**GIFT General Stewards meeting**

**Mexico City, 8 – 9 March 2017**

**Meeting Notes**

***Main results of the meeting:***

* *Eight new Stewards were welcomed;*
* *Mexico submitted a request to become a Lead Steward of GIFT;*
* *The Stewards expressed their support of the work plan and the strategy note for the next phase of GIFT;*
* *The Stewards made a strong commitment to continue publish budget data in open data format;*
* *A working group was established in the area of technology for the opening of budget data, under the leadership of Rafael Palau of Paraguay;*
* *South Africa and Brazil expressed strong interest in exploring the Open Fiscal Data Package (OFDP) and especially in linking open data with open contracting; Guatemala, Paraguay, and Brazil expressed their interest to explore the Open Contracting Data Standard (OCDS) led by the Open Contracting Partnership;*
* *Mexico presented its significant work on open data and open contracting, done in collaboration with the Open Contracting Partnership;*
* *The Stewards all approved the minor updates made to the Principles on Public Participation in Fiscal Policy;*
* *The Stewards discussed their experiences on public participation in fiscal policy and committed to share these as cases for the Guide on Public Participation in Fiscal Policy Principles and Mechanisms.*
* *GIFT is now starting an important exercise of documenting and systematizing its ways of learning in order to best take advantage of the network;*
* *GIFT endorsed Global Integrity´s proposal to support the network and its members through Participatory Assessments and Adaptive Implementation Support*.
* *A calendar of the 2017 GIFT events was reviewed, including the date choices (September 20-21 or October 10-11) for GIFT Fall General Stewards Meeting, to take place in MITRE’s headquarters in Washington.*

**Twenty-four stewards were present at the meeting, including four lead stewards. Please see the agenda of the meeting and the attendance list in the annex. All the presentations and materials of the meeting are** [**here.**](http://www.fiscaltransparency.net/fowg/#toggle-id-1)

**DAY ONE**

1. **Updates from Stewards**

*Krisna Murti, the Indonesian Ministry of Finance representative*, presented the Indonesian action plan related to fiscal transparency. They presented an internal version of the fiscal transparency portal in 2016. For 2017, they have several key objectives, including creating a link to the portal on the home page of the MoF; and creating a budget data map showing budget allocation. They are satisfied with the budget portal, but cross ministry coordination to enhance portal use has proven challenging. *Yenny Sucipto of FITRA* underlined that accessibility to local budget data remains a challenge.

*Jaime Lopez of FUNDE, El Salvador*, described updates from the last meeting, and FUNDE’s current activities, including litigation to obtain access to specific information, such as preliminary budget estimates. They are also working on publications providing critical analysis of enduring negative practices in approving government planned revenues and expenditures.

*Carlos Mendoza, Ministry of Finance, Guatemala,* explained that the process of approving the 2016 budget included fora of civil society participation and feedback, especially from specialized NGOs that gave direct feedback on budget plans of individual ministries. However, using budget feedback from the civil society forums to inform budget execution has proven quite challenging. In particular, time constraints make it difficult to translate this feedback into the annual operating plans. GIFT and the World Bank provided invaluable support to the creation of the Public Expenditure Observatories. They are also learning from other experiences with observatories and are starting to implement better control of spending of sub-national authorities. They are starting to implement the OFDP and are also interested in the Open Contracting initiative.

*Ricardo Barrientos of ICEFI, Guatemala,* spoke of the importance of taking into account both the technical and the political aspects when pushing for reforms. In view of the significant and high-level corruption scandals of the recent past, fiscal transparency is critical. He spoke about the challenges of mobilizing public participation and expressed a desire to know more about experiences from elsewhere of how best to stimulate participation. However, he alerted that when participation does not yield tangible results and there is no obvious incorporation of civil society feedback into budget execution, this can lead to decreasing trust in the government’s commitment to participation. Nonetheless, he also recognized important efforts undertaken by the MoF in 2016.

*Rafael Palau of the MoF of Paraguay* announced his government is now engaging in participatory budgeting. However, they still need to work on fomenting participation. Their OGP NAP contains 10 commitments and 62 goals, among them the transparency portal. He also called for the establishment of a working group for coordination in the area of technology for the opening of budget data. All concurred that this was an important idea, and it was agreed that Rafael Palau would be the coordinator of this working group. Uruguay offered to help the working group.

