

# IRM Refresh Approved by the OGP Steering Committee (February 2020)

At the OGP Steering Committee Meeting in Berlin, Germany, Denisse Miranda, Chief of the IRM, presented the IRM Refresh proposal, which had undergone extensive consultations in 2019.

The proposed changes are intended to make the IRM more **simple, fit for purpose, results-oriented, and prioritized**:

1. Products are shorter, more dynamic with a simplified review process and workflow.
2. Reports are around key information needs from IRM users.
3. Analysis is focused on results, outcomes, and factors of change during implementation.
4. IRM will continue to collect data on all commitments, but products will focus on deeper analysis at the reform or policy level.

The proposal builds on three key moments when flexible IRM products would add most value:

1. **Co-creation brief** - brings in lessons from previous action plans, serves a learning purpose, and informs co-creation planning and design (delivered three months before co-creation starts).
2. **Action plan review** - a quick technical review of the quality of the action plan and overall co-creation process. It identifies promising policy areas or reforms to inform implementation support (delivered 3-4 months after action plan is submitted).
3. **Results report** - an overall implementation assessment that focuses on policy-level results and how changes happen. It also checks compliance with OGP rules and informs accountability and longer term learning (delivered four months after the action plan ends).

The next steps in the IRM Refresh include:

- **March - December 2020:** IRM will roll out a dissemination strategy to communicate changes.
- **March - June 2020:** IRM will develop guidance and templates for new IRM approach.
- IRM Refresh changes will be implemented immediately.

Lastly, it was highlighted that 2019 action plan reviews are already underway with the current model. A transition plan has been put in place to alleviate the burden of reporting while the IRM refresh changes are implemented. This includes simplified templates and fast track strategies in the IRM's internal workflow.

Some highlights from the SC interventions include:

- The shift toward deeper analysis on results was highlighted as a key gain from the proposal.
- The balance between learning and accountability was welcomed, given that the IRM not only has ample amounts of data, but also tools to provide direction and strategic insights to the wider Partnership at the domestic and international levels.



- While the IRM cannot predict government transitions, having ongoing monitoring could be really helpful.
- Results reports need to be seen as strong, independent reviews to prevent being perceived as too critical or not understood, which could lead to rejecting OGP as an opportunity for high-level political engagement. A neutral approach is necessary when reporting on country context.
- Communications and guidance products will be key so that internal processes are understood by everyone, especially to “outsiders”.
- The IRM was called to continue engaging the SC and reporting on progress of the IRM refresh to the group, including on development of any “Rules of the Game” needed with the C&S Subcommittee.

**Decision:** The Steering Committee endorsed the IRM Refresh by consensus.

See the endorsed IRM Refresh proposal below.



# IRM Refresh

## Final Proposal for Steering Committee Endorsement

25 February 2020

### Summary

Over the past year the IRM gathered feedback from OGP stakeholders to design a new IRM approach. The IRM Refresh aims to increase uptake and impact of IRM data, findings and recommendations in OGP.

The main issues the IRM Refresh needed to address were timely delivery of IRM findings, uptake of IRM recommendations, outreach to share IRM findings and efficiency of the mechanism.

This proposal leverages foundational elements of the IRM such as its credibility, its independence, and its evidence-driven methodology, overseen by the International Experts Panel (IEP).

The IRM Refresh builds on the feedback received through the following IRM Refresh consultations in 2019:

- **March:** IEP/IRM meeting in Berlin
- **May:** OGP Global Summit in Ottawa
  - two sessions: one with IRM researchers and one with government POCs
- **July:** IRM Refresh Survey
- **September:** IRM Refresh session at Steering Committee Governance and Leadership retreat in Buenos Aires
- **October:** IRM Refresh Design Workshop in Brussels
- **October:** IRM session at OGP staff retreat
- **December:** Proposal Design workshop with IRM staff and IEP members
- **December/ January 2020:** 1:1 calls with Steering Committee members

The changes would take effect moving forward for new action plans submitted in 2020. This means the first products of the refreshed IRM would be delivered in 2021 for 2020-2022 action plans.

### Proposed renewed IRM approach

The revised IRM approach is a simplified, fit for purpose, results oriented and prioritized version of the IRM. In addition, an overarching change proposed is focusing more on the substance of action plans instead of the form. Although the IRM was identified as an essential source of evidence and a resource throughout the entire OGP process, the feedback received clearly pointed to three key moments where the IRM adds the most value:

1. During co-creation, particularly at the preparation stage before development of the action plan starts

2. Upon action plan submission
3. At the end of the action plan cycle

The proposed approach will break down IRM products to better align the way the IRM engages in the OGP process and provide input to the information needs and purpose it is serving. This will increase the IRM's ability to add value, increase the use of its findings and become more user centered.

