

**An Evaluation of Bond's 2013-16
Strategic Grant from DFID**

Executive Summary

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

1. Bond was awarded a strategic grant by DFID of £2.7m for the period June 2013 to March 2016. This covered two main and relatively distinct areas:
 - improving the effectiveness and transparency of UK INGOs' programmes to reduce poverty; building and coordinating INGO coalitions and
 - advocating to support positive EU and international policy action on global poverty reduction and a global framework post-2015.
2. The programme has taken place in a time of changing context including fundamental challenges to the established model of development and, within that, the role of UK-based organisations. Towards the end of the grant period, Bond published its strategy for 2016-21, responding to these challenges and informed by much of the learning from the effectiveness and advocacy activities funded under this grant.
3. This evaluation covers the two parts of the grant up to 31st March 2016. The three-year grant from DFID has since been extended by a further nine months to December 2016, and builds on an earlier grant from DFID for work in 2011-13. The evaluation aims to examine accountability, quality and learning aspects and draws on reports and data held by Bond as well as 32 user interviews, 15 external stakeholder interviews and seven staff interviews.
4. The most significant sources of information on effectiveness are Bond's Annual Outcomes Surveys, which gather information on increases in personal knowledge and organisational change. Further information is available from the INTRAC case study report¹ and from the 32 user interviews carried out for this evaluation. It should be noted that all these sources are likely to have a bias towards those who are positive about the programme as it is assumed that they will be more likely to respond to requests for information. An approach based on the principles of 'process tracing' was adopted for evaluating the advocacy work, identifying indicators of success, considering the causal processes or 'chains' and exploring supporting factors and mechanisms at work in the context.
5. Two thirds of the grant funded the majority of Bond's effectiveness and transparency work. This programme is intended to help UK-based INGOs to improve their effectiveness and transparency, and thus ultimately the development outcomes they achieve through their work with partners and beneficiaries. Bond works in collaboration with the international development network in Scotland, NIDOS, to deliver the effectiveness and transparency outcomes. Using a theory of change that has evolved over time Bond and NIDOS developed a range of tools, services, learning and networking opportunities for INGO staff, and also convened and led a set of sector-wide activities to improve the inter-relationship between transparency and accountability, learning and improvement, and funding. Key activities under the "effectiveness" heading include:
 - Convening working groups for peer learning and networking
 - Developing and supporting organisations to use diagnostic tools for assessing organisational capacity, quality of evidence and transparency
 - Producing and signposting organisations to publications and resources on a range of funding, futures, transparency and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) topics

¹ Lewis, Lipson, O'Flynn and Hayman (2016) Research Programme on the Use and Application of Bond / NIDOS Effectiveness Tools and Services. INTRAC

- Providing direct technical support to organisations to publish data to the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI)
6. One third of the project budget went towards influencing the policy of European governments in delivering their aid quality and quantity commitments and ensuring EU development cooperation is focused on tackling poverty and inequalities more broadly. In addition, this work included convening the Beyond 2015 alliance to provide an effective voice in the development of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), financing for the SDGs and post-2015 dialogue, at a UK, EU and global level. This DFID funding complemented other policy and campaigns work led and convened by Bond, and over 150 organisations have engaged with this work.
 7. The agreed programme outcomes have been fully achieved and almost all outputs achieved or exceeded. Effectiveness and transparency programmes have achieved reach and quality and there is evidence that UK INGOs have engaged with and influenced EU development policy and the post-2015 agenda. Bond has skillfully engaged with influencers and convened members and stakeholders effectively.
 8. Bond has taken on additional activities at the request of DFID including co-ordinating consultation on the Civil Society Partnership Review and the Ebola Response Hub
 9. Bond has played a unique role for civil society organisations working in development, internationally and in the UK as: a convenor and knowledge hub for INGOs and others; an amplifier of organisations' advocacy contributions by developing working relationships and consistent messaging; and as a conduit and broker between INGO, government, funders and other stakeholders.

