

# Paper 4b GADN Strategy Day Evaluation of Member Support and Engagement

11.02.2016

The aim of the evaluation is to assess progress on the aims laid out in the GADN Strategy 2014-2017, particularly as they relate to GADN's 'value added' for members. It is based on five semi-structured interviews with members and an online survey completed by 39 members. The interviewees represent a reasonable spread of organisation size and level of involvement in GADN activities, while the survey comprised 30 questions and was open to all members.

## I. Working with members

### **Supporting and increasing capacity (see Aim 1)**

The research showed that, by and large, members greatly appreciate the environment GADN provides for pooling expertise and increasing capacity. Asked whether participation in GADN strengthens their gender advocacy work, 75% answered positively, with a few qualifying with comments such as "enormously" or "massively". Members value GADN as a forum for learning, testing new ideas, and sharing expertise.

*"I'm not working on VAWG, but I know what's going on, and if I had to switch tomorrow and start working on VAWG, I would have a good background." (Interview)*

*"[If] I need to say something smart about women's leadership, I can call someone up really quickly. [...] If I can't make it to New York [for CSW], I can rely on getting notes from someone who is there." (Interview)*

*Members with less capacity "can turn to GADN and see, you know, what are the top ten asks on this topic? It helps them to profile gender within their organisations and their own advocacy asks." (Interview)*

Responses were more mixed regarding gender programming (47% positive, 13% unsure, 9.38% negative – see Appendix B: Q5) and mainstreaming work (47% positive, 19% unsure, 13% negative), but still encouraging. In both interviews and survey responses, it was clear that mainstreaming is a key area on which members look to GADN for capacity building and strategies. Some indicated a desire for greater support in that regard.

*"When I had my gender review at [my organisation], we used that model to see at what stage [we are]. We applied that theory to our own work." (Interview)*

*"Our programmes colleagues are working on that and GAD will be very important to that process, for the contacts as well as the learning we get directly from GAD. We have a lot of trust in them." (Interview)*

*"A lot of members are weaker on gender mainstreaming throughout their organisations because it's something we need support on as well." (Interview)*

Members welcomed the new Programmes Working Group as a promising move to strengthen a perceived gap in GADN work in that area. In a similar vein, some shared concerns about replicating divisions within the sector, such as the divide between programming, advocacy and campaigns.

*GADN is “perhaps less strong on providing the same tools and political pressure for/on our organisations to strengthen programme quality [...]” (Survey)*

*“I’m still unclear on what kind of space GADN is - it is policy/advocacy/neither?” (Survey)*

### **Enabling sharing of experiences and joint endeavours (Aim 1)**

Response to GADN’s ability to provide collaborative space was enormously positive. Asked whether GADN enabled them to collaborate with other organisations, 56% indicated that they strongly agreed and 28% agreed. Members appreciate the opportunities that GADN offers to build good relationships with other organisations, work on GADN publications, and seek other members’ support.

*“It’s given us forums to put our messages into – documents, publications, and briefings under a coalition branding – but also a little bit more legitimacy in our asks.” (Interview)*

*“I think you’re at a starting point where you already probably trust these colleagues [...] You’re exposed to their positions, their aims and objectives, and you know whether or not they align. And you probably wouldn’t be there if they didn’t.” (Interview)*

*“We helped draft a group letter to [a government minister] and we took the letter to GADN to see if anyone else was interested, and that really strengthened the letter because we had a much broader group of organisations.” (Interview)*

The collaborative work of the Post-2015 Working Group was particularly appreciated in both interviews and survey responses. Members felt that the group’s briefings gave them stronger, more evidence-based advocacy and a more well-rounded position on the SDGs and indicators.

*“I think it’s given us more robust advocacy asks around the post-2015 agenda. It meant that what we were asking for on gender equality was more evidence-based, which is good because we don’t always have the capacity in-house.” (Interview)*

*“It’s given us a way of doing advocacy that is in the context of the whole gender goal.” (Interview)*

That being said, members were more circumspect about GADN’s facilitation of joint strategies and advocacy: where 19% and 38% indicated they strongly agreed or agreed respectively, 31% were ambivalent and 13% disagreed (see Appendix B: Q8). A few qualified their responses by indicating that joint work happened more behind the scenes than through formal partnerships, and they did not seem to find formalised joint work necessarily desirable.

