



Survey Report
On Civil Society Organisations' Effectiveness

September 2008

Executive Summary

Introduction

This analysis summarises the findings from a survey that BOND conducted in June 2008. The purpose of the survey was for BOND to consult with its members primarily on a new global civil society organisations (CSOs) initiative on development effectiveness called the 'Open Forum for CSOs Development Effectiveness'¹ (survey's section A: international level) as well as on the effectiveness issues for the UK sector and how BOND should respond to them (survey's section B: national level – UK sector).

The Open Forum for CSOs Development Effectiveness is a CSOs led initiative which aims to address the challenges that CSOs face in regards to the effectiveness of their work. The initiative is open to all CSOs around the world and is led by a Global Facilitation Group in which BOND shares a position.

For more information on the initiative and on how BOND engages with it please visit www.bond.org.uk/pages/cso-effectiveness-international-work.html

Background

The issue of quality and effectiveness in the development sector is much debated at the UK as well as at the international level. BOND has been actively involved in increasing members' engagement to issues of effectiveness over the last 18 months and is committed to continue doing so in the most responsive way.

BOND recognises the complexities of development effectiveness and that there is not a shared understanding of effectiveness or a single shared definition. BOND has been actively engaged with the new global 'Open Forum for CSOs Development Effectiveness' initiative in the belief that it can get CSOs around the globe to work around these issues and develop some shared understanding.

BOND will use the findings of the survey to voice the UK sectors' position on issues of effectiveness on the first explanatory meeting of this new global initiative (Paris, June 2008) as well as in redeveloping BOND's work on supporting UK non-governmental organisations (NGOs) on effectiveness issues.

Finally, echoing some of our members' feedback on this exercise, we appreciate that a lack of definition on effectiveness puts some limitations to members' participation in the exercise. We are positive that the outcomes of this exercise will highlight some of these limitations in a constructive way which will help us to address them.

Key Findings

Overall, 38 organisations responded to the survey which constitutes about 12% of BOND membership.

In terms of the size of the organisations that responded, the majority of them (40%) are BOND members categories C and D (medium), 30% are BOND member categories A and B (small) and the rest 30% are BOND member categories E, F and G (large).

Representation from largest members is rather high given that these categories constitute only 10% of BOND's membership while the smaller organisations (categories A and B) which

¹ At the time the survey was launched, the initiative was called 'Framing and Promoting the Effectiveness of CSOs as Development Actors'. It was re-named the 'Open Forum for CSOs Development Effectiveness' at the first exploratory meeting in Paris (June 2008)

constitute the largest proportion of BOND membership (48%) make up 30% of the total number of respondents.

That raises certain questions about the capacity of smaller BOND members to participate in exercises like this and whether more time should be allowed in future similar exercises.

CSOs effectiveness – international level

According to the survey's findings CSOs internationally should be working jointly towards a **flexible tool** on effectiveness to which CSOs sign up to **voluntarily**.

The priority areas that CSOs need to address at an international level are:

- a) Relationships and partnerships between North and South
- b) Social accountability of CSOs (eg. to the wider society)

There is a clear message that CSOs need to be working with donors in that new international process but at the same time reserve the right to an independent perspective. CSOs need to be more confident in their understanding of effectiveness and ensure a coherent international approach in their strategic engagement with donors.

National level (UK sector)

The survey presents BOND with some key messages in terms of how best to support effectiveness issues for UK NGOs.

BOND needs to further develop its work on:

- a) **provision of practical and capacity building support to members**, for example effective impact assessment, tools and methods on increasing accountability to beneficiaries and quality standards and frameworks. BOND needs to be aware though of existing capacity building actors and initiatives in these areas of work. It was suggested that it might be more effective for BOND to play the role of the advocator of existing tools and initiatives
- b) **advocacy work with donors to change donors' practices** that affect the effectiveness of NGOs development work. It was very clear from participants' responses that donors needs and requirements seem to be far more influential than beneficiaries' needs and requirements on how NGOs implement their internal frameworks/tools for effectiveness
- c) **organisational learning** and the effects of it on the effectiveness of NGOs work and of the sector as a whole

BOND needs to consider working on the following areas:

- a) development of a **voluntary framework or instrument** for BOND members to sign up to
- b) **power issues** in relationships between UK NGOs and their stakeholders in their impact in processes of international development work
- c) **programme effectiveness**
- d) **leadership issues** within the UK international development sector
- e) **change**: how change happens and theories of change

In terms of how BOND should engage with the UK international development sector, there is clear direction that BOND should primarily facilitate engagement in the next stages of this international process with directors and planning, learning, impact staff of UK NGOs.

