Researcher Guidance: Early Results Indicator

This document assists IRM researchers in assessing commitments under the Early Results indicator. It supplements guidance in Section IV on methodology in IRM Results Reports. Any additional questions or clarifications can be raised with IRM staff.

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1. Early Results Indicator Overview

The IRM introduced the new Early Results indicator in August 2023 following a long period of consultations and internal review. The indicator measures early results achieved with implementation of a commitment and replaces the previous "Did it Open Government?" indicator. The IRM will assess all commitments whose implementation started in 2021 and onwards under the indicator. The indicator consists of a three tier scale:
- No Notable Results: reflects little or no positive results (including the very rare commitments where negative results occurred).
- Moderate Results: indicates positive results or meaningful changes in contrast with the starting point.
- Significant Results: reflects the deepest level of results, indicating significant positive results with clear expectations for these changes to be sustainable in time

Details on the tier definitions, guidance, examples, and recommended approach are provided below. To begin with it is important to note that:
- There are two main elements to consider when assessing commitments under the Early Results indicator i) the depth of the results that occurred due to the implementation of the open government commitment and ii) the promise of sustainability of the meaningful changes.
- The indicator applies to commitments with a clear open government lens. This includes commitments that aim to advance open government directly or those that use open government approaches (tools, mechanisms, etc.) to advance a policy area. Commitments that are not relevant to open government in design or implementation are coded as 'No Notable Results.'
- Assessment continues to be based on research, interviews, and evidence collected from stakeholders.
- Assessment should consider the expected aim of the commitment prior to its implementation, the specific country context in which the commitment was implemented, the specific policy area and the changes reported.
- Assessment can include unintended results towards the commitment's objective. For example, it can include activities that advanced the commitment's aim but were not explicitly cited as milestones in the initial action plan.
- Analysis underlying the indicator should aid stakeholders in the OGP process to identify areas for improvement and refine their open government approaches to better serve the public.

2. Tier Definitions & Guidance

No Notable Results

Definition
According to the evidence collected (through desk research, interviews, etc.), the implementation of the open government commitment led to little or no positive results. After assessing the activities carried forward during the period of implementation and its outcomes (if any), the IRM did not find meaningful changes towards: - improving practices, policies or institutions governing a policy area or within the public sector,   - enhancing the enabling environment to build trust between citizens and the state.

Guidance
This tier includes: - Commitments where no early results were achieved, such as commitments where implementation was not started.   - Commitments that did not have an open government lens (i.e. relevant to transparency, civic participation, or public accountability in government) through either their policy objective or mechanism to advance the policy objective.   - Commitments where few early results were achieved, such as commitments where the depth of change was limited and there is no evidence that the reform will be sustained over time.

Examples
- The government increases the number of school buildings and teachers to increase access to education. The government does not use open government (transparency, civic participation, or public accountability) as a mechanism to achieve this aim.   - An institution publishes datasets as per a preexisting proactive transparency law. It is a continuing practice to update existing datasets as in previous years. There is no clarity on the quality of or need for the datasets being published so it is not clear that implementation has resulted in a notable result or meaningful change in practice.

- The government commits to collecting and publishing information on beneficial ownership of companies. These activities were not started, instead only a few informational sessions on beneficial ownership information for civil society were held.

- The government passes legislation that does not 'change the game' as compared to before implementation. For example, a law is passed that unifies or clarifies the legal framework for whistleblower protection, but it does not establish new dimensions of openness or recourse.

Moderate Results

Definition
According to the evidence collected (through desk research, interviews, etc.) the implementation of the open government commitment led to positive results. After assessing the activities carried forward during the period of implementation and its outcomes, the IRM found meaningful changes towards: ● improving practices, policies or institutions governing a policy area or within the public sector, or ● enhancing the enabling environment to build trust between citizens and the state.

Guidance
This tier includes commitments where there is evidence of positive results, but the threshold for 'significant results' was not reached. Such commitments may have had a significant depth of change, but lack evidence that the reform will be sustained in time. Alternatively, commitments in this tier may have not led to a substantial depth of change in the short term, but there is clear evidence of their sustainability and how it could lead to significant change in the long run.

