

Responding to feedback on OGP’s three-year plan

After sharing OGP’s draft three-year plan (3YP) publicly, the Support Unit/IRM team began a period of public consultation. We received feedback from members of the OGP community, OGP strategic partners and had bilateral discussions with all but two of our Steering Committee members. This feedback has been extremely helpful in sharpening the 3YP and significant updates have now been made to the document.

This note summarizes the feedback we heard and the adjustments we made to the plan in response. While the comments were varied, this note groups them in three broad categories.

Feedback area #1

OGP needs to continue providing demonstrable value to all members across all aspects of open government, beyond the “focus” areas.

We heard from some stakeholders that the prospect of “priority” areas raises concerns that other areas won’t receive the support or attention they need to succeed. The entire partnership deserves to get value from its participation in OGP, and must be able to demonstrate that value in order to maintain political support.

Beyond clarifying the support and attention that “non-priority” areas would receive, this feedback included a push to think more broadly about what contributes to open government and how that leads to results—including beyond the OGP action planning cycle. We heard inputs on the re-stated theory of change; requests to capture and showcase reforms that happen outside of action plans; encouragement to value both incremental as well as “big bang” reforms; and more. The role of civil society was also thought to be underplayed in some parts of the draft.

This feedback was not always consistent, as different partners brought different perspectives. Some were worried that OGP would become too much of a campaigning organization, pushing its own agenda on member governments; others explicitly requested more campaigning, including on critical issues like civic space protections. Some felt the table on universal services and advanced services was too much insider talk; others felt it practically laid out the different options for OGP members.

How we responded

Some of these inputs were incorporated in fairly straightforward ways, such as by clarifying the “universal” vs. “advanced” services and by being clear that it is the combination of government and civil society reformers that makes OGP work, not one or the other in isolation. The plan now gives greater attention to the ways we’ll improve universal services going forward, including by making the IRM more

user-friendly and by improving the knowledge/learning resources we provide. The updated theory of change also makes clear the necessity for a strong baseline of support from OGP to its members, so that any commitment, country, policy area or global advocacy opportunity can be advanced whether or not it is a 2020 focus area for the Support Unit.

Balancing contradictory inputs is a more difficult task. Within the Steering Committee in particular there are differing views on whether OGP should be more vocal and visible in taking a stand on certain issues, or whether that would be counter-productive to the reformers particularly within governments who are engaged in the messy day to day work of open government. This tension warrants further discussion, in particular as OGP approaches its 10th anniversary in 2021 when the next global Summit is likely to be held. For now the 3YP maintains that OGP has an important advocacy role to play on the global stage, but leaves open the possibility for different tactics and approaches for example on whether or not OGP should follow the *Break the Roles* campaign with a campaign on civic space.

The updated 3YP also expands on the importance of OGP being a strong knowledge and learning hub, including for open government reforms that take place outside of OGP action plans. This is captured in the plans for knowledge and learning embedded across the 3YP, and in specific 2020 activities. It also shows up in a clear intent to look again at OGP's rules of the game, and ensure that the the structures of OGP are fit for purpose as the partnership approaches the 10th anniversary.

Feedback area #2

The plan is not clear enough on what it means for something to be a “focus” (formerly “priority”) area, including how those areas are selected.

The draft 3YP introduced the idea of priority areas under our strategic approaches, including priority countries, priority commitments, and priority themes. While a few stakeholders disagreed with the specific priorities mentioned, we heard overall support for need to prioritize and focus in order to ensure the partnership creates lasting results. There was general agreement that the Support Unit in particular needs to prioritize its staff time and resources over the coming three years.

The questions we heard most often were: how were the priority areas selected, and what does it mean to be a priority? How often will priorities shift? And what does it mean not to be a priority, particularly in the context of priority countries? Along with these requests for clarity, we also heard suggestions for how to better target and improve our planned support in these areas.

There were also many suggestions of specific activities the Support Unit, IRM, Steering Committee or other partners could undertake to help advance the Collective Results.

How we responded

We took several steps in this updated plan to respond to this feedback. First, we've reframed the “priority” areas as “focus” areas—an acknowledgement that the country stakeholders in a diverse partnership may each have their own priorities that are all equally valuable, but that these areas are



meant to provide focus to the work the Support Unit and IRM in particular to advance the partnership as a whole. Second, we clarified the criteria and process we use for determining the focus areas that can best benefit from our support and fleshed these out in more detail under each of the strategic approach section. We also clarified that the list of focus areas will be reviewed periodically, and that new opportunities may emerge that should be considered priorities even if they are not on the current list. Third, we outlined under each strategic approach in more detail what universal support will be given to all commitments, countries and themes.

Finally, we've included further detail on the specific activities planned to provide support to each focus area. While this support will evolve as opportunities shift, we hope the details included in the plan will help the OGP community to understand what to expect from the Support Unit in each area, so that we can work better together.

Feedback area #3

But can we get it done?

The final set of feedback we heard was around the execution of this plan. What are the details of how the Support Unit/IRM will get things done? Do we have resources to match the ambitions? Are the programmatic ambitions too high given our capacity—or conversely, too low to achieve the ultimate impacts described?

Embedded in much of this feedback is the issue of accountability: what exactly can members of the partnership expect of the Support Unit/IRM team, and what will we be held accountable for?

How we responded

The updated 3YP includes specific 2020 activities under each Strategic Approach, to be carried out by different parts of the partnership. This replaced the previous “roles and responsibilities” section under each strategic approach which was felt to be duplicative and too vague. These activities in turn drive the 2020 budget which has also been added to the plan. The combination of specific activities and budget should be the basis for an ongoing discussion around implementation of the 3YP, including with the community, the Steering Committee and within the Support Unit and IRM.

To understand better the overall health of the partnership, a new activity has been introduced called the OGP Vital Signs project that will bring together evidence and data from multiple sources to understand how the partnership is performing and make recommendations on where improvements can be made.

In addition, this plan attempts to clarify roles better, specifying where the Support Unit/IRM focuses its time and resources, versus areas where other strategic partners play a lead or primary role. This is contained within an expanded theory of change section.

In terms of resources, the medium-term budget also outlines where additional fund-raising is needed.

