

## NRGI Organizational Evaluation – Management Response

*December 2019*

The Natural Resource Governance Institute commissioned an evaluation in 2019 to inform development of its 2020-2025 strategy. As an evidence-driven organization, evaluations support accountability to the mission that we pursue and the partners and stakeholders with whom we work. As part of our growing Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning practice, organizational evaluations offer an important moment of reflection, learning, and adaptation.

NRGI's donors provided support to this process, financing the engagement of the external evaluator as well as NRGI staff time to participate in the assessment. Our supporters included the Open Society Foundations, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Luminate, the United Kingdom Department for International Development, and the Swiss Development Cooperation Agency.

We conducted a competitive selection process that resulted in hiring a firm to co-lead the evaluation with NRGI. Over the course of the initial phases of the evaluation, the management team determined that there was not a good fit between our ambitions and the support of the firm. We therefore ended the contract and identified a learning-focused consultant, Cathy Shutt, to work with us in view of her significant experience with our partners in the field. Because of this change, we adapted the evaluation scope and approach of the evaluation. Despite the truncated timeline, we worked to facilitate an evaluation that could generate timely inputs into the 2020-2025 strategy development process, while also garnering critical reflections and feedback on NRGI's work overall.

Working with the external evaluator, NRGI refined the study's evaluation questions to serve three key goals: to investigate the approaches put forward in our 2014-2019 strategy, reflect on our theory of change, and highlight where we needed more evidence to shape our forthcoming strategy. An Internal Advisory Group made up of staff across the organization developed the following evaluation questions:

- How and under what conditions has NRGI leveraged effectively its **'think' and 'do'** functions?
- To what extent did NRGI generate **sustainable outcomes**? If not, what could it have done differently? Were there unintended consequences from its work?
- How have disclosed **extractive sector data** (e.g., payment, contract and ownership data from mandatory disclosure or EITI and other government or company voluntary disclosures etc.) been leveraged to inform policy analysis and policy advocacy with the aim of influencing reform? What lessons can be learned?
- How effectively are we leveraging **partnerships with "influencers"** to multiply the effects of our work? How could NRGI's approach to partnerships be improved?

The consultant's methodology sought to surface key findings by triangulating insights through a range of methods: limited country case studies, surveys, remote interviews, focus groups, and document review. Due to the transition in consultants and abbreviated timeline, we were unable to conduct select country deep dives. While we are mindful of the limitations of the evaluation as a result, we nonetheless believe

that the evaluator was able to generate verifiable findings and recommendations, in by part by working iteratively with NRGi to ensure the recommendations were relevant and actionable. Because of this collaborative process, the evaluation resonated internally and served as a key influence in the development of our new strategy. We are committed to follow up work that will reinforce, unpack, or otherwise shed further light on the initial findings, as detailed below.

We are pleased to note that the evaluation identified the progress NRGi has made with regard to effectively influencing and leveraging international norms and standards, such as the EITI and Resource Governance Index (RGI) to shape national governments' incentives and policymaking. The evaluation cites particular progress with regard to increased disclosure, which we view as a key interim step in our work. Importantly, the evaluation also codifies success in mobilizing additional revenues, which have the potential to help improve development outcomes. Given the primacy of our ambition to help build domestic accountability, we value that the evaluation showed that our capacity building efforts have enabled accountability-seeking institutions to engage with and demand changes in their governments' transparency and accountability practices.

The evaluation notes that these successes are the result of effective ways of working that are unique to NRGi. We deliver on our "think and do" interventions in contextually relevant ways that leverage cross comparative rigorous knowledge. We have an increasing focus on policy implementation for long-term change in our program design and delivery. We invest in building the financial and technical capacity of accountability actors to contribute to policy reform and hold governments and companies accountable. We serve as an effective data intermediary that has been able to enhance government and accountability actors' access to and use of extractive data, increasingly through country led and problem driven approaches. We have adapted approaches to use of data for more effective uptake and policy reform influence. We create a multiplier effect leveraging access to global influencers.

Building on these successes, we will continue to:

- Work as a rigorous policy advocacy organization that delivers evidence-based policy analysis, advocacy and training, build alliances across agents of change, and offer cross-comparative perspectives.
- Focus on deepening understanding of the drivers and possible ways to address the implementation gap, and integrating that thinking into our program design.
- Continue to prioritize support to civil society as our foremost partner in driving and sustaining reform.
- Expand our evidence-based country-level analysis, with a focus on publishing collaborative and user-focused analysis that uses data to help advance public oversight or reform.
- Multiply our impact internationally and at the country level by more effectively targeting influential states, industry and multilateral/multi-stakeholder forums.

