

IRM Procedures Manual



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Introduction

About the IRM

The Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) is a key means by which all stakeholders can track Open Government Partnership (OGP) progress in participating countries. The IRM produces biannual independent progress reports for each country participating in OGP. The progress reports assess governments on the development and implementation of OGP action plans and progress in fulfilling open government principles and make technical recommendations for improvements. These reports are intended to stimulate dialogue and promote accountability between member governments and citizens.

In order to maintain its status as an independent institution, the IRM reports to different institutions and individuals for the different elements of its mandate. The IRM works under the close supervision of the Independent Experts Panel (IEP), a group of technical experts who design the IRM method, guide the IRM process and provide quality control throughout. The Criteria and Standards Subcommittee of the OGP Steering Committee provides guidance on OGP requirements that form the basis of the IRM assessment method and, when appropriate, provides guidance on IRM governance. The IRM Program Director reports directly to the Executive Director of the OGP for line management issues. The IRM coordinates closely with the Support Unit to promote the findings of individual IRM reports and crosscutting research.

About the IRM Procedures Manual

This procedures manual aims to combine previously existing relevant documents on OGP's IRM into one place. By doing this, we hope to assure OGP stakeholders that the IRM works to assess national performance on action plans in an impartial, fact-based manner. The procedures manual also serves as a standing reference for IRM researchers and national stakeholders who would wish to refer to the IRM's internal processes and standards for producing reports.

To this end, the manual is divided into three parts. The first section, "Structure and Guiding Principles," deals with crosscutting issues such as IRM governance, values, and overall programmatic goals. The second section, "IRM Process," focuses on the national level primarily. It illuminates the process for selecting the IRM researcher, assessment, and stakeholder engagement, as well as review and quality control. It also records existing outreach efforts on past IRM reports. The third and final section contains guidance on coding each of the IRM variables and on each area assessed for each OGP country, according to the IRM mandate. Annexes contain the relevant governance documents such as the IRM Charter, selected portions of the OGP Articles of Governance, and the Open Government Declaration.

This manual will be updated periodically as necessary changes are made and will be updated online.

Section 1: IRM Foundations

I. IRM values

Goals

1. IRM reports aim to encourage national dialogue on transparency, participation, and accountability with the long-term goal of opening government in all OGP countries.
2. The IRM seeks to model openness in its operations, including through timely release of its data and reports as well as proactive publication of its procedures.
3. The IRM seeks to promote open government and strengthen OGP by adding credibility and fact-based analysis to OGP activities.

Research standards

1. **Coverage and balance:** IRM reports aim to identify both the strengths and weaknesses in each OGP participating country's performance.
2. **Independence:** In all cases, the IRM strives to maintain independence of mind and independence of appearance. Where conflicts of interest arise, steps to make those conflicts public and to resolve those conflicts shall be undertaken. Researchers and IRM staff will work to ensure that the IRM conflict of interest policy is applied consistently.
3. **Fairness and context:** Because the IRM aims to improve national dialogue, it is necessarily tailored to the unique case of each country and its action plan. At the same time, the IRM will seek to apply the method in a consistent, fair way that encourages the OGP "race to the top." The IRM strives to balance these two, sometimes competing, objectives.
4. **Assumptions:** The IRM researchers assume neither honesty nor dishonesty of interviewees when conducting investigations.
5. **Inclusiveness:** The IRM will continually improve its outreach to interested stakeholders, both governmental and non-governmental. The IRM will assume a pluralistic, broad definition of stakeholders to include interested and affected, organized and unorganized parties.
6. **Impartiality:** The IRM works to advance the goals of open government, but provides needed criticism where those goals are not being met. This means that where the OGP or an OGP-participating country is not meeting its goals in a particular country or across countries, the IRM reserves the right to describe those shortcomings in a constructive, public fashion.
7. **Non-interference:** As part of joining OGP, a voluntary, multi-stakeholder initiative, each country agrees to undergo an independent review of its progress. The IRM, in carrying out this review, maintains the final say on all contents of IRM research products.
8. **Openness:** The IRM seeks to model openness in its actions. This includes making stakeholder meetings as open as possible and providing opportunities to comment on reports to all stakeholders.

Outputs

1. **Ranking and eligibility:** The IRM will not engage in ranking countries or in working to determine aid eligibility.
2. **Tone:** The IRM seeks to communicate its process and findings in an impartial, evidence-based, simple-to-use format.
3. **Findings:** The IRM aims, through its research, to provide concrete, actionable recommendations that may be undertaken by OGP governments in its research.
4. **Stakeholder feedback:** The IRM will strive to meet the highest standards of researcher responsibility and ethics by ensuring that all interview subjects are aware of the IRM process and findings from evaluation.

II. Context and reliability

The IRM reports aim to encourage national dialogue on open government with the long-term goal of opening government in all OGP countries. Because the IRM aims to improve national dialogue, it is necessarily tailored to the unique case of each country and its action plan. At the same time, the IRM will seek to apply the method in a consistent, fair method that encourages the OGP “race to the top.” The IRM strives to balance these two, sometimes competing, objectives.

Unique country context

Each OGP action plan is made in a country with unique economic, cultural, and political circumstances. The IRM seeks to support the maximum possible ambition and completion of concrete, relevant, and meaningful commitments. IRM reports aim to put commitments into a broader national policy context to inform readers and OGP stakeholders while still respecting the unilateral nature of the OGP action plan.

Because of each country’s unique circumstance, the IRM, through its deep, ongoing engagement with national researchers, will ensure that commitments have direct relevance to the OGP action plan submitted as part of the OGP process. With that in mind, the IRM evaluates the degree of each commitment’s completion with direct reference to action plan text.

At the same time, the IRM is charged with evaluating the relevance of the OGP action plan generally to the state of major open government issues (as defined by the OGP Values and Open Government Declaration). In that sense, for both a national and an international audience, the IRM provides context about where the action plan—as a whole and by its components—fits within ongoing national political debate. The IRM also gathers stakeholder views on the relevance of the action plan to that larger community debate.

Reliability

There are limits to the degree to which reports may be country-specific. For instance, OGP espouses a “race-to-the-top,” which requires countries to learn from one another and to make some comparisons between how they have faced similar challenges. Similarly, while OGP is not a standards-setting organization, OGP does have standard procedural requirements and definitions agreed upon by all countries upon entry to OGP.

Between countries

To be fair and to enhance learning, the IRM works to apply uniformly many of its indicators across countries. While this is not a “standard-setting” exercise per se, the IRM does seek to create uniform data and learning across each country.

Between researchers

While each researcher brings his/her own experience, the IRM aims to have the same result regardless of researcher in terms of data coding. For that reason, the IRM staff work closely with researchers to assure that indicators and data are produced in as uniform a way as possible while still maintaining the importance of providing feedback useful to the national context.

III. Authorship and branding

IRM reports and all derivative products (such as crosscutting analysis or data releases) are the result of a collaborative process between IRM researchers, the IRM program staff, and the IEP. Because the IRM's primary goal is to stimulate national-level dialogue, the IRM privileges authorship by the IRM national researcher by displaying the author's name and institutional affiliation (where appropriate) on the front of national-level IRM publications. At the same time, as the IRM is an institutional brand that must maintain standards across the brand, the IRM staff and the IEP reserve the ability to edit reports to ensure consistency in tone, audience, form, and content.

The following standards apply to authorship of IRM reports:

- **Assume a default of researcher expertise.** The IRM staff and the IEP defer to the expertise of the IRM researcher when evaluating an IRM product.
- **Transparency in editing.** In cases where it seems that the IRM national researcher has deviated from the IRM standards in terms of tone, audience, form, or content, the IRM staff will, through the quality control process, make all efforts to come to an amenable presentation and interpretation of the facts to meet both the author's requirements and the IRM's standards across reports.
- **Anonymity and credit.** Unless the author wishes otherwise, the author's (or authors') name(s) will be prominently displayed on the front of the report. Where the author is associated with an institution or where the author is an institution, the institution's name and logo will be displayed prominently with that of the IRM. The author may opt out of direct attribution, may opt out of use of an institutional logo, or may choose to engage with the IRM in a personal capacity rather than as a representative of their respective institution if such engagements are allowable within the researcher's respective institution. Both institutional affiliation and personal authorship are the assumed and encouraged default positions of the IRM publication.
- **Removal of IRM researchers.** In cases where the IRM researcher is unable to meet the terms of their research contract, the IRM Program Director reserves the right to finish the IRM reports. Credit for authorship will be determined based on the level of contribution of the researcher and the wishes of the IRM national researcher. As above, the author may choose to opt out of authorship credits.
- **Intellectual property.** The OGP, as represented by the IEP, remains the ultimate owner of reports produced through the IRM process. All published reports will be published under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike license in order to encourage reuse of the data.
- **Branding.** Reports will be branded uniformly in terms of graphic design and layout of content. The IRM national researcher may use the IRM brand and logo to create products (websites, surveys, pamphlets, presentations) during the research, publication, and promotion of IRM findings when acting in an official capacity as the IRM researcher. It is assumed that the products will maintain a consistency of quality, tone, and audience with the broader body of work carried out by the researcher.
- **Reuse.** Data collected as part of the research through the online tool will be made available after publication with a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike license. The national researcher is strongly encouraged to use information collected during the research and writing process to inform other work they may undertake once publication of initial reports is undertaken.

IV. Independence and conflicts of interest

Independence, integrity, and safeguards

The OGP IRM depends on both independence of mind and independence of appearance. To maintain independence and integrity, the IRM works to ensure that apparent conflicts of interest are dealt with in a proactive way.

Specifically the IRM faces a number of threats to independence and has developed corresponding safeguards:

1. Self-interest threat - the threat that a financial or other interest will inappropriately influence an IRM researcher's judgment or behavior. As a safeguard, the IRM requires all serious candidates for the national researcher position to declare outstanding contracts with governments or multilateral organizations with a vested interest in report outcomes. The conflicts of interest policy below is applied to the researcher and the IEP agrees on an appropriate remedy.
2. Bias threat - the threat that an IRM researcher will, as a result of political, ideological, or social convictions, or ties of familiarity, take a position that is not objective. The IRM passes all reports through multiple layers of quality control, including the IEP. Where reports do not meet the standards of the IRM in terms of tone and content, the IRM team has worked with researchers to develop neutral, fact-based, constructive reports. Where that is not possible, researchers have been replaced.
3. Undue influence threat - the threat that external influences, or pressures will impact a researcher's ability to make independent and objective judgments. The IRM has worked to assure researchers adequate independence while conducting an IRM report by providing international cover and general standards for review of all documents. Additionally, the IEP, together with the author of each report, maintains final say on the document.

The IRM researcher's principal role is that of finding facts and disseminating findings rather than advocacy. The IRM researcher will take necessary steps to ensure s/he is not carrying out advocacy activities while bearing the title of OGP IRM researcher and to ensure that his/her affiliated organization is not unduly influencing the process or outcome of the research. At the same time, it is understood that the IRM does not fully cover a full year's salary and many researchers have other jobs that may include advocacy activities. For that reason, the IRM researcher is asked to clarify to interested public when speaking in their official capacity as the IRM researcher for a particular country.

Conflicts of interest policy

During the process of hiring researchers, the IRM staff and the IEP vet applicants with governments and other informed stakeholders to ensure that the IRM is able to maintain its independence. Throughout the reporting process, the IRM national researcher is required to tell the IRM staff of any new circumstances or developments that may trigger the conflicts of interest policy.

Potential conflicts of interest include:

1. An individual currently working in an official capacity or speaking on behalf of an international organization (e.g. Bretton Woods institutions, regional development banks, OECD).
2. An individual who has worked in an official capacity or spoke on behalf of an OGP participating government within the past year in matters relevant to OGP values.
3. An individual who works in an official capacity or speaks on behalf of a civil society organization represented in the OGP steering committee or who has done so in the past year.
4. An individual who has worked as a consultant to the evaluated government in a capacity directly pertaining to OGP or to the national action plan in the past year.
5. An individual who still carries out partisan political activities, supporting a particular candidate or political party as part of his or her regular work. This does not rule out individuals who take positions on particular legislation or regulation.
6. An individual with ties of familiarity to a government employee directly involved with OGP in the country to be assessed.

In cases where the policy has been triggered, the IEP and IRM staff will work to identify remedies to lessen that conflict of interest, including, in certain cases, asking for the resignation of the researcher. If investigation suggests that there are equally qualified researchers, but that one benefits from greater independence of appearance, the IRM will show preference to that candidate.

Section 2: The IRM Process

An independent researcher under the guidance of the IEP produces the IRM progress reports. In each country, a researcher or team of researchers carries out consultative processes with government, civil society, and the private sector in order to review government progress. The goal of the IRM is to deliver credible, non-partisan description of the OGP process and results of commitments, and to provide technical recommendations based on the input of government, civil society, and the private sector. Each report is written to inform civil society and government input in the design of the next action plan, identifying areas of accomplishment and key areas for improvement.

I. Before assessment

Researcher hiring and recruitment

The IRM seeks to hire public policy experts in the governance field to produce reports of the highest quality and integrity. In order to do so, each candidate is vetted through a review process, as detailed below.

Applications are sought from individuals and organizations. The IRM also solicits third-party nominations. There is a strong preference for nationals of the country and for those with experience relevant to country action plans.

The hiring steps include:

- **Open call:** IRM staff updates the standard call for applications with the specifics of the current call. The call includes a brief overview of OGP and the IRM and details, qualifications, and duties of the IRM researcher as well as a brief overview of the decision making process.
- **Posting:** The call for applications is posted on the OGP website for a minimum of four weeks. The call is circulated to CSO networks and government contacts in relevant countries.
- **Selection:** Applications received are reviewed by IRM staff against the list of qualifications posted in the call. In countries with few or no qualified applicants, the call is circulated again to CSO networks and government contacts in relevant countries.
- **Interview:** A telephone or Skype meeting is scheduled with each of the finalists in each country. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the scope of work, compensation, applicant's experience, and more. Based on these interviews, the IRM staff identifies a short list of finalists. Often, these lists may have between one and three candidates.
- **Vetting process:** The CVs of the short-listed finalists are sent to the government contact point in the country. Governments are given five business days to raise any issue of conflict of interest (see Section 1, IV for full conflicts of interest policy) relating to the proposed candidate. The IRM reserves the right to check applications with other parties.
- **Conflict of interest:** In cases where a potential conflict of interest has been raised, the IRM staff gathers more information and submits the application to the IEP for review. The IEP makes a final decision on whether a potential conflict of interest warrants the non-appointment of a potential researcher.
- **Final approval:** The list of finalists is sent to the IEP for approval.
- **Contracting:** The IRM staff sends the contract and terms of reference to the researcher for signature.