*“For me personally, I haven’t developed a joint strategy... that I’ve written down anywhere.” (Interview)*

## ***Deepening understanding and commitment (Aim 2)***

Asked whether GADN challenges its members to improve their gender work, 44% agreed and a further 28% strongly agreed, with the remaining 28% indicating ambivalence (see Appendix B: Q10). In particular, respondents found that GADN enabled them to work in areas that they would not have otherwise have done or, similarly, to do work that they could not mobilise resources or interest to do within their own organisations.

*“No agency by itself would have done that work. It couldn’t have happened outside of GADN in terms of fostering that collaboration.” (Interview)*

*“It also allows us to work on documents that we couldn’t do in-house. The understanding is that we are part of GADN, but if there are wordings that endanger our identity or that would be difficult for us, we don’t have to use our logo, but we’re still members. It gives us the freedom to do things we couldn’t do in-house and maintain our place in the debates [...]” (Interview)*

A significant number of members also added that they would welcome more incitement to improve and extend their gender work. This came especially from those who work for gender-focused organisations.

*“My work has been more about contributing to GADN strategy than vice versa. We have an [organisational] strategy and a GADN strategy. We make an effort to have them cross over, obviously. But it’s been more about moving in parallel and contributing to joint GADN advocacy than being influenced by GADN strategy.” (Interview)*

*“Most of what is being promoted by GADN is stuff we’re already doing, really. My colleagues and I come from a strong feminist background. It’s been more about strongly reinforcing rather than expanding [our work].” (Interview)*

*“I could probably do with more of a challenge in terms of learning and being challenged [...]” (Interview)*

*“Would love to see a more ‘critical friend’ approach to those of us INGOs that talk the talk but don’t walk it in terms of funding for women’s rights, gender mainstreaming, etc.” (Survey)*

## **II. Working with the UK development sector**

### ***Providing well researched, accessible, and relevant information (Aim 2)***

Overwhelmingly, members responded positively (90%, with 10% unsure and no disagreement) when asked about GADN resources and publications. They showed special appreciation for pieces from the VAWG, Gender Mainstreaming, and Post-2015 Working Groups, which have proven useful to them in a variety of contexts. Specifically, many spoke highly of the exercise of researching and writing GADN pieces itself.

*“The VAWG booklet – I distributed a lot of that to colleagues. The theory of change stuff – we used that quite a lot as well.” (Interview)*

*The Post-2015 briefings “were some of the shortest, sharpest briefings. Often, I would contribute to those briefings, but then once they were developed, I would use massive chunks of them within my own briefings [...] so the message was spreading and being heard.” (Interview)*

Interestingly, some respondents also wondered if greater outreach beyond the world of gender could be attempted – and if publications in a more explanatory tone might be a key vehicle for doing so.

*“We privilege depth over the breadth of getting more people to do stuff on gender. Maybe some outreach could be done [...]” (Interview)*

*“When you have a briefing, it has to be specialised, but maybe there could be another set of resources to reach another audience.” (Interview)*

### **Demonstrating by example and holding the sector to account (Aim 2 and 3)**

The survey’s respondents indicated support of 73% for GADN’s efforts to promote and demonstrate best practices in the sector, with 20% unsure and 7% disagreeing (see Appendix B: Q13). When asked for examples, members noted GADN’s work on gender mainstreaming, programming insights gained from the VAWG and Programmes Working Groups, and GADN’s efforts to push networks like Bond to be more gender-sensitive in its papers and statements.

*“I bring a lot of the learning that I get from GADN back into my own organisation. [...] being able to continually keep up to date with what’s going on, what the important issues are, what we need to be doing, was really helpful for me to keep pushing internally.” (Interview)*

*“Basically, what came out with the case studies for the gender mainstreaming booklet, that really influenced the ways of working – what came out from the other agencies with the consultant, what everyone revealed about their work in their organisations.” (Interview)*

*“We’re going through a strategic review and it’s really helped us think about how we can show the impact our programmes are having.” (Interview)*

Respondents commented several times that they are keen to avoid silo-ing in their separate working groups within GADN, as gender experts within the development sector, and even within their own organisations. This resonates with comments that asked whether GADN’s publications might be used to reach beyond the world of gender advocacy and programming. It also speaks to issues that respondents from larger member organisations face, where staff who are active on health, education, infrastructure, or water, for example, often think GADN is not for them or relevant to them.

