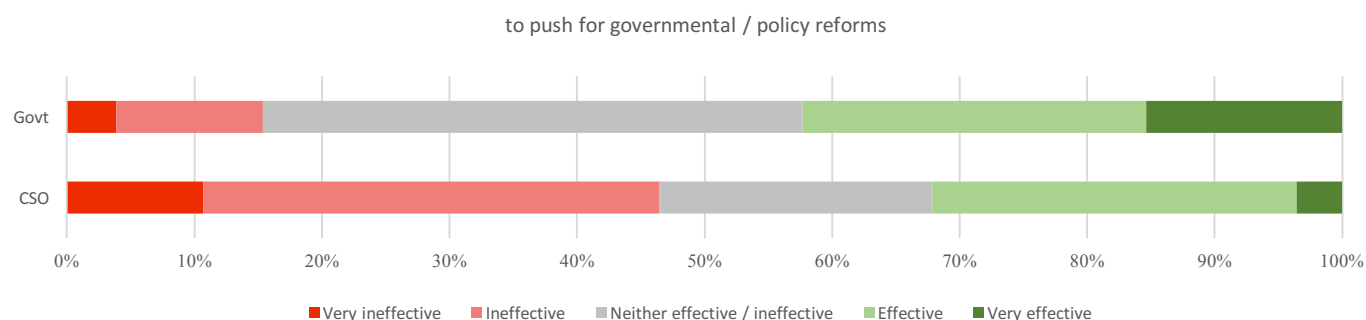


Figure 13 – CSO and Govt rating on effectiveness to push for governmental / policy reforms

KEY FINDINGS

- The effect of the IRM on allowing CSOs to hold Govts accountable is perceived limited due to lack of consequences and follow-up on poor performance.
- While CSOs consider the IRM potentially important, they either do not feel it is their duty to use the IRM to hold Govts accountable or have doubt on how to do so.
- The effect of the IRM on ensuring accountability within Govts translates into examples of PoCs asking clarification to NAP implementers, or line ministers taking measures on the basis of IRM criticism, as well as PoCs advocating for reform to their respective ministers.
- Govts emphasise the importance of frequent interaction between civil servants working on open government in order to enhance learning from the OGP as a whole.

It is important to note that the IRM is considered an accountability mechanism. As such, this review identifies different levels of accountability. The first relates to the role of the IRM as an accountability mechanism to ensure adherence to OGP principles by all the members of the OGP. The second relates to the ability of the IRM to allow the public and more specifically CSOs to hold Govts accountable on the national level. The third level refers to accountability within the Govt.

Concerning the role of the IRM within the OGP, this review finds that the IRM is considered a “soft” tool, primarily guiding the work of OGP support unit staff members when interacting with Govts and CSOs, as well as informing decision-making by the SC. Interviews confirm that the IRM is effective in this, but as previously mentioned, some obstacles limit uptake.

Concerning the role of the IRM on the national level, this review confirms that Govts and CSOs have high expectations from the IRM but do not capitalize on these expectations. Particularly CSOs consider that the IRM is to a limited extent effective in allowing them to hold Govts accountable. As discussed in the section on relevance, CSOs on the national level expect the IRM to be more a “hard” accountability tool and prefer to have consequences attached to poor performance. Interview feedback from CSOs suggest that there is limited follow-up on poor performance of Govts coming from the IRM. This is partially due to the fact that NAPs change every two years, but also due to the fact that IRM has limited dissemination reach on the local level. At the same time, CSOs do not always feel it is their duty to use the IRM to hold the Govts accountable and when they do, stakeholders express doubts on how to do so.

CSOs have their own advocacy agenda’s and use the OGP process as a tool to engage with the Govt. This does not automatically mean they also participate in the process in order to advocate for OGP compliance. OGP principles might be aligned fully or partially with those of CSOs, but on the operational level the CSOs can have different objectives as the OGP. For example, in case a CSO recommendation of an open data portal on procurement is not taken up in the NAP, this organisation might continue advocating for this issue throughout the NAP implementation and beyond. The IRM loses importance at that moment because of the fact it is largely dependent in its content on the NAP, regardless of whether it includes the issues of interest to the CSO. Another factor that might contribute to this is that the CSO’s activities can depend on external donors. Externally-funded project can dictate a CSOs activity agenda, giving it less space to advocate for OGP compliance. For example, a CSO might not organise an advocacy campaign on open

government when implementing an EU-funded project on anti-corruption reform. At the same time, the CSO might use the OGP process to interact with the Govt.

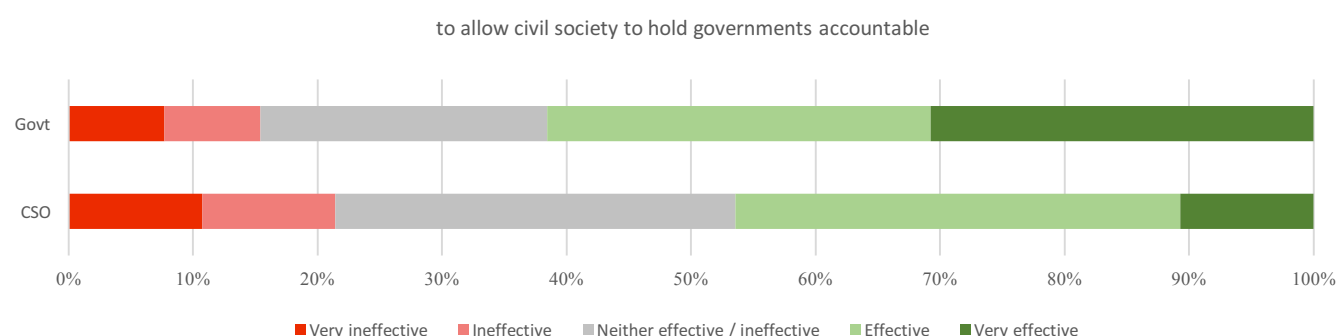


Figure 14 – CSO and Govt rating on effectiveness of accountability between civil society and government

Concerning accountability within the Govt, the survey shows that the majority of Govts respondents consider the IRM effective (Figure 15). This has also been confirmed by Govts. Govts explain how they would use to IRM reports internally to hold stakeholders accountable. In practice this would mean that NAP implementers would receive a notification via email with the IRM report attached. If needed in the view of the PoC, there would be a follow-up allowing the NAP implementer to respond to IRM findings and ask for clarification. Govt PoCs in most instances read through the reports during the comment phase and glance through the findings after publication. PoCs suggest that NAP implementers generally browse through the sections related to their activities. According to PoCs, the consequences of poor performance can be significant, especially when picked up by the line ministers. An interesting detail is that some PoCs use the IRM report to advocate with their respective Minister to push for more reform. Finally, it is important that accountability within Govts largely stays within the organisation and does not get picked up by CSOs. The survey shows that most CSO respondents have no clear view on this and tend to consider the IRM does not ensure accountability between government bodies. Interview feedback supports this, suggesting CSOs are not sure about the consequences of the IRM within Govts. The main point of interaction for CSO are the Govt PoCs and feedback suggests limited interaction with NAP implementers down the line.

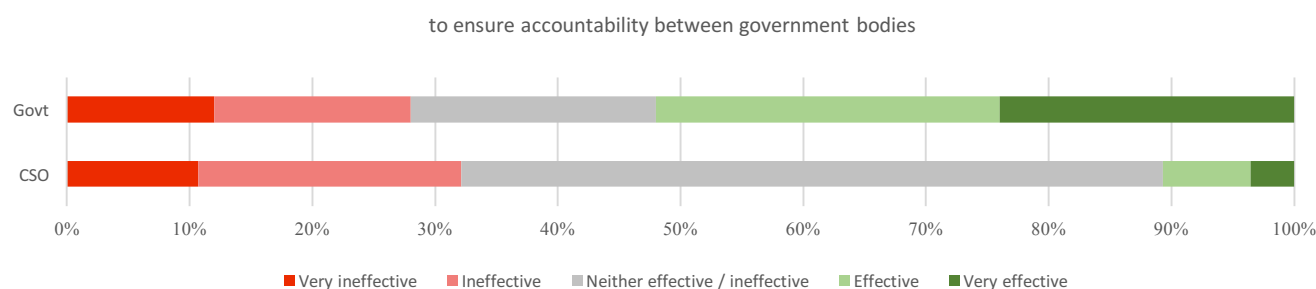


Figure 15 – CSO and Govt rating on effectiveness of accountability within governments

Finally, learning effectiveness is more pronounced when related to the NAP implementation and results, as well as development. The IRM's role on educating on how to open government is less clear. Few CSO stakeholders consider the IRM effective in this area (Figure 16). As discussed in the section on relevance, this could be attributed to the close interaction between CSOs and Govts which could interfere with the IRM's learning potential given that stakeholders rather learn from repeated interaction through co-creation rather than from the IRM reports. Nonetheless, CSOs do expect more from the IRM in this area, meaning the IRM does not fully meet the expectations of the CSOs.

Govts consider the IRM more effective on educating on open government. However, interview feedback suggests that these learnings mostly relate to NAP creation and implementation and less so on practical assistance on open government. The IRM could in the eyes of Govts be more practical but at the same time it is also understood that its mandate is to be primarily an accountability tool. Learning is hence seen as a OGP wider objective. The importance is placed on frequent interaction between civil servants working on open government in order to learn from each other. This in fact was mentioned several times as a key added value of participating in the OGP.

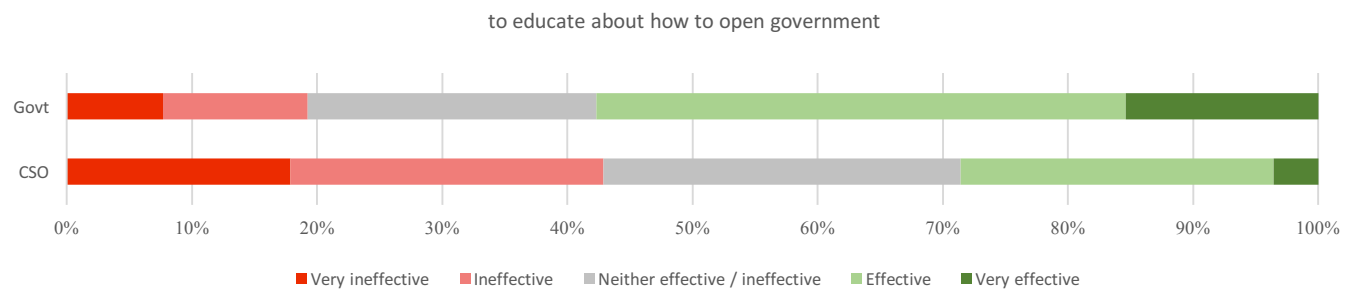


Figure 16 – CSO and Govt rating on OG education effectiveness

KEY FINDINGS

- The ability of the IRM to communicate OG achievement to the public cannot be decoupled from the OGP as a whole. While stakeholders emphasise the importance of communication to improve uptake, they are unclear about who is responsible for this.
- IRM data is used for communication purposes by OGP staff, IRM staff, Govts and CSOs. The IRM unit has over the years explored lines of communication through each of these actors.
- CSOs and Govts discuss, with each other and with their peers, ideas and recommendations related to the IRM. There is limited use of social media. CSOs are less likely to disseminate the report.
- Use of dissemination strategies depends on the use given to reports. Govts are more inclined to discuss and disseminate findings given the IRM directly passes judgement over their work in relation to the OGP, as well as their day-to-day activities.
- The usefulness of discussing ideas and recommendations is higher than distributing the IRM products. Lack of visualization of findings limits social media dissemination by CSOs.
- A key actor in dissemination and communication on the IRM is the national researcher. These activities focus more on civil society rather than on government.
- The IRM can capture political interest from line ministers and OGP lead department ministers given that these actors are exposed to research. However, the quality interaction is higher with staff from line ministries implementing OGP commitments and OGP lead department officials.
- Communication challenges relate more to lack of awareness on the OGP on the national level, rather than the access of IRM researchers to stakeholders. Those most likely to respond to the IRM are Govts and CSOs due to their direct involvement in the process.

There is much to say about the ability of the IRM to communicate OG achievements to the public. In fact, it is hard to decouple this aspect from the OGP as a whole. Interviewed stakeholders repeatedly emphasize the importance of communication as a way to ensure more uptake on the national level. The stakeholders are however unclear about who has the main responsibility to do so. On the level of the OGP, communication is placed under the responsibility of the OGP support unit. It is clear that the IRM data is used for communication purposes and branding of the OGP. Support unit staff members refer frequently to the need for more effective communication on the level of the OGP, as well as on the level of the IRM. At the same time staff warns that the IRM needs to remain independent and cannot be fully attached or detached from the OGP's communication strategy. Govts and CSO do not necessarily see it as their duty to disseminate IRM findings on the national level. This however does not mean that stakeholders do not do this or acknowledge the value. Govts do publically communicate on the IRM reports¹³⁷ as well as CSOs¹³⁸ have information on the OGP on their respective websites. In fact, survey feedback suggests that both CSOs and Govts consider the IRM quite successful in communicating OG achievements to the public (Figure 17).

¹³⁷ For example: <http://archive.ogpireland.ie/2016/02/04/minister-howlin-welcomes-positive-mid-term-assessment-of-open-government-action-plan/>; <http://www.gobiernoabierto honduras.org/>; <http://agacolombia.org/>.

¹³⁸ For example: <https://www.transparency.nl/nieuws/2016/06/ogp-nederlands-actieplan-open-overheid/>; <https://www.access-info.org/open-government>

to communicate Open Government achievements to the public

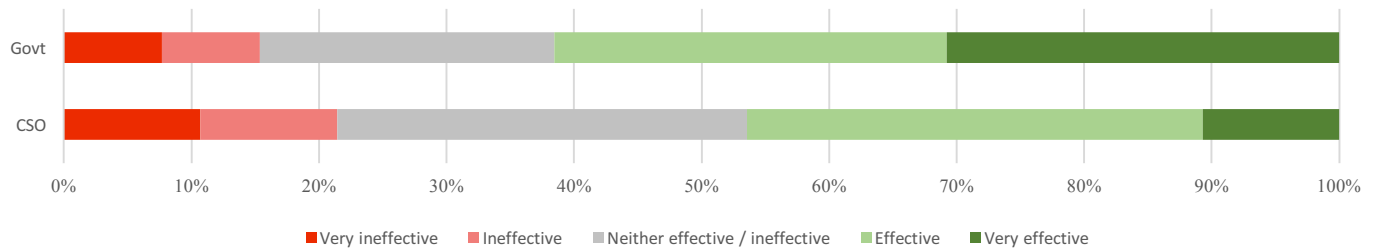


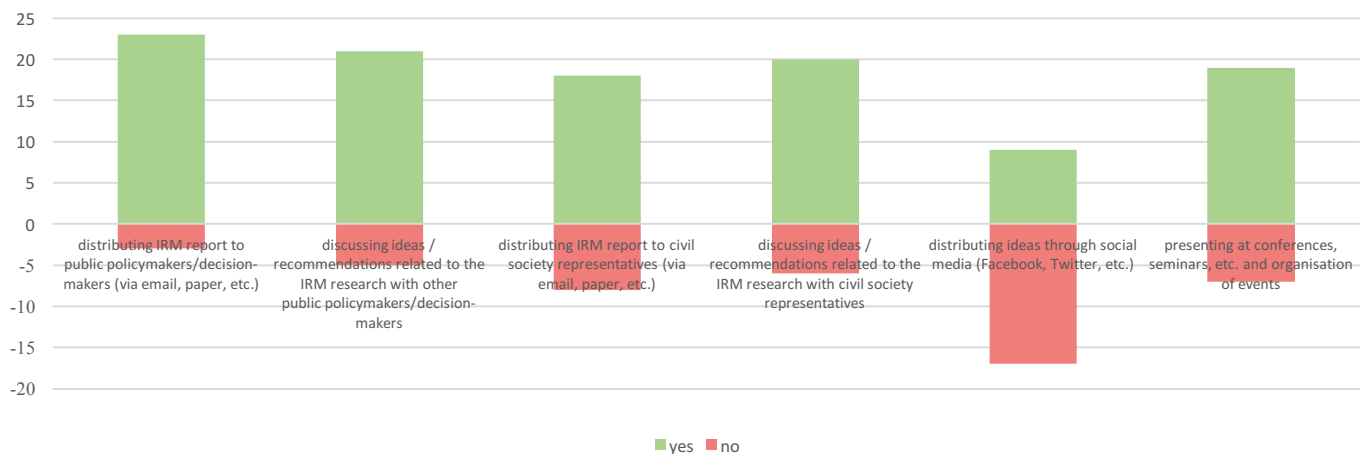
Figure 17 – CSO and Govt rating on communication effectiveness

There are different activities when breaking down per actor communication efforts on IRM findings. Feedback collected from IRM unit staff suggests that its work primarily focuses on the production of reports. In recent years, the team increasingly emphasized the importance of developing an approach to communication. Three lines of communication have been explored: 1) through the OGP; 2) through the IRM researchers; 3) through the CSOs and OGP Govts.

3.3.4.1 Outreach and dissemination strategies

Through the survey, CSO and Govt stakeholders were asked about the strategies used for disseminating IRM research findings as well as the usefulness of these strategies. The response suggests Govt stakeholders do disseminate and discuss findings from IRM research with other policy-makers on the national level as well as with civil society representatives (Figure 18). Stakeholders also participate and present findings at seminars and conferences. Use of social media channels to distribute IRM research is limited. Responses from CSO stakeholders show slightly lower levels of dissemination of IRM findings, particularly to policy-makers and to fellow CS representatives. At the same time, also CSO respondents do discuss ideas and recommendation related to IRM researchers, both with policy-makers and with CS representatives.

Govts: Q7. Please indicate whether you use the following strategies for disseminating IRM research findings:



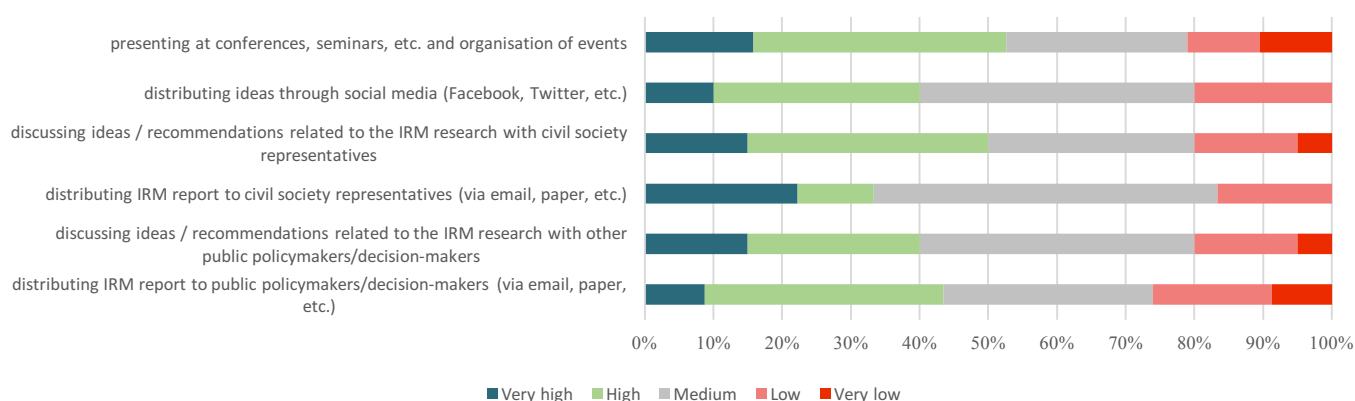
CSO: Q7. Please indicate whether you use the following strategies for disseminating IRM research findings:



Figure 18 – Govt and CSO use of IRM dissemination strategies

The difference in use of dissemination strategies for IRM findings between CSO and Govt can be explained by the use given to reports. OGP support unit feedback suggests that Govt PoCs take the IRM seriously partially because it directly passes judgement over their work. They are inclined to disseminate and discuss these findings, and are key actors participating in OGP organized events and seminars on the international and national level. The incentive for CSOs to use dissemination strategies for IRM findings is more indirect and depends on the usability of the findings. For example, the CSOs can use findings more likely within the framework of OGP co-creation activities and less so in relation to their day-to-day work. Govt stakeholders can use these findings both within the framework of OGP co-creation activities and in relation to their day-to-day work. This is also supported by the views of stakeholders on usefulness of these dissemination strategies (Figure 19). Govt and CSO respondents consider discussing ideas and recommendations related to the IRM research more useful than merely distributing the reports. In fact, interview feedback suggests that both groups of stakeholders do not care too much about disseminating the report once it is published, but rather attempt to extract key findings and recommendations and use these for discussion internally with NAP implementers and externally in dialogue with each other. Noticeable feedback from CSO survey respondents relates to low and very low usefulness of disseminating IRM findings through social media. Interview feedback points to the lack of visualization of IRM findings, making this difficult to incorporate in CSO social media strategies.

Govt - Q7. Please rate the usefulness to your work of the following strategies for disseminating IRM research findings:



CSO - Q7. Please rate the usefulness to your work of the following strategies for disseminating IRM research findings:

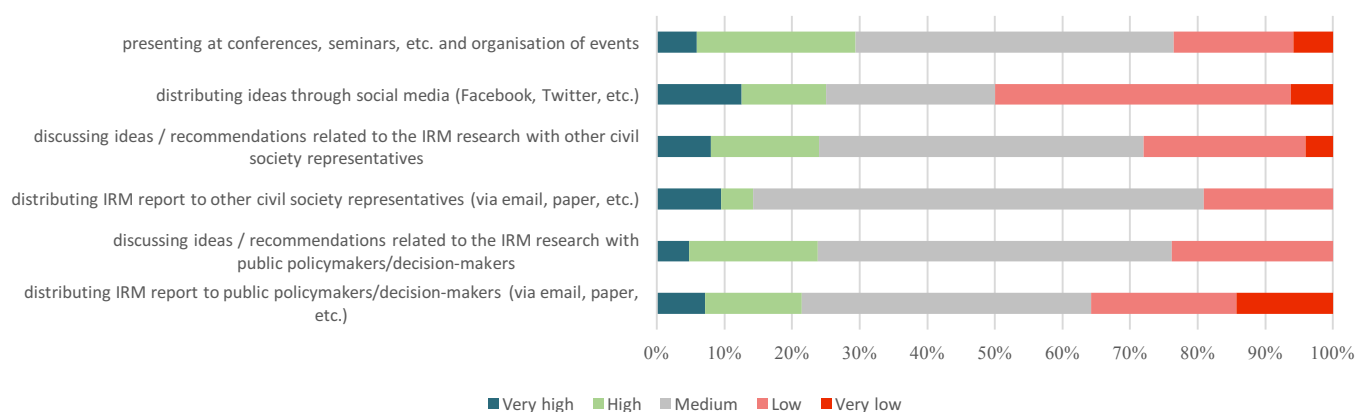


Figure 19 – Govt and CSO rating on usefulness IRM dissemination strategies

IRM researchers use most dissemination strategies (Figure 20). Interview feedback suggests that IRM researchers discuss ideas and recommendations related to IRM research more often with CSOs rather than with public policymakers due to the fact that most Govt interaction evolves around the PoC. Noticeable is that IRM researchers make more use of social media strategies.