Effectiveness and transparency

10. Over 700 organisations accessed the programme and there is evidence of positive changes in practice, effectiveness and transparency from individuals and organisations, with some evidence of broader change. The evidence indicates small changes across a wide range of organisations. The importance of engaging leaders in improving organisational effectiveness has developed as a priority over tools development over the grant period.
11. Changes at systems and policy level include support to other platforms on transparency; providing an authoritative INGO voice and influence at IATI and through funding policy work with funders. In addition there are examples of organisations working to extend changes in working practice within their networks or federations.
12. UK is a world leader in IATI and Bond has supported 97% of all UK publishers; messaging on the wider benefits of transparency and good data use has been consistent, though the challenge of embedding real transparency beyond compliance is acknowledged; Bond is the "go to" platform at an international level and is in a strong position to develop its transparency work further.
13. Effectiveness products and services are seen as high quality and valued; working Groups (including on-line forums) are valued by organisations as an opportunity to share and learn. There is less evidence of change among smaller organisations and support is proportionately more resource-intensive. Medium size organisations seem particularly well-placed to benefit from Bond's support. Organisational change is most likely to take place when there is strong commitment from organisational leaders and Bond resources are used within a larger bigger planned process to increase effectiveness.

14. Bond has adapted its programme to the changing environment and in response to learning and has made incremental improvements to existing products and services; new resources have helped to ensure the offer is relevant to emerging issues and Bond's Funding and Futures work are seen as particularly valuable by both members and funders.

EU advocacy

15. There is evidence that Bond has made an effective contribution to influencing in particular:
 - activities leading to the European Council Conclusions recommitment to the 0.7% aid target in May 2015
 - the outcome of the Third Financing for Development conference (FFD3) in July 2015 through its influencing at an EU level
 - the EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) 2016-20
16. Bond has demonstrated skillful engagement with influencers at "key moments" and has worked closely and constructively with DFID; relationships with European platforms have developed and strengthened and within CONCORD Bond has been a leading voice. The European Policy Group has strengthened and refocused and identified topics (e.g. GAP) that have relevance to a wide range of members. A strong network of relationships combined with a good grasp of the complexities of the EU landscape has enabled Bond to target its resources, though there may be scope for further prioritisation and focus.

Post 2015 agenda

17. There is evidence that: Bond Beyond 2015 informed the government's position, in particular on environmental sustainability within the post-2015 agenda; UK INGOs were effectively engaged in post-2015 dialogue and that action/2015 contributed to UK and global engagement by supporting partnership and collaboration within INGOs to bring supporters together.
18. Bond added value to the activities by: providing a neutral platform; adopting a convening rather than managing role; bringing in additional participants who may not otherwise have been able to contribute; providing momentum and structure; maintaining good relationships with government and playing a global role in action/2015 through engagement with other platforms. There have been clear learning points on Bond's role in building collaboration between differing strands of advocacy and establishing advocacy priorities at an early stage.

Bond's role and the future

19. There is evidence that Bond has brought added value to organisations, the INGO sector and external agencies through its work in support and development, collaboration and co-ordination, influence and representation. Contributing factors are that Bond is trusted, respected and has credibility; it has created a culture of openness and transparency and its response to its membership has evolved to meet the needs of members and in response to changes in the external environment.
20. Bond has provided both breadth (e.g. in terms of reach) and depth (e.g. in terms of quality of products) but this in turn has put pressure on its limited resources and a key challenge for Bond is identifying how to optimise these resources to support a highly diverse constituency facing an increasingly tough funding environment. Bond has a role to play in supporting its members by anticipating change on their behalf as well as responding to expressed needs and the availability of funding may dictate some trade-offs between these objectives in future.

21. The breadth, scale and quality of Bonds' work lead to assumptions that Bond is a bigger organisation than it is. Managing expectations and responding to demand at all levels pose considerable challenges. Bond is faced with the need to prioritise further some activities over others e.g. investing less time in developing, refining and maintaining resource-intensive tools in favour of options that focus on organisational effectiveness related to sustainability or increasing impact through increased collaboration or merger.
22. Bond's core constituency e.g. northern INGOs (and their funders) are increasingly shifting their focus to the South and so support models and Bond's own network will need to evolve to meet these changing needs
23. Bond is already working on SDG implementation and (depending on the outcome of the forthcoming referendum) is well-placed to continue to influence the policy of European governments and the EU.
24. Bond has offered good value for money from the grant, having exceeded most of its objectives as well as providing additional services within the budget
25. There are a number of specific areas for Bond to consider for future work that align with approaches in the new strategy, such as:
 - Prioritising how effectiveness work is delivered and whom it is targeting
 - Refining the customer focus and offer to raise awareness of Bond's offer and provide a closer fit between it and members' needs
 - Developing different partnerships and funding models to reflect changing constituencies
 - Building on its role as a thought leader and convenor