## Strategic Planning Meeting for GIFT

## Washington DC

## 28 September 2016

**Report**

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**1 Objectives of the Strategic Planning Meeting**

The Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency (GIFT) Strategic Planning Meeting was held on 28 September 2016 at IBP in Washington DC. The objectives of the meeting were to (i) consider the preliminary findings from the evaluation study by Swedish Development Advisers; (ii) to create a shared view of the key strategic issues for the next phase of GIFT in the next three years; and (iii) to gain broad agreement on how to address the identified main issues in the development of the next phase and agree a way forward for any outstanding issues.

Twenty Partners, Stewards and Lead Stewards (in addition to the GIFT Coordination Team and the Evaluation team leader) took part in the meeting, which was convened as a Lead Steward Meeting, with the presence of high level representatives of GIFT’s six Lead Stewards. The list of participants and the program are attached at Annex A. The event was facilitated by Samantha Wade. There was a high degree of participation and engagement in the discussions during the meeting and participants successfully mapped out future strategic directions for GIFT.

This report summarises the key messages from the meeting and outlines a brief summary of the meeting.

**2 Key messages from the Strategic Planning Meeting**

The **overall findings of the evaluation concluded that GIFT is a successful network**, uniquely placed as a learning forum to offer support to reform for greater fiscal transparency, public participation and accountability. Evidence gathered by the evaluation team has shown that GIFT is highly relevant and, crucially, that convergence and increased coherence around the norms and standards on fiscal transparency would not have happened without GIFT. The lead evaluator, Åsa Königson, will produce a second draft of the evaluation report, taking into account feedback from stewards and the GIFT Evaluation Committee, and this will be presented to Network Stewards in early November.

Meeting participants agreed on a set of core strategic questions to help frame the afternoon’s discussion. The resulting narrative builds on a shared understanding of the challenges, GIFT’s unique comparative advantage in this field and potential areas of future work.

**The key challenge that needs to be addressed is that there is slow and uneven progress in improvements in fiscal transparency, public participation and accountability** by governments around the world. In addition, current efforts are dissipated by the large number of actors in the field. The challenge for greater fiscal transparency includes dimensions of technical capacity and political economy issues. This latter dimension refers to **better understanding of the incentives and interests of key actors and the uncertainties involved in complex change processes in order to identify suitable entry points for action and ‘room for manoeuvre’ to shift change processes towards greater fiscal transparency**. The challenge as framed here implies interrogation of both the technical capacity needs and the political economy factors that are preventing countries from making progress in fiscal transparency, public participation and accountability. What is the mix of technical and especially political challenges in each context and how does it differ in different countries?

**Crucial to understanding the challenges towards greater fiscal transparency is placing the interests of the citizen and the people at the center.** Even if information on fiscal transparency is being successfully produced and disseminated at the local level, is it the right information and is it usable? For example, is it possible to trace allocations in the central government budget down to or close to the points of service delivery? Are beneficiaries and affected communities able to engage in budget processes?

**GIFT is uniquely placed to work towards a goal where citizens are able to know where the money is going, to have a say in government spending and to take part in monitoring**. As a multi-stakeholder action network comprising civil society organisations as well as country governments, international financial institutions and the private sector, GIFT’s role as an amplifier of the voice of the citizen is key. A future GIFT strategy needs to put the people (and the taxpayers) as the main objective of fiscal information disclosure and to seek partnerships with key actors such as the media and champions within the political system to achieve progress around greater participation in fiscal transparency. A possible entry point for engaging in greater country-specific support and advice could be using GIFT as a forum for bringing together the custodians of standards in fiscal transparency (governments, international institutions) and other in-country key actors to advocate for improvements in fiscal transparency.

The current international architecture of standards and norms, although now considerably more coherent as a result of efforts by the GIFT Stewards and coordination team, still contains some elements of inconsistency across the main instruments. In addition, there are some gaps in current standards when judged against the GIFT High Level Principles. GIFT is well placed to support further efforts to improve the comprehensiveness and coherence of the international architecture, through analytical support, brokering interactions, and helping to manage issues at the boundaries of the different institutions.

