

GODAN Steering Committee
Meeting Minutes
26th February 2020

Participants:

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Agenda:

- 1- Review and adoption of the draft agenda
- 2- Request nominations for the next GODAN Steering Committee Chair
- 3- Selection of the chair
- 4- Review of the last Steering Committee minutes
- 5- Briefing on activities carried out since the last Steering Committee meeting
 - Logistics - relocation of the Secretariat
 - First programmatic report under the transformation phase (eDIAL report)
 - Business model update and alignment to the Business Plan
 - Governance paper (attached)
- 6- AOB

Background documents: Past minutes, first eDIAL (draft) report, updated GODAN governance paper, GODAN Business Plan.

Summary of Key Decisions:

A: The present chair of the donor steering committee would be stepping down, as the role has been held by the United States since the launch of GODAN. Members are invited to send nominations to the Secretariat, by Friday, March 13, 2020.

B: As GODAN is now a legal entity in its own right, after transitioning from a project overseen by CAB International, an updated governance paper was submitted. Suggestions/observations on this updated governance document to be sent to the Secretariat by Tuesday, March 31st 2020.

C: The earlier suggestion for the Secretariat to advance the constitution of an advisory/community group made of GODAN Champions was raised. This will allow for broader geographic and gender representation, reflecting the configuration of today's GODAN network.

D: It was agreed that the Secretariat's efforts towards making capacity building materials available in more languages should be encouraged. The Annual review of the United Kingdom's Department for International Development identifies French, Spanish and Arabic as key languages. It was suggested to add Chinese to this list.

E: It was agreed that documents should be circulated at least two weeks prior to the next SC meeting(s)

F: It was decided that the next Steering Committee meeting should be in October 2020, on a specific date to be agreed.

Shall there be a need for an ad-hoc meeting to be called before October, the Secretariat in collaboration with the Chair, would request such a meeting.

1- Welcome, introductions and adoption of the agenda

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming all members of the donor steering committee and expressing gratitude for everyone's contributions since GODAN's inception in 2015. In particular the contributions of CTA and CABI during this period, was appreciated.

The draft agenda was then reviewed and adopted.

2/3- Nominations for the role of chair of the donor steering committee

The US having served as chair (previous and current) since the inception of GODAN in 2015, it would like to give the opportunity to another Donor to take up this role. The Chair emphasized that while time requirements are not very demanding, this role is nevertheless significant. SC members expressed appreciation for the Chair's contribution, and requested time to consult with their organisations before deciding. It was agreed members would send possible nominations to the GODAN Executive Director within two weeks after the release of these minutes.

4- Review of the previous Steering Committee minutes

The Secretariat confirmed that the correction to the previous minutes requested earlier in reference to the submission of the GODAN Business Plan ('appreciated' instead of 'approved') were made and that the changes are reflected in the online copy of the said minutes. No other points were raised.

5: Activities carried out since the last SC meeting

A: Logistics/relocation of the GODAN Secretariat

During the previous SC meeting, the Committee was briefed on the various proposals received to host the Secretariat, and to their relative ranking based on which Montreal International (on behalf of the City of Montreal, Governments of Canada and of Quebec, and McGill University) was selected. Accordingly, the Secretariat proceeded to establish logistical, financial, legal and other arrangements, and to the actual relocation of its office within the McGill University premises. The transfer was achieved without programmatic interruption, testimony to the dedication of the GODAN staff. The SC took note and expressed appreciation.

B: First programmatic report under the eDIAL programme

SC members took note of the draft programme report covering the first semester of activities under the DFID funded eDIAL programme (Jun-Dec 2019), and listened to contributions from other donors such as CTA, GODAN Action, FAO, France/AFD, Germany and the Netherlands in particular.

