

**Fast Forward – Bond Member Strategy Event
3 June 2015**

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Tough Choices**

I am a member of Bond's board of trustees and one of those with responsibility for overseeing the development of Bond's 2016-21 strategy. I don't want to say too much about my own take on things today – I am more interested in hearing from you, and from finding out what you consider the key areas for debate.

What sort of Bond do you need for 2021? We asked each of you to take our survey. The initial results are in!

The work we do often involves difficult decisions, cutting our cloth to fit the resources available, conceding a point in order to get agreement on the whole. We tried to give a flavour of this in the survey, and asked for your help in making these tough choices again today.

[Insider/outsider?]

Bond is most useful when it positions itself close to those with power, such as the UK government, multilaterals or big corporate businesses, for the benefit of its members

- Few people take a strong view in favour or against – almost all say there is a time to be close to influential actors in each sector, but a need to be realistic – being influential works both ways

[Breadth/depth?]

Bond's membership is diverse - over 450 members represent a large share of UK NGO resources for development. Bond should increase its membership, accommodating actors who are not NGOs, to increase diversity, legitimacy, and connections

- Few people feel we should either seal the borders or be open to all, with most sounding a note of caution, and scepticism about opening Bond membership beyond NGOs

[Here/there?]

Bond needs to invest more of its time and resources in building stronger international alliances for development between civil society actors (particularly North - South), even though this means less investment in current priorities

- This is thought to be an important role for Bond by a small majority, even at some cost to other streams of work

[Truth/unity?]

Bond must speak and act in the interests of effective development, even if this means criticising its members, partners, and donors

- There is a strong consensus that Bond must be an honest, independent voice speaking up for effective development and prepared to be critical of poor practice. A typical example of the responses we got:

"[Bond] should have the integrity to contribute to effective development, not to be an uncritical lobby group for yet another vested interest. We should promote more informed debate about what it means to be a relevant and effective NGO, challenging simple and over-positive marketing messages, while also challenging critics of civil society and of international development where they cannot back up their criticisms with evidence."

We asked you what we would do if we gave you one wave of a magic wand to use on Bond. Three themes have emerged thus far:

- Bond should play a role in helping the sector adapt to a changing external context: *"Successful transition of the UK's strong INGO community to be able to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing development scene, and to ensure that that community can continue to advocate for and campaign for positive change."*
- Bond should work to ensure that NGOs are adequately and appropriately funded to deliver against objectives: *"It would be amazing if Bond could convince donors, Governments (UK, US, EU) and general public that NGO's require funds for infrastructure in order to be effective. Currently it is extremely difficult to convince donors/funders/Govt's/public etc to provide funding or investment in areas like IT, HR, Training, Learning & Development, Research, M&E. All of this is critical to good quality work. It is quite harmful and somewhat counter-intuitive that NGOs feel obliged to focus upon the % of funding spent on programs" thus forcing the sector to spend less on aforementioned areas which are already somewhat under-funded."*
- Bond should have an advocacy role, but views varied on what this might entail

We also asked you to tell us how you prioritise the roles that Bond plays at present. It's fair to say that there were advocates for every option, no role was overwhelming favourite, nor did you want us to discard any area of Bond's work, but the highest priority was:

D) Influence the policies of governments and institutions in the UK and abroad

- B) Promote an operating environment for civil society that enables effective development
- C) Build connections and networks among members, and with external actors
- A) Help organisations to adapt to the changing development environment
- E) Provide services and support to improve organisational and sector effectiveness
- G) Campaign on key issues for NGOs and the people they serve
- F) Work to align funding policies and practices with effective development

These survey results are one element of a process that Bond's Board is leading on behalf of all Bond's members to develop a strategy for the five years from 2016. We've heard today about the huge opportunities to improve the conditions of life for people all over the planet, and the small but important contributions we can make if we work collectively and face the future together.

Bond is a key space for that collective action, and it is our responsibility to keep it relevant and useful to its members. From the survey results so far, it seems that the members also want Bond to play a role in keeping development actors accountable, though to whom and for what are questions we still need to grapple with. These and other thorny issues will be debated by the Board over the coming weeks, before we agree the proposals we want to make to the whole membership at our AGM in November.