Next Steps

CSOs effectiveness – international level

BOND has already used the findings of this survey to represent its members in the first explanatory meeting of the Open Forum for CSOs Development Effectiveness. BOND plays an active role in the facilitation of this initiative and has ensured that UK NGOs views are heard throughout the different processes and international discussions.

BOND is committed to representing and advocating for the issues that participants of this survey highlighted as priorities mainly through its participation to the Global Facilitation Group of the Open Forum for Development Effectiveness.

National level (UK sector)

In terms of BOND's work in the UK context, BOND has committed to a series of consultations with its members since earlier this year on issues of effectiveness. The findings of this survey, combined with the outcomes of the rest of the consultations, will play an important role, in the design and the development of a new programme area of work on issues of effectiveness.

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Survey

Survey methodology

BOND launched the survey on the BOND website and invited all BOND members to participate. The survey was restricted to BOND members only.

For reasons of fair representation, we put a restriction of one survey per member organisation. We requested that the survey was completed, where possible, by directors, heads of programmes or other senior staff consulting with relevant colleagues.

We recognise that this might have imposed certain limitations to some organisations in terms of identifying and agreeing who should be filling the survey and of consulting with colleagues within the timeframe given.

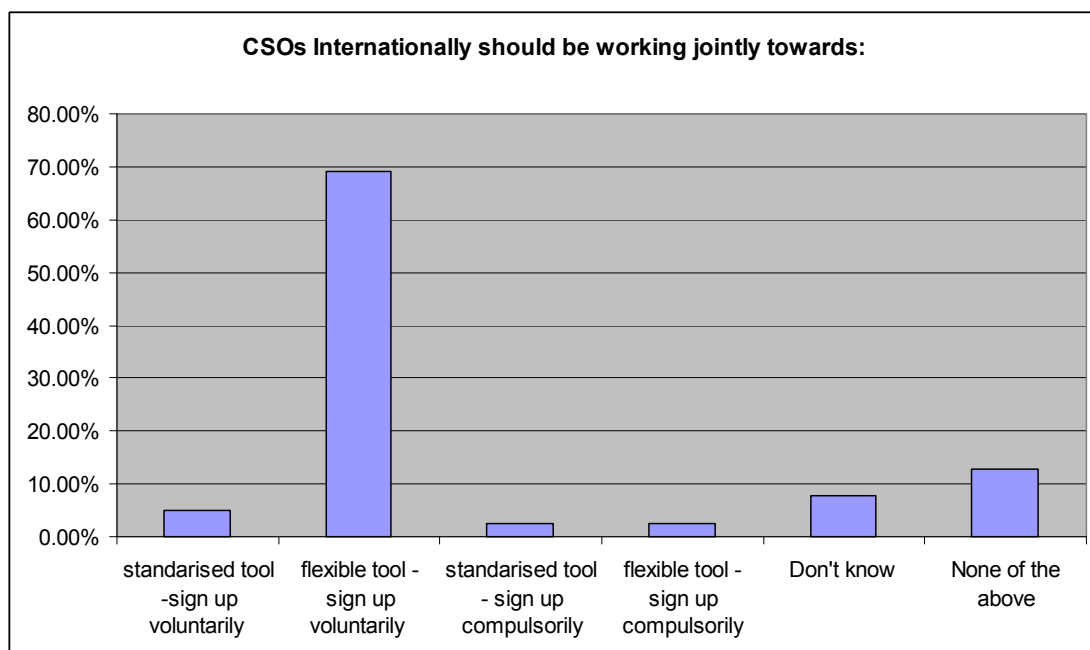
For the purpose of the survey CSOs were defined as a wide array of organisations: NGOs, community groups, labour unions, indigenous groups, charitable organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations and foundations.