Following the end of each research cycle, the IRM decides whether to (1) renew the current researcher's contract, (2) invite the researcher to compete again in an open call, or (3) open the call to new researchers and not renew the contract. Criterion for renewal include (1) an assessment of the researcher's fulfillment of the prior contract and reports, (2) researcher's expressed interest to continue working, and (3) an evaluation of the researcher according to the conflicts of interest policy.

Decisions to renew contracts are based on quality of research and writing, timeliness, professionalism, and quality of stakeholder consultation.

Researcher training

National researchers are required to participate in training before the research process begins. The IRM organizes in-person group trainings that researchers are strongly encouraged to attend. Participants who cannot attend in person are offered the option of a virtual meeting.

The training provides an in-depth look at a variety of topics including IRM mission, research ethics, research method and process, and writing style. Individual and group exercises as well as real-life examples

are provided. Ample opportunities for questions are provided and one-on-one sessions are offered with IRM staff for researchers who have questions related to their country.

Initial contact with government

In cases where researchers do not have existing contacts with government, the IRM staff helps make formal introductions or provides the researcher with a letter of introduction. Researchers must reach out to the government contact person prior to the beginning of the research process to introduce him/herself and present a research plan (see Section 2, II).

Initial contact with civil society

In cases where researchers do not have contacts with civil society in the country, the IRM can help make formal introductions or provide the researcher with a list of CSO contacts. Ideally, the IRM researchers will send the research plan to CSO stakeholders involved in OGP who can forward it to their relevant networks as appropriate.

II. Report preparation

Research plan

Following the training (see Section 2, I), researchers will prepare a research plan. The research plan maps how the research process will be conducted and should be shared with government and CSO stakeholders (see above) and with the IRM staff.

The research plan should cover all aspects of the research process, including:

- The list of documents to be reviewed (which will expand during the research process),
- The list of interviews to be conducted and with whom,
- Ideas for conducting stakeholders consultation including format, topic outline, questions, and potential list of invitees (more on stakeholders consultation below), and
- An outline of the final report, according to the sequence detailed in the research guide.

Because the IRM serves both roles of fact-finding and listening to the viewpoint of various stakeholders, the IRM researcher should be conscious of the following elements in developing the action plan:

- Care should be taken in inviting stakeholders outside of the "usual suspects" list of invitees already participating in existing processes.
- Supplementary means may be needed to gather the inputs of stakeholders in a more meaningful way (e.g. online surveys, written responses, follow-up interviews).
- The IRM researcher should be conscious of the amount of time he/she spends educating the public about OGP, with care not to displace the primary responsibility for raising awareness from civil society and government.

Document review

The IRM researcher will review documentation pertinent to the action plan to be evaluated. This includes, but is not limited to, the government's self-assessment report, official websites, news articles, and where they exist, independent civil society reports on progress of OGP implementation.

Government interviews

In order to solicit the broadest feedback possible, the IRM researcher will make every effort to interview at least one government officer of the appropriate level for each cluster of commitments contained in the progress report.

The researcher will also interview the official OGP government point of contact in the country to gather feedback on the OGP process more broadly, as relevant to Sections I, II, and III of the progress report.

Stakeholder meetings

Each local researcher will carry out at least one stakeholder meeting at the national level with a variety of stakeholders. It is recommended that at least one of any potential meetings take place with civil society organizations that are not already heavily involved in OGP. At the same time, some stakeholder meetings should involve non-government individuals and organizations that have been close to the OGP process.

The format of the meeting is left to the IRM researcher's discretion. Suggestions include organization of consultations by sector, geographic location, and commitment cluster, as illustrated in the table below.

In addition, IRM researchers may choose to conduct a survey to reach a broader audience, for instance in countries where relevant stakeholders are very dispersed geographically. The table below shows approaches to arranging stakeholder meetings used for past progress reports.

Table: Differing approaches to stakeholder outreach

	Logic	Forum 1	Forum 2	Others	Advantage	Disadvantage
Brazil	Geographic	In Brasilia	Sao Paolo		Two most influential cities	They may not be representative
Canada	Geographic & linguistic	Forum in Ottawa	Webinar/ discussion with translation	Questionnaire for regional groups	Collecting information from a smaller group	Virtual meetings are challenging, particularly with translation
Mexico	Per commitment cluster	Forum with tripartite commission	Interviews with every official partner CSO	Questionnaire for government and CSOs	Groups are well informed	Focused on the capital
Norway	Per commitment cluster	Gender (including government)	Extractive industries (including government)	Forum 3: Corruption control (including government) Questionnaire (4 th approach) with written response	Very complete; the written format allows for a larger group	Not possible in countries with more than a few topics in action plan
Philippines	Per social sector	CSOs	Public servant unions		Good, specific information	Focused on the capital
South Africa	Geographic	Cape Town	Durban		Brought in new groups that hadn't participated (especially in Durban)	English-speaking in a country where English is not the only language

Writing the report

To ensure uniform coding of responses, researchers are required to enter the result of their research in an online toolkit. The toolkit also ensures data is located centrally and allows the IRM staff to provide targeted support in case of issues.

The online toolkit provides for responses to both quantitative and qualitative questions covering all sections of the report.

III. Quality control

All IRM progress reports undergo a process of quality control.

Stage 1: IRM staff review and quality control process

The IRM staff also tracks and manages quality for in-country research and the drafting of progress reports for each OGP participating country, to enhance, formalize, and develop quality control processes for IRM progress reports. For each IRM progress report, the program staff ensures the following:

1. The report accurately describes the institutional context of the OGP in each participating country, including:
 - a. Date of joining.
 - b. The lead agency in charge of coordinating the OGP process and implementing the OGP action plan.
 - c. Making clear the relationship of the researcher to the IRM review process.
2. Relevant and accurate due dates for the development process of the action plan and whether views of civil society were included.
3. The report includes multiple stakeholder views in the process of implementation of the action plan.
4. With respect to commitments in each OGP country action plan, the report describes:
 - a. Where necessary, “clustering” or grouping together of various commitments under themes or clusters.
 - b. What the commitment would achieve and why it is important.
 - c. Progress made, i.e. whether the commitment is fulfilled and whether it is on time.
 - d. Whether suggested next steps are in keeping with the progress made at the time of the IRM review.
5. In reviewing the government’s self assessment activities:
 - a. All relevant, accurate due dates are provided in the government self-assessment report.
 - b. Whether the self assessment report is shared with stakeholders, either:
 - i. In the national/administrative language, in English, or in both.
 - ii. Online and/or through other channels.
 - c. Whether views of civil society are included in the self-assessment process.
6. That going forward, the progress report covers three areas:
 - a. Relevant government actions.
 - b. What stakeholders want from the next action plan.
 - c. IRM recommendations for general next steps.
7. The methodology for each report is reviewed, in particular the data gathering activities, and fact-checked for discrepancies.
8. Preparation of executive summaries for each report.

Stage 2: IEP review

An International Experts Panel (IEP) directly oversees the IRM. This panel is made up of several Senior Advisors and five Technical Advisors. The former's mandate is to defend the credibility of the IRM research and IRM reports, and the latter focus on quality control.

The Senior Advisors play a role in promoting uptake and discussion of results at the national level. When necessary, the Senior Advisors work together with the IRM Program Manager/Director to identify countries where IRM findings are likely to merit further dialogue (and potentially mediation) between government officials, civil society, and researchers.

The Technical Advisors in the IEP are all renowned experts in transparency, participation, and accountability. On the review and quality control process, the IRM program staff work directly with the Technical Advisors to identify, contract, and train local researchers in OGP participating countries. Overall, the advisors play the principal role of guiding development and implementation of the IRM research method. Taking a hands-on approach to developing and revising the structure of the IRM report, they guide the IRM program staff on how to integrate lessons from cohort-to-cohort, how to improve the IRM review process, and how to produce meaningful and high-quality reports.

With respect to the country-level reports, the IEP members, as experts in the fields of transparency, participation, and accountability, ensure that each national researcher adequately:

1. Examines the extent to which the implementation of the commitments adopted by OGP participating governments in their country action plans matches the milestones laid out by the government in its action plan.
2. Examines the extent to which the action plan and its commitments reflect, in a country-specific way, the OGP values of transparency, accountability, and civic participation, as articulated in the OGP Declaration of Principles and the Articles of Governance.
3. Provides technical recommendations regarding how countries can improve implementation of each commitment and the plan as a whole, as well as how to realize better the values and principles of OGP, with specific reference to the OGP Articles of Governance and the OGP Declaration of Principles.

The following questions guide the IEP during their review of each IRM progress report.

1. General: How ready is the document for publication?
 - Very good with very minor revisions
 - Passable with minor revisions
 - Needs substantial revisions
 - Needs urgent action with IRM staff
2. Style: Is the report clear, concise, and precise?
3. Tone: Is the report written diplomatically and based on evidence?
4. Content:
 - Structure: Are commitments organized sensibly?
 - Substantiation: Are claims substantiated from the IRM research? Is the 'Country Context' adequate for giving meaning to findings? Is the contextual data linked to findings and discussion?
 - Internal Consistency: Between 'Moving Forward' and all foregoing sections? All subsections within Section IV: Commitment Analysis? Throughout all sections when interpreting specific terms like 'transformative'?

Stage 3: Pre-publication review

After the IEP review, each IRM progress report undergoes two commenting periods. In the first, each OGP-participating government is invited to review IRM reports in draft form before they are put out for broader comment. The process of gathering comments during the pre-publication review period for each country report entails the following:

Scope of commenting

The pre-publication comment period ensures that governments have the opportunity to offer additional information, clarifications and other evidence; however, governments do not have veto power over any section of the reports. IRM researchers take into account pre-publication comments before finalizing the draft reports for publication. These comments will not be made public with the IRM report and can be considered confidential. During this period, the IRM retains the right to share copies of the draft report on an embargoed basis with experts in the country who can help to ensure the highest quality of reporting.

Time frame for first commenting period

For a period of three weeks (21 calendar days) following receipt of the report, each government is given an opportunity to identify possible factual errors in their country report. This review period is optional and further opportunities for comments will be provided when the report is available for public review. Governments need to alert the IRM if they wish to waive this optional comment period. IRM recognizes the time frame is not ideal, but due to the tight schedule of the OGP progress reporting process, no extensions can be granted.

Post-comment communication

In cases where comments merit additional verification, the IRM researchers and the IRM staff may need to contact government representatives in charge of the OGP process for additional information. In order to facilitate ease of communication, there is a strong preference for informal communications. The IRM staff, national researchers, and IEP take each comment seriously in the interest of producing fair and usable reports.

Due to the volume of reporting, the IRM is unable to respond to individual comments in writing.

Stage 4: Responding to pre-publication comments

The IRM takes all comments during the pre-publication period very seriously and evaluates each one based on a standard approach. As a matter of course, the IRM does not publish comment-by-comment responses, but makes staff and researchers available to respond to particular queries. In some cases, researchers have responded independently to government comments.

From the IRM team perspective, comments that come in from governments fall into one of three categories shown in the table below.

Green light (To be added)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simple corrections where we clearly made a mistake (e.g. eligibility requirements, basic math, date of joining, mistranslation of OGP documents, etc.)• Additional simple, non-controversial information worth integrating into the report that will not affect coding• Requests to make low-ranking public officials anonymous
Yellow light (Will be considered, weighing evidence for change)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information that would change data coding• Information on consultation practices, summaries, or websites that is undocumented• New information on activities that would change coding• New information on activities that does not specify when a task was completed• Requests to expand certain sections to cover more information• Requests for recoding relevance and ambition
Red light (Will not be considered)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information on activities that took place well after the implementation period (2-3 months)• General requests for redaction (especially in Section VI: Context areas)• Requests to remove stakeholder viewpoints• Requests to change recommendations and moving forward sections• Requests to remove anonymity

Stage 5: Public comment

For the second phase of comments on IRM progress reports, there will be a space on the OGP website for broader public comment on reports, including formal responses by governments. Comments made in this later period will be published alongside a final version of the report.

All reports are put out for public comment in English and the primary national administrative languages. From that date, the comment period is open for two weeks. Comments received will be collated and published, except where the requester asks to be anonymous or the comments contain abusive or off-topic language. Commenters are asked, but not required, to differentiate comments asking for changes to report contents from comments that they would prefer to be published with the reports.

Where relevant, comments will be integrated into a final version of the report.

Section 3: IRM Research Guidance

The IRM research guide contains all questions to be answered by national researchers in each OGP participating country's IRM report. Researchers will adapt these questions for use in document review, a series of stakeholder meetings, and interviews. The national researcher will complete a peer-reviewed, online progress report and, working with the IRM program team, will produce two "printable" reports. The first of these documents is the Progress Report on the development and first year of implementation of the country's OGP action plan. The second is the Final Closeout Report published following the end of the two years covered by the action plan, which addresses any unfinished commitments or OGP-relevant developments since the publication of the Progress Report.

All reports will be in the national administrative language with executive summaries in both the national language and English.

The original version of this methodology built on the OGP Proposal and Guiding Principles (Approved 12/12/12), public participation on the IRM Concept Note in August 2012, the IEP's consultation with the Steering Committee in January 2013, as well as a series of opportunities for public participation in February and March 2013. The 2.0 version of this methodology took into consideration the "lessons learned" from the first IRM reporting process, including researcher feedback. This 3.0 version is included as part of the IRM Procedures Manual and has been further refined through use and feedback during the publication of the OGP Cohort Two IRM reports. Version 3.0 was translated into Spanish (available at the link below).