*Dieudonné Houinsou of Social Watch, Benin,* spoke about their efforts to increase citizen oversight over government actions. They are studying the budget from a pro-poor perspective. There is still significant work to be done but transparency has improved. Benin’s OBI score in 2012 was 1! This apparently shamed the government to action and they managed to improve the score to 45 in 2015. Civil servants have little understanding of transparency and its importance. Parliament and the Court of Accounts should play a more important role. IFIs and GIFT have greater influence on the government than regional economic bodies.

*Diego Gonnet, Office of Planning and Budget, Uruguay*. In 2013, they published budget data from 1961 to present, data from 2011 to present are in open data format. GIFT has helped by providing good practices in transparency. The best way to improve the quality of budget data is to prepare for publication. When they did that they realized the data were often of low quality and required some effort to improve. They have learned that interacting with civil society generates implementable ideas, and that the sustainability of fiscal transparency initiatives requires specialized teams.

*Maximillian Moraes, Ministry of Planning, Development and Management, Brazil*. Transparency has been on the agenda in Brazil for almost 30 years and numerous instruments, portals, virtual schools and an ATI law have been developed. A fiscal transparency law was voted in 2000. Participation is granted through forums. The more civil society understands the budget language, the more influence they can have. Currently difficult times but that is no excuse to forget previous achievements in transparency. GIFT can help in reminding the authorities that fiscal balance shouldn’t be achieved at the cost of transparency.

*Lorena Rivero del Paso, Department of Finance and Public Credit, Mexico*. Mexico has done important work on publishing budget data through the OFDP and has started implementing open contracting. In terms of participation, last year they started doing Open Data Rallies where citizens go visit public projects and verify related financial and other information, which is then published through social media. Last year they had 6 subscribers, this year they had 519. They also held a competition and will hold budget training courses. Mexico is now also engaged in the process of applying to become a member of EITI.

*Javier Garduño, FUNDAR, Mexico*. Several contextual factors come together in Mexico to create an ecosystem that is favorable to transparency. Civil society is increasingly demanding; the law on revenues – which allows for the publication of income data (without revealing tax payer identities); litigation resulting in the tax authorities being forced to reveal information about tax credits and their beneficiaries. They see the existence of a transparency ‘ecosystem’ as a necessary condition, where several actors come together to work to enhance transparency. Fundar plans further work to promote mechanisms for participation. They also want to start working on the revenue side. GIFT can help by providing lessons and learning from other country experiences, and meeting with reform champions in government.

*Amelita Castillo, Department of Budget and Management, Philippines*. The new president has given a boost to transparency by issuing a FOI law (there has been demand for such a law for 3 decades). There is also a 24/7 hotline to give feedback on public services. An Office of Participatory Governance has been created, to promote participation. Government websites now have a transparency seal which provides information about each agency’s mandate, mission, vision, contracts entered into. This information is linked to employees’ performance bonuses. In case of non-compliance with the transparency seal requirement, all employees in an agency lose their bonuses.

*Norvin Berges, General Direction of Budget, Dominican Republic*. There is an access to information law and while there has not really been a culture of requesting information, things are improving. There is more budget information available now and budget data are more disaggregated. In 2013, a project was launched to get budget information from municipalities. In 2014, the citizens’ budget and the transparency portal were launched. They have seen that providing information is not sufficient, it is also imperative to try to push people to become interested in using the information.

*Raquel Ferreira, Department of the National Treasury, South Africa*. They publish extensive documents with detailed budget data in usable, downloadable format. They hold regular workshops with civil society and they also have informal dialog with civil society. They hold outreach sessions at universities to present the budget and get feedback. There are local budget data portals presenting information on “municipal money”. The relationship between the government and civil society can be volatile and they have to work at it, as people change. Relationships take time to establish, it is important to find a way to institutionalize mechanisms of working with civil society.