Survey findings

A. International level

International tools for effectiveness

In the question of what should CSOs internationally be working jointly towards, the responses were as follows:



Almost 70% of participants believe that CSOs internationally should be working jointly towards a **flexible tool** on effectiveness to which CSOs sign up to **voluntarily**.

While only 5% of participants think that CSOs internationally should be working jointly towards a standardised tool on effectiveness to which CSOs sign up to voluntarily.

It is also clear that the options of CSOs signing up compulsory, either to a standardised or to a flexible tool, were not popular at all with only 2.6% (respectively) of participants choosing them.

Comments that participants made in this section:

"a global accord or set of principles to be implemented through local customs, politics and traditions and circumstances is more realistic – and if promoted well could still be powerful and legitimate"

'standardisation, that is, one size fits all approach, does not work'

'a flexible tool should be used compulsorily as voluntary tools rarely have impact'

'a mandate for CSOs should be created, to be seen as part of a global movement which should have access and representation at international fora as a legitimate global partner and resource'

Priority aspects of CSOs effectiveness at the international level

Participants were asked to rank priority aspects of CSOs effectiveness at the international level. The list below presents the findings (1 being top priority and 7 being lowest priority).

Priority aspects of CSOs effectiveness at the international level:
1. North/South relationships/partnerships
2. Social accountability of CSOs (eg. accountability to wider society)
3. Impact assessment
4. CSOs internal organisational effectiveness (eg. financial management, management systems etc)
5. Relationships with national and international donors (eg. accountability, reporting mechanisms, links between funding and effectiveness of work)
6. Leadership within CSOs
7. Northern CSOs role as 'donors' to Southern CSOs

Donor engagement at the international level

BOND is already working with donors on issues of effectiveness and the next question asked whether CSOs need to be engaging with donors in the new international CSOs effectiveness process.

An overwhelming majority of participants, 89.7%, felt that CSOs need to be working with donors in that international process.

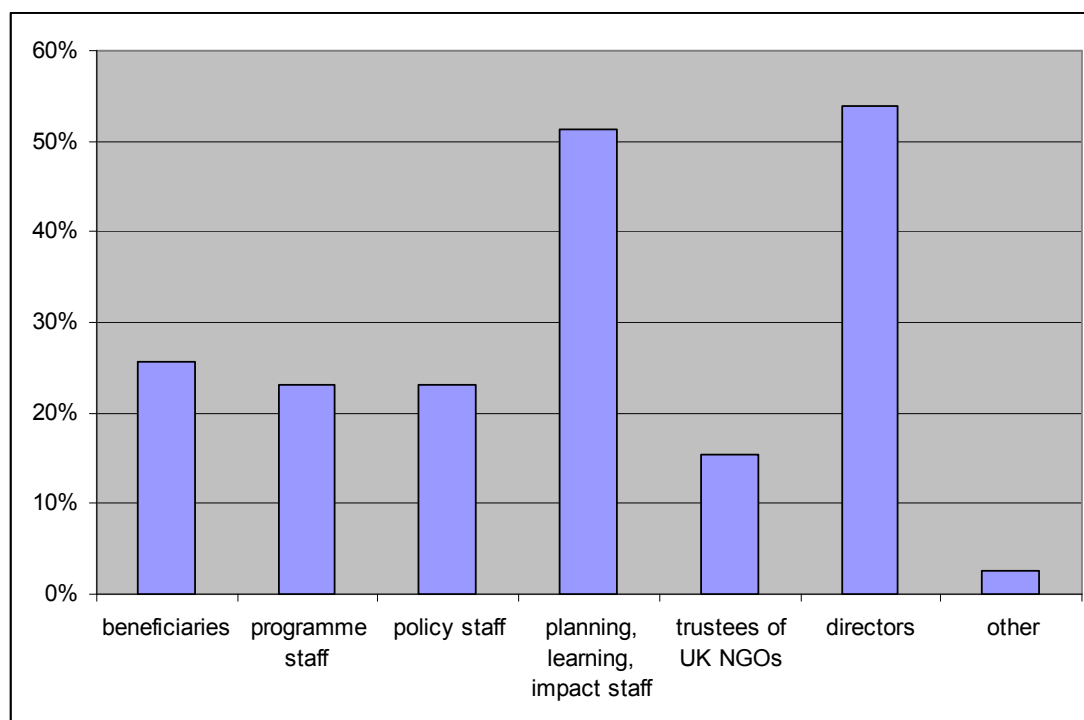
It can be argued that a positive response to that question was rather predictable but what makes the finding interesting is the volume of participants supporting engagement with donors. It would be also very interesting to explore further the reasons behind why 10% of participants feel that CSOs should not be working with donors in the international process.

