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BCO Alliance Impact Assessment Study Briefing document and ToR for consultant 16 May 2006

1. The Brief

The BCO Alliance, a group of seven development NGOs and three donors working in the field of Information and Communication for Development (ICD), is seeking international development consultancy support in the field of ICD, with specialised experience in evaluating the impact of ICD projects. Work will take place in the period June 2006 – September 2007.

2. The BCO Alliance

The Building Communication Opportunities (BCO) Alliance is made up of a dynamic and creative relationship between **three bilateral donor agencies** and **seven NGOs**. The former include DFID (UK Department for International Development - www.dfid.gov.uk), DGIS (Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate for International Cooperation - www.minbuza.nl), and SDC (Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation - www.deza.admin.ch/ICT4D). NGO partners are the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (www.amarc.org), Association for Progressive Communication (www.apc.org), Bellanet (<http://home.bellanet.org>), HIVOS (www.hivos.nl), International Institute for Communication and Development (www.iicd.org), OneWorld (www.oneworld.net) and Panos (www.panos.org.uk/about/worldwide.asp).

BCO Alliance members work around the world, in Latin America, Africa and Asia, identifying and supporting projects that promote the role of information and communication (traditional media and new ICTs) in development. The partners have identified the following as the intended outcomes of their work:

- ICT4D **mainstreamed** in development sectors
- Stronger **voice** of poor and marginalised people, and more and better-informed **debate** about development issues, enabled through ICT
- Demonstrated **impact** of ICT4D on **poverty**.

The BCO Alliance is a network, rather than a programme. Member organisations are on the whole carrying out their regular work, independently of one another, rather than any joint activities with other BCO members. The purpose of the partnership is learning and knowledge sharing on how information and communication technologies (ICTs) can be used as a strategic tool for sustainable development and poverty alleviation. By

collective reflection and review of their projects and programme experiences, the BCO Alliance members hope to add significantly to the body of development knowledge on the role that ICTs play in changing lives and eradicating poverty.

3. The BCO Impact Study

One significant area of learning and exchange is impact evaluation. Normally, evaluation at the end of a project or programme asks the question “Did this project/programme achieve its objectives?” BCO member organisations hope that by pooling resources and committing to a collaborative evaluation exercise, they can go beyond this to investigate what impact their projects have had on development; and thus gather evidence of the role information and communication plays in development.

One of the assumptions underlying much of the work of the BCO member organisations is that it is important for poor and marginalised people to have a stronger “voice” at local, national and global levels, and to be able to participate more effectively in development-related activities and debates – economic, social and political. The assumption is that such voice and participation contributes to effective development and poverty reduction. However, documented learning and concrete evidence to support this assumption is rare.

In discussions among themselves through 2005, the BCO partners decided to use the opportunity for collaborative evaluation offered by the BCO Alliance.

The BCO Impact Study consists of three components:

Component 1

Description:

A short-term analysis of existing evaluative material within the BCO network leading to an accessible and learning-oriented dissemination product.

Target Audience:

Target audience is particularly donors, policy makers and implementers, involved in the broad-based field of development and not only those already in ICT4D.

Expected Output:

Presentation needs to be appropriate to differing needs of these target groups including quantitative and qualitative material and sufficient context for broad-based audience.

- i. Outputs might include a DVD with voices, interviews; a short and accessible hard copy publication; and perhaps another, more critical and in depth, desk-based study.
- ii. The work would be based on material provided by the partners but would need an external consultant to pull together the material and

then write the dissemination product and compose the dissemination strategy.

Component 2

Description:

Impact studies, evaluations, and action research currently being undertaken by BCO partners, either individually, or in partnership with one another.

Target Audience:

Implementers and stakeholders and partners involved in the work, other BCO partners and development organisations in general.

Expected Output:

To be determined by partners doing the work.

Component 3

Description:

A joint initiative involving all BCO partners that addresses the following question:

How do communications for development contribute to poverty reduction through strengthening the voices, capacities, communications and networking of the poor and the marginalised, and enable them to influence decisions that affect their lives?

What is the best way to answer it?

Impact is very context specific and this will limit the learning that can be gained from a global study. It would have to focus on certain elements of strengthening voice. The study should aim to identify key factors and mechanisms, for example the relationship between audience and different tools, or media types.

