

Sixteenth session of the Assembly
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Note by the Director-General

Medium-term Strategy 2023-2027 - Mid-term Evaluation

I. Background

1. IRENA's strategic objectives are defined on a five-year basis through its Medium-term Strategy (MTS) that is developed through a consultative process with Members. IRENA's current MTS 2023-2027 sets out the Agency's mission and provides a five-pillar structure through which the successive Work Programmes are implemented. The MTS also provides for "a mid-term external evaluation that will also inform the development of the next Medium-term Strategy."¹ Accordingly, an external evaluation of the current MTS was undertaken in the course of 2025. The evaluation was conducted by IOD PARC, an independent consultancy company specialising in monitoring, evaluation, and organisational development.
2. The main objective of the evaluation was to assess the progress made since 2023 against the framework laid down in the MTS 2023-2027 and a review of the Agency's positioning in the context of the global energy transition. Building on the self-evaluation conducted in 2023, this evaluation has also considered the reach, effectiveness and impact of the Agency's activities as laid down in the two relevant Work Programme and Budgets (2022-2023, 2024-2025). In addition, the evaluators were requested to provide recommendations to the Director-General on several aspects of the MTS implementation, including on measures to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation structure.
3. The evaluation involved interviews with representatives from IRENA Members, partner organisations and staff undertaken remotely; desk review of relevant documentation, including Progress reports, Work Programmes and Budgets, etc., and online surveys circulated to IRENA Members, external Stakeholders and IRENA staff.
4. The findings of the external evaluation, presented in the attached report, are provided for Members' information and feedback. The report also includes a segment of the methodology used to conduct this process.

¹ [A/13/14 Medium-term Strategy 2023-2027](#).

II. Next steps

5. As in the previous cycle, this evaluation is a milestone in the assessment of the validity and relevance of the MTS 2023-2027, and an input into the process of the development of the next strategy. The evaluation's findings indicate that the current MTS's mission and objectives remain valid and can effectively guide programmatic implementation throughout its duration until the end of 2027.

6. The current MTS was a product of an inclusive and comprehensive two-year process, which included the establishment of a Working Team comprising interested Members to guide and support its development. As the Assembly will have to adopt the new MTS at its 18th session in 2028, the Council may wish to consider a similar process for the development of MTS 2028-2032. The Working Group would convene as necessary between the Council meetings to provide substantive input into the deliberation on the following strategic cycle.



Mid-Term External Evaluation of The International Renewable Energy Agency's Medium-Term Strategy 2023-2027

Final Report

Prepared for // International Renewable
Energy Agency (IRENA)

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Executive Summary

IRENA commissioned this independent mid-term evaluation of its 2023–2027 Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) to assess progress against the strategy, to evaluate the effectiveness of the underlying activities, and to develop conclusions and recommendations for strengthening both current delivery, and to inform the *next* MTS (2028-2032). The evaluation was undertaken by IOD PARC, an independent consultancy specialising in monitoring, evaluation and organisation development; IOD PARC also undertook the previous mid-term evaluation of IRENA's 2018-2022 MTS.

The evaluation's findings confirm that IRENA's mandate remains highly **relevant**. Stakeholders value its neutrality, technical expertise, and broad membership, with the latter providing a unique degree of legitimacy that sets IRENA apart from other institutions and networks. Individual services and strategic objectives have varying degrees of relevance for different stakeholders: foundational policy and capacity-building support remains most relevant for countries with nascent RE sectors, whereas IRENA's work on – for example – cost data is more relevant for countries and developers working with well-established RE sectors. However, as Member States' capacities for RE mature – and as they shift along energy transition pathways – maintaining IRENA's relevance will require responding to Member States' changing priorities. To that end, a number of stakeholders felt that IRENA should increase their support for planning, regulation and policy relating to transportation electrification and net zero buildings, and specifically for the integration of RE within these efforts.

Coherence is generally strong, underpinned by IRENA's near-universal membership. IRENA's ability to convene such a wide and diverse membership helps to ensure that international dialogue on RE reflects a broad spectrum of perspectives, and that collaboration is not confined to a narrow set of actors. Other RE-focused institutions and networks may be technically strong, but they do not have the same extent of representativeness. However, coherence can on occasion be undermined where IRENA's work on specific activities (particularly in country-level policy advice and capacity building) overlap with other organisations. Several stakeholders also questioned the coherence of IRENA's work on finance and investment, and whether this work was well-aligned with IRENA's comparative advantage. Stakeholders very clearly want to see IRENA work more closely with the private sector, investors and development banks, but at the same time it was not clear that IRENA were particularly better placed to provide *direct* finance and investment support when compared to – for example – international finance institutions and multilateral development banks.

IRENA is widely recognised as **efficient**, producing high-quality outputs despite modest resources, with activity completion rates above 98%. However, internal processes are often seen by staff as cumbersome, silo-working continues to be a problem, and the staff tenure policy has undermined continuity, institutional memory, and external relationships, creating inefficiencies. Notably, the staff tenure policy was also raised as a point of concern by *external* stakeholders (Member States and partners).

Effectiveness is strong overall: IRENA's knowledge products, data and convening platforms are highly valued, and the Agency is broadly meeting Member State and partner needs. At the same time, effectiveness in some areas has been limited. There has been slower-than-expected progress in finance facilitation and – most notably – there is a prevalent perception that IRENA has 'pulled back' from country-level support and have not been sufficiently engaged in regional-level support. For many stakeholders, the reduced levels of country-level and regional engagement have correspondingly reduced the Agency's effectiveness in some areas.

While IRENA was seen as a convener of effective meetings focused on key RE issues, concerns were raised that Annual Meetings were becoming *less* effective over time. A common perception here is that Member State representatives were increasingly becoming less technically knowledgeable, which had in turn reduced the technical substance and insight of such meetings. Stakeholders also felt that the effectiveness of IRENA's services stood to gain from artificial

intelligence: IRENA was encouraged to explore the use of AI in energy transition forecasting, grid integration and knowledge dissemination.

IRENA's **impact** is seen as catalytic but indirect: it has played a major role in normalising RE in the global discourse and strengthening national enabling environments, though attributing specific results to IRENA's work is challenging. Evidence of IRENA's historical contributions to systemic change is strongest in country-level policy and legislative reforms; impacts on project finance and socio-economic outcomes are emerging but less clear. Some stakeholders caution that – due to its very wide menu of services – IRENA risks spreading itself too thinly, which could be diluting the Agency's potential impact.

The evaluation makes the following **conclusions** and provides a series of **high-level recommendations** which can be further elaborated and made actionable by IRENA:

1. The 2023-2027 Medium Term Strategy provides a sound foundation for IRENA's current and future work programme and budget, though different outputs and activities are seen as more or less relevant for different actors. Recognising the need for IRENA to remain adaptive given an uncertain geopolitical environment management IRENA should continue to follow the goals outlined in the MTS.
2. The introduction of an Agency Theory of Change and launch of a new Results-based framework are important steps forward in helping IRENA track and communicate its performance, effectiveness and impact. Further refinement and guidance on how to operationalize outcome level indicators is required to ensure it becomes an effective learning and accountability tool.
3. With the current staff tenure policy, long-standing personnel are required to leave after a certain number of years. This has impacted efficiency, staff morale and institutional knowledge: it would be helpful for management to review this policy to ensure it supports effective organisational performance.
4. There are mixed views as to whether IRENA should have more of a presence at the national or regional level. Some Member states felt that IRENA was not engaging with them as promptly as they had done previously and that the next phase of the just and equitable transition required more in-country work and support. IRENA has to work within its resourcing constraints and wants to continue to be efficient and effective, however a review of different models/processes of increasing localised engagement – particularly given the importance of its broad membership – may help IRENA further build on its global work.
5. As IRENA has evolved and renewables are firmly on the energy agenda, Agency meetings are now being attended by representatives with less technical knowledge and background. It might be useful for IRENA to review with Members a) what the role and responsibility of being a member involves, so what can they expect from the secretariat and what is expected of them; and b) what are the specific purposes of different meetings and what knowledge, competencies and levels of authority are expected of attendees.
6. AI might help advance the RE agenda: a cross-agency strategic review into the benefits and opportunities open to IRENA and how it may be integrated across work programmes would help further IRENA's work on innovation and may provide ways of enhancing cooperation and communication.