IRM researchers: Q19. Please indicate whether you have used these strategies for disseminating IRM research findings, and indicate the usefulness of these strategies:

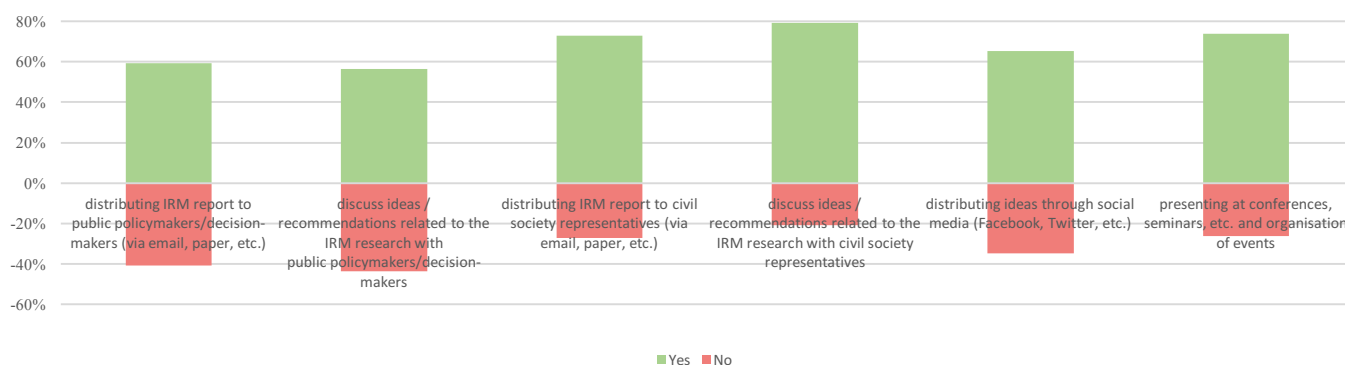


Figure 20 – IRM researcher use of IRM dissemination strategies

In terms of usefulness of the strategies, IRM researchers point out that directly discussing the ideas and recommendations is more effective compared to merely distributing reports (Figure 21). IRM researchers acknowledge that they need to get proactive when it comes down to communicating findings, but highlight that resource constraints play an important role in preventing this.

IRM researchers: Q19. Please rate the usefulness to your work of the following strategies for disseminating IRM research findings

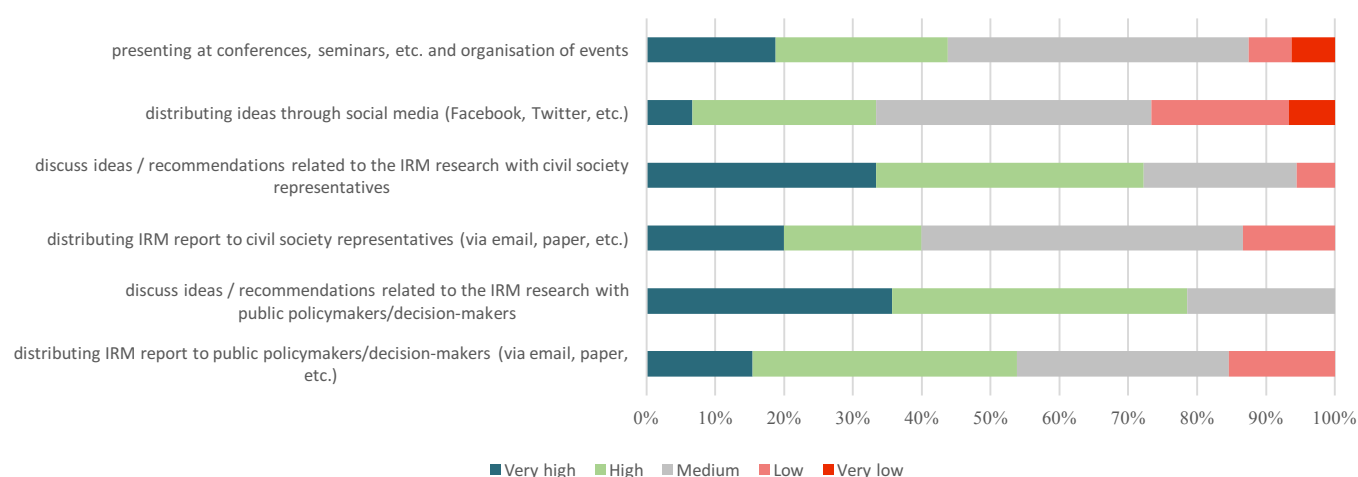


Figure 21 – IRM researcher rating on usefulness IRM dissemination strategies

To conclude, this review questions the added value on merely distributing the IRM reports. In the eyes of stakeholders, the key is to discuss at first hand the ideas and recommendations coming out of the IRM. It could be useful to facilitate a post-IRM research round of discussions between IRM researchers, policy-makers and CSO representatives. Interview feedback however does suggest that large public gatherings do not necessarily provide the right environment for dialogue. IRM researchers mention that they present findings during launch events but do not necessarily get immediately qualitative interaction out of this. More valuable interaction on IRM findings is observed when IRM researchers restart their activities for the next NAP and meet again with the OGP stakeholders.

3.3.4.2 Stakeholder exposure

Within the Govts, mostly OGP lead department officials and staff from line ministries implementing OGP commitments have been exposed to IRM research (Figure 22). It is noticeable that also ministers from OGP lead departments and line ministries have been exposed, suggesting that the IRM also can capture political interest. Within CSOs, mainly staff and management has been reached by the IRM.

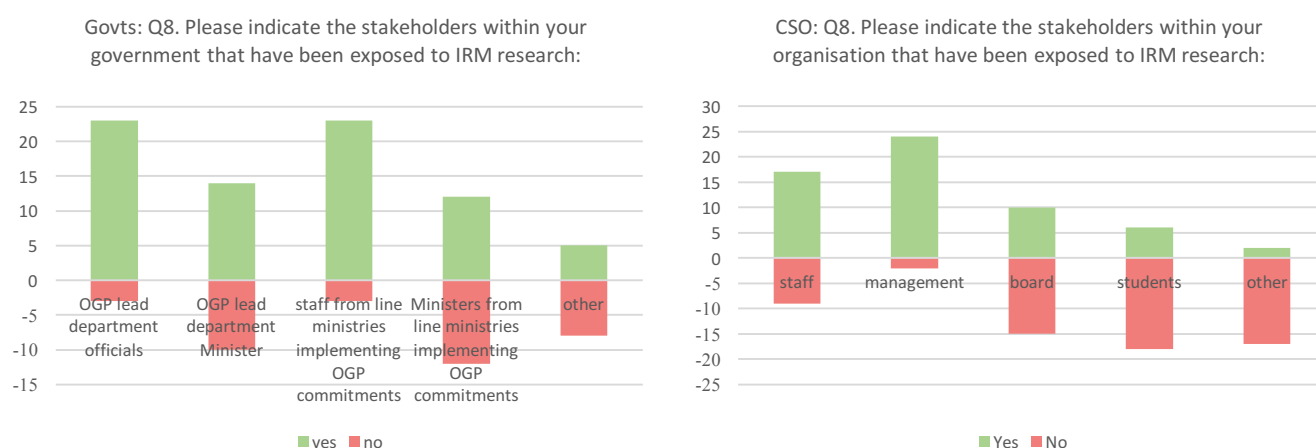


Figure 22 – Internal exposure IRM for Govt and CSO

The Govt survey respondents consider that especially interaction with OGP officials and ministry NAP implementers is of high and very high quality (Figure 23). The quality of interaction with ministers is rated less positive. Interview feedback suggests that ensuring engagement of line ministers implementing OGP commitments could be promoted by the OGP. The OGP Govt PoC can play a limited role in this, suggesting that this task should be placed more with the OGP lead department minister. Concerning the interaction with the latter, half of the respondents consider this of high or very high quality. The majority of the remaining half consider this of medium quality which suggests that in this area there is room for improvement.

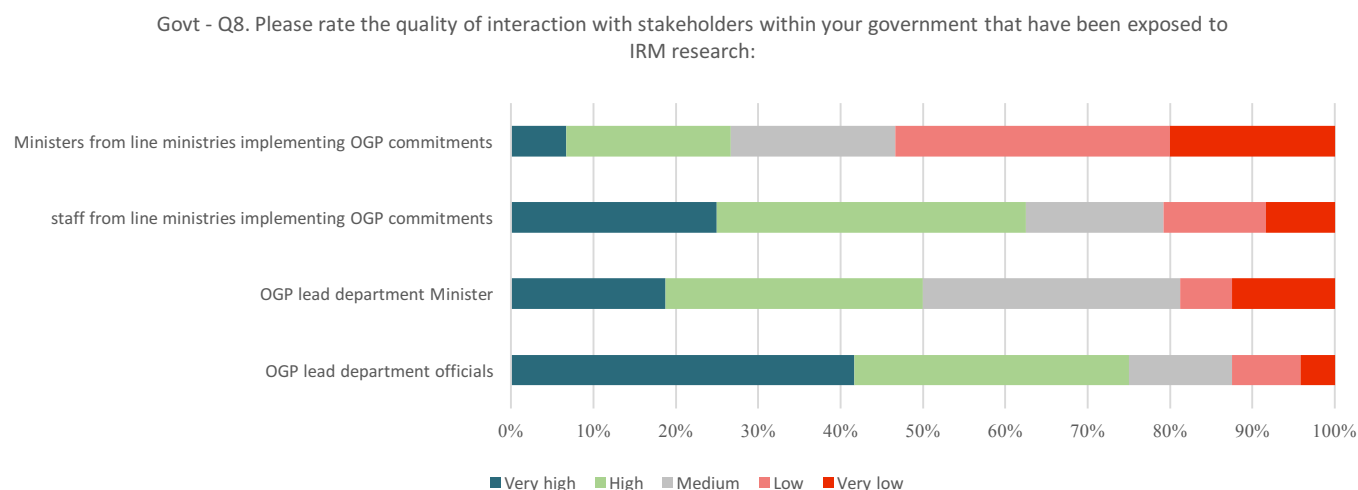


Figure 23 - Govt rating of quality interaction with stakeholders on IRM research

CSO survey respondents are less positive on the interaction within the organization on IRM research (Figure 24). Particularly with CSO management there is room for improvement, as well as with the board. The ratings from the respondents suggest that engagement of CSOs is not necessarily guaranteed top-down.

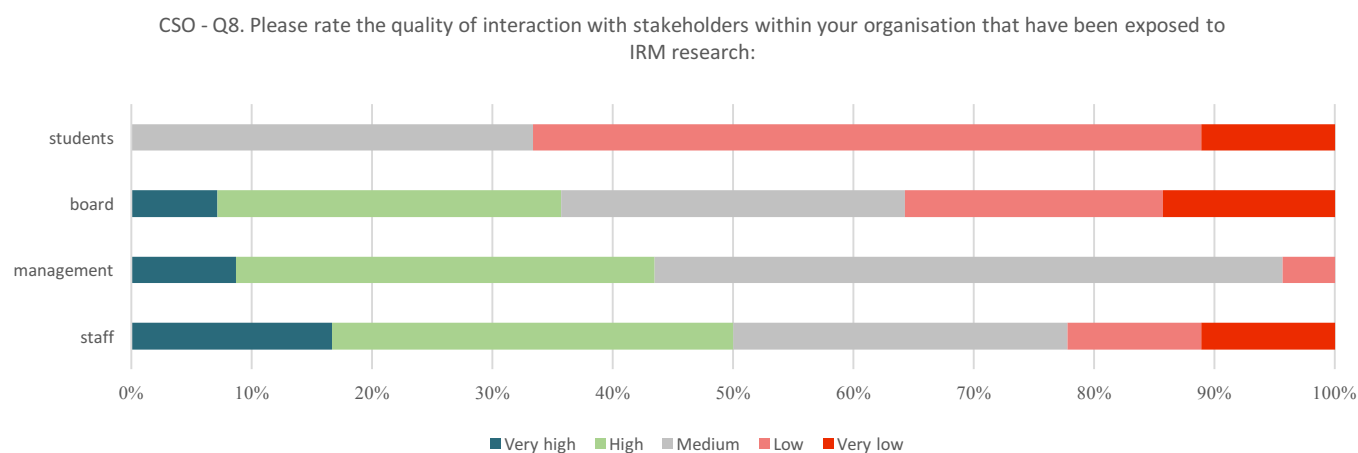
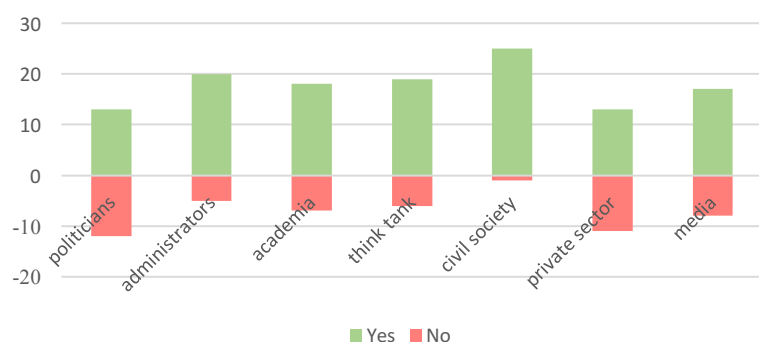


Figure 24 – CSO rating of quality interaction with stakeholders on IRM research

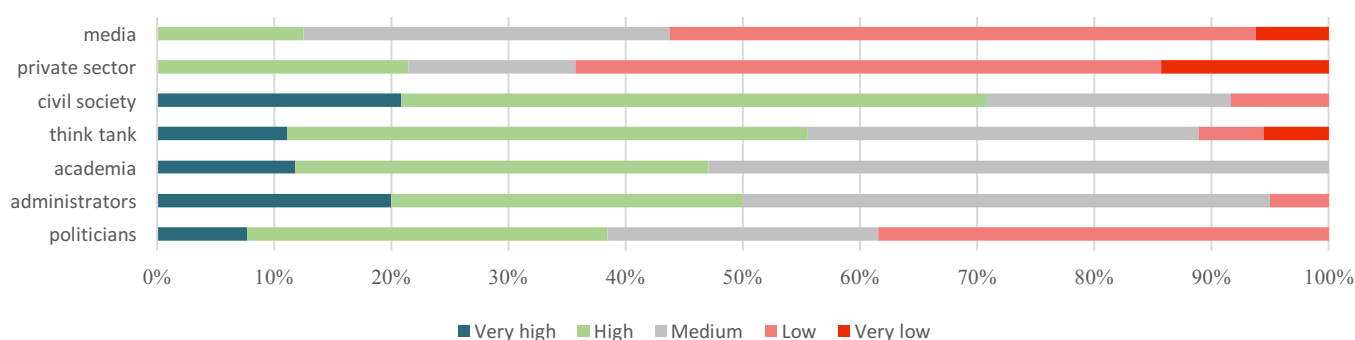
According to IRM researchers, mostly civil society and administrators have been exposed to IRM research. Interesting is that 17 out of 25 respondents indicate that media has been exposed to IRM findings.

IRM researchers: Q20. Please indicate the stakeholders that have been exposed to IRM research:



When looking at the rating of the quality of interaction, IRM researcher consider this low or very low for the media. Another interesting finding is that politicians and private sector are less frequently exposed to IRM research. Quality of interaction with the latter is considered low, which suggests that the IRM has difficulty connecting with this stakeholder group. Interview feedback also confirmed that the OGP in general does not connect easily with the private sector. As such, initiatives are explored to engage this group.

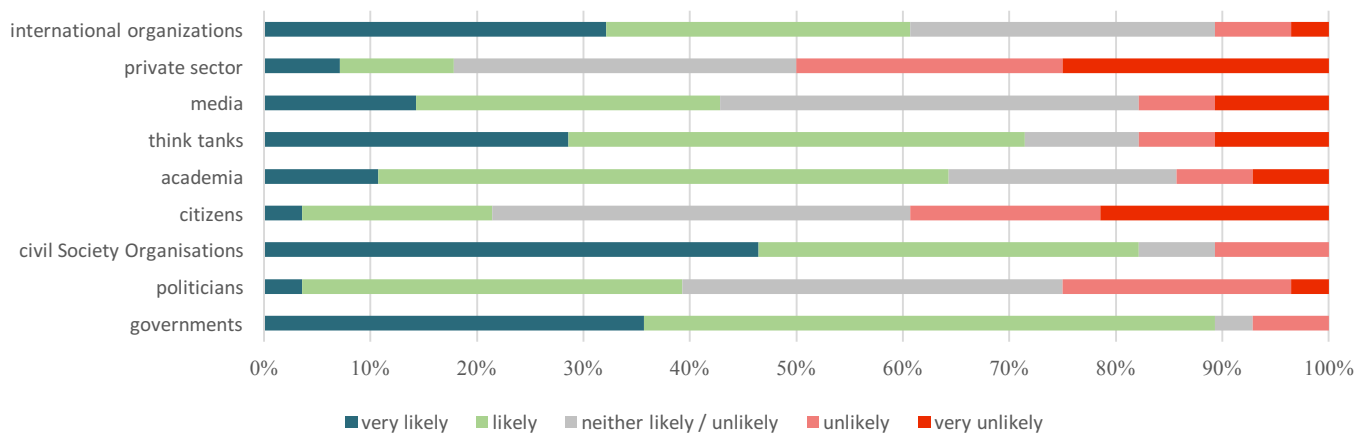
IRM researchers: Q20. Please rate the quality of interaction with stakeholders that have been exposed to IRM research:



To sum up, this review concludes that in terms of communication, IRM researchers do have access to most relevant stakeholders on the national level. In other words, communication challenges likely do not relate to access to stakeholders. Private sector and politicians are least exposed to IRM research, which suggests that here IRM researchers struggle to connect. For the private sector this is most likely due to stakeholders not having the right contacts on the national level or there is limited business interest in open government on the national level. The main challenge in communication lies with the quality of interaction. In many instances, stakeholders consider the quality of interaction medium and for some stakeholders (i.e. media, private sector and politicians) low. The reason for this could be poor communication skills of IRM researchers or poor timing of the report (i.e. delays), but these are most likely not the dominant explanations. After all, IRM researchers are often experienced and have been selected and also trained by the IRM on communication skills. Also, most IRM reports are published in time. More likely explanations of the medium and low quality of the interaction rating can be found in the likelihood of stakeholders using the IRM reports.

Quality interaction ratings from IRM researchers are higher in those cases where stakeholders are more likely to use the report. For example, Govts, CSOs, academia and think tanks are in the eyes of IRM researchers more likely to use the reports. Hence, when interacting with these stakeholders the quality is higher.

IRM researchers: Q25. Please rate the likelihood of IRM reports being used by country OGP stakeholders:



IRM researchers list various reasons why IRM reports are not used by stakeholders. At the top they list the lack of awareness on the OGP on the national level as well as the political context which has effect on relevance (i.e. the public debate is distracted by different issues). As a result, IRM researchers note that the stakeholders most likely to respond to the IRM are those directly involved in the process, namely the Govts and the CSOs. Think tanks and academia respond to the IRM due to the quality of the reports and the evidence it brings allowing them to use the findings for their own work. The stakeholders less likely to engage are those that cannot be reached due to limited dissemination efforts, namely citizens and the private sector. Elements that in the eyes of IRM researchers also contribute to the limited likelihood are IRM operational issues such as the length of the reports and the lack of visualization.

3.4 Efficiency of IRM

This chapter looks at the relationship between the resources used by the IRM mechanism and the changes generated by the intervention.

3.4.1 IRM hiring and selection

KEY FINDINGS

- The recruitment strategy on the OGP website used by the IRM only calls for applications from “open countries”. This excludes visitors to the website that might be eligible and interested to become an IRM researcher for other countries that might open in the future.
- The recruitment methods used differ per vacancy and largely rely on referrals from OGP/IRM staff, or from OGP Govts and CSO focal points. As a result, calls receive few applications lowering the probability of finding a suitable candidate for a specialised job.
- The main incentives for working as an IRM researcher are: doing meaningful work within the wider scope of the OGP framework; the possibility to participate in dialogue on open government on the national level; exposure to decision-makers on the national level allowing to professionally profile oneself; getting financial compensation for the work done.
- Thorough reviewing of possible conflict of interests prior to hiring researchers is considered relevant in the eyes of IRM staff members as well as Govts.
- Resources and time allocated to the selection process are considered justified in order to set a quality baseline of researchers and increase the likelihood of better performance down the line.

Both the IRM Charter¹³⁹ and IRM Manual¹⁴⁰ set out the hiring and recruitment process for IRM researchers. The Charter points to several actors that are to different degrees involved in the process. This includes: the IRM Program Director; the IEP; Govts and CSOs.

The Charter further states that an open recruitment process is used based on transparent public criteria. Candidates are shortlisted, interviewed and reference-checked after which a selection is made. The process is overseen by the IRM Program Director with the supervision of the IEP. Governments are invited to provide feedback on the shortlisted candidates. Civil society members can also be invited to do so.

The Charter highlights several qualifications suggesting IRM researchers should:

- be from, and currently working in, the country of study;
- have a background in academia or public policy, with demonstrated experience conducting research for publication nationally, regionally, or internationally;
- have specific experience working on public policy issues related to governance, transparency, accountability, or public participation more broadly;
- have experience working with and engaging civil society, the government and the private sector;

¹³⁹ p. 37-38

¹⁴⁰ p. 10

- have demonstrated capacity and willingness to engage a broad range of stakeholders in a non-partisan and objective fashion.

The IRM Procedures Manual provides a more detailed description of the selection process. This document states the objectives of the hiring and recruitment process: *'The IRM seeks to hire public policy experts in the governance field to produce reports of the highest quality and integrity'*. The way it aims to achieve this goal is through a vetted review process.

The IRM Procedures Manual also, to a certain degree, sets out the recruitment strategy by highlighting that it seeks applications from individuals as well as organizations. In addition, it notes that the IRM also solicits third-party nominations. Although not specifically emphasized, the introductory text on the IRM process in the Manual also suggests that teams of IRM researchers are used. When referring to the published list of IRM researchers, seldom more than one IRM researcher is mentioned. However, feedback from IRM staff suggests that IRM researchers indeed seek support or assistance in conducting the research. It is likely to assume that when an organization is in charge of an IRM review, internal resources are deployed under the responsibility of an appointed figurehead for the IRM.

In terms of recruitment methods, the document notes that the call for applications is posted on the OGP website for a minimum of four weeks and that the call is circulated to CSO networks and government contacts in relevant countries. In case few applications are received, the call is circulated again to CSO networks and government contacts. In practice, IRM staff highlights that the call is also disseminated through other channels such as university portals.

The selection process starts with a review of the application by IRM staff against a list of qualifications. The call does list OGP and IRM details, qualifications, the duties of IRM researchers, compensation arrangements, and the decision-making process. After the application review, finalists for each country are interviewed by telephone or Skype. The interview discusses the scope of the work, compensation, applicant's experience, and more. A shortlist is created. In practice this consists of one to three applicants. The shortlist is subsequently forwarded to government contact points which are allowed to respond within 5 days to any possible conflict of interest. The IRM staff can also consult other stakeholders. In case of a possible conflict, the CV's are forwarded to the IEP who takes a final decision on this issue. The list of finalists is sent to the IEP for approval. Upon approval, the contract and terms of reference are sent to the selected researcher for signature.

The IRM Procedures Manual also briefly details the contract evaluation at the end of the research cycle. The IRM decides whether or not to renew the contract, and to invite the researcher to compete again in an open call. Criteria for renewal include: an assessment of the researcher's fulfilment of the prior contract and reports; researcher's expressed interest to continue working; and an evaluation of the researcher's compliance with the Conflicts of Interest policy. Decisions are based on quality of research and writing, timeliness, professionalism, and quality stakeholder consultation.

Feedback from IRM staff highlights a series of challenges in relation to the selection process. Firstly, few applications are received on open calls. Despite variations between countries, several reasons for this have been identified: 1) the pool of eligible researchers is considered to be limited, especially in smaller countries; 2) the used methods to disseminate the call have a limited reach; 3) researchers in countries might simply not be interested in the job¹⁴¹. The second challenge identified relates to the selection process. Particular identified bottlenecks are: 1) the length of the

¹⁴¹ View of the authors.

selection process in relation to time frame of the NAP process, but also in case IRM researchers need to be replaced throughout the cycle; 2) the resource intensity of reviewing, interviewing, reference-checking and hiring researchers.

