



An Analysis of Sector Level Quality Initiatives: Identifying Common Lessons to Inform Bond's Effectiveness Framework

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Executive Summary

Introduction

This report sets out to better understand the individual and collective lessons that have been learnt by eleven initiatives (see **Table 1** on page 6) from within and outside the NGO community, that have developed sector wide frameworks on issues of quality and effectiveness. In particular it is concerned with uncovering how the frameworks were designed, and how initiatives have encouraged their implementation over time. Based on this analysis the report offers lessons for Bond to consider in moving forward with its effectiveness programme, proposes a possible approach for an effectiveness framework and makes some tentative suggestions about its content.

Key findings from the comparative analysis

Being clear about why a framework is being developed and for whom - In order for a sector wide quality framework to be successful, there needs to be clarity around why it is being developed, and for whom. This is crucial, as the answers will shape both the framework's content and the approach taken to incentivising its implementation.

Finding a niche for a framework - A successful framework needs to occupy a niche within the landscape of similar initiatives and approaches. Unless a framework is able to show that it is responding to a well defined need and users have a clear understanding of where it is adding value, the host organisation¹ will struggle to encourage organisations to use it.

Consulting with users in the development of a framework - Developing a framework in collaboration with the eventual users is crucial both to generating buy-in and to creating a tool which is workable. However, trying to generate consensus among a diverse set of organisations can lead to proposals slipping towards the lowest common denominator. Host organisations need to walk a fine line between listening to user's needs and pushing them to develop a framework that is progressive and challenging.

Developing a framework is an iterative process - The process of developing a framework involves ongoing cycles of drafting, piloting and revision. The most important changes to a framework are made once organisations start testing it.

Taking an integrated view of quality – Quality is a product of different parts of an organisation interacting, rather than any single part working in isolation. Quality frameworks therefore tend to cover a wide range of organisational areas from human resource management to monitoring and evaluation, leadership to communications, and view each component as equally important. While on the one hand this makes applying a framework and planning improvements more daunting, especially to smaller organisations, it provides a complete and realistic picture of what needs to be done to improve quality.

Going beyond process to look at results - Of the frameworks reviewed for the research the majority focus on the systems and practices for creating an effective organisation; few provide metrics for testing if an organisation is actually being effective. Given the absence of any established measures for comparing the performance of NGOs this is not surprising: frameworks tend to be built where there is agreement among users of what is good practice.

¹ By host organisation we mean the organisation that has developed and oversees the framework. For example, Bond is the host organisation of the effectiveness framework. 'Host organisation' and 'initiative' are used interchangeably throughout the report

Identifying high-level principles - Most frameworks start with a set of overarching principles that illustrate the high level ideas and values that inform and underpin its approach to and understanding of effectiveness. These are the foundations upon which the rest of the framework is built. Principles can also help engage the leadership of an organisation in discussions around quality and effectiveness.

Dealing with organisational diversity - A successful framework should be flexible enough to allow organisations of different sizes and mandates to engage with it and 'see themselves' in its components. Some frameworks pose general questions concerning quality and provide support to organisations in adapting them to their particular context. Others outline issues that apply to all types of organisations and have modules that present the effectiveness issues that apply to particular areas of work

Offering a signal of quality - Providing a certificate or award for compliance with a framework can be a powerful incentive for its adoption. In a sector in which there is strong competition for funds and staff, external recognition can help NGOs stand out from their peers.

Challenges of donor backing for a framework - A number of initiatives have found that pressure from donors has provided a powerful incentive for the uptake of their frameworks. While this may lead to the widespread use of a framework, there are challenges if donors are the primary driving force. In particular, organisations may aim for the minimum that is necessary to qualify for funding, rather than applying the framework as a tool for driving continuous improvement. The primary driver for using an effectiveness framework needs to come from within organisations themselves.

Different journeys towards effectiveness - Organisations are at different stages of their journey towards effectiveness. A framework needs to be flexible enough to accommodate this diversity by providing a tool that can help organisations that are only just starting to reflect on the issue and those that are more advanced in their thinking.

Creating spaces for peer sharing and learning - Providing opportunities for organisations to come together and share experiences on applying a framework can be an effective way of creating support for its use. Agencies that apply the framework and benefit from it will become the best advocates of the approach among peers.

Facilitating self-assessment - In order to reach a desired level of quality, an organisation needs to know where it is so that it can identify the necessary changes and actions to start the journey. A framework should facilitate this process of self-reflection and planning.

The need for ongoing support - While the development of a framework is an important step towards improving practice within a sector, it is only the first along a much longer path towards improved effectiveness; organisations to embrace and start implementing it. The host organisation needs to provide ongoing support, encouragement and guidance on the application of the framework.

Compliance systems evolve overtime- To help foster implementation of a framework, a number of initiatives have developed systems for monitoring and verifying compliance. In most cases, a framework's compliance system evolved over time, often in response to member demands. A compliance system needs to be appropriate to the level of debate and practice of a sector: an overly heavy approach to compliance too early on in the adoption of a framework can be counter-productive.

Outsourcing of capacity support - As the number of organisations that are using a framework increases and thus the demand for support in its implementation grows, an

initiative may find itself reaching a tipping point in what it can realistically do in-house. It may therefore need to look at out sourcing certain capacity building activities.

Develop a broad range of support products - Based on where there are gaps in the market host organisation develop a broad range of products to support agencies in implementing their frameworks, from guidelines to on-line tools to workshops. These may be provided free of charge, as part of the membership fee, or at a cost recovery basis.

A proposal for an effectiveness framework

The approach to an effectiveness framework

The approach to the Bond effectiveness framework should be underpinned by four key considerations:

- The framework should help bring coherence to existing initiatives, sign post and identify gaps
- The framework should have an element of self-assessment.
- The framework needs to be flexible enough to allow organisations to see aspects of themselves in the tool
- The framework should be seen as an enabling, rather than a compliance based tool

Components of the framework

The framework we propose is made up of four key components: principles of development effectiveness, common levers of organisational effectiveness, mission specific levers of effectiveness and approaches to demonstrating your effectiveness. For a visualisation of the framework see **Diagram 4** on page 21.

