

GODAN Steering Committee

Meeting Minutes
July 2018

Participants*

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Apologies

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GODAN Secretariat

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Items for discussion:

- Welcome, introductions, and Review of the April 2018 meeting minutes
- GODAN Donor Steering Committee
- 2018 and 2019 GODAN Secretariat Goals
- GODAN The Road Ahead plan/proposal

- Discussion
- Conclusion and next steps

Summary of Key Decisions:

1. General support to the proposed GODAN Road Ahead plan, timeframes and expected outcomes during the subsequent transformation period (2020-2022).
2. Donors approve of GODAN's use of 2018-2019 funds for transition in 2019.
3. Agreement to evolve the steering committee into an advisory role, while legal personality options for the secretariat are being assessed.

Resources for the Transition Period

There was a general agreement among participants that resources allocated for 2019 could be used flexibly in light of 2019 becoming a transition period instead of the originally planned programme/wind down period. Therefore, resources could be adjusted to facilitate the transition period, shall sufficient funding be received/committed before the end of 2018, towards the continuation of operations in 2020-2022

An RFP should be prepared and released by the Secretariat before the end of August 2018, seeking the confirmation (on standard format form) of partners' willingness to provide resources, whether funding, staffing or hosting for the transformation period. Results of this RFP should be assessed before December 1, 2018, where a decision should be made on the direction to be taken during the transition period and if applicable, subsequent transformation period.

The Road Ahead Meeting

The July Meeting was an opportunity to discuss GODAN's accomplishments and future. The aim of the first part of the discussion will be to bring new members/potential donors up to speed with GODAN's history and current situation.

Participants acknowledged the exponential growth of the GODAN partnership in the last three years in particular, and the continuing trend, reflecting a global desire for its activities to continue/intensify. The hope is that all the Friday meeting participants will also acknowledge that from the materials and presentations they will have been exposed to.

The plan being proposed involves significantly increasing the interactive capacity of the GODAN website, to facilitate more direct member interactions; social media and general electronic media integration should also be increased.

The ultimate goal of the transformation period is to secure gains/progress made through GODAN since its inception, and to provide means for these innovations/systems to continue as sustainably as possible (technically and financially)

For this purpose, a number of measures have been proposed to broaden GODAN's funding base, fund raising campaign, tax incentives, etc. measures that have been generally supported by the SC as part of the proposed GODAN Business plan.

Transformation Period Programmatic Strategy

Shall there be sufficient resources committed before the end of 2018, the transition period (2019)

should lead to a transformation of the GODAN Secretariat, aiming at preserving the past, accelerating the meeting of new/unresolved needs and securing legal, financial and programmatic mechanisms designed to provide sustainability for the foreseeable future, shall the network wish to continue after the transformation period (and if not, to be able to keep the core gains running (ex: interactive platform) at minimal cost

Experience shows that organisations joining GODAN often go through a learning curve beginning with basic understanding of the open data concept; then to understanding open data specifically in agriculture and/or nutrition; third is understanding what open data can do for the specific audience exposed to it/targeted by GODAN (farmers, research, policy makers, private sector, etc). The fourth step is where many/most current members are now, 'how do we do it?' stage; this is demonstrated by the increasing demand to/through the secretariat for strategic guidance in this area. Finally, field outcome/innovation/improvements/gains are the ultimate objectives for all. These phases and each segment of the GODAN audience requires a specific approach to these needs. In response, the Secretariat proposed to refocus its activities in three main branches: Communications/advocacy, essentially focusing on advocacy and sharing of best practices; partnerships, creating new, cross sectoral alliances towards innovation and three, knowledge, to make usable data and the intrinsic knowledge that arises from it more easily findable.

In order to achieve the above efficiently, the GODAN business plan proposes a realignment of its internal structure, but also of its external efforts, capitalizing on the opportunities it received becoming part of an increasing number of geographic (ex:AAPARI, EU), political (ex: Nairobi declaration) or technical (ex:GEO, NNEdPro) boards/alliances which play a very important role in terms of substance, outreach and influence over a large number of members worldwide.

The importance of a more empirical/quantitative approach to illustrate impact was underlined for the needs of current and potential donors. Success stories have proven to be quite useful to attract interest of existing and future members as they demonstrate direct, locally adapted examples where open data for agriculture and nutrition made a tangible difference in the lives of farmers, fishermen and others in the food industry. To secure and broaden GODAN's funding base however, the Secretariat will need to elevate its approach to results and strengthen its impact evaluation capacity, making it a regular part of work instead of an annual or ad-hoc exercise.

Finally, the complementarity between GODAN/the Secretariat and the partners has been discussed and well-illustrated by a statement made by FAO emphasizing the political/high level credibility and influence that GODAN has acquired, which makes technical interventions by partners much more effective and impactful as they now benefit from more tangible support from the highest political levels. Recent training workshops in Nairobi were given as examples of this most successful collaboration, as well as other GFAR-GODAN initiatives in other parts of the world.

Donor Funding/Support

While most donors present may not be in a position to make public support announcements on Friday, it was pointed out that the sheer number of interested parties accredited to Friday's meeting is very encouraging as to funding prospects for the next phase. All current donors indicated their intention to explore within their respective organisations how to make this possible for the transformation period as well as possibly during the transition period;

Similarly, a number of organisations have also indicated their intention to submit a proposal for the hosting of the Secretariat (including our current host CABI)

At this stage however, these as well as similar indications received from other potential donors remain speculative until the RFP is completed, assessed and a decision is made.

There was a consensus that legal personality options need to be considered and

recommendations made, especially those providing tax incentives in target countries. The Secretariat indicated that preliminary work on this was already underway.

The Secretariat to also work on a mechanism allowing for contributions from individuals, associated with an energetic PR/Fundraising system of targeted campaigns, sponsorships etc.

Governance:

In light of the largely expanded GODAN network, the desire of modest donors to have a greater say on possible priorities/advice and to increase representation at the governing board, it was proposed to transform the current Steering Committee into a broader advisory board (which could support both the Secretariat and its Board - shall it become a charity). This advisory entity would likely be larger than the current SC size, so the Secretariat should propose options as to how its governance should work. These recommendations should be finalized and approved before the end of the transition period.

Criteria may be established based on the minimum contribution for eligibility to the Board/advisory entity; considerations should be given to geography, type of partner and other criteria in order to ensure a functional but complete representation.

Committee may want to consider a structural format with a space for donors, and another space for the Secretariat.

Closing Statement:

All members agreed to support the approach proposed for the transition and transformation period and partners appreciated the presentation” of the GODAN Business Plan. The Chair encouraged the Steering Committee members to speak to the donors at the meeting and encourage them to support GODAN and its network based on the results it has generated globally, in a very short period, and on the consensus arising around the proposed approach.

On this the meeting was adjourned.