3.4.1.1 Recruitment strategy and methods

At the time of this review, the IRM was in the process to recruit 10 new IRM researchers. The vacancies were published on the OGP website¹⁴², presenting a general call and listing the open countries. The call does not clearly support a wider IRM recruitment strategy and suggests being more reactive rather than strategically aiming to attract talent to contribute to the IRM's success. Each IRM staff member responsible for the respective country chases his or her leads in order to increase visibility and the likelihood of finding a suitable candidate. The recruitment strategy limits itself by only calling for applications from open countries. In addition, the call calls for individuals to apply and does not specify whether also teams of individuals or organisations are eligible.

The recruitment methods used by the IRM staff members differ per case, with the exception that there is always a call on the OGP website for the open countries. Apart from this, recruitment largely relies on referrals from OGP/IRM staff, or from OGP Govts and CSO focal points. To a limited extent, the IRM staff uses other methods. This is primarily due to lack of awareness on which methods to use in each country. As a result, the IRM often receives a limited response to calls for applications. What this means in practice is that the IRM has a reduced pool of candidates when looking for an IRM researcher. In theory, a smaller pool of applications lowers the probability of finding a suitable candidate, because of the fact that the IRM researcher position is a specialised and skilled job. Hence, the IRM would benefit from widening the pool of candidates. There are several ways to achieve this.

Firstly, the use of mixed recruitment methods can be useful. In addition to the general call on the OGP website and the recruitment referrals, the IRM unit should consider at least one additional method when targeting a specific country. In countries with lower levels of Internet access or language obstacles, the IRM could consider engaging university or college career centres. Targeted centres do not necessarily have to be based in the countries but could also be based abroad. The IRM researcher survey suggests that more than half of respondents (56%/18) have obtained a master or doctorate degree from outside of their home country. Targeting universities with international master and doctoral degree programs could help attract IRM researchers from multiple countries.

Secondly, the IRM could consider expanding the general call on the OGP website from the open countries to all countries. This way the candidate pool can be expanded beyond the time frame for country specific recruitment. Country specific recruitment exposes candidates to a thorough selection process (i.e. application review, shortlisting, interviews, etc.). Candidacies for other countries can be included into a roster selection process, which can initially be based only on a review of the application. The roster can be used whenever there is a country specific recruitment process or in case of emergency when there is an immediate need for an IRM researcher.

Thirdly, a professional recruiter could help design a recruitment strategy and identify and deploy mixed recruitment methods on the national or regional level. This could be externally or internally set up. The advantage of working with an external recruitment agency is that these organisations would be able to expand the candidate pool given that they are often paid on the basis of success fees. In other words, a recruitment agency could help with the quantity of candidates. However, the costs can be relatively high (up to a commission of 20%) and this approach does not necessarily guarantee better quality candidates. A recruitment agency might not have a full understanding of the needs of the organisation and be more interested in placing a candidate rather than finding the right one. It could be

¹⁴² See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/about/careers-and-opportunities/call-irm-national-researchers>

recommended instead to add a professional recruiter to the IRM team. This person could operate a variety of recruitment methods, including social media strategies. In addition, if operating a roster of experts, it would be important to build relationships with those candidates. This function can be better performed by an internal recruiter. The recruiter can also assist the IRM unit with developing the selection process, allowing for more targeted recruitment. A key component in this area is the development of the job posting.

3.4.1.2 Job posting

The job posting¹⁴³ for the IRM researchers has a clear structure including some background information on the organisation and the position, a list of qualifications, duties, compensation and information on the selection process.

Information about the role and the position

Feedback from IRM researchers and IRM staff has pointed to several incentives that could be useful for the job posting. This can be relevant as such a posting should be seen as an advertisement aiming to attract the right type of person while giving a fair view of the job. The main four incentives are: compensation; purpose; career path; organisational culture.

Currently, the only incentive clearly detailed in the job posting is the compensation. The compensation offered by the IRM to the researchers is generally considered fair, allowing for covering expenses and providing partial income. This review has not identified specific concerns from IRM researchers apart from suggestions to increase funds available for outreach / research dissemination activities (more in this can be found in section 3.3.4). However, generally the compensation is not considered the main incentive for researchers to do the work. The job posting could hence benefit from highlighting other elements. For example, IRM researchers are clearly attracted to meaningful work within the wider scope of the OGP framework. The job posting could benefit from clearly highlighting the contribution of an IRM researchers, its purpose in achieving common OGP goals across 75 countries. At the same time, IRM researchers value the possibility to participate on the national level, especially performing as a watchdog over the implementation of NAPs. The position also exposes IRM researchers to decision-makers on the national level, allowing them to professionally profile themselves. In other words, being an IRM researcher is not an end goal and opens doors for careers. Another incentive in this area could be the possibility to move up the line within the OGP, i.e. by becoming eligible to join the IEP or eligible to work on other OGP consultancy assignments. The final incentive relates to the culture of the OGP work place. IRM researchers clearly value the interaction with their peers during IRM training events and other OGP activities. This is considered a high point in an otherwise considered “lonely” working environment.

To sum up, the background information on the organisation and the position in the job posting should be considered a key part in attracting the candidates to the position, help them understand the organisation, working culture and other incentives. It is important to paint an attractive picture but not to oversell. In other words, the job posting should be realistic. This is an area that could require some attention given that expectations from the job do not always meet with reality. For example, IRM researchers indicated during interviews that on some occasions the workload was higher than initially foreseen. This problem was also repeatedly highlighted by IRM staff members when asked about the difficulties researchers are facing. For example, when asked (Q18) about whether IRM researchers were able to meet the objectives / goals of their job and whether the targets set for the tasks were realistic given the scale of operations almost one out of four (23%/7) indicated targets were not realistic. It is understood that at the stage of job posting it is difficult to paint a realistic picture of the workload associated to the IRM researcher. This can vary

¹⁴³ <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/about/careers-and-opportunities/call-irm-national-researchers>

depending on several factors, such as the size of the NAP that needs to be evaluated. Regardless of this, the workload is considered a factor contributing to turnover of IRM researchers. Painting a realistic picture from the start could possibly contribute to lowering this. One area could be a clarification on the duties of an IRM researcher which includes an estimation of working days or an indication of the timeline.

Information about the requirements

Another important area for the job posting is the section on requirements such as experience, qualification, skills and personal attributes. At this stage, the list provided in the job posting used by the IRM unit presents a series of qualifications that suggest minimum requirements and preferred qualifications¹⁴⁴. From a recruitment perspective, it could be relevant to make a clear distinction between these two elements. Especially determining minimum requirements allows the IRM unit to short-list in an objective way. For example:

- University degree in political science, social sciences, law or related disciplines;
- Very good written and spoken command of English and Spanish (only for Latin America);
- Demonstrated policy-relevant research and publication related to governance, transparency, accountability, or public participation more broadly;
- Minimum of 2 years' experience working on public policy issues related to governance, transparency, accountability, or public participation more broadly;
- Previous experience with OGP on the national level preferred;
- Resident or national of IRM country preferred.

The idea is that these requirements are relevant to the duties and responsibilities of the IRM researcher. Interview feedback from OGP Govts repeatedly highlighted the need for IRM researchers to have a profound understanding of public administration. This could be an additional minimal requirement. It is important not to list too many hard minimum requirements as this can also limit the pool of candidates. Some soft skills can be added, such as: the willingness to communicate findings in a non-partisan, objective fashion and the ability to commit to the role for a duration of two years. The latter however could also be part of the job function and emphasis the possibility for renewal after two years. The former is arguably difficult to assess in a recruitment process.

The preferred qualifications concern skills and experience in addition to the basic qualifications. These can be tested through interviews by trained IRM staff members. These qualifications should describe a more proficient level at which essential functions for IRM researchers can be performed. For example:

- Ability to facilitate stakeholder dialogues, research, interviews, and institutional analysis across non-profit, public, and private sectors;
- Ability to solicit, incorporate, and respond to official and public comments;
- Ability to conduct objective, impartial and thorough research;

¹⁴⁴ This includes: Demonstrated history of policy-relevant research and publication; National reputation as objective, impartial, and thorough; Ability to facilitate stakeholder dialogues, research, interviews, and institutional analysis across non-profit, public, and private sectors; Specific experience working on public policy issues related to governance, transparency, accountability, or public participation more broadly; Demonstrated ability to solicit, incorporate, and respond to official and public comments; Ability to carry out research within a strict time frame; Willingness to communicate findings in a non-partisan, objective fashion; Ability to commit to the role for a duration of two years; Strong English-language skills preferred. Spanish-only speakers will be considered for Latin America. In addition to this list, the job-posting also states: There is a strong preference for nationals of the country to be evaluated and for those with experience relevant to country action plans.

- Ability to carry out research tasks within a strict time frame;
- Ability to write in a clear and concise manner.

Information about the recruitment process

Finally, the IRM job posting concludes with a section on the application process. This section informs on the steps in the decision process and the involvement of the applicants. This includes interviews, a review of work and references. It is noted that in practice the selection process can also include a written exercise. The IRM unit incorporated this component specifically to improve quality of the applicants. It is recommendable to clarify this also in the job posting.

3.4.1.3 Select and contract

As mentioned above, the selection process of IRM researchers is managed by each respective IRM staff member dealing with the open country. The interviews are conducted by the IRM research managers. There appears to be a strong role for the IEP in reviewing the candidates. This primarily falls under the tasks of the IEP taskforce on Ethics. Interview feedback from IEP members suggests that this role is meant to avoid conflicts of interest and protect the independence of the IRM. Upon approval by the IEP, the IRM research managers deal with the contractual arrangements and negotiate compensation. Compatibility of the researchers is also checked on the national level with Govts and sometimes CSOs. Interview feedback from Govts suggests that this practice is important given that the perceived objectivity and independence of the IRM is relevant. It has to be noted that in some cases, the Govt PoCs did not recall whether or not they were consulted on the selection. At the same time, some cases were identified in which the Govt expressed concern on the short-listed candidate. When asked about the responsiveness of the IRM to these concerns, stakeholders noted that the IRM responded timely. However, Govts were not always happy with the final decision. It is considered very important in such scenarios to provide solid arguments for the final decision on the IRM researcher. The main pre-selection concerns from Govts on the IRM researcher relate to previous work for a CSO on the national level.

From the perspective of the IRM researchers, the support from the IRM on hiring and selection is viewed positively (Figure 25). Survey feedback from IRM researchers (Q7) suggests that overall the support provided by the IRM unit at the stage of hiring (e.g. on the hiring process, scope of the work, objectives of the IRM) was considered very good (73%/24 very good and 18%/6 good)¹⁴⁵. Support at the stage of preparing the contract is also viewed positively (52%/17 very good and 36%/12 good)¹⁴⁶.

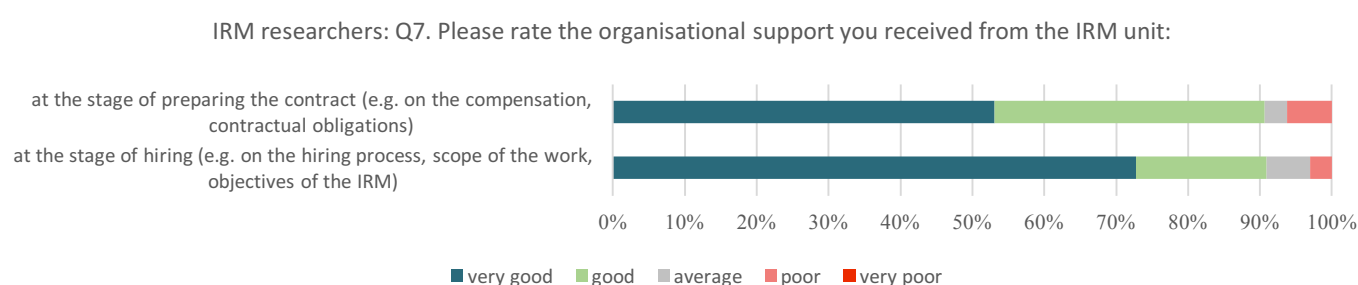


Figure 25 – IRM researcher rating on organizational support during hiring and selection

From an efficiency point of view. It is noted that the selection process is a time and resource consuming activity. IRM staff members and IEP members highlight however that the resources dedicated are justified considering that at this

¹⁴⁵ Only a few IRM researchers considered the support average (6%/2) or poor (3%/1).

¹⁴⁶ Only a few IRM researchers considered the support average (3%/1) or poor (6%/2).

stage the quality baseline of IRM researchers is set which affects the whole IRM process in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. In other words, the selection process is considered essential in order to improve the quality of the IRM output down the line. When asked about the possible effectiveness of the training activities on the capacity, the IRM staff and IEP members emphasise that this is particularly useful for building IRM methodology capacity, but that the basic research skills should be ensured from the start.

3.4.2 IRM training

KEY FINDINGS

- The IRM offers different types of training to IRM researchers and adopts a flexible approach to tailoring this to specific needs.
- IRM researchers are highly positive of the training provided and the complementary documentation made available to consult on the IRM process and methodology.
- IRM researchers value the interaction with their peers, IRM staff, and if present IEP members during the training activities.

The IRM Procedures Manual states that IRM researchers are required to participate in training before the research process begins. Various types of training are offered to IRM researchers. Most of the surveyed IRM researchers

IRM researchers : Q11. Please select the type of training you participated in:

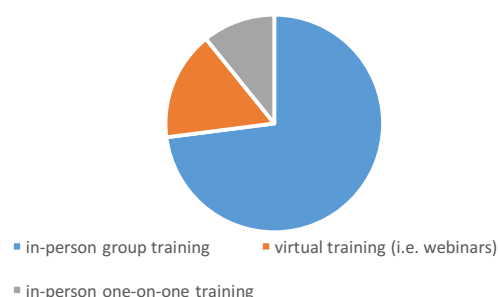


Figure 26 - IRM researchers training participation

Expectations generally were met (Figure 27). One respondent noted that the added value of the in-person training as compared to the virtual training was the interaction in group exercises. Another raised concerns related to the applicability on the national level of real-life examples.

IRM researchers: Q12. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

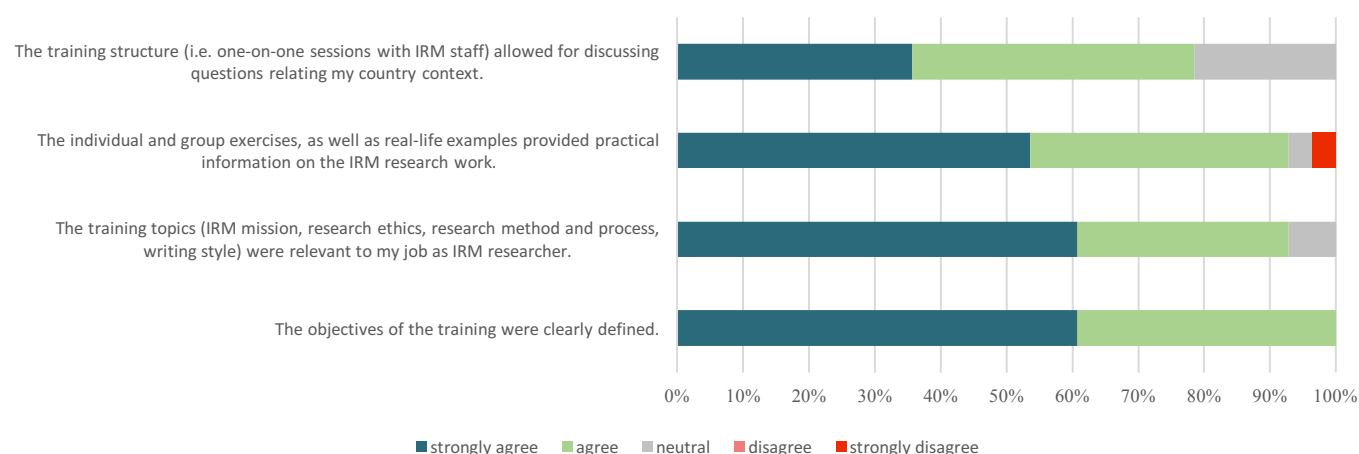


Figure 27 - IRM researchers rating of training

When looking at the specific topics of the training, survey respondents overwhelmingly considered these useful for their work (Figure 28). Interview feedback specifically emphasized the importance of getting a sound understanding of the methods and process. In fact, researchers highlighted that the methodology used is one of the IRM’s strong points, allowing them to present reports based on sound evidence.

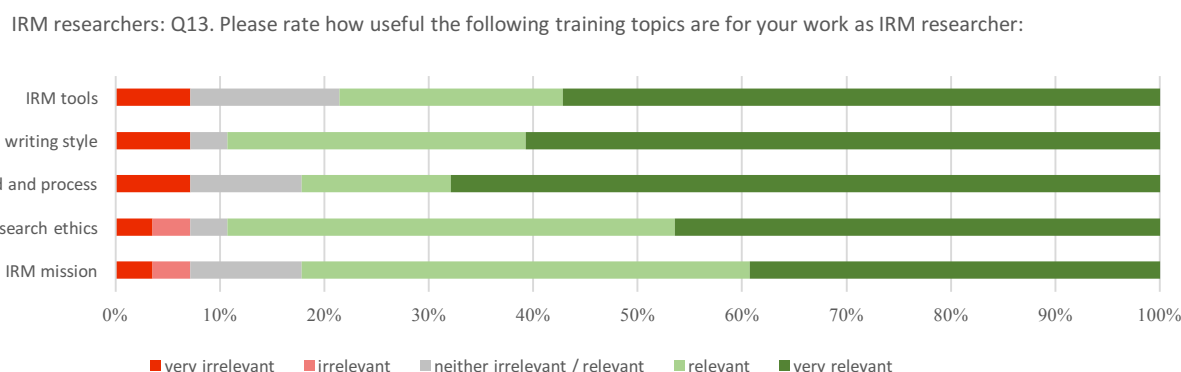


Figure 28 – IRM researchers rating of usefulness training topics

When asked what was missing from the training, IRM researchers provide several examples. A related element was follow-up training on changes in the methodology throughout the process. Also the topic of how to determine impact of NAP implementation was highlighted as a valuable topic. More practical issues concern how to deal with resistance from stakeholders to share data with the IRM researcher. On drafting recommendations, IRM researchers highlight that training on best practices could be useful. Related to this was a comment concerning the use of fictitious examples as opposed to real-life examples. The latter would allow the IRM researcher to benchmark findings.

When asked about barriers preventing IRM researchers to apply in their work what they had learned during the training, three times the issue of “time” was mentioned. This is discussed in more detail below, but indeed IRM researchers struggle in different ways with the timeline. First of all, training knowledge acquired at the start might fade over the course of two years if not refreshed on a periodical basis. One IRM researcher highlighted the need to go back to training notes on a frequent basis. The Procedures Manual is from this perspective considered a valuable tool. Another time issue is the rather cramped up data collection period which in case of slow response from Govts jeopardizes timely delivery of the report. In other words, a perfect IRM research scenario does not exist in practice and IRM researchers are each time when they assess a NAP confronted with new realities. This confirms there are limitation to the IRM research capacity that can be built through training. Researchers highlight that lots of this capacity comes from actual experience. The support from the IRM unit is from this perspective considered a valuable tool.

A particular interesting recommendation from an IRM researcher relates to training on how to contribute to the OGP development post-IRM. The researcher reiterates the need for independence during the IRM period but suggests that there is also life after the IRM where he or she can play an active role to support the OGP. This point also touches upon the incentives for IRM researchers as mentioned in the section on the hiring process. The IRM already does this to some extent through the IRM’s IEP which includes several members with an IRM researcher background. The OGP as a whole could also consider a way to engage former IRM researchers.

KEY FINDINGS

- The IRM unit performs well on service delivery to IRM researchers.
- Progress reports cause most problems in terms of timely delivery. Bottlenecks lie in the data collection phase and the report review / quality control phase.
- Delays are not the norm but nonetheless, the IRM unit has taken a proactive approach to mitigating risks for delays.
- The IRM unit is the ultimate responsible for timely delivery of reports but shares this largely with the IEP and IRM researchers. Also the responsiveness of Govts is considered essential in allowing the IRM to reduce risks for delays.
- Govts express signs of “reporting fatigue” in particular related to repeated data requests for IRM reports, self-assessment reports, as well as other international review mechanisms.
- The weight or relevance of the IRM reports depends partially on the quality of the NAP. The IRM can influence NAPs but the final product is presented by Govts, ideally co-created with civil society.
- The size of the IRM reports affects various parts of the IRM process as well as its uptake on the national level and on the level of the OGP. Big NAPs affect IRM data collection, analysis, report writing and importantly the reviewing of the reports.
- The work of IRM staff members during the research phase is at times a balancing act, juggling different needs and expectations of all OGP stakeholders. This comes with highs and lows in terms of workload but places pressure on most staff members especially during the quality control process.

The output from the IRM is widely considered the OGP’s backbone on which it presents evidence of its results. The weight of the IRM on the OGP is significant with the IRM being the largest unit within the organisation. In addition, the IRM also hires ad-hoc consultants and copy editors to help review and edit reports¹⁴⁷. On top of that, IRM researchers are contracted for almost all OGP member countries to do the on-the-ground interviews and draft IRM progress and end-of term reports¹⁴⁸. OGP projected organizational budget for 2015-2018 shows that around 18% of the budget is projected for the IRM¹⁴⁹. This includes for example local researchers, training, editing and publication of reports but not salaries. Including salary costs, around 28% of the projected budget distribution (figures from 2015) go to the IRM. Rough calculations made for review suggests that around 40% of the IRM budget is spend on OGP staff in 2015. In 2014 and 2015 the IRM hired two full-time Research Managers¹⁵⁰. The IRM budget also covers costs for the IEP as well as ad-hoc consultants and copy editors to help review and edit reports¹⁵¹. Large part of the interaction between the IRM unit, IRM researchers and the IEP takes place within the research process. This review takes a closer look at the efficiency of this process and the performance of the IRM unit.

IRM researcher survey feedback suggests that the IRM unit provided good support on administrative issues (e.g. payment tranches, calendar, deliverables) (Figure 29)¹⁵². Also on timeliness of service delivery to IRM researchers, the team scored well. The principle concerns relate to the timely response to submitted deliverables. Feedback on this suggests that the review process of draft reports can take time. Specific concerns from IRM researchers is reduced

¹⁴⁷ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/OGP%204-year%20Strategy%20FINAL%20ONLINE.pdf>

¹⁴⁸ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/OGP%204-year%20Strategy%20FINAL%20ONLINE.pdf>

¹⁴⁹ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/OGP%204-year%20Strategy%20FINAL%20ONLINE.pdf>

¹⁵⁰ To support the Program Director in overseeing local researchers, providing quality control for IRM reports, and doing meta-analysis of IRM findings.

¹⁵¹ See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/OGP%204-year%20Strategy%20FINAL%20ONLINE.pdf>

¹⁵² 53%/17 very good, 31%/10 good, 9%/3 average and 3%/1 very poor.

relevance of the reports when delayed for publication. These concerns are not only voiced by the IRM researchers but also by IEP members, OGP support unit staff members, Govt and CSO stakeholders.