Principles of development effectiveness

The framework should include a set of overarching principles, which unpack what Bond members think are the core ideas and values that underpin development effectiveness. While Bond needs to engage its membership in a discussion about what these principles are, the following principles have been found to be key to NGOs' understandings of development effectiveness:

- Accountability to communities and partners
- Continually learning and improving
- Demonstrating and managing by results
- Local ownership and partnership
- Respect for diversity and human rights
- Financial and political independence

Common levers of organisational effectiveness

Organisational effectiveness is key to development effectiveness. Looking across the eleven frameworks reviewed for this study, it is possible to identify eight common levers for organisational effectiveness that are applicable to a wide range of organisations, no matter their size, mission or structure:

- Leadership and management
- Governance and strategy
- Financial management
- People management
- Communications
- Relationships and alliances
- Learning and knowledge management
- User / beneficiary focus

Mission specific levers of effectiveness

While the framework should outline the levers of effectiveness that are common to any Bond member, it should also allow organisations to identify the levers of effectiveness that are relevant to their distinct missions, for example campaigning, service delivery or policy research.

Approaches to demonstrating your effectiveness

A key aspect of effectiveness is being able to measure and demonstrate that you are producing positive outcomes. Recognising the diverse ways of working and types of activities that Bond members are involved in, there will not be a single way of measuring and demonstrating results. The 'demonstrating effectiveness' component of the framework, however, would map out different approaches for monitoring and evaluating effectiveness. Over time, the framework could define core indicators and metrics for demonstrating effectiveness and could sign post the most appropriate approaches and tools for achieving this.

Introduction

This report sets out to better understand the individual and collective lessons that have been learnt by eleven initiatives (see **Table 1** on page 6) from within and outside the NGO community, that have developed sector wide frameworks on issues of quality and effectiveness. In particular it is concerned with uncovering how the frameworks were designed, and how the initiatives have encouraged their implementation over time. Based on this analysis the report offers lessons for Bond to consider in moving forward with its effectiveness programme, proposes a possible approach for an effectiveness framework and makes some tentative suggestions about its content.

The report is divided into four sections. Section one presents the purpose of the research and an overview of the methodology. Section two presents the findings of the comparative analysis of the eleven frameworks. It draws out a number of common lessons and offers suggestions for Bond on how it can take them forward. Based on this analysis, section three proposes a possible approach for an effectiveness framework and offers some suggestions for its content. Separate to this report case studies for each of the frameworks reviewed in the research have been produced, these are available on the Bond effectiveness programme website.

1 Purpose and methodology

The purpose of the research was two fold: First, to gather lessons and makes suggestions to Bond based on a comparative analysis of eleven quality frameworks from within and outside the NGO community. In doing so the research focused on five main issues:

- 1) Lessons from the design of the framework** – when the framework was developed how did the host organisation work with users to get agreement on how to develop it, what it should do (and not do) and its content.
- 2) Structure of the framework** – what is the framework for and how is it structured? What are the main things that it looks at and why? How have these helped organisations over time?
- 3) Implementation of the framework** – How does the framework stimulate buy in and the engagement of its users? Over time what have been the main reasons why they want to use the framework?
- 4) Measuring compliance with the framework** - how does the framework measure buy in among its users and what does compliance look like?
- 5) Support infrastructure for the framework** – What infrastructure and support does the framework need to maintain itself? What kinds of cost recovery/ funding models does the framework use?

The second main purpose of the research was, based on the comparative analysis and the insights of the One World Trust, to propose a potential effectiveness framework for Bond and its membership to consider and draw some tentative conclusions about its contents. In doing so it makes recommendations for taking the Bond Effectiveness Framework forward. The frameworks reviewed for the study and a brief description of their purpose and form are listed in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Quality frameworks included in the study		
Host Organisation	Framework name	Brief Description
Australian Council for International Development (ACFID)	Code of Conduct	The ACFID Code of Conduct aims to improve the standards of development organisations in Australia. Compliance with the Code is mandatory to access AusAID funding.
Canadian Council for International Development (CCIC)	Code of Ethics	The CCIC Code of Ethics provides a set of principles and operational standards for Canadian international development NGOs.
Charities Evaluation Services (CES)	Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations (PQASSO)	PQASSO is a quality assurance system for small and medium sized NGOs
Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC)	Accountability Framework	The DEC Accountability Framework is designed to strengthen accountability and improve performance across member agencies.
European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM)	Excellence Model	The EFQM Excellence Model is a framework to help an organisation understand the connections between what it does, and the results that it is capable of achieving. It is designed to be used by any size or type of organisation.
Humanitarian Accountability Partnership HAP)	Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management Standard	The HAP Standard aims to improve the accountability and quality of humanitarian aid, particularly in terms of its beneficiaries.
International Organisation for standardisation (ISO)	ISO 9001: 2008	ISO 9001:2008 specifically looks at organisational processes, and how these are managed. It is intended to be used by any type of organisation.
International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling (ISEAL) Alliance	Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards	The ISEAL Code aims to encourage good practice amongst social and environmental standard setters, and in turn protect their credibility.
National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)	Campaigning Effectiveness	The NCVO Campaigning Effectiveness programme offers tools, advice and training to organisations about improving the quality and effectiveness of their campaigning.
People in Aid	Code of Good Practice	The People in Aid Code of Good Practice addresses human resource management in humanitarian and international development agencies.
The Sphere Project	Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response	The Sphere Minimum Standards are a voluntary set of guidelines on the minimum acceptable standards for humanitarian operation.

The research for and writing of the report was conducted by Robert Lloyd, Projects Manager with support from Christina Laybourn, Research Assistant from the One World Trust. The research was conducted over two weeks in June and involved 15 semi-structured interviews with representatives of the eleven quality frameworks and secondary web based research (see annex for a list of people interviewed).

Before moving on to the findings from the research, a few words on language. Looking across the eleven frameworks reviewed for this report one notices a rather confusing mix of terminology used to describe similar concepts. HAP uses the language of quality with a particular focus on accountability to beneficiaries as a driver of this; CCIC speak of

organisational ethics; ISO 9000 looks at quality management systems, while EFQM promotes quality excellence. From our reading of these initiatives, they all have broadly the same aim: to improve and strengthen the performance of organisations to deliver on their missions, but each emphasises slightly different paths. We understand accountability as a component of both quality and effectiveness. For example, meaningful participation creates greater ownership, listening to feedback help an organisation learn etc. Quality is primarily concerned with process, how decisions are made, how an organisation plans, how it manages performance etc. Effectiveness encompasses all of the above, but has a particular emphasis on outcome – what has an organisation achieved and how does it demonstrate that. In many ways it is an umbrella term under which the different concepts can fit. Moving forward it will be important that Bond is clear about what it understands by effectiveness, accountability and quality. While there are many similarities, are there any differences? This is more than semantics; greater clarity will help Bond in identifying how different initiatives fit together and how an effectiveness framework can help bring greater coherence and understanding within the sector around these issues. For the purposes of simplicity the following report refers to each of the frameworks as quality frameworks.