Examples
● A public institution without a track record of engaging with civil society or citizens (like the Defense Ministry or the Police) carried out unprecedented participation exercises with a clear indication that input informed planning, policy, decisions or actions. However, these were one-off without the expectation of sustainability of the practice over time.

- The government develops and creates a new online public participation platform. Even though there is evidence some institutions use the platform on an ad hoc basis, institutions do not use the platform systematically.

- The government introduces a compulsory training module for public officials on open government that shows a change in internal practices to ensure public integrity (e.g. citizen participation, accountability, transparency). While maybe a positive change, it would be hard to assess this as a 'game changer' without measurement around the changes in practice following the training.

- Pilot projects were executed to test out possible changes in practice or policy, however, the sustainability of the project is not secure and would depend on the perceived success of the pilot project (by government or other stakeholders). For example, a pilot project that successfully worked with a handful of local governments to carry out participatory budgeting (with clear effects in these specific localities), but without a clear indication on the expectations to systematically continue/expand the program.

Significant Results

Definition
According to the evidence collected (through desk research, interviews, etc.) the implementation of the open government commitment led to significant positive results.   After assessing the activities carried forward during the period of implementation and its outcomes, the IRM found meaningful changes towards: ● improving practices, policies or institutions governing a policy area or within the public sector, or   ● enhancing the enabling environment to build trust between citizens and the state.   Significant positive results show clear expectations for these changes (as defined above) will be sustainable in time.

Guidance
This tier includes commitments that achieved significant positive results that transformed 'business as usual'. Evidence must indicate that implementation significantly changed practices, policies, or institutions (e.g. the way an influential sector is organized and carries out its work)

or had significant effects on society, the economy, or the enabling environment. Evidence must also indicate that the reform is expected to be sustained in time.

Examples
- The government passes a new whistleblower law that establishes mechanisms that would be a significant departure from current practice. While the mechanisms might not have yet been put in place, the law clearly states the significant change expected through implementation of the law, which is legally binding.   - There is new and/or expanded scope of data systematically published on a beneficial ownership register. Evidence indicates that this expanded publication will significantly contribute to the commitment's aim to combat corruption (like detecting irregularities and cases of possible corruption).   - A public participation platform is created and established and is being used by institutions systematically for public consultations. Evidence indicates that it is used for learning, adapting and course correcting policy or government action when needed.   - The signature or ratification of international or regional treaties with clear implementation plans that would substantially change a specific policy or practices around a given policy. For example, ratification of the Escazu Agreement with a clear plan to adapt national legislation to achieve transparency, participation, accountability in the protection of environmental defenders.   - The government used robust existing public participation practices to draft and pass a law. The law achieves a highly important national aim (i.e. addressing climate change or sexual violence) that is not related to open government.

3. Recommended Assessment Steps

Use the following steps to code all commitments and complete Annex 1 in the Results Report template. Commitments that achieved 'significant results' should be included in Section II "Implementation and Early Results" for in-depth analysis. If no commitments achieved 'significant results' then commitments with 'moderate results' may be considered for inclusion in this section. Use the guidance provided under Section II to inform your written analysis.

Step 1. Does the commitment have an open government lens as coded in the Action Plan Review? If not, was an open government lens introduced in the course of implementation?
- If the commitment has an open government lens proceed to step 2. As a reminder, commitments with an open government lens seek to make a policy area, institution, or decision-making process more transparent, participatory, or accountable to the public. This may be reflected in the commitment's policy objective or in the mechanisms used to advance the policy objective.
- Commitments that do not have an open government lens are coded as 'No Notable Results.' Such commitments lack a connection to open government in either their policy objective or mechanisms through which the objective is advanced.

Note: A commitment's relevance to open government may change during the course of implementation. For example, implementers may introduce open government elements - not initially stated in the action plan - during implementation. Alternatively, implementers may fail to carry out the activities that made a commitment relevant to open government. In these cases, the initial coding for 'open government lens' in the Action Plan Review does not retroactively change. However, this does influence coding under the Early Results indicator, as only commitments with a connection to open government as implemented can be coded as 'Moderate Results' or 'Significant Results.'