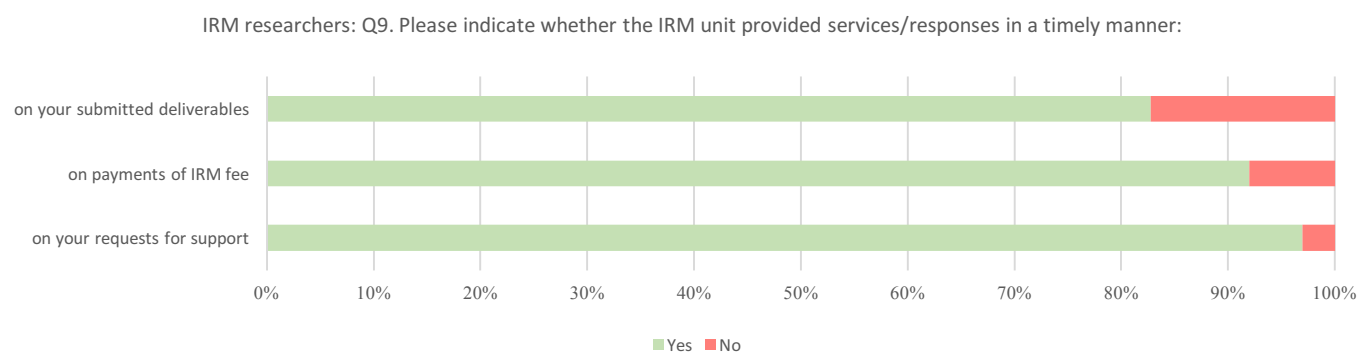


Figure 29 – Timely delivery of services by IRM unit

From the side of the IRM researchers, problems primarily are identified in relation to the timely delivery of the progress reports (Figure 30).

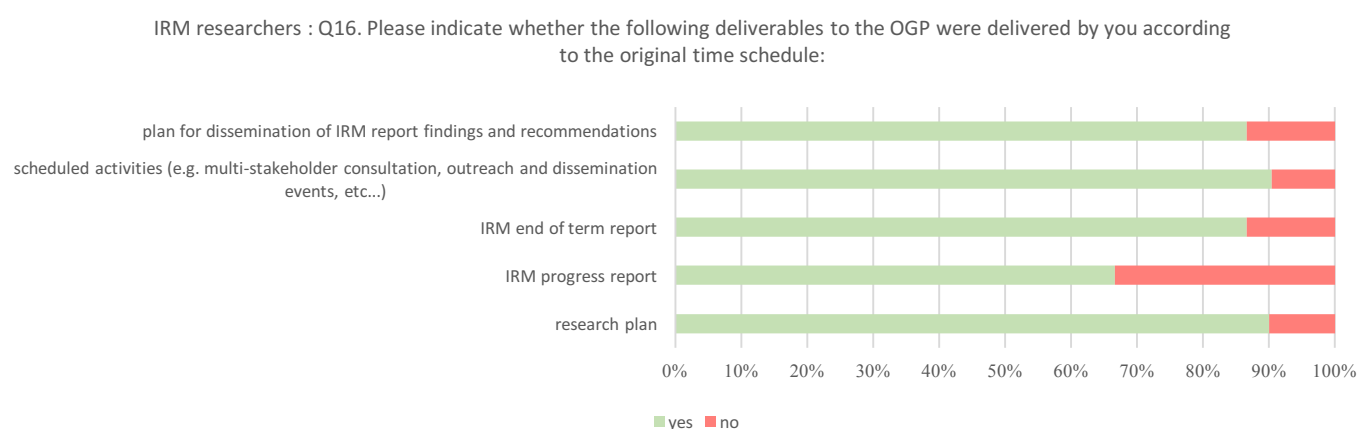


Figure 30 - Timely delivery of deliverable by IRM researchers

Identified reasons for delays are multiple, vary from the stakeholder's point of view and are largely anecdotal. Generally spoken, the primary bottlenecks lie in the data collection phase, data analysis and in the report review phase. Concerning data collection:

- IRM researchers start late with data collection due to the “down-time” between the start of the NAP and the IRM research process;
- IRM researchers are not familiar with who to contact;
- IRM researchers underestimate data collection due to size of NAP;
- Govts and CSOs respond late or do not respond to documentation requests / interview requests;
- Govts are late with the submission of the self-assessment reports.

Concerning the data analysis, IRM researchers indicate that the way NAPs are drafted affects how easy it is to analyse data and draw conclusions on implementation.

Concerning the review period, the main delays occur due to repeated back-and-forth between the IRM researcher, IRM unit and IEP. In addition, also the increasing length of the reports has affect on the review process. Another cause

can be the time needed for response from the IRM to the pre-publication comments from Govts and CSO. Feedback suggests that the low response to the public comment period does not cause significant delays.

Normal practice suggests that upon submission the IRM unit first reviews the draft before forwarding this to the IEP. This review is mostly focused on fact-checking and compliance with the IRM methodology. In case clarification is needed, the IRM researcher is consulted and once the draft is considered eligible it is forwarded to the IEP. The IEP appoints two reviewers that spend between 10-14 days to review the report. The comments from the IEP are first reviewed by the IRM unit and consolidated before returned to the IRM researcher. Comments from the IEP can be more substantial focusing both on compliance with the IRM methodology, but also clarifications in terms of content. Interview feedback suggests that IEP members focus on different issues when reviewing. However, a common area is how IRM researchers substantiate conclusions. Generally spoken the IRM unit “mediates” during the review period between the IEP and the IRM researchers. In some exceptional cases the IRM unit directly puts IRM researchers in touch with the IEP in order to ensure that both parties are on the same page. Once the report is approved by the IEP, the IRM unit launches CSO, Govt and public consultation.

To sum up, this review has identified a series of causes for delays of the reports. The consequence of these delays is important given that it negatively affects the usability of the reports and hence limits the potential impact of the IRM. The evaluators note that all stakeholders are very aware of these risks and that mitigation measures have been taken. For example, relating the data collection, the IRM unit actively tries to mediate early communication between the IRM researcher and the Govts and CSOs. Also, the IRM unit tries to get IRM researchers to submit in an early stage research plans which allows the team to monitor more closely the data collection and draft report writing. In addition, IRM researchers receive support on which questions to raise during interviews in order to ensure that the right kind of data is collected. Supporting evidence for the proactive engagement of the IRM unit in supporting the research phase is provided by the IRM researcher survey. Overall, the IRM’s support to researchers is rated strong. Nonetheless, on data collection and data analysis support some improvement can be made on the basis of 12% (4) of IRM researcher survey respondents considering the support average (Figure 31).

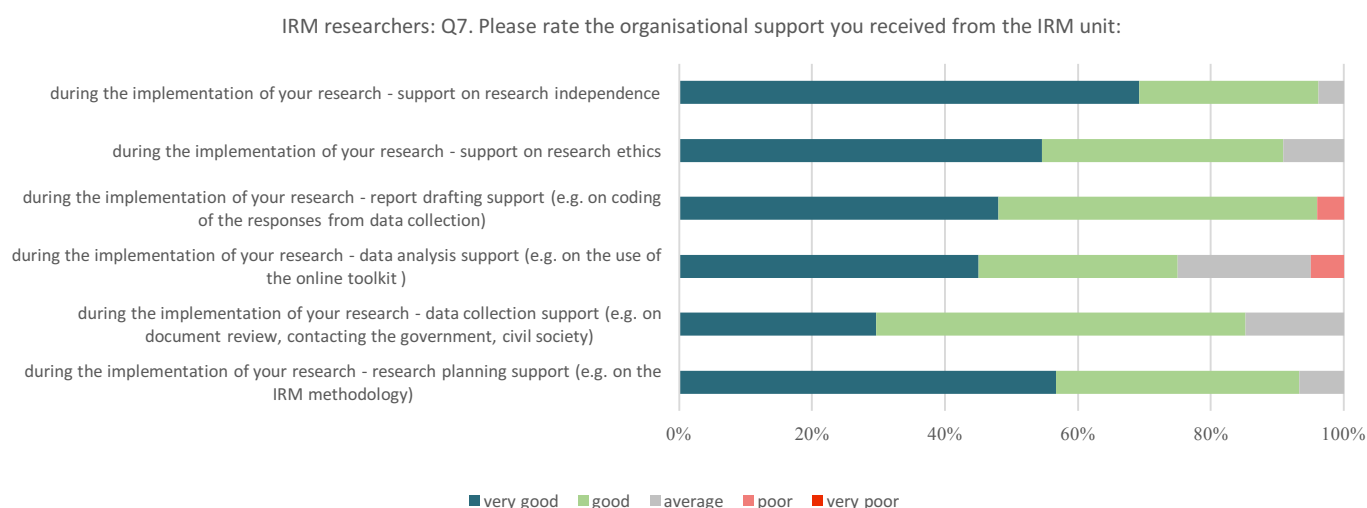


Figure 31 – IRM researcher rating of organizational support during the research process

This review also identified active engagement of the IRM unit during the quality control / review process. For example, the IRM unit’s close mediation in the review process allows simple corrections to be made early in the review process,

allowing the IEP to only focus on more substantial content issues. Also, the comment colour coding system¹⁵³ used by the IRM to deal with Govt and CSO pre-publication comments allows the IRM unit to quickly couple back the need for immediate action to the IRM researcher. This is especially important in case comments from Govts and CSO require more substantial work on the final document. The IRM researcher survey supports the strong performance of the IRM unit during the quality control process (Figure 32). Nevertheless, the survey also indicates some concerns from IRM researchers in relation to IEP comments and CSO and Govt comments. The latter is most likely attributed to the respective roles each actor play within the OGP, the Govt as NAP implementer being scrutinised by the IRM researcher. The IRM researcher and the IEP have different roles within the IRM process but aim for the same goal of producing an objective and high-quality report. Nevertheless, interview feedback suggests that there is not always a clear understanding between the two actors. This is most likely attributed to the limited direct interaction between the two actors. For example, according to IRM researchers interviewed the frequent face-to-face interaction between the IRM unit and the IRM researchers facilitates cooperation during the quality review process. The IRM researchers at the same time express the value of more frequent interaction with the IEP. Some highlight the added value of having IEP members participate during the training. Also IEP members consider these experiences valuable and express willingness in more interaction with IRM researchers at this stage. However, during the quality control process, the IEP members seem to prefer the mediation of the IRM unit.

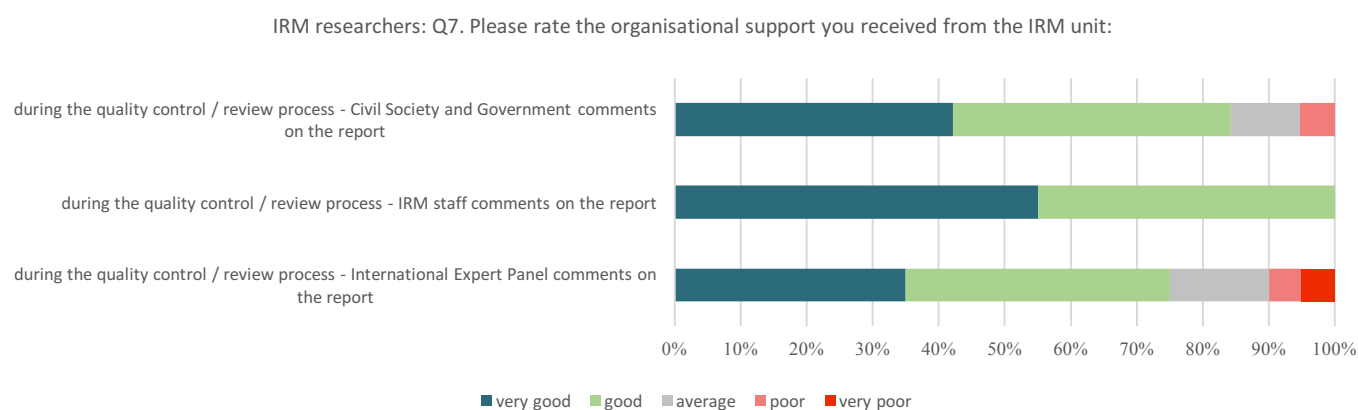


Figure 32 - IRM researcher rating of organizational support during the quality control / review process

It is important to highlight that the IRM can not mitigate all risks for delays. For example, the tardy submission of the Govt self-assessment report can affect data collection for the IRM. Also late or no response from Govts to data collection requests cannot easily be influenced by the IRM. The same counts for the size of the reports (which to some extent relates to the NAP) weighs in on the review speed. Taking into account external factors, the IRM should aim:

- To promote the timeliness of data collection and analysis;
- To influence the quality of draft IRM reports;
- To reduce the size of IRM reports;
- To ensure timeliness of the review process.

¹⁵³ The IRM uses a standard approach for comments on the basis of colour coding (“red” means the comment will not be considered, “yellow” means it will be considered given it might affect report conclusions, “green” means the comment will be added to the report). The IRM does not publish comment-by-comment responses, but it does make sure that the IRM unit and IRM researchers address the comments either directly in the report or liaise with the Govt and CSO.

3.4.3.1 Timely data collection

In relation to the data collection, this review identified with Govts signs of “reporting fatigue” in particular related to repeated data requests. In the case of the OGP, Govt PoCs highlight that they often request feedback from line ministries for both the self-assessment reports as well as the IRM reports. At the same time, multiple international review mechanisms dealing with governance issues (i.e. from the OECD, Council of Europe, European Commission, UN and AU) also request information which in some instances falls under the responsibility of the OGP PoC. Interview feedback from some of these international organisations confirms that Govts sometimes struggle with timely responsiveness to these data requests. It would therefore be recommendable to find synergies in terms of data collection. Within the OGP, this means that IRM researchers could liaise at an early stage with Govt PoCs to explore how the data collection for the IRM can be streamlined with that of the self-assessment. Analysis of data should remain a separate task for IRM researchers. Externally the IRM can consider streamlining data collection with some of the organisations operating periodically across a series of countries. This is somewhat more difficult given that the agendas of the respective organisations do not fully overlap. Nonetheless, this area should be further explored, particularly in relation to governance activities of the OECD (i.e. the Public Governance Reviews or the upcoming Recommendation of the Council on Open Government¹⁵⁴) and of the European Commission (i.e. in relation to the European Semester¹⁵⁵).

Further, at this point in order to promote the timeliness of data collection, the IRM unit could for each NAP cycle put the IRM researcher in contact with the Govt and CSO at an early stage¹⁵⁶. Ideally the IRM researcher follows up on this introduction with a brief personal meeting to make a first introduction and present the IRM process. The IRM unit should also continue asking each IRM researcher to submit a research plan at the start of the NAP detailing the tasks for data collection, stakeholder contact details, draft interview guides and timeframes.

The OGP support unit could warn the IRM at an early stage on possible delays in submission of Govt self-assessment reports. The support unit could also actively promote the adoption of electronic OGP document depositories, which will facilitate IRM data collection.

The IRM researcher could provide a data collection update during this stage or send out an early warning to the IRM unit in case of slow or no response to data requests.

3.4.3.2 Quality reports

It is important to note that part of the quality of the IRM report also depends on the quality of the NAP. This has been repeatedly highlighted by IRM stakeholders. In other words, the weight or relevance of the IRM reports depends partially on the quality of the NAP. The IRM can influence NAPs but the final product is presented by Govts, ideally co-created with civil society. In a scenario where NAP commitments are vague and milestones difficult to measure, the IRM researcher might struggle with data analysis and drafting useful recommendations. Despite this limitation, the IRM should consider how to support together with the OGP support unit the creation of NAPs. This review finds that in practice IRM researchers do receive questions on the national level on how to develop NAPs. However, IRM researchers are expected to remain independent and should refrain from providing advice to Govts. The task for such support therefor lies primarily with the OGP support unit. However, it is understood that there are limited resources to provide individual support to Govts on the creation of NAPs. Ways could be explored to allow IRM researchers on the ground to play a constructive role in this process providing safeguards are in place to ensure the independence of

¹⁵⁴ <http://www.oecd.org/governance/recommendation-open-government-public-consultation.htm>

¹⁵⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/european-semester_en

¹⁵⁶ This can be done via email and accompanied by a letter of introduction from the OGP support unit directors or the OGP’s CEO.

the researcher from the NAP process. For example, the IRM researcher could at the start of co-creation process present sample NAPs to all stakeholders involved. Such a session could include a presentation of good practices from other OGP countries. This would mitigate the risk that national stakeholders would mirror the NAP to the IRM methodology and this way relegate genuine national OG issues. Safeguards to ensure independence could be to have an open dialogue, accessible for all parties and properly documented or recorded. Another approach for NAP development support could be the involvement of former IRM researchers, the “IRM alumni”.

In order to influence the quality of draft IRM reports, the IRM could first and foremost gain from effective hiring and training of IRM researchers. More recommendations can be found above in section 3.4.1. In addition, during the IRM “down-time” (between NAP launch, research plan drafting and start data collection), the IRM researchers could start analysis of IRM’s indicators on Specificity and OGP Value Relevance. In more general terms, the IRM unit and the IEP could prepare a plan on how to spread the research work across the time period rather than having this concentrated towards the end of the NAP mid-term.

The IRM unit could also consider a peer mentoring program in which IRM researchers (i.e. more with less experienced researchers) are paired up for the duration of research phase. This would provide IRM researchers with the opportunity to reflect on data analysis and report drafting with their peers. The barrier for asking for help from a fellow IRM researcher as opposed to the IRM unit could be lower. At the same time, this could reduce the need for the IRM unit to (micro) manage IRM researchers. A peer mentoring program also falls in line with the positive feedback from IRM researchers on the interaction with colleagues during IRM training.

3.4.3.3 Lengthy reports

The size of the IRM reports affects various parts of the process as well as its uptake on the national level and on the level of the OGP (more information on the uptake in section 3.2.2.). There is a general understanding among stakeholders that bigger NAPs result in bigger IRM reports. Big NAPs affect data collection, analysis, report writing and the reviewing of the reports.

Within the OGP’s Steering Committee there are discussions on putting a cap to commitments which could ease the burden on the IRM. This initiative has been promoted by the IRM against the backdrop of series of identified challenges for the OGP. For example, the IRM warns for possible problems of credible NAP implementation taking into account that less than 5% of all commitment are “star” rated, meaning that they have transformative power¹⁵⁷. In addition, large NAPs come with higher coordination costs for Govts PoCs and leading CSOs. For the IRM, the increase in commitments also poses challenges. In particular, the need to review more but without the corresponding resources available. The OGP recommends NAPs to have between 10 to 15 commitments. Over the last years the number of commitments indeed went down. However, the IRM points out that outliers are worse with some NAPs including between 21-30 commitments, 30-40 and even several NAPs having more than 60 commitments. In addition, OGP membership grew and the organisation is also actively developing a new sub-national program which will expose the IRM to expansion. Govts are also encouraged to broaden themes and sectors forcing the IRM to adapt its methodology to new OGP working areas. As a result, the IRM reports have increased in size. Also, the end-of-term report which was originally foreseen to be a short update from the progress report has increased in size, *de facto* resulting in the IRM producing two large reports per NAP. The expansion of the OGP has been met with an increase of resources for the IRM unit. However, the workload varies depending on NAPs over which the IRM has little control. At the same time, it is important to note that the economies of scale for the IRM are limited. Increased quantity of reports does not

¹⁵⁷ See: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwD0jnz8k5PQeExRN1Q2SzB5b28/view?ths=true>

automatically result in reduced costs per report. This does not mean that operational efficiencies cannot be pursued. This is also the reason why this review presents recommendations on how to improve the hiring, training and research process. However, it has to be noted that optimising operational processes does present trade-offs. More information will be given in Annex I on strategic options and scenarios.

In order to reduce the size of IRM reports at this point, the IRM unit could continue promoting researchers to cluster commitments which allows to limit number under review. In addition, the IRM unit should consider a major overhaul of the structure of IRM reports. For example, for each NAP the emphasis could be placed on those indicators valuable for dissemination and national uptake. This could consist of a publication with a section on: OGP Values Relevance; Potential Impact and Completion; and Recommendations. Sections on Context and objectives as well as Specificity can be annexed at a later stage. Specificity of NAPs could be analysed once every number of NAPs or analysed horizontally across the OGP in a technical paper.

3.4.3.4 Timely reviewing

Stakeholders suggest that the review process is a key strength of the IRM, supporting the production of high-quality reports. However, it has to be noted that this process is lengthy and especially resource intensive for IRM staff as well as IEP members. The review process takes place towards the end of the report cycle, meaning that in case problems are identified with the state of reports, the review process can become a painstaking exercise for all parties. This can also further exacerbate already existing delays, causing serious delays in the publication of IRM reports. It is therefore that this review has suggested various ways to detect warning signals for delays at an early stage. At the same time, this review finds that the IRM unit and IEP have developed ways to deal with emergency situations. For example, in case of “problematic” reports, the IRM’s Research Managers tend to take the lead and directly liaise with the IRM researchers and IEP members. In some instances, the IEP members directly interact with the IRM researcher trying to find solutions to problems identified in reports. In theory, an early warning system could avoid having to deal with such emergency situations. However, in practice the IRM will likely always be confronted with difficult reports. Especially the IRM unit is placed at the centre of this. As a result, staff members are interacting with many different actors involved in the OGP process (i.e. Govts, CSOs, other OGP staff members, IRM researchers and IEP members). In the view of the authors, the work of IRM staff members is at times a balancing act, juggling different needs and expectations of all OGP stakeholders. This comes with highs and lows in terms of workload, but places pressure on most staff members, especially during the review period.

In order to ensure timeliness of the review process, the IEP and IRM unit could decrease the number of comment periods and only stick with the one for Govts and CSOs. After publication of the IRM report, an online permanent public comment period could be facilitated allowing the public to directly engage in dialogue on the reports. This would allow for the quality control / review process to be reduced in time. Feedback also suggests very limited response to the public comment period.

Another option is for the IRM unit to consider real-time reviewing, which could allow the IRM researcher to immediately respond to comments. This is harder in the case of the IEP considering that in practice two IEP members provide comments and consolidate their feedback prior to coupling this back to the IRM unit.

3.4.4 Governance arrangements

KEY FINDINGS

- IRM staff members are largely grouped together by similar business rather than by similar function. This means that staff members are put together to work on the delivery of the same product, namely the IRM reports.
- The team is largely cross-functional with decisions taken on the basis of consensus and coordinated by the managers. There are short lines of communication between staff members and leadership, partially because the team is small and most staff members are physically present at the same location. This is considered a useful approach when working towards a common goal. Would the IRM opt for functional teams, the interaction penalty could be higher considering the pursuit for a common goal would require more coordination and communication.
- The cross-functionality challenges managers to extract best practices from the different approaches used by members of the team, to test these practices and incorporate them. As a result, some IRM staff members feel that their concerns related to the workload and suggested changes to alleviate these are not addressed effectively.
- The IRM workload is intrinsically linked to the OGP membership but the IRM budget is not. In order to address resource constraints, the IRM depends on the OGP for sign-off.
- The IRM's independent position within the OGP requires it Program Director to maintain some distance from SC members. As a result, it is more difficult for the IRM to defend its interests vis-à-vis the SC.
- The IEP has a small role in safeguarding the IRM's independence vis-à-vis the OGP, which is a task left more to the IRM Program Director. This is a challenging task given that the Program Director is part of and reports to the OGP support unit.

This review considers two areas important to consider. The first is the team's organisation, the second concerns the position of the IRM within the OGP.

3.4.4.1 Team organisation

At the stage of this review, the IRM team consists of 8 staff members: one Program Director, two Research Managers, two Research Associates, two Program Officers and a Research Assistant (Figure 33). The Program Director reports directly to the Support Unit Executive Director¹⁵⁸ and oversees the IRM core functions¹⁵⁹.

¹⁵⁸ The Executive Director hires and evaluates the performance of the IRM Program Director (with input from the IEP) and provides fiscal and administrative oversight for the IRM program. The Executive Director should also ensure that the IRM progress reports are used across the OGP to facilitate learning and improvement. The Executive Director does not sign off on the content of any of the individual IRM reports.