2 Analysis: lessons from other quality frameworks

The following section presents the findings of the comparative analysis of the eleven quality frameworks. It is structured according to the five main areas of research enquiry: how frameworks are developed, how they are structured, how organisations have been encouraged to implement them, what systems are in place for monitoring compliance, and what support infrastructure exists to support the framework. After each finding, suggestions are made to Bond on how it may want to consider and act upon the research.

2.1 The process of developing a quality framework

2.1.1 Being clear about why a framework is being developed and for whom

In order for a quality framework to be successful, there needs to be clarity around why it is being developed, and for whom. This is crucial, as the answers will shape both the framework's content and the approach taken to incentivising its implementation.

Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), for example, developed its Code of Conduct in the 1990s in response to growing public scrutiny of NGOs and a string of media scandals in the sector. The Code was designed to assure donors (institutional and private) that funds were being managed effectively and efficiently, and set standards on good governance, financial management and ethical conduct that members could verify and demonstrate compliance with. Similarly when the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC) revised its Code of Ethics in 2001 to include verifiable standards on partnerships it was in response to the introduction of new domestic anti-terrorist legislation, which argued for control over aid money to stay firmly in the control of the North and that consequently threatened the approach to Southern partnerships promoted by Canadian NGOs². While the standards were a tool to improve practice in the sector, they were also a means of challenging the government's approach and understanding to North-South cooperation.

The drivers and audience for the Disaster Emergency Committee Accountability Framework (DECAF) are similarly clear. DECAF was developed as a tool to assure the UK public that the funds raised through high profile fundraising appeals are used effectively by DEC

² CCIC (2008) A story of Partnership and Progress, CCIC, Ottawa, Canada
http://www.ccic.ca/files/en/what_we_do/002_ethics_story_of_partnership.pdf

members and to in turn encourage future giving. In a bid to sustain public trust the framework sets standards against which member agencies are annually assessed.

In contrast to the examples above, NCVO's programme on Campaign Effectiveness did not emerge out of any overt threat to the sector; it was developed in response to an identified need amongst UK NGOs for a resource that supports organisations in improving their campaigning and policy work. Reflecting this, the programme has not been concerned with establishing verifiable standards on what constitute campaign effectiveness, but has rather been about developing a shared understanding within the sector of what effective campaign is, encouraging the sharing of good practice, bringing together existing tools, and developing new approaches.

Suggestions for Bond:

As Bond moves forward with an effectiveness framework it needs to be clear about why it is developing it and who the primary audiences are. While these are basic questions they are fundamental to the eventual success of any future framework. While the UK development sector may not be facing a crisis of trust that peers in Australia and Canada were confronted with in the 1990s/2000s, there is mounting pressure from donors and the UK public for agencies and the sector as a whole to demonstrate its effectiveness. The recent announcement of an Aid Watchdog is illustrative³. In this respect, while the effectiveness framework should be concerned primarily with enabling self-reflection and learning, rather than setting verifiable standards, Bond cannot be blind to the growing pressure on the sector to demonstrate results. Thought needs to be given to how the framework and the wider Bond effectiveness programmes are able to meet both these needs.

2.1.2 Identifying a clear niche for a framework

In order to be successful a framework needs to be seen to be adding value and responding to a well defined need. People in Aid's Code of Good Practice, for example was developed in response to a survey following the Rwanda Genocide that highlighted the need for greater professionalisation and better human resource management within the humanitarian sector. The International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling (ISEAL) Alliance's Code of Good Practice emerged because of growing public and commercial interest in social and environmental standards and the need to protect the credibility of the most established social and environment standard setters. Charities Evaluation Services (CES) developed the Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations (PQASSO) because there was an absence of quality assurance frameworks suitable to small and medium sized NGOs in the UK. NCVOs' Campaign Effectiveness Programme emerged because of the growing involvement of UK NGOs in advocacy and campaigning and the lack of support and resources for organisations on how to ensure effectiveness. A successful framework needs to occupy a niche within the landscape of similar initiatives and approaches. As one interviewee noted, a framework "needs to be adding something....people tend to disengage if they think it is just *another* initiative"

Suggestions for Bond

Having come relatively late to the issue of quality and effectiveness Bond is aware "that there are tools, systems and processes in abundance"⁴ and as such it needs to find its niche within a crowded landscape. We think that providing an overarching framework that pulls together existing tools and standards and indicates how and in what ways they relate to effectiveness would add value. Developing an overarching framework, which collates tools

³ DfID News 'Full transparency and new independent watchdog will give UK taxpayers value for money in aid': <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Media-Room/News-Stories/2010/Mitchell-Full-transparency-and-new-independent-watchdog-will-give-UK-taxpayers-value-for-money-in-aid/>

⁴ Bond Effectiveness Programme Proposal

and standards, will also allow Bond to identify gaps in what exists and work with the membership to develop new approaches.

2.1.3 Consulting with users during the development of a framework

Developing a framework in collaboration with the eventual users is key to its success. It helps generate buy-in and ensures the framework is in tune with the realities of the organisations that will eventually use it. That said, while building consensus is important, when working with a very diverse set of organisations consensus decision-making can also lead to agreement slipping towards the lowest common denominator. For membership agencies such as ACFID and CCIC developing their respective Codes required walking a fine line between listening and adapting to the needs and interests of members while at the same time pushing them to develop a framework that is progressive and challenging. As one interviewee noted “while you need to find an approach that is supportive, you also find your self having to push organisations.”

Another theme to emerge from the research was that while it is important to reach out to as wide a number of organisations as possible in the development of a framework, having a small group leading the process is key. Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International (HAP), for example, had a reference group of over 200 people and an editorial committee of 20 people in developing the HAP 2007 Standard, but the working group that led the process was composed of only six people from HAP staff and member agencies⁵. Similarly, while ACFID consulted its entire membership on the development of its Code of Conduct, the development process was led by a committee composed of seven independent experts and six representatives of organisations elected from within the membership.

Establishing or tapping into existing expert groups is also useful. HAP, ACFID, Sphere, CCIC and the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) all used expert groups to develop the details of their frameworks and to work on key technical areas. ACFID found it useful to “front load” the consultation process; working closely with its member committees – groups of member agencies that address different technical issues - to review early drafts of its Codes of Conduct before taking an already well developed (although still draft) framework to the wider membership for comment.

