

BCO Coordination Report, August 2006

1. Introduction

This report covers the period January 2006 - August 2007. Reporting will be against the four areas identified for the coordination role and presented to partners at the Kathmandu meeting in January 2006:

- Reporting and learning programme
- Impact
- Communications
- General coordination

Handover of function from IICD to APC

APC assumed responsibility for the coordination of the BCO alliance in January 2006. Previously IICD played this role. APC and IICD collaborated closely during the transition. Lauren Fok of Women'sNet, South Africa, continued to play the role of BCO coordinator; reporting to APC, as opposed to IICD.

Collaborative approach to coordination

APC proposed an approach to the coordination role that relied on involvement from all partners. The plan was that the different tasks that form part of the coordination role be played by different partners. For example, one partner would assume responsibility for communications and another for the impact programme. In spite of a lot of good will and interest, this approach was not entirely successful and resulted in slowing down implementation. The challenge is to have an effective balance between centralised coordination and partner participation in the process.

2. Overview of activities from January to July 2006

2.1 Reporting and Learning Programme

The Learning Day during the partner meeting in Kathmandu in January 2006 was organised by Panos South Asia and focused on "MDGs and ICT and the Media in Nepal". This was a successful event in which BCO partners and invited guests were able to gain a perspective of the state of ICTs and the media in Nepal. This perspective was contextualised within an environment where the State exercised control over the media, particularly community radio, and where media organisations had to employ innovative ways to continue creating dialogue and awareness of human rights amongst people and communities. Partners benefited from host Panos South Asia's close relationship with local media organisations and the presence of AMARC. We visited Radio Sagamartha, a member of BCO partner AMARC, and were able to see a well established sustainable community radio go about its business, in spite of what were, at the time, very difficult circumstances. A video of the Learning Day is available from Panos South Asia.

2.2 Impact Programme

Getting this process off the ground has been difficult, and has taken a long time. Our first substantial discussion about the impact process was in London at the January 2005 partners meeting. This was followed by a more focussed discussion at the meeting in Lusaka, July 2005. An Impact Assessment Working Group was convened and met in

London in September 2005. Kitty Warnock of Panos London coordinated the process, working closely with Lauren.

At the Kathmandu meeting partners approved a broad framework for the study. This was followed by some online and offline work, further consultation with DFID and a new iteration of the impact study process. In May 2006 terms of reference for external consultants were developed and revised at a meeting of a few partners at the GKP AGM in Colombo . Since then consultants have been contracted (after a competitive bidding process) and the impact group met in June 2006 in London, hosted by Panos London. A financial model by which each partner will contribute GBP 30,000 of the approx. 225,000 in each partner's agreement with DFID was proposed.

The BCO coordinator has worked closely with individual partners to gather 'raw material' for the impact process. This includes:

- Country based and project map of potential projects to be evaluated against the research questions identified has been compiled and will be presented to this meeting
- Consolidated Map of BCO activities and projects broken into country, region, partners and networks
- Compilation of BCO partner documentation for Component 1 of the impact study.

At the recommendation of the impact group the coordinator has liaised with consultants around bringing a communication consultant into the process. The consultants developed a workplan which has been disseminated to partners prior to the Hague meeting.

Both the workplan and the communication strategy for the BCO Impact Study will be discussed and ratified at the BCO Hague meeting .

Contracts will be entered into between APC and the consultants as well as with each of the BCO partners to finance the BCO Impact Study.

2.3 Communications - internal and external

At the partners meeting in Lusaka partners agreed that BCO does not need a newsletter, or an aggressive communications strategy but a brochure and a website. A basic brochure was produced for the WSIS.

Now, a year later, partners should review this decision and assess to what extent there is a need for disseminating information about BCO, in what forms and to which audiences.

We anticipate that the communication strategy development that will take place in the context of the impact study will assist in developing a communications broader strategy for BCO.

Website development

Initially it was assumed that OWSA will be commissioned to design and develop the BCO alliance website. Due to delays and technical considerations, GreenNet, based in London was contracted to develop the site. The domain of "bcoaliance.org" was registered.