¹⁵⁹ These include: Working to convene the IEP in person, by phone or other means, as appropriate for ongoing business; Maintaining and updating the process for identifying national researchers; Hiring national researchers in each of the OGP participating countries; Developing, updating and applying the IRM reporting template; Developing detailed guidance for national researchers and providing training, coaching and feedback as necessary to IRM researchers; Identifying and rolling out tools to help national researchers collect IRM inputs within OGP participating countries; Publishing all reports in a timely, consistent manner; Briefing the Criteria and Standards sub-committee and Steering Committee as appropriate; Reviewing and finalizing reports in tandem with the IEP; Develop relevant learning products derived from IRM findings, including collaborating with the Support Unit to ensure learning is being used to advance OGP's mission (p. 37 Articles of Governance)

In practice the Program Director shares many of these functions with the two Research Managers. To some extent, all activities that directly involve the IRM researchers are managed by the Research Managers. The Program Director oversees the management of the IRM unit and closely interacts with the IEP on IRM strategic issues. In addition, the Program Director represents the IRM vis-à-vis the Criteria and Standards sub-committee and Steering Committee, and forms part of the management of the Support Unit¹⁶⁰. Finally, the Program Director plays an important role in the development of relevant learning products derived from IRM findings, including collaborating with the Support Unit to ensure learning is being used to advance OGP's mission. Within this function, the Program Director is a key contributor to the work of the Knowledge, Learning, Innovation and Capacity Building (KLIC) unit within the OGP.

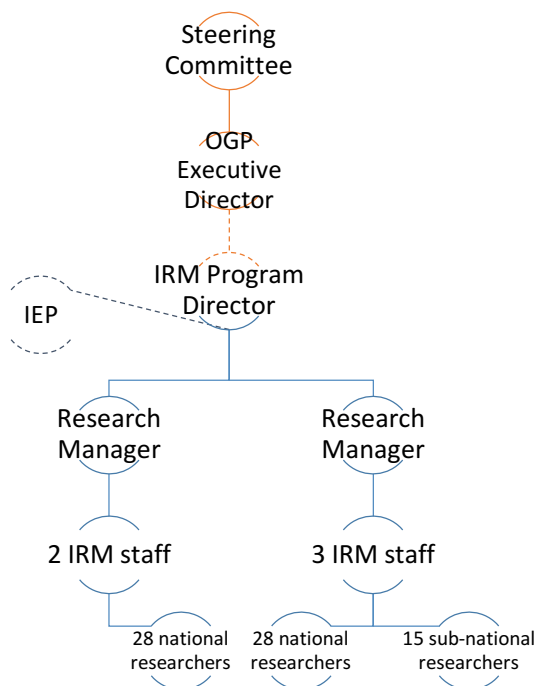


Figure 33 - IRM team structure

is the case for the Govt support unit and CS support unit) due to the fact that there is an uneven representation of countries per region¹⁶². However, the Research Managers are in contact with the respective regional coordinators in the support unit.

The teams of the Research Managers are largely cross-functional, meaning staff members are responsible for the production of IRM reports from start to finish, including the hiring the IRM researchers, providing research support, report reviewing, publication and dissemination. The Research Managers oversee these processes, are responsible for some countries, and in addition take up specific tasks, such as interviews during the hiring process, review in case of “difficult” reports, etc. The Research Managers also support the Program Director in tasks vis-à-vis the IEP, SC and OGP management. For the review process, the “IRM high-season”, additional consultants are contracted to support the team. These consultants are also managed by the Research Managers.

To sum up, the IRM staff members are largely grouped together by similar business rather than by similar function. This means that staff members are

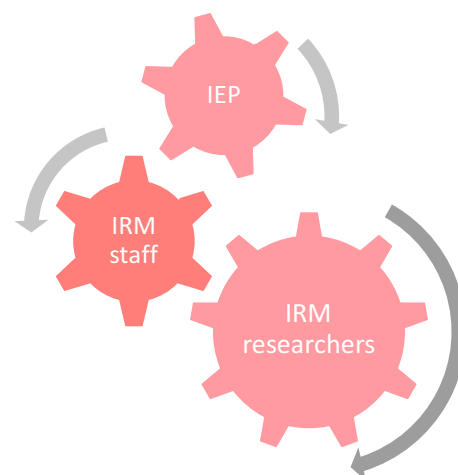


Figure 34 - IRM cross-functional team

¹⁶⁰ This consists of the CS Director, Govt Director and the Executive Director.

¹⁶¹ This is particularly the case for the Spanish-speaking countries.

¹⁶² The IRM only operates in OGP countries while the other units in theory could also be active in non-OGP countries, mainly in relation to future OGP membership.

put together to work on the delivery of the same product, namely the IRM reports. The team is largely cross-functional with decisions taken on the basis of consensus and coordinated by the managers. There are short lines of communication between staff members and leadership, partially because the team is small and most staff members are physically present at the same location. This is useful in terms of working towards a common goal. Would the IRM opt for functional teams, meaning consisting of staff members responsible for parts of the IRM process, the interaction penalty could be higher. Pursuing a common goal would require more coordination and communication. If this would be the choice of the IRM, the team would best be physically located at one place. The current cross-functional grouping means that the team has a lower interaction penalty. This would allow the staff members to be dispersed across different locations. This is already the case for the Program Officer for the sub-national pilot project who is located in Madrid and not Washington D.C. Feedback suggests that the distance between the team and the Program Officer is not a point of concern. Arguably the reason for this is the fact that this person has a cross-functional position dealing with the whole sub-national IRM process.

The fact that the current team grouping used by the IRM works well, does not mean it is not facing challenges. For example, the cross-functionality challenges managers to extract best practices from the different approaches used by members of the team. It requires more effort for a manager to identify good practices and test these across the team. This review identified some of these practices¹⁶³ but did not identify a clear monitoring of these and reflection on its effectiveness. In addition, IRM staff members have plenty of ideas on how to change the IRM set-up. Management also offers space for staff to voice ideas during meetings as well as dedicated brainstorm sessions. However, it is unclear to which extent there is measured follow-up on these initiatives. This is most likely attributed to the difficulty to extract best practices and subsequently test these or incorporate them into the IRM structure. As a result, some IRM staff members feel that when they present solutions to deal with the high workload, there is no effective response. Ideas are not easily turned to action. The main reason for this is that despite being an independent body within the OGP, the IRM is dependent on different actors.

3.4.4.2 IRM within OGP

First of all, for resources the IRM depends on the OGP and its Executive Director. Addressing human resource constraints is hence a difficult task as it requires the sign-off of the OGP. IRM's workload is intrinsically linked to the OGP membership but the IRM budget is not. Interview feedback from IRM stakeholders point to the need to discuss ways in which the IRM's budget can be linked to OGP membership. This issue is also mentioned by some OGP Govts when discussing on an OGP level the financial contribution of OGP members to the initiative. There seems to be an understanding that the growth of the organisation does have implications on the IRM, and OGP as whole, if not met with budget. Within the IRM this issue becomes particularly critical when looking at the IEP and the additional workload related to the sub-national pilot project. Some concerns have been voiced over the lack of input from the IEP on these decisions.

The CS maintains a watching brief over the IRM to ensure that the IEP, IRM staff and IRM researchers are able to publish their reports, achieve objectives and that the reports maintain a high standard of quality and accuracy. Also decisions taken in the Steering Committee can directly affect the IRM, for example in the case of launching a sub-national pilot program. It is unclear to which extent the IRM is consulted on these decisions. It is understood that the support unit is considered a secretariat to the OGP and therefore it takes a backseat role at the table during SC meetings. However, the support unit maintains close lines of communication with respective CSO leads and Govts part

¹⁶³ For example: research managers closely interact with OGP support unit regional staff members in order to better understand needs and expectations from Govts and CSOs; research managers requesting a research plan to IRM researchers in order to detect caveats in data collection at an early stage; staff is supported by external consultants in order to deal with increased workload during reporting season.

of the SC. The IRM's independent position requires its Program Director to maintain some distance from SC members despite the fact that the Program Director is part of the OGP support unit. As a result, it is more difficult for the IRM to defend its interests vis-à-vis the SC. While relations between the Program Director and the SC are generally good, it would still be useful to have clearer ways for the IRM to provide input to the SC. This issue has been repeated several times in particular by IEP members.

The IRM depends to some extent on the IEP. Apart from the close involvement of the IEP, it also has a say in the IRM methodology and the hiring of IRM researchers. In theory the IRM is not accountable to the IEP, however in practice the IEP's guidance has a strong influence. This influence is particularly vis-à-vis the IRM research process. The IEP safeguards the independence of the IRM by screening IRM researchers on possible conflicts of interest and thoroughly reviewing reports on quality and objectivity. The IEP has a smaller role in safeguarding the IRM's independence vis-à-vis the OGP. This task is more left to the IRM Program Director. However, this is a challenging task given the Program Director's position within the OGP.

4 Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter presents the main conclusions and recommendations of this review.

4.1 Relevance

This chapter aimed to answer four main review questions:

1. To what extent are IRM practices aligned with the Articles of Governance?
2. To what extent are the IRM Charter of the OGP Articles of Governance still aligned with existing knowledge of OGP's challenges and the IRM's role in addressing those challenges?
3. To what extent do the IRM objectives correspond to the OGP's shift of objectives and alignment in response to the OGP's Strategic Refresh?
4. What use has been given to the IRM reports and to which extent do IRM reports and mandate correspond to the needs and expectations of beneficiaries (i.e. related to the twin mandate of accountability and learning)?

The IRM practices largely align to the Articles of Governance by 1) reporting on NAP implementing and 2) informing the Steering Committee's OGP response policy.

Concerning the latter, there are different expectations from the IRM as an accountability tool. Mostly Govts expect the IRM to be a "soft" tool that rates their performance, but does not prevent OGP members from continuing dialogue within the OGP framework. Mostly CSOs expect the IRM to be a "hard" tool to ensure poor performance has consequences. On the OGP working level, the extent to which the IRM is in practice used to ensure accountability is unclear. The main challenge is limited uptake of findings within the SC, risking that the IRM cannot influence decision-making. The second challenge is uptake on the national level. However, the Articles of Governance place limited emphasis on this. Concerning the former, the IRM and OGP reporting are aligned with expectations from OGP and IRM staff. However, Govts do consider the self-assessment report data collection and participation in the IRM data collection a burden. As such, there is more support among OGP staff members and Govts for a phasing out of the self-assessment report rather than a phasing out of the IRM report.

IRM objectives correspond to a large extent to the OGP's Strategic Refresh's shift of OGP objectives.

Close interaction between CSOs and Govts strengthens the perception of the IRM's relevance to ensure accountability, given that results are more long term and thus less visible. At the same time, that interaction affects the perceived importance of learning considering that stakeholders are frequently in contact during the NAP development and implementation. Govts learn from working on a daily basis on the implementation of NAPs, which affects the likelihood of learning from the IRM report. Instead, Govts stress the need for technical assistance on implementation. This review questions whether the twin mandate of accountability and learning should be placed alongside each other. The IRM might be faced with some accountability limitations, particularly in the case IRM findings are not taken up by Govts or CSOs, or even the OGP's SC. If the emphasis of the IRM would be placed on learning, these could then subsequently be used by stakeholders for accountability.

There is wide-spread country-level and OGP-level use of IRM products. These are used internally within institutions or organisations and/or for external purposes such as communication and policy deliberations or concrete advocacy activities. More than a dozen different uses have been identified, supporting the main IRM objectives.

This review finds that it is hard for the IRM mandate to fully correspond to the needs and expectations of stakeholders considering the heterogeneous landscape of the OGP. Nonetheless, the IRM products do cater to different needs in many instances, and in a way the IRM has developed a product that meets many of the standards expected from its users. The main strengths are the credibility of the methodology, the availability of detailed technical content, and its independence as key factors enabling the use of reports. Govts particularly value the OGP brand attached to the IRM reports. The most important obstacles for its use are the length of the reports and the difficulty of extracting key messages. Another major obstacle is the timing of the reports which could seriously limit the IRM's usefulness, especially when not being able to influence the NAP development process. The IRM shares a significant part of the responsibility for delays in publication, however, management of IRM uptake is a shared responsibility between all OGP actors.

In order to align IRM practice with the Articles of Governance, the OGP could consider the following recommendations:

1. In relation to country performance within OGP: The IRM affects the procedural review of the OGP's response policy but does not play a formal role. Consider to include a formal role in the Articles of Governance (Addendum F). For example, the obligation to formulate and publish an IRM response to concern letters or to annex an IRM background document to OGP SC decisions.
 - a. In the procedural review, include a standard reference to the way in which the IRM findings support recommendations.
2. In relation to NAP development and implementation performance: Consider developing some form of IRM compliance procedure¹⁶⁴ in response to poor NAP development and implementation performance. For example:
 - 1) upon proposal by the IEP, two former IRM researchers are appointed to prepare a brief report on Govt compliance of IRM recommendations¹⁶⁵ (with the support of the IRM unit);
 - 2) Govt under procedural review comments on compliance report;
 - 3) revised compliance report is issued to CS subcommittee for adoption.
3. Reduce the administrative burden on Govts for IRM reporting and self-assessment reporting, by exploring synergies on data collection.
 - a. Continue the development of the repository-based system.
 - b. Explore ways to gain efficient access to stakeholders for interviews.
4. Consider phasing out the Govt self-assessment reporting, but take into account a possible trade-off concerning data collection for the IRM. Therefore, accompany this by:
 - a. promoting the use of online document depositories by Govts;
 - b. including in the Articles of Governance - Addendum D (Guidelines for Public Consultation on Country Commitments) a provision asking OGP Govts to ensure access of IRM researchers as observers to consultation during development of NAPs and during implementation of NAPs¹⁶⁶.

¹⁶⁴ The Council of Europe's GRECO compliance procedure could be used as a model: <https://rm.coe.int/16806cd443>

¹⁶⁵ The compliance report could indicate whether each individual IRM recommendation: has been implemented satisfactorily or otherwise has been dealt with in a satisfactory way; has been partly implemented; has not been implemented.

¹⁶⁶ The reviewers acknowledge the fact that IRM researcher have limited resources to their disposal which arguably could make attendance to meetings burdensome. The IRM could therefore emphasize in trainings and guidance to researchers that their role is also to be observers in the process and should make themselves available (whenever possible) to participate in OGP related meetings. Instead of adjusting the Addendum D, the OGP could also include a recommendation in the PoC Manual asking Govts to have the researcher present at meetings on the IRM assessment, review process and recommendations from latest reports at the beginning of the development process.

In order to adjust IRM objectives with the OGP's shift of objectives and alignment of the OGP's Strategic Refresh, the OGP could consider the following recommendations:

5. Clarify the shared responsibility of the OGP support unit and IRM unit to manage expectations in terms of IRM learning and accountability on the national level.
 - a. Expectations from the IRM differ on the basis of the frequency of interaction between CSOs and Govts. Consider setting up a task force consisting IRM staff and OGP support unit staff that periodically discusses the needs of CSO and Govts per country/sub-set of countries (i.e. per region).

In order to enhance uptake of IRM products, the OGP could consider the following recommendations:

6. The wide variety of CSOs participating in OGP processes across the globe challenges the usability of the IRM for this group. Instead, prioritize the needs of the stakeholders that are most closely involved in the OGP process, namely OGP support unit, and Govts. CSO needs can indirectly be addressed through the OGP support unit.
7. This review identified a series of objectives in order for the IRM to increase its usability:
 - a. Prioritize working on the following objectives over which the IRM has direct influence: to extract findings / key messages from NAPs / draw conclusions from multiple NAPs; to decrease length of the reports; to improve general understanding of IRM process.
 - b. After this, work on the goals of which the IRM has shared responsibility with the OGP Support Unit and Govts: to ensure timely publication to feed into NAP development; to increase awareness on OGP; to ensure recommendations are practical and can be used in NAP implementation.
8. Delegate the following objectives to other stakeholders, i.e. the OGP support unit, given this falls outside the sphere of influence of the IRM: to align NAP with the CS advocacy thematic focus; to adapt timing to political context; to match NAP cycle to policy cycle on the national level.

4.2 Effectiveness

This chapter aimed to answer three main review questions:

1. To what extent have IRM objectives (i.e. medium-term visions for the IRM) been achieved? To what extent do the observed effects of the IRM mechanism correspond to the objectives? To what extent can these effects be credited to the IRM mechanism?
2. Which factors contributed to the success or failure of certain objectives to be achieved?
3. How can consistency and quality of IRM communications be enhanced in order to ensure that decision-makers at the national level are better informed?

Overall, the perceived impact of the IRM on the wider OGP objectives does not correspond with the expectations of stakeholders (Annex H includes the survey responses). At the same time, the IRM is considered more effective on those objectives that relate directly to the NAP development and implementation.

Govt respondents are particularly positive about the IRM's effectiveness in: supporting co-creation activities with evidence-based information; ensuring that quality of future NAPs improves; and ensuring that Govts can effectively implement OGP commitments during the NAP cycle. CSOs emphasise effectiveness in terms of ensuring that quality of future NAPs improves and the ability of the IRM to help CSOs to hold Govt accountable, but in general have a more critical view on effectiveness suggesting there is room for improvement.

Various factors contribute to the effectiveness or lack of effectiveness of the IRM:

- CSOs are less homogenous compared to Govts. This suggests that there are limitations to the possible impact of the IRM. Addressing the needs of all CSOs that are operating on the national level would be an unrealistic goal for this IRM. In fact, the IRM cannot be decoupled from the overall impact of the OGP. In many instances, stakeholders did not necessarily make a distinction between the IRM and the OGP when talking about their work. Nonetheless, the perception of stakeholders concerning the role of the IRM within the boundaries of the NAP development and implementation is more clearly defined. The review identified effects that could be attributed to the IRM. Most importantly are IRM recommendations concerning the co-creation. In addition, this review finds that stakeholders have picked up on the need to aim for transformative commitments in their NAPs.
- The IRM's role as "honest broker" supports better outcomes from the co-creation activities between CS and Govts. Arguably this position allows the IRM to be effective within an environment where stakeholders clearly have different expectations from the mechanism. In other words, without the IRM as independent broker, the outcomes from co-creation could be worse. There is, however, no counterfactual to this. A limit to the IRM's effectiveness is at the same time the fact that different expectations of co-creation outcomes explain why CSOs perceive the IRM less effective in supporting this process. Govts measure success on the basis of CS consultation for NAP development, CSOs on the basis of uptake of their recommendations in a NAP or the frequency of interaction with the Govt.
- The IRM methodology contributes to the effectiveness of the IRM in supporting co-creation activities. Acceptance of findings is, however, strongly affected by the frequency and length of interaction between the IRM researcher and stakeholders, as well as the justification of the representativeness of the interview sample.

To conclude, this review emphasises the importance of communication to improve uptake, however, it also finds that stakeholders are unclear about who is responsible for this. Nonetheless, the IRM unit has taken a proactive role in exploring lines of communication by OGP staff, IRM staff, Govts and CSOs. As a result, IRM data is used for communication purposes by these actors. CSOs and Govts discuss ideas and recommendations related to the IRM with each other and with their peers. There is limited use of social media. CSOs are less likely to disseminate the report. Communication strategies are strongly affected by the use these stakeholders give to reports. Govts are more inclined to discuss and disseminate findings given the IRM directly passes judgement over their work in relation to the OGP as well as their day-to-day activities. A key actor in dissemination and communication on the IRM is the national researcher. These activities focus more on civil society rather than on government. This review finds that the IRM manages to reach stakeholders and can capture interest. However, its effect depends on the quality of interaction which is influenced by the degree of awareness on the OGP on the national level. Those most likely to respond to the IRM are Govts due to their direct involvement in the process.

In order to strengthen effectiveness, the OGP could consider the following recommendations:

1. Align IRM recommendations to OGP co-creation objectives relating to: the establishment of a permanent dialogue mechanism; the call for frequent or repeated interaction between CSO and Govt; the inclusion of wider CS (beyond those organisations dealing with transparency, access to information, anti-corruption, etc.); the expansion of the co-creation process to other governmental levels.
2. Formalise the role of the IRM as an honest broker in the co-creation process.
 - a. This could be done by including in the Articles of Governance - Addendum D (Guidelines for Public Consultation on Country Commitments) a provision asking OGP Govts to ensure access of IRM researchers as

observers to consultation during development of NAPs and during implementation of NAPs (see also recommendations in the relevance section).

- b. This can also be done through IRM Terms of Reference as well as the IRM Procedures Manual. The IRM staff can provide guidance for minimum frequency and length of the interaction between IRM researcher and stakeholders.
3. Allow the IRM researcher to clarify to Govts and CSOs the baseline expectations from the IRM on the national level. Providing the IRM researcher with some degree of flexibility on this allows for measurement of impact on the basis of national context.
4. Continue promoting interaction between the OGP support unit and the IRM researcher to flag national level need for support unit assistance on the OGP process.
5. Reflect on how the SC could use IRM data in order to support open government reform on the national level. Such initiatives could focus on already existing peer exchange between SC CSOs and national level CSOs as well as engaging MOs to assist Govts.

In order to improve consistency and quality of IRM communications, the OGP could consider the following recommendations:

1. On the global level, consider placing the responsibility of communicating IRM findings, disseminating reports, and preparing visualization of findings with the communications department at the OGP.
2. Continue strengthening the capacity of the IRM researcher on the national level to introduce findings into the policy-dialogue.
 - a. Provide IRM researchers with on-demand access to resources to enter into dialogue after publication of IRM reports. This could be through public seminars and conferences or by allowing post-publication face-to-face debriefings with stakeholders.
 - b. Periodically update current and former IRM researchers on broader OGP developments and findings, as well as country updates from OGP support unit.
3. Continue channeling communication with CSOs and Govts through IRM researchers.
 - a. Make sure this is monitored by the IRM staff given their permanent involvement in the OGP.

4.3 Efficiency

This chapter aimed to answer three review questions:

1. To what extent is IRM input (IRM workflow, staffing, division of labour) justified given the effects which have been achieved?
2. To what extent is this input proportionate to the benefits achieved?
3. How can governance arrangements further facilitate the process of strategic decision-making?

Taking into account the findings on relevance and effectiveness, this review concludes that the IRM input in terms of workflow, staffing and division of labour is justified given the effects that have been achieved. However, this does not mean that the IRM should not try to improve operational aspects in its work in order to allow for more efficiency and aim for more effectiveness. At the same time, this review notes that under the current status quo, the IRM's input is justified but that sustainability of the efficiency of the IRM is under severe pressure. In other words, the OGP and IRM should consider a more strategic overhaul of the IRM model in order to sustain in the future.

In terms of hiring and selection, this review finds that time and resources are considered justified in order to ensure a quality baseline of researchers and increase the likelihood of better performance down the line. Nonetheless, the recruitment strategy on the OGP website used by the IRM only calls for applications from “open countries”. This excludes visitors to the website that might be eligible and interested to become an IRM researcher for other countries that might open in the future. Further, recruitment methods used differ per vacancy and largely rely on referrals from OGP/IRM staff, or from OGP Govts and CSO focal points. As a result, calls receive few applications lowering the probability of finding a suitable candidate for a specialized job. Generally, IRM staff considers that most can be gained in terms of efficient implementation of the research by conducting a thorough selection. As such, the IRM staff conducts interviews and asks IRM researchers to present written exercises to ensure shortlisting quality candidates. A thorough reviewing of possible conflict of interests prior to hiring researchers is considered relevant in the eyes of IRM staff members, IEP and Govts.

Training offered by the IRM is considered of good quality. The IRM offers different types of training to IRM researchers and adopts a flexible approach allowing them to tailor this to the needs of each individual researcher. IRM researchers are highly positive on the training and the complementary documentation made available to consult on the IRM process and methodology. In particular, the IRM researchers value the interaction with their peers, IRM staff, and if present IEP members during the training activities.

