

BCO IMPACT ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 3 – INVESTIGATION 4

ICD, EVALUATION AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT

**REPORT OF A WORKSHOP ON IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND
INFORMATION/COMMUNICATIONS IN DEVELOPMENT**

London, 18/19 March 2008

DAVID SOUTER – April 2008

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Introduction

A workshop was held in Development House, London on 18 and 19 March 2008 as part of Investigation 4 of the BCO Impact Assessment.

The workshop was intended for personnel from BCO partners who are concerned with evaluation and impact assessment issues. It was attended by four participants from AMARC, ten from APC, one from DFID, one from Hivos, one from IICD, one from OneWorld South Asia, nine from Panos London, two from Panos South Asia and two participants from non-BCO organisations. It was facilitated by Kate Wild.

The draft report of Investigation 4, written by David Souter of *ict* Development Associates, was circulated as the background document for the workshop. In addition, expert contributions were made by Sarah Lilley of Save the Children, Anthony Makumbi of Plan International (Uganda), Alice Munyua of Kictanet (Kenya), Kerry McNamara (formerly of *infoDev*), Pam Muckosy of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), Brian Pratt of INTRAC, and Claire Sibthorpe (formerly manager of the CATIA programme).

A full list of participants is attached at Annex 1.

This document briefly summarises the discussions held during the workshop. A copy of the programme is attached as Annex 2, and copies of the draft report and presentation slides are attached as an appendix and annexes to the electronic copy of this document.

Background

BCO (Building Communications Opportunities) is a three-year programme supported by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), with the involvement of six international development NGOs (AMARC, the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), Hivos, the International Institute for Communications and Development (IICD), OneWorld (members in Africa, Asia and the Americas) and two Panos Institutes (Panos London and Panos South Asia)). Impact Assessment work within BCO is supported by DFID.

The BCO programme has supported a range of work undertaken by the BCO partner agencies, which is summarised in Component 1 of the BCO Impact Assessment (available at http://www.bcoalliance.org/system/files/BCOImpact+Assessment_C1Report.pdf).

Component 3 of the Impact Assessment consists of investigations into BCO, and ICD experience in general, in four areas:

1. Radio and political change (with particular emphasis on Nepal);
2. ICTs, markets and the poor (with particular emphasis on Ecuador);

3. ICT networking for policy change (with particular emphasis on gender/ICT networking); and
4. Evaluation and impact assessment of ICD activities.

BCO partners agreed that the scope of Investigation 4 should be as follows:

- a. to review the approaches to evaluation and impact assessment which are used by BCO partners and other ICD agencies;*
- b. to compare these with approaches to evaluation and impact assessment which are used in other development organisations, including both donor agencies and mainstream development NGOs;*
- c. to assess whether, how and where the evaluation and impact assessment requirements of ICD activities differ from those of other development contexts;*
- d. and to identify measures which BCO partners and other ICD agencies can take to improve the quality and value of their monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment.*

The Investigation has been made up of two components:

1. A written report which provides a general review of impact assessment literature and experience, and explores possible areas in which ICD impact assessment may have different requirements to those in other development sectors.
2. The workshop here reported, which was intended to provide an opportunity for BCO partners to review their own approaches to evaluation and impact assessment and compare these with practice in other organisations and the requirements of other stakeholders.

Workshop objectives and programme

The agreed aims of the workshop were as follows:

- a. to establish the relationship between implementation, M&E and impact assessment;*
- b. to discuss objectives and best practice in impact assessment;*
- c. to review BCO partner experience to date and compare it with experience of selected NGOs with substantial IA experience and established models of practice;*
- d. to understand donor perspectives on impact assessment;*
- e. to identify areas in which ICD IA may differ from that in other sectors; and*
- f. to identify ways in which BCO partners – and other ICD agencies – can move forward in this area*

The programme for the workshop is attached at Annex 2. Over the course of two days, it focused in turn on:

1. Impact assessment principles and practice (Day 1 Session 2)
2. BCO partner experience (Day 1 Session 3)
3. Experience in other NGOs and development agencies (Day 1 Session 4)
4. Stakeholder requirements for impact assessment (Day 2 Session 1)
5. The relationship between ICD IA and that in other development sectors (Day 2 Session 2)
6. BCO partner discussions and ideas for the future (Day 2 Sessions 3 and 4)

Day 1 Session 1 : Introduction and purpose of workshop

The workshop was opened by the facilitator, Kate Wild, who outlined the background (above) and emphasised the workshop's aims – in particular, developing understanding of the role of impact assessment and assisting BCO partners to improve their practice in this area.

