

HIGHLIGHTS

2018

Report of Activities





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GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR
FISCAL TRANSPARENCY

**REPORT OF
ACTIVITIES**
December 20, 2018

The Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency is the only global action network that demands transparency in the use of public resources for people who want and can make a difference in countries led by leaders who believe in accountable and honest governments in a time of increasing corruption and lack of trust public institutions.

This document provides an account of the activities of GIFT in the period January-December 2018. It has been prepared as a background for discussion in the December 19th Lead Stewards Meeting (Washington DC).

The most important outcome of the year was the change to the network's Operating Rules, which introduced tougher conditions for admission and membership, setting the grounds for the consolidation of a global competitive network of about 50 fiscal transparency champions. From now on, all members must present a set of concrete and measurable commitments to improve fiscal transparency and participation in their areas of influence. To maintain membership status, stewards must report regularly on progress towards these commitments. Failing to respond to the network's communications, omitting to report back and not attending the General Stewards meeting more than two times, will trigger an additional supporting effort from the network, but might eventually result in losing membership.

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More generally, in the last 12 months, the network has worked towards the following main outcomes:

- Advancing transparency and citizen engagement in the budget process in international norms and at country level;
- Increasing and improving peer-learning and technical collaboration, harnessing digitalization and open data to engage the public and increasing transparency; and,
- Consolidating GIFT as an action network composed by fiscal transparency champions gathered in a cohesive and selective group, set to become a source of knowledge, experience, impact, and inspiration to the global community working on accountability, citizen empowerment and anti-corruption issues.

This report contains sections describing specific activities related to these outcomes, and an additional table that provides a brief outline of the activities performed in 2018 by the GIFT Coordination Team. It ends presenting the outlines for the 2019 workplan discussion.



Advancing transparency & citizen engagement

in the budget process
in international norms
and at country level



IBP's 2017 Open Budget Survey and public participation

Between January and May, IBP presented the 2017 edition of the Open Budget Survey (OBS) in global and regional launches, in which network members and the GIFT coordination team were involved. The team was principally in charge of presenting and discussing the questionnaire section on the public participation¹. As well-known, the OBS 2017 included a new set of measures of public participation based fundamentally on the **GIFT Public Participation Principles**, offering a completely new stocktaking of the state of the art in public participation in the budget process in the world.

Although more than 80% of the countries surveyed (94 out of 115) have some form of participatory mechanism in place, the OBS 2017 results made it clear that all countries included in the survey need to enhance the inclusiveness, openness and depth of existing public engagement mechanisms and implement similar mechanisms in other stages of the budget cycle. That said, many governments are innovating in engaging citizens in the use of public resources and many others have expressed interest in understanding how they can create mechanisms for participation in national budgeting at GIFT partners' meetings throughout 2018.

**CLICK HERE
TO LEARN
MORE ABOUT
THE PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION
PRINCIPLES**

IBP and the GIFT coordination team proposed to the lead stewards (June meeting) to deepen the work on the matter, supporting select governments to pilot practical and meaningful mechanisms through which they can engage their citizens on such policies. Following this invitation, several budget authorities, members and partners of the GIFT network, expressed their interest to engage in the pilot on public participation in the budget at the national level, including Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Croatia, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Guatemala, Liberia, Nigeria, Benin and South Africa. The main objective of this initiative, to be implemented during the period 2019-20, is to support government in establishing meaningful and practical participation mechanisms in fiscal policies and to document the achievements and challenges of these mechanisms. Such documentation would help to begin systematizing the lessons of public engagement in budgetary processes at the national level, analyzing their impacts and generating recommendations for peer learning and technical collaboration.

Some members of the network excelled in the OBS 2017. The Philippines is one of the small number of countries that are engaging the public across the whole budget cycle (along with Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom). A more diverse group of countries achieved the top score for public engagement by the executive branch on at least one of the ten questions in the survey, including Guatemala, Mexico, South Africa, and Ukraine.

On budget transparency, the network is happy to acknowledge the outstanding results in the OBI of many of its stewards: South Africa ranked second place, with a score of 89, an improvement from a score of 86 in the 2015. Also, with a score of 79, Mexico ranked 6th, and Brazil 7th with an unchanged score of 77. Mexico improved significantly from a score of 66 in 2015. Moreover, many of the stewards accomplished improvements in 2017: the Philippines increased its score to 67, from 64 in 2015, and was able to institutionalize the gains and survived the political transition; Indonesia to 64 from 59; and Croatia to 57 from 53. The greatest advances in score came from the Dominican Republic –scoring 66- and Guatemala –scoring 61-, both with a 15 point increase from 2015.