Although the message was very clear and strong, respondees were very keen in sharing their views and concerns about the way that CSOs need to engage with donors.

All of the participants who commented on this question highly emphasised the need for CSOs to engage with donors. However, there was also a strong sense that CSOs need to be clear about what constitutes 'effectiveness' before they embark in engaging with donors. A number of participants also feel that CSOs need to take the lead on the debate on effectiveness when engaging with donors but at the same time ensure that CSOs run their own independent process and discussions and that they reserve the right to an independent perspective (see full list of comments – Appendix II)

Facilitating engagement from within the UK international development sector

When participants asked who, within the UK international development sector, BOND should primarily facilitate engagement with in the next stages of this international process, their responses were as follows (participants could choose up to two answers):



These findings present a strong message for BOND that needs to engage primarily with directors and NGO staff working on areas of planning, learning and impact.

Beneficiaries came third as a group that BOND needs to engage with in this process and that makes it an interesting finding given that BOND traditionally has been working only indirectly with beneficiaries through its UK NGOs members.

B. National level (UK sector)

Frameworks or tools for effectiveness

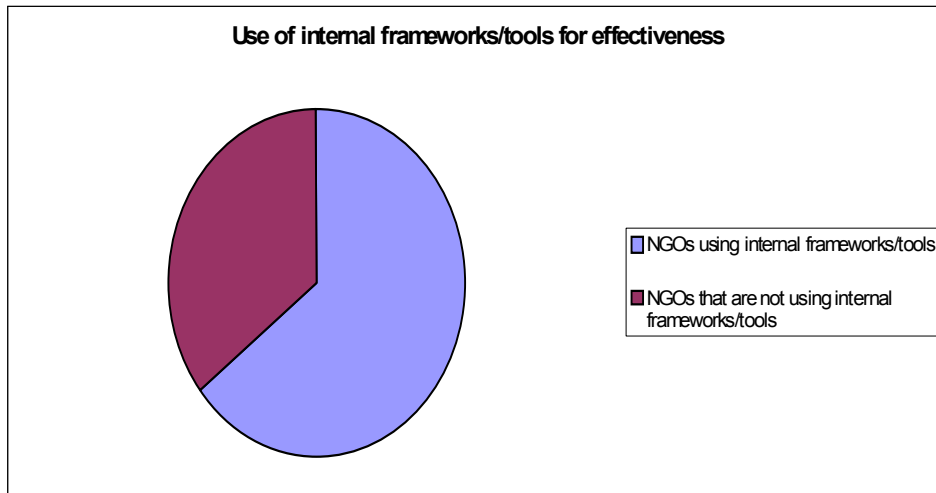
The next part of the survey looked at the frameworks or tools that NGOs use to increase and to safeguard the effectiveness of their work.

'Internal frameworks/tools' refers to organisation –specific approaches which NGOs have developed themselves.

'External frameworks/tools' refers to approaches which are recognised or practiced by a number of NGOs could be either regulatory or codes of practice.

Internal frameworks/tools for effectiveness

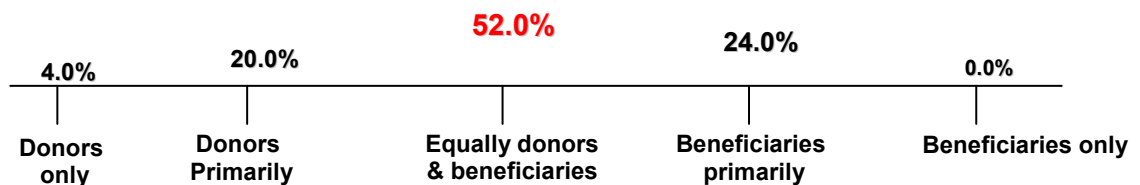
The majority of participant organisations surveyed (64.1%) use internal frameworks or tools for effectiveness as opposed to 35.9% who are not using any.