Introduction

Evaluation Purpose

IRENA has commissioned this evaluation to address four objectives:

1. To assess the progress made against the 2023-2027 Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) framework, and to review how IRENA is positioned within the context of global energy transitions.
2. To evaluate the reach, effectiveness, and impact of IRENA's activities.
3. To develop conclusions and recommendations that strengthen current program delivery and inform the preparation of the 2028-2032 MTS.
4. To develop recommendations on measures to strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems and structures.

It is being undertaken by a team from IOD PARC, a UK-based independent consultancy company, who also undertook the Mid-term evaluation of the 2018-2022 MTS. An overview of the evaluation approach and methodology is included in Annex 1.

Overview of the 2023-2027 MTS

The IRENA 2023-2027 MTS aims to build on the progress and contribution IRENA has made since being established in 2009. The MTS outlines how renewables have moved from being a niche interest and how the need for a 'just transition' and reduction in the use of fossil fuels is now accepted mainstream thinking. IRENA is acknowledged to have played a significant role in this change in global discourse and there is evidence of progress. Renewables capacity has increased by 130% whereas non-renewables is only up by 24%.

The 2023-2027 MTS is an evolution of the 2018-2022 MTS. It aims to utilise IRENA's comparative advantage of its renewables mandate and its global membership to focus on the systemic changes required to achieve a just and equitable transition. There is a continued emphasis on generating high-quality data and knowledge, developing and working effectively in partnerships, and convening groups and supporting countries in partnerships. What is new is more focus on the facilitation of projects and leveraging the finance and investment required for change at scale. For IRENA to enable systems change there is also a need for increased engagement in areas and sectors where renewables contribute to broader human welfare outcomes, such as food, water and health, and addressing energy security and climate resilience needs.

The MTS suggests that IRENA needs to be agile, practical, anticipatory and relevant to members and to understand how its work contributes to broader outcomes. Annex 2 includes IRENA's new Theory of Change which outlines how activities, outputs and enablers can help drive systemic change.

Report Structure

The report findings are structured around the DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and impact. Each main evaluation question is responded to directly with sub-questions also addressed. Conclusions and suggested ways forward are at this stage suggestive and possible recommendations will be discussed with IRENA to ensure they are practical and can be operationalised.

Findings

RELEVANCE

Evaluation question 1:

Is IRENA providing services and products that members and partners value, and which are seen to potentially influence key actors in the energy sectors?

Sub questions:

1.1 Are there programmatic activities that should be added in the next MTS? Are there programmatic activities that other organisations are better placed to do, and IRENA should stop undertaking?

IRENA's *mandate* continues to be highly relevant

Evaluation respondents invariably felt that IRENA's mandate continued to be highly relevant at global, regional and national levels. Even though renewable energy (RE) technologies are an increasingly mainstream part of the energy mix and technical and legislative capacities have strengthened correspondingly, stakeholders often noted that the need for IRENA had not lessened. Of particular value was IRENA's position and legitimacy as a neutral, intergovernmental body with a very broad membership across both the global North and South. For many, this broad membership underpinned the Agency's continued relevance and was the central differentiating factor when comparing IRENA to other RE-focused networks and institutions.

Individual services, products and strategic objectives have varying degrees of relevance for different stakeholders

IRENA has a wide-ranging set of strategic objectives that are in turn supported by a broad spectrum of services and products. Certain services are targeted at specific stakeholders. For example, policy support and capacity development are more geared towards Member States that are still in the early stages of RE adoption and/or tend to have less well developed RE sectors. Other services – such as cost data – have broad relevance but are particularly valued and used by Member States that have more developed RE sectors, and Partners that work directly on – for example – RE development and deployment. Unsurprisingly then, the extent to which IRENA's various objectives and services are *relevant* depends on the needs and priorities of each stakeholder group. Overall, though, because IRENA's offer and support is broad, IRENA's stakeholders invariably find that *at least some aspects* of IRENA's work is relevant to their needs. And as Members' technical, commercial and legislative capacity for RE strengthens, the *relevance* of IRENA's various offerings also changes.

There was a divergence of views as to the degree to which IRENA should be involved in some activities, in particular finance and investment facilitation. Those who were positive about it, particularly at a country level, felt that IRENA's knowledge base, connections, 'neutral reputation' and experience meant they were well placed to help develop and broker agreements. Other interviewees/survey respondents felt it was not core to their mandate, and that other actors – such as the development banks – were better placed to take this role. They were also concerned about the level of internal resources required to do it effectively, and the likely return on this investment. A general comment made by many was a concern that in the MTS IRENA could be spreading itself too thin and needed to ensure it didn't get drawn into activities that others are better placed to do.

Maintaining relevance will require responding to Member States' shifting priorities

Since IRENA's establishment, it has supported numerous Member States to establish and strengthen national enabling environments for RE, in turn helping those States to build the foundations for RE deployment and integration. This kind of foundational support continues to be relevant for many Member States whose RE sectors are still at a nascent stage. However, the relevance of this 'early stage' support to IRENA's *broader* membership is decreasing – as RE is mainstreamed and legislative frameworks are established, many (perhaps most) States' priorities are shifting further along energy transition pathways. Several evaluation respondents specifically

identified an increasing need for support in planning, regulation and policy development for transportation electrification and net zero buildings, and specifically for the integration of RE within these efforts. The same stakeholders did not view this potential focus as going beyond IRENA’s mandate, rather it was seen as a logical evolution for the Agency, and a natural extension of the foundational enabling environment support provided since the Agency’s inception. This also seems in line with the MTS goal of looking to support and contribute to systemic change.

For similar reasons, some stakeholders also felt that an increased focus on facilitating *regional* cooperation would strengthen IRENA’s future relevance. While *national* enabling environments for RE have improved, some Members felt that there has not been a corresponding improvement in *regional* enabling environments (for example, to support cross-border interconnections and the necessary legislative alignments). Again, if IRENA were to increase their focus on regional cooperation, stakeholders viewed this as clearly within the Agency’s mandate.

COHERENCE

Evaluation question 2:

To what extent is IRENA’s work aligned with – and complementary to – other work being delivered globally, regionally and nationally?

Sub question:

2.1 To what extent has IRENA’s work enhanced international collaboration for the energy transition?

IRENA’s broad membership underpins legitimacy and convening power

IRENA’s membership of 169 countries and the EU differentiates it from other institutions in the RE field. Evaluation respondents repeatedly emphasised that IRENA’s near-universal membership and intergovernmental status give the Agency political legitimacy and credibility as a convener. This broad base affords IRENA a comparative advantage in fostering international collaboration, particularly South–South and South–North exchanges. In this sense, IRENA’s ability to convene such a wide and diverse membership is itself an important dimension of coherence: it ensures that international dialogue on renewable energy reflects a broad spectrum of perspectives, and that collaboration is not confined to a narrow set of actors. Other RE-focused institutions and networks may be technically strong, but they do not have the same extent of representativeness.

Alignment with other work is broadly coherent, though risks of overlap remain

Most respondents felt that IRENA’s work complements that of other organisations and initiatives, particularly through its data, knowledge products and convening platforms. Responses to the evaluation survey strongly support these positive assessments of the coherence and complementarity of IRENA’s work. However, some interviewees did point to areas of activity-level overlap with institutions such as the International Solar Alliance, IEA and GGGI, especially in policy advice and capacity-building.

1. Figure 1. Survey response - Complementarity of IRENA's work

	Weighted Average (out of 10)		
	Member States	External Stakeholders	Staff
SURVEY QUESTION: Do you feel IRENA's work is aligned with and complementary to other work being delivered globally, regionally and nationally?	7.96	7.88	7.87

