

EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF NIDOS' WORK

2011-2014

Presentation of findings

'I am a very happy member – I never feel like a number'

'We ...greatly admire the work and the reach that NIDOS has in the sector in Scotland and also the commitment from the administration to fund this work'

Carolyn Norris

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Executive Summary

This External Evaluation of NIDOS' work between 2011 and 2014 is based on information gathered in two distinct electronic questionnaires: one for stakeholders and one sent to all of the 108 member organisations. Fifteen individual meetings, in October and November 2014, added further information to the Evaluation. The Evaluator also attended NIDOS AGM and Annual Conference in Edinburgh on 23 October.

The quantitative findings are presented in different formats and are not repeated in this executive summary which will draw attention to the main points only.

The small NIDOS staff provide an excellent, value for money, service to its members, over 50 of which have a turnover of less than £100,000. The membership demands vary, as it also includes some large international development agencies, which together have a budget considerably larger than the Scottish Government's development budget. Together these member organisations constitute a significant part of the international development sector in Scotland and NIDOS aims to improve their contribution to reducing poverty and inequality worldwide.

Of particular value to smaller members is their increased professionalism, including improved governance structures, through use of the NIDOS effectiveness toolkit and stronger funding base through NIDOS' direct support in reviewing funding bids and provision of information about potential funders. Networking events with other NIDOS members and people from other sectors benefit all NIDOS members who also valued reading and contributing to the NIDOS newsletter.

Membership of NIDOS and attendance at advocacy strategy days has certainly helped to strengthen member organisation's knowledge of global policy issues, including the post-2015 discussions, and has enhanced the capacity of those who do undertake policy and advocacy work for themselves. It is also one of the ways members' profile has been raised with politicians. Members' profile with the public and funders has also been increased thanks to NIDOS membership.

The evaluation took place at a time of intense constitutional debate in Scotland and this may explain the tension around NIDOS' involvement in policy work. In preparation for the September 2014 Independence Referendum, NIDOS members produced a report entitled *Scotland's Place in Building a Just World* with the aim of ensuring that Scotland's role in international development be part of the constitutional debate. The policy recommendations contained in that report were generally well received. Some raised questions about what NIDOS' advocacy role should be.

These findings generated a series of suggestions for further consideration and these are presented in the final section.

A. Background to Evaluation - Core Objectives and Methodology

Carolyn Norris was competitively selected and appointed through a Memorandum of Understanding to carry out an 18-day External Evaluation for the Network of International Development Organisations in Scotland (NIDOS). The Evaluation had three key aims:

1. To gather feedback from NIDOS members about the impact of use of NIDOS services and collective facilitation efforts in relation to the first four Outcomes listed below and related indicators as outlined in the NIDOS business plan which was provided:

1. Improved effectiveness of more Scottish International Development CSOs in relation to their Accountability, Transparency and Governance, Partnerships, Sustainability and Learning approaches
2. Strengthened capacity of individual NIDOS member organisations, particularly in relation to financial base, advocacy capacity and response to climate change impacts on development
3. Outcome 3a: Increased and strengthened engagement of diasporan organisations and community in NIDOS and in using our services
Outcome 3b: Increased and strengthened engagement of NIDOS with Southern platform organisations
4. Strengthened collective engagement with and influence on the key stakeholders, particularly in Scotland, that have influence on international development.

2. To gather information from Stakeholders / Partners, about how NIDOS has increased their understanding of Scotland's international development sector and contributed to the delivery of their aims

3. To review what can be learned from this feedback and how NIDOS can improve performance, activities and services in the future.

The agreed methodology:

The information was gathered through a separate survey prepared for all NIDOS members and all stakeholders. In addition, emails were sent to more than 25 members and two stakeholders, requesting a direct exchange, either in person, in a focus group forum, or in a telephone meeting. The Evaluator travelled to Edinburgh for the NIDOS AGM and Annual Seminar on 23 October and combined this with individual meetings with members and one stakeholder there and in Glasgow. One other stakeholder interview was carried out in person in London.