Day 1 Session 2 : Implementation, evaluation, impact assessment – principles and practice

David Souter presented Part 1 of the draft report of Investigation 4, which sets out the broad understanding of impact assessment which is found in development practitioner literature and development agency practice.

The draft report itself is not summarised in this workshop report, but should be reviewed in conjunction with it. A copy of this original workshop report is attached as an Appendix. A revised version is included separately in the overall BCO Impact Assessment report.

A copy of David Souter's presentation is attached at Annex 3. A principal objective of this presentation was to build a common vocabulary for the workshop by clarifying the understanding of key terms in impact assessment literature and practice, including the relationship between different aspects of "result assessment" (monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment).

Two key definitions of "impact assessment" cited in this context were as follows:

- *"Impact assessment refers to an evaluation of how, and to what extent, development interventions cause sustainable changes in living conditions and behaviour of beneficiaries and the differential effects of these on women and men."* (Peter Oakley, Brian Pratt and Andrew Clayton, *Outcomes & Impact*, INTRAC).
- *"Impact assessment is the systematic analysis of the lasting or significant changes – positive or negative, intended or not – in people's lives brought about by a given action or series of actions."* (Chris Roche, *Impact Assessment for Development Agencies*, Oxfam).

This understanding of "impact assessment" was contrasted in development literature and practice with "evaluation", defined in the presentation as *"the periodic assessment of the relevance, performance, efficiency and impact of a piece of work with respect to its stated objectives."*

In the presentation, David Souter emphasised that impact assessment, as understood by development agencies, is concerned with the measurement of change for individuals, communities and societies and is therefore much broader in purpose and requirements than the evaluation of specific development interventions. The development literature on impact assessment pays particular attention to the importance of understanding context; engaging stakeholders (including donors, participants and non-participants) in the impact assessment process; establishing appropriate indicators and baseline data; exploring unexpected and negative outcomes; and facilitating learning which will improve future intervention design and implementation.

The presentation identified ten major challenges (or difficulties) faced by those engaged with impact assessment, as follows:

- the challenge of change
- the challenge of context
- the challenge of the baseline
- the challenge of attribution
- the challenge of aggregation
- the challenge of disaggregation
- the challenge of the non-participant
- the challenge of the unexpected
- the challenge of perception; and
- the longitudinal challenge.

These are described in the attached presentation (Annex 3) and the draft report (Appendix). David Souter closed by emphasising that these challenges made impact assessment complex rather than unachievable; that there was increasing experience in addressing them; and that experience suggested that the ability to do so depended as much on organisational commitment as on other necessary resources.

An initial plenary discussion followed this presentation. This focused in particular on:

- the relationship between monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment, and different ways of integrating these into a common framework of understanding and practice;
- the relationship between different terms of measurement used at different stages or levels of results assessment (such as “outputs”, “outcomes”, “effects” and “impact”);
- the engagement of participants and other stakeholders in impact assessment design and implementation;
- the role which interventions themselves play in changing the context within which they are implemented during the course of implementation;
- the difficulty of establishing impact in advocacy and media activities, which are directed at intermediaries rather than intended “beneficiaries” of interventions;
- the difficulty of establishing “lasting and sustainable” impact without available funds for longitudinal research or retrospective studies undertaken some time after an intervention has been completed;
- and the competing pressures placed on agencies by the desire to understand as well as possible what they have and have not achieved (on the one hand) and the need to secure donor funding by demonstrating the effectiveness of their work.

These issues were taken forward during subsequent discussions.

Day 1 Session 3 : BCO partner experiences

The third session of the workshop was devoted to BCO partner experiences and brief question and answer sessions resulting from these.