In terms of service delivery to the IRM researchers this review highlights that the IRM unit performs well. Progress reports cause most problems in terms of timely delivery. The bottlenecks lie in the data collection phase and the report review / quality control phase. Delays are not the norm but can have an important impact, and other OGP stakeholders consider this a problem. The IRM unit has taken a proactive approach to mitigating risks for delays. The IRM unit is the ultimate responsible for timely delivery of reports but shares this largely with the IEP and IRM researchers. Also the responsiveness of Govts is considered essential in allowing the IRM to reduce risks for delays. In light of this, Govts express signs of “reporting fatigue”, in particular related to repeated data requests for IRM reports, self-assessment reports, as well as other international review mechanisms. Other factors contributing to risks of delays are the size of the IRM reports which affects various parts of the IRM process as well as its uptake on the national level and on the level of the OGP. Big NAPs affect IRM data collection, analysis, report writing and importantly the reviewing of the reports.

This review argues that the work of IRM staff members during the research phase is at times a balancing act, juggling different needs and expectations of all OGP stakeholders. This comes with highs and lows in terms of workload but places pressure on most staff members especially during the quality control process. This balancing act relates to some extent to the governance arrangements. The team is put together to work on the delivery of the same product, namely the IRM reports. Each member leads a process from start to finish, making the team largely cross-functional with decisions taken on the basis of consensus and coordinated by the managers. There are short lines of communication between staff members and leadership, because the team is small and most staff members are physically present at the same location. This is considered a useful approach when working towards a common goal. Would the IRM opt for functional teams, meaning each staff member would be responsible for part of the process, the interaction penalty could be higher considering this would require more coordination and communication.

The cross-functionality make it difficult for managers to extract best practices from the different approaches used by members of the team, to test these practices and, if needed, incorporate them into the IRM process. As a result, some IRM staff members feel that their voices are not heard. In this context it is important to stress that the IRM workload is intrinsically linked to the OGP membership but the IRM budget is not. In order to address resource constraints, the

IRM depends on the OGP for sign-off. The IRM's independent position requires it Program Director to maintain some distance from SC members. As a result, it is more difficult for the IRM to defend its interests vis-à-vis the SC.

In order to enhance the hiring and selection process, the OGP could consider the following recommendations:

1. Widen the pool of candidates by using a variety of recruitment methods.
 - a. Consider at least one additional recruitment method, apart from the general call on the OGP website and the recruitment referrals, when targeting a specific country.
 - b. Consider formalizing partnerships with universities with international master and doctoral degree programs.
2. Consider including apart from the country-specific call for IRM researchers on the OGP website, also a general call for IRM researchers.
 - a. Consider developing an expert roster which can be used whenever there is a country specific recruitment process or in case of emergency when there is an immediate need for an IRM researcher.
3. Consider hiring a professional recruiter as a permanent staff member to help design the recruitment strategy and identify and deploy a variety of recruitment methods on the national or regional level. It is recommended to do this internally and to not make use of a recruitment agency.
4. Ensure that key incentives for IRM researchers are reflected in the job posting: doing meaningful work within the wider scope of the OGP framework; the possibility to participate in dialogue on open government on the national level; exposure to decision-makers on the national level allowing to professionally profile oneself; getting financial compensation for the work done.
5. Make a distinction between minimum job requirements and preferred qualifications.
 - a. Consider including a specific requirement for IRM researchers to have a profound understanding of public administration.

In order to enhance the training process, the OGP could consider the following recommendations:

1. Continue online training activities during the NAP cycle.
2. Consider increasing the involvement of IEP members during the initial IRM researcher training.
3. Consider involving former IRM researchers and former PoCs (OGP alumni) on training IRM researchers.

In order to enhance the training process, the OGP could consider the following recommendations:

1. Promote timeliness of data collection and analysis. This can be done by:
 - a. Continue putting the IRM researcher in contact with the Govt and CSO at an early stage. The IRM researcher could follow-up on this introduction with a brief personal meeting in which he or she introduces herself and presents the IRM process. This could be included in the IRM Procedures Manual.
 - b. Make sure IRM researchers together with the OGP Govt support unit liaise at an early stage with Govt PoCs to explore how the data collection for the IRM can be streamlined with that of the self-assessment. For example, the Govt could be supported by the OGP support unit on creating an online repository.
 - c. In order to better the quality of collected data from Govts, emphasise to targeted stakeholders for data collection the need for verifiable, concrete, publicly attainable evidence.

- d. Consider streamlining data collection with some of the MOs operating periodically across a series of countries. For example, this could include participation of the IRM researcher in fact-finding missions by the OECD, UNCAC, Council of Europe, etc. Or access to survey feedback from existing review mechanisms dealing with governance.
2. Influence the quality of draft IRM reports. This can be done by:
 - a. The IRM unit should consider how to support together with the OGP support unit the creation of NAPs. For example, allow IRM researchers on the ground to play a constructive role in this process providing safeguards are in place to ensure the independence of the researcher from the NAP process.
 - b. Promote that the IRM researcher presents to participants at the start of the co-creation process sample NAPs and best practices from countries.
 - c. Consider involving IRM alumni in the assistance of NAP development as well as IRM researcher training, peer coaching or quality control. This could be done by building a roster of retired researchers as a permanent pool of experts, also for emergency situations.
 - d. IRM unit and the IEP could prepare a plan on how to spread the research work across the time period rather than having this concentrated towards the end of the NAP mid-term. For example, during the IRM “down-time” (between NAP launch, research plan drafting and start data collection), the IRM researchers could start analysis of IRM’s indicators on Specificity and OGP Value Relevance. It has to be noted, however, that this can only be realized if work from quality control staff is reduced in other areas, particularly in relation to hiring and selection which happens at the same time period.
 - e. Consider a peer mentoring program in which IRM researchers (i.e. more with less experienced researchers) are paired up for the duration of research phase. Consider that this might have budget implications.
3. Reduce the size of IRM reports. This can be done by:
 - a. Consider a major overhaul of the structure of IRM reports. For example, for each NAP the emphasis could be placed on those indicators valuable for dissemination and national uptake. This could consist of a publication with a section on: OGP Values Relevance; Potential Impact and Completion; and Recommendations. Sections on Context and objectives as well as Specificity can be annexed at a later stage. Specificity could be analysed once every number of NAPs or analysed horizontally across the OGP in a technical paper.
 - b. Continue promoting IRM researchers to cluster commitments which allows to reduce the size of reports. This does not have affect on the quantity of commitments researchers need to review.
4. Ensure timeliness of the review process. This can be done by:
 - a. Consider real-time reviewing which allows the IRM researcher to immediately respond to IEP comments.
 - b. Consider decreasing the number of comment periods and only stick with the one for Govts and CSOs. For example, consider a pre-publication review in which the IRM organises a “walk through” meeting of the report with the IRM researcher, Govt PoC and CSOs. This allows for feedback and discussion, followed by a two-week comment period.
 - c. After publication of the IRM report, an online permanent public comment period could be facilitated allowing the public to directly engage in dialogue on the reports. This would allow for the quality control / review process to be reduced in time.

In order to enhance the governance arrangements, the OGP could consider the following recommendations:

1. Maintain the current cross-functional team structure and the short lines of communication between staff and leadership.
2. Ensure that director and managers have a clear process in place to monitor IRM work, collect best practices, test these and, if effective, implement these within the IRM process.
3. Growth of the organization has direct implications on the IRM and the IRM has limited economies of scale. Before deciding on further expanding OGP processes to countries, governments or other actors, discuss and determine on the level of SC how the IRM budget / resources can be linked to OGP membership.
4. Consider input of the IEP on the level of the SC when taking decisions affecting the IRM.

4.4 Strategic options and scenarios

The IEP asked the authors of this review to present an environmental scan and capacities assessment in order to better understand the strategic scenarios and options for the IRM. The following table presents a schematic overview of the internal and external environment of the IRM on the basis of the main findings from this review (Table 4). The former includes strengths and weaknesses internal to the IRM, the latter includes opportunities and threats in relations to external factors. Further, this schematic overview presents a series of recommendations that: a) use strengths to maximize opportunities; b) minimize weaknesses by taking advantage of opportunities; c) use strengths to minimize threats; and d) minimize weaknesses by avoiding threats. Each strategy is sub-divided between operational options and more strategic options¹⁶⁷.

Table 4 - IRM environmental scan and recommendations

IRM REVIEW	Internal strengths	Internal weaknesses
	<div><div>1.</div>IRM reports are independent and credible</div> <div><div>2.</div>IRM reports are of high quality</div> <div><div>3.</div>IRM reports present evidence on the basis of a sound methodology</div> <div><div>4.</div>IRM data can be used for cross-learning</div> <div><div>5.</div>IRM researcher are on the ground in OGP countries</div> <div><div>6.</div>IRM team cross-functionality allows for efficient communication</div> <div><div>7.</div>IRM is a collaborative effort between IRM staff, IEP, IRM researchers, and is supported by the OGP support unit</div> <div><div>1.</div>Reports are long and too technical (difficult to read)</div> <div><div>2.</div>The high quantity of reports affects IRM resources</div> <div><div>3.</div>Report data collection is work intensive for IRM researcher and Govts</div> <div><div>4.</div>Report reviewing is work and time intensive</div> <div><div>5.</div>IRM research phases is concentrated over a specific period of time</div> <div><div>6.</div>IRM researchers cannot provide technical assistance due to the need to remain independent</div> <div><div>7.</div>Pool of IRM research candidates is small</div> <div><div>8.</div>IRM researchers rotate frequently</div> <div><div>9.</div>No clear monitoring system of IRM work</div> <div><div>10.</div>IRM reports target a wide variety of stakeholders</div>	

1.

Reports are long and too technical (difficult to read)

2.

The high quantity of reports affects IRM resources

3.

Report data collection is work intensive for IRM researcher and Govts

4.

Report reviewing is work and time intensive

5.

IRM research phases is concentrated over a specific period of time

6.

IRM researchers cannot provide technical assistance due to the need to remain independent

7.

Pool of IRM research candidates is small

8.

IRM researchers rotate frequently

9.

No clear monitoring system of IRM work

10.

IRM reports target a wide variety of stakeholders

¹⁶⁷ Operational include options that can largely be implemented under the current status quo by the IRM unit and IEP. More strategic options might: require further consideration by the IRM unit and IEP; have budget implications; and or require reflection from the OGP as a whole.

External opportunities	a) Use strengths to take advantage of opportunities	b) Overcome weakness by taking advantage of opportunities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Govts want to learn how to develop NAPs Govts want to know how to better implement NAPs National stakeholders want to use the IRM to hold each other accountable OGP stakeholders want to use IRM reports OGP is growing in size and depth Open government is a topic of interest for national and international donor organisations Online technology can facilitate IRM data collection and reviewing The OGP Steering Committee can use IRM findings to inform OGP decision-making 	<p>Operational options</p> <p>Promote that the IRM researcher at the start of co-creation process presents sample NAPs and good practices to all stakeholders involved (S5, O1, O2, O3).</p> <p>Maintain the current cross-functional team structure and the short lines of communication between staff and leadership (S6, O4, O5).</p> <p>Consider input of the IEP on the level of the SC when taking decisions affecting the IRM (S1, O5, O6).</p> <p>Include a standard reference to the way in which the IRM findings support OGP response policy recommendations (S1, S2, S3, O8).</p> <p>Prioritize working on the following user objectives over which the IRM has direct influence: to extract findings / key messages from NAPs / draw conclusions from multiple NAPs; to decrease length of the reports; to improve general understanding of IRM process (S7, O4, O6).</p> <p>Continue promoting interaction between the OGP support unit and the IRM researcher to flag national level need for support unit assistance on the OGP process (S5, S7, O1, O2, O3, O4).</p>	<p>Operational options</p> <p>Build an IRM researcher alumni roster to assist on NAP development and NAP implementation (W6, O1, O2, O3).</p> <p>Prepare a plan on how to spread parts of the research work across the cycle (W5, W4, O1, O2, O3).</p> <p>Ask OGP Govts to ensure access of IRM researchers as observers to consultation during development of NAPs and during implementation of NAPs (W3, W6, O1, O2, O3).</p> <p>Consider real-time reviewing which allows the IRM researcher to immediately respond to IEP comments (W4, O7, O3).</p> <p>Decrease the number of comment periods for Govts and CSOs (W3, W9, O7).</p> <p>Consider an online permanent public comment period which allows the public to directly engage in dialogue on the reports (W4, W4, O3, O7).</p> <p>Continue the development of the repository-based system for data collection (W3, O7).</p> <p>Periodically update current and former IRM researchers on broader OGP developments and findings, as well as country updates from OGP support unit (W10, O5).</p> <p>Continue online training activities for IRM researchers during the NAP cycle (O7, W7).</p>
	<p>Strategic options</p> <p>Consider a major overhaul of the structure of IRM reports and place emphasis on those indicators valuable for dissemination and national uptake (S3, O1, O2, O3).</p> <p>Consider to include a formal role in the Articles of Governance (Addendum F) to formulate and publish an IRM response to concern letters or to annex an IRM background document to OGP SC decisions (S1, S3, S4, O8).</p>	<p>Strategic options</p> <p>Discuss and determine on the level of Steering Committee how the IRM budget / resources can be linked to OGP membership (W2, W3, W4, O5, O6).</p> <p>Work on the user objectives over which the IRM has shared responsibility with the OGP Support Unit and Govts: to ensure timely publication to feed into NAP development; to increase awareness on OGP; to ensure recommendations are practical and can be used in NAP implementation (W3, W4, W5, O1, O2).</p>

	<p>Reflect on how the SC could use IRM data in order to support open government reform on the national level. Such initiatives could focus on already existing peer exchange between SC CSOs and national level CSOs as well as engaging MOs to assist Govts (S2, S3, S4, S7, O8).</p> <p>Provide IRM researchers with on-demand access to resources to enter into dialogue after publication of IRM reports. This could be through public seminars and conferences or by allowing post-publication face-to-face debriefings with stakeholders (S5, O5).</p>	<p>On the global level, consider placing the responsibility of communicating IRM findings, disseminating reports, and preparing visualization of findings with the communications department at the OGP (W2, W3, W4, W10, O4, O5).</p>
<p>External threats</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Timing of reporting does not match with national policy cycle 2. Timing does not match with CSO advocacy cycle 3. OGP process is work intensive for Govts and CSOs 4. Quantity of NAP commitments is decided by Govt and CSO 5. All OGP members undergo the same OGP process regardless of their level of advancement in open government 6. Funding of the IRM depends on OGP 7. Funds IRM do not increase proportionally to OGP membership 8. Govts and CSOs are subject to different international review mechanisms (“data collection fatigue”) 	<p>c) Use strengths to avoid threats</p> <p>Operational options</p> <p>Continue to put the IRM researcher in contact with the Govt and CSO at an early stage (T1, T2, S5)</p> <p>Continue online IRM researcher training activities during the NAP cycle (T9, S5, S6).</p> <p>Increase the involvement of IEP members, IRM researchers and former PoCs during the initial IRM researcher training (T9, S5, S6).</p> <p>Clarify the shared responsibility of the OGP support unit and IRM unit to manage expectations of CSOs and Govts in terms of IRM learning and accountability on the national level (S7, T5).</p> <p>Align IRM recommendations to OGP co-creation objectives relating to: the establishment of a permanent dialogue mechanism; the call for frequent or repeated interaction between CSO and Govt; the inclusion of wider CS (beyond those organisations dealing with transparency, access to information, anti-corruption, etc.); the expansion of the co-creation process to other governmental levels (S3, T4).</p>	<p>d) Minimize weaknesses to avoid threats</p> <p>Operational options</p> <p>Make sure IRM researchers and Govt PoCs liaise on streamlining data collection of IRM with that of the self-assessment (T3, W3)</p> <p>Consider a peer mentoring program in which IRM researchers are paired up for the duration of research phase (W4, T10).</p> <p>Continue promoting IRM researchers to cluster commitments which allows to reduce the size of reports (W1, T4).</p> <p>Ensure that the IRM unit has a clear process in place to monitor IRM work, collect best practices, test these and, if effective, implement these within the IRM process (W9, T12).</p> <p>Allow the IRM researcher to clarify to Govts and CSOs the baseline expectations from the IRM on the national level. Providing the IRM researcher with some degree of flexibility on this allows for measurement of impact on the basis of national context (W9, T12).</p> <p>Widen the pool of candidates by using a variety of recruitment methods. Consider at least one additional recruitment method, apart from the general call on the OGP website and the recruitment referrals, when targeting a specific country. Consider formalizing partnerships with universities with international master and doctoral degree programs (W7, T9, T10).</p> <p>In order to better the quality of collected data from Govts, emphasise to targeted stakeholders for data collection the need for verifiable, concrete, publicly attainable evidence (W3, T5).</p>

<p>9. IRM reporting depends partially on capacity of IRM researchers</p> <p>10. Pool of open government experts in OGP member countries is small</p> <p>11. Uptake of IRM depends partially on willingness CSOs and Govts</p> <p>12. IRM uptake cannot be decoupled from OGP effectiveness as a whole</p>	<p>Strategic options</p> <p>Allow IRM researchers to play a constructive role in the development of NAP process providing safeguards are in place to ensure the independence of the researcher from the NAP process (S5, T5).</p> <p>Consider developing some form of IRM compliance procedure in response to poor NAP development and implementation performance (S1, S2, S3, T1, T2, T4).</p> <p>Prioritize the needs of the stakeholders that are most closely involved in the OGP process, namely OGP support unit, and Govts. CSO needs can indirectly be addressed through the OGP support unit (S7, T11).</p>	<p>Strategic options</p> <p>Consider streamlining data collection with some of the MOs operating periodically across a series of countries (T8, W3).</p> <p>Consider phasing out the Govt self-assessment reporting, but take into account a possible trade-off concerning data collection for the IRM. Therefore, accompany this by promoting the use of online document depositories by Govts; including in the Articles of Governance - Addendum D (Guidelines for Public Consultation on Country Commitments) a provision asking OGP Govts to ensure access of IRM researchers as observers to consultation during development of NAPs and during implementation of NAPs (W1, W3, W10, T3, T5, T8).</p> <p>Delegate the user objectives to other stakeholders, i.e. the OGP support unit, given this falls outside the sphere of influence of the IRM: to align NAP with the CS advocacy thematic focus; to adapt timing to political context; to match NAP cycle to policy cycle on the national level (W1, W10, T1, T2).</p> <p>Consider hiring a professional recruiter as a permanent staff member to help design the recruitment strategy and identify and deploy a variety of recruitment methods on the national or regional level. It is recommended to do this internally and to not make use of a recruitment agency (W7, W8, T9, T10).</p>
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Annex A - Theory of Change

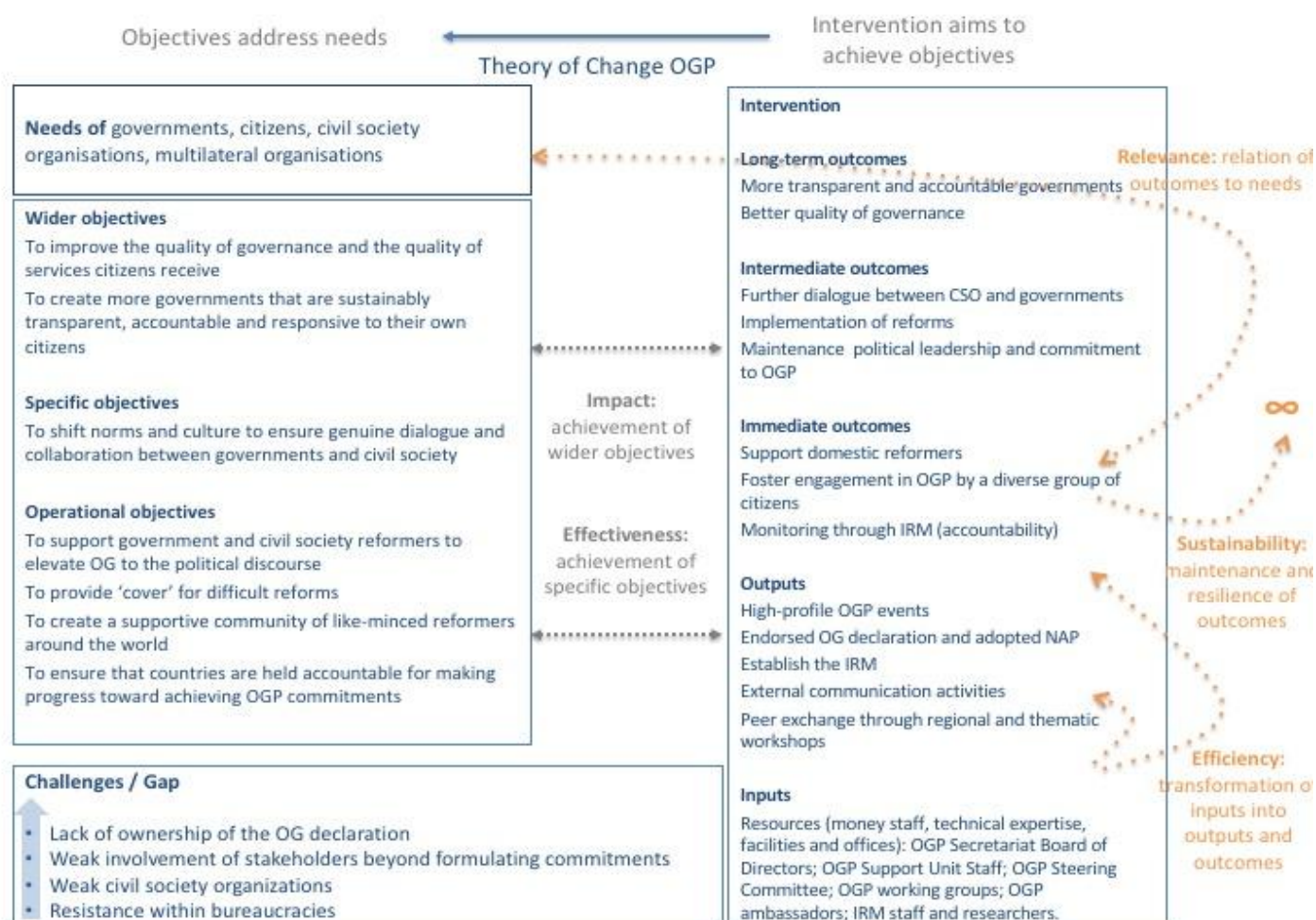


Figure 35 - Theory of Change

Annex B - Exhibit A

Exhibit A: Scope of Work: 2017 IRM review

A. Purpose

OGP's Independent Reporting mechanism is undertaking a review of effectiveness and efficiency following the adoption of OGP's strategic refresh. Blomeyer & Sanz will undertake this review.

Drivers and justification

A review would address the following demands on the IRM's existing model:

- Continued growth of OGP (including with new actors such as parliaments, subnational governments, and new national governments) stretch finite human and resources.
- As the IRM has become more widely used and accepted, the role of the IRM has expanded, as staff of the IRM play a growing role in organization-wide strategy, analysis, and cross-country learning.
- There is an increasing expectation of communications work carried out at the national level.

- Some stakeholders feel that the IRM “lacks teeth” for compelling action by governments in OGP, allowing for open-washing and free-riding. Others feel that the IRM does not adequately address issues of scope in terms of time frame, broader policy context, or civic space.
- While there is significant evidence from independent reviews of the utility of IRM reporting, OGP stakeholders have pointed out areas where the IRM could be strengthened, especially at the national level

B. Scope: Topics addressed

A thorough review will take into consideration the following elements of how the IRM is functioning.