Meetings were finally arranged with **15 members**. There was no interest in the proposed focus group discussion, so all meetings were carried out individually. Some played a double role as the interlocutor was working for one NIDOS membership organisation and a trustee for another, or two worked for two NIDOS membership organisations, so they were asked questions about both roles. This brought the total number of member organisations 'interviewed' to 17. The 31 fully completed surveys and 15 people (representing 17 different

member organisations) interviewed, meant information was gathered from 48 out of the 110 members, representing a response rate of 44% .

The final count of those interviewed was 17 which is broken down in categories in column 2, with the third column showing the breakdown of survey responses:

Membership category	Interview	Survey completed	% of research	Overall Members	% of members
Full member, large (income more than £1 million)	3	6	19%	16	15%
Full member medium (income between £500,000 and £1million)	2	4	13%	5	5%
Full member, developing (income between £100,000 and £500,000)	3	7	21%	22	20%
Full member, small/very small (income between £20,000 and £100,00)	7	12	40%	58	53%
Associate member, not for profit, large (more than 3 full time staff)	1	0	2%	8	7%
Associate member, not for profit, small (less than 3 full time staff)	1	1	4%	1	1%
Diaspora-led	0	1	2%	11	10%
TOTAL	17	31	100%	110	100%

Figure 1: Table of respondents according to membership category

The aim was to interview at least 10 small or very small member organisations but their lower level of response or availability made that impossible. The apparent correlation between the challenge of arranging interviews and the relatively low response level from this group to the questionnaire may indicate they simply have less capacity to meet such demands. As one small member organisation said:

I'm sorry to have been unresponsive to your previous emails, but I am afraid I don't have the time to assist you with your evaluation work - we are a one person organisation, and a lot of our capacity is already taken up with work with/for NIDOS so I really can't devote any more time to it.

Also, the group of developing organisations is over-represented in this sample as compared to that of the overall membership. These two factors are likely to have influenced the results, as in fact small organisations represent more than half of NIDOS' membership, yet their views were not proportionately represented.

The **stakeholder** survey was accompanied by an offer of a one-to-one meeting as an alternative. Two took up this offer in addition to the two already approached, so four

stakeholders were interviewed directly and a further seven responded to the online survey. From a total of 23 stakeholders, this represents a response rate of almost 50%. And, of the 12 who did not respond, four represented bodies where another staff member DID reply.

Of the 11 Stakeholders who replied:

- 5 represented other networks
- 2 represented government departments, including DFID which could also be classified as a funder
- 2 were international development funders
- 2 were regulating/evaluating the sector

The external evaluator collaborated with NIDOS to finalise the survey questions and obtain contact details for all members and stakeholders. Suggestions were made as to how to make questions clearer or more comprehensive, and how to improve on the diversity of the members selected for interview. However the selection of which NIDOS members to interview was done by the external evaluator.

The information gathered from the online survey and the interviews is presented below. After two introductory sections, the findings have been linked directly to the four Outcomes detailed in NIDOS' Business Plan for the period under review. There is then a final section to capture other issues raised, before some concluding comments and some suggested areas for further consideration as NIDOS develops its current Business Plan.

B. Evaluation findings

The first two sections explain how members perceive the advantage of joining NIDOS and the most-used services. It is followed by sections provision specific feedback relating to each of the four outcomes NIDOS aims to achieve.

1. Members' views on the advantages of belonging to NIDOS

Out of the 31 survey respondents, 27 provided examples of what they considered the top three benefits. All those interviewed also responded. There were three outstanding benefits which many respondents highlighted. Others benefits are listed to provide an overview of the reasons members value their membership of NIDOS.