*“For me, the issue remains the silo-ing. If we replicate that, that’s not best practice. The programming/advocacy split, but also amongst VAWG, education. It gets very, very specialised in each subject area, but there are lots of linkages between sectors. And we all know these issues are linked.” (Interview)*

*GADN is less strong on “targeting and influencing non-gender champion spaces, e.g. it was very difficult to influence the Beyond 2015 coalition during the build-up to the SDGs... do we always get out of the silo, or do we reinforce it?” (Survey)*

*“[...] there is an expectation that the gender advisor will be plugged into GADN so you don’t have to.” (Interview)*

### **Strengthening UK government commitment, policy, and practice (Aim 3)**

On holding the UK government accountable on its strategies, policies, and implementation on gender equality, 73% answered positively, with 27% unsure but no disagreement. Likewise, 77% agreed or strongly agreed that GADN provides constructive feedback and expertise to the UK government, with 23% unsure and no registered disagreement. In their comments, respondents spoke highly of GADN's comments on Multilateral and Bilateral Aid Reviews, as well as its overall impact on DFID.

*"[DFID] didn't have any thoughts around enabling environment. And they did listen. It's a way that GADN has had a chance to influence quite strongly. I remember it very vividly." (Interview)*

*"The work that has been done around post-MDGs and SDGs was also highly acknowledged by many actors." (Interview)*

*"Without the [WGs] and the Secretariat, we would not be having the same conversation with DFID – it would be much different and much narrower. [...] It would always be a focus on a particular issue at the expense of something else." (Interview)*

Some respondents discussed navigating changing DFID agendas and the challenges of working with non-gender DFID teams, issues which a few linked to a concern about whether reacting to DFID detracts from GADN's goal of promoting alternative visions of development (Aim 4).

*"One of the things we've done really well is knowing which entry points are going to work for different people. I think GADN's really helped us to understand that better. Things do shift, and VAWG used to be the top issue, and SRHR is becoming more dominant in conversations, and it's good to understand how that happens and how to capitalise on that." (Interview)*

*"We're working with lots of different teams within DFID, not just the gender people, and you wind up pushing to have gender even on the agenda." (Interview)*

*"[...] in the context of the SDGs, the government was already amenable anyway. GADN did really push the unpaid care target and it came on to the DFID agenda through GADN's pushing. It would be interesting to see how GADN will approach things when the government is perhaps less disposed." (Interview)*

### **Facilitating dialogue with members and building GADN's role as authoritative actor (Aim 3)**

When it comes to facilitating members' interactions with politicians and civil servants, survey participants again responded positively (70%) in the main, with 30% unsure and no negative responses. Members discussed GADN's growing position as a one-stop shop for DFID and the value of its brand. They felt that GADN is a useful umbrella for them all, giving them authority to speak to the entire gender agenda and a calling card for contact with decision-makers, and DFID in particular. There was a clear consensus that profile-raising is an ongoing but very welcome endeavour.

*"GADN is really well-regarded by the government and the sector in general, which means that as members, we are also well regarded and respected." (Survey)*

*"[...] even if GADN hasn't facilitated that contact, the GADN label helps you to do it yourself." (Interview)*

*GADN "gave us a bit of clout, more than we'd have as a tiny, single-issue organisation." (Interview)*

*"I think they could do more to advertise themselves, so that all in the sector know they're there, to highlight and be recognised. [...] When there's a meeting of the big development agencies, why shouldn't GADN be at that table as well?" (Interview)*

### III. GADN structure and operation

In the final group of questions, members were asked for feedback on GADN's structure, relative to Aim 5 on maintaining a strong, inclusive, and effective network. Asked whether they find GADN to be structured and managed in an appropriate, efficient, and effective way, members agreed at a rate of 72%, while 24% were ambivalent and 3% disagreed (see Appendix B: Q19). One survey participant called the network "responsive and outward looking."

The Secretariat received overwhelmingly positive feedback for its resources, support for members and working groups, and ability to make links amongst members. While members would appreciate additional support, this came without fail with an understanding of the limitations of funding and capacity. Some respondents were concerned about what they saw as a "proliferation" of working groups in recent years, and they also wondered if there might be more communication and synergies to be forged amongst the groups.

A small group of members raised concerns about inclusivity, citing a lack of GADN events taking place outside London and difficulty feeling part of the network as individual consultants and academics.