- **Mission alignment**
 - Alignment of current IRM practices with the Articles of Governance
 - Alignment of the IRM Charter of the OGP Articles of Governance with existing knowledge of OGP's challenges and the IRM's role in addressing those challenges
 - Alignment of reporting with OGP's strategic refresh including assessment of mission creep and alignment
 - Alignment of IRM mandate with expectations from stakeholders or IRM audience especially around the twin mandate of accountability and learning
- **Strategic options and scenarios**
 - Consult with stakeholders about the future of the IRM
 - Uses given to the reports
 - Usefulness of reports by different stakeholders
 - Interviews with Steering Committee members on their medium-term vision for the IRM
 - IRM environmental scan and organizational capacities assessment (SWOT analysis)
 - Identify the main strategic alternatives that the IRM has in articulating a 2022 vision. In particular, identify options for emphasis (such as communications, international comparison, national accountability).
 - Present different several scenarios that consider the financial and organizational implication of the different strategic options
 - Develop a definition of an IRM effectiveness framework that it defines its dimensions and alternatives to assess them. Evaluator will identify key indicators of effectiveness.
 - Facilitate the process of strategic decision-making
 - Draft the IRM's strategic directions document
- **Effectiveness for implementing the strategy:**
 - IRM workflow, staffing, and division of labor
 - Suggestions for dealing with quantity of work
 - Suggestions for adapting to growing scope of report coverage
 - Relations, collaboration and workflows between the IRM and the Support Unit
 - Improving consistency and quality of communications to ensure that report messages inform decision-makers at the national level

SPECIFIC TASKS AND DELIVERABLES

The following section presents a detailed description of the tasks foreseen for this review. All deliverable dates and timelines are outlined in Exhibit B: Budget.

Task 1: Kick-off meeting

Upon contract signature the reviewers propose will have a kick-off meeting over Skype with the OGP team responsible for the review to discuss the methodology, define review indicators and discuss the work plan. The reviewers suggest to also use this meeting to schedule an optional field mission to the OGP (task 8) and determine the objectives for such a visit.

Task 2: Drafting research plan

Based on this meeting the reviewers will conduct preliminary desk research and draft a final research plan. The research plan will include a final list of review questions, indicators for measurement, data collection methods and division of tasks between the team members. The aims of desk research are to (among other things): review IRM process design and implementation, and where necessary, reformulate and/or clarify

qualitative aspects of certain points in the ToC to facilitate reviewing effectiveness and efficiency of the IRM; identify all relevant stakeholders; develop contextual analysis; and develop the detailed methodology.

Task 3 / Deliverable 1: Submission research plan

The final research plan will be submitted 2 weeks after the kick-off meeting. Upon approval by the OGP team the reviewers will initiate the review and start collecting data (tasks 4-8). The research plan, to be discussed with the IRM staff, will address the key issues of concern in proposed paper final outline and the scope above.

Task 4: Desk review

Desk research will include reviewing a wide range of internal and external OGP/IRM documents as well as external documentation of similar mechanisms. The aims of desk research are to (among other things): review reported activities, outputs, and outcomes; develop IRM timelines; identify linkages to relevant third party initiatives in order to identify strengths and weaknesses in the IRM as an accountability mechanism; develop initial answers to the review questions and identify issues of particular interest for more in-depth data collection.

Task 5: Interviews and workshops

The Scope of Work calls for targeted interviews with key participants such as: IRM staff; IEP; Steering Committee; OGP Support Unit; government points of contact; national civil society actors; and IRM national researchers. The reviewers understand that this is not an exhaustive list and that additional stakeholders may be identified during the desk review activities.

- Phone: The stakeholder most likely targeted through telephone are members of the IEP, government points of contact, civil society actors and IRM national researchers.
- If possible the reviewers will target IRM staff, Steering Committee and OG Support Unit through face-to-face meetings during the optional field mission.
- In addition, the reviewers will work with IRM staff to carry out a workshop with IEP members to capture additional inputs.

The specific interview questions will be developed before the data collection activities initiate.

The reviewers will undertake various semi-structured interviews with a sample of stakeholders selected on the basis of criteria agreed upon in the research plan. For example, the reviewers suggest to select a sample of countries for stakeholder consultation on the basis of their action plan cycle (i.e. inactive, 1st, 2nd, 3rd round, under development). Proportionally divided the reviewers could target **one** inactive country, **two** 1st round countries, **three** 2nd round countries, **four** 3rd round countries and **one** country under development. If the reviewers target 2-3 stakeholders per country (i.e. IRM researcher, national contact point, civil society actor), this would suggest between 22 and 33 interviews depending on availability. The reviewers note that instead of national OGP, the reviewers could also consider targeting subnational governments. Feedback from these stakeholders could be especially relevant in terms of determining strategic options for the IRM.

The IEP will have a virtual or in-person workshop to discuss principal concerns as a group.

Task 6: Survey

Beyond the sample of stakeholders targeted for interviews, the reviewers propose to use a survey to reach a wider group of relevant IRM users. This survey could for example target all IRM national researchers as well as government points of contact. The survey work would aim to validate the findings derived from desk research and stakeholder consultations on a wider basis, informing us on whether the validity of findings for a small sample can be extrapolated to a wider group. Prior to launching a survey, the evaluator will seek the approval and assistance (if necessary) of the OGP team in order to guarantee full compliance with data protection regulations and key questions.

Task 7: Open consultation

The call for proposals suggests the use of an open comment period for non-targeted stakeholders. Depending on the availability of a consultation platform, the reviewers propose to provide this option when targeting civil society stakeholders in addition to those interviewed. In particular, the lack of a clear conceptual definition of civil society as well as wide range of actors involved on the national level, a public consultation could provide for a more useful tool compared to a targeted survey in order to complement interview findings. Given the short timeframe for this review, the reviewers suggest that the use of this tool is discussed with the OGP team at the start of the review and if possible integrated on the OGP website given this possibly generates significant traffic of civil society actors.

Task 8: Field mission OGP

The reviewers propose to organize a four-day field visit to the OGP headquarters in Washington DC in order to conduct face-to-face interviews with IRM staff, OGP Support Unit and if available Steering Committee and IEP members. This mission is particularly relevant in order to collect feedback on the mission alignment, as well as the review element on effectiveness for implementing the strategy (in particular the workflow review). Apart from face-to-face interviews, this mission can also be used to organize one or more focus groups. The reviewers see these not simply as another way of generating more feedback to be analyzed by our team, but rather the reviewers consider that focus groups are an essential tool in promoting empowerment of OGP stakeholders, foster dialogue between them, and generate understanding of IRM results. At this stage the reviewers would propose to organize internal OGP focus groups, but for the purpose of this mission the reviewers could also organize mixed groups involving representatives of civil society and government contact points.

Task 9-10: Data processing and analysis and interim report drafting

By triangulating findings from desk research, interviews, survey and open consultation, our team will make an initial assessment of the data and draft an interim report.

Task 11 / Deliverable 2 and Task 12: Submission of the draft final report and validation of findings and recommendations

The draft final report will be submitted 13 weeks after the start of the contract. Findings and recommendations from the draft final report will be discussed with the OGP team and if possible validated by a selection of key OGP staff members.

Task 13-15

The reviewers will draft the final report and submit this 16 weeks after the start of the contract. The reviewers propose to have a Skype debriefing session with the OGP where the reviewers will present the final document. On invitation of the OGP, the reviewers are of course willing to present the document in person at the OGP headquarters or to members of the Steering Committee and IEP.

Payments:

The total sum payment for work to be performed will be US\$20,100. Payment shall be made in two installments: 30% (\$6,030) upon signature of the contract and the remaining 70% (\$14,070) upon presentation of the final draft of the report to the International Experts Panel.

Optional Reimbursable expenses:

OGP will reimburse up to \$5,000 for additional workshop and/or outreach activities, as discussed and approved by the IRM team. Acceptable expenses include airfare and per diem, as estimated by the reviewers in Exhibit B. Such expenses will be reimbursed upon submission of receipts with already scheduled payments.

Annex: Notes on method and research questions

The reviewers take note that the ToR requests us to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the IRM following the OGP strategic refresh. Taking into account that a detailed methodology will be provided in the research plan the reviewers can already briefly reflect on the specific elements for review as outlined in the ToR:

- Mission alignment
- Strategic options
- Uses given to the reports
- Usefulness of reports by different stakeholders
- Effectiveness for implementing the strategy When taking the different elements requested for this review under consideration, the reviewers consider three review criteria to be applicable:
 - Relevance;
 - Effectiveness;
 - Efficiency.

Relevance looks at the relationship between the needs and problems in a particular scenario and the objectives of the intervention. In our view, this criterion can address the review elements concerning **mission alignment** and **uses given to the reports**. For example, this criterion will address the following review questions:

1. To what extent are IRM practices aligned with the Articles of Governance? To what extent are the IRM Charter of the OGP Articles of governance still aligned with existing knowledge of OGP's challenges and the IRM's role in addressing those challenges?
2. To what extent do the IRM objectives correspond to the mission creep and alignment in response to the OGP's Strategic Refresh?
3. What use has been given to the IRM reports and to which extent do IRM reports and mandate correspond to the needs and expectations of beneficiaries (i.e. related to the twin mandate of accountability and learning)?

Effectiveness looks at how successful the IRM has been in achieving or progressing towards its objectives. In our view, this criterion can address large part of the review elements relating the **usefulness of reports by different stakeholders** as well as elements under **effectiveness for implementing the strategy**. For example, this criterion could ask the following review questions:

4. To what extent have OGP objectives (i.e. medium-term visions for the IRM) been achieved? To what extent do the observed effects of the IRM correspond to the objectives?
5. To what extent can these effects be credited to the IRM?
6. Which factors contributed to the success or failure of certain objectives to be achieved?
7. Which alternative strategies can be emphasized in order for the IRM to drive for future effectiveness? And what are the organizational implications of alternative strategies?

8. To what extent does the governance model of the IRM support its mandates of accountability, learning, and analysis?
9. How can consistency and quality of IRM communications be enhanced in order to ensure that decision-makers at the national level are better informed?

Finally, efficiency will be addressed. This criterion addresses the review elements under the heading **effectiveness for implementing the strategy** as well as some elements concerning the **usefulness of reports by different stakeholders**. For example, this criterion could ask the following review questions: efficiency looks at the relationship between the resources used by the IRM and the changes

9. To what extents is IRM input (IRM workflow, staffing, division of labour) justified given the effects which have been achieved?
10. To what extent is this input proportionate to the benefits achieved?
11. How can governance arrangements further facilitate the process of strategic decision-making?

Outputs: Framing and Scenarios

One potential framing for answering questions of efficiency are the relative trade-offs between the IRM's existing goals (in practice, if not in letter) of a tradeoff between return on investment between (1) Accountability activities; (2) Learning activities; (3) Analytics.

The proposed review questions above, incorporate large part of the sub-elements provided under each heading in the ToR. The reviewers consider that some of the sub-elements not covered in the above questions rather constitute output from the review itself. The refining of the methodology through the first three tasks will provide OGP with an **IRM effectiveness framework**, including key indicators and judgement criteria. The actual findings of the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency review will further complement this framework, but will also provide **an environmental scan and organizational capacities assessment**. A series of recommendations will inform the OGP audience on **strategic options and scenarios for the future of the IRM**, including **suggestions for dealing with quantity of work and requirements related to adapting the scope of report coverage**.

Annex C - Review indicators

Table 5 – Review indicators and judgement criteria

Review criteria	Review questions	Judgement criteria	Indicator	Data collection tool
Relevance	To what extent are IRM practices aligned with the Articles of Governance? To what extent are the IRM Charter of the OGP Articles of governance still aligned with existing knowledge of OGP's challenges and the IRM's role in addressing those challenges?	IRM practices are aligned with the Articles of Governance IRM charter is aligned with existing knowledge of OGP challenges	IRM team (PD) generally considers IRM practices aligned with the Articles of Governance Steering Committee members generally consider IRM practices to be aligned with the Articles of Governance IEP members consider the IRM Charter to be aligned with existing knowledge of OGP challenges	Interviews

			IRM considers in its evaluation improvements of OGP commitments ¹⁶⁸	
	To what extent do the IRM objectives correspond to the mission creep and alignment in response to the OGP's Strategic Refresh?	IRM objectives correspond to changes in OGP objectives related to the OGP Strategic Refresh	Unit directors consider most IRM objectives aligned with OGP Strategic Refresh Steering Committee members consider most IRM objectives aligned with OGP Strategic Refresh	Interviews
	What use has been given to the IRM reports and to which extent do IRM reports and mandate correspond to the needs and expectations of beneficiaries (i.e. related to the twin mandate of accountability and learning)?	IRM mandate corresponds to the expectations of beneficiaries IRM activities correspond to needs of beneficiaries	IR training increased understanding of OG monitoring (IRs) IR training knowledge was used when monitoring (IRs) IR reports are referenced by beneficiaries (Govts, CSO, IRs or other, i.e. academia) Research methodology aligns with local needs (IRs, CSO, Govts) Quality control is considered complementary to IR's work (IRs) IRM considers relevant OG actions implemented outside the NAPs ¹⁶⁹	Interviews Survey
Effectiveness	To what extent have IRM objectives (i.e. medium-term visions for the IRM) been achieved? To what extent do the observed effects of the IRM mechanism correspond to the objectives?	IRM technical recommendations are adopted by Govts IRM technical recommendations are included in CSO advocacy agendas Govts re-adjusts commitments Govts are incentivized to progress in achieving commitments Country-level dialogue on results takes place	Quality of reports is considered satisfactory (i.e. 4 on a Likert scale 1 to 5) (Govts, CSOs, IEP, IRM staff) Reports are considered non-partisan (i.e. 4 on a Likert scale 1 to 5) (Govts, CSOs, IEP, IRM staff) # of recommendations adopted by Govts # of recommendations included in CSO advocacy agendas Perception of the OGP tolerance level in relation to mistakes/failures/partial results in the implementation of ambitious actions (Govts, CSO, IRs) ¹⁷⁰ CSO and Govt enter into dialogue Perception of quality interaction during dialogue (i.e. 4 on a Likert scale 1 to 5) (Govts, CSOs)	Desk review Survey Interviews Open Consultation
	To what extent can these effects be credited to the IRM mechanism?	IRM has affect on conditions for change	i.e....	Interviews
	Which factors contributed to the success or failure of certain objectives to be achieved?	Open question	i.e....	Interviews Survey
	Which alternative strategies can be emphasized in order for the IRM to drive for future effectiveness? And what are	Open question	i.e. should the IRM have a flexible evaluation mechanism that allows for adjustments of commitment objectives?	

¹⁶⁸ Brazil written input on IRM review expectations

¹⁶⁹ Brazil written input on IRM review expectations

¹⁷⁰ Brazil written input on IRM review expectations

	the organizational implications of alternative strategies?		<p>i.e. should the intermediate balance sheet be a process evaluation instead of a commitment's implementation evaluation?</p> <p>i.e. should the IRM foster CSO-Govt interaction, i.e. by hosting a joint-meeting before the End Term Assessment?</p>	
	How can consistency and quality of IRM communications be enhanced in order to ensure that decision-makers at the national level are better informed?	Open question		<p>Interviews</p> <p>Survey</p>
Efficiency	To what extents is IRM input (IRM workflow, staffing, division of labour) justified given the effects which have been achieved?	Governance arrangements (IEP, C) facilitate efficient workflow	<p>Perception IRM support to IRs (i.e. 4 on a Likert scale 1 to 5) (IRs)</p> <p>IEP members have a clear role (qualitative)</p> <p>Reporting is done in a timely manner</p> <p>Training is provided in a timely manner</p>	<p>Desk review</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Survey</p>
	To what extent is this input proportionate to the benefits achieved?	Open question		<p>Interviews</p> <p>Survey</p>
	How can governance arrangements further facilitate the process of strategic decision-making?	Open question		Interviews

Annex D - Bibliography

Bibliography

Annex E - List of Interviews

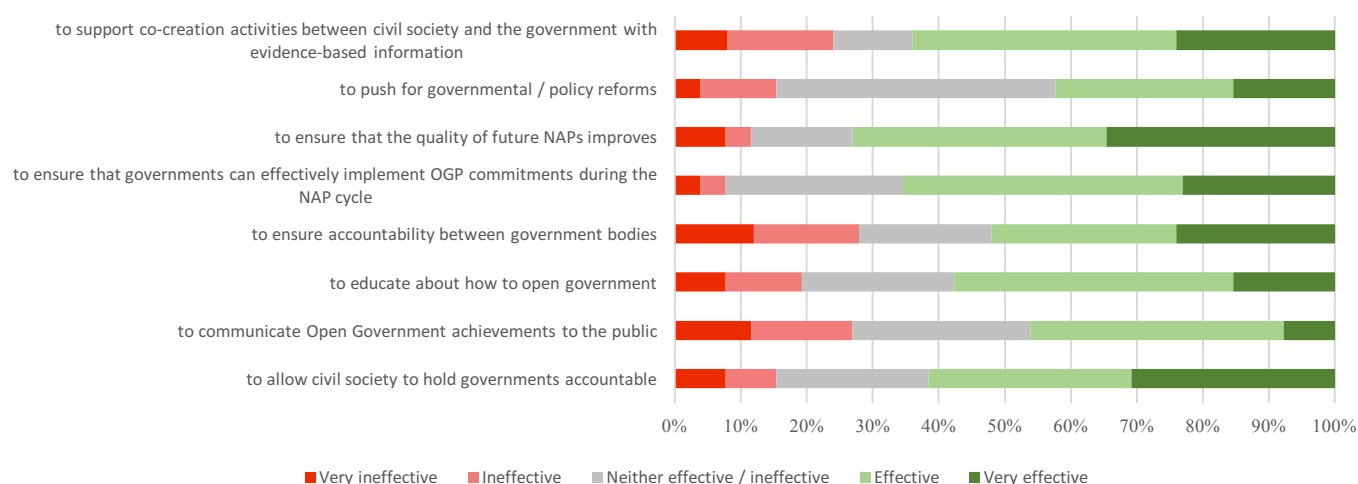
List of interviewees

Annex F - Survey templates

Survey templates

Annex G - Ratings on achieving short and medium objectives

Govt - Q11. Please indicate to which extent the IRM is effective in achieving the following objectives:



CSO - Q11. Please indicate to which extent the IRM is effective in achieving the following objectives:

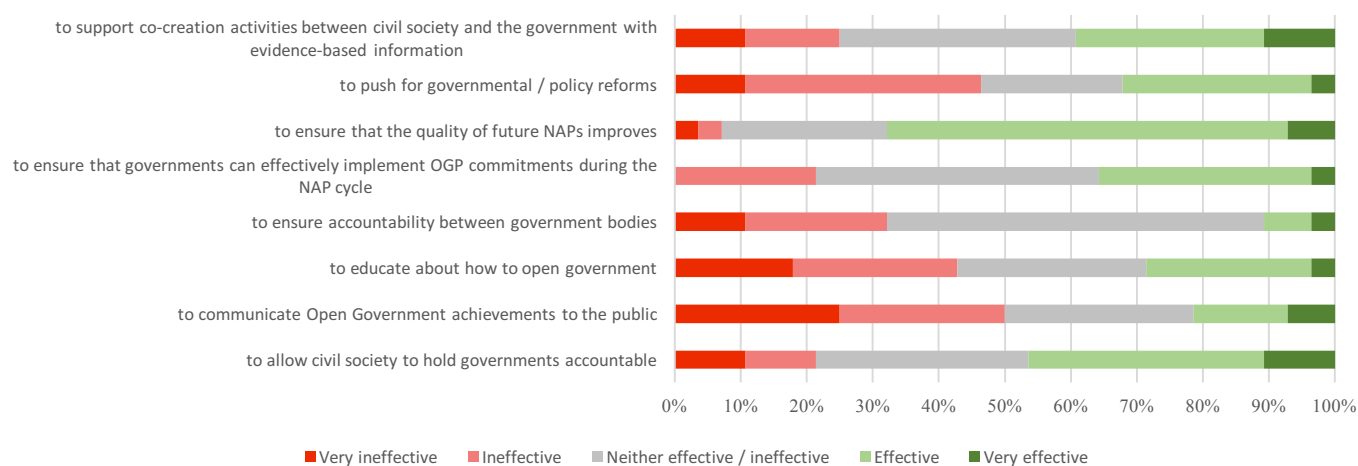
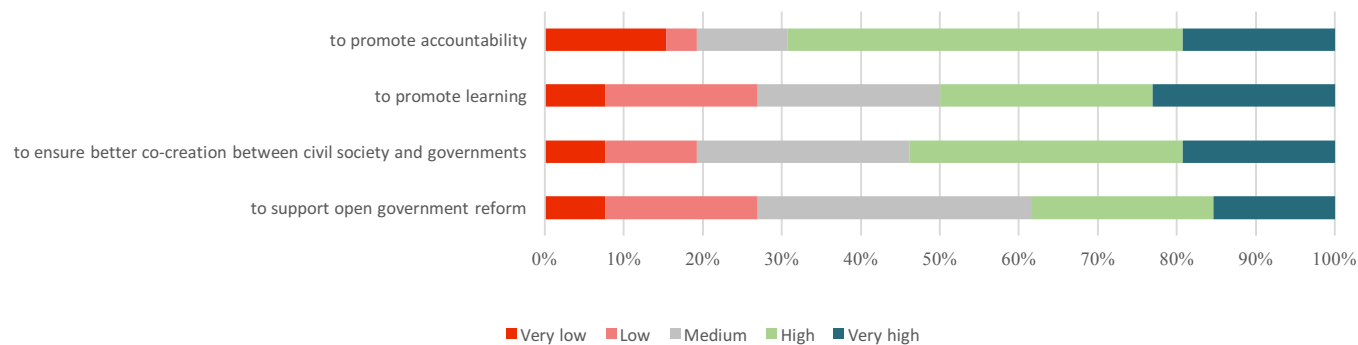


Figure 36 – Govt and CSO rating of achievement short and medium term objectives

Annex H - Ratings on achieving long term objectives

Govts - Q12. Please rate to which extent IRM reports and research contribute to achieving wider objectives of the OGP:



CSO - Q12. Please rate to which extent IRM reports and research contribute to achieving wider objectives of the OGP:

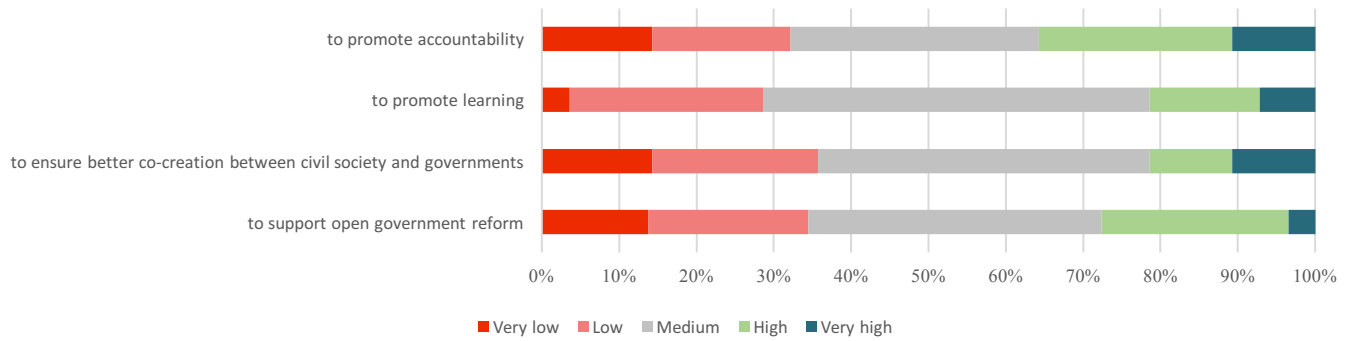


Figure 37 – CSO and Govt rating on IRM contribution to achieving wider objectives

Annex I - Strategic options and scenarios

The following chapter presents a series of strategic options and scenarios on the basis of a set of wider, specific and operational objectives that, in the eyes of the reviewers, capture the expectations from stakeholders involved and affected by the IRM.