Most cited benefit	Networking – sharing ideas, exchanging services, learning about the work of other Scottish NGOS, important for small members to share experience and expose them to larger NGOS.
Second most cited	Reliable advice on fundraising, trust funding, workshops on funding AND Access to funders, we are more educated about international funders
Third most cited	Tailored intelligent advice/mentoring/direct communications on specific issues - responsive staff – ‘never feel like a number’
Others	Raising the profile of all development organisations in Scotland
	Training – affordable/accessible
	Policy work – staying up to date with developments, Value of NIDOS as Eyes and Ears of the international Development Community
	Advocacy opportunities – connection to national level campaigns – e.g. post 2015, allows members to get their messages across, gives the sector a louder voice
	Self-assessment tool – establishing good governance
	Collaboration in preparing events
	E-news/newsletter/knowledge
	We are more confident
	Timely information about key events
	Improved awareness of needs of disabled people (especially children) overseas
	Office space when we need it
	Website – to get specific advice on issues as they arise
	Builds bridge between academia and activists – research voices better heard by activists.

2. NIDOS Services and events most used by members

Members were asked what services or events they had used/attended and then to rate these in terms of importance to their organisation. The results are from the questionnaire respondents are presented in Figure 2 below:

Which of these services or events have you used or attended?					
Answer Options	Yes	No	Intend to in future	Not relevant to our work	Response Count
Effectiveness programme services, including toolkit, mentoring, outreach meetings and provision of template services	19	8	6	1	32
NIDOS training course/workshop	25	5	3	0	30
NIDOS networking events/conferences	30	1	2	0	31
Funding advice, surgeries and support services, including info sessions with funders like DFID	22	5	5	1	31
NIDOS working groups, e.g. Small NGOs group, South Asia group, Funding Group, etc	14	9	5	1	28
NIDOS advocacy strategy days and activities e.g. on Post-2015, Scotland v Poverty, Scotland's Place	18	9	2	1	29
The NIDOS website	31	0	2	0	31
NIDOS newsletter or other emailed information	33	0	2	0	33

Equally positive, was the almost unanimous response that joining NIDOS represented value for money. One member organisation dissented, admitting this was entirely his fault – he simply did not have time to take advantage of the services and activities on offer.

3. Findings relevant to Outcome 1 - defined as ‘Improving the effectiveness of more Scottish International Development Civil Society Organisations’

Use of the Effectiveness Toolkit: Respondents were asked whether they had reviewed their effectiveness and whether any changes could be directly related to the effectiveness review process offered by NIDOS to members through its website. In statistical terms, of the 26 questionnaire responses:

46% said NIDOS effectiveness review has strengthened their monitoring and evaluation

27% said it had strengthened their governance

19% said it had strengthened their staff

38% said it has strengthened their partnerships

27% said it has strengthened their community engagement.

Based on this sample, NIDOS has reached its target of 40% of its members engaging in effectiveness self-assessment by the end of year 3. Not surprisingly, the survey showed that there were other, non-NIDOS, influences on their effectiveness. For example, the large international NGOs, a group which is also somewhat over represented in the survey, have often contributed to preparing the effectiveness toolkit, but do not use it for their own staff as they have their own systems and training programs. However, members of all sizes have found it useful to shape their work with partners – helping them to strengthen their governance structures and in one case to help them select or de-select partners. Three small members had found it challenging to get board members to participate, and one had learnt the lesson that it is useful to be selective about the areas to cover to minimise the time required of board members. For those who had conducted review, they had noted some specific changes related to the process of using the toolkit:

- Benefit of challenging assumptions
- Improved professionalism
- Help in getting non-program staff better involved in organisation’s work

A fuller range of advantages associated with use of the effectiveness toolkit is reflected in the feedback comments below:

We have changed our project selection following use of the Effectiveness Toolkit

We know better what information to provide to our volunteers

We have established a more committed relationship with our partner organisation

NIDOS helped us ensure we run our organisation to the best standards of current practice

NIDOS helped assure us of our ability to conform to charity regulators

Two members mentioned their registration as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation as a change due to their interaction with NIDOS

Networking has helped us gain insights into how other NGOs operate

NIDOS has helped develop our thinking and practice on M&E for ourselves and our partners – this is echoed by others, with one saying:

“we have learned ways to measure and report impact. We have become more professional in our dealings with our sister charity in xx”

And another saying NIDOS has made them consider how they interact with their partners in Africa.