*Zukiswa Kota, Public Service Accountability Monitor, South Africa*. How will the “municipal money” initiative and data feed into the national data portals? Good legislation is important, but it must be transparent, we must push for more transparency. There are weaknesses in oversight. They plan to push for increased space for civil society dialog, and to monitor the performance of oversight institutions.

*Boris Marcius, State Treasury, Croatia*. They have a transparency law. The MoF publishes the budget and information about budget execution. They would like to further discussions on who is the recipient of budget information.

*Mihaela Bronić, Institute of Public Finance, Croatia*. The IPF has translated the HLP into Croatian to send to legislators, journalists, officials, and other stakeholders. Local units publish some budget documents and they grade the units according to the number of documents published. Based on that they have written a study on the determinants of local budget transparency, which showed that richer units tend to be more transparent. Units also do tend to get motivated by increased transparency of their neighbors.

*Jasmine Faubert, MITRE Corporation*. The MITRE Corporation plays a role in the Federal government by providing expertise in various areas, such as defense, health care and the judiciary, among others. Her unit works on government fiscal management. They work with government agencies such as the Office of Management and Budget and the Treasury to develop capacity. They also do research comparing budgets, spending and performance across government agencies. They struggle with making data consistent for comparison and evaluation. Improving data requires improving business processes.

*Vincent Tophoff, International Federation of Accountants*. He spoke of the importance of having quality data. Many citizens are not interested in the information itself, but in the public services government provides. IFAC helps develop good data (for instance through International Public Sector Accounting Standards - IPSAS). The problem is how to get people to use it. Civil society needs to press government for better information to make better policy decisions.

*Maria José Eva Parada, IBP.* The OBS is on its 6th version and is the only international index of its kind. Between 2012 and 2015, there was a revision in line with international standards. Between the 2015 and the 2017 versions, they are revising indicators of public participation. The process includes governments and the participation of GIFT is important. They want to share experiences of governments who budget for the MDGs/SDGs.

*Kathrin Frauscher, Open Contracting Partnership.* They set data standards and have had much more demand than anticipated. Countries that have adopted the Open Contracting framework have obtained important savings, ex Ukraine achieved savings of over 10%, and competition increased by 50%. OCP has a sunset clause, they will later work through OGP.

*Jorge Florez, Global Integrity.* They do research about integrity and governance. They support governments and CSOs around the world by bringing lessons from other countries, not just about budgets and data but also about the politics behind this. G.I. is offering to support GIFT through two activities: Participatory Assessments and Adaptive Implementation Support.

1. **GIFT’s future – the Strategy for the next phase**

*JPGA* initiated the discussion around future plans by stating that GIFT meetings have had an impact in the sense that the discussion has significantly improved and moved forward. In the first meetings, there was significant discussion around the idea of why fiscal transparency is important. Now, we have moved beyond that, the importance of fiscal transparency is incorporated into our way of thinking – it is a given. More transparency on the revenue side is necessary. GIFT will engage in this in the next phase. This is a necessary basic element of fiscal transparency.

Foreign aid is becoming increasingly scarce and countries must become increasingly self-sufficient. Over the next 15-20 years, the countries that become developed and continue to grow are the ones that have enough resources to use for advancing growth and equality. Guatemala, El Salvador, Mexico and others need to raise levels of tax collection. There is a need for a discussion around fiscal reform and this discussion must be informed by good, up-to-date data. It is also important to link transparency to corruption and to service delivery.

GIFT wants to continue to be a flexible network and wants to touch on all the important issues, but more involvement on the part of stewards is needed. The evaluation of GIFT provided important input for the strategy meeting of September 2016. Main lessons for the future: GIFT has been delivering learning, tools, norms, and technical assistance and it should focus on two areas: global norms and peer learning.

In the area of peer learning, MoF and CSOs talk to each other to learn and share experiences. As such, peer learning continues to help countries’ efforts by presenting other experiences and practices for countries to follow. World Bank peer learning activities are different in that there is a contractual relationship between the Bank and countries. This is not the case in GIFT peer learning. Countries attend GIFT meetings out of free will – there is no contract, the demand side is important.