A.S. Panneerselvan, from Panos South Asia, put the case (based on PSA experience) that communications is not so much instrumental as a central feature of human existence which cannot be judged as a development activity aimed at defined outcomes. A copy of his presentation is attached at Annex 4.

Kitty Warnock, from Panos London, discussed the different levels that need to be considered when exploring the impact of media and described Panos' experience in evaluating its media work in Uganda. A copy of her presentation is attached at Annex 5.

Marcelo Solervicens, from AMARC, described the Community Radio Social Impact Assessment work undertaken by AMARC in 2006, the report of which can be found at http://evaluation.amarc.org/evaluation_2007.pdf.

Anne Podt, from IICD, described the systematic approach which IICD has adopted to securing participant evaluations of its workshops and other activities. Her presentation is attached at Annex 6.

Among issues raised during the discussion following these presentations were:

- the importance and difficulty of establishing baselines, particularly given their high degree of dependence on context;
- the importance of relating intervention objectives to implementation activities, in particular of having a realistic understanding of what a particular intervention can achieve;
- the importance of identifying local partners and other informants for inclusion in evaluation and impact assessment, including at the planning stage, and of valuing the different perceptions that arise from their inclusion ("intersubjectivity");
- and the importance of triangulating data – comparing findings from different methodologies – in order to gain a richer and more reliable understanding of what has taken place.

In his summary at the end of the session, Brian Pratt of INTRAC raised a number of examples of impact assessment experience in non-ICD sectors which suggested points of comparison and discussion for ICD agencies. He concluded by emphasising the importance of being able to answer what he called the "So what?" question, as it might be put by different stakeholders (donors, project participants, governments, other NGOs, and the implementing agency itself). The fact that an intervention has been implemented is not evidence of developmental value (impact); developmental value can only be established through a more thorough understanding of what actually took place, and an honest assessment of what worked and what did not. No-one involved in the intervention (donor, implementing agency, intended "beneficiary") should be satisfied, he concluded, if the "So what?" question can't be answered.

Day 1 Session 4 : Examples of NGO practice and plenary discussion

Session 4 began with three presentations from external experts.

Sarah Lilley described Save the Children's approach to impact assessment. Her presentation is attached at Annex 7. She emphasised the relationship between Save's impact monitoring system, its overall rights-based approach to children's development, and the different dimensions of change which Save seeks to enable in the lives of children, both directly and through other agencies including governments. From Save's experience, she emphasised the challenge of attribution; the need to draw on both quantitative and qualitative methodologies; the problems posed by lack of funding for longitudinal/hindsight studies; the need to build internal impact assessment capacity; the need to streamline reporting and to make more effective use of findings gained.

Pam Muckosy reported on the investigation into networking experience which the Overseas Development Institute had undertaken as part of Investigation 3 of the Impact Assessment. Her presentation is attached at Annex 8.

Brian Pratt of INTRAC raised a number of issues in a wide-ranging discussion of impact assessment experience in development agencies, focusing in particular on current trends and emerging issues. In particular he emphasised:

- the dichotomy between the demand to meet short-term objectives (results-based management) and the need to understand longer-term impact concerns (learning from impact assessment);
- increasing emphasis among donors on demonstration of impact, particularly in the context of the MDGs;
- the importance of using a variety of indicators (including both qualitative and quantitative, both of which are necessary to understanding impact);
- the importance of asking open questions in order to identify unexpected outcomes;
- the tendency within agencies to overcomplicate systems, establishing more indicators than can be readily assessed with available resources;
- the importance of understanding that evaluation and impact assessment may result in different conclusions about the same activity (because they are measuring different things);
- and the risk that competition between agencies for donor resources will lead to distortions in the interpretation of impact assessment findings.

In conclusion, he suggested that impact assessment thinking was being affected by changes in the "aid architecture" – in particular that donors are placing more emphasis on the state and less on civil society.

Session 4 continued with group discussions amongst participants on the following questions posed by the facilitator, Kate Wild:

1. What can BCO partners learn from the experiences described during the workshop to date?
2. What is going to challenge BCO partners most at different stages of impact assessment?

3. Can BCO partners learn from others in the following areas:

- a. diagnostics and design?
- b. implementation?
- c. analysis and interpretation?
- d. use of findings?