It is envisaged that this third component should be a substantial and rigorous study with the active involvement of the partners in framing the research, supporting the data gathering, advising on the analysis and being consulted in the drafting of the final report.

The study is intended for an audience of specialist and generalist development actors but should also contribute to strengthening the institutional and evaluation capacity of the partners themselves.

The methodology should include the three levels of intervention of BCO projects – local/community, intermediary or aggregation level and governmental.

Target Audience:

The audience will include development partners in the north and south. It should include movements, civil society, implementers, community groups who can use this to reinforce their learning, and their advocacy. The output should also have relevance for ICT4D specialists namely, donors, governmental policy makers and NGOs.

Expected Output:

The study will need to have two outputs: first being the full study in a form and level of detail that is of use to specialists (donors, governmental policy makers, NGOs) working in the communications for development field; second being a shorter, more accessible report with context and explanatory material designed for non-specialist development actors.

4. Expected outcomes of the Impact Study process

- stronger project/programme design by ICD practitioners;
- more support to Voice and participation projects in general, and ICD interventions in particular, from donor and development organisations
- Evidence and greater understanding of the role of voice and participation in development
- Evidence and greater understanding of the impact of ICD on project interventions in strengthening voice and participation
- Learning by BCO member organisations about the above
- Advocacy towards the wider development community – NGOs, bilaterals, and government – to promote greater understanding of and commitment to the role of voice and participation and effective approaches to strengthening the uses of ICD to build them.

5. Role of Consultant

The primary role of the consultant is to provide overall coordination of the BCO impact process, in consultation with and reporting to the BCO partners, through the BCO Impact Study Group. Contractual arrangements will be made with the BCO partner where the BCO Coordination function resides, namely APC.

The use of additional evaluators or resource people in the Impact Study process is anticipated. These people could be sub-contractors identified by the lead consultant, or by BCO partners, and could be BCO partners themselves. Any use of additional resource people should be agreed on in consultation with the BCO impact study group.

The Consultant is expected to assist in planning and participating in the next BCO Impact Study Group meeting scheduled for the **8-9 June 2006** to take place in London.

Tasks include:

- Overall coordination and overseeing the production of all outputs for components 1 and 3 as contained in this Terms of Reference document.

- Carry out a in-depth, desk-based study and critical analysis of existing BCO partner learning studies for Component 1 with a view to extracting learning that can be used to enrich the practice of BCO partners and other development practitioners as well as decision-makers.
- Providing support and advice to BCO members on the development of evaluation indicators, approaches and tools for Component 3
- Identifying and manage the recruitment of consultants and service providers needed for the implementation of components 1 and 3, working closely with BCO partners
- Managing the implementation of the work by those consultants
- Working closely and consultatively with all BCO partners by supporting and participating in feedback and meetings of the BCO Impact Study processes

6. Call for Expressions of Interest

The BCO partners are inviting consultants to submit an expression of interest, of not more than 3 pages in length.

Your short proposal should focus on

- 6.1 How you would deliver on the expected outputs for Component 1 and 3 as outlined above.
- 6.2 How you would answer the following question, including recommendations of possible methodology approaches:
How do communications for development contribute to poverty reduction through strengthening the voices, capacities, communications and networking of the poor and the marginalised, and enable them to influence decisions that affect their lives?
- 6.3 Please include a costing, stating your daily rates, and how many days of work you envisage your involvement to be, based on your proposal.
- 6.4 Your submission should contain a CV/profile of your consultancy and previous work you have conducted in this field. If relevant, please attach CVs/profiles of any other people who will be involved in executing this Study with you.

7. Selection Process

The deadline for submission of your expression of interest is **26 May 2006**. A selection committee comprising members of the BCO Impact Study Group will review all the “Expressions of Interest” submitted. You will be informed whether you are successful by the **1 June 2006**.

Please note that the successful Consultant is expected to assist in planning and participating in the next BCO Study group meeting scheduled for the **8-9 June 2006** to take place in London.

Please submit your proposal to Lauren@womensnet.org.za and Kitty.Warnock@panos.org.uk

We thank you for your time and look forward to working with you on this very exciting study.