The sections are laid out in the order in which they appear in the final version of the report. Each section notes the responsible party for completing the section. Some sections also include hypothetical sample text in red, based on the IRM's experience. Additional examples can be taken from previous IRM reports.

Many examples and further detailed guidance are available at

<https://sites.google.com/a/opengovpartnership.org/text-for-irm/system/app/pages/sitemap/hierarchy>

I. National participation in OGP

IRM staff will update Section 1.1, “History of OGP participation,” by updating the underlined text in the example text below, which uses the hypothetical country of ‘Taprobane.’ Researchers will verify this section, adding any relevant additional details and translating when applicable. Researchers then complete Section 1.2, “Basic institutional context,” and adapt Section 1.3 where necessary.

I.1: History of OGP participation

Example of boilerplate text:

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is a voluntary, multi-stakeholder international initiative that aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to their citizenry to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. In pursuit of these goals, OGP provides an international forum for dialogue and sharing among governments, civil society organizations, and the private sector, all of which contribute to a common pursuit of open government. OGP stakeholders include participating governments as well as civil society and private sector entities that support the principles and mission of OGP.

Taprobane began its formal participation in July 2011, when President Anula declared her country’s intention to participate in the initiative [Link to Letter].

In order to participate in OGP, governments must exhibit a demonstrated commitment to open government by meeting a set of (minimum) performance criteria on key dimensions of open government that are particularly consequential for increasing government responsiveness, strengthening citizen engagement, and fighting corruption. Objective, third party indicators are used to determine the extent of country progress on each of the dimensions, with points awarded as described below.

Taprobane entered into the partnership exceeding the minimal requirements for eligibility, with a high score in each of the criteria. At the time of joining, the country had the highest possible ranking for open budgets (2 out of a possible 2), an access to information law, the highest possible rankings in asset disclosure for senior officials, and a score of 8.53 out of a possible 10 on the Economist Intelligence Unit’s Democracy Index: Civil Liberties subscore.

All OGP participating governments are required to develop OGP country action plans that elaborate concrete commitments over an initial two-year period. Governments should begin their OGP country action plans by sharing existing efforts related to their chosen grand challenge(s) (see Section IV), including specific open government strategies and ongoing programs. Action Plans should then set out governments’ OGP commitments, which move government practice beyond its current baseline with respect to the relevant grand challenge. These commitments may build on existing efforts, identify new steps to complete on-going reforms, or initiate action in an entirely new area.

Along with the other 39 participating countries, Taprobane developed its National Action Plan from September 2011 to April 2012. The effective period of implementation for the action plan submitted in April was officially July 1, 2012 through July 31, 2013. The government published its self-assessment in April of 2013. At the time of writing (July 2013), [current status].

In order to meet OGP requirements, the Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) of OGP has partnered with [name of researcher and organization], who carried out this evaluation of the development and implementation of Taprobane’s first action plan. It is the aim of the IRM to inform ongoing dialogue around development and implementation of future commitments in each OGP participating country. Methods and sources are dealt with in a methodological annex in this report.

I.2: Basic institutional context

A) Please use the following coding system to respond to these variables, all analyzing institutional ownership of OGP within the country. This information will be part of the data release, but will not be part of the printed report.

Who’s involved?

1. **Single branch:** The variable codes for whether the action plan involved either one or more branches of the government. Possible values include:
 - 1 = Only one branch (e.g. executive, judicial, or legislative) involved in OGP.
 - 0 = More than one branch of government involved in OGP.
2. **Executive branch involvement:** The variable indicates whether the executive branch assisted with the drafting and/or implementation of the OGP action plan. Possible values include:
 - 1 = Yes, the executive branch had a role in the OGP action plan.
 - 0 = No, the executive branch had no clear role in the OGP action plan.
3. **Multi-agency vs. single:** The variable tracks the number of government agencies involved in and engaging with the OGP process. Possible values include:

1 = Multiple government agencies or ministries are involved. Similarly, an interagency working group may be involved.

0 = Only one government institution or agency (not an interagency working group) is involved in the process.

4. Head of government involved: The variable indicates whether the President/Prime Minister, a committee of the President/Prime Minister, or a staff member within the President/Prime Minister's office is directly involved with OGP. Possible values include:
 - 1 = The head of government (e.g. President or Prime Minister) has influence and involvement with OGP developments.
 - 0 = The head of government (e.g. President or Prime Minister) and members within the President/Prime Minister's office do not have a directly active role in its country's OGP developments.
5. Ministry of foreign affairs: The variable indicates whether the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (or Department of State or Chancellery) is one of the ministries or agencies involved in contributing to the country's OGP development. Possible values include:
 - 1 = The Department of State/Ministry of Foreign Affairs is involved in the process and/or implementation of OGP initiatives.
 - 0 = The Department of State/Ministry of Foreign Affairs is not involved with the OGP.

Who's in charge?

6. Single lead: The variable tracks the number of government agencies involved in and engaging with the OGP process. Possible values include:
 - 1 = A single government agency or a well-structured collaborative organization with representatives from a variety of agencies leads the OGP efforts.
 - 0 = No single clearly definitive leader organizes OGP efforts.
7. Foreign affairs lead agency: The variable indicates whether the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (or equivalent) is the leading organization organizing the country's OGP initiatives. Possible values include:
 - 1 = The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (or equivalent) is the lead office of the country's OGP efforts.
 - 0 = The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (or equivalent) is not the leading office behind the country's OGP efforts.
8. Head of government lead: The variable indicates whether the office of the Chief Executive or Head of Government) is the leading organization organizing the country's OGP initiatives. Possible values include:
 - 1 = The Head of Government or chief executive is the leader of the country's OGP efforts.
 - 0 = The Head of Government or chief executive is not the leading office behind the country's OGP efforts.
9. Implementing same as developing?: The variable indicates whether the government agency that developed the action plan is also the agency that implemented the action plan. Possible values include:
 - 1 = The government agency that initially developed the OGP action plan is carrying out some of the commitments and is an implementing agency.
 - 0 = The implementing agency is not the same agency that initially developed the OGP action plan.

Legal mandate

10. Officially mandated: The variable indicates whether the government's commitment to OGP is established through an official, publically released mandate. This would include any mandate that government employees would see as binding, regardless of whether it has the force of administrative law. Possible values include:
 - 1 = The government has established an official mandate for OGP goals that may or may not be legally binding.
 - 0 = The government has not established a non-legal mandate related to OGP.
11. Legally mandated: The variable indicates whether the government's commitment to OGP is established through a legally binding mandate. This would include anything that would pass through administrative law or through legislation. Possible values include:
 - 1 = The government has established a legal mandate related to OGP goals.
 - 0 = The government is not legally mandated to complete OGP activities.

Continuity and instability

12. **Multiple arrangements:** The variable indicates whether there was a change in the organization(s) leading or involved with the OGP initiatives during the development and implementation of the action plan. Possible values include:
 - 1 = One or more government agencies involved with the OGP action plan were removed or replaced by other government agencies.
 - 0 = No shift in the organizational structure of involved institutions or agencies occurred during the development and implementation of the action plan.
13. **Change of executive:** The variable indicates whether the executive leader changed during the duration of the OGP action plan development and implementation phase. Possible values include:
 - 1 = The government experienced a change in executive leadership during the OGP action plan development or implementation phase.
 - 0 = The government did not experienced a change in executive leadership during the OGP action plan development or implementation phase.

B) Please describe the lead institutions responsible for the action plan and explain their powers of coordination [Narrative]. In this section, you may want to describe how well this fits the challenge laid out by OGP using clear fact-based analysis. For example:

The Executive Office for Transparency was the leading office responsible for Taprobane's OGP commitments. However, this Office had little legal power to enforce policy changes on other agencies within government. At the current time, its mandate is largely around implementing technological solutions to improve transparency, but it does not have the ability to compel other agencies to enter in commitments. As a result of the limited mandate, the action plan is heavily oriented toward technology and there are few commitments on transparency or accountability.

During the latter half of 2012, the government developed an interagency working group and a multi-sector advisory panel. However, this panel was developed too late to influence the commitments that entered into the action plan. Some agencies, such as the Ministry of Justice and the Energy Regulation Commission, which were involved in later consultation, have a mandate that expands well beyond technology and transparency to cover accountability, participatory processes, and service delivery.

The Executive put out Circular A-220 on Open Government Procedures in January 2013. However, this circular does not go into effect until 1 January 2015. It is unclear whether this circular had an impact on the formation of commitments for the second action plan.

Finally, it is important to note that Taprobane is a highly federalized system, meaning that the national level government has few "sticks" to compel subnational governments, but a few of the commitments involving subnational government levels show that the national and subnational governments can coordinate when needed. This is not to imply, however, that the consultation (even within government) took place beyond the capital (see Section II on "Development of Action Plan.").

Topics covered may very briefly orient the reader to the following (similar to the coding above):

- Form of government (federal/unitary, separation of powers, etc.)
- The branch in charge of OGP
- The agency or offices in charge of OGP and whether the head of government is involved
- Whether OGP is led by a multi-agency or single agency operation
- Whether OGP is legally mandated
- Whether elections or other significant political events helped or hindered the administration

In addition, researchers should comment on their understanding of the following:

5. Amount of budget dedicated to OGP.
6. Amount of staff dedicated to OGP.

In most cases, these will be approximations.

Researchers on their second report will want to make a brief reference to what happened during the first action planning cycle, but do not need to recap other than explaining the differences.

I.3: Methodological note

Please adapt the following to your needs:

The IRM partners with experienced, independent national researchers to author and disseminate reports for each OGP participating government. In Taprobane, the IRM partnered with Taprobane Social Research (TSR). TSR reviewed the

government's self-assessment report, gathered the views of civil society, and interviewed appropriate government officials and other stakeholders. OGP staff and a panel of experts reviewed the report.

[Cohort 1 and 2 only]: This report follows on an earlier review of OGP performance, "Taprobane Progress Report 2012-2013," which covered the development of the first action plan as well as implementation from [1 July 2012] to [30 June 2013].

To gather the voices of multiple stakeholders, TSR organized two stakeholder forums, in Tarachi and Galibi, which were conducted according to a focus group model. TSR also reviewed two key documents prepared by the government: a report on Taprobane's first action plan and the self-assessment published by the government in April 2013. Numerous references are made to these documents throughout this report.

Summaries of these forums and more detailed explanations are given in the Annex.

II. Action plan development

This section will collect the national researcher's narrative on the development of the action plan in their country, with an emphasis on opportunities for access to information and public participation. Where possible, several questions ask for "Yes" or "No" responses, with space for explanatory text in the narrative. The IRM researchers are permitted to make a judgment as to the quality of effort.

Guiding text on the process requirements is taken verbatim from the OGP Articles of Governance (AoG) Addendum C, except where noted. Please note that the IRM staff has attempted to rearrange the questions in a manner that makes them chronological, rather than merely follow the OGP AoG (which are not chronological).

A. Advance notice and awareness-raising

OGP Guiding Text: Activities prior to consultation

Availability of process and timeline: Countries are to make the details of their public consultation process and timeline available (online at a minimum) prior to the consultation.

Public awareness-raising activities: Countries are to undertake OGP awareness-raising activities to enhance public participation in the consultation.

Advance notice of public consultation and variety of mechanisms: Countries are to consult the population with sufficient forewarning and through a variety of mechanisms—including online and in-person meetings—to ensure the accessibility of opportunities for citizens to engage.

Good Examples:

Peru: Published a brochure online with a detailed Gantt chart of dates of meetings and opportunities for stakeholder input into the second action plan. See [in Spanish]: <http://bit.ly/1ky3TYc>

Estonia: Used the government consultation website and cooperation with the Estonian Civil Society Roundtable to inform stakeholders about opportunities to contribute to the first action plan. See [in Estonian] <http://bit.ly/1rLYTV8> for the first action plan consultation and <http://bit.ly/1kMkByy> for the second action plan consultation.

Tanzania: Carried out a variety of awareness-raising activities around dates and opportunities for input into the first action plan, including a letter from the President's Office (<http://bit.ly/Te9eJv>), commercials (<http://bit.ly/1kMkJ10>), and blog posts (<http://bit.ly/1kCVG5g>).

IRM Questions:

1. Was the process for public consultation and timeline or schedule available:
 - a. Prior to beginning consultation [Code: Yes, No, Other see narrative]?
 - b. Online [Code: Yes, No, Other see narrative]?
 - c. Through other channels [Code: Yes, No, Other see narrative]?
 - d. Provide links where appropriate.
2. Was there advance notice of the consultation process [Code: Yes, No, Other see narrative]?
 - a. How many days of advance notice were given for participation [Code: Number of days. Put 999 if unclear and explain in the narrative]?
 - b. Did you as the IRM researcher consider this advance notice to be adequate [Code: Yes, No, Other see narrative]?
3. Were there awareness-raising activities [Code: Yes, No, Other see narrative]? If yes, provide links when possible.
4. Description of activities prior to consultation.
 - a. Quality of public consultation [Narrative].

B. Depth and breadth of consultation

OGP Guiding Text:

Countries are to consult widely with the national community, including civil society and the private sector; seek out a diverse range of views; and make a summary of the public consultation and all individual written comment submissions available online.

