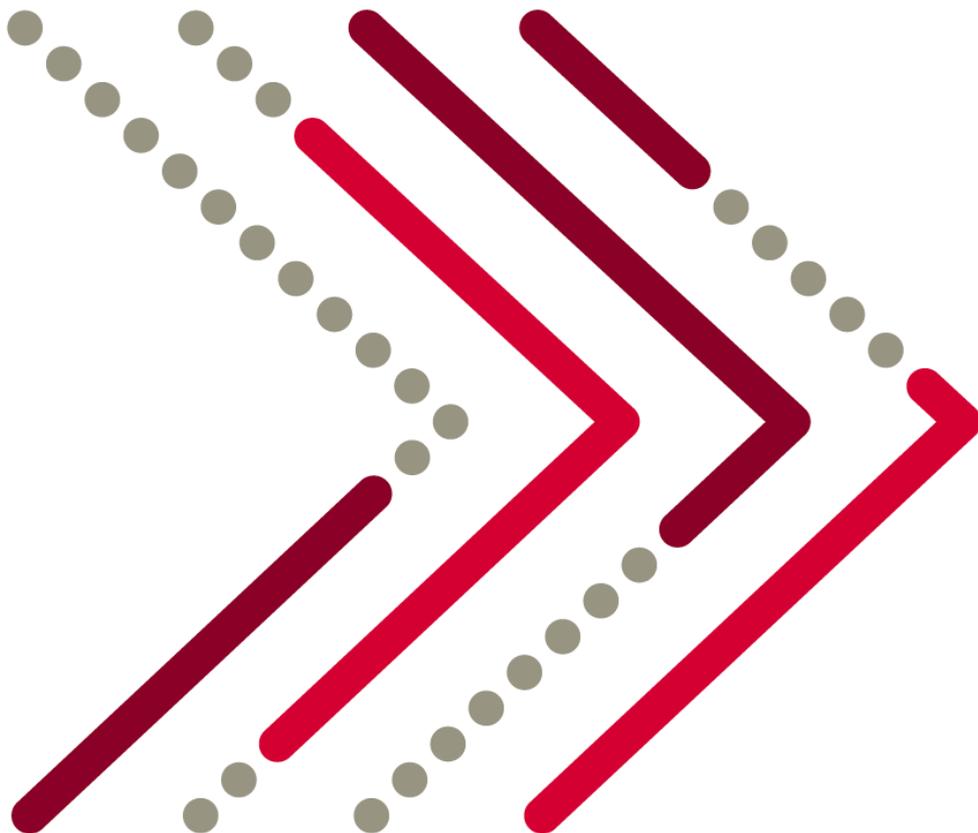


Bond's strategy 2020-2030

November 2020



1. Introduction

This document presents Bond's strategy and goals.

It is a rolling strategy, allowing us to be agile and responsive to an ever-changing and challenging environment. We have set goals for 2030 that take us towards our purpose. We have identified strategic objectives for the next three years that aim to contribute to these goals. These will be reviewed and adjusted every year, based on what we are learning and what the international development sector needs to continue building a just and sustainable world.

2. Background and context

There is sector-wide consensus that the international development system is experiencing a period of intense and rapid change. In the face of challenges to legitimacy, power, finances and relevance, international NGOs need to completely rethink their role and purpose.

Our strategy process explored how the external environment is changing and what UK development actors need to consider to remain relevant, trusted and effective in the next decade.

How we respond to climate change; our role in development programmes; the UK's loss of power and influence; abuses of power; business models; declining public support and innovations in the way organisations work: all of these will need to be renegotiated. The Covid-19 pandemic and the creation of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) have further exacerbated these challenges and uncertainties.

Working with members and our own teams, we created a vision for the future of development and humanitarian assistance where decisions are made by those who we seek to support; where access to technology is equitable and safe; where INGOs are more agile and consultative; and where the UK addresses global challenges while upholding human rights and international law.

The UK's international development sector needs to change to realise this vision.

Our takeaways from our initial diagnosis were:

- Bond has a significant role to play in helping the sector to transform and respond to the issues that it faces.
- In a more difficult political and media environment in the UK, Bond needs to take a leadership role in core areas of policy that drive development outcomes.
- Bond needs to ensure that development concerns are progressed at significant international events, like G7 and the Climate Summit, where the UK has a significant role.
- Bond needs to continue its innovative approach to how our network works and who our members are.
- Bond needs to embrace changes happening in the workplace to ensure our organisation is an inclusive, nurturing and stimulating place to work.

3. Our purpose, goals and objectives

Our purpose:

Bond exists to enable civil society organisations and allies to achieve greater progress towards a just and sustainable world together

Long-term goals (2030):

1. Shape **policy and UK politics** to support a just and sustainable future for the world's marginalised communities
2. Help the UK's international development **sector to transform** by creating opportunities for increased impact out of the challenges it faces.
3. Connect and nurture a **dynamic and supportive network** of civil society organisations to share learning, support each other and strengthen effectiveness.
4. These are underpinned by an internal goal: For Bond to **be an inclusive, high performing, happy organisation**.