The evaluation includes important recommendations for how NRGi can leverage these strengths, and address areas for improvement. We have taken steps to integrate this thinking in our 2020-2025 strategy. This evaluation drives the following specific evolutions:

- **We will think and work more politically.** NRGi has implicitly considered political economy, power and stakeholder analysis in the design and implementation of its country programs and global advocacy. We will make these efforts more explicit going forward, particularly as we develop new country strategies. We will also integrate the lens of capture and corruption into our work. We will more effectively link our country and global work in ways that are mutually reinforcing and leverage key influencers, such as China’s influence abroad and the role of industry actors.
- **We will clarify our contributions to the natural resource governance ecosystem at the global and country levels.** In the new strategy, we updated our theory of change in order to better depict the enablers and obstacles to resource governance, and in turn the path to sustainable development outcomes, including improved voice and accountability. Within that model, we seek to disaggregate NRGi’s specific contribution to the field, and the assumptions we make about how others contribute.
- **We will clarify how we work with partners, and how we work locally and internationally to be more concerted, strategic, and impactful together.** This includes, in the development of our influencing strategies, delineating how we support and complement the work of local and international actors to advance resource governance and better coordination.

NRGi will track our progress in implementing the accepted evaluation recommendations. The Recommendation Tracking Matrix below will inform our ongoing accountability to this exercise. We share this evaluation with our partners in the field, mindful of the importance of sharing learning and evidence that can elevate the entire community seeking to advance resource governance. We welcome questions, comments, and reflections from your own experience.

## Recommendation Tracking Matrix

The following table provides a summary of the key channels through which NRGi will apply the organizational evaluation’s recommendations. While we signal direction of travel and responsiveness to the recommendations in our strategy, in the years ahead we will need to monitor implementation to ensure we are accountable. We will also track how and whether our impact is deeper because of these actions. NRGi will report on progress over the duration of the 2020-2025 Strategy. As we learn and adapt, we will share updates with partners and other actors in the field, and look forward to learning from them in turn.

Summary of Relevant Recommendations	Recommendation Implementation Mechanism	Response to Recommendations
<p>The relevant recommendations that informed the language and decisions of the strategy include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarifying NRGi’s identity and reconciling internal differences on positioning</li> <li>• Focusing NRGi on its most effective interventions and niche in the ecosystem</li> <li>• Attention to the organization’s balance in regards to operating as a “think and do” tank</li> <li>• Producing a more explicit theory of change outlining the path NRGi will take to achieve change</li> <li>• The need to make clear decisions on where NRGi should lead versus where the organization should follow others and develop parameters on effective partnerships</li> </ul>	<p>NRGi 2020-2025 Strategy (Finalized December 2019)</p>	<p>The evaluation served its intended purpose to prompt NRGi to leverage work that has been effective and to confront challenges that stand in the way of our success. NRGi’s new strategy and its subsidiary components reflected these recommendations.</p> <p>In particular, in the strategy we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developed a theory of change that articulates our role and the role of others</li> <li>• emphasized the importance of evolving our work beyond transparency</li> <li>• advanced learning from use of data</li> <li>• focused more expressly on power dynamics that influence our work</li> <li>• put forward ambitions to hone our work with influencers, and</li> <li>• seek to work in a more horizontally and vertically integrated fashion.</li> </ul> <p>Also note that our thinking on NRGi’s theory of change will continue to evolve and will likely be a site of further inquiry and assessment.</p>

<p>In 2020, NRGi will develop country strategies. In doing so, we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond to the evaluator’s call for NRGi to think and work more politically</li> <li>• Ensure that programming reflects the aforementioned updated theory of change through various corresponding theories of action</li> <li>• More explicitly incorporate partnership into program planning and activities</li> </ul>	<p>Country Strategies (forthcoming update in 2020)</p>	<p>2020 will serve as the inception year for the new NRGi strategy, and require the development of subsidiary country strategies in line with organizational priorities.</p> <p>Internal learning will be necessary to support the shift toward more political thinking and ways to implement work that builds on more robust political economy analysis, particularly in terms of NRGi’s approach.</p>
<p>Key recommendations from the organizational evaluation to be reviewed and implemented during the annual planning process (just completed for 2020 and looking ahead) include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better alignment of thinking on implementation gap and sustainability with the program design around technical policy work</li> <li>• Developing, communicating and monitoring an explicit influencing strategy/plan including the pros and cons of the Resource Governance Index (RGI) as an influencing tool</li> <li>• Building on recent successes of data use by increasing country-led participatory approaches to the use of data</li> <li>• Developing perspectives that further take into account the risks of open washing</li> <li>• Encouraging further pursuit of multi-year funding to the extent possible</li> <li>• Better enabling flexible planning cycles when necessary, particularly if made</li> </ul>	<p>Strategic Program Committee (SPC) Annual Planning Process (Completed in December 2019 for 2020)</p>	<p>During NRGi’s annual planning process (along with the mid-year planning check-in), the SPC reviews strategic and programmatic choices. We noted that several team submission respond to the evaluation recommendations. This included developing a specific influencer strategy on the OECD, support to developing civil society engagement strategies, leveraging the RGI previous findings and forthcoming interim assessments, a revamp of our communications strategy to achieve greater accessibility, and multiple projects that seek to evolve our use of data work. Following the SPC review process, we will identify specific learning priorities to track learning from this work and linked to the strategy.</p> <p>While the evaluation included recommendations on a path forward for developing a standalone body of work related to the implementation gap, NRGi’s management believes it is more effective to integrate an understanding of drivers and responses to this gap into our program design instead.</p>

