**DRAFT MINUTES**

**Lead Stewards Meeting**

6 September 2022 | Tuesday | 8:30 – 10:30 AM EDT

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| **Attendee name** | **Organization** |
| Claire Bautista, Ericka Blas | Department of Budget and Management (DBM), Philippines |
| Breno Alves, Leila Bezerra Motta, Leonardo Sales, Giovana Bertolini | Office of the Comptroller General, Brazil |
| Lorena Caballero, Diana Cruz, Alicia Gómez, Sandra Vázquez | Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público (SHCP), Mexico |
| Anjali Garg, Claire Schouten | International Budget Partnership (IBP) |
| Sailendra Pattanayak, Michelle Stone | International Monetary Fund (IMF) |
| Aura Martínez, Marianne Fabian, Raquel Ferreira, Albertina Meana, Juan Pablo Guerrero | Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency (GIFT) Coordination Team |

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| **1.0 Welcome** | |
| 1.1 | Juan Pablo welcomed everyone to the meeting and extended the apologies received from Roby Senderowitsch from the World Bank. |
| 1.2 | The meeting agenda was adopted.   * Updates around the table * 2022 Stewards General Meeting (SGM) debriefing * Update on network membership * GIFT Strategic guidelines for 2023-2026 |
| **2.0 Updates around the table** | |
| 2.1 | **Mexico**  Lorena Caballero provided an update on the project done in partnership with the World Bank to upgrade Mexico’s fiscal transparency portal with the aim of making the information available more user-friendly, stating that the work is almost complete and that the new version of the portal will be launched next month. |
| 2.2 | **IMF**  Sailendra Pattanayak and Michelle Stone provided the following updates:   * Fiscal transparency continues to be a key area of work for the IMF, with 4/5 Fiscal Transparency Evaluations conducted in the last year, of which 3 have been [published](https://www.imf.org/en/Topics/fiscal-policies/fiscal-transparency). * The Fiscal Affairs Department has developed new relevant tools for Public Financial Management (PFM) and transparency, including the Public Investments Management Assessment (PIMA) and its Climate module (and Handbook 2022), and the Fiscal Risks Assessment Tool (FRAT). Relevant recent country reports include one titled “[Georgia: Technical Assistance Report-Updating the Balance Sheet and Quantifying Fiscal Risks From Climate Change](https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2022/05/27/Georgia-Technical-Assistance-Report-Updating-the-Balance-Sheet-and-Quantifying-Fiscal-Risks-518383)” where the Fiscal Risk Statement includes for the first time a qualitative discussion on the fiscal risks from climate change. * Emergency financing conditions include those requiring transparency in respect of emergency procurement, beneficial ownership and the like, bringing governance considerations to the fore. Governance considerations also underlie the technical support provided by the IMF. * There have been several IMF/GIFT collaborations on fiscal transparency within the last year, including the facilitation of two sessions at the 2022 GIFT SGM. * A workshop on the draft PFM Digitization Guidelines was held in the last week of August with a few stakeholders, including the Public Digital of UK, Overseas Development Institute, and the Gates Foundation on public infrastructure and digital public goods, providing useful inputs to further inform further drafting of the guidelines. |
| 2.3 | **Brazil**   * Breno Alves shared that colleagues have reflected on the discussions that took place at the GIFT 2022 SGM, and are particularly interested in furthering work related to budget tagging on cross-cutting priorities, and would as such enthusiastically join GIFT peer-learning activities in this regard. * Leonardo Sales and Giovana Bertolini were introduced and welcomed as new colleagues from the Office of the Comptroller General joining the meeting. |
| 2.4 | **Philippines**   * Claire Bautista shared that the Philippines is one of only four countries that demonstrated an adequate level of accountability in its early COVID-19 fiscal policy responses as shown in the IBP’s May 2021 study titled: [Managing COVID Funds: The Accountability Gap](https://internationalbudget.org/covid/) that documented the introduction of almost 400 emergency fiscal policy packages aimed at addressing the impact of the COVID- 19 emergency from March to September 2020 in 120 countries. * The Philippines Open Budget Index score of 68 in the IBP’s 2021 Open Budget Survey is lower than its 2019 score of 76, ranking it 3rd in South Asia and 19th globally. The country's performance in terms of public participation secured top spot, with a score of 35, higher than its 2019 score of 31. The country maintained its strong position for budget oversight with a composite score of 74. Going forward, recommendations will be taken on board to improve scores. * A CSO Desk was established, tasked with publishing information on public engagement processes and feedback on how public