The table below summarizes need and purpose of the IRM at each of these three moments, as suggested by consultation feedback:

**Table 1. Stakeholder information needs and purpose**

Moment in action plan cycle	Information Need	Purpose
Before co creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recommendations on the co creation process</li> <li>● Recommendations on action plan, including commitment design</li> <li>● Lessons from previous action plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improve the co creation process</li> <li>- Improve the quality and ambition of commitments</li> <li>- Inform in-country learning and reflection on open government journey</li> </ul>
Action plan submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Assessment of the quality of the action plan/commitments</li> <li>● Identification of ambitious or promising reforms/policy areas or commitments</li> <li>● Reflections on the shortcomings of the action plan/potential improvements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Identify promising commitments or policy areas. May include, clusters of commitments that together could be transformative</li> <li>-Provide recommendations on promising policy areas/commitments/reforms to inform implementation</li> <li>- Inform country support strategies, and OGP partners providing support during implementation</li> <li>- (Secondary) inform the IRM's internal research strategy/plan for each action plan</li> </ul>
End of action plan cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Status of commitments/action plan completion</li> <li>● Results from implementation - at the policy, reform or commitment level</li> <li>● Compliance with OGP rules</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Produce evidence-based analysis on the changes or results from promising reforms/policy areas or commitments in an action plan</li> <li>- Inform learning on how results/change happens and what are the enablers or constraints in implementing promising reforms</li> <li>- Enable and inform accountability in the Partnership</li> </ul>

## Outline of the proposed IRM approach in practice:

### 1. IRM provides input to inform co-creation

**Timing:** Three months before the year of co creation. *Example: the IRM will provide OGP members with recommendations for co creation and backdrop of open government opportunities in the country between October - December of 2020 for action plans scheduled to be co-created in 2021.*

**Audience:** Governments/Multi-stakeholder forums. Secondary users include OGP country support team or OGP partners providing support during development of action plans.

**Content:**

- Provides an overview of open government opportunities in the country context.
- Provides recommendations on co creation and design of action plans.
- Maintains the IRM's neutral role and content is informed by:
  - Previously reviewed IRM findings and looks at the journey of action plans/commitments/ or policy areas across AP cycles.
  - Information that already exists by credible third-party sources.
  - Insights from country support visits to the country and country support staff feedback.
  - Other OGP knowledge products and learning tools such as the co-creation toolkit and Global Report.
  - IRM researchers input, where needed.

**Product:** two-pager brief

**Quality control process:**

- Led by and approval from IRM senior level staff.
- Written by IRM staff
- International Expert Panel (IEP) members consulted as needed for geographic/thematic expertise.

**How is this different to the current IRM approach?**

- Currently, the IRM does not have a product intended to inform the co creation process at this early stage. The IRM currently assumes that the findings from Design Reports will inform the next co creation process. However, Design Reports cover many elements of a single action plan attempting to serve both learning and compliance purposes, they average 50-70 pages and timing is still an issue since the production takes at least six months.
- The proposed co-creation brief is a two-pager, production time is estimated to be of 5 days (based on similar briefs prepared by IRM staff on an ad-hoc basis), brings in lessons from previous action plans and serves a learning purpose.

## 2. The IRM offers a review of the action plan

**Timing:** within four months of action plan submission. *Example: the IRM will deliver a technical review of an action plan submitted in December 2020 by April 2021.*

**Audience:** Governments/Multi-stakeholder forums. Secondary users include, OGP country support team or OGP partners providing implementation support.

### **Content:**

- Main narrative to focus on:
  - IRM technical assessment on the design of commitments, the thematic or policy focus of action plan, highlight if it carries over commitments/reforms from previous action plans, indicate how commitments were included in the action plan (government led, civil society proposals, co-created), and overall quality of the action plan development process.
  - Highlight which are the promising policy areas/reforms or commitments that are most likely to lead to meaningful change. This is informed by the analysis of the elements in design variables.
  - What could be improved in the action plan? What are the shortcomings of the action plan?
  - Next steps - the IRM recommendations or insights to inform implementation and address findings from the technical review.
- While the IRM will continue to collect data on all commitments, the in-depth analysis on results will focus on promising policy areas/reforms or commitments identified in this initial review.
  - Note on key variables: The IRM will continue to assess the quality of action plans based on current design variables (verifiability, relevance and potential impact). However, consultation feedback suggested that “Relevance” and “Potential Impact” should be simplified and the IRM should offer better guidance on both. The IEP and IRM will work on clarifying how IRM measures these two variables during the first two months (March and April 2020) of the implementation phase of the IRM Refresh.