In the area of global norms, there are 2 components: 1) global norms and efforts to address gaps and enhance coherence (IMF fiscal transparency code, PEFA, OBI, OECD Principles of budgetary governance); and 2) linking fiscal transparency with the people. Citizens do not have a very clear understanding of the benefits of fiscal transparency. How do we link fiscal transparency to people’s lives? Three areas for doing so: anti-corruption agenda, tax transparency and revenues, and public service delivery.

The work with Guatemala on public observatories includes a mix of think tanks and fiscal councils. In Paraguay, there is work on performance evaluations and how to create incentives for local governments to evaluate. Mexico and Brazil can show examples and help Guatemala and Paraguay in these areas.

*Murray Petrie* talked about areas for future work for GIFT to link budgets to citizens through public service delivery. There is much focus on expenditures, less focus on how tax policies are made. The fairness of tax systems, non-tax revenue and the equity impacts of fees and charges are also important considerations. Looking at revenues and the correlation of revenue transparency and tax expenditures is an important potential area of further work. Procurement is another potential area of involvement. Linking transparency work to corruption is also crucial.

*Tania Sánchez* stressed that focusing on public participation is a way to bridge the gap between transparency and the public interest and bring these together. The Guide on Principles of Public Participation puts emphasis on producing new cases, to generate discussion in order to bring about knowledge and also to generate action.

The following break-out session focused on two questions related to GIFT’s strategy for future work:

1. What are your views of the new Strategy?

2. In what areas would you like to get involved?

The three groups provided feedback:

Group 1

*Feedback on the strategy*: the strategy should be given more buzz for instance by sharing stories. The GIFT team is small, so we could define topics, which specific countries would lead and then report back to the GIFT team. Furthermore, GIFT should engage with the media and with parliaments. In order to measure progress on the strategy, we should define clear objectives and measures of success.

*Engagement with GIFT*: around portals, connecting with other networks, engaging with oversight institutions (Supreme Audit Institutions, legislatures), integrating sub-national, national and regional aspects. IFAC would like to continue to engage with GIFT on promoting the value of high quality fiscal information, and developing more integrated and simplified forms of communicating fiscal information together with other performance information. MITRE proposes to host workshops and conferences, and to contribute through developing papers on topics such as data privacy and information sharing among others. They can also share business process and data standardization work done with the US government. The MoF of Mexico could take on the coordination of developing one topic. PSAM proposes to disseminate lessons learned within the network throughout their community of practice on social accountability monitoring.

Group 2

GIFT’s new strategy is very relevant. Citizens have a right to be informed of the usages of public money. It is necessary to differentiate between different types of citizens and their different interests and levels of expertise and knowledge, but without excluding anyone.

Group 3

The international norms seem disparate for many MoF around the wolrd, therefore GIFT’s continuing focus on that area makes sense. The private sector should be included in mapping exercises. There is confusion around participation, not all understand it as the same thing. GIFT could engage with G20 anti-corruption work. There are different target audiences, and a need to foster champions inside government and show them the importance of participation and highlight the benefits of transparency. Concerning public service delivery, countries should publish performance indicators. Just as civic education, fiscal transparency could be taught in primary education for kids as well as for adults.

*Murray Petrie* highlighted the idea that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), will be with us for some time. It is important to link fiscal transparency to this.

*Jorge Florez from Global Integrity* presented an initiative offering support to GIFT through two streams of activities: Participatory Assessments and Adaptive Implementation Support. This support will aim to strengthen members’ learning by helping them better assess their problems and develop a strategy for action. It also aims to enhance GIFT’s capacity for learning. They propose to work with 3-5 countries, systematize the process, provide information to the network and get feedback.

*JPGA* expressed appreciation on the part of GIFT for this ambitious initiative of support offered by one of the network members. Global Integrity will be taking the proposal forward, including fund raising to carry out this work.

1. **Sustainability – how to preserve fiscal transparency gains through political transitions**

It is important to ensure sustainability of advances in fiscal transparency, even in times of political transition. If efforts are questioned every two years, it is problematic. Sustainability is key to what GIFT does.

*Amelita Castillo of the Philippines* mentioned that they have a new president as of mid-2016. He is supportive of fiscal transparency in general. He signed a FOIA executive order and promotes grassroots level participation. The Secretary of the Department of Budget and Management is very reform minded and supports fiscal transparency. Secretary Benjamin Diokno has submitted a letter to become a member of the OGP Steering Committee. Ms Castillo does not think sustainability will be an issue with this administration.