### IV. Actions resulting from GADN Strategy Day

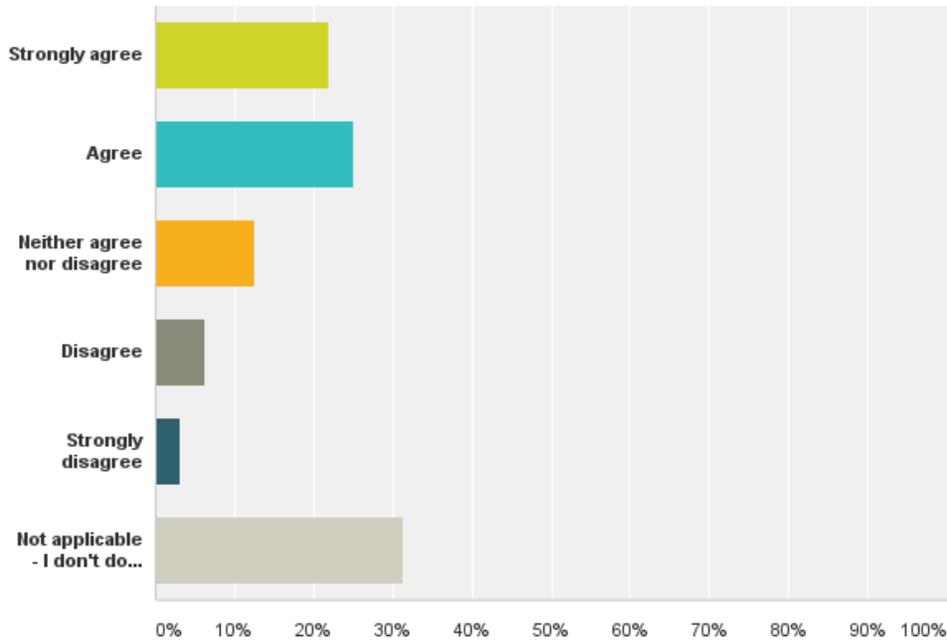
The findings of this evaluation process were presented to the GADN Board of Trustees and Advisory Group at the annual GADN Strategy Day on 3 February 2016. The Trustees found the evaluation very useful and took many points into consideration in discussion of next year's workplan. In particular, it was agreed that the following themes, which emerged prominently in the evaluation, would be taken forward in future GADN strategic planning:

- Working groups: GADN has now begun holding semi-annual meetings of the working group chairs, which will help coordinate group activities, prevent duplication, and avoid silo-ing. The Advisory Group will also conduct a check-in on the purpose and direction of the working groups.
- Targeting non-gender audiences: The Secretariat and the Advisory Group will consider ways to increase visibility of GADN resources and improve dissemination. The possibility of more accessible publications or events that would speak to a non-gender-specialist audience will also be considered.
- Challenging members: In terms of providing a challenge to member to push their gender lens further, GADN will explore expanding its links with academics. The Alternatives work will also provide an opportunity to introduce new ideas to our membership.
- Inclusion: While it was agreed that holding the majority of meetings in London continues to be the preference of almost all members, GADN will endeavour to make them more accessible through the use of services like Skype and Webex for those not based in London.
- Reactive vs. proactive: It remains important to work with DFID given their interest in our areas of work at present, but the Alternatives work and the new Gender and Macroeconomics Project (in conjunction with the Bretton Woods Project) offer a more proactive and transformational angle on development agendas to complement this.

V. Appendix: Key results

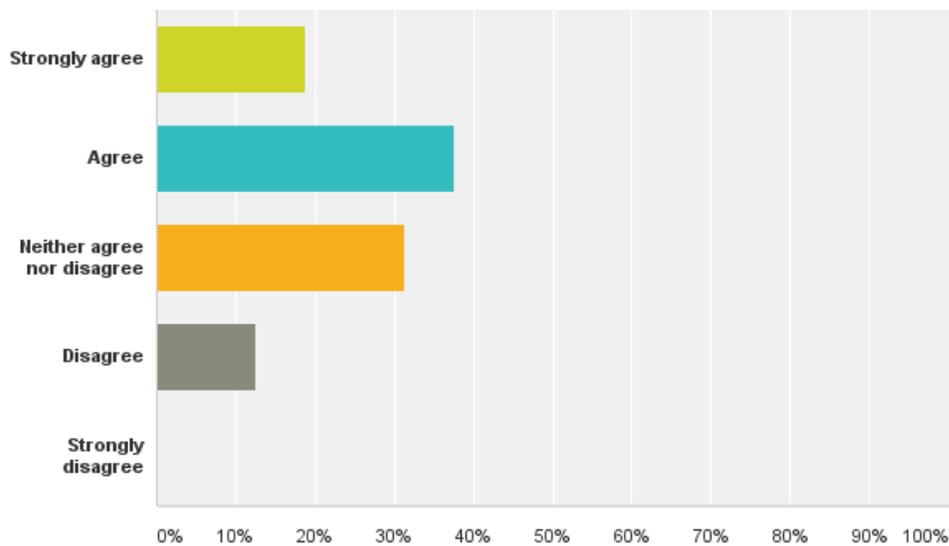
**Q5 Membership in GADN strengthens my gender programming work.**