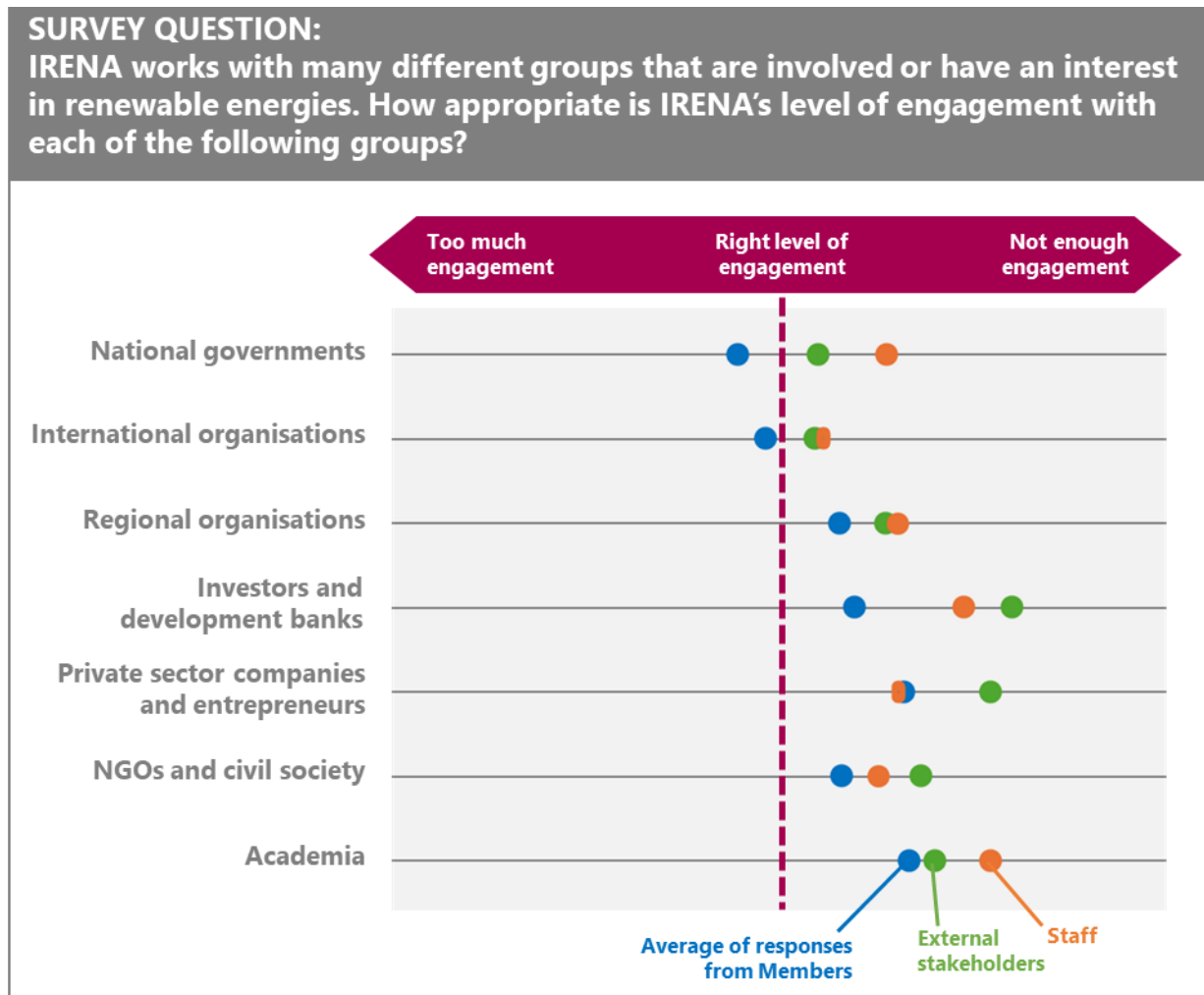
Several stakeholders emphasised that coherence would be strengthened if IRENA more clearly articulated its comparative role and systematically coordinated with these actors to avoid duplication.

Effective leadership is seen as essential to ensure that IRENA's work plan remains coherent and 'silo working' is limited.

Level of engagement with partners is generally appropriate, although indications that more engagement is required with investors, development banks and the private sector

As another measure of the coherence and alignment of IRENA's work, the evaluation survey asked respondents to identify whether IRENA was engaging with the right groups:

Figure 2. Survey Response -IRENA engagement levels

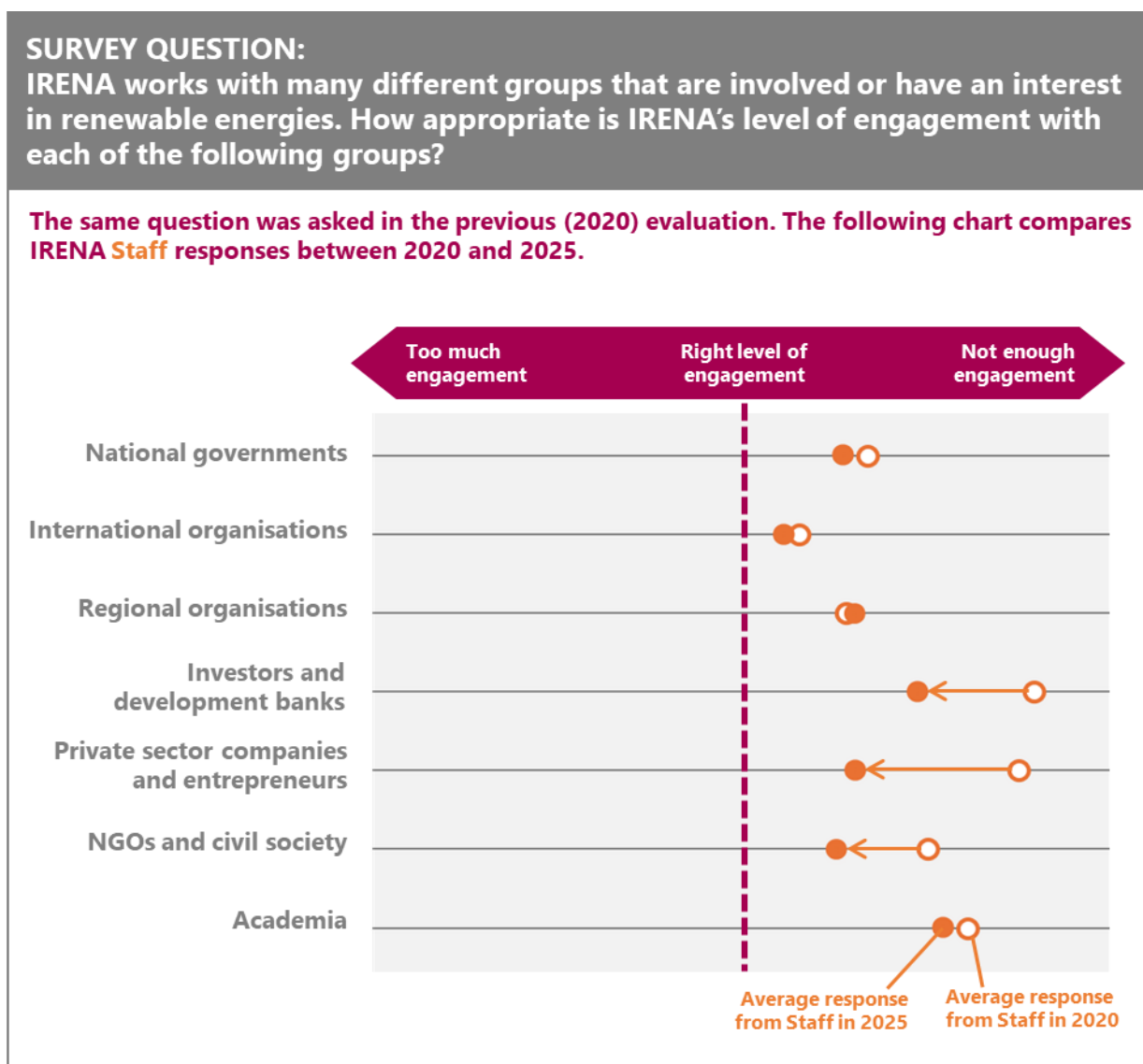


These responses suggest that – on balance – IRENA generally has the right level of engagement with national governments, along with regional and international organisations, including NGOs. However, some respondents also felt IRENA could be more engaged with investors, development banks, the private sector and academia. This was especially the case for IRENA's external stakeholders (i.e. institutions other than Member States), who – as a group – gave a comparatively stronger indication that IRENA should be more engaged with investors, development banks and the private sector. This is supported by some interviews and qualitative survey responses, where one theme was that – while IRENA was undeniably well-connected to governments – greater engagement with private sector actors could make its work more impactful and connected to implementation.

However, it is also notable that – comparing the survey results to those gathered during the previous IRENA strategy evaluation in 2020 – IRENA staff appear to rate the Agency's performance here as having improved in the last 5 years. Whereas in 2020 staff felt that there was not enough

engagement with investors, development banks and the private sector, survey results indicate a markedly more positive assessment from staff² in 2025.

Figure 3. Survey Response -IRENA engagement with different groups



EFFICIENCY

Evaluation question 3:

Are IRENA’s activities being delivered within expected or reasonable timeframes and budgets?