*In Brazil*, the new president was not elected, which has split the population. So far, the political shift has not changed what they usually do. Fiscal transparency was achieved by civil society in Brazil. Nothing has changed in terms of commitments to transparency on the government’s websites, and it is still important to work on fiscal transparency.

In *Ricardo Barrientos opinion, (ICEFI),* the issue of sustainability is very important. There have been highs and lows in terms of commitment to transparency depending on the priorities of each administration. In 2016 a new government came into power. Civil society was concerned with ensuring a commitment to transparency on the part of the new government. In the spring of 2016 there was a new ally – GIFT. In March 2016 the new minister presented his priorities and also adhered to the principles of GIFT.

*Carlos Mendoza, MoF Guatemala* – ICEFI is a key institutional actor. When there is a change in government, many of those leaving government go to civil society. Civil society thus keeps the institutional memory.

*Dieudonné Houinsou, Benin* – it is central to institutionalize budget transparency. It is important for the international community to be involved as the government tends to take more heed of recommendations coming from outside than those coming from national NGOs. Civil servants do not yet fully understand the importance of fiscal transparency. IBP’s monitoring of openness and transparency through OBI is a good way of putting pressure on the government.

*In Mexico*, the new administration has kept the commitment to transparency and has generally been more supportive than the previous administration. This transition was also helped by civil society.

*In South Africa*, according to the Treasury representative, they have generally had ministers who were supportive of transparency, now it is almost institutionalized. But CSO support for new reforms is key. It is important not to make it about people but about processes to promote sustainability.

*MITRE Corporation* pointed out that the US efforts toward transparency have been top-down, based on federal mandates. Currently there is a lot at stake in the new administration. Some websites have been taken down and some contents have been cut. But there is also interest in data driven decisions.

*In Croatia*, there were parliamentary elections last year, but there is still demand for the work done by the IPF. It is important that GIFT push from the outside, that makes it easier for reform champions to also push from the inside.

*JPGA* asserted that GIFT can help governments and civil society advance transparency but there must be internal demand. International pressure can help but it cannot substitute domestic political leadership.

**DAY TWO**

1. **Open Fiscal Data Package (OFDP)**

The session started with a presentation by Diana Krebs of Open Knowledge International. The Open Spending platform is a community-based initiative where all material is open. They saw there was demand for visualization of budget and spending data. So far 75 countries have uploaded more than 1000 data sets. This allows for the tracking of flows of money. The OFDP allows for standardizing and structuring contents of data and improve data quality.

Following the presentation, the teams that implemented OFDP pilots (Croatia, Guatemala, Mexico, Paraguay and Uruguay) shared their views and experiences; and Brazil and the Philippines gave their feedback based on their own experience with fiscal transparency portals.

*Croatia* has uploaded 3 years of data sets and wants to upload more but want to learn to do it all themselves.

*Guatemala* – they have created a working group to have their own policy of open data. They launched a pilot for 2 years (2014-2015) and they have held training sessions to help the relevant people work on the OFDP.

*Uruguay* – the OFDP tool is very good compared with others but the usability needs to improve. It must be possible for lay users, not just experts, to use the tool.

*Paraguay* – they are very pleased with the tool and its recent updates as compared with earlier versions, they can see their recommendations have been taken into consideration. They want to use and modify it according to their needs and not depend on anybody else.

*Mexico* – first country to implement the OFDP and they will soon connect it with Open Contracting. However, linking these data has been a challenge. To start, audit, accounting data all “speak” a different language. OFDP helps to unify and use the same language. How do they know user needs? Not through OFDP but through the portal. They use google analytics, focus groups, surveys in the street, online surveys etc.

*Brazil* – it is a work in progress. They have an open data plan for 2017- 2018, the open data law is going through congress. The focus of the pilot was on the federal budget classification scheme. They face a significant challenge of how to adapt their different classifications to OFDP, as the classifications change from year to year. They also want to know how to deal with transversal data. For instance in the area of health, how can they get overall spending on health, including health related actions taken in other areas. Or gender spending or spending on the poorest? Max expressed interest in following up the experience of Mexico of linking the budget information published in open sources with the procurement data. They said they were keen to continue this discussion within the network.