**GIFT also has an important role to play as a connector of important actors and a knowledge platform.** GIFT’s unique convening power enables all the major institutions to sit around one table, enabling GIFT to bring key actors together, to challenge them, to encourage them to work in a coordinated way.

**If citizens are to be active engaged participants in this space, then working to build coalitions of key actors will be key to GIFT’s work in the future in promoting significant and continuous improvements in fiscal transparency, public participation and accountability.**

There is also an important relationship here between the international and domestic levels of improving fiscal transparency work – and **significant potential for flexible and adaptive learning in an iterative program of work.** When dealing with a high degree of complexity, purposeful experimentation or ‘learning by doing’ could be placed at the heart of GIFT’s future work.

The international dimensions of this relationship include the international bodies who are responsible for setting and assessing country practices against the standards. **At the domestic level, there is significant potential for country governments and civil society organisations to engage in this adaptive learning approach, by applying and testing out the standards at the country level, making transparency more relevant to the country’s citizens and learning lessons to feed back into and influence the global norms at the international level.** In this way, GIFT becomes a broker of learning and knowledge, an advocate for citizen-centered budget processes linking national and international actors, by placing citizens and public interest squarely at the center in order to influence international standards and nudge change processes towards greater fiscal transparency, public participation and accountability. This seam of creativity between the two levels is what makes the Open Government Partnership an important and creative opportunity to push for improvements in fiscal transparency in its engagement with the national and international dimensions.

**Key to delivering on this role as a broker is better communication** with citizens and public interest groups. How to make fiscal transparency directly relevant to citizen groups? There are also important gains to be made in linking to public resource use. For example, working closer on the anti-corruption agenda as well as greater public participation will be a strong influence among citizen groups. Looking at GIFT’s future work through this lens with citizen engagement at the core transforms GIFT into a political instrument, providing voice (and bringing in more voices), working analytically and feeding lessons back into the international architecture.

**The evaluation has shown that GIFT is successful in its work on harmonisation of norms and in its powerful relationship with the Open Government Partnership (OGP) and all Stewards agree this work should continue. Two new areas of work in particular were agreed: linking the fiscal transparency agenda to reducing corruption; and expanding transparency of revenues.** There is also potential work to be done in building new norms where there are gaps (linking with the citizen-centric work); in promoting greater publicity of the fiscal transparency agenda (and also in the Stewards’ own organisational senior leadership teams to reinforce this); in brokering meetings with citizens and international actors in citizen spaces; looking at the impact of new technologies and leveraging partners to help implement norms in their own countries. An important question to ask: where are there other mechanisms like the OGP where GIFT could effectively work? Where are the levers we can use to amplify our efforts?

**Stewards agreed that the current working model for GIFT is fit for purpose and having a lean and flexible structure is an effective way of supporting implementation of GIFT’s work. Stewards indicated that the membership should expand to achieve a more global coverage, with additional Stewards sought in Africa, Europe and Asia. It was also agreed, however, that while the geographic representation within GIFT needs to be broader, any move to expand membership should be manageable under the current working model.** While the composition of Lead Stewards should include more governments and civil society organisations to increase membership diversity, the current governing model works for now and should remain the same for the time being.

Stewards and Lead Stewards all make important contributions to the network, whether it be sharing operational links in country work, in-kind resources such as research opportunities and convening power, knowledge in specific areas and participation in relevant networks as well as helping to disseminate the GIFT message to key constituencies. **The meeting agreed that there needs to be better communication and coordination between Partners/Stewards/Lead Stewards and the GIFT Coordination Team in terms of country-level linkages and participation in appropriate fora.** Moving forward, there are many opportunities for Lead Stewards and Stewards to be more engaged with the GIFT Network, specifically through support and engagement at the country level through coordination with the GIFT Coordination Team. In addition, there are opportunities for more extensive networking and joint working between the coordination team and relevant staff in lead steward organisations on analytical and communication initiatives.

1. **Brief summary of the meeting**

The Partners, Stewards and Lead Stewards were warmly welcomed by Juan Pablo Guerrero, GIFT Network Director. The facilitator invited participants to introduce themselves and to outline what they hoped would come out of the day. Expectations mirrored the meeting’s objectives and included learning from the evaluation study, identifying key topics for the next phase and looking at ways of working better together.