**Product:** Seven-page (max) synthesis paper

### **Quality control process:**

- IRM staff writes, sends to IRM researcher (from the regional or sub regional pool) for feedback or additional input.
- Draft is sent to the IEP for review (may also include a broader pool of expert reviewers).
- IRM staff reconciles external expert reviewer feedback and IRM researcher feedback.

- IRM staff will engage MSF (or country specific stakeholders) and government POC for feedback and validation before the paper is finalized.

### **How is this different to the current IRM approach?**

- Production of current IRM Design Reports is dependent on individual IRM researchers and begins after the final deadline for action plan submission in December. The IRM review will begin to be drafted upon real-time action plan submission, centralized on IRM staff and in a synthesis paper format. This approach will ensure delivery within 4 months of the action plan presentation, instead of nearly a year into the implementation of the action plan.
- Current IRM Design Reports include details on OGP process compliance and an assessment of the design of each commitment. The proposed IRM review will look at action plan design at the policy or reform level. This means several commitments may add up to one reform or public policy. The IRM review will synthesize quality of action plan development and focus on aspects that can inform implementation, which is the immediate need for IRM findings and recommendations according to user feedback.

### **3. The IRM presents a report on action plan results**

**Timing:** research/writing process starts at 1yr action plan implementation mark, so it is delivered within 3-4 months after action plan ends. *Example: For 2020-2022 action plans, research/writing would start on July 30, 2021 and be delivered by December 2022.*

**Audience:** country stakeholder use and OGP community. Secondary users include the Analytics and Insights team in OGP or external researchers conducting broader open government research.

### **Content:**

- On implementation:
  - Overview of commitment completion - completion will be verified by monitoring and assessing evidence available on government websites, repositories or any other sources during implementation.
  - Focus on results from implementation - primarily looking at the promising policy/reforms areas or commitments identified in the AP Review. The IRM will also look into any other results from completed commitments that signal significant change and results.
  - Research questions and analysis will look into how the change happened and the enabling factors or constraints to achieve results. This will contribute to better understanding of changes in the culture of government and the incremental changes that may be adding up to bigger reforms and results over time in OGP action plans.
- Reports on compliance with OGP Participation and Co-creation standards throughout the OGP action plan cycle.

- An annex will include previous IRM products or the IRM will consider an online option to see all products as one whole IRM review of the action plan.

**Product:** IRM assessment report

**Quality control process:**

- IRM will maintain a pool of “IRM Researchers”. The pool of researchers will allow the IRM to have a smaller, more manageable group of researchers (consultants) with regional, sub regional or thematic expertise. The IRM will vet and certify them to be ready to review or conduct research as needed.
- IRM staff will develop a research plan and engage country stakeholders to verify findings on an ongoing basis during implementation.
- Drafting and evidence verification will start at the end of the first year of implementation.
- IRM staff will coordinate with OGP Country Support team and country stakeholders check-in moments during implementation to validate preliminary findings, in-person or virtually. Note: during the transition time to the proposed IRM approach, this check-in moment will be conducted in-person where opportunity allows and incrementally implement it across all countries.
- Draft is sent to the IEP for review (may also include a broader pool of expert reviewers).
- IRM staff will engage the MSF (or country specific stakeholders) and government POC for feedback on the final draft before it is finalized.

**How is this different to the current IRM approach?**

- Current IRM Implementation reports focus primarily on activities and completion. Some elements of results are discussed but not in depth. Much of the content is a descriptive narrative of implementation commitment by commitment. The proposed results report will build on completion, but shift focus to results at the policy or reform level.
- The shift from form to substance will also mean that the IRM will no longer highlight commitments that may look good in promise, like “Star” commitments. Instead the IRM will highlight results.
- Current IRM implementation reports begin production once the two-year implementation period ends. The production of this result report will begin at the one-year mark and the IRM will open the research process to stakeholder input on an ongoing basis. The delivery time will be reduced from 12 months after the action plan ends to three/four months after the action plan ends.
- Instead of having IRM Researchers for each country, The new IRM Researcher pool model will reduce delays and complexity of researcher recruitment and retainment, increase cross-country analysis , safeguard the credibility of the mechanism by reducing the number of individuals representing the IRM and mitigate risks of a researcher developing a conflict of interest in their own country’s process.