*The Philippines* launched an open data portal in 2013, more than 3,000 data files have been uploaded. They are concerned with the low usage of the data in the portal. They are trying to promote data use by researchers, for example.

South Africa expressed interest in including the publication of budget information as part of their fiscal transparency and expressed interest in following up the discussion within the network.

*JPGA* congratulated the Mexican government’s courage to publish their budget data, using the OFDP. In the countries publishing data, the issue of supply has been addressed but there is a need to work on demand, now that the data is out there.

1. **Open Contracting Platform**

*In Mexico*, with open contracting, more than 72 000 contracts from states and local governments have been uploaded on the portal, but none from the federal level. In September 2016, MoF committed to putting contracts on the portal in open data format. However, certain things need to be in place before engaging in open contracting. For instance, general accounting classifications should be consistent, and everything needs to be systematized. In Mexico, the legislation – the general accounting law – allowed for open contracting.

*Kathrin Frauscher, Open Contracting Partnership*. They are doing ground-breaking work in Nigeria, the only country so far to link open contracting with fiscal transparency. The initiative connects budget and contracting data with a focus on health. CSOs visit to check on individual projects. They involve users in the design, to make sure they use it. The CSOs got data to develop a pilot platform. Then showed government ministries what the platform could help them do. The OCP. has a 7-step guide to help in the process to publish data and to make sure it is used. This provides a checklist of things that are necessary preconditions. Many other tools are also available on their website.

1. **Linking transparency with SDGs and other initiatives**

Various members of the network were involved in the development of the new SDGs, seeking among other goals to have fiscal transparency directly included. The concept is included in the SDG communications and declarations. And there is a direct hook through the SDG focus on good governance, openness and access to information.

*Claire Schouten, IBP* – they have been trying to understand the budget practices around the SDGs, and to work on that in order to inform the SDG process. But how do you make it concrete? Sharing good practices around this is an opportunity for countries to show the importance of fiscal transparency for development.

Mexico has already started working on how much spending can be related to SDG goals.

*Juan Pablo Guerrero* – INTOSAI has been engaged and is mentioned in the SDGs. They have a significant role to play in SDG 16. The Organization of Latin American and Caribbean Supreme Audit Institutions (OLACEFS) invited GIFT (thanks to Asociación Civil por la Igualdad y la Justicia, ACIJ,-Argentina) to discuss the GIFT Public Participation principles in a meeting in Asuncion. This discussion might be continued in the OLACEFS annual meeting in Paraguay in October. This could be continued as a way of having audit institutions to have a more significant role in the GIFT network.

*The Philippines* – There are many organizations and different standards. GIFT and OGP could prescribe minimum standards that need to be complied with and outline different levels of compliance to allow countries to be realistic while also aiming to gradually improve. GIFT could provide guidelines, for instance on internal audit.

*Murray Petrie* – Many sets of standards do propose different levels of compliance, for instance the IMF Code, PEFA, OBS. Standard setters increasingly recognize the need for different standards. However, GIFT could map standards and identify common core elements. GIFT could create a map to identify complementarities, conflicts and gaps. Stewards could be engaged in a process of creating a graphic map of this.

CABRI just joined the GIFT network, but GIFT has not engaged in the Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM).

1. **Public Participation – the Guide and how to get involved**

Murray Petrie presented a proposal to make slight spelling changes to the public participation principles to clarify and strengthen their content. The changes (see presentation [on line](http://www.fiscaltransparency.net/fowg/#toggle-id-1)), which do not alter the principles, but reinforce their meaning, were approved by the stewards.

The guide has been published but new cases will be identified for inclusion in the guide. We now need an international lawyer to review the wording of each principle, including the names.

All the general stewards approved the updates made to the principles of participation.

A break-out session focused on 4 questions:

1. What are you currently doing on participation (level of action, what can you share?)
2. Identify basic facts (budget phase, participation) of a specific program, does it involve other ministries?
3. Based on the above, identify experiences from which it is valuable to learn.
4. Identify experiences you might like to nominate for documentation and inclusion in the guide.