The BCO website is targeted predominantly at BCO members to access content relating to the BCO alliance and its work as well as cohorts in the ICT4D sector. This would also include civil society organisations and grantmakers involved in the development sector who are interested in engaging with ICD.

Content has been added to the site. Additional content still needs to be developed. This is work in progress but we hope to demonstrate the site at the partners meeting in The Hague in August 2006.

It is hoped that BCO members will interact with the BCO site, upload content and use it as a platform to further collaborate with other partners.

2.4 General coordination and meeting facilitation

Meetings

The following meetings took place in 2006:

BCO Bi-Annual meeting in Kathmandu, Nepal 2006

BCO adhoc meeting of BCO partners in Colombo, Sri Lanka in May 2006

Impact group meeting in London, June 2006

In addition there were numerous online/instant messaging and phone meetings.

Knowledge sharing has been captured, for internal consumption through:

- Partner reports, meeting minutes and learning day proceedings
- Updated contact database of BCO partners
- Mapping of BCO partner activities, projects and networks facilitating the identification and follow-up on collaboration opportunities

DFID Output to Purpose Review

BCO partners were requested by David Woolnough of DFID to engage in an OPR in June-July 2006. Some partners did not have clearly stated objectively verifiable indicators (OVIs) at both output and purpose level, although success criteria were included in their agreements with DFID. Other donors in the BCO partnership expressed their support and interest in this process, particularly as a means of capturing learning, and refining our future outlook.

Tina James was contracted to assist Lauren in this process and to facilitate the OPR discussion at the BCO meeting in The Hague.

OVI's were developed at the output level and sent to partners with agreements with DFID for verification. Partners will have an opportunity to prioritise OVI's against which they wish to be evaluated; the suggestion is to pare down to about three OVI's to make the process manageable. Higher level OVI's at purpose level will be identified at the Hague BCO meeting.

DFID intends to send out independent consultants to evaluate some partner projects at country level.

Strengthening and growing the partnership

We welcome IDRC to this BCO meeting. In the sense that Bellanet has been a BCO partner, and is currently being reintegrated into IDRC (which has always been Bellanet's host institution) IDRC is not exactly a new partner. Many of the partners present have worked with IDRC at some point and IDRC has a long track record of involvement in the ICD field. APC, OWSA, DFID and SDC are currently engaged in a partnership with IDRC. We believe their participation will add depth and breadth to BCO.

Invitations were also sent to DANIDA and CIDA to attend this meeting.

3. Assessment of this period and recommendations

Strengths and achievements

- The BCO Impact Study has made collaboration between partners a reality.
- The Impact Study has also enhanced our understanding of the work that partners are engaged with at a broader level.

- BCO Partners have responded positively to organising Learning Days and hosting BCO meetings.
- BCO learning events drawing on expertise and synergies with other networks or institutions has been of great value, and has had concrete impact on stimulating new partnerships or partnering with other networks.
- Continuity of BCO representatives attending BCO meetings facilitates decision making, a climate of trust, and open mutual exchange between the participants in the meeting. This allows a learning process to be nurtured on general ICT4D and other topics.
- The sharing of partner plans, intentions, ideas, upcoming key events, collaborative action amongst BCO members, strategic alliances and processes, perspectives and analysis constitutes the value add that BCO aims to offer its partners.

