

Minutes of BCO Bi-Annual Meeting: Impact Assessment

Session 1: Theories of Change

The day began with each partner reflecting on the process of writing up a theory of change for the BCO Impact Study for their organisation. Not everyone submitted a theory of change. Comments below reflect the challenges and opportunities of drawing up the ToC.

Challenges

- Rationale for developing a ToC (as an approach) for the BCO Impact Assessment was unclear
- More assistance from DFID would have been helpful in clarifying why this approach was taken, the rationale of a ToC and how it should be developed
- Difficult to complete
- Lack of uniformity
- Process not consultative
- Difficulty in seeing a distinction between developing a theory of change on BCO and other organizational strategic objectives or project specific activities where the objectives/themes theoretically fit into the organizations that framework no matter what you do

Opportunities:

- Impact of poverty point of view – if you believe in fighting poverty – it's an opportunity

Session 2: Aims and objectives of BCO evaluation

Each person was given 4 cards to suggest reasons for carrying out some impact evaluation as a collective activity of the BCO alliance, and benefits to be gained from doing so. These reasons were then clustered into the following 4 broad areas:

- 1 Adding to our knowledge of how ICD makes a difference to poverty alleviation**
 - to explore whether the assumptions on which our programmes are based – e.g. is “voice” important? Does good media actually make any difference to government policymaking and people’s empowerment?
 - Need to invest some money as collective to study impact of ICD in areas we believe they can make change
 - assess whether the targets we have for BCO are achievable
 - to better structure BCO

- 2 Carrying out more effective lobbying and advocacy around ICD for poverty alleviation**

- To convince skeptics (by proper “packaging” of our impact evaluation outputs)
 - Support IC4D “lobby”
 - To add to the lobby of literature on impact of ICD on poverty in order to continue to advocate for more appropriate investments and main streaming ICD in development targeting decision makers and donors
- 3. Self learning for our own programmes**
- Self learning about our methodologies and our work in relation to ICD and social change
 - Come up with evidence based findings/learning about changes from the work of BCO partners
 - To increase our impact
- 4. Sharing/learning evaluation methods**
- Assess the impact of the project activities on achieving BCO objective
 - Better our activities to make them effective to achieve the BCO ultimate objective
 - Comparative analysis of our impact across BCO partners based on linkages

The following comments were made:

- Need to identify common indicators so that we can gear our evaluation systems to them and draw in any information we already have
- On-going self monitoring processes fed from the ground that feed automatically into the system
- What is the exercise for? - What are we trying to evaluate and what is the rationale?

Session 3: Impact evaluation questions for the BCO impact study

The BCO partners were requested to suggest some questions about the impact of ICD to which they and their organisations would like to find answers. The questions suggested were then grouped into 4 questions:

- 1. How do ICD at grassroots help achieve pro-poor growth and mitigate inequalities, towards the achievement of the MDGs and PRS goals?**
 - a. How does the use of ICD at the grassroot bring about pro-poor growth thus eliminate disparities in growth – national level
 - b. What is the contribution of ICT to “traditional general” poverty reduction
 - i. Awareness
 - ii. Empowerment
 - iii. Economic impact
 - iv. Social cultural
 - c. How does the use of ICD mitigate social generalities in the achievement of MDGs?
 - d. What is the contribution of ICT to MDG and PRSP – how do we make the links visible?
- 2. How does “giving voice to the poor” (including through local media) change their lives towards development objectives?**
 - a. How does local media work for development

- b. How do voices of the poor in mainstreaming media contribute to poverty reduction?
- c. Does developing technical and training resources build capacity in greater involvement in policy advocacy and strategic use of ICTs?
- d. Do we need different indicators for projects directly linked to the policy?
- e. How does enabling poor people to “voice” actually improve their lives?
- f. How does the use of ICD to give the poor a voice lead to socio-economic and political empowerment at local regional and national level? (country level)

3. How is ICD influencing processes of governance? (transparency, accountability, responsiveness.....)

- a. How does the use of ICD in development impact on governance to become more transparent, accountable and responsive to citizens, especially the poor?
- b. How is ICD influencing processes of democracy (governance)?