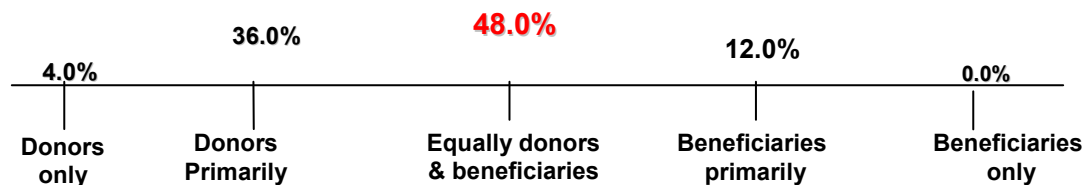
As a next step, the survey tried to unpack whose requirements and needs were the main drivers for organisations developing the internal frameworks or tools they are using and then to compare that with the drivers behind the implementation of those internal frameworks or tools in reality.

The findings are presented below:

a. Whose requirements and needs have been the primary driver for your organisation developing these internal frameworks or tools?



b. In practice, whose requirements and needs ARE driving the implementation of these internal frameworks or tools?



Donors and beneficiaries seem to be the driving forces equally behind both the development and the implementation of organisations' internal frameworks or tools.

However, donors' needs and requirements seem to play a far more influential role in the implementation of the tools compared to the one in the original development of the tools (an increase of 80%).

At the same time, beneficiaries' needs and requirements as a main driver has fallen by 50% from development stage to implementation stage.

It becomes very clear from participants' responses that donors needs and requirements seem to be far more influential on how NGO's implement their internal frameworks/tools for effectiveness to beneficiaries' needs and requirements.

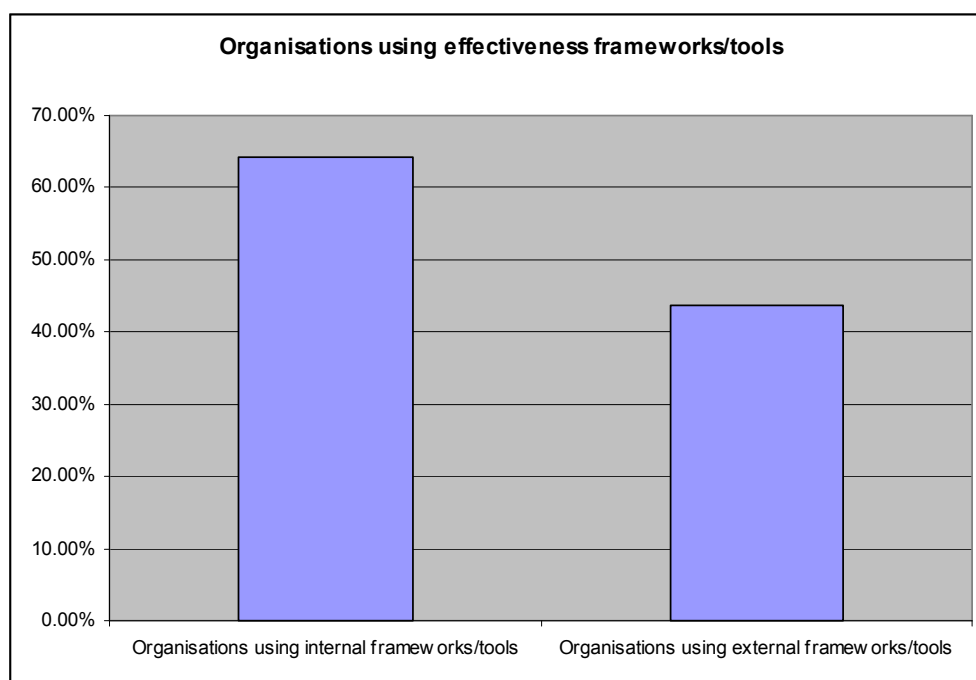
External frameworks for effectiveness

In contrast to the use of internal frameworks, the majority of participant organisations (56.4%) stated that their organisation does not comply with external effectiveness frameworks.

