Open Government Partnership

Criteria and Standards Subcommittee (C&S) Quarterly Call

July 8, 9:00-10:30 AM ET

Meeting Minutes

Attendees:
Government of Estonia (Marten Lauri, Adviser, Government Office)
Government of Kenya (Viola Ochola, Director, Access to Information, Office of the Ombudsman)
Civil Society: Natalia Carfi, Executive Director, Open Data Charter; Zuki Kota, OGP Civil Society Steering Committee Member)
OGP Support Unit: Paul Maassen, Deputy CEO; Jose Maria Marin, Director of Country Support; Tinatin Ninua, Director of Accountability & Learning; Rosario Pavese, Country Support Regions Director; Jaime Mercado, Global Programs & Governance Lead; Andreas Pavlou, Independent Reporting Mechanism Lead; Rowan Sockwell, Global Programs & Partnerships Officer

Apologies: Government of Armenia; Government of Norway; Anabel Cruz, Founding Director, ICD Uruguay; Doug Rutzen, President & CEO, ICNL

1. OGP Eligibility Update (30 min)

Context: Each year, the Support Unit (SU) reviews all countries' eligibility to participate in OGP in line with criteria established by the OGP Steering Committee (SC). The review is completed by June/July, once all data sources are updated, and identifies both non-member countries that are eligible to join OGP and current members that no longer meet OGP's minimum eligibility threshold. Two of the four core eligibility metrics—Fiscal Transparency and Asset Disclosure—do not provide data for all countries. As a result, the SU relies on potentially outdated data in some cases to determine eligibility. Where necessary, the SU can conduct ad hoc reviews to assess countries whose data may be outdated.

Discussion:

a. The subcommittee discussed strategies to encourage eligible non-members to join OGP, including bilateral outreach by SC government members. Countries currently eligible to join OGP are: Austria, Belgium, Bhutan, Denmark, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Luxembourg, Namibia, Nepal, Pakistan, Poland, Slovenia, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United States.
b. Members also suggested tailoring outreach around countries' policy priorities. For example, the SC and SU could position OGP as the go-to platform to advance democratic digital governance and AI priorities for governments with an interest in those areas.

c. The subcommittee also discussed concerns that eleven OGP Participating Countries currently do not meet OGP's Core Eligibility Criteria, the Values Check, or both. Members noted that one SC member falls into this category, which potentially minimizes the importance of meeting OGP's eligibility standards, particularly given that SC members are responsible for leading the Partnership by example. The SU will develop options for how these cases may be addressed going forward.

2. Sunsetting the Eligibility Review Policy (30 min)

Context: The Eligibility Review is a protocol to address instances in which OGP members fail to meet OGP's Core Eligibility criteria for two or more consecutive years. Countries under Eligibility Review are listed on the OGP website and are removed once they again meet the minimum core eligibility threshold. Eligibility Review does not itself lead to inactivity recommendations but may inform a C&S recommendation for inactivity when a country is also under Procedural Review.

The SU presented a proposal to sunset the Eligibility Review for three main reasons: 1. Eligibility Review does not form part of the new action framework, approved by the SC earlier this year; 2. The policy does not carry any meaningful consequences; and 3. The review policy does not work in practice as intended.

Discussion:

a. Members discussed whether the Eligibility Review should be sunset as a standalone policy or considered as part of a broader review of OGP's governance framework. Some noted that amending policies individually could create confusion for Participating Countries.
b. Some members also flagged the underlying asymmetry: a country cannot join OGP without meeting the minimum eligibility threshold, yet current members can fall below it and stay. Sunsetting the Eligibility Review without a replacement would leave that gap unaddressed. Some members favored strengthening or replacing the mechanism rather than dropping it. The C&S C0-Leads (the Government of Estonia and Zuki Kota) suggested allowing time for written feedback from all members on the proposal before coming to a decision on the path forward.
c. The Support Unit clarified that the proposal is narrow in scope, aimed at streamlining a policy that no longer functions as designed, and is no longer included in the new Action Framework, rather than at reducing accountability. Members also weighed a comprehensive review of the eligibility criteria and Values Check, framing the question around whether such a review would strengthen accountability in practice or restate standards OGP has traditionally struggled to enforce. Members noted that a review of that scale would draw on limited time and resources, which would have to be prioritized against the Partnership's other commitments.

Next Steps:

1. The SU will recirculate the proposal to sunset the Eligibility Review for written feedback from the subcommittee.
2. The SU will work with the C&S Co-Leads to revise the proposal based on members' feedback before deciding on a way forward.

3. Procedural Review (15 min)

Context and Discussion: The new Action Framework approved by the SC this year requires an update in the Co-creation and Participation Standards and introduces a revised approach to Procedural Review. The SU presented the proposed process for implementation.

The Action Framework Task Force will finalize the updated Participation and Co-Creation Standards as well as the Activity and Participation Review Policy before sharing them with the C&S Subcommittee for consideration. The task force is in the process of laying out the specific timeline for next steps.

4. Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) Review Update (15 min)

Context and Discussion:

a. Following the adoption of OGP's new Action Framework, the Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) has been updating its reporting and assessment model. Over the past six months, the IRM has developed an options paper and conducted targeted consultations during May, June, and July.

   Over the coming months, the IRM will prepare a final proposal for a revised reporting approach that better meets the Partnership's needs. The proposal will be presented to the C&S Subcommittee in September/October for discussion and endorsement.

b. Consultations have focused on three broad questions: 1. How, on top of its core accountability function, the IRM could incorporate learning to better support countries in improving reforms; 2. Whether the IRM should assess only action plan commitments or also broader open government reforms; 3. The appropriate depth, format, and timing of IRM assessments.

Next Steps: 1. The IRM will complete stakeholder consultations on the proposed changes; 2. The IRM will present its proposal to the C&S Subcommittee for endorsement in September/October; 3. Following C&S endorsement, the proposal will be submitted to the full SC for approval.