The following paragraphs report briefly on the subsequent presentations on group discussions.

Group 1, reported by Anne Podt of IICD, had begun to address the issues by exploring the purpose of impact assessment in the light of diverse experiences with donors and own practice. In this context, the group felt it was important a) to emphasise change rather than attribution when thinking about future impact assessment work; b) to understand the difference between evaluation and impact assessment (valuing the distinctiveness of evaluation rather than viewing it as inferior); and c) to focus on achieving credible evidence of results rather than seeking to establish (unattainable) proof. It felt that there was much to learn from Save's experience of learning from disappointing results and its emphasis on separating learning from funding/finance (which is also the practice in IICD).

The group suggested that BCO might be able to undertake studies or trials aimed at establishing "realistic levels of evidence".

Group 2, reported by Marcelo Solervicens of AMARC, had brainstormed around the three questions raised by the facilitator. In its presentation, it emphasised a) the importance of seeing civil society as an actor within the assessment itself; b) the need to integrate impact assessment into the whole intervention process, rather than seeing it as something to be undertaken at the end of the intervention; and c) the importance of involving "the people on the ground" fully in the assessment process.

The group suggested that BCO and other agencies could do more to share both data-gathering and results. In this context, it emphasised the importance of evidential rigour and quality in enabling credible results and advocacy.

Group 3, reported by Natasha Primo of APC, raised a number of additional points. In particular, it a) stressed the value of selecting a small number of appropriate and measurable indicators, even if this meant sacrificing some richness of detail; b) suggested focusing attention on collaboration (and aggregation) rather than seeking to establish (or contest) attribution; and c) recommended involving all stakeholders in establishing the framework for impact assessment work.

It noted five particular challenges: i) the high cost of impact assessment, particularly for small agencies; ii) the difficulty of measuring change in the policy environment, particularly where this can only be measured in the longer term; iii) the difficulty of ensuring commitment to the process throughout the organisation; iv) the challenge of encouraging honesty around difficulties; and v) the establishment of effective feedback mechanisms between impact assessment and future practice.

Concluding the first day of the workshop, the facilitator Kate Wild noted that discussions throughout the day had emphasised that, while impact assessment was challenging, and different for different organisations, it was not something that could be set aside or ignored if

agencies wanted to achieve objectives. The "so what?" question, in other words, was crucial. She pointed to considerable convergence during discussions around a number of themes – including a) the need for stakeholder involvement, b) the importance of assessing process as well as outcomes, c) the need to be open to unexpected results, and d) the challenge of limited funding.

Day 2 Session 1 : Stakeholders in impact assessment

The second day of the workshop began with a session focusing on impact assessment as it is seen by different stakeholders, in particular by donors, project participants and governments.

It began with a presentation (delivered remotely from Washington DC) by Kerry McNamara, formerly of *infoDev*. A copy of his presentation is attached at Annex 9. This presentation built upon the opening presentation by David Souter on Day 1. In it, Kerry McNamara focused in particular on the following points:

- the difficulty (and importance) of trying to understand causal links or "results chains" in development work, particularly in ICD;
- the importance of asking counterfactual questions about experience (*e.g.* of asking what would have happened if an intervention had not taken place);
- the value of using several methodological approaches in order to triangulate research findings;
- the need to understand potential trade-offs between different approaches when learning from experience;
- the particular difficulty of dealing with impact assessment in policy and advocacy contexts,
- and the special challenge of replication and scaling of interventions, particularly where ICD pilot projects are concerned.

The presentation also addressed some of the issues concerned with the relationship between impact assessment for ICD and impact assessment in other, more established, development sectors.

Kerry McNamara discussed recent increased interest in impact assessment in the World Bank, including the perceived need to build impact assessment capacity in developing countries, and increased interest in intermediate as well as final impacts. Finally, he raised some wider issues about the broader development context. In particular, he raised three points which were the subject of further discussion later in the day:

- the relationship between the impact of changes in the context for development (*e.g.* the widespread availability of mobile phones) and that of specific development interventions;
- the relationship between impact assessment and different broad conceptions of development – in particular the emphasis of some development specialists on

measurable specific development outcomes (such as the MDGs), while others concentrated more on changes in the context/environment for development (including participation and empowerment);

- the possibility that impact assessment of information and communications interventions might need to focus more equally on "environmental" and "instrumental" aspects of change, given the cross-cutting nature of some IC activities, and that this may require some different framing of impact assessment from other areas of development activity. Such reframing did not mean avoiding the question, he added, but might make it less restrictive.