## Overview of proposed key changes

Current Practice	Proposed Change with IRM Refresh
<b>Frequency of IRM input</b>	
Two standard and formal IRM moments per action plan cycle. After the fact.	Input during key moments of the action plan cycle, flexible and closer to real time engagement.
<b>Variety of IRM Products</b>	
One product - a report	Three different products: a co creation recommendations brief, an action plan review (synthesis paper) and a results report.
<b>Timing of IRM Products</b>	
<p>Design report - Six to Eight months after the deadline for action plan submission. For action plans that are delivered before the Dec 31, deadline delivery could be up to 12 months after submission.</p> <p>Implementation report - Six to eight months after end of action plan.</p>	<p>Co creation brief - three months before co creation begins.</p> <p>AP review - within three months of real-time AP submission.</p> <p>Results report - ongoing monitoring/validation/writing as AP implementation happens, finalized three to four months after the end of action plan.</p>
<b>Type of information IRM reports on</b>	
<p>Focus on form, compliance, design and implementation activities.</p> <p>Reports on what happens in one action plan.</p>	<p>Focus on substance, how change happens and results.</p> <p>More intentional in looking at policy/reforms or commitments across action plans.</p>
<b>Approach to research process and how IRM engages with stakeholders</b>	
<p>Formal and constrained to one particular moment of pre-publication review.</p> <p>Led by individual country researchers.</p>	<p>Open, ongoing and collaborative.</p> <p>Led by IRM staff with collaboration from a pool of IRM researchers.</p>

## Roll-out and timelines

Pending Steering Committee endorsement, the roll-out and implementation of the IRM Refresh will take place between March and December 2020.

**March - May 2020:** IEP and IRM will develop guidance material including an updated procedures manual with clarified definitions for IRM key variables and indicators, templates and guidance for country stakeholders.

**April - December 2020:** outreach and dissemination of the IRM Refresh change implications. This includes training, workshops and communications such as blogs, webinars, FAQs and 1:1 guidance.

In addition, during **the course of April and October 2020**, the IRM will work with the Criteria and Standards Sub-committee to make necessary revisions to the IRM Charter. This would be streamlined with broader updates to the Articles of Governance that will be presented for Steering Committee approval.

Finally, transition to the new IRM approach will be gradual. Action plans submitted in 2019-2021 will still be reviewed with the current IRM approach, delivering a Design Report and an Implementation Report. The changes would take effect for action plans submitted in 2020. This means **the first products of the refreshed IRM would be delivered in 2021 for 2020-2022 action plans.**

## Articulation with OGP's three-year implementation plan

The IRM is a key component of OGP's universal platform. The renewed approach will improve opportunities for coordination across teams and programs in OGP such as:

- **Collection and production of data that informs and enables learning when country level reflection is needed.** IRM data, insights and recommendations can directly help improve country processes but can also be used by other teams to produce learning products, research, stories and country strategies to provide direct support.
- **Stronger and more strategic contributions from the IRM team to regional and country discussions.** This is particularly useful to inform focus countries and commitments, support strategies.
- **Effective opportunities to align the data the IRM collects in its research process with broader research agendas.** Focusing data collection and analysis on the results of implementation and how change happens within a given commitment/policy/or will support a better understanding of how open government reforms impact citizens' lives or how open government reforms are changing the culture of government. Shifting the balance of attention toward implementation more than process.
- **Assurance of an independent voice to enable accountability and ensure the Partnership's credibility.** Producing evidence-based analysis with more emphasis on results rather than design of action plans will shift attention and visibility from OGP commitments that may look good in promise, to OGP commitments that actually delivered results and meaningful change. This will also provide the IRM with rich insights that can inform strategic decision making on the whole of the Partnership. For example, the OGP

Local Strategy envisages a periodic IRM in-depth analysis on the progress of select themes and action plan processes across Local members.

- **Provide guidance and monitoring practices that can be replicated by emerging programs in OGP such as Local.** The IRM will not provide qualitative assessments of the co-creation process or commitments of local action plans but will comment on whether sufficient evidence is provided for the progress reflected in the local monitoring reports. The IRM will provide guidance materials and suggest templates for locals to conduct their monitoring.