IRENA delivers strong outputs relative to its budget

Respondents consistently observed that IRENA ‘punches above its weight’, producing high-quality knowledge products and convening well-regarded international, regional and national activities, despite modest resources. The Agency’s comparatively lean budget and staffing were often cited as evidence of efficiency, with partners noting that IRENA delivers more than might be expected given its size. Table 1 draws from the 2025 and 2024 annual reports and highlights how IRENA manages to efficiently utilise its budget/income and keeps on track to complete nearly all its planned activities.

² There was much less variation amongst responses on this question from Member states and external stakeholders

There were no external comments that suggested that IRENA has an issue with late delivery or going over budget. The only negative from several respondents, however, was that at times IEA were putting out information on renewables more promptly or utilising a more impactful medium than IRENA, even when IRENA had more insightful data/knowledge.

2. *Table 1. Summary of expenditure and activity completion*

2024 Annual Report (of 2023)	2025 Annual Report (of 2024)
<p>Biennium Budget</p> <p>64.8 million (2022/2023)</p> <p>96% utilization 62\$ million – all divisions 92-99% (end of 2-year cycle)</p>	<p>Biennium Budget (2024/2025)</p> <p>64.8m</p> <p>68% utilization \$44.2 million – all divisions 56-79% (1 year of 2-year cycle)</p>
<p>Activity reporting – on track or completed</p> <p>Overall, 99.1% (658 of 664)</p> <p>Centre for excellence for Energy Transition 71 of 71</p> <p>Global Voice of Renewables 83 of 84</p> <p>Network Hub 269 of 272</p> <p>Source of Advice 124 of 125</p> <p>Additional outputs 87 of 99</p> <p>Enabling Delivery 24 of 24</p>	<p>Activity reporting – on track or completed</p> <p>Overall, 98.2% (481 of 490)</p> <p>Centre of excellence for Energy Transition 32 of 32</p> <p>Global Voice of results 67 of 68</p> <p>International Collaboration and Network Hub 221 of 225</p> <p>Support for regions and countries 63 of 66</p> <p>Facilitating Projects and Mobilizing capital 43 of 44</p> <p>Additional Outputs 31 of 31</p> <p>Enabling delivery 24 of 24</p>

Some inefficiencies with internal processes

Some respondents – *particularly* staff – did identify inefficiencies with *internal* processes. Administrative procedures, internal communications and decision-making chains were often perceived as cumbersome, delaying responsiveness to Member State requests and sometimes slowing delivery. Staff respondents also felt that these inefficiencies were sometimes exacerbated by a lack of internal coordination and coherence: although there is a sense that this has improved in recent years, some felt that there is still a degree of ‘silo working’ within the organisation. Clear leadership is seen as the most effective way of addressing this issue. Delays in governance processes, caused by recent global events have also contributed to a delay in decision making and approvals³.

Staff tenure policy has been disruptive and has created inefficiencies

Several respondents noted that IRENA’s staff tenure policy – while intended to promote flexibility and innovation – often disrupts continuity. This disruption has been particularly marked in recent years, with a significant proportion of well-experienced staff having to leave their posts. Staff felt that as a result of the tenure policy expertise is being lost just as institutional knowledge is consolidating, creating inefficiencies and delays in ongoing work. Some *external* stakeholders also remarked that the frequent turnover of IRENA counterparts made follow-up and relationship-building more difficult. Overall, the policy was seen to weaken institutional memory and reduce the efficient use of limited human resources.

EFFECTIVENESS

Evaluation question 4:

³ Specific details on these are slightly outside of the evaluation terms of reference

Are IRENA's program activities delivering planned outputs and meeting partner and member needs?

Sub questions

- 4.1 Are the Work Programme and Budget for 2022-2023 and 2024-2025 well aligned with the MTS?
- 4.2 To what degree, and how, have IRENA's collaborative arrangements with other stakeholders facilitated the delivery of its programmatic activities and MTS?
- 4.3 Are the objectives in the MTS being adequately fulfilled, considering the Agency's size and scope?
- 4.4 To what extent have IRENA's services helped fill knowledge gaps, build cooperation, strengthen capacity and facilitate investment to support the energy transition?
- 4.5 To what degree has IRENA's support leveraged additional funding for energy transitions?
- 4.6 Is IRENA able to effectively monitor and track progress and influence?

IRENA is performing strongly in delivering against its work programmes with Annual reports showcasing achievements, while all survey stakeholder groups on average agreed that IRENA is achieving its current strategic objectives.

Table 2 gives a summary of outputs delivered as reported in the 2024 and 2025 Annual reports. There are no specific targets set though the reports do provide narrative explanations which provide more detail on specific achievements and areas of work. There is a clear correlation between the work programmes, budget and the MTS.

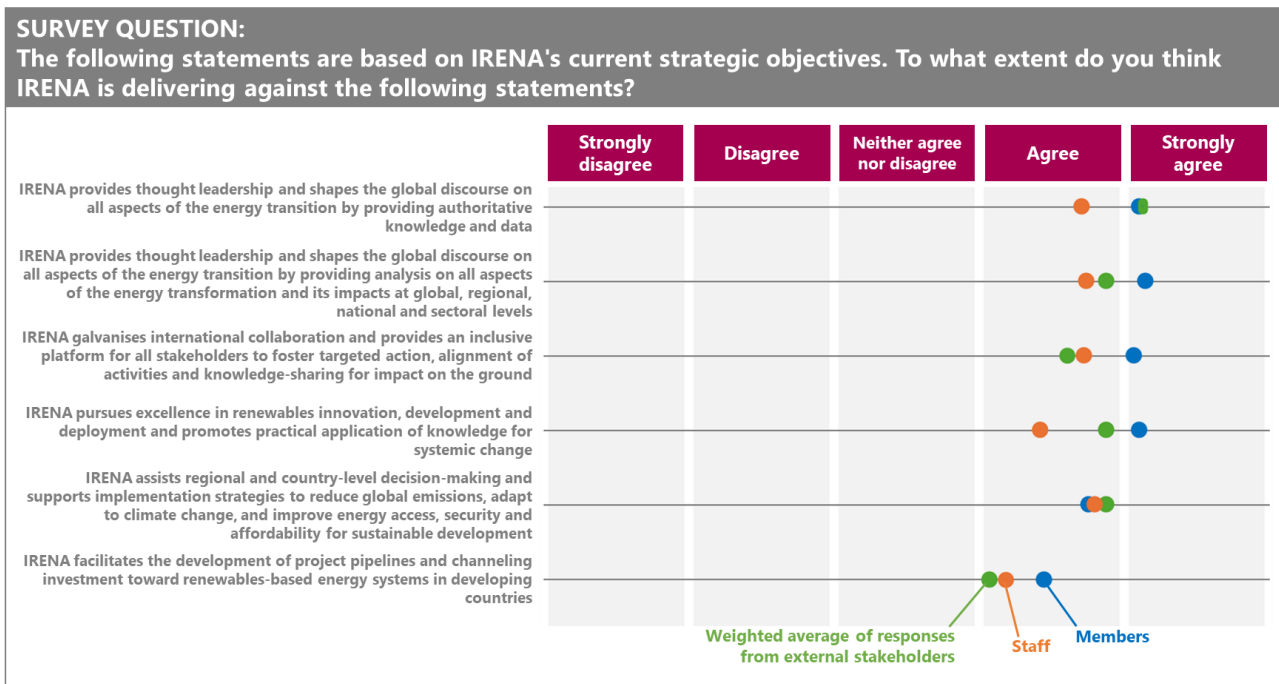
3. *Table 2. Summary of reported Outputs*

2024 Annual Report (of 2023)	2025 Annual Report (of 2024)
No. of Publications 95	No of Publications 97
No. of events (co)organised 223	No. of events (co)organised 205
Media coverage 67,100 media articles	Media coverage 40,300 media articles
Climate Investment Platform	Climate Investment Platform (cumulative)
427 projects sourced	497 projects sourced
209 eligible for support	209 eligible for support
87 actively supported	109 actively supported
39 matched with financing partners	64 benefitting from technical support
4 achieved financial close - \$52.6 million, 42.6 MWs to be developed on full commissioning	14 matched interested financing partners
	5 achieved financial close \$84.9 million, 64.8 MW to be developed on full commissioning.
Energy Transition Accelerating Financing Platform	Energy Transition Accelerating Financing Platform (cumulative)
45 project proposals received	82 project proposals submitted
3 Solar PV units benefited from ETF partner benefit	22 proposals fulfill requirements
	16 received interest from partners
	3 solar projects (achieved financial close)
Partnership working	Partnership working
Collaborative Frameworks 8	Collaborative Frameworks 8

As shown in Figure 4. the survey responses back up the views of interviewees which suggest that overall IRENA is delivering well against its strategic objectives. Staff though were often more critical

of IRENA's performance than Members and external stakeholders. This split came through strongly in interviews as well as in the survey, as illustrated in Figure 5.