The session continued with a presentation by Jappe Kok of Hivos on the results orientation and results assessment which it applies to the work of its development partners. A copy of his presentation is attached at Annex 10.

In this presentation, Jappe Kok emphasised the importance which Hivos attaches to result (or impact) assessment: although difficult, this was considered an essential element in accountability, learning and programme development. He placed particular emphasis on the importance of building trust between Hivos (in its capacity as "donor") and the implementing agencies with which it works. Hivos expects its partners to undertake results assessment work that will enable learning on the part of all concerned, but to make use of approaches and methodologies that most suit their needs and circumstances – rather than trying to impose a template of Hivos' own devising. In discussion, a number of BCO partners stressed the importance of the "trust agenda" in enabling effective impact assessment to be undertaken.

Two further presentations were made in this session:

Anthony Makumbi of Plan International described the approach to child-centred community development within Plan, and its relationship with programme design, evaluation and post-evaluation. A copy of his presentation is attached at Annex 11.

Alice Munyua looked at impact assessment from the perspectives of a) a multistakeholder civil society-led network (such as Kictanet) and b) a government agency (such as the Communications Commission of Kenya). She emphasised the importance, from these perspectives, of thinking about impact assessment in terms of impacts on society and of social and economic development as a whole, as well as the specific outcomes of particular interventions. Developing this kind of approach, she said, was progressing but still in its early stages in Kenya. She noted the analogous use of consultation processes by government agencies such as CCK; and the importance which Kictanet attaches to measuring outreach and the impact of its networking on mobilisation of stakeholders for policy intervention. Finally, she suggested the possible need to bifurcate consideration of impact assessment of ICD, seeing it not so much (or not only) as a development sector but also (or primarily) as an enabling or cross-cutting factor that has most significance in terms of its interactions with other development sectors.

Day 2 Session 6 : IA for ICD compared with IA in other development contexts

This session took the form of a roundtable discussion exploring the question of whether (and how) impact assessment for ICD might differ from impact assessment in other development sectors (such as health, education or rural development).

David Souter opened the session with a brief presentation outlining some differences between ICD and other development sectors which might suggest that impact assessment challenges in the ICD context differ from those in other sectors or that common challenges might need to be addressed in different ways. A copy of his presentation is attached at Annex 12.

The possible differences raised in this presentation included:

- a. organisational issues, including:
 - the difference between media and advocacy ICD interventions (which are concerned principally with change in the social or political environment) and service delivery ICD interventions (which are instrumental in character);
 - the small scale of most ICD agencies compared with mainstream agencies like Save the Children;
 - and donor uncertainty about the risks and potentialities of ICD activities;
- b. issues to do with the nature of ICTs, including their cross-cutting character (and the difficulty of segregating the specific contribution of ICTs); the importance of habituation (changes in behaviour as people become accustomed to the availability of goods and services); and the difficulty of disentangling the impact of interventions from changes in the environment around them;
- c. the weakness of the established evidence base for ICD, which makes it more difficult to identify research questions and to establish appropriate indicators and baselines;
- d. the rapid pace of change in information and communications technology and markets, resulting in:
 - rapid and unpredictable changes in the context for interventions;
 - difficulty in establishing baselines (even as trends); and
 - frequent changes in implementation strategies during the intervention cycle;
- e. and difficulties in assessing replicability and scalability, as technological change is likely to have made some aspects of interventions obsolete by the time impact assessment takes place.