Out of the 43.6% who do comply with external effectiveness frameworks, 82.4% have implemented some of them in the last two years.

It is interesting to note also that out of the 43.6% of participant organisations who use external frameworks the vast majority of them (63%) are medium size organisations (according to BOND members' categories) and the rest (37%) are small size organisations. All large size participant organisations use external frameworks or tools for effectiveness.

It is also worth noting the significant difference between the number of participant organisations who use internal frameworks or tools (64.1%) to the number of participant organisations who use external effectiveness frameworks (43.6%).



The following is a list of some of the external frameworks for effectiveness participant organisations have implemented over the last 2 years:

- Action by Churches Together (ACT)
- Charities' Statement on Recommended Practice (SORP 2005)
- Cochrane Collaboration
- Code of Good Practice for NGOs Responding to HIV/AIDS
- Development code of practice
- Ethical Trading Initiative
- External evaluations of Tsunami and other large scale humanitarian response evaluations
- HAP Certification

- Hyogo Framework for Action
- IFAT Self Assessment
- ImpACT Coalition (Improving Accountability, Clarity and Transparency)
- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRCRCS)
- International Mine Action standards (IMAS)
- Investment in People
- ISO
- National Authority Accreditation
- OSCR Caritas International Frameworks
- People in Aid
- Red Cross Code of Conduct
- Research4development (DFID)
- SAA
- Setting the standard – a Common Approach to Child Protection for International NGOs
- SPHERE Standards
- The DEC Accountability Framework
- The Fundraising Standards Board (FRSB)
- Transparency and Accountability in Fundraising
- UN Accreditation

Supporting effectiveness issues for UK NGOs

The next part of the survey asked participants to identify up to two priority areas for BOND to support effectiveness for the UK sector. The findings were as follows:

What BOND should be doing to support effectiveness issues for UK NGOs:

provide practical/capacity building support and tools to members	59%
advocate with donors for changes in donor practices	51.30%
develop a voluntary framework/'instrument' for its members to sign up to	33.30%
identify and analyse effectiveness issues	28.20%
research effectiveness issues	7.70%
develop a mandatory framework/'instrument' for its members to sign up to	2.60%

This question presents some interesting findings for BOND:

Firstly, it reinforces the already established need for BOND to continuously provide practical and capacity building support to its members. The fact that almost 60% of the survey participants identified this area as the number one priority gives a clear and strong message to BOND in terms of prioritising its work on effectiveness issues.

Secondly, it was felt that there is a role for BOND in advocating for a change in practices from donors. That finding comes as a very strong message recognising the role of donors and of their practices in the effectiveness agenda of UK NGOs.

The third priority area for BOND is a very specific one and one that BOND needs to consider how to respond to. One third of participants believe that BOND should develop a voluntary framework or instrument for its members to sign up to. It is important to note here as well, that only less than 3% believe that BOND should develop a mandatory framework or instrument for its members to sign up to making it clear that it is the voluntary element of a framework or instrument that members are in favour of.

Around 28% of participants believe that BOND should work on identifying and analysing effectiveness issues while only 7% believe that BOND should be conducting research on these issues.

We take great notice of the comments echoing that BOND needs to engage more with effectiveness issues and that it needs to ensure understanding of and linkages with existing

frameworks and approaches. Some participants also commented that there is a need for BOND to create more spaces for members to discuss issues of effectiveness.