Step 2. Is there evidence of early results and, if so, what are the depth of changes?
- Commitments with little or no results, such as those where implementation was not started, can be coded as 'No Notable Results.'
    - Commitments are considered to have little results when the changes from implementation are limited in depth and there is no evidence that the reform will be sustained in time.
- Commitments with notable early results may be coded as 'moderate' or 'significant' results.
    - Commitments with 'moderate results' have evidence of positive results, but the threshold for 'significant results' was not reached.
        - Such commitments may have had a significant depth of change, but lack evidence that the reform will be sustained in time.

- - - Alternatively, commitments in this tier may not have led to substantial depth of change in the short term, but there is clear evidence of their sustainability and how it could lead to significant change in the long run.
    - Commitments with 'significant' results must have achieved meaningful changes that were 'game changing' and transformed 'business as usual.' 'Game changing' reforms change policies, practices or institutions (e.g. the way an institution or sector is organized and carries out its work) or have significant effects on society, the economy, or the environment (through improved transparency, participation, or accountability).

Note: "Changes towards enhancing the enabling environment to build trust between citizens and the state" includes changes in behavior, relationships and incentives, both individually and in groups. These changes could contribute to the analysis of sustainability, such as shifts in incentives, processes or behaviors that don't amount to formal institutionalization but are significant enough to change the course of how things get done.

Step 3. Does the evidence indicate that the reform will likely be sustained over time?
- Commitments with 'significant results' must have evidence that the results are 'game changing' and that the reform will be sustained in time.
    - Evidence of sustainability can include formal institutionalization of the reform through changes in laws, regulations, decrees, institutions, etc.
    - Evidence of sustainability can also include informal institutionalization of the reform through changes in incentives, relationships, behavior, processes, etc.
    - Either way, the evidence should indicate that the changes will be sustained after the implementation period ends. Such evidence could include a legal mandate that makes the changes binding, or a pattern of behavior that suggests a permanent shift in how things are done.

Table 1: Simplified Overview

The following table is a simplified overview of the indicators. It shows how the two main elements of the analysis are: the extent to which the implementation of the commitment led to positive results (or the depth of the result) and the expectation of changes to be sustained over time.

	No Notable Results	**Moderate Results**	**Significant Results**
Depth of results	**No or little improvement** in practices, policies or institutions governing a policy area or within the public sector, and/or enhancing enabling environment	**An improvement** in practices, policies or institutions governing a policy area or within the public sector, and/or enhancing enabling environment	**A significant improvement** in practices, policies or institutions governing a policy area or within the public sector, and/or enhancing enabling environment
Sustainability of changes	There **could** be evidence that changes will be sustained in time	There **could** be evidence that changes will be sustained in time	There **must** be evidence that changes will be sustained in time

Table 2: Key Shifts From the Previous Indicator

Key shift	From: "Did it Open Government"	To: Early Results
Broadening the focus	Limited definition, focused on changes in terms of open government (like more transparency, participation or accountability).	Comprehensive definition, measuring whether open government commitments are achieving their goal (in terms of the policy area, government practice or in the enabling environment) and how open government approaches contribute to these goals.
Going beyond milestones	Focusing specifically on changes from the implementation of milestones.	Can include analysis of unintended results, even from activities that advanced the commitment's objective but were not explicitly cited as milestones in the action plan.
Focusing on outcomes	Predominance of descriptive analysis, often focused on outputs and activities.	Focused on understanding the implication of the outputs and value created by them.
Integrated analysis across reports	Independent from other report indicators (siloed analysis).	Explicit connection between indicators across reports for a holistic assessment of commitments from design to implementation. Reflects the indicator of Potential for Results for a more comprehensive analysis of expectations versus actual results.
Indicator measurement scale	Five tier scale, with the two edges seldom used (worsen, outstanding).	Three tiered scale, simple to use, flexible to apply to many complex and varied topic areas, and therefore helps ensure consistent data.