Good Example:

Croatia: Used a variety of consultation types and invited government, academics, media, and business representatives to participate. All minutes were published online and clearly attributed inputs to who provided them. See First Progress Report, Section II: <http://bit.ly/1pjRNQT>

1. Were consultations held [Code: Yes, No. Provide links where possible]:
 - a. Online?
 - b. In person?
2. Was a summary of public consultation, including all individual submissions, available online [Code: Yes, No]? If yes, please provide links.
3. [Narrative] Please describe the quality and breadth of consultation during action plan development including:
 - a. Whom did the government invite to participate?
 - b. Who actually participated (from civil society, the private sector, and other branches of government)?
 - c. Was a diversity of views represented?
 - d. Was power shared with stakeholders on decision making on commitment inclusion or action areas?
 - e. Did stakeholders consider the consultation to be meaningful?
 - f. Describe the nature and accessibility (geographic, socioeconomic, physical ability, or other groupings) of these mechanisms.
 - g. When relevant, provide links.
4. Was the consultation “invitation-only” or open to all interested parties [Code: Invitation only, Open]?
5. Based on your narrative (above) please refer to the IAP2 spectrum of political participation [http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/imported/IAP2%20Spectrum_vertical.pdf] and describe the impact of public input on the outcomes. Choose one of the following:
 - a. Inform
 - b. Consult
 - c. Involve
 - d. Collaborate
 - e. Empower
6. Optional narrative: Include additional important information that falls outside of the requirements put forward in the Articles of Governance. This is an optional space to include additional information on the consultation process that does not fit underneath the other headers. You may include whether parliament was involved.

III. Implementation of action plan

Similarly to the previous section, this section assesses implementation of the action plan and the government self-assessment, with an emphasis on opportunities for access to information and public participation. Guiding text on process requirements is taken verbatim from the OGP Articles of Governance, Addendum C, except where noted.

A. Regular multi-stakeholder consultation

OGP Guiding Text:

Countries are to identify a new or existing forum to enable regular multi-stakeholder consultation on OGP implementation.

Good Examples:

USA: The USA's Open Government Working Group, a government committee meeting regularly for collaboration and feedback, opened up its meetings to civil society on a quarterly basis (<http://1.usa.gov/1umJBqX>). As one result, a further consultation mechanism was created in the form of the public US Open Government Google Group: <http://bit.ly/1l0TYrk>

IRM Questions:

1. Coding: Was there a forum for consultation [Code: Yes, No]?
2. Coding: Was the consultation "invitation-only" or open to all interested parties [Code: Invitation only, Open]?
3. Coding: Based on your narrative (above) please refer to the IAP2 spectrum of political participation [http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/imported/IAP2%20Spectrum_vertical.pdf] and describe the impact of public input on the outcomes. Choose one of the following:
 - a. Inform
 - b. Consult
 - c. Involve
 - d. Collaborate
 - e. Empower
4. Narrative: Questions to consider strongly include:
 - **Form:**
 - Was it in person? Online?
 - Was a pre-existing forum that was adapted to OGP or was new? Did it continue from the earlier action planning processes or was it new?
 - **Influence:** Did the forum have influence over decisions, monitoring processes, or implementation?
 - **Frequency:** How often it met (regularly, ad hoc, at key times, etc.).
 - **Membership:**
 - Were there officers or official members?
 - Was it multi-sectoral (government, civil society, or private sector invited)?
 - Was it "invitation-only" or open and pluralistic?
 - Make up of participants. Topics you may choose to include whether it was always in the capital city or regionally diverse, whether it only contained professional NGOs, and whether it had gender balance.
 - Was it dedicated to OGP or was it broader in its mandate?
 - **Accountability:** Were notes or minutes of meetings posted or forums made open to the public?
 - If relevant, disclose whether the IRM researcher was a part of this process.
5. Narrative: If there is no mechanism, please comment on the lack of this mechanism [Narrative]. You may consider offering possible options for the design of such a forum above.

IV. Analysis of action plan contents

When the action plan is published, the national researcher will respond to section 4.1 on general analysis of the entire plan and for each commitment, the researcher will carry out the analysis in Section 4.2. After implementation, the national researcher will answer the questions in Section 4.3.

Each commitment worksheet is divided between describing the commitment questions (“fact finding” or “what happened?”) and relatively more subjective questions (“how did the commitment matter?”). The questionnaire also leaves space for local researchers to assemble the comments of stakeholders on “Next Steps” for the individual commitment.

The IRM depends on the IRM researchers to ensure accurate and consistent translation of all official terms, including grand challenges, open government values, names of sections, and the like. While official translations exist in Spanish, all researchers are asked to provide a final check that all terms were correctly translated throughout the entirety of the report. For example, the coded term ‘limited’ appears many times throughout the report. The same administrative language translation should be used in every instance.

IV.1: Opening text

The following sample text will appear in all reports. It appears here in italics only as guidance.

All OGP participating governments develop OGP country action plans that elaborate concrete commitments over an initial two-year period. Governments begin their OGP country action plans by sharing existing efforts related to their chosen grand challenge(s), including specific open government strategies and ongoing programs. Action plans then set out governments’ OGP commitments, which stretch government practice beyond its current baseline with respect to the relevant policy area. These commitments may build on existing efforts, identify new steps to complete on-going reforms, or initiate action in an entirely new area.

OGP commitments are to be structured around a set of five “grand challenges” that governments face. OGP recognizes that all countries are starting from different baselines. Countries are charged with selecting the grand challenges and related concrete commitments that most relate to their unique country contexts. No action plan, standard, or specific commitments are to be forced on any country.

The five OGP grand challenges are:

1. **Improving Public Services**—measures that address the full spectrum of citizen services including health, education, criminal justice, water, electricity, telecommunications, and any other relevant service areas by fostering public service improvement or private sector innovation.
2. **Increasing Public Integrity**—measures that address corruption and public ethics, access to information, campaign finance reform, and media and civil society freedom.
3. **More Effectively Managing Public Resources**—measures that address budgets, procurement, natural resources, and foreign assistance.
4. **Creating Safer Communities**—measures that address public safety, the security sector, disaster and crisis response, and environmental threats.
5. **Increasing Corporate Accountability**—measures that address corporate responsibility on issues such as the environment, anti-corruption, consumer protection, and community engagement.

While the nature of concrete commitments under any grand challenge area should be flexible and allow for each country’s unique circumstances, OGP commitments should be relevant to OGP values laid out in the OGP Articles of Governance and Open Government Declaration signed by all OGP participating countries. The IRM uses the following guidance to evaluate relevance to core open government values:

- **Access to information** — These commitments:
 - pertain to government-held information;
 - are not restricted to data but pertain to all information;
 - may cover proactive or reactive releases of information;
 - may pertain to strengthen the right to information; and,
 - must provide open access to information (it should not be privileged or internal only to government).
- **Citizen participation** — Governments seek to mobilize citizens to engage in public debate, provide input, and make contributions that lead to more responsive, innovative, and effective governance. Commitments around access to information:

- *open decision making to all interested members of the public; such forums are usually “top-down” in that they are created by government (or actors empowered by government) to inform decision making;*
- *often include elements of access to information to ensure meaningful input of interested members of the public into decisions;*
- *often include enhancing citizens' right to be heard, but do not necessarily include the right to be heeded.*
- **Public accountability** — *Rules, regulations, and mechanisms in place call upon government actors to justify their actions, act upon criticisms or requirements made of them, and accept responsibility for failure to perform with respect to laws or commitments. As part of open government, such commitments have an “open” element, meaning that they are not purely internal systems of accountability without a public face.*
- **Technology and innovation for transparency and accountability** — *Commitments for technology and innovation promote new technologies, offer opportunities for information sharing, public participation, and collaboration. Technology and innovation commitments:*
 - *Should make more information public in ways that enable people both to understand what their governments do and to influence decisions;*
 - *May commit to supporting the ability of governments and citizens to use technology for openness and accountability;*
 - *May support the use of technology by government employees and citizens alike;*
 - *May focus on the national, local and/or subnational level—wherever the government believes their open government efforts will have the greatest impact.*

Recognizing that achieving open government commitments often involves a multiyear process, governments should attach time frames and benchmarks to their commitments that indicate what is to be accomplished each year, whenever possible.

This section details each of the commitments the country included in its initial action plan.

While most indicators used to evaluate each commitment are self-explanatory, a number deserve further explanation.

1. **Relevance:** *The IRM researcher evaluated each commitment for its relevance to OGP values and OGP grand challenges.*
 - *OGP values: To identify OGP commitments with unclear relationships to OGP values, the IRM researcher made a judgment from a close reading of the commitment’s text. This judgment reveals commitments that can better articulate a clear link to fundamental issues of openness.*
 - *Grand challenges: While some commitments may be relevant to more than one grand challenge, the reviewer only marked those challenges that had been identified by government.*
2. **Ambition:** *The IRM researcher evaluated each commitment for how ambitious commitments were with respect to new or pre-existing activities that stretch government practice beyond an existing baseline.*
 - *Potential impact: To contribute to a broad definition of ambition, the IRM researcher judged how potentially transformative each commitment might be in the policy area. This is based on the IRM researcher’s findings and experience as a public policy expert.*
 - *New or pre-existing: Based on the facts, the IRM researcher also recorded whether a commitment was based on an action that pre-dated the action plan.*
3. **Timing:** *The IRM researcher evaluated each commitment’s timing, even when clear deliverables and suggested annual milestones were not provided.*
 - *Projected completion: In cases where this information was not available, the IRM researcher made a best judgment based on the evidence of how far the commitment could possibly be at the end of the period assessed.*

IV.2: General overview of the commitments

[Narrative] Overview

Please provide an overall view of the action plan and describe how it was organized or what it emphasized. This section should describe any unique characteristics of the process or plan that are necessary to understanding this report, for example whether the plan passed through multiple versions and how this was done. This is a brief overview and does not need to be more than one page. It should be very readable for the general public.

[Narrative] Clustering

If the IRM reorganized or ‘clustered’ the commitments in a way that differs from the action plan, explain here why and how this was done. (Note: The IRM will work with national researchers to cluster commitments where necessary, before beginning the reports.)

IV.3: Commitment description

To be repeated for each action plan commitment upon deposit of the action plan.

This section is based on desk research that researchers can gather without talking to stakeholders. It is carried out upon publication of the action plan. Researchers use their best judgment to identify the information based on their expertise, the action plan, and necessary materials referenced in the action plan.

A. Basic information

1. Number of the commitment: If the government has assigned the commitment a number, it is noted here. Where commitments were not assigned numbers in the action plan, the researchers do so for ease of organization.
2. Short title for the commitment: Provides an accurate and precise description that differentiates the commitment from other, similar commitments.
3. Full text of the commitment: This is copied directly from the action plan. If the fact sheet treats multiple actions or commitments, bullets, or hyphens, separate them here.
4. Is this associated with a thematic grouping or heading by government in the action plan? If yes, please name the grouping.
5. Is the commitment made of individual milestones and deliverables [Narrative]?
6. Number of milestones.
7. Short title of each milestone.

B. Specificity and measurability

1. This question assesses the level of specificity and measurability with which each commitment or action was framed. Using the IRM ‘SMART Guidance’ (<http://bit.ly/1kCZh3h>), IRM staff and national researchers code this information based on the following definitions [Code: Select one]:
 - a. High (Commitment language provides clear, measurable, verifiable milestones for achievement of the goal)
 - b. Medium (Commitment language describes an activity that is objectively verifiable, but does not contain specific milestones or deliverables)
 - c. Low (Commitment language describes activity that can be construed as measurable with some interpretation on the part of the reader)
 - d. None (Commitment language contains no verifiable deliverables or milestones)

C. Accountability and answerability

1. Which, if any, primary institution was designated as responsible for the commitment [Short narrative]?
2. Which, if any, supporting institutions were designated as responsible for the commitment [Short narrative]? (Note: In some circumstances, these may not be limited to national government agencies. They may be subnational governments, private companies, or civil society organizations.)
3. Did the commitment specify an answerable person or office responsible for the commitment [Narrative]? (Note: Most countries would not designate a single officer in charge of an individual commitment, but in some cases governments will put a single office or team in charge with a clear email or web platform through which the public may interact with them. This should be indicated in the action plan.) If not, then the answer to this question is "No." Use the IRM ‘SMART Guidance’ (<http://bit.ly/1kCZh3h>).

D. Relevance

OGP values

1. Did the goal directly address one or more of the four principles of OGP [Code: Select and all that apply]? See “Guidance Note: Assessing OGP Values for Relevance” for input on how to code, and the IRM ‘SMART Guidance’ (<http://bit.ly/1kCZh3h>) for examples. Mark all that apply:
 - a. Access to information
 - b. Civic participation
 - c. Public accountability
 - d. Technology and innovation for openness and accountability

Guidance: assessing OGP values for relevance

I. Purpose

This document presents the definitions of Open Government Partnership (OGP) *values* that are applied by the Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) to evaluate the relevance of commitments made as part of OGP national action plans. As part of its mandate, the IRM evaluates each commitment within the national context for its relevance to the OGP values (as contained in the OGP Articles of Governance) and the OGP Declaration which all countries sign. The definitions offered here are syntheses of these sources.

These definitions, taken as a whole, will be used to evaluate whether each OGP commitment meets the test of “clear relevance” for each commitment. In order to be marked of “clear relevance” in an OGP IRM report, a commitment must clearly articulate their relationship to “Access to Information,” “Civic Participation,” and “Public Accountability.”

While action plans may contain commitments that do not meet the test for relevance, those that do not will be ineligible for “starred” or exemplary commitment status. (This is used to highlight the major achievements of a country around open government in its IRM report.) Proponents of commitments will want to draft commitments in such a way that they clearly articulate which of the values they intend to improve. Relevant commitments may either employ these values instrumentally (in the service of some other policy aim) or they may be aims in-and-of-themselves.

Because the fourth value “Technology and Innovation for Transparency and Accountability” is instrumental in achieving the other three values, governments that wish to have this value checked are advised to clearly articulate how technology and innovation will improve access to information, civic participation, and public accountability. Commitments that have technology but do not clearly articulate their intended impact on these other values may be considered of “unclear relevance.”

OGP values may be applied to any branch of government to be considered relevant.

II. How to use these values

- **Government points of contact:** Share these values with civil society, private sector and government stakeholders to ensure a shared understanding of open government values. These can be used to help draft, evaluate relevance of, and where necessary revise commitments under, the OGP action plan. Additionally, you can use these definitions to help predict the evaluation by the IRM in your country.
- **Members of government:** Use these values to help draft your commitments and make proposals to civil society and to government for inclusion in the action plan. These should help to identify those goals that meet your goals of good government and open government.
- **Civil society:** Use these values to draft proposed commitments and to evaluate the relevance of commitments in your national action plan. These definitions should also help to educate your colleagues on what is and what is not relevant to open government.
- **IRM national researchers:** Carefully apply these definitions to each commitment or group of commitments to identify whether the actions described in the commitment, as written, would either enhance these values or would employ these values to meet other policy goals. Assess the intent of the commitment, as written, rather than the ultimate potential impact or the intentional impact.

