



**BUILDING COMMUNICATION OPPORTUNITIES (BCO)
MINUTES OF BCO BI-ANNUAL MEETING, JOHANNESBURG 18-20 FEBRUARY 2007**

Link to pre-BCO meeting documentation

<http://www.bcoalliance.org/node/231>

Participants:

Kitty Warnock, Panos London
Kishor Pradhan, Panos South Asia
Jac Stienen, IICD
Priscilla Jere, One World Africa
Geeta Malhotra, One World South Asia
Patrick Kalas, Swiss Development Cooperation
Marjan Besuijen, HIVOS
Anriette Esterhuysen, APC
Analia Lavin, APC
Steve Buckley, AMARC
Lauren Fok, APC/BCO
Heloise Emdon, IDRC (joined us on Day 2 after tea)

In Attendance:

Colleen Crawford-Cousins, facilitator
Laureen Bertin, rapporteur

Apologies:

Richard Rose, DFID (Andrew Pollard will be BCO contact person after March)
Marcelo Solervicens, AMARC
Michael Roberts, IDRC
Gerolf Weigel (Planning for GK3)
DGIS (No formal apology received)

DAY ONE: TUESDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2007

Learning Day planned by APC.

Please go to www.bcoalliance.org

to find the resources, links and digital stories that BCO partners produced on the day.

DAY TWO: MONDAY 19 FEBRUARY 2007

1. PARTNER REPORTING

Detailed records of the presentations and discussion that followed each of the BCO partner presentations of existing and new projects are available in a more detailed minute. The discussion that ensued was facilitated to encourage peer consultation and peer learning. The main points of discussion and possible action for collaboration are highlighted here in this summary of decisions.

The following questions were posed to small groups for discussion:

1. What struck me most, new thoughts? What does it make me want to talk about?
2. What have you learned from the reports – in relation to your work and sector? What are the most important / interesting / striking things?

3. What have you learned about partners' conditions and dynamics which is helpful to your work?
4. Are you committed to a new bilateral or BCO collaborative project?

Topic: Connectivity Co-operative?

There was both a practical and a policy aspect to this. This was included in discussions of low-cost access in the group which had discussed *Technology / Policy / Advocacy Think Tank*, which would document some existing work and practices for presentation. Some work was already being done amongst partners. The HIVOS journalism programme contained a component of this approach.

Topic: Technology / Policy / Advocacy Think Tank

Please refer to Day 2 discussions on this topic as this was a continuation of that discussion.

Rationale: Existing expertise within BCO, added value for partners and their networks, sustaining BCO in the long-term, bring in more donors who wanted to contribute to learning exchanges and research? Idea of a think tank was suggested.

Potential Outputs: Could include publications and papers. Events could be convened covering pro-poor spectrum allocation policy and to push for low-cost connectivity solutions. Global and national policy questions would be included.

Planning: Three major events in 2007: ITU (Oct-Nov); IGF (November); GK3 (December) could be used by BCO and the following topics were suggested:

- consultant writer to produce discussion papers and draw on experience and illustrative examples of spectrum allocations, such as the access of poor people to radio
- organize events, panel discussions exhibits
- publish papers to feed into the events.

It was further agreed that:

- AMARC is keen to work in this area, as its members are key CSOs, such as the open spectrum lobby.
- Anriette would identify other partners outside of BCO. APC was already committed to working on this area, with the Internet Governance Forum.
- All the big projects should be branded as BCO, although more discussion was needed. For big events such as GK3 there might be co-branding. It was however, important to highlight partner participation as well.
- PANOS expressed interested in participating together with APC and OWA both short and long term, including jointly branded publications, briefs and research reports.
- APC is interested in integrating this idea with the 'low cost connectivity' event to be held at the IGF and GK3.

Topic: Bilateral Co-operation for Capacity Building (using e-health as an example)

Rationale: The health sector in India was very under-resourced.

Potential Outputs: A pilot would be used drawing on IICD experiences in West Africa, aimed at rural communities and youth to enhance their capacity in using ICTs for e-health and to contribute to achieving the MDGs. The project could build synergy with local universities and institutions to accredit skills that they acquire, which would have a long-term benefit for the youth. Soft skills would include project planning and shared experiences, using an online link.

What about a Bilateral project – tripartite partnership?

The value of partnerships was not in question, and although the approach was not new, it was noted that there are often reviews of existing work. There were many pilot projects that do not develop any further, so BCO should look at issues of replication. Drawing on other learning also helps to increase productivity.

Topic: Partnerships in co-operation

- Gaps exists between donor country offices and their HQ. It was recommended that if a programme is being implemented at a particular country level then you must approach application for funding at that level.
- How can BCO help donors like SDC to help implement better, think strategically about things, move away from working in a constrained environment? It would help SDC

internal processes to have assistance in developing and framing programmes and therefore working together as a BCO alliance is advantageous.