4. Figure 4. Survey responses to statements on whether IRENA is delivering against its objectives



5. Figure 5. Survey Response - Is IRENA meeting Member and Partner Needs

SURVEY QUESTION:	Weighted Average (out of 10)		
	Member States	External Stakeholders	Staff
Do you think IRENA's program activities are meeting member and partner needs?	7.32	6.75	6.01

Figure 6 though highlights that overall Members States are satisfied with how IRENA is performing. External stakeholders are also satisfied though to a slightly lesser degree. The primary comment from those who scored satisfaction lower relates to a perception that IRENA could still engage more with the private sector and concerns over whether IRENA should be as engaged as it is in finance and investment, given that this support is well-served through other channels (e.g. development banks).

6. Figure 6. Survey Response - How satisfied are you with IRENA's performance

SURVEY QUESTION:	Weighted Average (out of 10)	
	Member States	External Stakeholders
How satisfied are you with IRENA's performance?	8.04	7.00

Identifying where IRENA is most effective.

In terms of meeting Member needs, Members and External stakeholders felt that IRENA was able to draw upon several of its comparative advantages. Survey and interview responses highlighted how as the only intergovernmental organisation dedicated exclusively to renewables, IRENA was able to provide reliable, high-quality data, statistics, and analyses which was essential for stakeholders such as governmental renewable energy departments and project developers. IRENA is consistently viewed as a credible knowledge hub, and an organization that can bring together governments, private sector actors, and civil society from both the Global North and South in a way that no other agency or organisation can.

IRENA's production of key knowledge products on decarbonization, renewable energy and Quality Infrastructure and Energy Roadmaps have been seen as core strengths of IRENA that contribute to systemic change.

It is less clear to stakeholders as to how effective the IRENA Finance and investment facilitation has been so far.

While Staff and Members can point positively to the generation of bankable projects, there is a concern amongst some, particularly staff, that progress and results so far have been slower than anticipated and it does seem that only limited levels of additional funds have been leveraged so far. Several respondents questioned whether this is an area of work where IRENA is sufficiently well placed to get an appropriate return given the resources required. The alternative view is that limited progress can be attributed to the significant time it takes to reach project closure and that – in any case – there is significant evidence of a positive momentum.

While generally members were satisfied with IRENA in terms of its performance many Members are concerned about a reduction in in-country engagement and limited regional presence.

Interview responses highlighted how members felt IRENA has changed over time, with its focus moving deeper into the global and political spheres, backing away from national support. Some members felt country or regional-level engagement at times was a 'one-off' with insufficient follow-up or sustained presence. Several Members commented that this could be reflective of an organisation that is overstretched with too few staff. A sense of a reduced level of engagement was something that extended to wider networks. For example, some stakeholders who are part of the "Coalition for Action" felt that they have not had the opportunity to contribute effectively but instead are only invited to discussions about *completed* work.

Ensuring that meetings have the right people

The ability to convene effective meetings focused on key renewable energy issues is seen as a key strength of IRENA's. One comment from several interviewees concerned governing body meetings. It was felt that attendees and Member State representatives were increasingly becoming less technically knowledgeable and therefore the discussions and interactions were not always as insightful and purposive as they had been.

Developing M&E systems further to understand the contribution and impact.

IRENA has been in the process of developing and implementing a new results framework. A key issue has been that reporting in the past has been activity and output focused with little systematic assessment of the contribution that IRENA has been making. As mentioned in the previous mid-term evaluation undertaken by IODPARC in 2020, this is a missed opportunity for learning given the role stakeholders feel IRENA has played in driving forward a just transition. The 2024 and 2025 Annual reports are still focussed on activities and outputs though the most recent progress report on the 2024-2025 work programme and budget does introduce the new framework. It appears to be coherent, and reporting seems much clearer, with the development of intermediate outcomes providing a means for measuring the bridge between the significant increase in uptake and usage of renewable energy and the contribution of IRENA's activities and outputs. The only concerns the evaluation team has over the new framework are a) the sheer volume of indicators, although they make sense collecting large amounts of data is itself resource intensive, b) although quantitative indicators are clear and well thought through, there is perhaps less clarity on how qualitative data – especially important at intermediate outcome level to address how and why questions, and assess

system change - will be managed and collected, and (c) the absence of baselines and targets, both of which are a prerequisite for measuring and understanding performance.

Utilisation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to improve effectiveness

A number of respondents highlighted an opportunity for IRENA to take a lead in the utilisation of AI in the renewable energy space. AI has the potential to help with forecasting renewable generation, optimizing grid management and integration, improving energy efficiency, supporting data-driven policymaking, big data cleaning, and knowledge sharing. AI was also seen as offering a unique and novel way for members to digest and investigate often lengthy publications in practical bite-sized knowledge offerings.

IMPACT

Evaluation question 5:

What evidence or examples are there of where IRENA have influenced or are on track to influence or contribute to systemic change?

Sub questions:

5.1 To what extent has IRENA influenced the global energy discourse during 2023-2025?

5.2 What evidence/examples are there of IRENA'S work contributing at a country/regional level to:

- Increased access and reduced inequality
- Improved energy security, affordability and resilience
- Greater efficiency, environmental stewardship and circular economy
- Enhanced socio-economic benefits and human welfare
- Strategic shift in investments toward transitions

IRENA is perceived to have had a significant impact in the take-up and normalisation of renewable energy and the global discourse.

As shown in Figure 7 survey respondents are positive about how IRENA has influenced change across its areas of work.

Figure 7. Survey Response -IRENA Impact

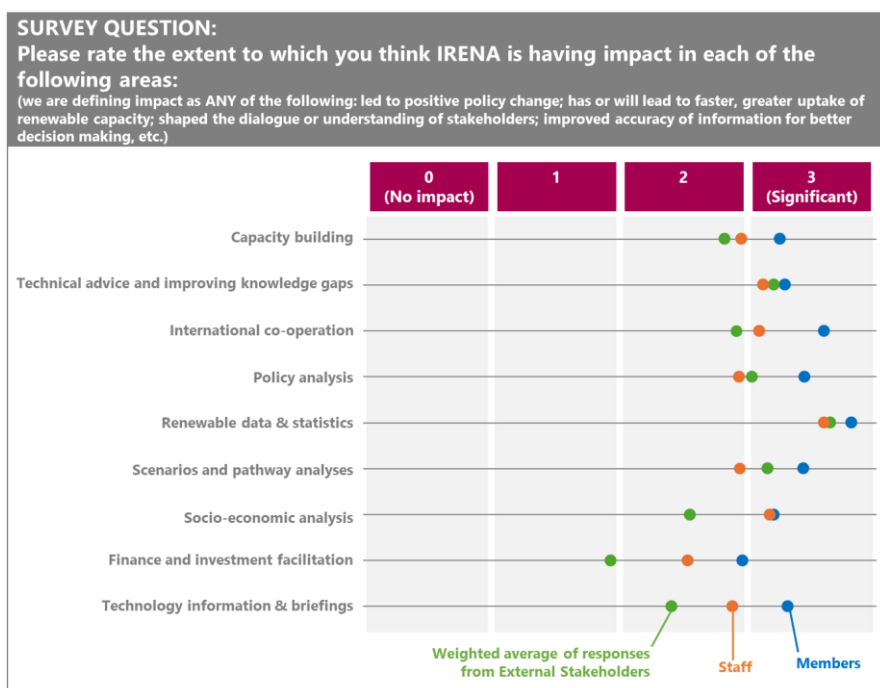
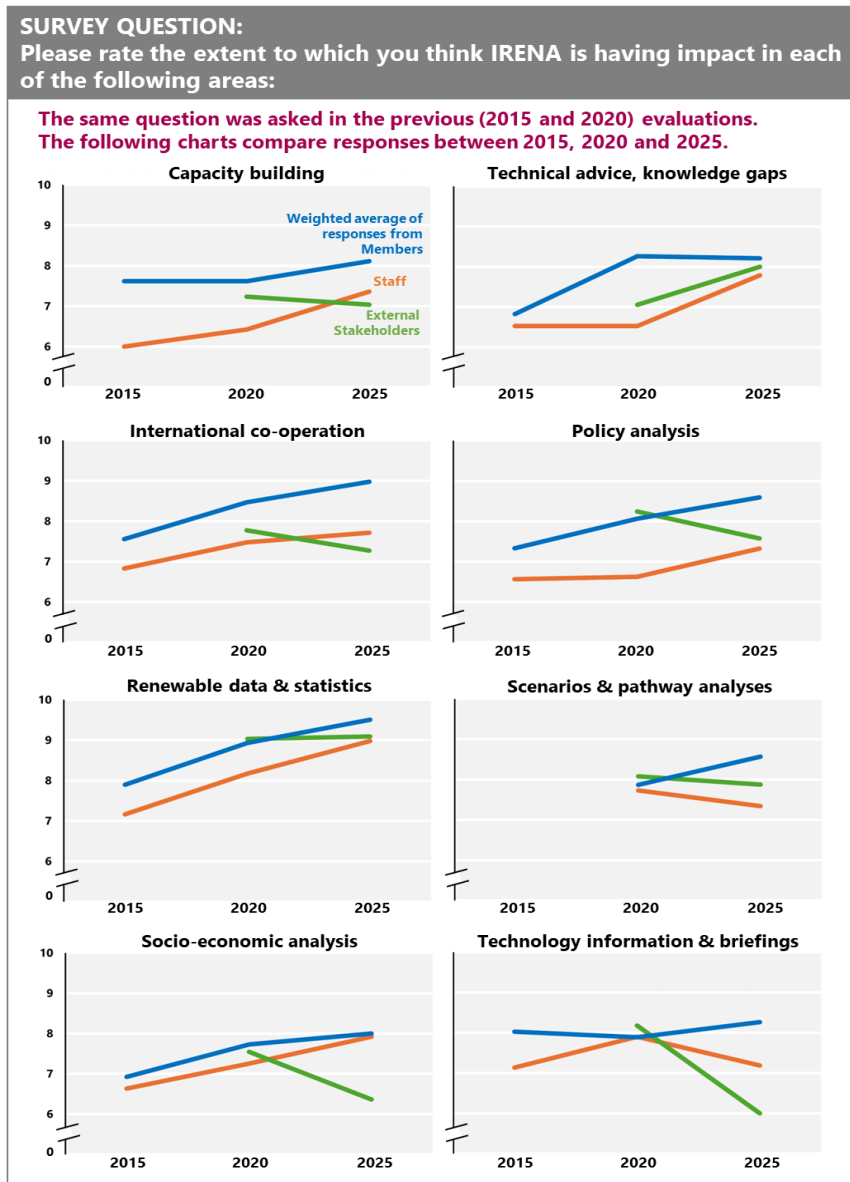