Objectives for 2023:

To shape **policy and UK politics**, we will:

- Ensure the UK plays a progressive global role in development, humanitarian aid and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals
- Advocate to maintain the quality of UK aid policy and delivery
- Rebuild political support for aid and development, including maintaining the UK's aid spending commitment of 0.7% of GDP
- Influence key international policy processes where the UK plays a leading role (such as G7 and COP26) to accelerate progress for justice and sustainability
- Advocate for a more open civil society space in the UK and internationally
- Champion the UK development sector's voice, through direct government engagement and the media

To help the **sector transform**, we will:

- Ensure civil society sector understands and proactively adapts to its changing context
- Catalyse change on two or three key issues collectively. We will initially focus on anti-racism; shifting power and resources; and funding diversification and business models.
- Sustain and increase the sector's progress in safeguarding and transparency
- Cultivate purposeful working groups that support sector wider transformation, deliver policy outcomes and/or support learning

To connect and nurture a **dynamic and supportive network**, we will:

- Build a diverse membership that reflects a range of global challenges and international development actors in the UK, where all members are engaged

- Provide an authoritative voice on key issues to strengthen the sector's reputation in the UK
- Equip members with the information, resources and connections to support their work
- Support organisational effectiveness through individual learning and professional development
- Accelerate group learning, particularly around the collaboration and partnerships needed for the future

4. The rationale

As a membership organisation, we understand the importance of collective endeavour. In a changing environment, our sector needs to combine leadership in some areas, co-creation and challenge in others. All underpinned by shared learning, networking and communications.

Our broad theory of change is that, for the UK to play its part in a safer, more prosperous world for everyone, we need: a solid policy framework with political support, an agile NGO sector that adapts to achieve its goals, and greater shared learning and collaboration.

These are the main areas where Bond can contribute, based on our core assets:

- Convening an active member network that contributes and learns together to solve problems (including a range and breadth of CSO members)
- Strong relationships with key stakeholders particularly UK government, members, funders and international bodies
- A strong brand and reputation for high quality communications and events
- Committed staff with expertise and experience
- A solid income profile that provides financial stability
- The policy and media voice for the sector, based on our members' principles, that exerts collective influence

Our goals match these needs and strengths. We will be developing a fuller theory of change over the course of the year.

4.1 Shaping policy and UK politics

As the umbrella group for the UK sector, Bond needs to lead on navigating a challenging political environment. Our policy and advocacy work is cited as a key priority by members. Influencing UK policy for the sector is one of the things that only Bond can do. We are recognised as an authoritative, representative and influential voice that mobilises members for effective advocacy. We will continue to create an opportunity for organisations of all sizes to come together to create common positions and leverage their collective influence.

Given the difficult political environment for development, the loss of DFID, and challenges facing our members in resourcing policy and political work, greater leadership from Bond is needed. In our CEO survey, 76% of respondents thought we should take a leadership role in shaping the UK sector's future. 95% thought that Bond's role should be to provide a platform to members to work together on policy. We will focus our advocacy on the most significant policy areas and political moments for improving development outcomes. Focusing on cross cutting policy themes where we add most value to members and there is often less capacity in the sector. For the next three years at least, this means a

focus on three themes: effectiveness of development and humanitarian aid; sustainable economic development and the SDGs, including climate change; and protecting civil society space and open societies. Internationally, we will focus only on the international processes and events where the UK plays a key role.

Our parliamentary engagement, advocacy strategies and media and communications will ensure that our policy work is influential. We will be agile and proactive to shape the policy agenda, as well as responding to it. We will speak out to protect good development. We also want to be strategic, positive and propositional - believing that high quality ideas and principles that work for the long term and get to root causes, will help us be more influential.

We will also need to work hard to rebuild political support for development among parliamentarians and other key influential actors. We will maintain party political neutrality, but we are not a neutral platform – we are focused on getting good outcomes for marginalised people and communities and we know some of the root causes of marginalisation are political, and we will speak truth to power when needed.

Our strength lies in combining policy and advocacy expertise and on the ground experience from our members with our own knowledge and convening power. In the three areas noted above, we will draw on members expertise, add value to it using our own knowledge. On that basis, we will act as the voice of the sector, challenging the government, our own members, and others to do the right thing.

In other areas we will provide the platform for members to work together on policy through working groups, providing guidance on engagement with Government. We will play a lead role in the UK being an open, democratic society by ensuring that CSOs' voices are valued and there is open, meaningful dialogue to achieve better policy outcomes.

4.2 Helping the sector to transform

The sector needs to proactively respond to a rapidly changing external environment. One of Bond's core strengths is bringing people together. We will help address these challenges in a structured way, so that we can have more impact as a sector, and as part of the development system.

Bond has a proven track record of contributing to and driving change in the UK international development sector, through its extensive network of members (mainly INGOs), external partners and stakeholders. Our role in transforming safeguarding practice in the sector provides valuable lessons that can help us and the sector respond to systemic issues that are important to our members. We will provide the space and the process to catalyse the sector's much-needed transformation.