A number of important issues were raised during the following discussion, which fed into subsequent group sessions. These included the following:

- the importance of the distinction between information and communications as agents of environmental change (participation, empowerment, media, *etc.*) and as agents of instrumental change (service delivery in areas such as health and education) – and therefore of considering approaches to impact assessment appropriate to both these contexts;
- the question whether, in light of this, it is more appropriate to think of ICD as a development sector *per se* or to emphasise its mainstream/cross-cutting/environmental role (and whether this is a matter that can be determined by the ICD sector or one which is determined in practice by perceptions of ICD in the development community as a whole);

- the importance of the distinction between technical (including technological) and behavioural change, the interplay between these, and the complex relationships which they have individually and collectively with social change;
- the need to include assessment of the value of access to communications and the value of participation in communications alongside other factors in impact assessment;
- the need to relate the impact of interventions taken against the impact of “environmental” changes such as (for example) the increase in mobile telephony access which has occurred in most developing countries independently of any development intervention (an issue that might be summarised as “own agency *versus* development agency”);
- the question of whether evaluation and impact assessment are primarily tools of donor accountability, or should be seen instead primarily (or equally) as tools for implementing agency learning and improvement – and whether, in either case, they are essential or necessary for ICD NGOs;
- the likelihood that ICD interventions will coincide and intersect with one another, often/usually without implementing agencies cooperating or sharing common objectives and assessment methodologies;
- the significance of governance issues in enabling and assessing impact;
- the degree to which donors emphasise the MDGs in impact assessment and the extent to which this is relevant or helpful in the ICD context;
- the potential for structuring impact assessment of ICD interventions in ways that reach beyond the ICD sector into the relationship between information, communication and ICTs (on the one hand) and other development sectors (on the other);
- and the need for BCO partners and ICD agencies to develop a clear understanding of how to assess impact and how to articulate and present results to donors.

In his summary, Kerry McNamara described this debate as raising two core issues for further discussion:

1. how to develop more rigorous models and tools for understanding whether particular interventions (or agencies) are making “a difference”?
2. and how to express the impact which interventions/agencies are having in a way that engages effectively with other stakeholders, notably with donors?

Day 2 Session 7 : BCO partner group discussions

A number of participants had to leave the workshop before or during the afternoon sessions on Day 2 of the workshop. In session 7, the remaining participants from Panos and APC were invited by the facilitator to discuss (in groups made up of representatives from their own

agency alone) the implications of the issues raised so far for their own organisations. Other participants were invited to consider the question raised in Kerry McNamara's presentation, about whether the impact assessment of ICD could be reframed in ways that took account of its specific and distinct dimensions. (The Panos and APC groups were also invited to discuss this question if they had time available.) The following paragraphs summarise the feedback presentations from these sessions.

The Panos group had begun by focusing on the question of what would be most useful for it to evaluate or assess, in line with Panos network objectives to establish a common approach to evaluation and impact assessment. It was envisaged that a more common approach would help Panos institutes better to understand the big picture issues with which they are concerned, as well as in developing aggregate indicators, exchanging findings, learning from one another's experience and running joint programmes in the future. It was hoped that this approach would also assist in seeking and securing funding, not least for impact assessment itself. The core theme which had been discussed within the group in this context was the importance of stimulating debate around issues, and in particular seeking to address the balance between "media development" and "media for development" which cuts across many aspects of Panos' work.

The APC group noted that many of its activities had an evaluation component, but that these were not fed into a more institutionalised system of monitoring and evaluation across the organisation. It had discussed possible ways of addressing this, including the viability of a centralised monitoring system; the desirability of encouraging donors to move away from project-based evaluation to programme-wide assessments; and the possibility of aggregating impact findings through the framework of the APC strategic plan. One possible approach would be a comprehensive evaluation of what APC has achieved over the past eighteen years, which would contribute towards future prioritisation and strategisation. Finally, the group noted that, in discussion, many of its members preferred to use the term "evaluation and learning" rather than "impact assessment".

The third group, which focused on the question of whether it would be possible or desirable to reframe the meaning of impact assessment in the ICD context, raised a number of questions which fed into subsequent discussion – in particular, about whether ICD should be seen primarily as a sector or as a cross-cutting activity; a tool or a process; an issue of information or of communication; of knowledge or of governance. The group also raised the question of whether ICD agencies should base their thinking on this around pillars of activity (as Save the Children does) or around knowledge-sharing indicators.

A number of important issues were raised during discussion following these presentations.