Figure 8 shows how responses compare to impact questions in surveys undertaken in 2015 and 2020 evaluations. In general, there is an upward trajectory in perception from members and staff, though a more mixed response from external stakeholders.

Figure 8. Survey Response - IRENA impact in different areas



Plausible contribution to increased uptake of RE

The 2025 renewable capacity statistics show there has been a 15.1% increase in renewable capacity. All interviewees recognised that there is good evidence of systemic change and acknowledged IRENA’s role in this. However, IRENA’s contribution is seen as catalytic and indirect; identifying attribution to impact is difficult and may not even be helpful given that change of this magnitude involves multiple stakeholders working together.

Evidence of sustainable change at a country/regional level is very much focused on improvements to the enabling environment, rather than at the specific project level.

Representatives of eight member countries were interviewed and when asked to identify examples of systemic change they all focused on improvements in policy, legislative frameworks, capacity, procurement processes or strategy. In countries and regions where projects were being facilitated there were some issues around the timeliness of IRENA’s support and results being undermined by

a lack of follow-through mechanisms. Some countries felt this could be improved and would welcome IRENA having a stronger regional or country presence. Of areas where IRENA should look to focus, interviewees who commented, felt that enhanced socio-economic benefits were likely to be the strongest driver for increased use of renewable energy. In Small Island Developing States (SIDS) the link to climate change and the environment was more prevalent.

Is Impact diluted by IRENA ‘spreading itself too thin’?

As noted in the effectiveness section, there are some concerns that IRENA could be spreading itself too thin. Recognising that systemic change requires a multi-pronged approach there is still a question as to the degree that having a broad portfolio may dilute the depth of IRENA’s overall impact.

Conclusions and recommendations

The following conclusions should be seen as the basis for a collaborative approach with IRENA to develop some operational recommendations.

Conclusion 1:

The 2023-2027 Medium Term Strategy provides a sound foundation for IRENA's current and future work programme and budget, though different outputs and activities are seen as more or less relevant for different actors. The evaluation team recognise that IRENA is working in a challenging current geopolitical environment, so may need to review work programmes on a more regular basis.

Given the progress made in promoting the importance of renewables, a shift in strategic direction to one focused on supporting the implementation of systemic change makes sense. IRENA has a good reputation, technical expertise and a wide membership which makes it well placed to work in this space. Effectively communicating the strategy and ensuring that IRENA has sufficient resources to implement its various workstreams will be key to continued effective performance. There is a question about IRENA's role in finance and investment. Lack of finance is seen as a major barrier to effective implementation and there is clearly some demand at the country level for IRENA to undertake this role. However, there is also a need to ensure Member States have a clear understanding of how long it takes to achieve results in this area, IRENA's competitive advantage in this area, and – if IRENA *does* have a competitive advantage – how to better communicate why and how IRENA works in this domain. It is important that IRENA does what it is good at and doesn't duplicate the work of other organisations or do things that others are better placed to do.

Recommendation A:

IRENA should continue to deliver the goals outlined in the 2023-2027 Medium Term Strategy in its future work programmes, however it should:

- Ensure there is capacity to adapt to enable the agency to pivot given the level of uncertainty in the current global geopolitical environment
- Continue to review progress in the finance and investment workstream, including potentially a) creating a communication strategy explaining IRENA's competitive advantage in this area and b) setting interim targets which illustrate sufficient progress for continued efforts in this area

Conclusion 2:

The Theory of Change and introduction of a new Results framework is an important step forward in helping IRENA track and communicate its performance. They need to be fully institutionalised and may require further refinement as they are rolled out and operationalized.

The development of a results framework which moves beyond output and activity reporting is welcomed and should improve both learning and accountability. The ToC seems coherent and provides a good overview of the causal pathways underpinning the MTS. The evaluation team have identified three areas that may need more attention: 1) the identification of intermediate outcomes provides a good bridge between outputs and impact; however it is not clear at this stage how data would be collected or reported in a systematic way, 2) there are a lot of indicators – collecting this amount of data may be resource intensive so designing processes and methods which are easy to understand and utilise will be important, and 3) baselines and targets will need to be developed, as both are a prerequisite for measuring and understanding performance. It may also be useful for IRENA to 'test' the causal pathways in the ToC by commissioning some deep-

dive case studies in areas/countries where IRENA feels it has made a noticeable contribution to system change. These would also be useful for communication products.

Recommendation B:

IRENA should allocate sufficient resources to ensure the successful operationalization of the Results-based Framework. As a minimum, additional resources should be allocated to:

- Develop clear guidance (definition sheets) for immediate and intermediate outcome indicators, specifying – for example – monitoring approaches, calculation methods, responsibilities, and processes for baseline and target setting.
- Ensure sufficient staff capacity development, including through targeted workshops and ongoing advisory support
- Consideration should also be given to developing periodic case studies to analyze where – and why – IRENA have contributed to systemic change within specific countries, regions or thematic domains.

Conclusion 3:

It would be helpful for management to reconsider IRENA's staff tenure policy

The current approach where staff are forced to leave after a certain number of years has impacted on efficiency, staff morale and institutional knowledge; notably it has also raised concerns amongst some *external* stakeholders (Member States and other partners). The principle itself of staff moving after a set period of time is standard in many international agencies and organizations; however, a more phased and flexible approach would clearly be welcomed by staff and may help IRENA maximise its performance.

Recommendation C:

IRENA should formally review its staff tenure policy, with the outcome of that review directly informing a decision on whether to retain or remove the policy. The analysis should include perspectives not just from staff, but from key external stakeholders.

Conclusion 4:

There are mixed views as to whether IRENA should have more of a presence at national or regional level.

Some Member states in particular felt that IRENA was not engaging with them as promptly as they had done previously and that the next phase of the just and equitable transition required more in-country work and support. IRENA has to work within its resourcing constraints and wants to continue to be efficient and effective, however a review of different models/processes of increasing localised engagement – particularly given the importance of its broad membership – may help IRENA further build on its global work.