1. The GIFT network director was part of the OBS launch events in Washington (January), London (February), Amman (February), Conakry (February), Vienna (March), Washington (April), Manila (May), Santo Domingo (May), Zagreb (May).

On the other hand, Chile, Argentina, Colombia, Benin and Nigeria experienced declines, although one must keep in mind that they only joined GIFT in late 2017 or 2018. And challenges remain with members since 2016, such as Paraguay (first time included on the OBS), Tunisia, El Salvador and the United States. Fortunately, in all of these cases, efforts are being made recently to ensure a positive correction towards greater transparency in the short term.

Public participation principles and mechanisms in policy agendas

During 2018, the GIFT public participation principles, practices and mechanisms published in the [Guide](#) continued to be part of reform and discussions around the world. Examples are:

- The IMF Public Finance Management on-line [course](#), where FAD experts explain that well-designed PFM institutions, including fiscal transparency and accountability systems, support effectively economic policy objectives, inclusive growth and sustainability. The subject of fiscal transparency is recurrent during the course and a section is devoted to the public participation.
- The Guinee Conakry workshop organized with IBP and CABRI on fiscal transparency and public participation with African countries (February).
- The PEMNA (Public Expenditure Management Network in Asia) countries meeting in Kuala Lumpur, covering 15 countries in Asia² (March).
- Recent legislation reform discussions on participatory budgeting in Slovenia based on meetings and workshops (co-organized by the Court of Audit and the Parliament) where GIFT work has been referred to (April).
- The Brasilia IT for citizen engagement workshop and the presentation of the new version of Brazil's transparency portal (June);
- The Financial Forum and the workshop on participatory budgeting in Moscow (in coordination with PEMPAL countries, September).
- The Participatory Budgeting Project (PBP) Conference in Phoenix (March) and the Cascais Course hosted by the Municipality on Participatory Budgeting (October).
- The World Bank's Global Partnership for Social Accountability Global Forum (GPSA), where links between building human capital, fiscal transparency and citizen engagement were strongly established (October).
- The training to officials from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning of South Sudan, organized through the UNICEF South Sudan Country Office (December).
- The documented references in public discussions about citizen engagement in various steward countries such as Chile, as promoted by the [Observatorio del Gasto Fiscal](#) in its dialogues with the Ministry of Finance, as well as in Argentina by ACIJ, in South Africa by the civil society coalition Imali Yethu, in Central American by ICEFI, in Brazil by INESC, in Mexico by Fundar and in Colombia by the Ministry of Finance.

It is important to register that the [Guide on principles and mechanisms](#) has been published in Spanish and French (Arabic and Russian translations are upcoming in 2019).

2. Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Mongolia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam.

GIFT principles in global normative discussions and standards

**You asked,
we listened!**

GIFT published in January 2018 the

[Expanded Version of the High-Level Principles in Fiscal Transparency, Participation and Accountability,](#)

which seeks to explain the role played by the GIFT High-Level Principles in promoting greater fiscal transparency globally (2012), as well as to set out the

relationship between each of the [High-Level Principles](#) and the corresponding standards, norms, assessments, and country practices to which they relate. This resource provides a quick overview of the current multiplicity of instruments in relation to each other, identifies effective entry points to the more detailed sources of information and guidance, and considers where standards and assessments of practice may need strengthening to better realize the aspirations in the High-Level Principles. It has been a valuable tool for the discussion on the global architecture of fiscal transparency and participation.

Based on its principles and experience, GIFT provided feedback to processes of norm revisions, standards or new norms produced during 2018, in the following cases:

- The IMF Fiscal Transparency Code Handbook, published in April.
- The Declaration in Advance of The Summit of the Americas, in coordination with the Latin American Open Data Initiative ([ILDA](#), steward), which explains the role of open data and civic technology in the fight against corruption in the Americas, as a prelude to the declaration of the Heads of State of the Americas that called for the use of open data to combat corruption in the region.
- The US General Accountability Office's [study](#) on open government data, which identifies key practices for transparently reporting open government data, and evaluates the US Treasury's new open spending website against these key practices and other standards (August).
- The Latin American Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (OLACEFS in Spanish) consultation on engaging civil society in SAI work (August).
- The triennial Strategic Development Plan of INTOSAI's Professional Standard Committee (on SAI independence, audits results communications and dissemination, and use of new technologies and innovative communication approaches to engage the public, October).
- The PEFA Indicators Program Handbook (November).
- The IMF Fiscal Transparency Code IV Pillar on resource revenue transparency (December).