1. There was significant discussion about the historical context for information and communication issues within development. Some participants argued that "the case for ICD" had been dominated around the turn of the century by ICT or ICT4D practitioners, that they had overstated the importance of technology, failed to deliver an adequate evidence base to back this emphasis, and so undermined the case for ICD as a whole with donors. However, it was suggested, donors were now moving back towards a more empowerment-focused approach to ICD rather than one based on the instrumental role of technology.

2. This led to discussion about distinctions between different ICD (and BCO) agencies – for example, between those focused on empowerment and voice (such as APC) and those more focused on mainstream deployment of ICTs (such as IICD). The relationships between technology, communications and empowerment were obviously complex, and different BCO partners had different conceptualisations of them and their roles respecting them. Different agencies with different approaches to ICD, it was suggested, also required different approaches to impact assessment. (as had been illustrated during the course of the workshop).
3. One BCO partner, in particular, felt that scepticism among donors about the merits of ICD had a positive value for ICD agencies because it forced them to pay more attention to demonstrating the value of their work. More serious attention to impact assessment resulting from this challenge was beneficial not just in terms of donor relations, but also in improving agency performance and practice.
4. There was further debate about the question of whether ICD should be treated as a sector in its own right, or as a set of strategies and tools that are enablers in other development sectors. Some argued that treating ICD as a separate sector, and certainly treating it as an "exceptional" sector, had meant that ICD agencies had failed to learn as much as they could from other, more experienced, development agencies operating (and assessing impact) in less technology-enabled areas: "We have lost learning because of the exceptionalism that we have applied to ourselves." One participant from AMARC summarised this debate as follows: "We are working in a sector where there is a duality. If communications is intrinsically valuable, it is a sector in itself. When we see it as instrumental, it is a cross-cutting tool. We need to understand this dual complexity."

Day 2 Session 8 : What can BCO do collectively?

The workshop ended with a discussion about whether there was scope for BCO collectively to follow up on the discussions and issues raised within the workshop. Two further suggestions were contributed during this discussion, in addition to points which had been previously raised.

- ICD agencies should focus on communications itself, rather than on the broader development objectives which ICD might help to serve. In particular, ICD agencies should not assess their work primarily on the basis of its contribution to the MDGs.
- BCO could provide a debating space in which issues such as impact assessment (and those raised in the previous session) could be explored further, not just between BCO partners but also with other stakeholders, including donors.

In summing up the workshop as a whole, the facilitator Kate Wild said that she felt it had met its objective of enabling discussion of impact assessment for ICD activities in the light of experience of BCO partners and other agencies, including those not concerned directly with ICD. There was a broad consensus among participants on the importance of understanding the results of interventions, but also a recognition that this required assessment of process as well as outcomes, and of aggregate as well as disaggregated impact. Understanding change and learning from experience were felt to be more important than attribution. Results needed to be seen – by donors and by implementing agencies – in terms of organisational learning as

well as donor accountability. Result assessment needed to fit within the contexts and requirements of the agencies concerned, rather than restrictive templates; different methodologies were appropriate in different contexts for identifying rigorous and credible results.

The workshop ended with a brief evaluation exercise conducted by the BCO coordinator; and with thanks to the facilitator (Kate Wild), principal consultants (David Souter, Kerry McNamara) and BCO coordinator, Lauren Fok.

**Report compiled by David Souter
March/April 2008**

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

Annexes:

1. Participants list
2. Workshop programme
3. Presentation by David Souter (Day 1 Session 2)
4. Presentation by A.S. Paneerselvan, Panos South Asia (Day 1 Session 3) [awaited]
5. Presentation by Kitty Warnock, Panos London (Day 1 Session 3)
6. Presentation by Anne Podt, IICD (Day 1 Session 3)
7. Presentation by Sarah Lilley, Save the Children (Day 1 Session 4)
8. Presentation by Pam Muckosy, ODI (Day 1 Session 4)
9. Presentation by Kerry McNamara (Day 2 Session 1)
10. Presentation by Jappe Kok, Hivos (Day 2 Session 1)
11. Presentation by Anthony Makumbi, Plan International (Day 2 Session 1)
12. Presentation by David Souter (Day 2 Session 2)

Appendix: Draft report of BCO Investigation 4 (by David Souter)