Åsa Königson of SDA presented the preliminary findings of the evaluation study of GIFT in 2013-2016. The overall findings of the evaluation concluded that GIFT was a successful network, having achieved significant convergence of international standards, and uniquely placed as a learning forum to offer support to reform for greater fiscal transparency, public participation and accountability. Participants in the meeting were invited to comment and ask questions on the evaluation and these will be taken into consideration in the revised evaluation report.

The full set of slides presented is attached at Annex B.

In small working groups, participants identified the key strategic issues that needed to be discussed at the meeting and the rest of the day’s discussion was framed around eight core questions. The key discussion points noted in the plenary sessions are detailed in section 2 above. The meeting did not have time to discuss the final question on funding.

1. *What is the challenge that needs to be addressed?*

Participants agreed that the key challenge is the slow and uneven progress in improvements in fiscal transparency, public participation and accountability by governments around the world. In addition, current efforts are dissipated by the large number of actors in the field. This challenge includes both dimensions of technical capacity and political economy issues which need to be further explored.

1. *What, therefore, is the purpose of GIFT?*

Participants did not come up with a final agreed purpose statement for GIFT but everyone in the meeting agreed that GIFT works towards the strategic objectives of working to achieve greater fiscal transparency, public participation and accountability. Crucial to understanding the challenge is placing the interests of the citizen and the people at the center. GIFT is uniquely placed to work towards a goal where citizens are able to know where the money is going, to have a say in government spending and to take part in monitoring. As a multi-stakeholder action network comprising civil society organisations as well as country governments, international financial institutions and the private sector, GIFT’s role as an amplifier of the voice of the citizen is key.

1. *Is there a realistic theory of change to take us there?*

Participants agreed the current theory of change is valid and that through working to build coalitions of key actors, GIFT will significantly impact on the promotion of significant and continuous improvements in fiscal transparency, public participation and accountability.

1. *What is GIFT’s unique comparative advantage?*

GIFT’s unique comparative advantages is its convening power enabling all the major institutions to sit around one table, enabling GIFT to bring key actors together, to challenge them, to encourage them to work in a coordinated way. GIFT has an important role to play as a connector of important actors and a knowledge platform.

1. *Where should we focus our efforts?*

There was engaged and constructive discussion on the main areas of future work. GIFT is successful in its work on harmonisation of norms and in its powerful relationship with the Open Government Partnership (OGP) and all Stewards agree this work should continue. Two new areas of work in particular were agreed: linking the fiscal transparency agenda to reducing corruption; and expanding transparency of revenues. Better communication (‘and bringing fiscal transparency alive as a human issue’) could be a way to building stronger connection to the corruption and anti-corruption agendas.

1. *What is an appropriate working model?*

There was broad agreement that the current working model for GIFT is fit for purpose and having a lean and flexible structure is an effective way of supporting implementation of GIFT’s work. Stewards indicated that the membership should expand to achieve a more global coverage, with additional Stewards sought in Africa, Europe and Asia. It was also agreed, however, that while the geographic representation within GIFT needs to be broader, any move to expand membership should be manageable under the current working model.

1. *What does each Steward bring to the GIFT table?*

Lead Stewards bring representativeness and credibility to the Network; as well as access to their own networks to grant GIFT effective access to relevant fora, particularly in linkages to operations at the country level. All Stewards have an important role in publicizing GIFT’s work.

1. *How will it be funded? How to ensure the sustainability of the Network?*

This final question was not discussed in the meeting.

The meeting ended with some closing words from the Network Director and Lead Stewards. The Network Director invited Lead Stewards to engage more with GIFT with in-country support and to help include more governments and CSOs in the Network’s initiatives.