GIFT also provided recommendations to the Government of Canada for ambitious commitments on fiscal transparency in the framework of producing an OGP new national action plan (April), the ministries of finance of the Dominican Republic and El Salvador, on portals designed to address users' needs, and to the New Zealand Government on its call for public submissions on the initiative to create an Independent Fiscal Institution (October). In the latter case, GIFT's submission focused on the contribution an IFI can make to pro-actively promote more public debate on fiscal policies and more effective accountability.

International Fiscal Transparency Instruments' Mapping

Click over each norm
to learn more!



Increasing and improving
peer-learning and
technical collaboration,
harnessing digitalization and open
data to engage the public and
increasing transparency

2

Peer-learning and technical collaboration

Besides the OBS events mentioned above, the GIFT coordination team participated in 20 meetings and/or workshops in which network members were able to share knowledge and experiences³. Given the role of GIFT and the engagement of some of the stewards, the most important ones are listed below (all materials of these meetings are available at GIFT website and the [newsletters](#)):

- The workshop Towards greater transparency, participation and accountability in Africa, held in Conakry (February), organized by CABRI, IBP and GIFT, in cooperation with the Guinea *Ministère du Budget*, with the attendance of more than 60 representatives from multiple countries and organizations from the region, including high-level budget officials, independent budget experts, representatives from civil society organizations and international financial institutions.
- The workshop on *Digital Tools, Information Technologies and Citizen Engagement*, with the Ministry of Finance of Croatia, held in Zagreb (May), with the attendance of 25 representatives from more than 15 countries, back to back to the OECD Senior Budget Officials-PEMPAL meeting on fiscal transparency and budget reform.
- The official national launch of the new Brazilian Fiscal Transparency [Portal](#), which included a dialogue on citizen engagement and technologies and a technical workshop on *information technologies, transparency and public participation*, hosted by the Secretariat of Budget and Planning (Ministry of Finance), the Ministry of Transparency and Comptroller-General of the Union and the GIFT network, in Brasilia (June), with the attendance of 25 representatives of budget agencies and accountability SCOs from the GIFT community.
- The workshop on *Information technologies for citizen engagement in service provision* in Tbilisi at the OGP Summit (July), with the attendance of 30 members and partners of the GIFT network. During the workshop, participants discussed country initiatives to increase public participation through the increased use and optimization of IT.
- The workshop on participatory budgeting during the October General Stewards Meeting in Cascais, Portugal, held in coordination with the PEMPAL network, which included a field visit to learn more about the participatory budget experience, and hosted representatives from civil society and governments from 31 countries.
- The technical collaborative visit and workshop hosted by the South Africa National Treasury in Pretoria (December) with a delegation led by the Ministry of Budget and National Planning of Nigeria, including public servants of other ministries as well as representatives of civil organizations and private sector of Nigeria, with the goal of learning from the experience of building a portal based on the dialogue between providers and users of fiscal information (the visiting delegation was of 10 government and civil society representatives), sponsored by CABRI and GIFT.
- The training workshop for Budget Officials from South Sudan (6 participants), organized by UNICEF, IBP, GIFT and the participation of the Ministry of Finance of Kenya, to provide basic skills to write a thorough and comprehensive budget proposal, aiming at improving at the same time fiscal transparency and openness.

**20 meetings
and/or
workshops**
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members were able
to share knowledge
and experiences!

3. PEMPAL conference in Vienna (March), PEMLA conference in Kuala Lumpur (March), OAS and IADB Summit of the Americas in Lima (April), OECD public infrastructure conference (March), OECD Senior Budget Officials in Zagreb (May), Open contracting and corruption in Mexico (May), Transparency & Accountability in Latin America (WBG, Panama, June), OECD global public procurement (September), OLACEF on civil society stakeholders in Asuncion (August), Global open data conference in Buenos Aires (September), Center of Excellence in Finance in Ljubljana (September), Financial Forum in Moscow (September), Parl-Americas workshop on public participation in the approval budget phase in Victoria (September), OGP regional conference for Franco-phone Africa in Tunis (November).

Publishing Open Data and piloting the Open Fiscal Data Package

The use of IT and government digitalization were the main features of many of the workshop described. In parallel, the GIFT coordination team supported stewards in publishing budget information in open formats, promoting actively the use of published information by citizens, and piloting the open fiscal data package.