III. OGP values defined

Access to information

Commitments around access to information:

- Pertain to government-held information, as opposed to only information on government activities. As an example, releasing government-held information on pollution would be clearly relevant, although the information is not about “government activity” per se;
- Are not restricted to data but pertain to all information. For example, releasing individual construction contracts and releasing data on a large set of construction contracts;
- May include information disclosures in open data and the systems that underpin the public disclosure of data;
- May cover both proactive and/or reactive releases of information;
- May cover both making data more available and/or improving the technological readability of information;
- May pertain to mechanisms to strengthen the right to information (such as ombudsman’s offices or information tribunals);
- Must provide open access to information (it should not be privileged or internal only to government);
- Should promote transparency of government decision making and carrying out of basic functions;
- May seek to lower cost of obtaining information;
- Should strive to meet the 5 Star for Open Data design (<http://5stardata.info/>).

Civic participation

Commitments around civic participation may pertain to formal public participation or to broader civic participation. They should generally seek to “consult,” “involve,” “collaborate,” or “empower,” as explained by the International Association for Public Participation’s Public Participation Spectrum (<http://bit.ly/1kMmlYC>).

Commitments addressing public participation:

- Must open up decision making to all interested members of the public; such forums are usually “top-down” in that they are created by government (or actors empowered by government) to inform decision making throughout the policy cycle;
- Can include elements of access to information to ensure meaningful input of interested members of the public into decisions;
- Often include the right to have your voice heard, but do not necessarily include the right to be a formal part of a decision making process.

Alternately, commitments may address the broader operating environment that enables participation in civic space. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Reforms increasing freedoms of assembly, expression, petition, press, or association;
- Reforms on association including trade union laws or NGO laws;
- Reforms improving the transparency and process of formal democratic processes such as citizen proposals, elections, or petitions.

The following commitments are examples of commitments that would **not** be marked as clearly relevant to the broader term, civic participation:

- Commitments that assume participation will increase due to publication of information without specifying the mechanism for such participation (although this commitment would be marked as “access to information”);
- Commitments on decentralization that do not specify the mechanisms for enhanced public participation;
- Commitments that define participation as inter-agency cooperation without a mechanism for public participation.

Commitments that may be marked of “unclear relevance” also include those mechanisms where participation is limited to government-selected organizations.

Public accountability

Commitments improving accountability can include:

- Rules, regulations, and mechanisms that call upon government actors to justify their actions, act upon criticisms or requirements made of them, and accept responsibility for failure to perform with respect to laws or commitments.

Consistent with the core goal of “Open Government,” to be counted as “clearly relevant,” such commitments must include a public-facing element, meaning that they are not purely internal systems of accountability. While such commitments may be laudable and may meet an OGP grand challenge, they do not, as articulated, meet the test of “clear relevance” due to their lack of openness. Where such internal-facing mechanisms are a key part of government strategy, it is recommended that governments include a public facing element such as:

- Disclosure of non-sensitive metadata on institutional activities (following maximum disclosure principles);
- Citizen audits of performance;
- Citizen-initiated appeals processes in cases of non-performance or abuse.

Strong commitments around accountability ascribe rights, duties, or consequences for actions of officials or institutions. Formal accountability commitments include means of formally expressing grievances or reporting wrongdoing and achieving redress. Examples of strong commitments include:

- Improving or establishing appeals processes for denial of access to information;
- Improving access to justice by making justice mechanisms cheaper, faster, or easier to use;
- Improving public scrutiny of justice mechanisms;
- Creating public tracking systems for public complaints processes (such as case tracking software for police or anti-corruption hotlines).

A commitment that claims to improve accountability, but assumes that merely providing information or data without explaining what mechanism or intervention will translate that information into consequences or change, would **not** qualify as an accountability commitment. See <http://bit.ly/1oWPXdl> for further information.

Technology and innovation for openness and accountability

OGP aims to enhance the use of technology and innovation to enable public involvement in government. Specifically, commitments that use technology and innovation should enhance openness and accountability by:

- Promoting new technologies that offer opportunities for information sharing, public participation, and collaboration.
- Making more information public in ways that enable people to both understand what their governments do and to influence decisions.
- Working to reduce costs of using these technologies.

Additionally, commitments that will be marked as technology and innovation:

- May commit to a process of engaging civil society and the business community to identify effective practices and innovative approaches for leveraging new technologies to empower people and promote transparency in government;
- May commit to supporting the ability of governments and citizens to use technology for openness and accountability;
- May support the use of technology by government employees and citizens alike.

Not all eGovernment reforms improve openness of government. When an eGovernment commitment is made, it needs to articulate how it enhances at least one of the following: access to information, public participation, or public accountability.

OGP grand challenges

1. Did the goal directly address one or more of the grand challenges set out by OGP [Code: Select all that apply]? The action plan should specify this. If it does not, researchers mark ‘none specified.’ You do not need to mark all grand challenges that potentially apply. Just mark those that apply.
 - a. Improving Public Services
 - b. Increasing Public Integrity
 - c. More Effectively Managing Public Resources
 - d. Creating Safer Communities
 - e. Increasing Corporate Accountability
 - f. None Specified

E. Time-bound

OGP participating governments are encouraged to make concrete time-bound commitments. Commitments that had either a start date or an end date that the researcher could ascertain were coded as time-bound. The IRM ‘SMART Guidance’ (<http://bit.ly/1kCZh3h>) contains examples.

1. Specify the start date for the commitment. If the action plan does not include this information, researchers put “Not specified.”
2. Specify the end date for the commitment. If the action plan does not include this information, researchers put “Not specified.”

F. Ambition

OGP countries are expected to make ambitious commitments (with new or pre-existing activities) that stretch government practice beyond an existing baseline. To contribute to a broad definition of ambition, IRM researchers judge how potentially transformative a commitment might be in that policy area. This is based on researcher’s findings and experience as a public policy expert.

The IRM’s definition of ambition looks at two aspects in particular:

- Newness
- Potential Impact

1. New vs. pre-existing

This question asks, “Is there evidence that the specific actions described by the commitment language appeared as commitments in earlier policy documents?” The possible responses are ‘pre-existing’ or ‘new.’

The OGP does not require commitments to be new, so it is not necessarily a sign of lack of ambition if an action pre-dated the action plan. Rather, this question tries to identify those commitments whose specific actions pre-dated inclusion as OGP commitments and distinguish them from commitments that add a new level of specificity and accountability that did not exist before. For example, passing a draft law that has existed in Congress for several years would be ‘pre-existing,’ while carrying out a public consultation to amend an existing law could be ‘new.’

It is important to note that this question refers to the specific actions, rather than the policy area in general. It will be rare (although not impossible) that new policy areas will be introduced as part of OGP.

2. Potential impact

This question asks, “Would the commitment, if implemented, stretch government practice beyond business-as-usual in the relevant policy area—regardless of whether it is new or pre-existing?”

Researchers answer this question according to the potential effect of the commitment as written, not what actually happens. This is necessarily specific to the baseline in each country—the exact same commitment could have a completely different potential impact depending on which government made it.

There are five options in the IRM method for potential impact:

1. Worsens: Worsens the status quo.
2. None: Maintains the status quo.
3. Minor: An incremental but positive step in the relevant policy area.
4. Moderate: A major step forward in the relevant policy area, but remains limited in scale or scope.
5. Transformative: A reform that could potentially transform ‘business as usual’ in the relevant policy area.

3. How to code a commitment for ambition more reliably

A big part of your success in being able to tell the ambition of a commitment is being sure that you have a strong evidence to back up how you assess. The IRM team has found that the following format works well in a narrative, thus allowing an informed argument:

- **Problem statement:** Identify what the social or problem the commitment actually tried to tackle. (Ask the government if you cannot.)
- **Status quo:** What is the status quo in the policy area when the commitment is made?
- **Projected improvements:** What impact would the commitment likely have if fully implemented?

By answering these three questions, you should be able to give a more accurate, reliable, and informed assessment of ambition, making your reasoning clear to the reader.

“[Narrative] Describe the status of the commitment at the time of writing the action plan and the projected improvements.” This is the baseline against which the actions taken during the period of implementation are measured. This is to be included in beginning of the “Did it matter” Section below.

In cases where a commitment has multiple milestones and the effects of milestones are cumulative, the IRM will assume the highest level of potential impact among the individual milestone. Where milestones are “stand-alone,” the IRM will leave milestones disaggregated.

IV.3: Commitment analysis

National researchers use these three questions to analyze each commitment (or milestone) after the first year of implementation. Responses should elaborate on coded choices to the questions above, and narratives should be cohesive and flow between each of the three focuses.

A. Completion

1. **Projected level of completion of the commitment** [Code: Select one (and only 1)]. How complete should the commitment be at the end of the first assessment period? Researchers base this response on the end date included in the action plan. Where such a date is not available, researchers use their expertise to choose appropriately.
 - a. Complete
 - b. Substantial
 - c. Limited
 - d. Not started
 - e. No dates or milestones inferable
2. **Actual level of completion of the commitment** [Code: Select one (and only 1)]. How complete is it at the end of the assessment period?
 - a. Complete
 - b. Substantial
 - c. Limited
 - d. Officially withdrawn
 - e. Not started
 - f. Unable to tell from government and civil society responses
3. **What happened?** Describe, in a cohesive narrative, the starting point, progress, and current level of completion. This narrative:
 - Includes a basic description of what this commitment was supposed to achieve and what policy it aimed to improve.
 - Puts the commitment into context for the non-expert.
 - Answers in simple language, "Where was this commitment before OGP? Where is it after OGP?"
 - Clarifies the standard of judgment of completion based on a precise reading of the commitment text.
 - Lays out the government viewpoint.
 - Lays out the non-government viewpoint, and differentiates this from the government's viewpoint. Analysis should be a dispassionate analysis of the objective facts of completion.
 - Includes commitment outputs, including challenges faced by government during implementation and challenges faced by stakeholders in making use of the outputs.

Important: When writing this section, please be sure to distinguish the views of different stakeholders. For example:

According to the government self-assessment and interviews with the Inter-Region Railroad Commission, data on freight and passenger rail was published in May of 2013. However, individuals from NGOs working on issues of transport, while the data platform was published in May 2013, the key data sets on freight and passenger rail frequency, tonnage, and passengers had yet to be published. An Internet Archive search by the IRM researcher found that the data had been published at that time, although the data sets were not complete for all seven national regions until December 2013.

B. Did it matter?

This section establishes the relevance of the commitment. In the narrative, please be sure to include the following information:

- What did the commitment set out to accomplish (in terms of impact, not outputs)? Was it ambitious? (See your notes from “Potential impact” above.)
- Is there any evidence that it accomplished what it set out to do? You may consider:
 - a. If stakeholders have ‘taken up’ or used the plans or actions produced by the commitment.
 - b. If members of government or civil society stakeholders have critiques of implementation of the commitment or plans on how to improve it.
 - c. Problems with the commitment’s usefulness are presented without use of emotional language.
 - d. Where innovation seems to be a possibility, it is also noted. Both the “good” and the “bad” are included.

C. Recommendations

1. [Coding] Should the commitment (or activities related to the commitment) be included in the next action plan, even if in modified form?
 - a. Further action required in next action plan.
 - b. No further action required in next action plan.
2. [Narrative] Describe the next steps for this commitment and more specific recommendations. This section:
 - May include relevant recommendations from stakeholders, but needs to make clear that these are from stakeholders, not from the IRM researcher.
 - Establishes the IRM researcher’s views as an informed expert and attributed to the “IRM researcher.”
 - Do not describe problems, but respond to problems identified in the prior section.
 - Should explicitly refer to the OGP action plan and what actions can be taken in the next action plan.

Good recommendations should model good commitments. They should be specific, measurable, actionable, and incremental. Bullets are recommended for ease of reading.

V. Process: self-assessment

This section evaluates performance with reference to the following requirements.

OGP Guiding Text: All participating OGP governments are to publish an annual progress report approximately three months after the end of the first 12 months of action plan implementation.

This report should be made publicly available in the local language(s) and in English and deposited on the OGP portal. (See Articles of Governance, Addendum C.)

All countries are required to have at least a two-week public comment period on draft self-assessment reports before finalizing, for public input on implementation performance into account.

Countries are to report on their consultation efforts as part of the self-assessment, and the IRM is to examine the application of these principles in practice.

This report should assess government performance in living up to its OGP commitments, according to the substance and timelines elaborated in its country action plan.

Each country self-assessment report should be drafted with the following elements in mind: Reaffirmation of Responsibility for Openness, Relationship of the Action Plan with Grand Challenge Areas, etc. (Guiding Principles for Government Self-Assessment).

Please fill out the chart below and add brief narrative text describing qualitative aspects of the research such as:

- Quality of public comment period.
- Quality of the self-assessment report.

V.1: Self-assessment checklist

Was the annual progress report published?	Y/N
Was it done according to schedule? (Due 30 Sept. for most governments, 30 March for Cohort 1.)	Y/N
Is the report available in the administrative language(s)?	Y/N
Is the report available in English?	Y/N
Did the government provide a two-week public comment period on draft self-assessment reports?	Y/N
Were any public comments received?	Y/N
Is the report deposited in the OGP portal?	Y/N
Did the self-assessment report include review of consultation efforts during action plan development?	Y/N
Did the self-assessment report include review of consultation efforts during action plan implementation?	Y/N
Did the self-assessment report include a description of the public comment period during the development of the self-assessment?	Y/N
Did the report cover all of the commitments?	Y/N

Did it assess completion of each commitment according to the timeline and milestones in the action plan?	Y/N
Did the report respond to the IRM key recommendations (2015+ only)?	Y/N

V.2: Summary of additional information [narrative]

An example:

The government self-assessment was published on 23 April. While as of July 2013, the Taprobani Transparency Agency (TTA) had not released information on the consultation processes leading to the drafting of the action plan, upon the author's request the TTA made available its report on the self-assessment process. The information is not publicly available because it has not yet been officially approved. CSOs at the Tarachi Stakeholder Forum stated that one commitment is missing from the government's self-assessment report and that government did not explain or discuss the process that led to reducing the number of commitments from eight to seven. Finally, stakeholders at the Galibi forum stated that the entire OGP process in Taprobane has been carried out in English, which may exclude views from many citizens who are not conversant in English.