Priority areas of existing and new work for BOND in order to better address effectiveness issues in the UK international development sector

Existing areas of work

In the question of 'what areas of existing work does BOND need to be focusing more in order to better address effectiveness issues in the UK International Development sector' participants were encouraged to choose as many areas as they wanted from the list provided. The findings could be summarised as follows:

The majority of participants felt that BOND should provide more support on:

- effective impact assessment methodologies (74.4%)
- tools and methods on increasing accountability to beneficiaries (69.2%)
- quality standards and frameworks (66.7%)

These three priority areas seem to fall under the more general heading of 'practical/capacity building support and tools' that we saw as the top area of work for BOND to support effectiveness issues for UK NGOs (see question 8: supporting effectiveness issues for UK NGOs)

The following most popular area of work for BOND to focus on more was 'funding and working with donors' (51.3%) which again corresponds to the second priority area: 'advocate with donors for changes in donor practices' outlined in the previous section (see question 8: supporting effectiveness issues for UK NGOs)

Organisational learning (51.3%) was also deemed to be an important existing area of work of BOND that it needs to focus on more in order to address effectiveness issues.

New areas of work

When participants asked what other areas of work BOND should develop so as to address effectiveness issues in the UK sector, the findings were as follows:

The majority of participants' feel that 'power issues in relationships between UK NGOs and their stakeholders and their impact in processes of international development work' (56.4%) is the highest priority area of work that BOND needs to develop.

'Programme effectiveness' (53.8%) is the second top priority area.

'Leadership issues within the UK international development sector' seems to be a high priority as 48.7% of participants have indicated so.

BOND also needs to support its members in exploring and understanding 'how change happens' (eg. theories of change, gaps between practice and global analysis of change, competing development narratives) according to 48.7% of participants.

Another area that came as a priority area of work for BOND to develop is the one around the 'partnership issues between UK NGOs and their partners' (48.7%).

'Internal organisational effectiveness' (eg. financial management, management systems) was the least important area of work for BOND to develop (28.2%).

Appendix I – Survey

BOND Members' Survey on Civil Society Organisations' Effectiveness

Definition: Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) refer to a wide array of organisations: non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community groups, labour unions, indigenous groups, charitable organisations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, and foundations.

For reasons of representation ONLY ONE survey from each BOND member organisation will be accepted.

Please complete the survey after consulting with relevant colleagues.

There are 9 questions (questions 2-5 cover the International level and questions 6-9 the UK level)

BOND will use this data for representation purposes in various stages of the developments of the new global CSOs initiative called 'Framing and Promoting the Effectiveness of CSOs as Development Actors'. It will also inform BOND's planning and decision making around relevant areas of work. We may quote any comments that you make in this survey but will not assign your name or your organisation's name unless you agree below in questions 1e and 1f.

Q1a Organisation name:..... { max 30 characters}
Q1b Your name: {max 30 characters}
Q1c Job title:..... {max 30 characters}
Q1d Email address:.....

Q1e Would you be happy for BOND to quote your name against any comments you make in this survey in future effectiveness work?

Yes

No

Q1f Would you be happy for BOND to quote your organisation's name against any comments you make in future effectiveness work?

Yes

No

International Level

Q2. What do you think CSOs internationally should be working jointly towards?

(please select one box)

- a. A standardised tool on effectiveness to which CSOs sign up to voluntarily
- b. A flexible tool on effectiveness to which CSOs sign up to voluntarily
- c. A standardised tool on effectiveness to which CSO sign up to compulsorily
- d. A flexible tool on effectiveness to which CSOs sign up to compulsorily
- e. Don't know
- f. None of the above (please comment)

Q3. What do you think are the priority aspects of CSOs Effectiveness at the international level? (Please rank 1 to 7, with 1 being top priority and 7 being lowest priority. Please use each number only once and use all numbers)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
North/South relationships/partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Northern CSOs role as ‘donors’ to Southern CSOs							
Social Accountability of CSOs (eg. accountability to wider society)							
Impact Assessment							
CSOs internal organisational effectiveness (eg. financial management, management systems)							
Relationships with national and international donors (eg. accountability, reporting mechanisms, links between funding and effectiveness of work)							
Leadership within CSOs							

Q4. At the UK level, BOND is already working with donors on issues of effectiveness. Do you think CSOs need to be engaging with donors in that process internationally?

- YES
 No
 Don't know
 Comments

.....

Q5. Who do you think BOND should primarily facilitate engagement from within the UK international development sector in the next stages of this international process? (please tick only two boxes.)

- Beneficiaries
- Programme staff
- Policy staff
- Planning, learning, impact staff
- Trustees of UK CSOs
- Directors
- Other

Please specify any other stakeholders: {30 characters}

.....

