

DECEMBER 2024

# Guidance for quality assurance in monitoring and evaluation

## A. Overview

This is an outline of procedures IRMA staff will follow to assure quality in monitoring and evaluation (M&E activities) as well as learning from these activities. As such, it is a guidance document to be used by IRMA staff who are implementing these activities within their workplans. This might include staff involved directly or indirectly in M&E across the assurance, standards, executive, or communications functions, among others.

IRMA works to be a learning organization and to learn from the outputs of its M&E system including how its outputs, outcomes and impacts of the IRMA system can help IRMA to drive more transformational change over time.

### *Ways IRMA receives data*

IRMA will include the M&E inside of its activities. Information is collected primarily through the following methods, among others:

1. Through self-assessments submitted by mining operations
2. Through independent audits carried out by certification bodies
3. Through information submitted to IRMA by its formal members or other stakeholders
4. Through IRMA's internal collection of *references* to IRMA or published citations of IRMA or the IRMA standards

Information is collected and stored in internal systems. It is then further analyzed by IRMA experts for internal communications and learning. IRMA will also determine when certain aspects of these analyses are fit for external communications.

Procedures are defined in this guidance to ensure quality in outcome and impact monitoring, from collection of the information until the results of the analysis. These procedures have been written to be in line with the ISEAL Code of Good Practices.

## B. Quality assurance procedures

Quality assurance procedures should be carried out from collection of information, through to storage of the information and ensuring the privacy of data collected, through to careful analysis of the information, and finally through to how the learnings are used.

The guidance on these procedures is as follows for each of these steps:

- Collection of data
- Storage and ensuring privacy of data
- Analysis of data
- Using the results to learn and improve at IRMA

## B – 1 Collection of data

IRMA receives regular information (data) that can be used for outputs, outcomes and impacts from its members, from self-assessments, and from independent audits. In addition, IRMA proactively collects some external information as well, with a primary focus on references to or 'calls for' IRMA by external stakeholders such as companies, policy makers, and civil society, among others.

IRMA staff need to ensure that quality is upheld when these pieces of data are either proactively collected, or when this data is regularly acquired through independent audits, membership applications (or surveys or updated information shared by members), or in the confidential data received from mining operations during self-assessments.

Another set of data may be regularly acquired through the evolving IRMA Grievance mechanisms, and this also requires quality assurance and strict adherence to ensuring security and privacy of data.

The following procedures need to be followed:

### *Regularity (frequency) of collection*

- Since IRMA's independent audits are annual, or even sooner in the case of a surveillance audit, information should be collected at these intervals by ensuring that auditors are filling out the required reports in full, including all the relevant parts of the IRMA audit report that are relevant (some IRMA chapters may not be relevant and audits should duly note when this is the case) and these need to be fully collected for all indicators that are required for IRMA's M&E system.
- IRMA staff will receive auditor reports once they are filled out and should check for any possible missing or incoherent information that is relevant for M&E purposes. IRMA staff should ask the certification body for improvements, explanations, or changes made when any inconsistencies or missing or incoherent information is found. IRMA staff should approve the report only if found to be complete and accurate with respect to information that is needed for the IRMA M&E activities.

### *Validity of collected information*

- IRMA staff involved in M&E will review the M&E framework to see which of the indicators are most relevant to include in the audit reports, i.e. in assurance processes, and will consult with the IRMA Assurance Director to ensure these indicators are included in the reports received from the self-assessments or from independent audits. This may require additional guidance or changes to the reporting templates or auditor guidance.
- The updating of the guidance and any inclusion of the M&E indicators in specific reporting templates should be a collaboration between IRMA staff involved in M&E and the IRMA assurance team. Many indicators will already be embedded into reports, but slight adjustments may be required to ensure the information is valid, accurate, and relevant for M&E purposes. If indicators are not feasible to be collected via the assurance process, the two staff teams should collaborate on whether they can be collected in other IRMA processes or activities, or whether the indicator lists or protocols in the IRMA M&E Framework will require a revision or removal of such indicators.

- Where possible, digital collection methods should be used by auditors and by IRMA staff that include validation rules for data entry fields (e.g. drop-down lists for common data inputs such as regions or countries, type of entity, type of audit, dates, etc.) to reduce the likelihood of data entry errors.
- When requested by auditors, additional guidance should be given by IRMA staff to help auditors collect data that can fulfill the M&E indicators.
- IRMA staff, when receiving information from members or auditors, should do regular checks including but not limited to: 1) checking that formulas used are correct, 2) checking that units are used correctly, 3) checking that the data matches the type of data submitted previously in audits or in membership surveys or updates, 4) checking that the information provided is comparable to information provided similarly in terms of format, scope and scale, and 5) checking that the information is coherent in general with the scope and scale of the mining operation and what has been reported previously or by similar types of entities.

## B-2 Storage and ensuring privacy of data

IRMA takes the trust of its stakeholders, including its formal members and its audited organizations very seriously and will work to ensure data privacy and security in its M&E activities.