Through combining learning across issues and drawing on system change processes, we will drive and support transformation in the UK development and humanitarian system. Our theory of change is that the sector can make progress by collectively focusing on a specific future issue and applying robust change processes and practical innovation. We will apply this to the need for the sector to be anti-racist, the imperative to shift power and resources to local communities, and NGOs' financial challenges in the first instance, bringing in other issues as they arise. We will bring this work together and link it to our policy work to allow us to accelerate change across issues and be more than the sum of our projects.

4.3 A dynamic network

The nature of networks is changing, with technology and new social movements. To accelerate progress and deliver on our other goals there is an imperative for shared learning and partnership. We identified four priorities: decentralisation and shifting power to the countries where our members work, membership models and audience, new models of accountability and use of technology, and network inter-relationships. These will change the nature of the network, the services we provide members and our business model.

We want our network to be even more dynamic, influential and focused on learning. CEOs said that the main reasons for joining networks are to address challenges collectively, develop their organisation's capacity and learning, and connect with other organisations. Membership also underpins our current financial success. We will continue to focus on CSOs by making incremental improvements to technology, accountability and engagement, and increase our focus on helping the sector to learn.

We will provide a communications hub for the UK sector, drawing on the best of technology and engagement tools to enable members to work together or independently. Our communications, events and media work are critical to keeping our members informed and maintaining a credible voice on sector issues. The Bond conference and events will bring together diverse actors to help shape the future of the UK sector and support policy change.

We need to lead by example on transparency to our members, leading the way on meaningful, deliberative and inclusive engagement. We will review and update the Bond Charter and our own accountability mechanisms to do that.

We will continue to respond to what support the sectors needs through training, recruitment and corporate partnerships. We will bring our training and learning closer together for more active and collective learning. We will build corporate partnerships that support CSOs and our other goals.

We will remain a national platform, delivering ad hoc services internationally. We will work proactively with other national platforms, networks and business networks to deliver on cross cutting goals. But we will evolve our network and services, maintaining an agile approach and experimenting with new approaches, including reviewing our funding and network model for the long term.

4.4. Nurturing an inclusive organisation

Our final goal is to become an effective, supportive organisation to deliver the other goals. Our staff are central to our mission. We will put wellbeing, shared decision making and flexibility at the heart of our approach. We want to have a positive culture that reflects our values. We need a financial model that supports the strategy and enables us to weather turbulent times ahead.

We want to grow our impact through this strategy, but this is not a growth strategy in terms of income or staff. Given the turbulent external environment, we need to diversify funding to allow us to continue our work and replace existing grants that are vulnerable. At the same time, we need to be properly resourced to deliver our goals. In the short term, we will be checking resourcing for each of the goals (through the annual plans). We will be developing a business model to allow us to stay stable into the future and finding an additional institutional funder in the first instance.

5. What will be different for members?

This strategy combines convening thinking, creating clarity and catalysing change, with a sharp focus on what we are trying to achieve as Bond and as a wider sector. We will provide members with a platform, ability to make connections and access and influence on decision makers. We want the strategy to enable us to tell our story more clearly, learn about what we are achieving and prioritise.

Members will see five main changes in how we work:

1. We will take a **stronger leadership role in three key policy areas and be more propositional**. That means drawing on member expertise and prioritising on behalf of the sector where possible. We will do that based on an overarching vision for the policy environment in the UK.
2. We will ensure that our **working groups are clear and transparent about what they are trying to achieve** and that we can provide appropriate support. For policy areas and working groups outside our three policy priorities we will provide a **clear, bounded package of support for wider advocacy** and draw on their expertise to shape our overarching policy positions. It will mean we say 'no' to some things.
3. We will create a **new programme of work focused on supporting and challenging the sector to transform**. This will include a greater focus on helping the sector to track how the context is changing. The main work will be in-depth processes that enable practical transformation on issues like racism; the need to shift to locally-led solutions and business model transformation. The need to increase public support for aid is a core part of this work – delivered through the campaign for aid - that we will continue to host. We will review this programme each year and pick up, or exit from, issues based on the context and member need.
4. We will build on the experiences during the lockdown period **to provide new opportunities for members to engage with our work, ensuring wider participation in activities**. This has been one of the hallmarks of the past six months, and we want to feed our learning into a new understanding of the way the network can function. Our communications and services will be driven by greater clarity and response to member need, delivering support in a timely and agile way.
5. We will be **more outcome focused, accountable and look at how our work adds up**. To maintain trust and earn our leadership we will have a **clear engagement and consultation process and be accountable for our decisions**. We will be transparent about what we are achieving, adjusting our approach on an annual basis and ensuring that all our work – from conference to training – delivers on our purpose to enable civil society organisations and allies to achieve greater progress towards a just and sustainable world together.

We will continue to be the UK national platform for international development CSOs. We will still be London-based (although working more remotely).

Your views:

We would welcome member feedback on this approach and will incorporate changes into our annual planning process as part of the rolling strategy. We are also developing our Theory of Change and learning approach in the coming months.

If you have thoughts or questions please contact Stephanie Draper or Mike Wright
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