Lastly, presenting a draft framework early on in the consultation process can be valuable. Consulting on the basis of at least a rudimentary framework can help ground discussion and avoid unfocused and unnecessarily theoretical conversations. As one interviewee noted, “presenting a draft structure helped people identify what they liked and didn’t like and what they would like to see in a final set of standards and what they wouldn’t like to see.” HAP, for example, felt that it lost 3-4 months during the development of its 2007 Standard by not presenting a draft framework early enough in the process.

Suggestions for Bond

Bond is already implementing a number of the findings regarding how to engage users in the development of a framework. For example, it is already actively reaching out to members to help shape the framework; plans are in place to establish working groups to develop specific components of the framework; and a Programme Effectiveness Reference Group is in place to support the Programme Manager in leading the process. An area where Bond may, in light of these findings, want to give further thought is how to use existing learning groups such as the Quality Group, Small NGOs, or Advocacy Capacity Building Group as the framework evolves. Finally, Bond should be cautious of not settling for the lowest common denominator as it builds consensus around the framework. As other membership

⁵ The HAP standard development process used the ISO rules for the development of international standards. These require any sector-wide standard to be developed through a consensus building process that all relevant stakeholders, critically the users and immediate beneficiaries of the standard.

organisations have, Bond will need to walk a fine line between listening to, and leading, the membership.

2.1.4 Developing a framework is an iterative process

The process of developing a framework involves ongoing cycles of drafting, piloting and revision. The most significant changes to a framework are made once organisations start to test it. CES, for example, found that most of the adaptation and refining of PQASSO emerged through trialling and supporting organisations in implementing the framework. Likewise, in certifying compliance with the 2007 Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management Standard, the HAP Secretariat and its members went through a continual learning process adapting and improving the self-assessment, baselines analysis and audit guidelines. People In Aid cautioned however, that the first revisions of a framework should come quickly after the initial implementation as amendments can cause difficulties for organisations that are in the process of adopting it.

Suggestions for Bond

Once the core components of an effectiveness framework begin to emerge, Bond should start working with organisation to pilot it. Given the variation among Bond members, it would be advisable to pilot the framework among a sample of organisations that reflect the diversity of the membership.

2.2 Components of a quality framework

2.2.1 Taking an integrated view of quality

Underpinning many frameworks is a view that quality is produced through the interaction of all parts of an organisation rather than the contribution of any single component. PQASSO for example identifies 12 quality areas covering issues such as monitoring and evaluation, people management, leadership and governance and argues that each of these interact and reinforce each other in the delivery of quality. An organisation is unlikely to be focused on the needs of users if it lacks committed staff with the right values, likewise it will struggle to plan and develop relevant strategies if it is unable to learn from what it is doing. The EFQM framework is based on a similar premise with its six principles of quality viewed as indivisible. Each needs to be present in equal measure in order for quality to be realised.

On the one hand, a framework which presents quality in this way can make planning improvement daunting, especially to smaller organisations, but on the other, it provides a complete picture of what needs to be done. To prevent the task becoming too overwhelming, support needs to be provided to organisations applying the framework. People in Aid for example works closely with organisations following their social audit to help prioritise areas for improvement and develop a practical action plan. Similarly, EFQM supports organisations that want to be recognised as “Committed to Excellence” by helping them analyse the results of their self-assessment and identify priority areas for action.

Suggestions for Bond

While Bond should aim to keep its framework as simple as possible, it should not shy away from the fact that effectiveness is complex and requires all parts of the organisation to be working well and supporting each other. In this regard, while the framework should look at programme effectiveness, this cannot be tackled in isolation of wider issues of organisational effectiveness. The framework needs to look at both, and map out the ways in which the two interact with and support each other to produce positive development outcomes.

2.2.2 Moving beyond processes to look at results

Of the frameworks reviewed for the research the majority focus on the systems and practices for creating an effective organisation; few provide metrics for testing if an organisation is being effective. Given the absence of any common measures for comparing the performance of NGOs this is not surprising. As one interviewee noted: “the issue of results has been the subject of much discussion among the membership. The problem is that no one really knows how to capture it...the reason we focus on systems and processes is because that is the area where we have been able to come to consensus.”

There are exceptions. The PQASSO framework for example, includes a results section which attempts to define metrics on an organisations impact on users, staff, the wider community / society, and organisational sustainability. EFQM uses similar measures. HAP and People in Aid also address the issue of demonstrating effectiveness. HAP tests how accountability and quality management systems are working at HQ and field level through its baseline studies and certification process and ask stakeholders about the extent to which an agency has responded to their needs, while People In Aid collects stakeholders’ perceptions of how an organisation’s HR systems are working through its social audit process.

Suggestions for Bond:

As Bond develops an effectiveness framework it should consider addressing not only how organisation’s deliver effectiveness, i.e. what systems and processes they have in place, but also how they measure, report and demonstrate effectiveness. Recognising the diverse ways of working and types of activities that Bond members are involved in, there will not be a single metric for this. However, a ‘results’ component of the framework could map out the different approaches for monitoring and evaluating effectiveness, and Bond could work with members to share their experiences of using these. Over time this piloting and testing could result in the framework defining core indicators, or metrics for demonstrating change in particular thematic areas (e.g. governance and accountability or advocacy) and sign posting the most appropriate approaches and tools for achieving this (e.g. outcome mapping, social network analysis, appreciative enquiry etc.) Having a framework that outlines how to demonstrate effectiveness in key thematic areas, as defined by Bond members themselves, could also be a powerful tool for pushing back on any attempts by donors to promote metrics that are ill suited to capturing the unique contribution of NGOs to development.

2.2.3 Identify high level principles

Most quality frameworks start with a set of overarching principles that illustrate the core values and concepts that inform and underpin its approach. EFQM has Fundamental Principles, DEC Accountability Priorities, AFCID has its Values, CCIC its Development Principles. ISEAL saw the definition of its overarching principles as the most important part of developing its Code of Good Practice as it represented the foundations upon which the rest of the framework was built. Likewise, EFQM has found that its Fundamental Principles help engage the leadership of organisations in discussions around quality and provide them with the key ideas and messages to drive excellence throughout their organisation.