Conclusion 5:

As IRENA has evolved and renewables are firmly on the energy agenda Agency meetings are now being attended by representatives with less technical knowledge and background

It might be useful for IRENA to review with Members a) what the role and responsibility of being a member involves, so what can they expect from the secretariat and what is expected of them; and b) what are the specific purposes of different meetings and what knowledge, competencies and levels of authority is expected of attendees.

Recommendation D

In advance of any events – including Assemblies – IRENA should consider providing more prescriptive guidance to Member States on the purposes of events, and on the expected attendees.

Conclusion 6:

Increased use of Artificial Intelligence is seen as an opportunity that IRENA should purposefully look to utilise.

Several respondents commented on how AI might help advance the Renewable Energy agenda. A strategic review of the benefits and opportunities open to IRENA and how it may be integrated across work programmes would help further IRENA's work on innovation and may provide ways of enhancing cooperation and communication.

Recommendation E:

IRENA should undertake or commission a cross-Agency review of potential applications of AI within its work. To ensure consistent analysis and strategy, it is important that this review be conducted at the Agency level, rather than at a programmatic or activity level.

Annex 1: Evaluation Approach

This independent evaluation was commissioned by IRENA to address four objectives:

5. Assess the progress made since 2023 against the MTS framework, and review how IRENA is positioned in the context of global energy transitions
6. Evaluate the reach, effectiveness and impact of IRENA's activities
7. Develop conclusions and recommendations that strengthen current program delivery, and inform the preparation of the 2028-2032 MTS
8. Develop recommendations on measures to strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems and structures

To address these objectives, the evaluation was tasked with answering five evaluation questions, grouped against the three evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness and impact:

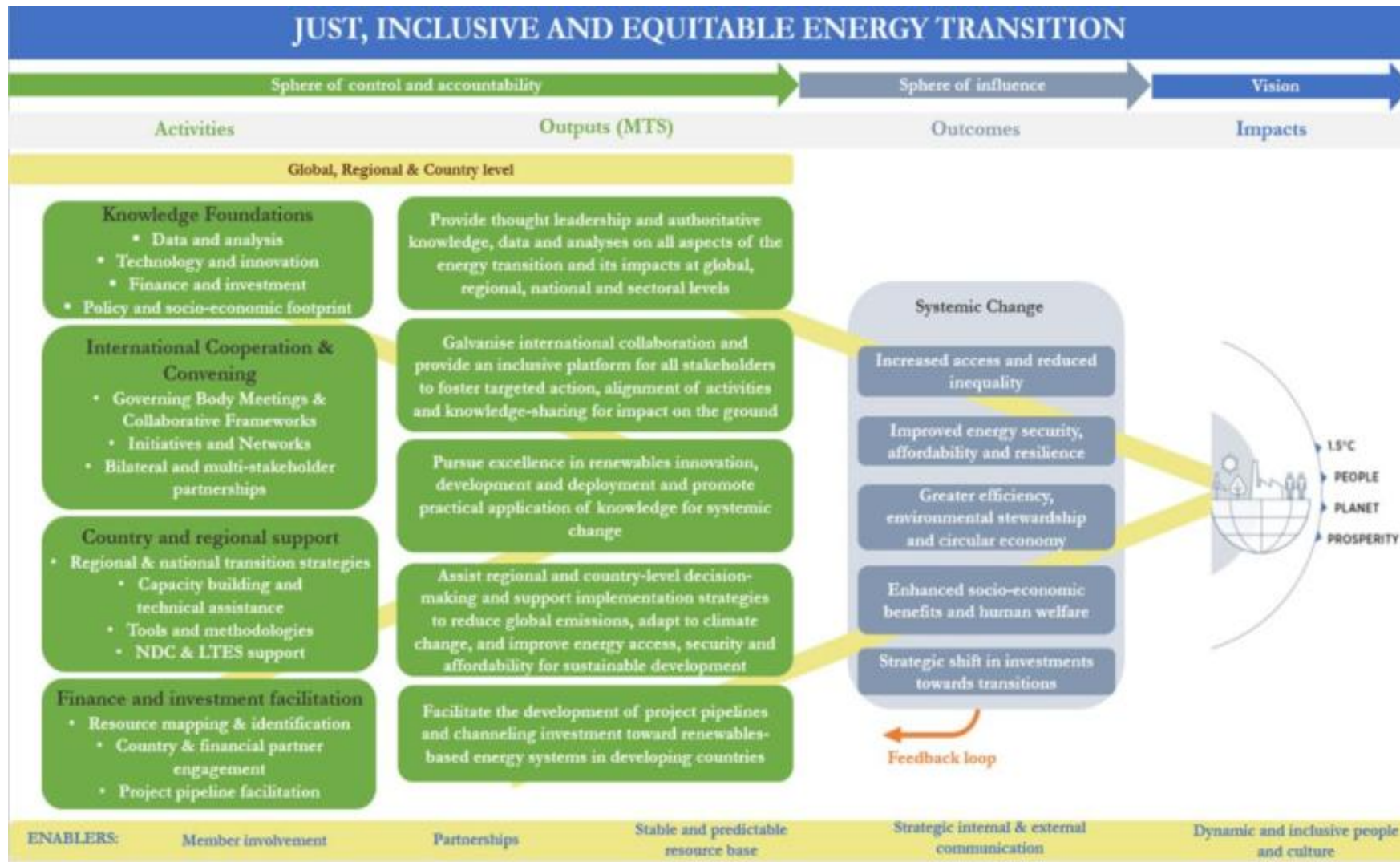
Criterion	Evaluation Questions	
Relevance	1	Is IRENA providing services and products that members and partners value, and which are seen to potentially influence key actors in the energy sectors?
	1.1	Are there programmatic activities that should be added in the next MTS? Are there programmatic activities that other organisations are better placed to do, and IRENA should stop undertaking?
Coherence	2	To what extent is IRENA's work aligned with – and complementary to – other work being delivered globally, regionally and nationally
	2.1	To what extent has IRENA's work enhanced international collaboration for the energy transition?
Efficiency	3	Are IRENA's activities being delivered within expected or reasonable timeframes and budgets?
Effectiveness	4	Are IRENA's program activities delivering planned outputs and meeting partner and member needs?
	4.1	Are the Work Programme and Budget for 2022-2023 and 2024-2025 well aligned with the MTS?
	4.2	To what degree, and how, have IRENA's collaborative arrangements with other stakeholders facilitated the delivery of its programmatic activities and MTS?
	4.3	Are the objectives in the MTS being adequately fulfilled, considering the Agency's size and scope?
	4.4	To what extent have IRENA's services helped fill knowledge gaps, build cooperation, strengthen capacity and facilitate investment to support the energy transition?
	4.5	To what degree has IRENA's support leveraged additional funding for energy transitions?
	4.6	Is IRENA able to effectively monitor and track progress and influence?
Impact	5	What evidence or examples are there of where IRENA have influenced or are on track to influence or contribute to systemic change?
	5.1	To what extent has IRENA influenced the global energy discourse during 2023-2025?
	5.2	What evidence/examples are there of IRENA'S work contributing at a country/regional level to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Increased access and reduced inequality b) Improved energy security, affordability and resilience c) Greater efficiency, environmental stewardship and circular economy d) Enhanced socio-economic benefits and human welfare e) Strategic shift in investments toward transitions

The evaluation involves three phases: inception, implementation – including data collection and analysis – and reporting. The evaluation drew on a series of tools to gather and analyse qualitative and quantitative information. This included the following:

- **Interviews:** Representatives from 29 IRENA members and partner organisations were interviewed remotely via Microsoft Teams.
- **Desk review:** A literature review analysed all relevant documentation including progress reports, work programmes and budgets, and key strategy documents. A full list of documents is presented in Annex 5
- **Online surveys:** Surveys were circulated to three groups, namely (i) IRENA Member States, (ii) External Stakeholders (e.g. Coalition members, partners, consultants working with IRENA) and (iii) IRENA staff. Response rates were as follows:

Survey Group	Population	Responses	Response rate
Members	169 countries and the EU	55	32%
External Stakeholders	180	22	12%
Staff	210	115	55%