We work more effectively at governance level

Trustees better informed about international development policy

We have the confidence to apply for government/grant funding

‘We are now an international development organisation, thanks to NIDOS – we realised we had to get our policies sorted when seeking funds’

It has increased awareness of our weaknesses

We have submitted a publication to IATI since we first heard about it from NIDOS

Applying the Effectiveness Toolkit is underway. It ‘will take us two years in total to complete, hopefully by December 2014. This has also educated our board I the expectations of a professional NGO’. The board has since been involved in developing the medium-sized organisation’s implementation plan, rather than it the implementation itself.

Some noted that the time required was often a barrier, although the toolkit remained a resource which one very small member organisation had consulted specifically to improve their use of key performance indicators. One small member organisation felt the effectiveness toolkit did not really meet their needs – they are an activist group with membership in Scotland, keen to remain flexible and relevant. Though another had the opposite experience finding it useful to increase their support base within Scotland. Another commented: 'the toolkit gave us the structure to test ourselves'. Another explained how they had printed out sections so that a group of them could work on it, rather than use it online. Two respondents mentioned that the toolkit was too comprehensive for them, so they sought alternative advice.

Information gathered from other survey questions also commented on the impact of the effectiveness toolkit and review. One small organisation noted their funding situation improved and they made particular progress in their accounting practices through introducing Accounting for International Development. Similarly, the toolkit had led another organisation to access other resources – a board effectiveness consultant and the International Aid Transparency Initiative.

Importance of networking in improving effectiveness:

The members' questionnaire posed a specific question about members' links through NIDOS members and an open question - the results are explored below.