Suggestions for Bond:

In developing its framework Bond should work with the memberships to identify the high level values and principles that underpin their understanding of what it means to be effective as a development NGO. The current revision of the Bond membership principles could be used as a means for developing these. The development of such principles could also be used as part of the Bond Effectiveness Programme work with senior leaders to promote and manage for effectiveness within their organisations

2.2.4 Allowing organisations to ‘see themselves’ in a framework

A common challenge when developing a framework which is intended to be applicable to a wide range of organisations, is finding the right balance between being explicit in what is required, and allowing for diversity in organisations’ structures, missions, capacities and cultures. EFQM, for example, addresses this issue by presenting key questions for self-reflection rather than specific standards, and working closely with organisations to interpret and adapt the language of its framework to suit their context and ways of working. With a growing number of NGOs applying the EFQM framework they are developing sector specific guidance notes to facilitate this process of adaptation. SGS NGO Benchmarking on the other hand, has developed a set of core standards covering issues such as financial management, governance, human resources etc that apply to all types of agencies, and thematic standards in areas such as shelter and HIV/AIDS. Likewise, Sphere has ‘common standards’ covering issues applicable to all types of organisations such as participation and monitoring and evaluation, and ‘thematic standards’ in areas such as shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene. Both the Sphere and the SGS framework allow organisations to interact with them and apply the parts that are most relevant to what they do.

Suggestions for Bond:

Bond will need to consider how the effectiveness framework can appeal to a diverse range of organisations. A successful framework should be flexible enough to allow agencies of different sizes and mandates to engage with it and see that it is relevant to what they do. The research has indicated different ways of doing this. Bond could develop a non-prescriptive framework that poses general questions concerning effectiveness and provide support to organisations in adapting them to their particular context. It could also develop a framework which outlines the effectiveness issues that apply to all types of organisations but that also has thematic modules, that unpack the issues that apply in particular areas of work (eg capacity building, advocacy etc).

2.3 Encouraging implementation of a quality framework

2.3.1 The benefits and challenges of donor pressure

A number of initiatives have found that pressure from donors has provided a powerful incentive for the uptake of their frameworks. AusAid, for example, requires any agency seeking government funding to be compliant with ACFID’s Code of Conduct. HAP benefited from the Danish government requiring certification as part of its funding criteria. Likewise, ISEAL found that the use of its Code increased when governments started to take interest in whether standard setters were compliant.

While donor backing for a particular framework can lead to a rapid increase in its application, there are challenges. Notably, faced with donor pressure, organisations may adopt the minimum that is necessary to qualify for funding, rather than using the framework as a tool for driving continuous improvement. Furthermore, if donors promote compliance with a framework without an appreciation for the different levels of capacity among organisations, it could present a barrier to funding for smaller organisations with less resources.

Suggestions for Bond

Bond will need to carefully manage how the effectiveness framework is promoted among external audiences, such as donors. It will be important to first incentivise Bond members to use the framework on a voluntary basis to improve effectiveness, then, overtime, once it becomes more widely accepted within the sector and adopted by organisations, explore with donors how they can further cement its use. Donors can play an important role in promoting the uptake of the effectiveness framework, but they should not be the initial drivers of its use.

2.3.2 Providing a signal of quality

Providing a certificate or award for compliance with a framework can be a powerful incentive for its adoption. In a sector in which there is strong competition for funds and staff, external recognition can help an NGO stand out from its peers. HAP for example has found that one of the reasons why many organisations, including those from the global South find certification appealing is to achieve an internationally recognised standard of quality. People in Aid found that organisations have gone for its Quality Mark 2 certificate because they want to be recognised as a good employer. CES started to certify organisations against the PQASSO framework (previously, it was based purely on self-assessment) because organisations that had been using the standard wanted their efforts formally recognised.

Suggestions for Bond

While Bond may not aspire to develop a framework that organisations would be certified against, it should look at ways in which the application of the framework, or parts of it, by organisations can be recognised.

2.3.3 Recognising organisations are at different stages

It is important to recognise that organisations will be at different stages of their journey towards quality. A framework needs to be flexible enough to accommodate this diversity. PQASSO for example, has three levels of standards, each progressively more advanced than the other. This allows the framework to be used both by organisations that are just starting to look at the issue of quality and those in which debate and practice is more advanced. The different levels also provide organisations with a road map for improvement. Similarly, People in Aid and EFQM, while their frameworks are fixed, have developed different assessment tools for organisations at different stages of debate and practice on quality (see **Section 5** for more information).

The support provided to organisations them also needs to be tailored to their needs. CES has found that small NGOs benefit the most from basic introductory training on the PQASSO framework, while large national and international agencies tend to want individualised support such as organisation specific PQASSO standards or one-on-one guidance on how to design an action plan following a self-assessment.

Depending on the capacity of the initiative overseeing the use of the framework, catering to the needs of organisations with very different needs can be difficult. ISEAL for example, has found it a struggle to serve both its founding members, which are all well established social and environmental standard setters that are interested in how to take their initiatives to the next level in terms of quality, and emerging standard setters, which need support on applying the basic principles of good practice to their standards development process.

Suggestions for Bond

Recognising that Bond members are at different levels in their debate and practice in addressing effectiveness, the framework should offer a tool that can both aid organisations that are only just starting to reflect on these issues and those that are more advanced in their thinking. The support Bond provides to members will also need to be sensitive to this. Depending on the resources it has available, Bond could consider providing hands on support to smaller and medium sized agencies, while facilitating peer support and learning among larger agencies and those that are more advanced in their thinking.

2.3.4 Providing spaces for learning between peers

Providing opportunities for organisations to come together and share experiences on applying a framework is an effective way of creating support for its use. The DEC, for example, organises regular meetings for its members to share their experiences on applying its Accountability Framework and has found that overtime these have helped generate

deeper support for the tool. Likewise, HAP has found that encouraging peer learning both at field level and among headquarters staff has been a powerful way of encouraging the adoption of its 2007 Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management Standards. Agencies that apply the framework and benefit from it will often become the best advocates of the approach among peers.

Suggestions for Bond

As Bond moves forward with the implementation of an effectiveness framework it should consider how to encourage early adopters to share their experiences with the wider membership. Furthermore, as it takes the effectiveness programme forward, Bond should reflect on how it can create spaces where members that are piloting new tools / approaches can support each other.

2.3.5 Facilitating self-assessment

In order to reach a desired level of quality, an organisation needs to know where it is so that it can identify the necessary changes and actions to start the journey. A framework should facilitate this process of self-reflection and planning. Many of the initiatives described their frameworks in this way: DECAF “helps structure a conversation around quality management”, PQASSO “allows for internal dialogue and problems solving” on quality, while EFQM framework allows “organisations to see how they can improve.”