V.3: Follow-up on recommendations (2015 +)

OGP Guiding Text: Starting in the second year of assessments, reports shall also include a section for follow-up on recommendations issued in previous reports. This follow-up process will also be carried out in accordance with the principles set out in this document.

Here, you will insert key recommendations from your last report and establish whether the respective government addressed these key concerns either directly in its action plan or in its self-assessment.

VI. Country context

This section places the action plan commitments in the broader national context and discusses the concrete next steps for the next action plan. In its final form, this section usually has the following three parts.

VI.1: Country context

Describe any significant relevant actions (negative or positive) not captured in country commitments, relevant to its participation in OGP and the four OGP values (access to information, participation, accountability, technology for openness and accountability) [Narrative].

As examples, significant events might include whistleblowing cases, new laws, or widespread new citizen-led movements. The emphasis of the IRM report is on the development and implementation of the OGP action plan. However, to ensure the credibility of the report and of OGP more broadly and to inform future versions of the action plan, researchers are asked to briefly take into account significant actions not covered by the action plan which affect OGP values and the country's participation in the Partnership.

VI.2: Stakeholder priorities

[Narrative] Based on the finding of prior sections, please address the following two main themes.

[Narrative] First, what were the stakeholder priorities from the current action plan? This question asks which of the commitments or included themes were considered to be the most important. These can be high priority commitments that were successfully implemented or that should be carried forward.

[Narrative] Second, what are the stakeholder priorities for the next action plan? This question asks which themes or areas stakeholders would like to see in future action plans that were not addressed in the first plan. These should be high priority themes that are affecting the country, according to the information included in the country context.

VI.3: Scope of action plan in relation to national context

While it is not the job of the IRM as a whole to tell governments and civil society organizations what can or cannot be in action plans, the IRM Guiding Principles do require the IRM to identify, “The extent to which the action plan and its commitments reflect, in a country-specific way, the OGP values of transparency, accountability, and civic participation, as articulated in the OGP Declaration of Principles and the Articles of Governance.”

In that sense, the author should make constructive comments about areas or policies that might be considered in light of the national context. These might be “headline” issues that have not been part of the action plan thus far. These should be framed in terms of practical areas that can be acted on in a two-year time frame, but recommendations on specific commitments or activities should be presented in the next section.

VII. General recommendations

Section 7 recommends general next steps for OGP in general (rather than specific commitments).

VII.1: Crosscutting recommendations

This section allows the researcher to make crosscutting, prioritized recommendations in a descriptive narrative or bulleted lists. These need not be exhaustive and should instead focus on high-level messages for principal actors. In that sense, it should not repeat the individual recommendations for commitments below.

Well-written commitments will identify the actors clearly, be organized under sub-headings, and address incremental, SMART steps the government can take in the next two years. These recommendations can address additional sources of opinion that should be included in the next iteration of the action plan, multi-stakeholder consultation, self-assessment, and post-implementation processes) or specific actions in the different areas of open government.

OGP guiding text: Technical recommendations regarding how countries can improve implementation of each commitment and the plan as a whole, as well as how to better realize the values and principles of OGP, with specific reference to the OGP Articles of Governance and the OGP Declaration of Principles. Recommendations can cover any issues of process and implementation of the action plan.

VII.2: Box with top SMART recommendations

Beginning in 2014, all OGP IRM reports should include five key recommendations about the next OGP action planning cycle. Governments participating in OGP will be required to respond to these key recommendations in their annual self-assessments. Further guidance on this will be issued to IRM researchers in 2015.

VIII. Sources

A. Interviews and focus groups

Each national researcher will carry out a minimum of two focus groups at the national level with a variety of stakeholders. It is recommended that at least one of the meetings take place with civil society organizations that are not considered those already heavily involved in OGP. At least one of the stakeholder meetings should involve non-government individuals and organizations that have been close to the OGP process. Additionally, researchers perform specific interviews with responsible agencies when the commitments require more information than provided in the self-assessment or accessible online.

Please describe the considerations taken into account when selecting national level stakeholders [Narrative].

For each focus group or stakeholder national-level meetings please provide the following [Short responses]:

- Source. If anonymous, explain why.
- Date of interaction
- Attendees
- Format of interaction (e.g. interview, focus group, workshop)
- Synopsis of meeting

In a select number of countries, after consultation with the IRM staff, the researchers opt for an alternative to a second stakeholder meeting. In these cases, there are substitute activities. If this is the case, for this question describe the alternative and the arrangements undertaken to carry out the research and include wide stakeholder views.

If researchers wish to substitute a stakeholder meeting with another format, they should communicate this to IRM staff.

B. Document library

The IRM will use a publically accessible Google (or equivalent) library. The IRM team will create a page for each country and send the national researcher detailed instructions for how to upload important documents used in their research. Then, the researcher will be able to use those website permalinks to cite in the text of their report.

C. Survey-based data (optional)

Carrying out a survey can be helpful in gauging the interest of national-level stakeholders in OGP commitments. However, it is not expected that a national researcher would carry out this survey.

If an online survey was carried out, this section provides links and provides the results of the survey, including number of respondents and findings.

IX. 2014+ assessments only

In September 2012, OGP decided to begin strongly encouraging participating governments to adopt ambitious commitments in relation to their performance in the OGP eligibility criteria. From 2014 onwards, the IRM will document steps to improve country performance on OGP eligibility criteria as part of their action plans. The OGP Support Unit’s annual review of eligibility criteria will remain the primary authority for determining and discussing OGP country performance on eligibility criteria. The IRM reports will have a more limited discussion of the context surrounding progress or regress on specific criteria at the country level each year, based on public feedback. As a basis for this discussion, the IRM will collate information on eligibility.

Criteria	Measure	Source	2010 Score	2012 Score	Trend?
Fiscal Transparency	Publish Executive’s Budget Proposal	Open Budget Index	2010 Open Budget Index	2012 Open Budget Index	Improved, Worsened, No Change
	Publish Audit Report	Open Budget Index	2010 Open Budget Index	2012 Open Budget Index	Improved, Worsened, No Change
Access to Information	Existence of Law	Right2info.org	Y/N	Y/N	Improved, Worsened, No Change
Disclosures by Senior Public Officials	Disclosure by Politicians	Djankov et al.	Djankov et al.	???	Improved, Worsened, No Change
	Income and Assets Declaration	U4/CMI	U4/CMI	???	Improved, Worsened, No Change
Citizen Engagement	“Political Participation”	Economist Intelligence Unit	2010 Democracy Index	2012 Democracy Index	Improved, Worsened, No Change

These questions are asked once for each country, rather than for each of the individual commitments. Dates of eligibility requirements documented will change from year to year and specific sources are subject to revision by Steering Committee members. For each of these, the IRM researcher will have space to describe elements pertinent to each criterion that may not be caught in the raw “score.” Since the members of the OGP Steering Committee choose the eligibility criteria, changing the actual eligibility requirements is outside of the scope of the IRM.

Describe [Narrative] other actions not captured in the previous table affecting:

- Fiscal transparency
- Access to information
- Disclosures by senior public officials
- Citizen engagement

Annex A: IRM Charter

IRM Charter (Proposed)

Draft version for discussion September 2014.

“[...] / [...]” signify possible alternatives.

***Bold text** indicates IEP-recommended proposal.*

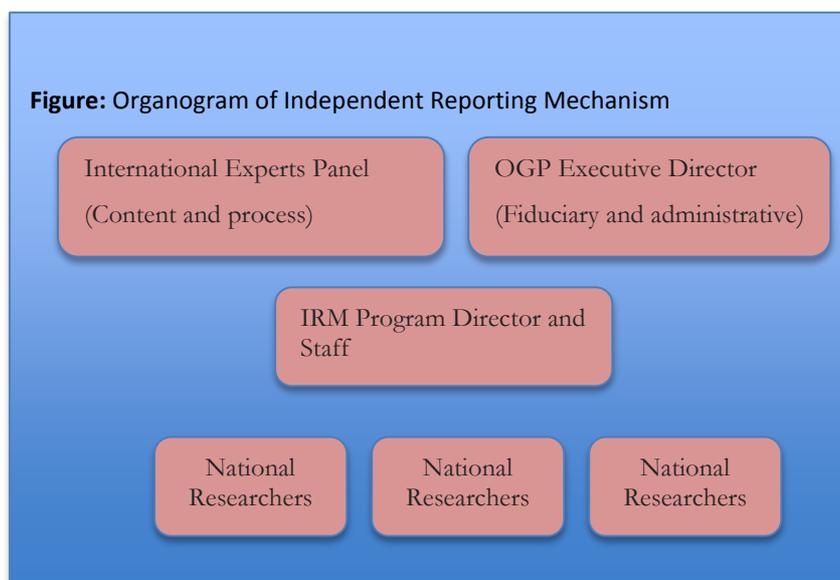
I. Overview

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) is a key means by which all stakeholders can track progress among OGP governments, as well as promote strong accountability between member governments and citizens. The IRM serves a key role in cooperation and collaboration between governments and civil society and in ensuring the credibility of OGP, and in promoting accountability for carrying out commitments outlined in national action plans. The IRM issues annual reports that assess each OGP participating government’s progress in development and implementation of its respective national action plan. The IRM is in charge of overseeing this process on behalf of OGP to ensure reports are credible and independent.

The IRM assesses each OGP participating government on development and implementation of action plans and progress in fulfilling open government principles. The IRM also develops technical recommendations. In each country, well-respected national researchers, drawn from the country whenever possible, apply a common questionnaire to evaluate these areas. The actual IRM country reports are drafted by the national researchers, based on a combination of interviews with national OGP stakeholders, analysis of relevant data, and reports by governments and civil society.

An International Expert Panel (IEP) oversees the IRM. The IEP is comprised of **[10]** individuals who are technical and policy experts. In accordance to the OGP Articles of Governance, the OGP Steering Committee appoints the individuals following an open, public nominations process. In line with OGP’s commitment to peer support, the IEP’s efforts to ensure due diligence, quality assessment, and the application of the highest standards of research help to ensure the credibility of the Partnership. At the same time, the IEP also identifies opportunities to strengthen OGP processes and national implementation of commitments.

The IEP is comprised of experts representing a diversity of regions and thematic expertise. The organogram of the IRM is found in the figure below:



The content of individual reports and the methodology of the IRM are protected from outside influences. Final say on the content of a report rests with the IEP, the IRM program staff, and the individual author. Neither the Executive Director of the Support Unit nor any member of the Steering Committee has veto authority on the reports.

Once drafted, IRM reports go through a process of initial review by the IEP. They are also provided to governments to offer their comments and feedback. No government has the power to veto any content within

IRM reports, but their initial review offers the opportunity to correct any factual errors or offer new evidence that can inform the final report.

Following IEP and government review, the IEP conducts a final review of each country report for quality control purposes, to resolve any outstanding questions or concerns, and to finalize reports for publication on the OGP website in both English and the relevant national administrative language(s). There, public comments may be received and may warrant final revision.

II. IRM governance

International expert panel (IEP)

As part of the critical function of quality control, the IEP establish and updates guidelines for the IRM to incentivize governments and civil society to “race to the top.”

1. **Membership:** The IEP will be broadly representative of OGP participating countries, with experts that represent a diversity of regions and thematic expertise related to open government. IEP members are not required to come from OGP participating countries to sit on the panel.
- **Size:** The IEP has [5 technical advisors]/[10 technical advisors]/**[5 members with a steering role and 5 with a supporting, quality control role]**.
- **Qualifications:** Due to the complexity of the role and the large number of countries that must be assessed, Technical Advisors should have substantial experience in the transparency, accountability, and civic engagement field in a number of regions, as well as experience managing multinational research projects.
- **Responsibilities:** They will have the following responsibilities:
 - a. Develop the overall assessment guidelines and the assessment template for national researchers to use.
 - b. Work with the IRM Program Manager to identify respected, nationally based researchers in each OGP participating governments to draft the independent reports.
 - c. Review draft country reports and work with national researchers to incorporate inputs from IEP and government review.
 - d. Provide final approval for report publication.
 - e. Aid the IRM staff in developing a robust and transparent system for addressing complaints from OGP countries and other stakeholders.
 - f. [Attending regularized meetings of the IEP to be held at least twice per year.]
- **Powers:** **[Any IEP can withhold any report that it does not see fit for publication.] [The IEP may also withhold the IRM brand from products written by IRM staff that the panel has not reviewed.]**
- **Limits on powers:** **[The IEP does not have powers to recommend administrative changes to the IRM.]**[The IEP, as the steering entity of the IRM, does not have the power to dismiss the IRM Program Director nor have a say in hiring the new one, should such a situation arise.]
- **Nomination and appointment:** The IRM will be overseen by an International Expert Panel, which is comprised of individuals nominated through an open, public process and selected by the OGP Steering Committee. **[Currently, the OGP Steering Committee appoints the IEP at the recommendation of the OGP Criteria and Standards Committee following an open nomination and vetting process.] [The IEP has standing to make nominations and recommendations to [nominate new candidates,] [set requirements for publication of nominees,] [set criteria for weighing individual candidates or the whole panel]].**
- **Terms:** [Initial terms for International Expert Panel members will be two years, with the possibility of a one-year extension.]/[There are no term limits for IEP members]/**[IEP members serve a two-year term and serve one year as “emeritus reviewers.” During the emeritus period, they review reports and pass on knowledge to new IEP members.]**
- **Renewal of terms and termination of contract:** **[IEP members will develop a clear, public set of transparent criteria for their own performance evaluation. The review would be applied annually by [the Executive Director]/[the IRM Program Director] in consultation with the Executive Director.] [In cases of renewal, the IRM Program Director would make recommendations to the Criteria and Standards Subcommittee for renewal of terms. In cases of termination or expiration of the annual contract, [the Executive Director]/the IRM Director would make a recommendation to [the Criteria and Standards Subcommittee] /[the Executive Director] for termination or expiration of the contract. The OGP Executive Director is legally responsible for termination of the respective IEP member’s contract.]**

- **Resignation, dismissal, and replacement:** [Resignations ahead of the end of term are to be sent to the IRM Program Director and communicated to the OGP Criteria and Standards Subcommittee.] [In cases of inactivity of more than two months, and after appropriate due diligence by IRM staff, the IRM Program Director may recommend to the IEP that the member be considered to have effectively resigned.]
- **Compensation:** Technical Advisors will be compensated for their time and direct expenses.