The following procedures need to be followed with regard to data storage and ensuring data privacy with regards to information that it collects regularly via assurance (including self-assessments, independent audits, and grievances/complaints formally logged in IRMA systems regarding IRMA independent audits), and in membership activities (applications, information given in updates or reporting from members, in the annual general assembly, and in surveys received from members):

- When the audit is approved and completed, it is stored in IRMA's online database that is locked and password protected. Only authorized IRMA staff have access to the reports, and two-factor authentication is set up for access.
- IRMA carries out regular protocols and works to understand the security in place by its software providers to ensure that the storage of data is secure, and the likelihood of a data breach is low.
- When all M&E activities are carried out by staff responsible for these reports, all data from the database is carried over and gathered in a limited number of Excel spreadsheets and only shared or processed by a limited number of staff that have access to these spreadsheets. The sheets are locked in folders and password protected.
- All information gathered by IRMA related to audits, membership, and other activities is all subject to the IRMA policies related to data protection and confidentiality and these policies are published on the IRMA web site.
- Access is only for IRMA staff, and no consultants or contractors have access to folders containing IRMA audit reports, information reported by IRMA formal members, or IRMA M&E analyses or data. IRMA staff are subject to IRMA confidentiality policies.
- IRMA does not delete information stored in its system and uses a system that allows for the storing the same information in multiple locations, including the cloud, to reduce the risk of losing data for system bugs. IRMA responsible staff perform regular backups of the data IRMA collects.

## B-3 Analysis of data

Analysis is the process through which stored information for IRMA members, audited organizations, or other stakeholders (e.g. stakeholder representatives that issue a formal complaint in the IRMA Grievance mechanism) are fully elaborated and put into aggregated information (data) that can talk more about the reach of IRMA, and about IRMA's outputs, outcomes and impacts.

IRMA staff responsible for M&E will compile – at least annually – an analysis on reach, scale and output of IRMA programs in an Excel spreadsheet that can be used for internal learning, and possibly for external reporting, according to the IRMA M&E Framework.

- IRMA staff will identify and ensure there is not any double counting. If double counting occurs, M&E staff will cross check and ensure that numbers including workers, volumes of minerals, or other quantitative data are separated and removed for accuracy. If needed, mining companies or other stakeholders should be consulted about fixing information or adding missing information. If there are gaps or missing data, and if this information cannot be provided at all, then IRMA can ask stakeholders or auditors for the missing value if it is available or can ask for the most recent information available. If not available at all, and included in any calculations, IRMA staff should assess how many values are being affected and then remove the items that are affected, possibly adding a footnote to the analysis if the gap creates issues.
- IRMA staff should also handle where it identifies outliers in the data. This can be done via cross checking and checking in comparison with previous years' data. When outliers are seen, IRMA staff should identify if the outlier is due to the current year or from an issue that was never detected in the previous year. If from a previous year, it may be more feasible to footnote the situation rather than to go back and fix previous year's reports especially if published. However, the outliers must be explained or rectified for the current year. These can be explained in a qualitative manner, even if the outlier is a quantitative issue.
- Validation of the analysis – where possible, IRMA staff responsible for M&E should share the analysis with other staff experts within IRMA such as in staff meetings and with the IRMA governance bodies, and/or with IRMA members. This can happen through the Annual General Assembly. Feedback should be sought where possible and integrated into the final reports.
- IRMA will publish regular M&E reports according to the schedule in its M&E Framework.

## B-4 Using results to learn and improve at IRMA

IRMA should use its results of M&E activities to learn and improve the IRMA system including its standards and assurance. For example, if indicators show that IRMA is having little uptake in certain parts of the world where mining has negative impacts on people and landscapes, IRMA can prioritize outreach to those areas. If indicators show that IRMA is achieving one outcome and not another outcome, more resources can be allocated to programs and activities that are contributing to that outcome that is not yet reached.

To support learning, the following procedures shall be followed:

- IRMA staff will seek comments on its M&E results from other staff, from the IRMA Board of Directors, and from members at regular intervals.
- When comments are received, IRMA staff will consider the relevance of these and take them into account. If required, IRMA staff will provide more clarification, especially if the comments relate to the interpretation of the results and if any results are not clear or are not interpreted correctly by staff or external stakeholders.
- When comments are received that provide additional gaps in information, these should be incorporated into future M&E activities if they help to fill in results that

might otherwise be incomplete.

- When comments are received that uncover an error in the IRMA results, IRMA should review these and correct such errors. Note that this does not refer to smaller errors such as wording or typing errors.
- When possible, IRMA should respond to these commenters and allow them to know how IRMA is taking their comment into the future M&E activities.
- Every year, IRMA senior staff should consider the learnings from the M&E results and activities and consider this in terms of IRMA effectiveness. This should be used in revisions of the IRMA Theory of Change, strategic directions, priorities, and programs.