On the International Open Data Day, Mexico's Ministry of Finance, with GIFT and [Social Tic](#), led the 3rd edition of the #DataOnTheStreets Rally. This time, other countries were invited to join the initiative with the objective of promoting the engagement of citizens with the data from their fiscal transparency portals, becoming social supervisors of public works and agents of change in the use and promotion of fiscal transparency geolocation data. More than one thousand people participated in the rally, in Chile, Colombia and Mexico. The #RallyChile (@observafiscalcl) had 431 registered participant teams who visited 84 public works sites, and posted 321 photos and 86 videos. In the case of the #RallyColombia (@STransparencia), 53 projects were visited, 300 photos and 45 videos posted⁴. In the #RallyMéxico (@tpresupuestaria), 600 participants registered, 224 projects visited, 775 photos and 111 videos were posted.



The OFDP has continued to represent an accessible and free resource for the GIFT community members to publish fiscal information in open formats, with visualizations and data analysis tools to help non-experts use the data. Piloting the tool has provided important insights on its development, mainly derived from the actual use and possibilities of governments, leading to improvements, such as enabling automatic updates and possibility of hosting the packager in institutional servers. The following countries piloted the OFDP in 2018: South Africa, Argentina and the Dominican Republic. Publication of fiscal information by these governments using the OFDP is expected in 2019.

At the same time, GIFT has strongly encouraged the publishing of information in open formats, facilitating the process as much as possible and regardless of the platforms used. An illustration of that is the [Open Data Tutorial](#) recently launched in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance of Mexico.

11,206
total views of all the videos



New Open Budget Data!
Argentina,
South Africa,
Brazil and El Salvador.

While some countries are still in the process of publication, in the last months the following countries have started to make their open data available: [Argentina](#), [South Africa](#), [Brazil](#) and [El Salvador](#).

4. The #RallyChile was organized by the Observatory of Fiscal Spending of Chile (steward), with the support of the Ministry of Public Works and the Chilean Chamber of Construction; and the #RallyColombia by the Secretariat of Transparency of the Office of the President, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Information Technology, Open Knowledge Colombia and the Observatory of Visible Infrastructure of the University of the Andes.

This new portal also took into account the network's recommendations on user experience design, plain language communication strategies and citizen engagement strategies.



Communications and the Community of Practice

The stewards continued to collaborate with the GIFT coordination team in developing videos and blogposts as peer-to-peer learning tools on specific topics. The goal of such initiatives has been to ensure that the technical teams of budget agencies have access to practical experiences on the use of technologies for disclosing meaningful information and engaging the public. One product is the **Open Data Tutorial** which includes ten short videos plus one webinar recorded session and, a support document for each video. This tutorial, produced with Hacienda of Mexico, was launched in May in Spanish (<http://bit.ly/DiasDeDatos>) and in July in English (<http://bit.ly/OpenDataDays>).

Another new feature developed in 2018 is the **GIFT Webinar series**, a **six chapters edition** that explores concrete experiences in the use of digital tools to effectively communicate budget information. Webinars will continue in 2019 on a monthly basis. In addition to the 26 existing Tutorial and Webinar Series videos, GIFT produced 6 new videos in 2018 and

1. Building fiscal transparency portals.
2. Communicating the budget. How to promote the use of budget information.
3. Building a strong budget open data policy.
4. Getting real with the use of budget open data. Examples from the field
5. Exploring effective ways to engage citizens. The role of digital tools, what works?
6. Educating about the budget- Online courses experiences.