Staff support for the IRM

The full-time IRM Program Manager leads the IRM, supported with adequate staff. All such positions are housed within the Support Unit for administrative and fiduciary reasons, but report to the IEP in terms of content to ensure independence of thought and appearance. The Program Manager will not have a reporting relationship to the director of the Support Unit and the Subcommittee on Criteria and Standards in terms of intellectual products, although they will maintain a strong working relationship with both in order to keep the Support Unit and the Steering Committee informed of the progress.

The Criteria and Standards Subcommittee oversees and has input into the Program Director's hiring.

The IRM Program Director's responsibilities include:

1. Working to convene the IEP in person/by phone and staff for ongoing business;
2. Maintaining and updating the process for identifying national researchers;
3. Hiring national researchers in each of the OGP countries;
4. Developing, updating, and applying the IRM template;
5. Developing detailed guidance for national researchers and providing training, coaching and feedback as necessary to IRM researchers;
6. Identifying and rolling out tools to help national researchers collect IRM inputs within OGP countries;
7. Publishing all reports in a timely, consistent fashion;
8. Briefing the Criteria and Standards Subcommittee and Steering Committee as appropriate;
9. Reviewing and finalizing reports in tandem with the IEP;
10. Developing relevant products derived from OGP data, as appropriate.

[While the Program Director is legally an at-will employee, subject to resignation or termination without notice,] [the IEP will be confidentially informed of reasons for termination of employment]/[IRM Program Director should only be dismissed as a result of _____ standards.]

Criteria and Standards Subcommittee of the OGP Steering Committee

[The Criteria and Standards Subcommittee of the OGP Steering Committee will oversee the selection and vetting process for the IEP. This includes identifying the selection criteria and having them approved by the Steering Committee, short-listing and interviewing nominees after an open nominations process, and providing a final set of recommendations on IEP panel members to the full Steering Committee for approval.]

[The Criteria and Standards Subcommittee will also oversee the hiring of the IRM Program Director.] / **[The Executive Director oversees the hiring of the IRM Program Director with the input of the Criteria and Standards Subcommittee and the IEP.]**

[The Criteria and Standards Subcommittee develops definitions and guidelines on OGP eligibility criteria, reporting requirements, and the implications of IRM findings (for example, defining the consequences of a negative IRM report).]

[Finally, the Criteria and Standards Subcommittee will maintain a watching brief over the IRM to ensure that the IEP, project management team, and national researchers are able to publish their reports, achieve objectives, and that the reports maintain a high standard of quality and accuracy.]

No more than once [annually]/**[every two years]**, the Criteria and Standards Subcommittee will revisit and, where necessary, revise the IRM Guiding Principles Document as well as provide official guidance to the IEP and IRM staff, subject to approval of the Steering Committee.

National researchers

IRM national researchers are hired through an open recruitment process, based on transparent public criteria. This open recruitment will supplement the existing pool of researchers that OGP partner organizations have

already identified. Candidates will be short-listed after an open call based on this broad set of qualifications by the IRM project manager, overseen by the IEP.

The IRM Program Director oversees the process of conducting interviews, checking references and working with IEP technical experts to make a final selection of national researchers for each country. Further details on the national expert selection process are to be made public.

Whenever possible, national researchers should be from—and currently working in—the country of study. Candidates should have the following:

- A background in academia or public policy, with demonstrated experience conducting research for publication nationally, regionally, or internationally;
- Specific experience working on public policy issues related to governance, transparency, accountability, or public participation more broadly, as well as experience working with and engaging civil society, the government, and the private sector; and
- A demonstrated capacity and willingness to engage a broad range of stakeholders in a non-partisan and objective fashion.

While governments will not have veto power over any particular expert's nomination, they will be invited to provide feedback on the shortlist of national researcher candidates for the sole purpose of identifying any information that might present a conflict of interest or draw into question the expertise of particular candidates.

As appropriate, the IRM may engage civil society members to provide feedback on the national researcher candidate shortlist.

Governments, CSOs, and other stakeholders in the IRM

During the research process, national researchers will use a variety of methods to gather data. Among the most important will be participatory research, such as focus groups and interviews, to solicit the broadest possible feedback of relevant stakeholders, especially civil society and the private sector. At a minimum, it will include stakeholders involved in the drafting of the OGP plan and those directly affected by commitments. Through these processes, CSOs and other stakeholders will be able to evaluate the focus, development, and progress of the action plan.

Governments will also be invited to review IRM reports in draft form before they are finalized. While governments will not have veto power over any section of these reports, they will have the opportunity to offer additional information, clarifications, and other evidence that IRM experts will then take into account before finalizing the draft reports for publication. Once published, there will be a space on the OGP website for broader public comment on reports.

All countries will respond to IRM reports by leveraging IRM recommendations to improve performance and implementation of current action plans. Countries also will report on their reform and action plan progress within the next annual self-assessment reporting cycle. In line with OGP's commitment to peer support, these countries will also benefit from OGP's community of extensive technical assistance providers and peer support as they work to implement their OGP commitments and analyze and implement IRM recommendations.

Disclosure policy

OGP operates on a presumption of openness in all of its activities. It must favor openness over any approach which advocates secrecy. The OGP disclosure policy was developed with input from the OGP community and applies to all information held by the OGP Support Unit, Steering Committee and subcommittees.

The IRM upholds this as stated in the general OGP Disclosure Policy. Exceptions provided for in the General Policy are as follows and may have particular resonance in the administration of the IRM:

1. Information received by OGP which has an explicit expectation of confidentiality;
2. Information which, if disclosed, would do identifiable harm to the safety or security of an individual, or violate his or her rights or privacy;
3. Information that in OGP's view, if disclosed, would demonstrably inhibit candid policy dialogue with governments, donors, communities or partners;
4. Internal pre-decisional policy documents that are not available for public consultation. Pre-decisional policy documents not subject to public consultation will be archived and available on request after three years.

III. IRM Reporting

Objectives

IRM reports are intended to help promote stronger accountability between citizens and their governments, and ensure governments are living up to the commitments made in their OGP country action plans, as well as OGP process requirements. In essence, they provide a “snapshot” view of the national action plan development and implementation process.

IRM reports will be prepared every year for each participating government. Reports are to be published for comment seven months after each year of implementation. Midterm progress reports aim to provide learning for the next iteration of the action plan (in addition to final implementation). Shorter closeout reports are to provide end-of-term accountability for each OGP participating country.

The following “Guiding Principles” aid the IRM in its work:

1. The independent reports will be elaborated in a transparent, objective, non-intrusive, impartial, and apolitical manner. IRM researchers will have access to key decision makers within assessed countries.
2. The independent reports will contribute to advancing open government internationally by encouraging dialogue between citizens and their respective governments and by sharing best practices, achievements, and challenges in the implementation of country action plans among all stakeholders.
3. Key measures of success for the IRM will be (1) public dialogue on IRM findings by governments and civil society and (2) whether and how much progress was made on recommendations contained previous reports.
4. The IRM reports will not define standards for use as preconditions for cooperation or assistance, or to rank countries.
5. The IRM and IEP’s work in developing their methodology will be open and participatory with relevant stakeholders.

Scope of reports

The IRM assessments will highlight successes in achieving action plan objectives, will detail opportunities, challenges, and any weaknesses in each of the three substantive areas, and will include specific recommendations for improvement. The IEP will endeavor to prepare reports in a way that is complementary to independent monitoring efforts by civil society and other related multilateral mechanisms. Various public audiences will understand the reports easily within each country (NGOs in both rural and urban areas, as well as citizens, the media, etc.).

Accordingly, IRM reports will provide insight into several areas, with emphasis on development and implementation of action plans:

- The extent to which the action plan and its commitments reflect, in a country-specific way, the OGP values of transparency, accountability, and civic participation, as articulated in the OGP Declaration of Principles and the Articles of Governance.
- Wherever relevant, IRM reports may reflect actions or measures relevant to the country’s participation in OGP that were not originally reflected in the action plan.
- The degree to which OGP governments are following OGP process requirements and guidance in the development and implementation of their plans, in keeping with the Articles of Governance (Addendum C).
- Progress made on the articulation and implementation of each commitment and the plan as a whole, according to milestones laid out by the government in its action plan.
- Technical recommendations regarding how countries can improve implementation of each commitment and the plan as a whole, as well as how to better realize the values and principles of OGP, with specific reference to the OGP Articles of Governance and the OGP Declaration of Principles. Recommendations are to cover all of the preceding bullets under scope.
- In September 2012, OGP decided to begin strongly encouraging participating governments to adopt commitments that stretch beyond current practice in relation to their performance in the OGP eligibility criteria. From 2014 onwards, the IRM will document steps to improve country performance on OGP eligibility criteria as part of their action plans. The OGP Support Unit’s annual review of eligibility criteria will remain the primary authority for determining and discussing OGP country performance on eligibility criteria. The IRM reports will have a more limited discussion of the context surrounding progress or regress on specific criteria at the country level each year, based on citizen feedback.

- Starting in the second year of assessments, reports shall also include a section for follow-up on recommendations issued in previous reports. This follow-up process will also be carried out in accordance with the principles set out in this document.

Overall reporting approach

The IRM report templates will incorporate the above criteria. The IEP will work with national researchers to ensure that they strictly adhere to these guidelines in their reporting. The IEP establishes and updates quality-based guidelines to inform the IRM report preparation process, allowing it to highlight achievements and best practices, as well as challenges and substantial weakness in the above areas.

The IRM reports are meant to complement and support independent monitoring of the commitments by civil society in each country, and provide useful recommendations to enhance government performance. For example:

1. All research for the elaboration of the reports will be conducted in a way that incorporates the views of different public and private national stakeholders involved in, impacted by, and interested in the development and implementation of the country action plans.
2. National researchers will work in culturally, nationally, and contextually appropriate ways to convey information and to engage all relevant stakeholders in the elaboration of independent reports.
3. In order to be able to incorporate all different domestic views in the independent reports, the IEP will strive to make use of any relevant information and communication technology tools available.
4. IRM will listen to and take into account on-going citizen, civil society, and related multilateral monitoring efforts.
5. Reports will be produced in a form that facilitates easy monitoring and comparison over time, e.g. commitment-by-commitment, recommendation-by-recommendation.
6. Reports will be written to be easily understandable by the broader public in each country. Consistent with the OGP Articles of Governance, IRM reports are to be made publically available in the national administrative language(s) as well as English.

The IRM reports will be informed by consultations with a wide range of different stakeholders. The IRM's primary role is to listen to as many people as possible and to make an overall assessment based on these views, information provided by governments (including self assessment reports), and the expertise of the IEP. Whenever possible, the IRM should provide for review and input of assessment findings by members of civil society before and after publication.

IRM report executive summaries

IRM assessments will feature an executive summary in a common format to be established by the IEP. The executive summaries will offer the basis for cross-country comparison and progress over time on the elements set out in "Scope" of the "IRM reports" Section (above). Executive summaries should allow for easy comprehension by a large international audience, both in content and visual terms. The executive summaries will offer a quick, visually compelling, and pithy sense of each IRM report, providing the basis for rapid evaluation of country performance over time and across countries.

Publication

- The independent reports will be made available publicly in the national administrative language(s) and in English.
- Taking into account budgetary constraints, translation costs, and the length of action plans, the progress reports should aim to be as concise and precise as possible.
- The independent reports will be comprised of an executive summary and the full independent report, with any annexes the IEP deems appropriate. End-of-term reports will not have an executive summary.
- Data collected during the IRM process appropriate for a database should be available following open data principles.

Table: Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) governance matrix

This governance matrix is a visual account of the roles and responsibilities of the various parties who contribute to various duties and decisions of the IRM.

	Steering Committee	Criteria and Standards Subcommittee	OGP country	IEP	IRM Program Manager	National Researcher	Support Unit Director
Guiding documents							
Development and revision of concept note, guiding principles	Approves	Develops			Coordinates		
Periodic review of IRM by Criteria and Standards Subcommittee		Executes		Provides input	Provides data and findings		Coordinates
Independent Experts Panel							
IEP membership	Approves	Proposes		Recruits additional members	Recruits and executes		
Regular IRM meetings			Attends	Attends	Coordinates		
IRM Program Administration							
Hiring of IRM program manager	Approves	Proposes					Coordinates
Implementation of IRM work plan (meeting deadlines, etc.)	Receives reports	Receives reports		Provides guidance (see “Note” below)	Executes		Oversees (see “Note” below)
IRM website					Provides content		Manages
National-level research process							
National researcher management (identification, onboarding, guidance, renewal)			Advises	Approves, selects, and guides	Executes		
Training				Advises	Executes	Attends	
IRM Method							
Questionnaire development				Approves	Develops	Provides feedback	
National research process				Approves	Coaches	Executes	
Official and public comment				Advises program manager and approves	Coordinates	Facilitates and integrates	

Publication of reports				Peer review and final approval	Final draft and publication	Drafting	
Promoting national reports				Executes (esp. Sr. Adv.)	Coordinates		
Integration of recommendations into future action plans			Executes			Advises	Advises
Formal complaints and ATI processes							
Fields complaints on IRM process from civil society and governments		Advises	Submits comments	Addresses	Collates		Advises
Official ATI requests relevant to IRM				Responds (if necessary)	Processes (1 st response)		Provides guidance
Feedback and learning							
Regular progress reports				Receives	Produces		Reviews
Synthesis report		Advises		Approves	Writes		Reviews

The IRM manager reports to the Executive Director of the Support Unit for administrative aspects of daily work, including:

- Personnel and human resource issues (including approval of contracts and administrative hires)
- Fundraising (where appropriate)
- Annual budgeting and expense approval over X threshold
- Annual work planning and submitting key deliverables by agreed-upon timelines
- Coordination on travel, calendar, and communications

The IRM Manager independently reports to the IEP on the following issues:

- IRM research method
- Coordination of and with the IEP
- Hiring of the IRM researchers
- Content of IRM findings
- Publications

Annex B: Selected Articles of Governance

I. Background and Objectives

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is a voluntary, multi-stakeholder international initiative that aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to their citizenry to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. In pursuit of these goals, OGP provides an international forum for dialogue and sharing ideas and experience among governments, civil society organizations, and the private sector, all of which contribute to a common pursuit of open government. OGP stakeholders include participating governments as well as civil society and private sector entities that support the principles and mission of OGP.