Topic: Civil Journalism, CSO Communications Strategies

- The discussion revolved around a project for which Hivos has recently received funding from the EU, “civic journalism” aimed at strengthening the voice of civil society
- “Citizen journalism” is a term used to refer to media outputs produced by individuals and organisations outside the mainstream media (eg individuals’ blogs). This kind of media output is proliferating and is seen as liberating and empowering and often important as a source of alternative information eg in situations of media repression; but at the same time it lacks the professional standards and safeguards of mainstream journalism, raising many issues of credibility and public interest (eg it can be biased and inflammatory). For mainstream media, general public (media consumers), governments, and producers of such alternative media, it is a challenge to learn how to use and interpret and respond to it. There is a wide range of approaches but this must be underpinned by a proper communications strategy.
- Communication capacity – for CSOs or any other type of organisation – involves not just technical skills (writing, use of ICTs, etc) but also skills in identifying communication needs, and planning strategies and messages for reaching different audiences. It also includes media literacy, user perspectives, how to bring together CSOs and mainstream media.
- Panos London has good materials that can lead into training materials and shared learning. Panos SE Asia also has good information for the civil journalism project of HIVOS.
- The members of the group expressed their willingness to contribute to further development of the Hivos project by email.

Suggestions made for a common “big” project that everyone could be involved with:

1. Engaging in technical policy especially spectrum issues
2. Community radio convergence
3. Platforms to raise issues of infrastructure, policy and research and development at international forums, with publications being disseminated
4. Issue papers, research and writing – co-brand issue papers on multi-relevant topics for constituencies, including learning events. Identify topics, release as BCO briefings and incorporate with learning events attached to big meetings
5. CSOs as communication intermediaries
6. Collaborate with Training and Capacity building
7. Connectivity co-ops
8. Transfer of skills (AMARC/Nepal)
9. APC Capacity Building event (Brazil) – addressing policy at a national level (invitation to BCO partners to attend)

Online discussions were proposed, around capacity-building and training across the board such as, for example, collaboration on e-health initiatives.

1.1 How would you redesign the programme for the next meeting?

It was suggested that the reports should be tabled beforehand and present only one aspect/project out of the report for reporting in the BCO meeting. Added to the current reporting template should be the reporting/sharing of new work that provides insight into new things and current issues as well as reporting on negatives or errors.

Most partners liked the BCO partner presentations approach of this meeting in that it covered a wide variety, a very open process, focused on one or two subjects, including failures, lots of exposure to different organizations. 10 minute short presentations are good. BCO reporting is a lot of work and linking it more to the BCO reporting format is valuable in the process of putting the report together. Outcomes as required by DFID are what brings BCO together. The fact that the report includes activities, key successes, and learning implications remains relevant. The afternoon discussion were good and specific, however, a more formal approach

with concrete outputs is preferred as an outcome. We do not speak often enough at sufficient depth, so it is good to do that. The inclusion of challenges and errors in project formulation and implementation is essential for the learning process, errors must be embraced. BCO partners should be encouraged to read those reports

2. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY, Anriette Esterhuysen

APC supports the rotational approach to co-ordinating BCO, and would do this through to the end of 2007, to ensure continuity. Given the time needed for a smooth transition, it is hoped that a discussion could be held at the next meeting.

SDC has provided support to the BCO process to the end of 2008.

3. ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL REPORTING, Patrick Kalas

- Donors participation in BCO is not primarily premised on partner access to request funding, but rather for them to participate in the processes.
- From a donor perspective, it is preferable to have more donor participation in BCO to debate issues. A strategy is needed to engage them better. However it was felt that it was best to first consolidate present activities and ensure institutional sustainability.
- The value of the alliance lay in enabling an understanding of the issues and priorities and donors can draw on this in their planning and thinking, and thus contribute to improving impact.
- It was suggested that BCO could expand by inviting donors on a topic-specific basis, and include some of their key partners
- Collaboration was important, and BCO was urged to identify a few projects – these could be large or small or bilateral - and use these to show donors that successful collaboration was possible. Larger scale collaborations needed time to develop, but that time was needed to consolidate ideas too.
- A targeted list will be developed of people to invite who could offer strategic contributions. If they are not keen, then figure out why.
- Look at existing donors to help us bring other people in to ensure strategic contributions.
- A brainstorm gave rise to the following initial list:
 - OSI, UNDP, Swedish SIDA, Danida, IDRC, UNESCO, corporate donors?
 - Give Lauren the freedom to stop harassing Canadian CIDA, send a letter to say if they are interested to let us know.
 - Lauren had concern about entry points. This can usefully be done by partners. We need your help, for example, AMARC can also get help from SDC; Anriette will work with OSI; Kishor will send a list of current partner donors to Lauren.
 - Consider other implementing partners that would be interested to join.
- All agreed to develop suggestions and send the list to Amarc. This was agreed and Amarc would manage the process
- Hivos was not sure about the official Hivos position on opening up the partnership to others, Lauren to follow up with Loe.

4. CALENDAR OF EVENTS

It was suggested that BCO should only attend those events which were the most strategic, given the budgetary constraints. Each partner was requested to make a case for BCO-focused events and how best information-sharing could happen between all the partners.

10-13 September: Highway Africa, Grahamstown. South Africa
Involvement: Panel discussion on civil journalism, Panel discussion on participation of women
BCO Media partner?