<p>possible by more unrestricted and secured funding streams</p>		<p>Further, while we will seek to move to multi-year planning and more flexible cycles, our current funding streams do not allow for such an approach.</p>
<p>Across a range of topics and additionally set aside in discrete sections, the organizational evaluation called for certain areas of improvement and/or inquiry in regards to the future of MEL practice:</p> <p>Specific recommendations to NRGi's MEL approaches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need to increase the rigor of evaluation work</li> <li>• The need to further engage other actors in the relevant MEL communities of practice</li> <li>• Conduct learning activities that will further investigate ongoing questions that were surfaced but left unanswered by the evaluation</li> <li>• Continued internal learning on civil society and government capacity development</li> <li>• More robust internal and external sharing of lessons learned, including insights generated through the evaluation</li> <li>• Further develop NRGi's theory of change through engagements with organizations such as IBP and Oxfam</li> </ul>	<p>MEL Strategy (forthcoming in 2020)</p>	<p>The organizational evaluation helped define capacities and deficiencies in NRGi's MEL team and areas of focus for internal MEL capacity development.</p> <p>The team will develop an updated MEL strategy in 2020 coinciding with the inception year of the new strategy. The MEL strategy will include a structured plan for engagement with other actors, focusing on but not limited to the resource governance and transparency/accountability field.</p> <p>The evaluation recommended that NRGi adopt the use of participatory capacity assessment tools. These tools are characterized as assessment methods that actively solicit the perspective of the actors that receive support from NRGi, which in turn can better inform the organization's capacity development tools through the perspective of stakeholders. NRGi is currently involved in learning initiatives and exchanges with other actors that will help shed light on the appropriateness of such tools. Currently, NRGi is engaged in an OSF-supported initiative to develop better indicators and assessments to support CSOs working in the fiscal governance field. The results of this project will likely inform NRGi's engagement with such participatory capacity assessment tools.</p> <p>As recommended in the evaluation, NRGi has engaged with other actors in the field in order to better develop its updated theory of change. These field exchanges are ongoing, including an upcoming</p>

		learning exchange with IBP, Oxfam, and Global Integrity along with ongoing data-use learning based on a convening facilitated with Oxfam in October 2019.
<p>In 2020, NRGi will develop a results framework aligned to its new strategy. Through this framework we will track progress on the following recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The continued importance of monitoring data use’s impact and uptake</li> <li>• Importance of developing current baseline data for a future evaluation</li> <li>• Ongoing importance of outcome monitoring</li> <li>• Call for tracking of shared impacts across the field</li> <li>• Enhanced MEL perspective in future iterations of the RGI</li> </ul>	NRGI Results Framework (Forthcoming in 2020)	As the key organizational accountability mechanism, the results framework will reflect—on the most concrete level—the ways in which shifts in NRGi’s way of working will manifest in program changes.
<p>Noting that the evaluation methodology did not include the full range of approaches initially anticipated, NRGi specifically requested recommendations on possible follow up evaluative work. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow up evaluation work to conduct a cost benefit analysis of NRGi’s support for data work, particularly mandatory disclosure data</li> <li>• Follow up monitoring and evaluation work to assess how NRGi contributes to the long-term technical and financial capacities of its partners</li> </ul>	Future Evaluations (Forthcoming over the strategy period)	The evaluation recommendations included specific suggestions to further interrogate the initial findings. NRGi will seek to conduct inquiries both throughout the strategy period and at its conclusion. This will include considerations of joint evaluations and work to bolster the evidence base in the field of how policy reform leads to improved lives.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Partnering with other organizations to assess the impact of NREGS work on translating effective laws and policies into tangible benefits for citizens</li><li>• Plan for deep dive assessments at the conclusion of the strategy</li></ul>		
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