Group reports:

Group 1:

In Croatia, a tripartite committee that includes civil society gets the budget before it is tabled in the legislature. CSO feedback on it is used.

Mexico – participation through implementation: “How are we doing” initiatives at the local level.

Video clips could be good to enrich the guide. Interns could be hired to do research. Audit institutions could be used to educate parliament.

Benin – scorecards and social audits are used to engage with government, some formal, some informal processes. There is documentation on this, in several sectors, for instance in the education or the water sector. Spending is traced from MoF to the municipalities.

Indonesia – the pre-budget proposition is scrutinized.

Group 2:

There is most participation in the preparatory phase and involving the Executive branch.

In Indonesia it is bottom-up and expert-based.

Croatia – three partite institutions, though they do not have much influence

South Africa – media is an important partner in each phase. The legislature asks for citizen comments on the budget. The legislation compels them to do this.

Brazil – the National School of Public Administration has cases on their website, including cases related to openness, timeliness – some of these cases could be included in the guide.

Group 3:

Several countries engage in participatory budgeting: Mexico, Dominican Republic, Paraguay, Uruguay.

Guatemala – their experience with observatories failed previously but this has now been introduced again. This could provide lessons from a failed case and how things are done differently now.

In Paraguay, people can vote through social media to influence the choice of public works to be carried out.

1. **Ideas, comments, requests to enhance GIFT´s technical assistance and peer learning agenda**

*Guatemala* – they have requested a visit from the Mexico team to help with their portal. We have also had contacts with other governments, for instance Colombia, in order to get help on specific issues.

*JPGA* – reminding that GIFT can be subsidiary recourse, to help when partners need further assistance or additional support, for instance, to support covering travel transportation costs.

*Uruguay* – was recruited as a partner of GIFT a year ago, when work on a portal was just starting. GIFT’s support has helped accelerate the process and give a significant push in the right direction.

*MITRE* – they sense a deep commitment and passion from the participants and can see an opportunity to participate and contribute. This is a self-selecting movement, so everyone made a commitment to be here and to be a part of this. They will continue to work to engage the US government more fully and move on commitments made.

*Benin* – budget transparency is currently on trend in Francophone Africa. We are challenged by technical and technological requirements. This needs a lot of work but there is little capacity. The authorities are still suspicious of the transparency agenda. GIFT can help a lot with these challenges.

The general stewards discussed the meetings planned for 2017

Below are the GIFT & Fiscal Openness Working Group international workshops / meetings planned for this year:

* Ljubljana, Slovenia, May 11, on Fiscal transparency and public participation, in partnership with the Slovenia Court of Audits
* Asuncion, Paraguay, May 31, June 1-2, on disclosure of budget information in open data sources (Open Fiscal Data Package) and disclosure of budget performance indicators, and proactive fiscal information disclosure (Access to Information implementation), in partnership with the Technical  Planning Secretariat for Development (GIFT steward), the Ministry of Finance and the World Bank
* Uruguay, Second half of August, to present their fiscal transparency portal in partnership with the Budget and Planning Office (GIFT steward)
* Guatemala, Second half of 2017, date to be determined, on Fiscal Transparency and Citizen Observatories, in partnership with the Ministry of Finance (GIFT steward) and the World Bank
* The GIFT General Stewards Meeting, at MITRE’s headquarters (McLean, VA), Washington DC area, October 10-11 (along with the Fall IMF-WB meetings) in partnership with MITRE (GIFT steward) (By the way, MITRE has been working for many years with the US treasury).
* Buenos Aires, November 21-22, Argentina, OGP regional meeting
* Africa in Francophone Africa, country to be determined, second half of 2017
* Asia, maybe Sri Lanka (coordination with OGP), second half of 2017

**Closing session**

Fernando Galindo Favela, Under Minister of Expenditures, of the Department of Finance and Public Credit made the closing remarks. He underlined Mexico’s sustained commitment to fiscal transparency and participation, and submitted a letter to request the Under Ministry’s admission as a Lead Steward of GIFT.