While recognising the value of self-assessment, the quality and rigor of self-reflection can vary. While some organisations are willing to probe and reflect deeply on their application of a framework, others may undertake superficial assessments. To address this problem, EFQM reviews and provides feedback on organisations self-assessment against its framework; other initiatives provide support to organisations on how to facilitate a rigorous self-assessment.

Suggestions for Bond

The framework that Bond is developing should be a tool for facilitating internal dialogue and reflection on effectiveness. As a consequence it should provide some top-level questions that allow agencies to gain a sense of where they stand in each component of the framework and identify gaps.

2.3.6 The need for ongoing support

While the development of a framework is an important step towards improving practice, it is only the first along a much longer path towards improved effectiveness. A framework helps to provide the key concepts, approaches and tools, it does not itself improve effectiveness, this requires organisations to embrace and start implementing it. As one interviewee commented: “developing a framework is just the tip of the iceberg, the real effort comes in encouraging and supporting organisations in implementing it”. When HAP developed its Standard it found that it was initially taking between nine and 14 months for members to progress from the baseline analysis to the audit, and that this required close ongoing support from HAP.

Suggestions for Bond

While it is important that Bond invests resources in the development of an effectiveness framework, it also needs to give thought as to the level of support it will be able to provide to members applying the framework.

2.4 Compliance systems for a quality framework

2.4.1 Compliance systems evolve over time

To help foster implementation of frameworks, a number of initiatives develop systems for monitoring and verifying compliance. The types of compliance mechanisms that exist run along a continuum from commitment only, to self-assessment, to peer assessment, to third party assessment, with each reflecting a progressively more independent form of verification.

Interestingly, in most cases, a framework's compliance system evolves along this continuum. For example, when it was first set up PQASSO relied on self-assessment, however with a growing number of organisations using the standard and demand for independent validation from users, CES developed an external certification process. Likewise, ACFID and CCIC use to rely solely on members making a commitment to comply with their respective Codes, however, they have subsequently both developed systems of externally reviewed self-assessments. Similarly, compliance with ISEAL's Code of Good Practice started with standard setters self-assessing, moved onto peer review, then, as the Code became more widely known, an external audit was introduced.

Compliance systems need to be appropriate to the level of debate and practice of a sector. In particular, an overly heavy approach to compliance too early on in the implementation of a framework can be counter productive; organisations need time to apply the framework, identify gaps and strengthen capacities in key areas before they are required to undergo external assessments.

Suggestions for Bond

If in the future Bond members decide to introduce compliance-based tools to encourage the uptake of the effectiveness framework, they should be mindful that the type of mechanisms promoted need to be suited to the nature of debate and practice within the sector.

2.4.2 Different levels of compliance

To accommodate diversity among organisations, some frameworks have different levels of compliance. EFQM for example has two: Level One 'Committed to Excellence' requires an organisation to undertake a one year ongoing assessment and implementation process. Starting with a self-assessment the organisation prioritises three areas for improvement. For each of these areas it develops an action plan, which it submits to EFQM for feedback and advice. This is followed by regular reporting and ongoing support over the year. Level Two on the other hand, means an organisation has been 'Recognised for Excellence'. This requires an in depth assessment by an independent auditor that checks both the organisation's quality 'enablers' and its 'key results'. People in Aid have a similar approach in that they have Quality Mark 1, which requires a written commitment from the CEO to implement the Code, but nothing else, and Quality Mark 2 that requires an external social audit.

Suggestions for Bond

If in the future Bond members decide to introduce compliance-based tools to encourage the uptake of the effectiveness framework, it might want to consider developing different approaches depending on the different capacities of organisations and the resources they have to invest into applying the framework.

2.5 Support Infrastructure for a quality framework

2.5.1 Outsourcing of capacity support

To ensure the success of a framework the initiative overseeing its implementation needs to be able to respond to demands for capacity support. However, as the number of organisations using a framework increases and the demand for support in its implementation grows, an initiative may find itself reaching a tipping point in what it can realistically do in-house. It may therefore need to look at out-sourcing certain capacity building activities. For example, as the number of HAP members has grown, the Secretariat is exploring options for having a pool of external consultants that it can recommend to members for capacity building support and certification, or signing Memorandums of Understanding with institutions to provide organisational development and capacity support. Faced with a similar challenge CES started to run courses training local trainers on the PQASSO standard. EFQM and ISO 9001 both certify independent consultants in the application of their framework. People in Aid work with employment engagement specialists to implement different aspects of its Code of Conduct.

Suggestions for Bond

Bond will need to consider how it will respond to demand from the membership for support in applying the effectiveness framework and helping to build capacity in areas of weakness. In doing so it should give thought to how it could work with existing service providers. Possible options include: working with external consultants to develop tailored training for Bond members; developing a pool of consultant to sign post members to for advise and support on specific issue; or certifying trainers on the application of the effectiveness framework.

2.5.2 Develop a broad range of a support products

Based on where there are gaps in the market, initiatives develop a broad range of products to support organisations in implementing their frameworks. Some initiatives such as PQASSO and EFQM charge for all of their products, membership-based organisations such as HAP, ACFID, CCIC provide a mix of free tools and fee-based services. NCVO's Campaign Effectiveness Programme for example has a range of products such as training, a campaigning certificate, toolkits and guides. HAP provides good practice examples for free, but has a fee guide for organisational development and capacity building services. A number of initiatives such as PQASSO and EFQM also provide consultancy services.

Suggestions for Bond

Once a framework is in place Bond should look at where there are gaps and then develop new tools. It will need to think through whether it should charge for these or make them freely available. It could also develop internal consultancy expertise in particular aspects of the effectiveness framework.

3 Mapping a way forward: a proposed approach for an effectiveness framework

Based on the above findings and the insights of the One World Trust, the following section presents a proposed approach to an effectiveness framework for Bond to consider and some tentative suggestions about its contents.

3.1 Key considerations

The approach to the Bond effectiveness framework should be underpinned by four key considerations: First, there are already many existing tools, approaches and frameworks

that address the issue of quality and effectiveness, therefore Bond's approach should not replicate what already exists. The framework should help **bring coherence to existing initiatives, sign post and identify gaps**. Based on gaps Bond can also work on developing new methodologies and approaches.