inputs have been used in the formulation and implementation of the annual budget. * A new Facebook page, Usapang Budget, features updates on budget policies, plans, programs, activities and projects in a manner that is more easily understood by the public. * DBM plans to revisit the budget form for CSO inputs and recommendations on new and expanded programs and projects to explore the inclusion of a column providing for the central office agency’s response in order to close the feedback loop. * There is a plan is to establish an interagency task force on fiscal openness with executive, legislative, and audit offices as members. * The DBM is also lobbying for the passage of the Budget Modernization Bill that promotes the use of the principles of fiscal sustainability to guide national government budgeting and strengthens the national budget oversight powers of Congress. It also further ensures that budget information is understandable and made available to the general public. |
| 2.5 | **IBP**  Anjali Garg and Claire Schouten provided the following update:   * The 2021 [Open Budget Survey](https://www.internationalbudget.org/open-budget-survey) (OBS) global launch took place in May 2022, with more than 1000 people from 130 countries joining the event. Since then, the IBP has hosted a number of events with partners around the world to disseminate its findings, focusing more on national level engagements towards encouraging governments to improve their practices. * The Collaborating for Open and Accountable Budgets (COAB) initiative strengthens the capacity of civil society groups in multiple countries to actively engage in budget processes and advocate for more transparent, inclusive, and accountable public budgeting. Recently IBP colleagues hosted a 5-day workshop in Egypt in this regard. * IBP has been doing research pertaining to budget credibility, including in respect of the credibility of country Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets, with briefs being published on selected country cases. A synthesis note will be published soon. A handbook will also be drafted with supreme audit institutions seeking to provide practical guidance on this topic, with a focus on particular sectors such as health and sanitation. * Over four years, IBP and its partners successfully piloted the SPARK model in seven countries (Ghana, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, and South Africa). The first phase of SPARK equipped movement partners with the capacities to engage with, and extract results, from fiscal governance and service delivery systems. This next phase will seek to improve those systems in a way that brings both scale and sustainability. The work will be deepened within a narrower geographical focus. In addition, as many of the most effective champions in the first phase were women members of IBP movement partners, the second phase will focus on female-led groups. * A key area of the IBP’s work will focus on developing tax knowledge products and resources on the revenue side of the fiscal equation, an area that has been traditionally neglected in the fiscal transparency field. |
| 2.6 | Juan Pablo Guerrero thanked the Lead Stewards for their updates, and commended them for their great work in the field, including their valuable collaborations with GIFT. |
| **3.0 2022 Stewards General Meeting debriefing** | |
| 3.1 | The GIFT Coordination Team took the meeting through the highlights of the 2022 GSM meeting. The meeting highlights can be accessed [here](https://fiscaltransparency.net/sgm-2022/). |
| **4.0 Update on network membership** | |
| 4.1 | A number of applications to join the GIFT network have been received from subnational governments since the decision was taken at the Lead Stewards meeting in August 2021 to pilot their membership in the network. Application documents shared with Lead Stewards in preparation for the meeting can be accessed [here](https://fiscaltransparency.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Applicants-Stewards-Background01Sep22.docx.pdf). A brief summary is provided below:   * The City of Bogotá, Colombia was the first to apply and join the network as a subnational member, proving to be a valuable addition by hosting the 2022 SGM. * The State of Guanajuato, Mexico, decided in 2020 to improve its fiscal transparency, and has since then successfully collaborated with GIFT on projects,, including the launch of their first fiscal transparency portal, publishing a citizen’s budget and hosting Budget Dataquests in 2021 and 2022. Guanajuato's Secretary of Finance, Investment, and Administration formally applied to join the GIFT network in May 2022, expressing gratitude and acknowledgment of GIFTs principles, and intent to assume GIFT Steward member commitments and responsibilities. A representative also attended the 2022 SGM, sharing the State’s progress in promoting fiscal transparency and public participation. * From 2020-21, GIFT has worked with stewards from Georgia and the Europe Foundation in providing