Partners: APC, PANOS, SDC participation
Lead partner: APC

27 Oct – 16 November: World Radio Communication Conference, ITR, Geneva
Involvement: Lobby and presence
Inter-governmental observers
Lead partner: Amarc

12-13 November: Internet Governance Forum, Brazil
Involvement: BCO presence and Public event by BCO, “Technical policy and advocacy” is the suggested title of the workshop, Low cost / exhibition
Partners: APC, SDC, Panos, Amarc
Lead partner: APC involved
Global / national

2 or 8 November: APC Learning Day on Policy Analysis at global national regional levels, Brazil
All BCO partners are invited

11-13 December: GKIII, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Involvement: BCO Exhibition space (like at WSIS), smaller side event, thematic input, take connectivity policy and advocacy event from IGF to GKIII, partner-specific events
Costs: BCO together with partners
Partners: APC – mainstream gender advisor, Panos – Media cluster, IDRC, Amarc, IICD
Lead partner: SDC and BCO

Please refer to separate attachment for the 2007 calendar that partners added events to.

The next BCO meeting would take place over three days between 17 and 31 August, hosted by SDC in Berne or Geneva. If held in Prague where there is APC staff, the learning day could be substituted with discussions around the Impact Study, the Spectrum paper and plan for the 3 global events. There was some discussion on various other forthcoming events, and the events calendar was updated.

OWSA Delhi have offered to host the BCO meeting from 27-29 January 2008.

5. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 Component 1

Decisions

1. To accept the C1 report once the corrections requested by partners have been made.
2. The section on BCO collaboration needs to be made more accurate to reflect the work that has happened. Reference was made to the email message that was sent by Anriette to David and the BCO list. Propose that D-groups as an example of collaboration be removed, not relevant to BCO collaboration.
3. The IA Team need to process the additional comments made by APC who offered to pay for additional time. The section on BCO collaboration is being done at no charge.
4. Partners agree to sign off on the C1 report, subject to the above matters being addressed.
5. Date for final input from partners to the consultants regarding examples of collaboration is 7 March, and final report from consultants by 15 March.

5.2 INTERROGATION OF TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR C3 COMPONENT

Hypothesis One

Include the role of networks, BCO work in strengthening networks in civil society, and the sharing of information.

Organisations who feel they can contribute to this hypothesis were OWSA; IICD; Panos SA; HIVOS; Panos London

Hypothesis Two

Organisations who feel they can contribute to were APC; AMARC; IICD; OWSA; Panos SA; HIVOS.

Hypothesis Three

HIVOS is already working in this area.

Component 3

All the partners committed to going ahead with C3.

However the partners did want to propose some changes in approach to C3. In view of the fact and acknowledging the limitations to the methodology that the Team outlined viz:

1. BCO experience alone can offer only partial, limited evidence regarding these hypotheses.
2. Impact assessment, in particular, requires significant time to have elapsed between interventions and their assessment taking place.
3. That there may not be BCO experiences which have significant longevity
4. The time and resources available for implementation of the C3 are limited, and that partners do not necessarily want to delay the deadline set for September 2007.

Partners wish to propose the following:

1. That the BCO IA days specifically help BCO partners improve their evaluation, impact assessment and programme planning for the future
2. In relation to the Component which builds explicitly on selected experiences of BCO partners, BCO partners wishes to engage in a discussion with the Team to identify these programs and projects relevant for each of the three hypotheses, looking at areas where there is existing work and information in order to kickstart the process. Each consultant needs to have discussion with the partners, to assess how to select projects.

Work/docs done for C1 and a quick brainstorm of partners at the BCO meeting can be drawn from to identify the partner specific projects against each of the hypothesis.

3. Draw up one research matrix in consultation with partners.
4. Draw up a schedule which helps each of the partners to prepare for the IA day so that a constructive discussion can be had, the right people selected to participate in the day, that relevant documentation can be prepared before the day and that each partner has done some thinking beforehand.
5. This preparatory process to take place by mid March.
6. It seems as if most partners, except for Hivos and IICD would prefer the day to be scheduled late march early April.

Partners also expressed a desire for improved working relationships with the consultants. Points that emerged from the discussion were noted and will be conveyed to the consultants by BCO coordination.

Timeframes:

- BCO partners will comment on the ToR and feedback to consultants by the end of the week 23 February.

- Consultants to incorporate feedback and finalise ToR by 2 March
- Final deadline for sign-off by partners 15 March.
- Once a research matrix has been agreed, partner interrogations will take place until early April. Some partners felt the need to hold internal discussions as well.
- IA process should be finalized by September 2007.

7.3 IA Working Group and decision-making

The agreed communication process was that consultants communicate with Lauren, the working group is communicated with by Lauren, and Lauren communicates with David Souter.

The proposed representatives in each organisation are:

ICD – Stijn

Panos - Kitty and Kishor

APC - Anriette and Chat rotating participation

HIVOS – Loe

AMARC – Steve and Marcelo

OWSA - Geeta

OWA - Priscilla

6. EVALUATION

An evaluation took place which is documented separately and can be retrieved on <http://www.bcoalliance.org/node/231>.