

The Core Proposition of the BOND Effectiveness Programme

The focus of the BOND Effectiveness programme is on strengthening the management and reporting of NGO performance – the management of social development work which is based on strong relationships with partners and beneficiaries and is able to provide robust evidence of its performance through rigorous measurement using appropriate techniques. An NGO is considered to be effective when it contributes to social change through high quality relationships with partners and intended beneficiaries.

	Developing a Shared Analysis of Effectiveness	The Importance of Prioritising Relationships	Setting a Management Agenda
What's the Problem?	<p>There is growing consensus that INGOs do not consistently meet the standards of transparency and accountability that they increasingly demand from governments and other donors (and, on occasion, demand of their funded partners also). Many lack reliable reports of performance for making key internal decisions, such as ensuring the best use of limited resources or holding staff to account.</p> <p>This can be explained in part by the convergence of 2 trends which have influenced development management and practice; the new public management agenda with its drive for greater efficiencies and quantifiable results and a social anthropological agenda which places a strong focus on relationships and beneficiary participation. While this has led to a welcome drive to strengthen monitoring and evaluation and has precipitated an expansion in the tools and methodologies available to achieve this, it has also exposed tensions about where to focus resources and how best to prove effectiveness.</p> <p>Internally, INGOs continue to experiment with different approaches to managing and reporting their performance. Managers are strongly committed to using their limited resources effectively. But some of the dominant approaches – including results-based management, impact assessment and centralised planning and controls – whilst often enthusiastically adopted in the search for quantifiable certainties, are inadequate for measuring social change or the quality of relationships.</p>	<p>While the discipline brought by the focus on results based management has strengthened planning and clarity of NGO programmes which are now better able to provide quantifiable results, there is concern that this only goes only part way to providing evidence of NGOs contribution to social development.</p> <p>There is growing acknowledgement that NGOs can best contribute to sustainable change when they contribute to local organisations' and people's own efforts, rather than delivering programmes themselves directly.</p> <p>While many NGOs have made serious efforts to define how more effective relationships could be developed, power to set agendas and take decisions still very often rests with the NGO.</p> <p>There has also been little progress made towards developing approaches for managing these ways of working to a high quality on a systematic basis, or for incorporating feedback mechanisms on the quality of relationships and hence there is a real lack of systems to measure the quality of participation.</p>	<p>Over the last decade, organisations in both the North and South have invested in building their organisational capacity. At the same time, because of the rapid growth in the sector, growing competition for resources as a result of the unpredictable economic climate of the 90's, and new approaches to organisational management, many NGOs have had to adapt their managerial skills, adopt new managerial techniques and cope with rapid organisational change. It is in the context of this increasing concern about the efficiency and effectiveness of organisations that the original values that made NGOs distinctive risk becoming marginalised.</p> <p>Indeed, the findings of the BOND Quality Report, that the importance of relationships to delivering sustainable change points to a management agenda that prioritises staff's softer relationship-building skills and challenges excessive managerialism in development. That is not to say there is a need to abandon the important emphasis on logic, accountability, cost-effectiveness and efficiency which has come out of such thinking; but a recognition that indicators of key organisational values, particularly around valuing participation, and building sustainable and accountable relationships that are particular to many development NGOs, are also an essential management and reporting requirement.</p>
How will BOND	<p>Recognising that both of these trends have value in the management of effective programmes and could provide compelling evidence of NGO performance, BOND will seek to understand the tensions implicit in these approaches and develop a framework for the management and reporting of NGO performance which draws on the strength of each and presents this in a single structure. In doing this, BOND recognises that there are tools,</p>	<p>BOND will work with its members to understand what constitutes good practice in participation and to describe what an optimal set of relationships with partners and beneficiaries looks like as a means to judge practice.</p>	<p>We will support senior managers to reflect on their existing organisational approaches and their own beliefs and attitudes around the importance of establishing appropriate relationships and managing these consistently, and how these can be balanced with other management necessities. This issue will be</p>

systems and processes in abundance that are consistent with organisational values, but there is no single framework which finds the right balance between the different components necessary to manage and report on NGO effectiveness.

BOND will work with its members to develop a wider analysis of the full range of issues that INGOs face, which seeks to balance competing priorities such as the strong values of working in partnership with Southern partners and beneficiaries while developing robust systems for understanding social change and impact; systems which stand up to external, professional scrutiny.

The analysis will be developed into a framework which will provide practical guidance for managers. It will help them understand what each specific initiative and approach can offer them and how it fits into a broader framework for managing and reporting NGO performance. Rather than create new tools, the framework will provide a structure to understand existing tools and techniques.

Existing tools presented in the effectiveness framework will be used as a means of closing the gap between aspiration and practice. The systematic monitoring of these relationships would present a way to strengthen development interventions and would provide a foundation for understanding effectiveness.

a focus of the NGO leaders network.

Experience suggests that learning is as much an issue of organisational culture as it is an issue of having a system in place and that there needs to be an environment where stakeholders feel able to speak frankly and where NGO staff members can be self-critical and reflective. This will also be an area that BOND will seek to stimulate discussion and work with senior managers to reflect on practice.

We will seek to build a network of practitioners who have the skills and knowledge to build strong relations that can contribute to change. Through BONDs Quality group, knowledge and understanding of appropriate approaches to measuring social change will be discussed with a view to influencing pilot programmes and wider uptake of appropriate tools and techniques.

Approach & Activities

- The Effectiveness Framework will provide a single coherent system for the management and reporting of NGO performance rather than deal with them as separate issues.
- The framework will incorporate issues of how organisations learn and who informs their learning. The issue of organisational culture and space for learning will be addressed with senior managers.
- The framework will seek to build a shared agenda between NGOs and donors around the need for the sector to be able to provide evidence of its contribution to social change through a mix of quantitative and qualitative tools.
- BOND will not seek to develop its own techniques but instead will use the framework as a means of understanding the particular contributions of existing tools to managing and describing performance. Only where these don't exist will BOND support the trialling of new tools.
- In addition to drawing on experience from within the development sector, BOND will also seek to bring in skills and experience from outside the sector and will consult with academics and, where appropriate, members of the private sector to develop the framework.
- While we will support agencies to incorporate the framework into their practice, we will not prescribe a mechanism for compliance but will leave this to members to decide for themselves.
- BOND will lead a process to develop a standard approach to reporting the quality of participation and relationships with partners and beneficiaries which can be used by managers to assess the quality of field work. This will be complimentary to existing performance reporting processes which tend to focus on pre-determined project objectives.
- This process will (a) define success criteria for partnerships, (b) through assessment and monitoring, allow a judgement to be made about agency practice, and (c) provide a route map to address deficiencies.
- The initial focus will be on building knowledge for practitioners through network meetings, trialling of new practice and the dissemination of good practice guides.
- An NGO leaders network will be established which will provide a forum for reflecting on beliefs and attitudes and sharing lessons
- The programme will also include structured opportunities for immersions in developing countries which will provide more opportunities for senior NGO managers to benefit from focused learning and reflection about issues of programme quality and effectiveness.