Second, to help organisations engage with the framework and identify which parts to focus on the framework should **have an element of self-assessment**. A set of basic questions under each component of the framework will aid organisations in identifying gaps and help them identify the tools and approaches which are most appropriate to their needs.

Third, Bond has a diverse membership in which organisations are of different sizes, have different focuses and are at different stages of their conversation on effectiveness. The framework **needs to be flexible enough to allow a wide range of organisations to see aspects of themselves in the tool** and find elements that are useful to moving the debate on effectiveness forward within their own organisations.

Finally, while there is growing pressure on the UK NGO sector to demonstrate effectiveness, it is not facing a crisis of confidence or public trust. In this way the framework should **be seen as an enabling rather than a compliance based tool**. Its purpose should primarily be to provide a tool for self-reflection and learning both within and between organisations, not for verifying that minimum standards are being met. That said, the framework needs to push organisations and the sector collectively towards a more systematic approach to demonstrate its effectiveness.

3.2 A possible approach for an effectiveness framework

The framework we propose is made up of four key components: principles of development effectiveness, common levers of organisational effectiveness, mission specific levers of effectiveness and lever for demonstrating your effectiveness. For a visualisation of the framework see **Diagram 1**.

3.2.1 Principles of development effectiveness

The framework should include a set of overarching principles, which unpack what Bond members see as the core ideas and values that underpin their understanding of what it means to be effectiveness as development NGOs. While Bond needs to engage its membership in a discussion about what these principles are, we would suggest using recent research by the One World Trust and World Vision International to inform this discussion⁶. By reviewing over 200 NGO codes of conduct and certification schemes worldwide, both from within the global North and South, this research puts forward the following principles as key to NGOs' understandings of development effectiveness:

- **Accountability to communities and partners** –NGOs need to ensure they are accountable and responsive to the needs and interests of the communities and partners with which they work and on whose behalf they undertake their work
- **Continually learning and improving** –NGOs need to be learning organisations, continually reviewing, reflecting, learning and adapting based on what works and what does not
- **Demonstrating and managing by results** –NGOs need to be able show and evidence the impact that they have and use this to inform internal decision making
- **Local ownership and partnership** – that local stakeholders need to be involved in

⁶ Jeannet Lingán, Amy Cavender, Robert Lloyd and Beris Gwynne (2009) Responding to NGO Development Effectiveness Initiatives, One World Trust/World Vision Briefing Paper Number 122, November 2009; and Jeannet Lingán, Amy Cavender, Thomas Palmer, and Beris Gwynne (forthcoming) Responding to development effectiveness in the global South, One World Trust / World Vision Briefing Paper Number 126, June 2010

NGO's decision making and that work agendas should be based on the priorities of these stakeholders

- **Respect for diversity and human rights** - that diversity, equity, the respect of human dignity and the advancement of human rights should guide NGO action
- **Financial and political independence** – that NGOs ensure independence from political and economic interests.

3.2.2 Common levers of organisational effectiveness

A core component of effectiveness is having the appropriate organisation wide systems, processes and capacities in place to deliver on your mission. Looking across the eleven frameworks reviewed for this study, it is possible to identify eight such common levers for organisational effectiveness that are applicable to a wide range of organisation, no matter their size, mission or structure (See **Table 2**):

INITIATIVE	People management	Governance	Leadership	User Needs	Monitoring & Evaluation	Financial management	Learning	Communications & fundraising	Relationships & partnerships	Strategy & Planning
ACFID	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		
CCIC Code of Ethics	X	X				X		X	X	
DEC	X			X	X	X	X		X	
EFQM	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X
HAP-I	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
NCVO Campaign Effectiveness				X	X			X	X	
PQASSO	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
People In Aid Code	X		X					X		
ISEAL				X	X		X	X	X	
ISO 9001	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X
Sphere	X		X	X	X					

- **Leadership and management** – the capacities of leadership in communicating an organisation's vision, understanding and responding to the external environment, managing change, supporting learning etc
- **Governance and strategy** – how an organisation is governed, the functioning of the board and how strategy is developed and overseen
- **Financial management** – how financial resources are managed
- **People management** – how staff are supported and managed
- **Communications & fundraising** – how an organisation communicates with external audiences and raises funds
- **Relationships & partnerships** – how an organisation engages with and relates to other organisations, the quality of its relationships, the principles that guide partnerships etc
- **Learning and knowledge management** – how an organisation manages internal information flows and uses this to support processes of review, reflection and learning
- **User / beneficiary focus** – how an organisation ensures that its primary stakeholders lie at the heart of what it does and informs decision and actions at all levels.

Under each of these common levers, the framework would have questions that would allow an organisation to undertake a basic self-assessment so as to identify areas where it may want to focus and then sign posting to existing tools and approaches that provide more detailed guidance, assessments and support for addressing the issue. See **Diagram 1** for an example of what could be presented under the 'leadership and management' lever of organisational effectiveness.

Diagram 1: Example of what details could be presented under the 'Leadership & management' levers of organisational effectiveness
Common levers of organisational effectiveness
'Leadership and management'
<p>Self-assessment questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managers identify and respond effectively to changes in the external environment • Managers provide clear leadership motivating and inspiring people by their vision and commitment • Managers drive change throughout the organisation <p>Leadership strengthening tools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • =MC Senior Management Team Competency Assessment, Management Center • INTRAC (2006) NGO Leadership Development, Praxis Paper 10 <p>Existing frameworks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People in Aid • HAP • PQASSO

3.2.3 Mission specific levers of effectiveness

While the framework should outline the levers of organisational effectiveness that are common to any Bond member, it should also allow organisations to identify the levers that are relevant to their distinct missions. The framework should therefore also identify a series of themes, which represent the key types of activities that Bond members are involved in for example campaigning, service delivery or policy research, and unpack the effectiveness issues unique to these areas. This would allow users to move beyond the levers of effectiveness that are common to all types of organisations and delve into the effectiveness issues specific to the work that they do. Similar to common levers of organisational

Diagram 2: Example of what details could be presented under the 'Advocacy & campaigning' lever of effectiveness
Mission specific levers of effectiveness
Advocacy and campaigning
<p>Self-assessment questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are primary stakeholders involved in the design of your campaigns? • Is the evidence to substantiate policy positions publicly available? <p>Tools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding power for social change, Just associates • Tools for Policy impact: a toolkit for researchers, ODI <p>Existing frameworks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCVO campaign effectiveness program • ODI - Research and Policy in Development

effectiveness, under each mission specific theme would be a self-assessment along with sign posting. See **Diagram 2** for an example.