Weaknesses and challenges

- The BCO Impact study process has been challenging but stimulating. While the process was delayed and took longer than anticipated to get off the ground, the time was useful in getting partners to consolidate their expectations of what they wanted to get out of the Study, without being influenced by consultants. It has meant that the Impact Study is very much partner driven. It also gave partners time to digest and understand the state of play vis a vis Monitoring and Evaluation in each of the partner networks.
- The OPR process could have been introduced at a much earlier stage and integrated into the single reporting format, easing the current OPR process which has been rushed and has not given partners enough time to learn through the process.
- Partners seldom respond to requests for feedback or information. Online work with BCO partners is difficult
- Lack of donor meetings and therefore not maximising the BCO collaborative forum to communicate issues and facilitate processes (e.g. OPR reporting and encouraging more collaboration at programmatic level).
- BCO partners had agreed to support the implementation of at least one aspect of the BCO programme, playing a more strategic role and creating distributed ownership for BCO. Unfortunately the departure of Shaddy made communication between BCO and OWSA difficult, directly affecting the ability of OWSA to assist in developing the website. Panos London supported the Impact Study process until recently, and IICD, HIVOS, DGIS and Panos South Asia have hosted meetings and organised learning days this year.
- Sustainability of the Alliance. The future of BCO had been uncertain.
- When talking about BCO, people ask how BCO compares with GKP, InfoDev or the newly established Global Alliance. We need to make our role and purpose clearer.
- We need to foreground the collaboration aspect of the BCO alliance. Through the exchange of each other's activities there is greater potential for learning and innovation that could be further maximised.

4. Financial report

Based on current expenditure DFID's contribution to coordination is sufficient to keep going at the current pace until the end of 2007. The good news is that SDC have also agreed to fund BCO coordination over a 3 year period beginning 2006-2008. Please find a report of expenditure against budget below.

APC Expenditure report: BCO Coordination For the period 30 July 2005 to 31 July 2006

<i>Summary: in USD</i>				
<i>Income: no funds received to date</i>				-
<i>Expenditure:</i>				23,679
	USD	USD	USD	USD
	BUDGET	EXPENDITURE		VARIANCE
	2,006	2005	2006	2006
Learning and Reporting Programme:				
Southern-based BCO coordinator for BCO content and programme				
50 % time - 2.5 days per week	21,000		11,222	9,778
Travel and per diem - BCO Meetings x 3	7,800	3,190	3,634	976
Travel and per diem - Impact Assessment Working Group Meetings x 3	7,800			7,800
Overheads –Women’sNet (calls, printing, etc)	1,800		700	1,100
Overheads - ADSL line	900			900
Sub - TOTAL:	39,300	3,190	15,556	20,554
BCO meetings x 3				
Meeting venues and catering	4,200		732	3,468
Catering	1,500			1,500
BCO partner meeting hosts’costs	3,000		786	2,214
Facilitation	15,000			15,000
Travel subsidisation for invited participants	10,000			10,000
BCO reception	4,500			4,500
Sub - TOTAL:	38,200	-	1,518	36,682
Communications Programme:				
Realising the BCO House Style: brochure, findings, booklets, CD-ROM	5,000			5,000
BCO Brochure (500 copies)	3,000			3,000
BCO Donor/partner Brief (25 copies)	500			500
Monthly story focussing on BCO Partner Collaboration	-			-
Website development and hosting and updating	10,000			10,000
Consultant time to improve reporting template	2,000			2,000
Sub - TOTAL:	20,500	-	-	20,500
Impact Assessment Programme:				
Communications Strategy development	-			-
Consultants travel x 4 meetings	5,000			5,000
Consultants time (facilitation, research, field, writing)	16,000			16,000
Consultant Research (desk study, writing)	6,000			6,000
Editor	2,000			2,000
Published Findings and CD Rom -Activity 1	10,000			10,000
Published Findings and CD Rom - Activity 2	5,000			5,000
Published Findings and CD Rom - Activity 3				-
Video/Audio production of IA outputs	2,000			2,000
Sub - TOTAL:	46,000	-	-	46,000
TOTAL BEFORE ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT FEES	144,000	3,190	17,074	123,736
APC Costs				
Administration Overhead (15% of sub-total)	21,600		2,561	19,039
Management and Strategic Support ¹ (5% of sub-total)	7,200		854	6,346
Sub - TOTAL:	28,800		3,415	25,385
TOTAL:	172,800	3,190	20,489	149,121
GBP =	99,300	1,688	10,841	78,900

¹ Towards time of APC executive director and other senior staff.