C: Business model update and alignment to the Business Plan

The Secretariat referred to the Business Plan submitted in the summer of 2018, proposing a transformation phase (2019-2022) during which the Secretariat would gradually broaden its funding and programmatic base, aiming at financial self-sustainability at the end of the period. This plan involved establishing a formal legal personality for GODAN, identifying tax incentives to stimulate private donations, developing updated governance mechanisms, upgrading the GODAN website and communication strategy, and initiating fund-raising campaigns. The Secretariat confirmed that it was speedily progressing along these tracks, giving an overview of what has been achieved so far, concluding that all the goals set in the Business Plan were on track to be achieved.

The Secretariat reminded SC members that already in 2018, the Business Plan funding projections were pointing at a possible deficit at the end of 2019, which would need to be addressed. Thanks to the new contributions received from Montreal, FAO, and France/AFD, this financial crunch was partially addressed, leaving a need to closely monitor expenditures and *continue to press* for additional funding in the first part of 2021, after which a solidified funding base should be secured.

Shall there be a delay in obtaining sufficient funds to avoid a deficit (not possible under current financial mechanisms), the Chair could call an ad hoc SC meeting at the request of the Secretariat, as soon as/if such a situation arises.

Note was taken by the SC members.

D: Governance paper update

In light of the new legal status achieved by the Secretariat, the GODAN Governance paper (under which the GODAN has been operating since inception) was updated. Key updates include the legal incorporation of GODAN as non-profit entity under Canadian law, and its registration as a charity, making private donations tax deductible in Canada (latter step underway). The same donation incentives are also being sought in the US, continental Europe and the UK, where similar registrations have been initiated. These should also facilitate greater access to donor funding such as from the European Commission for example.

A second development, arising from the legal personality acquired by GODAN, is the constitution of a Board of Directors, whose mission is to review and approve financial statements to be submitted to the SC, and to make any other useful recommendation for the SC's approval. It will be the Board of Directors who will hold legal responsibility, not the Donor Steering Board Committee members. The initial composition of the Board of Directors is composed of the GODAN ED as Ex Officio, Mr Amir Dossal from the GPF as Chair and Mr Ernest Jones from the ICC, as Treasurer. The intention is to increase the board to between 5-7 individuals, ensuring gender balance in its make-up. Suggestions are being sought from SC members, in particular towards identifying possible female Board members.

SC members raised an earlier Secretariat proposal to constitute an advisory body composed of the GODAN champions; it was reminded that this could be a good way to reflect the broad diversity achieved within the GODAN network, and to achieve a greater regional and gender inclusion.

Programmatic: The number of GODAN partners has not only rapidly grown since its 2015 inception, but so too did the knowledge and depth of its members. Consequently, it is now proposed to put a greater emphasis on 'equipping', (versus 'advocacy'), an element of the GODAN Theory of Change (ToC) that reflects the network's readiness to implement and develop impact oriented operational policies and programmes making use of open data for agriculture and nutrition. Aligned with the GODAN ToC, this new emphasis reflects a greater 'hands-on' effort by Secretariat and Network experts, building on the awareness and knowledge developed in GODAN's first programmatic cycle (2015-2019).

This is consistent with the contributions and programmes implemented in collaboration with the various entities represented in the SC, as well as with other Government and International Organisation partners increasingly interested in GODAN.

6: AOB:

The Secretariat's efforts towards generating, facilitating, disseminating and encouraging the use of data related capacity building in agriculture and nutrition were noted. Its intention to make these materials (including those developed under GODAN Action) available in languages other than English were appreciated. While French and Spanish as well as Arabic were identified in the Annual Review of the United Kingdom Department for International Development as priorities, a suggestion was made to make these materials also available in Chinese. For this purpose, the Secretariat suggested further discussions to find the best way to support this additional, but important effort. It was proposed that GODAN members in the various countries should think of possible ways to make GODAN material available in the official languages of the respective countries.

The representative from Montreal International/Canada concluded in stating its consortium's support to GODAN and its satisfaction looking forward to a GODAN summit to take place in Montreal in 2020.

7 Conclusion and next steps

Thanking SC members for their contribution and support to GODAN, the Chair summarized the discussions and closed the meeting.