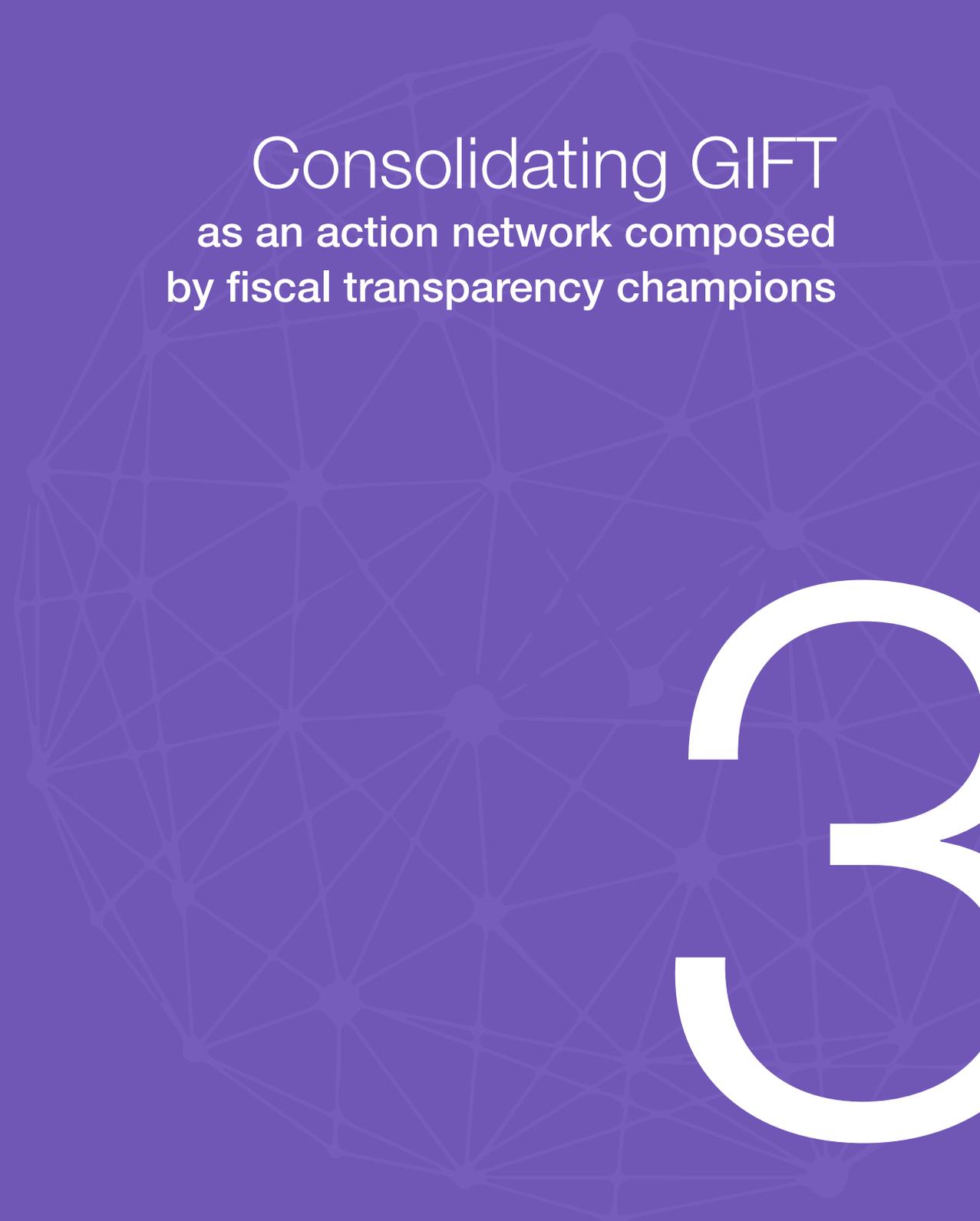


published 9 new blog posts in English and 3 in Spanish. In parallel, the coordination team continued improving its strategies on social media.

The network launched a new **Instagram** and **LinkedIn** accounts. Its **Twitter** account grew to 6,704 followers (from 4,350 in early 2017), and its **Facebook** page currently has 7,712 followers (from 1,303 in January 2017). GIFT's official website reported an increasing number of visits with an average of 1,663 visits per month (compared to 1,068 monthly visits during 2017) at GIFT's official website.



Lastly, GIFT Stewards have had a more fluid, active and intense engagement in the multiple IT working groups using the *WhatsApp's platform*, created by regions and thematic subjects with the objective of generating a continuous discussion of the common topics and challenges that the network's members face.



Consolidating GIFT as an action network composed by fiscal transparency champions

3

Two happenings are outstanding for the network's governance in 2018: the growth of its membership and significant changes in the membership rules.

a) Growth of Membership

In this period, the Ministry of Finance of Argentina, the Ministry of Finance of Chile, the Ministry of Economy and Finance of Benin, the Ministry of Finance of Ukraine, the Ministry of Finance of Colombia and the Asociación Civil por la Igualdad y la Justicia from Argentina became new stewards of the network. These are institutions whose representatives previously engaged in significant interactions with GIFT over the period 2015-17, attending workshops and meetings, sharing their experiences on fiscal transparency and participation, and benefiting from peer learning processes.