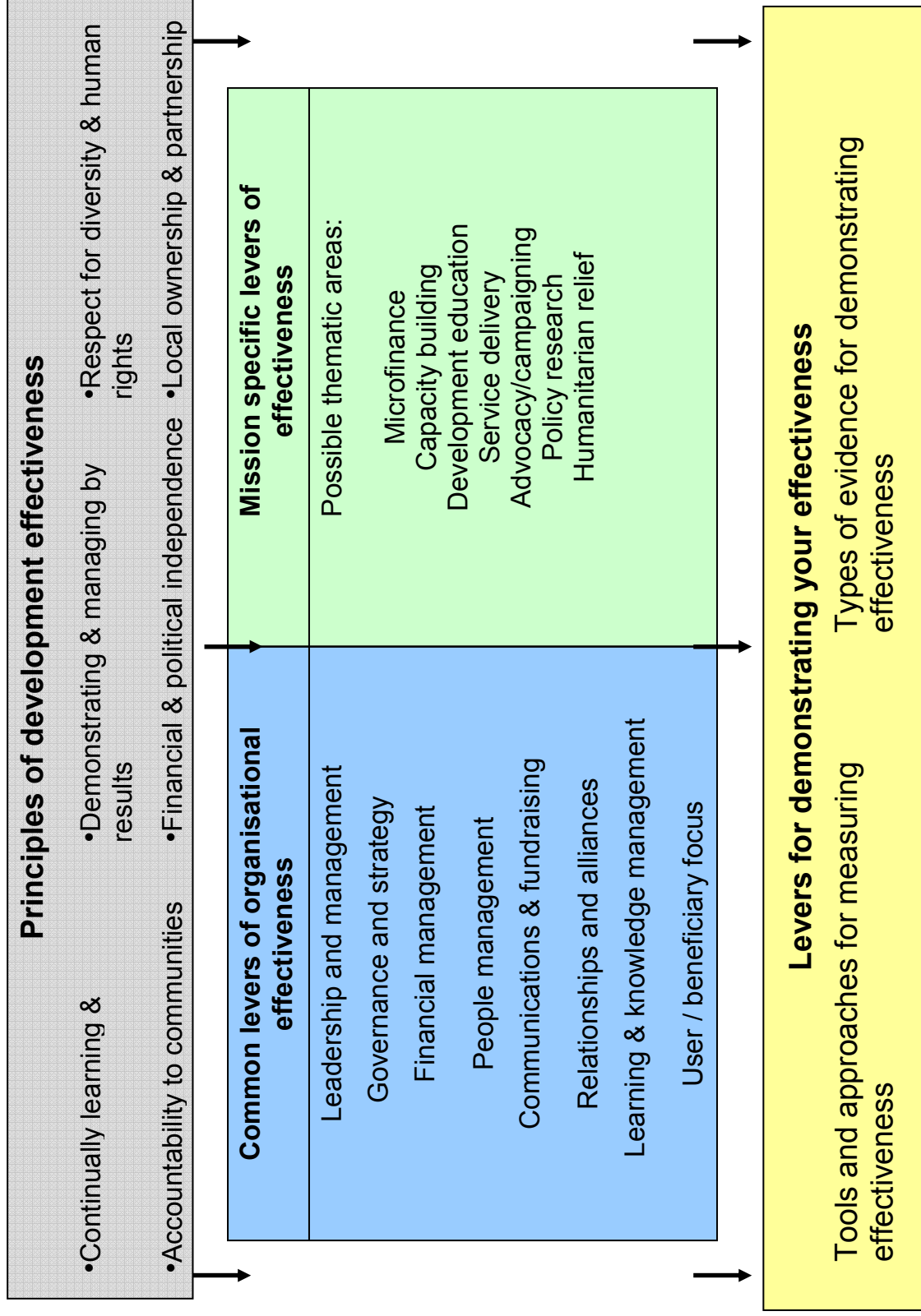
3.2.4 Levers for demonstrating your effectiveness

A key aspect of effectiveness is being able to measure and demonstrate that you are producing positive outcomes. Recognising the diverse ways of working and types of activities that Bond members are involved in, there will not be a single way of measuring and demonstrating results. The ‘demonstrating effectiveness’ component of the framework however would map out the different approaches for monitoring and evaluating effectiveness. Over time with members piloting and testing approaches, the framework could define core indicators, and metrics in particular thematic areas (eg voice and accountability) and sign post to the most appropriate approaches and tools for Monitoring and evaluation in each area (eg outcome mapping, social network analysis etc.) See **Diagram 3** for an example.

While the first three components of the framework (principles, common levers and mission specific levers) will require Bond to primarily bring existing information and approaches together and present them in an accessible way, the ‘levers for demonstrating your effectiveness’ component is where there will be the most scope for Bond to develop, pilot and test new approaches and methodologies.

Diagram 3: Example of what details could be presented under the levers for demonstrating your effectiveness
Levers for demonstrating your effectiveness
Advocacy and campaigning
Tools: Outcome mapping, composite logic model, spider diagram for capacity building for advocacy, theory of change, policy maker ratings, bellweather methodology
Types of evidence: changes in awareness of issue, improved capacity to communicate and promote advocacy messages, increased visibility of campaign messages

Diagram 4: Proposed structure of an effectiveness framework



Appendix 1- List of People Interviewed

Monica Blagescu	Policy Services Co-ordinator, Humanitarian Accountability Partnership
Cath Blunt	Code of Conduct Manager, Australian Council for International Development
Anne Buchanan	Co-ordinator (Ethics), Canadian Council for International Co-operation
John Damerell	Project Manager, Sphere Project
Attallah Fitzgibbon	Head of Performance Improvement, Islamic Relief
Sheryl Haw	International Director, Micah Network
Hervé Legenvre	Director of Knowledge and New Product Development, European Foundation for Quality Management
Patrick Mallet	Credibility Director, ISEAL Alliance
Sam Mathews	Director of Services, Charities Evaluation Services
Michel Mooser	Lead Auditor, SGS
Jonathan Potter	Executive Director, People in Aid
Susi Rabin	Learning and Development Manager, National Council for Voluntary Organisations
Cait Turvey Roe	Accountability and Audit Manager, Disasters Emergency Committee
Elaine Shapowal	Business Process Analyst, Medair
Gillian Wilson	Co-ordinator, Network of International Development Organisations in Scotland