The lead IMF representative, Manal Fouad, acknowledged the very encouraging and positive achievements of the Network and restated that GIFT was a valuable forum for the IMF. Going forward, the lean, flexible structure of the Network is an appropriate model for the future work. Fayezul Choudhury (IFAC) reiterated the usefulness of the day’s discussions and was optimistic about the Network’s future. The lead World Bank representative, Jim Brumby, emphasised that GIFT was created to be a game-changer and we must continue to push for significant changes in the fiscal transparency environment. There are important linkages with the anti-corruption agenda and work on expanding transparency of revenues. The World Bank will continue to embrace GIFT’s work in its country-level operations. He concluded that the event had been a good opportunity to stand back and exchange with colleagues and friends. Warren Krafchik (International Budget Partnership) publicly thanked the Director for his energy and passion and the GIFT team and the resulting impact on work and quality of the Network. IBP recognises the value of GIFT and will continue to work towards the strategic objectives. He highlighted the greater effort needed in making sure we harness a more diversified set of civil society actors to help with country level work and to ask the uncomfortable questions.

Finally, Juan Pablo thanked everyone for their active engagement in the meeting and providing some clear core messages for the next phase. The workplan for GIFT’s next phase will be available in early 2017 for consultation with Stewards.

Annex A: Participants and agenda

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| **Name** | **Last Name** | **Organization** |
| Jim | Brumby | World Bank |
| Keith W. | McLean | World Bank |
| Stephen | Davenport | World Bank |
| Vivek | Ramkumar | IBP |
| Warren | Krafchik | IBP |
| Alta | Prinsloo | IFAC |
| Fayezul | Choudhury | IFAC |
| Janet | Abuel | Philippine Department of Budget and Management |
| Katarina | Ott | Institute of Public Finance - Croatia |
| Ronald | Downes | OECD |
| Sanjay | Pradhan | Open Government Partnership |
| Sailendra | Pattanayak | IMF |
| Manal | Fouad | IMF |
| Xavier | Rame | IMF |
| Greg | Linden | MITRE Corporation |
| Abhinav | Bahl | Open Government Partnership |
| Asa | Konigson | SDA-Independent evaluator |
| Ivana | Jakir-Bajo | Ministry of Finance - Croatia |
| Daniel | Avelino | IPEA-Brazil |
| Molly | Elgin Cossart | Omidyar Network |
| Alan | Hudson | Global Integrity |
| Tania | Sanchez | GIFT |
| Tarick | Gracida | GIFT |
| Murray | Petrie | GIFT |
| Juan Pablo | Guerrero | GIFT |

**STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING FOR THE**

**GLOBAL INITIATIVE ON FISCAL TRANSPARENCY (GIFT)**

IBP, Washington DC, 28 September 2016

820 First Street NE, Suite 510, Washington DC, 20002, tel. +1202 325 8858

**AGENDA**

**Objectives**

In the context of planning for the future of the **GIFT network**, the purpose of the meeting is to consider the big picture with a view to learning the main lessons of the past three years 2013-16, and identifying the main areas of **GIFT’s** work moving forward.

**Specifically, the meeting will…**

* Consider the preliminary findings from the evaluation study by Swedish Development Advisers.
* Create a shared view of the key strategic issues for the next phase of GIFT in the next three years.
* Gain broad agreement on how to address the identified main issues in the development of the next phase and agree a way forward for any outstanding issues.

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| --- | --- |
| 8.30 - 9.00 | Welcome breakfast |
| 9.00 - 9.10 | Welcome and introductory remarks  *Juan Pablo Guerrero, GIFT Network Director* |
| 9.10 – 9.40 | Overview of the day, introductions and expectations  *Samantha Wade, facilitator* |
| 9.40 – 10.30 | Overview of the GIFT evaluation findings  *Åsa Königson, SDA* |
| 10.30 – 11.15 | Questions for the evaluation team from GIFT Network stewards and partners |
| 11.15 – 11.40 | Break |
| 11.40 – 12.30 | Identification of the key strategic issues to discuss in the afternoon  *Samantha Wade, facilitator* |
| 12.30 – 13.30 | Lunch |
| 13.30 – 15.00 | Discussion and agreement on the key issues |
| 15.00 – 15.30 | Break |
| 15.30 – 17.00 | Conclusion of discussion and confirmation of matters decided |
| 17.00 | Close of day |

**Output**

The output of the workshop will be a set of agreements at a broad level to support the next phase of GIFT going forward, for subsequent more detailed discussion and design.

**Annex B: Presentation on the Evaluation Study**