

IRM Quality Assurance Framework

Summary of IEP Session 1: Consistency of the application of the IRM method

September 25, 2023

In attendance

- **IEP members:** Mary Francoli, Cesar Nicandro Cruz, Maha Jweied, Rocio Moreno and Snjezana Bokulic
- **IRM Staff:** Tinatin Ninua, Gustavo Pérez Ara, Andreas Pavlou, Mathew Tramonti and Justin Temple

Summary

The International Experts Panel (IEP) oversees the Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) to safeguard its independence and to ensure consistent application of the IRM methodology and quality research standards in its products. In 2023, the IEP approved the Quality Assurance Framework, an essential tool for ensuring that the IRM assessments meet the highest standards of quality, due diligence, research and controls to safeguard its objectivity, independence, and credibility.

The IEP held the first quality assurance session on September 25, 2023. During the two-hour online session, IEP members examined a sample of 16 commitments from IRM Action Plan Reviews and Results Reports published in 2022 and 2023 to ascertain the consistency of IRM method's application across regions. The discussion led to several key conclusions and recommendations that aim to further enhance the quality and consistency of IRM assessments.

1. Consistency in Methodology Application

Based on the sample analyzed, IEP found general consistency in the application of the established IRM reporting method across reports. The IRM analysis, its conclusions and indicator measurements are grounded on evidence and are generally well argued. Nonetheless, assessing commitments with differing scopes, themes, baselines, and country contexts using a common methodology could sometimes be challenging. The IRM should:

- Continue to carry-out measures to mitigate potential subjectivity in the IRM analysis through its quality control process, which includes multiple internal reviews from IRM Staff and external reviews from regional and thematic experts for each assessment published.
- Clarify the assessment's scope (limited to evaluating the policy objectives the commitment aims to achieve) and offer more insights into the broader national context and its impact on the commitments, when needed.

2. Maintaining Balance of Stakeholder Views and Due Diligence

The IEP found that in some cases, IRM assessments did not clearly indicate that efforts have been made to obtain views of civil society organizations (CSOs). The IEP emphasized the need to maintain a balance of voices and transparently communicate when information is lacking. The IRM engages with government stakeholders as well as CSOs during the research process to

support their analysis and conclusions. To this end, the IEP recommended reinforcing the IRM's policy of clearly documenting and citing information requests made to CSOs, especially in cases where outreach efforts do not yield responses.

3. Enhancing Depth of Analysis

The IEP found that, while the structure of the reports is the same for all countries, the level of attention and depth of each section can vary from report to report. For example, some provided more nuance on the context and aim of the commitment, while others focused on the analysis of results or potential for results. To ensure consistency and quality across reports, the IRM can work on providing uniformity to the analysis in all sections. This includes consistency in the level of depth and specificity in each report section across regions.

In light of these observations, the IEP concluded that there is no need to alter the current research practices and methodology, which is consistently applied and yields well-sustained and sound analysis. Nevertheless, the IEP recommended that the IRM team prioritize additional training and guidance for its researchers in the following areas:

1. Documenting and properly citing stakeholder interviews to support the report analysis.
2. Ensuring uniformity in the depth of analysis across various sections of the report.

Moving forward

During its monthly meetings the IEP will monitor the integration of these recommendations within the IRM work plan. Additionally, the next IEP Quality Assurance Session is scheduled to take place in December 2023, where the IEP will discuss the quality and consistency of external expert reviews of IRM products.