II. Participation in OGP

Expectations of OGP participating governments

All OGP participating governments commit to meeting five common expectations. These are that they:

1. Endorse the high-level Open Government Declaration;
2. Make concrete commitments, as part of a country action plan, that are ambitious and go beyond a country's current practice;
3. Develop country action plans through a multi-stakeholder process, with the active engagement of citizens and civil society;
4. Commit to a self-assessment and independent reporting on the country's progress; and,
5. Contribute to the advancement of open government in other countries through sharing of best practices, expertise, technical assistance, technologies and resources, as appropriate.

OGP participating governments are expected to uphold the values and principles articulated in the Open Government Declaration, and to consistently and continually advance open governance for the well being of their citizens. Should the IRM process find that a participating government repeatedly (in two consecutive IRM reports) acts contrary to OGP process and to its action plan commitments (Addenda B and C), fails to adequately address issues raised by the IRM, or is taking actions that undermine the values and principles of OGP, the Steering Committee may upon recommendation of the Criteria and Standards Subcommittee review the participation of that government in OGP. Both the Subcommittee and Steering Committee processes will include direct conversations with governments under such review. Specifically, in order to safeguard the integrity and legitimacy of OGP, the Steering Committee may review the participation of governments in OGP if they fail to resolve these issues:

1. Should a participating government fall below the minimum eligibility criteria (Addenda A, updated each year by the OGP Support Unit) that government should take immediate and explicit steps to address issues so that it passes the threshold within one year.
2. Should the IRM process find that a participating government repeatedly (for two consecutive reports) acts contrary to OGP process or its action plan commitments (Addenda B and C), and fails to adequately address issues raised by the IRM, the Steering Committee may upon recommendation of the Criteria and Standards Subcommittee review the participation of said government in OGP.

Steering Committee engagement with participating governments should emphasize the vertical accountability between a government and its citizens that is the founding principle of OGP.

The Steering Committee will issue a public report about its final decision on the participation of any government.

III. OGP action plans and reporting

Action plans should be for the duration of two years, although individual commitments contained in these action plans may be for more or less than two years, depending on the nature of the commitment. However, each action plan should include one-year and two-year benchmarks, so that governments, civil society organizations, and the IRM (see below), have a common set of time-bound metrics to assess progress. As living documents, action plans may be updated as needed based on ongoing consultations with civil society. Any updates must be duly noted in the official version of the action plan on the OGP website.

All OGP participating governments are to publish an interim self-assessment report approximately three months after the end of the first year of action plan implementation. This report should follow OGP guidelines in assessing the government's performance in meeting its OGP commitments, according to the substance and timelines set out in its national action plan. This report should be made publicly available in the

local language(s) and in English and should be published on the OGP website. A comprehensive self-assessment report will be required after two years of action plan implementation. For countries that have joined OGP through 2012, interim and comprehensive self-assessment reports will be required after the government's second OGP action plan. For countries that have joined OGP in 2013 and onwards, self-assessment reports will be required in the implementation of their first action plan.

As a complement to the participating government self-assessment report, an independent progress report is to be written by well-respected governance researchers, preferably from each OGP participating country. Researchers are to use a common OGP independent progress report instrument and guidelines, based on a combination of interviews with local OGP stakeholders as well as desk-based analysis. This report is to be shared with a small International Experts Panel (IEP) (appointed by the OGP Steering Committee) for peer review to ensure that the highest standards of research and due diligence have been applied. The draft report is then shared with the relevant OGP government for comment. After receiving comments on the draft report from each government, the researcher and the IEP finalize the independent progress report for publication on the OGP portal. OGP-participating governments may also issue a formal public response to the independent report on the OGP portal once it is published. The executive summary of the independent progress report is to be made publicly available in the local language(s) and in English.

Disclosure policy

OGP operates on a presumption of openness in all of its activities. The disclosure policy outlined in Addendum E applies to all information held by or on behalf of the OGP Support Unit, Steering Committee and subcommittees, and must favor openness over any approach which advocates secrecy.

Addenda

Addendum B: OGP country commitments

All OGP participating governments are to develop OGP national action plans that elaborate concrete commitments over a two-year period.

Governments should begin their OGP national action plans by sharing existing efforts related to their chosen grand challenge(s), including specific open government strategies and ongoing programs. Action plans should then set out governments' OGP commitments, which stretch government practice beyond its current baseline with respect to the relevant grand challenge. These commitments may build on existing efforts, identify new steps to complete on-going reforms, or initiate action in an entirely new area. Commitments in country action plans should be ambitious in nature. An ambitious commitment is defined as one that, once completed, will show a demonstrable advancement from action plan to action plan in the grand challenge areas proposed by OGP through openness, transparency, civic participation, and accountability. In the context of pre-existing commitments, ambition is defined as expediting the time frame for completion of the stated goals of a commitment.

OGP commitments are to be structured around a set of five “grand challenges” that governments face. OGP recognizes that all countries are starting from different baselines. Countries are charged with selecting the grand challenges and related concrete commitments that most relate to their unique country contexts. No action plan, standard or specific commitments are to be forced on any country.

The five OGP grand challenges are:

1. Improving Public Services—measures that address the full spectrum of citizen services by fostering public service improvement or private sector innovation, including health, education, criminal justice, water, electricity, telecommunications, and any other relevant service areas
2. Increasing Public Integrity—measures that address corruption and public ethics, access to information, campaign finance reform, and media and civil society freedom
3. More Effectively Managing Public Resources—measures that address budgets, procurement, natural resources, and foreign assistance
4. Creating Safer Communities—measures that address public safety, the security sector, disaster and crisis response, and environmental threats
5. Increasing Corporate Accountability—measures that address corporate responsibility on issues such as the environment, anti-corruption, consumer protection, and community engagement

While the nature of concrete commitments under any grand challenge area should be flexible and allow for each country's unique circumstances, all OGP commitments should reflect four core open government principles:

- Transparency: information on government activities and decisions is open, comprehensive, timely, freely available to the public, and meets basic open data standards (e.g. raw data, machine readability).
- Citizen Participation: governments seek to mobilize citizens to engage in public debate, provide input, and make contributions that lead to more responsive, innovative, and effective governance.
- Accountability: there are rules, regulations and mechanisms in place that call upon government actors to justify their actions, act upon criticisms or requirements made of them, and accept responsibility for failure to perform with respect to laws or commitments.
- Technology and Innovation: governments embrace the importance of providing citizens with open access to technology, the role of new technologies in driving innovation, and the importance of increasing the capacity of citizens to use technology.

Countries may focus their commitments at the national, local and/or sub-national level—wherever they believe their open government efforts are to have the greatest impact.

Recognizing that achieving open government commitments often involves a multi-year process, governments should attach time frames and benchmarks to their commitments that indicate what is to be accomplished each year, whenever possible.

To encourage the sharing of best practice and innovation and maintain high standards, all OGP countries are to participate in working-level sessions with other participating governments and the OGP Steering Committee during the action plan development phase.

Through presentations and discussions, governments with initially less ambitious proposals are to be able to identify gaps and address them early. Peer consultation sessions also are to enable participants to identify the need for additional feedback from relevant technical experts on specific commitment areas, which the OGP networking mechanism can help facilitate.

Addendum C: guidelines for public consultation on country commitments

OGP participants commit to developing their country action plans through a multi-stakeholder process, with the active engagement of citizens and civil society. Taking account of relevant national laws and policies, OGP participants agree to develop their country commitments according to the following principles:

i. Consultation during development of action plan

- Availability of timeline: Countries are to make the details of their public consultation process and timeline available (online at minimum) prior to the consultation
- Adequate notice: Countries are to consult the population with sufficient forewarning
- Awareness-raising: Countries are to undertake OGP awareness-raising activities to enhance public participation in the consultation
- Multiple channels: Countries are to consult through a variety of mechanisms—including online and through in-person meetings—to ensure the accessibility of opportunities for citizens to engage
- Breadth of consultation: Countries are to consult widely with the national community, including civil society and the private sector, and to seek out a diverse range of views
- Documentation and feedback: Countries are to make a summary of the public consultation and all individual written comment submissions available online

ii. Consultation during implementation

- Consultation during implementation: Countries are to identify a forum to enable regular multi-stakeholder consultation on OGP implementation—this can be an existing entity or a new one.

Countries must report on their consultation efforts as part of their self-assessment reports, and the IRM is to examine the application of these principles in practice.

Addendum D: Open Government Declaration

As members of OGP, committed to the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Convention against Corruption, and other applicable international instruments related to human rights and good governance:

We acknowledge that people all around the world are demanding more openness in government. They are calling for greater civic participation in public affairs, and seeking ways to make their governments more transparent, responsive, accountable, and effective.

We recognize that countries are at different stages in their efforts to promote openness in government, and that each of us pursues an approach consistent with our national priorities and circumstances and the aspirations of our citizens.

We accept responsibility for seizing this moment to strengthen our commitments to promote transparency, fight corruption, empower citizens, and harness the power of new technologies to make government more effective and accountable.

We uphold the value of openness in our engagement with citizens to improve services, manage public resources, promote innovation, and create safer communities. We embrace principles of transparency and open government with a view toward achieving greater prosperity, well-being, and human dignity in our own countries and in an increasingly interconnected world.

Together, we declare our commitment to:

Increase the availability of information about governmental activities. Governments collect and hold information on behalf of people, and citizens have a right to seek information about governmental activities. We commit to promoting increased access to information and disclosure about governmental activities at every level of government. We commit to increasing our efforts to systematically collect and publish data on government spending and performance for essential public services and activities. We commit to pro-actively provide high-value information, including raw data, in a timely manner, in formats that the public can easily locate, understand and use, and in formats that facilitate reuse.

We commit to providing access to effective remedies when information or the corresponding records are improperly withheld, including through effective oversight of the recourse process. We recognize the importance of open standards to promote civil society access to public data, as well as to facilitate the interoperability of government information systems. We commit to seeking feedback from the public to identify the information of greatest value to them, and pledge to take such feedback into account to the maximum extent possible.

Support civic participation. We value public participation of all people, equally and without discrimination, in decision making and policy formulation. Public engagement, including the full participation of women, increases the effectiveness of governments, which benefit from people's knowledge, ideas and ability to provide oversight. We commit to making policy formulation and decision making more transparent, creating and using channels to solicit public feedback, and deepening public participation in developing, monitoring and evaluating government activities. We commit to protecting the ability of not-for-profit and civil society organizations to operate in ways consistent with our commitment to freedom of expression, association, and opinion. We commit to creating mechanisms to enable greater collaboration between governments and civil society organizations and businesses.

Implement the highest standards of professional integrity throughout our administrations.

Accountable government requires high ethical standards and codes of conduct for public officials. We commit to having robust anti-corruption policies, mechanisms and practices, ensuring transparency in the management of public finances and government purchasing, and strengthening the rule of law. We commit to maintaining or establishing a legal framework to make public information on the income and assets of national, high ranking public officials. We commit to enacting and implementing rules that protect whistleblowers. We commit to making information regarding the activities and effectiveness of our anticorruption prevention and enforcement bodies, as well as the procedures for recourse to such bodies, available to the public, respecting the confidentiality of specific law enforcement information. We commit to increasing deterrents against bribery and other forms of corruption in the public and private sectors, as well as to sharing information and expertise.

Increase access to new technologies for openness and accountability. New technologies offer opportunities for information sharing, public participation, and collaboration. We intend to harness these technologies to make more information public in ways that enable people to both understand what their governments do and to influence decisions. We commit to developing accessible and secure online spaces as platforms for delivering services, engaging the public, and sharing information and ideas. We recognize that equitable and affordable access to technology is a challenge, and commit to seeking increased online and mobile connectivity, while also identifying and promoting the use of alternative mechanisms for civic engagement. We commit to engaging civil society and the business community to identify effective practices and innovative approaches for leveraging new technologies to empower people and promote transparency in government. We also recognize that increasing access to technology entails supporting the ability of governments and citizens to use it. We commit to supporting and developing the use of technological innovations by government employees and citizens alike. We also understand that technology is a complement, not a substitute, for clear, useable, and useful information.

We acknowledge that open government is a process that requires ongoing and sustained commitment. We commit to reporting publicly on actions undertaken to realize these principles, to consulting with the public on their implementation, and to updating our commitments in light of new challenges and opportunities.

We pledge to lead by example and contribute to advancing open government in other countries by sharing best practices and expertise and by undertaking the commitments expressed in this declaration on a non-binding, voluntary basis. Our goal is to foster innovation and spur progress, and not to define standards to be used as a precondition for cooperation or assistance or to rank countries. We stress the importance to the promotion of openness of a comprehensive approach and the availability of technical assistance to support capacity- and institution-building.

We commit to espouse these principles in our international engagement, and work to foster a global culture of open government that empowers and delivers for citizens, and advances the ideals of open and participatory 21st century government.