technical assistance to Georgian municipalities and civil society organizations on fiscal transparency and public participation. The Municipality of Ozurgeti is also part of a group of municipalities participating in an effort to pilot the Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) subnational evaluation, that includes a pillar on fiscal transparency. The municipality was also selected in 2020 as a member of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) Local Program. Ozurgeti’s application for GIFT membership in July 2022has been endorsed by the Europe Foundation and the Georgian Ministry of Finance, with the municipality expressing its intent to assume GIFT Steward member commitments and responsibilities. * In 2017, the Participatory Budgeting Initiative of the Municipality of Cascais, Portugal won a GIFT Public Participation in Fiscal Policy and Budget Making Award. Since then, its collaboration with GIFT intensified. In 2018, Cascais organized the first edition of the Smart Citizenship Academy, and also co-hosted the GIFT SGM, where it presented its participatory budget initiative. In January 2019, Cascais participated in a session on exploring effective ways to engage citizens using digital tools. Their methodology has been cited by various international publications and organizations and replicated in more than 10 cities in different continents. While the municipality has not yet formally applied to GIFT to join the network, it has expressed its strong intention to do so. |
| 4.2 | The Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP) of Liberia started official collaboration with GIFT in July 2018, when a representative joined a GIFT international meeting held in Brasilia on fiscal transparency portals. In September 2019, the MFDP became one of the five pilot countries of the Fiscal Openness Accelerator (FOA) Project.  Since then, Liberia’s Open Budget Index score has increased from 38 in 2019 to 45 in 2021, reaching the global average score. This upward movement is attributable to the steps taken by the MFDP to enhance fiscal transparency efforts, including the timely online publication of the Citizens Budget and In-Year Reports. Currently, Liberia is piloting its pre-budget consultations aimed towards the development of a Shadow Budget Options paper that will consolidate citizen inputs in the formulation of their 2023 executive’s budget proposal, for consideration of the MFDP and Cabinet. Liberia applied to join the GIFT network in July 2022, stating intent to take advantage of the network’s cooperation and peer learning exchange platforms to further promote capacity building and its commitment to intensify efforts to enhance fiscal transparency, participation, and accountability in fiscal policies. |
| 4.3 | Lead Stewards approved that the subnational governments listed above join the GIFT network as pilot members and that the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, Liberia formally join the network as a steward. Juan Pablo Guerrero thanked the Lead Stewards and stated that the GIFT Coordination Team will communicate this decision to the governments concerned. With that the number of GIFT Stewards increases from 54 to 58 members. A letter will also be sent to older members of the network that have not interacted in activities in some time, asking them to re-affirm their interest in being part of the GIFT network. |
| **5.0 GIFT Strategic guidelines for 2023-2026** | |
| The GIFT Coordination Team took the meeting through a presentation on GIFT’s Strategic guidelines for 2023-2026. The presentation can be accessed [here](https://fiscaltransparency.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/2022-26-GIFT-Workplan_06Sept22_ppt.pdf).  Lead stewards were invited to put forward any further comments or questions:   * Stewards agreed to encourage individuals to sign up to take the Fiscal Transparency for Development Course, and also to join dissemination activities where possible. * It was noted that there are different organizations working on elements of fiscal transparency, with some areas of disconnect. It would thus be beneficial if links were intensified between the work done by different institutions such as GIFT, the OGP, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) leading to more cohesive work agendas. * Juan Pablo Guerrero thanked stewards for this important observation and noted that while efforts are continually made to work collaboratively with other organizations in the field, emphasis will be placed on aligning more closely with these organizations in GIFT’s strategic workplan. Aura Martínez will also be joining the OGP meeting to be held in Dominican Republic at the end of September 2022 and ensure to stress these considerations. Feedback on developments will also be provided to Lead Stewards going forward. | |
| **6.0 Closure** | |
| 6.1 | Juan Pablo Guerrero thanked all participants for attending the meeting and contributing to the fruitful discussions. The meeting was adjourned at 10:10 AM, EST. |