Strategy

Within the broader goal of striving for openness in government, the strategic purpose of the IRM is to ensure accountability and learning from governments and civil society organisations participating in the OGP. The idea is that stakeholders involved in the OGP (i.e. OGP support unit, CSOs and Govts) work in the same direction and benefit from complementing each other's efforts. The OGP support unit benefits by allowing it to push for open government reform through the adherence of members to the OGP principles. The CSOs and Govts benefit from this by learning from participating in the OGP and holding each other accountable on their behavior within the OGP framework.

In order to achieve the purpose, a sub-set of wider objectives can be defined that narrow down to medium-long term goals of the IRM. These objectives relate directly to the development and implementation of NAPs as a fundamental part of the OGP process. Even though this is an area over which the IRM has influence, these objectives cannot be achieved by the IRM alone. They also depend on external factors. Those wider objectives are:

- To promote learning from carrying out commitments outlined in NAPs and continuously refine them;
- To promote accountability for the effective carrying out commitments outlined in NAPs.

More specific objectives for the IRM should relate to problems that impede the mechanism from promoting learning and accountability. For example, if stakeholders are not able or willing to use the IRM products in order to track progress, they are unlikely to use these in order to hold each other accountable. Secondly, if stakeholders do not use the IRM products in order to create better NAPs and improve implementation, it is unlikely they learn from carrying out commitments. On this premise, the IRM's specific objectives are:

- To facilitate stakeholders to use IRM products in order to create better NAPs and improve NAP implementation;
- To enable stakeholders to use IRM products to assess progress of OGP Govts in NAP implementation.

Further narrowed down, the specific objectives of the IRM can translate into a series of operational goals for the IRM. These operational goals are short-term and aim to bring the IRM closer to its longer-term objectives. For the purpose of this scenario, the IRM's operational objectives are:

- To produce independent, credible and high quality IRM reports; To provide guidance / training on the use of IRM products to OGP SU, Govts and OGP SC;
- To communicate in an effective way IRM findings and recommendations to OGP SU and Govts.

The management of the IRM can use this set of wider, specific and operational objectives to set a direction for the mechanism, and identify a range of sub-strategies to pursue in order for the IRM to achieve its goals. On this basis, together with the IRM staff, the management agrees on an operational plan against which the resources are deployed and activities carried out.

There are three main groups responsible for the implementation of the IRM tasks, each group with a specific set of tasks, often working towards the same goals. The IRM unit is the main hub in this interaction, closely working with IRM researchers and IEP members, as well as the OGP support unit and Steering Committee.

So what are the activities required to achieve the operational objectives? In broad lines, the operational objectives fall under three activity lines:

1. Research and reporting;
2. Guidance and training;
3. Communication;
4. Management.

1. Research and reporting activity line

The IRM unit plays a key coordinating role and ensures that activities together with the IEP and IRM researchers result in the production of impartial, independent, credible and high quality IRM products. In order to do so, the main tasks would focus on the production of the IRM reports. The IRM unit takes a leading role in most of these tasks (highlighted in green), but shares responsibility with the IEP, IRM researchers and OGP support unit (highlighted in yellow). The following table presents a schematic overview of the different tasks, associated tasks and degree of involvement of IRM stakeholders (Table 6). The column on the far right provides examples of output indicators that could be used in order to measure the activity.

Table 6 - Example output indicators for IRM research and reporting activity

IRM unit	IEP	IRM researcher	OGP support unit	Measurement
Main tasks				
<div>- To select and hire an IRM researcher</div>	<div>- To review conflict of interest short-listed candidates</div>			<div># of candidates per call</div> <div>% of turnover of IRM researcher</div> <div>Expert roster created</div>

- To train an IRM researcher	- To assist on IRM researcher training	- To participate in training		# of IRM researchers in face-to-face training # of IRM researchers receive additional online training
- To support IRM researcher data collection and analysis		- To collect and analyze data - To draft IRM report	- To connect IRM researcher to CSOs and Govts	Interview sample per country # of reports delayed due to data collection # of reports delayed due to report drafting
- To review and publish IRM reports	- To review IRM reports	- To revise IRM reports	- To support on IRM report review with CSOs and Govts	# of reports delayed due to report review # of reports published
Additional tasks				
- To populate the OGP explorer				# of data sets increase
- To write and publish cross-learning papers	- To review cross-learning papers		- To co-write and publish cross-learning papers	# of reports published

2. Guidance and training activity line

Guidance and training activities aim to ensure stakeholders understand how they could use the IRM products (Table 7). The IRM unit could focus its guidance and training on the OGP support unit in order to reach Govt and CSO stakeholders. The goal would be to ensure that the OGP support unit in its documentation for CSOs and Govts incorporates guidance on how these stakeholders can use the IRM products. In addition, the IRM unit could include in its training for IRM researchers a component dealing specifically with this issue. This would allow IRM researchers to better understand the CSO and Govt expectations of IRM reports and how to anticipate their needs. Secondly, this would allow IRM researchers to advocate for the use when presenting to Govts and CSOs at the start of their work the IRM process and sample NAPs with good practices. Finally, guidance and training activities could target the OGP SC with the ultimate goal that the findings and recommendations are clearly reflected in the debates and decision-making of the SC.

Table 7 - Example output indicators for IRM guidance and training activity

IRM unit	IEP	IRM researcher	OGP support unit	Measurement
Main tasks				
- To monitor and map use of IRM products		- To collect evidence on use of IRM products by CSOs and Govts	- To collect evidence on use of IRM products by CSOs and Govts	Overview use of IRM products
- To monitor and map expectations of CSOs, Govts, OGP SU and OGP SC		- To collect expectations from CSOs and Govts on IRM	- To collect expectations from CSOs and Govts on IRM	Overview expectations of IRM

- To support the review of the IRM methodology on a periodical basis	- To review and adjust the IRM methodology on a periodical basis			Periodical update methodology
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3. Communication activity line

Communication activities could be done on two levels, namely on national and on the OGP level. The IRM unit would play largely a monitoring role, the IEP a strategic role, while actual communication activities would take place primarily through the OGP support unit as well as IRM researchers.

Table 8 - Example output indicators for IRM communication activity

IRM unit	IEP	IRM researcher	OGP support unit	Measurement
Main tasks				
- To support on IRM communication strategy	- To draft an IRM communication strategy		- To integrate IRM communication into OGP communication strategy	IRM communication strategy Joint-OGP/IRM communication strategy and action plan
- To extract findings / key messages from IRM reports		- To support on extracting findings / key messages from IRM reports	- To integrate IRM findings and key messages into OGP communication tools (i.e. info-graphics)	One-page summary in IRM report Regional info-graphs Country info-graphs
- To train IRM researchers on introducing IRM findings and recommendations into policy dialogue		- To introduce IRM findings and recommendations into policy dialogue	- To advocate for OGP/IRM process compliance on CSO advocacy agenda	# of IRM researchers trained # of IRM researchers present findings in public event # of CSOs that call of compliance with IRM process at start of the cycle
- To monitor IRM communication efforts				

5. Management

The final activity line relates to the overall human and financial resource management of the IRM unit. The Program Director plays an important role in terms of managing the IRM unit, and dealing with contractual obligations of the IEP. The Research Managers play a key role in the management of the 70+ IRM researchers. The management activities will be discussed in more detail in the scenario section below on the team composition.

It is the purpose of this chapter to discuss different scenarios that would support the framework above. The reviewers use this framework to guide this discussion and reiterate that the strategic plan for the IRM should come from IRM 'roadmap' process.

IRM tasks (the what)

Currently there are two IRM reports, a mid-term progress report and end-of-term report. The former aims to provide learning for the next iteration of the NAP, the latter to provide a final accountability check following the conclusions of each biannual OGP cycle. The IRM unit prepares every year one batch of progress reports for half of the OGP participating countries, and one batch of end-of-term reports for the other half of OGP countries. This means that on full capacity, the IRM could be required to produce 75 reports on a yearly basis, roughly half of these progress reports, the other half end of term reports. The main challenge for the IRM unit is the workload when producing these reports.

There are various strategic options to deal with the workload: 1) maintain the current production but reduce the length of reports and adjust staff capacity for the IRM; 2) reduce the quantity of reports and adjust the timing of the reports.

The recommendations included in this review mainly concerns actions that can be taken on the basis of the current production. However, as also mentioned in the report, structural challenges jeopardise the sustainability of the current production model. As a consequence, the IRM needs to consider reducing the quantity of reports. This can for example be done by merging the two IRM reports for all countries to one major IRM report per NAP cycle

The main challenge with this option is the fact that it alters the potential impact of the IRM on the national level. Producing only an end-of-term report limits the IRM's potential to provide learning for the next iteration of the NAP or provide learning to adjust NAP implementation. This also reduces the relevance of the IRM. Producing only a mid-term report limits understanding ex-post change that occurred as a result of the NAP implementation. The advantage of such an option is that it simplifies the OGP process for CSOs and Govts, mainly due to the fact that they only need to contribute once to data collection from the IRM. From the perspective of the IRM staff and IEP, it allows the team members to work on one report per country and per year, which could save time in the review and editing process. For IRM researchers it would reduce the data collection efforts. It is important to take into account that merging the reports should also go hand-in-hand with reducing the length of the report in order to be able to have efficiency gains.

An option could be that the Govt would only be required to do a mid-term self-assessment and the IRM only an end-of term evaluation. This could start as soon as the implementation of the NAP is concluded and run from July to February. The Govt would make data collected for the mid-term self-assessment available to the IRM researcher and the IRM researcher would make data collected for the end-of-term assessment available for the Govt.

Cost scenarios (the how much)

When looking at other review mechanisms it is important to point out that, as is the case for the IRM, funding for review largely comes from the general budget. OECD reviews can be on request, which would imply the requesting country would cover the review expenses. An important difference between other review mechanisms and the IRM is the fact that the workload for IRM reviews can differ significantly per NAP. This has to do with the amount of commitments for each NAP, which makes future planning of the costs per report very difficult. This in combination with the fact that the IRM budget does not grow linear to the growth in OGP members puts financial strain on the mechanisms.

There are various suggestions on dealing with this issue. The most important option currently at the table is the cap on the commitments which would allow the IRM to better manage its resources. The strategic options are: 1) maintain

the current funding structure where countries make voluntary contributions to the OGP and additional funds are raised from international donors; 2) countries have a minimal fixed fee for participation in the OGP, can make voluntary additional donations and additional funds are raised from international donors (also for countries that cannot pay). The strategic options for the IRM budget could be: 1) maintain the current funding model and enable the IRM to raise additional funding from international donors; 2) link OGP funding for the IRM proportionally to the OGP membership; 3) countries make direct contributions to the IRM.

Table 9 - Funding model for other international review mechanisms

GRECO	MONEYVAL	UNCAC IRM	OECD Anti-Bribery Monitoring
Any State which took part in the elaboration of the enlarged partial agreement, may join by notifying the Secretary General of the CoE. Automatic membership if party to the Criminal or Civil Law Conventions on Corruption. ¹⁷¹	Member States of the CoE which are not members of the FATF, members States which become members of the FATF and request to continue to be evaluated, any State that makes a request in writing to the Secretary General in which it undertakes to participate fully in the evaluation procedure, to comply with its results and to contribute to its costs. ¹⁷² Financed by the Ordinary Budget of the Council of Europe. The mechanisms may receive additional voluntary contributions from evaluated States, States and bodies participating in its meetings, as well as from any other international institution. ¹⁷³	State members of the United Nations Convention against Corruption. ¹⁷⁴ Mechanism is funded by the regular budget of the United Nations. There are voluntary country contributions. ¹⁷⁵	Members of The OECD Anti-Bribery Convention (Also non-OECD Countries). ¹⁷⁶ Each country bears costs related to sharing information with the OECD authority (translation, filling out questionnaire, ...). ¹⁷⁷

Timing scenarios (the when)

It is clear from this review that the OGP and IRM cycle are tightly organized, which is by some considered a strength of the initiative, by others a weakness. For example, Govts frequently mentioned the importance of taking into account election periods, which could interfere with NAP development and implementation. CSOs emphasized the possible incompatibility of the IRM cycle with the national policy cycle, which would have an effect on the “newsworthiness” of IRM findings and as such the usability for CSO advocacy agendas. When comparing with other review mechanisms it shows that overall the use of fixed periodical assessment is common (Table 10). For example, the OECD in its review mechanisms uses also flexible approach for non-members that request a review. This is then based on a tailor-made roadmap for that specific country. It is noticeable that most mechanisms conduct “bite-size” reviews that relate to specific thematic areas. The IRM seems to be the only review mechanism that always conducts a full evaluation of all implementation activities and continuously repeats this during fixed time periods.

¹⁷¹ See: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/greco/about-greco/what-is-greco>, <http://www.coe.int/en/web/greco/faq>.

¹⁷² (Article 2.2 of the Resolution [CM/Res\(2013\)13](#) on the statute of the Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL)) See:

https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016805c77e5

¹⁷³ (Article 54 of the Resolution [CM/Res\(2013\)13](#) on the statute of the Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL)) See:

https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016805c77e5

¹⁷⁴ See: <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/corruption/uncac.html>

¹⁷⁵ (Art. 30 of the Resolution 3/1 of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption) See:

http://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNCAC/Publications/ReviewMechanism-BasicDocuments/Mechanism_for_the_Review_of_Implementation_-_Basic_Documents_-_E.pdf

¹⁷⁶ See: <http://www.oecd.org/daf/anti-bribery/countryreportsontheimplementationoftheoecdanti-briberyconvention.htm>

¹⁷⁷ See: <http://www.oecd.org/daf/anti-bribery/countrymonitoringoftheoecdanti-briberyconvention.htm>

Table 10 – Review cycles used by other international review mechanisms

GRECO	MONEYVAL	UNCAC IRM	OECD Anti-Bribery Monitoring
Evaluation rounds, each covering specific themes. ¹⁷⁸	There are rounds of evaluation and each developed it's own procedure, although they are quite similar. ¹⁷⁹	Evaluation cycles, each covering specific themes. In each one, each State party must undergo review once, and must perform between one and three reviews of other States. ¹⁸⁰	There have been three “phases” with a progressive approach building on the last one (Legislation, application, enforcement, specific needs). ¹⁸¹

Currently the IRM is dependent on the calendar set by the OGP for each participating country. There is no flexibility on deadlines for countries, however the OGP has decided in the past to shift process dates for the movement as a whole. In addition, as part of the OGP process review, individual countries can on the basis of a CS subcommittee decision be shifted from one year to the other. This review shows that indeed this occurs frequently and that also OGP countries struggle with complying with the strict OGP deadlines. The main strategic options for the IRM are: 1) maintain the current status quo, which is linked to the OGP process; 2) adopt a tailor-made timeline for each OGP country. The recommendations provided in this report mostly address the weaknesses and avoid threats with relation to the current status quo. To adopt a flexible approach on the IRM process timeline is generally not supported by interviewed stakeholders. The main concern is the manageability of such a system as well as difficulty to draw comparative lessons. This does not mean that countries sometimes set themselves objectives that span periods of time longer than the two-year NAP cycle. However, the IRM does not have the freedom in such a case to adjust its model to a mid-term review after two years of implementation and an end-of-term evaluation after four years. In short, this review considers that if the IRM wants to tackle structural challenges relating to the timing of its activities, it needs to discuss with the OGP support unit on how to accommodate this. For example, countries could be given a NAP development time-out during election and government formation periods which would imply automatic shifts from odd to even years (or vice-versa).

Team composition (the who)

Various options have been discussed with interviewees concerning review team compositions. At this stage, the IRM relies on national researchers, mostly residents or nationals from OGP countries. For each country, one IRM researcher is appointed. He or she can work alone or in a team, as independent consultant or as part of an organization. Various review team compositions are used by international reviewing mechanisms. A benchmarking exercise shows that the current model used by the IRM stands out from different review mechanisms (Table 11)

Table 11 – Review team composition for other international review mechanisms

GRECO	MONEYVAL	UNCAC IRM	OECD Anti-Bribery Monitoring
Team of experts appointed by GRECO to evaluate a member. ¹⁸²	There is a Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism.	The review of the implementation of the Convention and the Mechanism shall be under the authority of the Conference. Two	In consultation with the country examined, two or three countries are chosen to lead the examination. ¹⁸⁷

¹⁷⁸ See: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/greco/about-greco/how-does-greco-work>

¹⁷⁹ See: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/moneyval/evaluations>

¹⁸⁰ (Article 13 of the Resolution [CM/Res\(2013\)13](#) on the statute of the Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL)) See:

https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016805c77e5

¹⁸¹ See: <http://www.oecd.org/daf/anti-bribery/countrymonitoringoftheoecdanti-briberyconvention.htm>

¹⁸² See: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/greco/fag>.

¹⁸⁷ See: <http://www.oecd.org/daf/anti-bribery/countrymonitoringoftheoecdanti-briberyconvention.htm>

Each member also provides GRECO with a list of experts available for taking part in GRECO's evaluations. ¹⁸³	The evaluation team normally comprised one member of the MONEYVAL Secretariat and four evaluators: one legal evaluator, one law enforcement evaluator and two financial evaluators. ¹⁸⁴	peers review each State party - one from the same regional group. ¹⁸⁵ Each State party is to nominate up to 15 governmental experts for the review process. Periodic training courses for experts are organized. States parties shall endeavor to provide information necessary on their background for the secretariat to compile that list and keep it up to date. ¹⁸⁶	The countries acting as lead examiners choose the experts who take part in the preparation of the preliminary report. ¹⁸⁸
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Firstly, IRM researchers are independent experts who are not affiliated to entities under review. The appointment of the evaluators is strictly the responsibility of the IRM. Entities under review, such as Govts, are only involved in pointing to possible conflicts of interest of the candidate evaluators. The advantage of this system is the assurance that evaluators are independent. Other review mechanisms ensure independence through close involvement of the review authority secretariat as well as a participatory process (i.e. including other Govts) for validating review findings. The downside of such a process compared to the IRM is that it is time consuming and risks watering down evaluation findings, especially when the final report needs to be adopted by the group as a whole. The upside of the process is that final output is based on a consensus, which can strengthen ownership by the authority under review. In addition, the process itself contributes to in-depth (cross-) learning from the review findings.

A second area in which the IRM stands out is the use of one-the-ground evaluators. Other review mechanisms tend to use reviewers that visit the country under review. The upside of having a reviewer permanently on the ground is that it facilitates data collection and allows the reviewer to monitor the authority under review on a constant basis. The reviewer can also strengthen ownership of the review findings due to his or her availability to conduct outreach and communication activities also after the end of the review period. The downside of this model is the risk of losing objectivity in the assessment due to the close interaction of the reviewer with its surrounding.

The third area in which the IRM stands out is the predominant use of individual evaluators as opposed to teams of reviewers. An IRM researcher is expected to have a general knowledge and understanding of issues relating to transparency, accountability and citizen participation. In addition, he or she is expected to be able to collect and analyze data, draft research reports and communicate findings. Other international review mechanisms use teams of reviewers. The upside of using teams is the effect it has on the workload. In addition, team members can complement each other's work which can improve the quality of the work overall (i.e. in the case of MONEYVAL). Another added value of using a team of evaluators is the possibility to bring practical knowledge to the table by including members from different professional background, i.e. (former) civil servants, researchers of activists.

To sum up, the IRM is facing various challenges in relation to the review team composition. The main challenge is the diversity in quality delivered by the IRM researchers as well as the rotation of staff. The following table (Table 12) outlines several strengths and weaknesses of the current model used by the IRM. It is recommended to explore strategic options available to use strengths, overcome weaknesses, take advantage of opportunities and avoid threats.

Table 12 - IRM review model strengths and weaknesses

Strengths	Weaknesses
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¹⁸³ See: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/greco/faq> .

¹⁸⁴ See: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/moneyval/evaluations>

¹⁸⁵ <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/corruption/implementation-review-mechanism.html>

¹⁸⁶ See: <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/corruption/implementation-review-mechanism.html>

¹⁸⁸ See: <http://www.oecd.org/daf/anti-bribery/countrymonitoringoftheoecdanti-briberyconvention.htm>

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. IRM researchers are independent (selected against conflict of interest criteria) 2. IRM researchers are present on the ground in OGP countries 3. IRM researcher closely collaborate with IRM staff and IEP 4. IRM researchers take up most of the review work 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. IRM researchers vary in educational and professional background (uneven quality) 2. Quality of delivered products differs between IRM researchers 3. IRM researchers can rotate frequently and are not easily replaced 4. IRM researchers cannot easily estimate workload 5. Management of group of IRM researchers is time consuming
Opportunities <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. IRM researchers on the ground can ensure ownership 2. IRM researchers can ensure sustainable communication post review period 3. IRM researcher's independence ensure credibility 4. Other international review mechanisms operate in OGP countries 5. IRM unit and IEP can provide necessary assistance 	Threats <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. IRM researchers work alone and do not have full capacity 2. IRM researcher leaves and takes along knowledge 3. IRM researcher can be captured by local context 4. IRM researchers are not exposed to best practices outside OGP country

The IRM has three strategic options: 1) maintain the current model; 2) adopt a different review model; 3) adopt a mixed model. The recommendations provided in this report mostly address the weaknesses and avoid threats identified in this table with relation to the current model. A different model could mean the IRM would have to abandon the use of IRM reviewers on the ground and adopt a model based on review teams visiting an OGP country. Interview feedback collected for this review suggests there is little support for this from within the OGP/IRM and among OGP country stakeholders. The main obstacles identified for this are the costs of managing these teams and the risk of not being able to do in-depth analysis through ad hoc country visits. Interview feedback from representatives from other international review mechanisms also emphasises that their models require significant secretarial support, both in data collection as well as analysis and report drafting. A mixed model could imply the general use of individual / teams of IRM researchers on the ground and for ad hoc / emergency situations the deployment of a team of international reviewers. This would allow the IRM to counter scenarios in which IRM researchers on the ground leave during the NAP cycle. A team of international reviewers could consist of former IRM researchers ("IRM alumni") selected by the IEP. Criteria (i.e. IRM alumni from the region) could be established in order to select such a team and funds that were originally foreseen for the IRM researcher on the ground could be diverted to a covering an ad hoc mission to the OGP country. In terms of tasks for such a team, lessons could be learned from other review mechanisms (Table 13).

Table 13 – Review team tasks for other international review mechanisms

GRECO	MONEYVAL	UNCAC IRM	OECD Anti-Bribery Monitoring
Questionnaire, on-site visits, meetings, discussions, documents submitted by members. Evaluated States are given the opportunity to comment. ¹⁸⁹	On-site visit provides opportunity to meet with relevant governmental agencies, regulators, law enforcement and prosecution agencies, as well as with representatives of the private sector and non-governmental organizations. A detailed mutual evaluation questionnaire is sent to the evaluated State, who is required to provide comprehensive replies the questionnaire, relevant legal and regulatory provisions and related statistics. Progress	The review process shall be conducted in a non-political progressive and comprehensive approach (degree of development and tradition considered). There is a desk review based on responses to self-assessment checklist, a constructive dialogue, information from other organizations is also considered. A country visit is	Different methods were adopted for the different "Phases". There are elements of self and mutual evaluation. Overall, questionnaires, on-site visits, formal and informal meetings with stakeholders from the private and public sector. ¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ <http://www.coe.int/en/web/greco/about-greco/how-does-greco-work>

¹⁹² <http://www.oecd.org/daf/anti-bribery/countrymonitoringoftheoecdanti-briberyconvention.htm>

	reports describing new measures were required from States. ¹⁹⁰	possible if agreed upon and the same goes for meetings with officials. ¹⁹¹	
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¹⁹⁰ See: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/moneyval/evaluations>

¹⁹¹ (Part B of the Resolution 3/1 of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption)

See: http://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNCAC/Publications/ReviewMechanism-BasicDocuments/Mechanism_for_the_Review_of_Implementation_-_Basic_Documents_-_E.pdf