**Welcome to
the network!**

With the admission of these six institutions, GIFT counts with 46 stewards, integrated as follows:

GIFT Stewards by Sector



46
Stewards

- 19** budget authority institutions
- 14** national or regional civil society organizations
- 5** expert organizations or technical networks
- 4** multilateral organizations
- 3** private non-profit foundations
- 1** international development institution

b) Changes in Membership Rules

The General Stewards Meeting (Portugal, October) endorsed the changes to the Operating Rules introduced by the Lead Stewards. These changes establish:

**CHANGES IN THE
OPERATING
RULES FOR
BETTER
COLLABORATION**

- All members must present a set of concrete and measurable commitments to improve fiscal transparency and participation and report back periodically on progress. This will facilitate the ability of stewards to cooperate in particular topics and monitor results.
- Stewards are free to step down and end collaboration with the network (when their policies clash with GIFT principles and democratic values). Nonetheless, in order to maintain membership status they must report regularly on the progress toward their goals and commitments; failing to respond to the network's communications, omitting to report progress and not attending the General

Stewards meeting more than two times will result in losing steward status.

- The stewards will continue to encourage and support the network peer learning and technical collaboration, which include a system of peer support and cross check on members' reports.

Raising the bar for the GIFT members in their fiscal transparency and participation objectives, represents a timely and relevant evolution for a network that is moving strongly towards becoming a competitive and selective group of fiscal transparency champions, willing to work together in continuously advancing GIFT's agenda and leading by example. The goal is to establish the GIFT membership as a source of prestigious recognition in the near future.

By the way, the response of the stewards to these changes was impressive in Cascais. At the General Stewards meeting, attended by 26 out of the 46 members, the stewards pledged 97 fiscal transparency and public participation commitments. In most cases, stewards made a distinction between commitments to advance fiscal transparency and public participation, from the engagements assumed towards strengthening the network.

In the coming weeks, the GIFT coordination team will:

- Gather the commitments from the stewards that have not expressed them yet;
- Systematize the commitments in a comparative form and prioritize them;
- Propose a system of peer support and cross-checking on the progress made by the stewards.

A follow up and discussion on these points will take place at the first lead steward meeting of 2019.



Executive outline on the responsibilities and activities performed by the Coordination Team



Network
Director



Lead
Technical
Advisor



Representative
in Africa



Research
& Learning
Manager



Technology &
Communications
Coordinator



Program
Assistant



newcomer
Manager for
Technical
Collaboration
& Cooperation



a) Norms and standards work

1. Providing feedback and technical recommendations on FT norms and standards to the following institutions: IMF, PEFA, GAO, INTOSAI, OLACEF, OAS.
2. Produce analytical and substantive outputs that advance GIFT's agenda, such as research papers, stock-taking papers, draft normative instruments, substantive papers, manuals and guides, technical assistance and training material (General Stewards Meeting and other conferences such as PEMPAL, PEMPLA, Parl-Americas, OLACEF, Georgia Summit, South Sudan and Nigeria trainings).
3. Support stewards on national discussions on citizen engagement in Mexico, Guatemala, Uruguay, Colombia, South Africa, Chile and Argentina.

b) Peer learning, technical collaboration, assistance and tools development

1. Leading role in the logistical coordination and content of the following workshops: Guinea-Conakry, Brasilia, Zagreb, Tbilisi, Cascais, Pretoria (for Nigeria), Nairobi (for South Sudan).
2. Technical collaboration and support provided to the steward and partner governments of Canada, New Zealand, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Nigeria, South Africa, South Sudan.
3. Communication and learning tools on accessible formats (videos for training, webinars, infographics, event streaming, social media).

c) Governance and network consolidation

1. Membership of 6 new stewards.
2. Relationship with partners (Egypt, Guinea, Liberia, Madagascar, PEFA Secretariat, *Consejo de Transparencia Chile*) and potential new partners (South Korea, Canada, IEITI, Ireland, Scotland).
3. Reform of the Operating Procedures.
4. Drafting implementation systems for the new procedures.
5. Managing and facilitating the communications and collaboration between stewards.
6. Managing the website, community of practice platforms and social media accounts.

d) Accountability, coordination, fund raising and administration

1. Managing the community of practice, communications and dissemination policies via the website and social networks.
2. Support the mobilization of donor resources, fundraising proposals, agreements and reporting: Hewett Foundation, Omidyar Network (Luminate), European Union Commission, Ford Foundation, Open Government Partnership, The World Bank.
3. Organizing and support the effective functioning of the stewards and Lead Stewards meetings, activities and projects (February, June, October, December).
4. Maintain communication and coordination with the GIFT network partners.
5. Manage events and international travel.
6. General coordination, administration and logistical support (contracts, financial reports, providers, service delivers, etc).



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