National level (UK sector)

5. Does your organisation use any internal frameworks/tools for effectiveness?

- YES

If Yes, please go to Question 6b

NO

If No, please go to question 7a

Q6b) Whose requirements/needs have been the primary driver for your organisation developing these internal framework/tools? (1= Donors only; 2= Donors primarily; 3= Equally donors and beneficiaries; 4= Beneficiaries primarily; 5= Beneficiaries only)

1 2 3 4 5

5c) In practice, whose requirements/needs are driving the implementation of these internal frameworks/tools? (1= Donors only; 2= Donors primarily; 3= Equally donors and beneficiaries; 4= Beneficiaries primarily; 5= Beneficiaries only)

1 2 3 4 5

Q7a . Does your organisation comply with external effectiveness frameworks?

YES

(Please go to Question 7b)

NO

(Please go to question 8)

Q7 b) Have you implemented any of them in the last 2 years? (Please select Yes or No and comment in the box)

YES

NO

Comments: {max 600 characters}

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Q8. What do you think BOND should be doing to support effectiveness issues for UK NGOs? (Please tick only 2 boxes)

- Identify and analyse effectiveness issues
- Research effectiveness issues
- Develop a mandatory framework/ 'instrument' for its members to sign up to
- Develop a voluntary framework/'instrument' for its members to sign up to
- Advocate with donors for changes in donor practices
- Provide practical/capacity building support and tools to members
- Other.....

Please specify {max. 100 characters}

.....

BOND's role

BOND's role is to support the effectiveness of member organisations. Since a 2006 research project on [quality issues](#), BOND has developed a particular focus on addressing accountability to beneficiaries. Please, see this link for the 2006 report www.bond.org.uk/qualitystandards/repor.htm

Q9a. What areas of existing work does BOND need to be focusing on more in order to better address effectiveness issues in the UK international development sector? (Please tick as many as are applicable)

- Campaigning effectiveness
- Quality standards and frameworks
- Tools and methods on increasing accountability to beneficiaries
- Effective impact assessment methodologies
- Planning and reporting
- Organisational learning
- Funding and working with donors

Q9b. What other areas do you think BOND should be focusing on in order to address effectiveness issues in the UK sector? (Please tick as many as are applicable)

- Programme effectiveness
- Internal organisational effectiveness (eg..financial management, management systems)
- Leadership issues within the UK International Development sector
- How change happens (e.g theories of change, gaps between practice and global analysis of change, competing development narratives)
- Partnership work between UK NGOs and partners
- Power issues in relationships between UK NGOs and their stakeholders and their impact in processes of international development work

Other

Please specify {max 150 characters}

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Appendix II – Comments

Question 4:

The following is a summary of comments made in this section;

- 'engaging with donors on an international level, but reserving the right to an independent perspective'
- 'before we embark in engaging with donors we need to understand what constitutes 'effectiveness'; need to gain a joint understanding and a coherent international approach'
- 'the priority should be to make more progress within individual INGO's first'
- 'the priority is to lobby for a move away from project funding to general grants to organisations based on their overall effectiveness (either internationally or at country level), or to agree funding for a project based on organisational effectiveness and only then for the CSO to plan the project'
- 'donor engagement is necessary but only if we are clear that most of the dialogue is not actually about effectiveness at the moment but only about efficiency- they are not the same thing. There is no real debate about effectiveness nor impact in an organised and mutually reinforcing manner'
- 'CSO's need to respond to changes the international architecture of aid has gone through in recent years, CSOs need to anticipate future trends and ensure that they are leading the debate;CSOs need our independent process to discuss what effectiveness means for us'
- 'it is important for CSO's to engage with donors internationally for the following reasons: it gives a stronger voice to CSO's; it widens the donor audience from just the UK and EU; DFID and EU also distribute funding in country; it fits with the PRSP process'
- 'donors need to understand that the priorities for CSO effectiveness may be different to donors' traditional priorities. The solution is a new partnership between different stakeholders'
- 'the variety of measures of effectiveness apparently prioritised by different donors make strategic development of an effective CSO difficult /unrealistic'