Annex 2: IRENA 2023-2027 MTS Theory of Change



Annex 3: Interview list

Name	Role	Stakeholder Group
Margalita Aarabidze	Georgia	Member
Giada Venturini	Denmark	Donor
Nicolae Magdil	Moldova	Member
Marie Schipper	Belgium (Walloon)	Donor
Fatou Thiam	Senegal	Recipient
Mario Tot	IAEA	Partner
Aldilla Rakhiemah	ASEAN	Regional Organisation
Michael Hackethal	Head of Division at Germany's Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy	Donor
Stefan Gsänger	World Wind Association	Global Offshore Wind Alliance
Kenichi Kitamura	UNFCCC	Partner
Gauri Singh	Deputy Director-General	Staff
Adja Gueye	ANER Director Senegal	Recipient
Gabriel Makengo	São Tomé and Príncipe	Recipient
Ahmed Badr	Director, Project Facilitation & Support	Staff
Vanessa Eugenia Interiano Elfarnawany	El Salvador	Member
Claire Nicolas	World Bank	International Finance
Ute Collier	Acting Director - Knowledge Policy and Finance Centre	Staff
Diala Hawila	Programme officer	Staff
Damiao Namuera	Mozambique	Recipient
Gorbuz Gonul	Director, Country Engagement and Partnerships	Staff
Simon Benmarraze	Team Lead	Staff
Francesco La Camera	Director General	Staff
Kurt Inglis	St Lucia	Recipient
Huang KangQiao	CATL - Coalition for Action	Private sector

Mali Barnes	Antigua and Barbuda	Member
Mikaele Belena	Fiji	Member
Sheena Gosine	Trinidad and Tobago	Member
Norela Constantinescu	Acting Director, IITC	Staff
Anastasia Kefalidou	Acting Chief of IRENA New York Office	Staff

Annex 4: Survey Questions

Question	Response
What is your association with IRENA?	Staff
	Member
	External partner / other organisation
How long have you worked for IRENA?	Less than 2 years
	More than 5 years
Please select the division you currently work in	Administration and Management Services
	IRENA Innovation and Technology Centre
	Country Engagement & Partnerships
	Knowledge, Policy and Finance Centre
	Project Facilitation Services
	Office of the Director-General
Within what region are you based?	Africa
	Asia
	Eurasia
	Europe
	Latin America and the Caribbean
	Middle East
	North America
	Oceania
Within what sector/s do you mainly work? (Please tick all that apply)	Energy
	Environment
	Economy
	Climate
	Health
	Social development
	Foreign affairs
	Other (please specify)

In what capacity do you engage with IRENA?	Academia, Research Institutions, Think Tanks
	Civil Society and NGOs
	Commercial financing institutions
	Countries (Government and National Bodies)
	Developers (public and private)
	Development Financing Institutions
	Impact financing, angel investors
	International and Regional Organisations
	Media
	Multilateral Development Bank
	Philanthropic Organizations, Foundations and Trusts
	Private sector, including industry associations
	United Nations, including Agencies, Funds and Programmes
	Other (please specify)
How long has your institution been involved with IRENA?	Less than 2 years
	2-5 years
	More than 5 years
Within what country do you mainly work?	Open-Ended Response
Within what sector/s do you mainly work? (Please tick all that apply)	Energy
	Environment
	Economy
	Climate
	Health
	Social development
	Foreign affairs
IRENA provides thought leadership and shapes the global discourse on all aspects of the energy transition by providing authoritative knowledge and data.	Strongly disagree
	Disagree
	Neither agree nor disagree
	Agree
	Strongly agree

IRENA provides thought leadership and shapes the global discourse on all aspects of the energy transition by providing analysis on all aspects of the energy transformation and its impacts at global, regional, national and sectoral levels.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Strongly agree

IRENA galvanises international collaboration and provides an inclusive platform for all stakeholders to foster targeted action, alignment of activities and knowledge-sharing for impact on the ground.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Strongly agree

IRENA pursues excellence in renewables innovation, development and deployment and promotes practical application of knowledge for systemic change

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Strongly agree

IRENA assists regional and country-level decision-making and supports implementation strategies to reduce global emissions, adapt to climate change, and improve energy access, security and affordability for sustainable development.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Strongly agree

IRENA facilitates the development of project pipelines and channeling investment toward renewables-based energy systems in developing countries.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Strongly agree

Do you feel IRENA's work is aligned with and complementary to other work being delivered globally, regionally and nationally?

Strongly misaligned

Somewhat misaligned

Somewhat aligned

Strongly aligned

IRENA works with many different groups that are involved or have an interest in renewable energies. How appropriate is IRENA's level of engagement with each of the following groups?

National Governments - Not enough engagement

National Governments - Right level of engagement

National Governments - Too much engagement

International organisations - Not enough engagement

International organisations - Right level of engagement

International organisations - Too much engagement

Regional organisations - Not enough engagement

Regional organisations - Right level of engagement

Regional organisations - Too much engagement

Investors and development banks - Not enough engagement

Investors and development banks - Right level of engagement

Investors and development banks - Too much engagement

Private sector companies and entrepreneurs - Not enough engagement

Private sector companies and entrepreneurs - Right level of engagement

Private sector companies and entrepreneurs - Too much engagement

NGOs and civil society - Not enough engagement

NGOs and civil society - Right level of engagement

	NGOs and civil society - Too much engagement
	Academia - Not enough engagement
	Academia - Right level of engagement
	Academia - Too much engagement
Are there any other groups or partners that IRENA should be working with?	Open-Ended Response
Can you provide an example of how IRENA has effectively developed a relationship with your organisation or others you are aware of?	Open-Ended Response
Do you think IRENA's program activities are meeting member and partner needs?	Strongly disagree
	Disagree
	Neither agree nor disagree
	Agree
	Strongly agree
On a scale of 0-3, please rate the extent to which you think IRENA is having impact in each of the following areas: (we are defining impact as ANY of the following: led to positive policy change; has or will lead to faster, greater uptake of renewable capacity; shaped the dialogue or understanding of stakeholders; improved accuracy of information for better decision making, etc.)	Capacity building - 0 (No impact)
	Capacity building - 1
	Capacity building - 2
	Capacity building - 3 (Significant impact)
	Capacity building - 4 Don't know
	Technical advice and improving knowledge gaps - 0 (No impact)
	Technical advice and improving knowledge gaps - 1
	Technical advice and improving knowledge gaps - 2
	Technical advice and improving knowledge gaps - 3 (Significant impact)
	Technical advice and improving knowledge gaps - 4 Don't know
	International co-operation - 0 (No impact)
	International co-operation - 1
	International co-operation - 2
	International co-operation - 3 (Significant impact)

	International co-operation - 4 Don't know
	Policy analysis - 0 (No impact)
	Policy analysis - 1
	Policy analysis - 2
	Policy analysis - 3 (Significant impact)
	Policy analysis - 4 Don't know
	Renewable data & statistics - 0 (No impact)
	Renewable data & statistics - 1
	Renewable data & statistics - 2
	Renewable data & statistics - 3 (Significant impact)
	Renewable data & statistics - 4 Don't know
	Scenarios and pathway analyses - 0 (No impact)
	Scenarios and pathway analyses - 1
	Scenarios and pathway analyses - 2
	Scenarios and pathway analyses - 3 (Significant impact)
	Scenarios and pathway analyses - 4 Don't know
	Socio-economic analysis - 0 (No impact)
	Socio-economic analysis - 1
	Socio-economic analysis - 2
	Socio-economic analysis - 3 (Significant impact)
	Socio-economic analysis - 4 Don't know
	Finance and investment facilitation - 0 (No impact)
	Finance and investment facilitation - 1
	Finance and investment facilitation - 2
	Finance and investment facilitation - 3 (Significant impact)
	Finance and investment facilitation - 4 Don't know
	Technology information & briefings - 0 (No impact)
	Technology information & briefings - 1
	Technology information & briefings - 2
	Technology information & briefings - 3 (Significant impact)
	Technology information & briefings - 4 Don't know
Are there activities that other organisations are better placed to do, and IRENA should stop undertaking?	Open-Ended Response

Can you provide an example where IRENA has influenced or is on track to influence or contribute to systemic change?	Open-Ended Response
Can you provide an example of IRENA developing an effective relationship with your organisation or others you are aware of?	Open-Ended Response
What do you think is IRENA's comparative advantage?	Open-Ended Response
How satisfied are you with IRENA's performance?	Very dissatisfied
	Dissatisfied
	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
	Satisfied
	Very satisfied
What do you think are IRENA's main strengths?	Open-Ended Response
What is IRENA's main weakness? How could this weakness be addressed?	Open-Ended Response
What do you think IRENA should do more of?	Open-Ended Response
What do you think IRENA should do less of?	Open-Ended Response
Any final comments?	Open-Ended Response

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