4. How does ICD policy improve people’s lives?

- a. Policy and mainstreaming processes
- b. Do policy changes bring about better access, implementation and use of ICTs to improve people’s lives?
- c. Is policy an effective instrument for change?

Session 4: Way Forward

A Working Group comprising Kitty, Shaddy, Chat, IICD, David, SDC and Hivos was mandated to take the BCO Impact Study further.

Terms of Reference for Impact assessment Working Group

1. Re-state 4 evaluation questions to BCO Impact assessment
2. Facilitate a process of developing a set of indicators and stakeholders
3. Develop a process for this evaluation and indicate timeframes and outputs
4. Manage implementation of this process
5. Collate/gather information about evaluation, impact assessment, methodologies within BCO alliance
6. BCO Partners, through their mandated representative, are responsible for their partners’ engagement in the impact assessment
7. Lauren coordinates – Kitty to take the leading role

Who are we going to give the findings to?

- Mainstream donors, development agencies and multilateral institutions at international level (IICD)
- Specialised ICT core community e.g. IDRC, Communication Initiative, within country – media practitioners, line ministries, development organisations e.g. TI, HR orgs (PANOS)
- To the unconverted –government decision makers, national level program office of donors (OW)
- Bilateral development agencies, joint learning - knowledge sharing community (SDC)

- Mainstream women's organisations, AWID, prioritise mainstream development actors, bilateral agencies, impact media workers and development workers with an interest in ICT (APC)
- Prioritise outputs as BCO partners and later as different organizations
- Coordinate with other evaluation research projects

The meeting read through David's "bad cop" email message with specific regard to what needs to be done. The responses were as follows:

- Identifying gaps – difficult to develop now because we are struggling to set the priorities – inform David that this is impossible to do because of time constraints and may not be within the scope of the BCO partners to identify. May be a study that can be done by somebody else.
- Evaluation to fit into existing partner organization to avoid re-inventing the wheel.
- An evaluation of the evaluation to be conducted towards the end of the work
- BCO needs to develop a plan and indicators early and coordinate whatever resources are available. There is a need to agree on the evaluation and timeframe and decide whether the evaluation is going to be on-going and will continue beyond this Study.

It was agreed that the next Impact meeting of the Working Group would happen in the first week of September, in London.

The meeting ended at 15h00.

In the Open Space discussion on Day 1, several topics were raised related to Impact. They are included here so that they are picked up again as issues that can inform future Impact meetings.

Discussion Report

Subject: Impact Assessment/ Rationale of ICD

Initiator: Styjn

Participants: Kitty, Chat, Shaddy, Anriette

Topic 1 : ICD and Democracy

There's interest in the possibility of working towards a seminar or online discussion or something about the role of ICD in building democracy ie participation in political processes, and government's capacity to make information available and engage in dialogue with people.

BCO partners have many projects and experiences:

Kitty undertakes to explore further

- scoping and develop a proposal for some BCO activity:
- to share our experiences, including partners on the ground, of different types of

communication and their impact on in-country democratic processes.

Topic 2: Gender, ICD and Development

What are our thoughts about development and gender as a starting point for impact? We need to define how we define development?

Include:

- gender and ICT (integration of gender and development indicators in impact assessment; sharing among partners about their lessons/experience in integrating gender concerns
- democracy and ICT
- economic development and ICT

Need to include gender and development vision in our impact assessment plans for BCO

Share our experiences and knowledge on gender, ICD and development – eg share APC Issues papers.

Topic 3: Learning and sharing on national ICT policy processes and impact indicators

Governments have fragmented policies i.e telecoms, media, IT, etc; advocacy is needed on the value of ICT4D and the value of integrated national policy for this.

Solution and action point:

On the country level, there are many opportunities for collaboration among BCO partners for advocacy for national policies and sharing learning around evaluation such as:

- strategic planning at country level
- partners convening power on the ground
- creating multistakeholder platforms for discussion
- providing advocacy arguments i.e evidence and experience from other countries
- advocacy materials
- finding champions in governments
- getting public attention, media coverage
- understanding decision making processes including mainstreaming ICD advocacy in other development countries
- moving up to regional level