Answered: 32 Skipped: 7



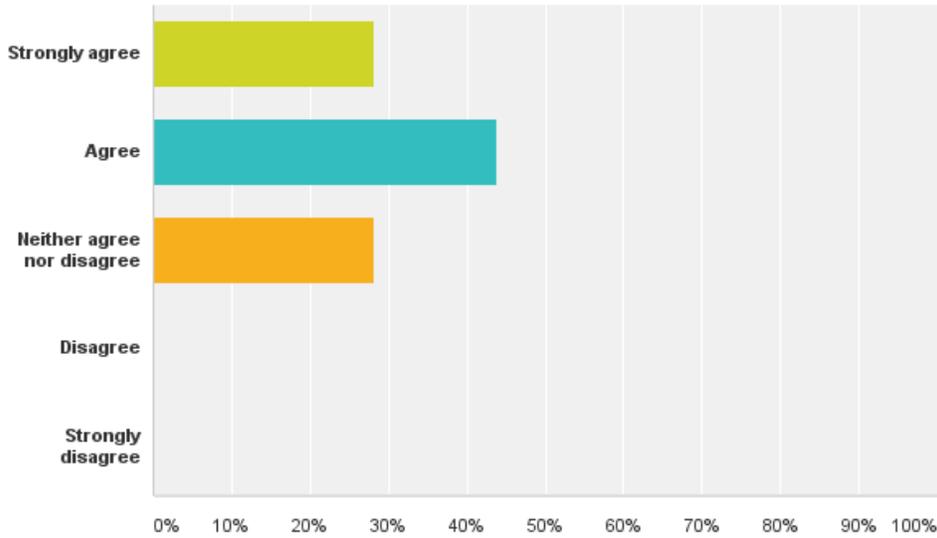
**Q8 Membership in GADN enables me to develop joint strategies and advocacy.**

Answered: 32 Skipped: 7



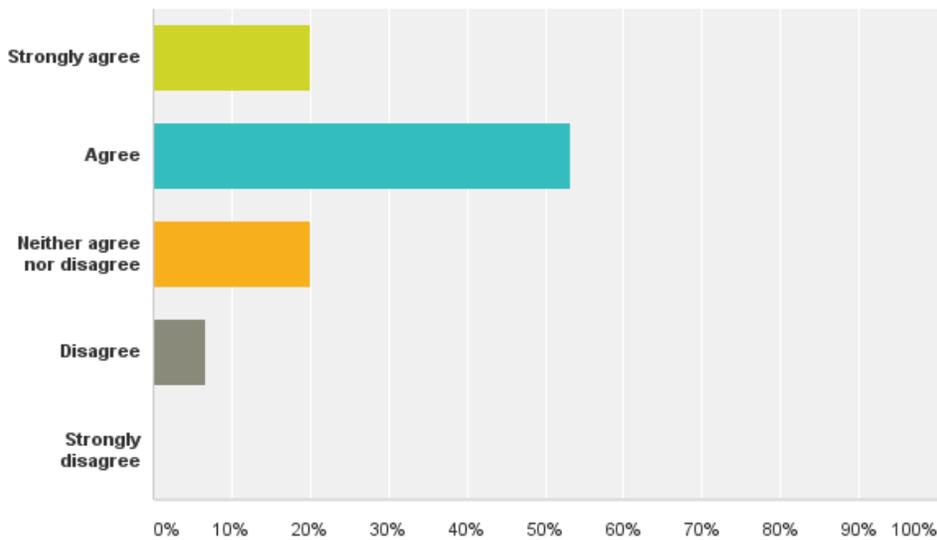
**Q10 GADN challenges me and my organisation to improve our work on gender.**

Answered: 32 Skipped: 7



**Q13 GADN promotes and demonstrates best practices on gender to the development sector as a whole.**

Answered: 30 Skipped: 9



**Q19 GADN is structured and managed in an appropriate, efficient, and effective way.**

Answered: 29 Skipped: 10