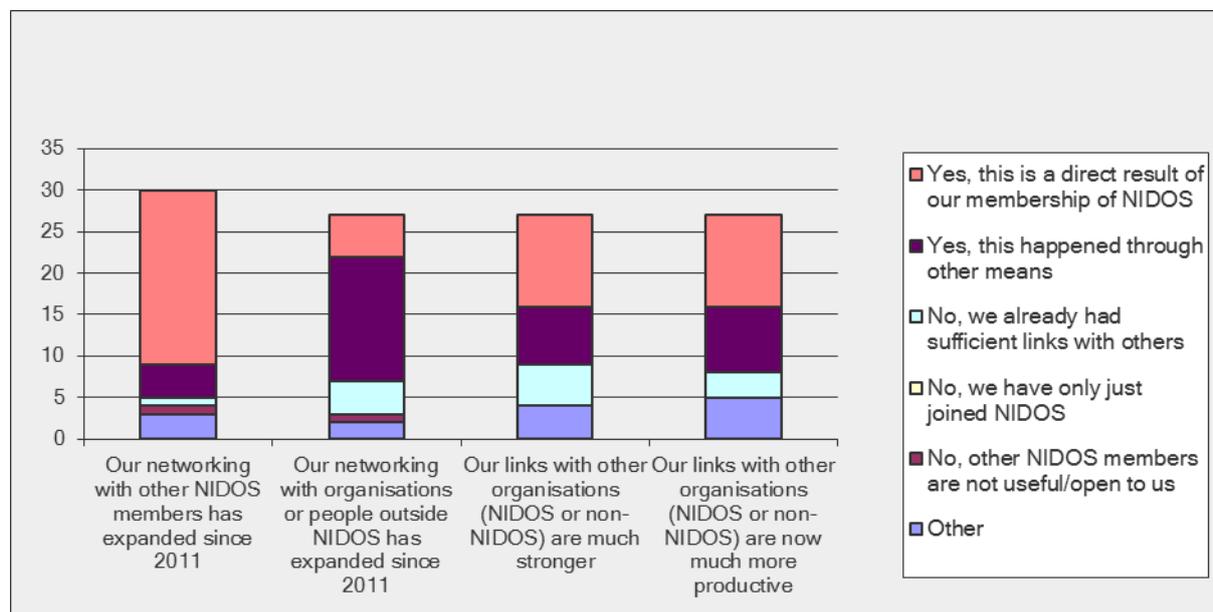


Figure 3 – the influence of NIDOS membership on networking

So, 72% of respondents said their networking with other NIDOS members had expanded since 2011 and 40% saying their links with other organisations were now much stronger. One member organisation had felt the benefit of networking in their sector: “We mainly network with organisations with an interest in HIV and development. As a result of the membership of NIDOS, we are able to identify ourselves and find those who may help to advocate on the issue”.

Another stated: “We are better connected with larger NGOs and this has helped influence some of our broader development thinking”

In terms of networking with other sectors, NIDOS members made the following suggestions:

- More direct contact with specific NGOS of similar size, goals and in the same sector ‘to help us improve as a charity’ – a form of mentoring
- NIDOS has helped us network with other NGOS, less with politicians or civil servants.
- Business
- Academics
- Specific health-related networks (HIV, palliative care, disability)

One member organisation pointed out that there is a place for networking through NIDOS, but they explained it was still important for them to network directly with ‘academics and businesspeople on our own terms, as we relate to them about our own specific matters, i.e. programmes and funding’.

4. Findings relevant to Outcome 2 - defined as ‘Strengthening capacity of individual NIDOS member organisations’ particularly in relation to financial base, advocacy capacity and response to climate change impacts on development

i. Strengthening Members’ capacity to raise funds

Around 50% of questionnaire respondents felt NIDOS advice helped them:

- improve their funding base,
- improve their knowledge of potential relevant funders
- improve relations with their funders
- enable them to better meet reporting requirements.

While an additional 11-36% said such improvements were a direct result of their interaction with NIDOS.

Of particular note was the statistic that 11 respondents (36% of the total) had received funds from the Scottish Government as a direct result of NIDOS help. Six other respondents had received funds from other donors through their support.

These figures show a substantial success and indicate that NIDOS has built members’ capacity as planned. This is particularly noteworthy when 8 out of the 31 member organisations who replied to the questionnaire stated they did not rely on NIDOS for funding

advice or support. There are various reasons for this. For example, from the interviews, it was clear that larger organisations have complex funding streams, including the Disasters Emergency Committee for specific crises, and their funding is often organised by their headquarters, rather than their Scottish offices. In addition, some members interviewed mentioned that they could not access Scottish government funds as members working in Eastern Europe and Kenya mentioned they were not eligible.

These are some sample funding-related responses from different organisations:

A medium-sized member said:

‘DFID is our most important funder..... NIDOS helped arrange our training meeting about UK Aid Match in Glasgow. Scottish Government is important to us, and we have just applied for a large grant from them. If successful, this will make them second in importance to DFID for us. NIDOS gives me advice by email about when rounds are expected. Major donors are our next most important, and we are very successful with them. We have a member of staff dedicated to this, and NIDOS helps through enabling us to follow the NIDOS Effectiveness Toolkit, and we then tell major donors our achievements with the Toolkit. Trusts are our next most important. Again, it helps if we tell them we are members of NIDOS, as it shows our engagement and professionalism. A small contribution from NIDOS, but important.’

A developing organisation joined NIDOS as part of their overall funding strategy to help raise their profile, gather information on potential funders and enhance their application skills, and it has worked well.

Another developing organisation found the newsletter listing of funders particularly useful in drawing funders to their attention. ‘NIDOS support has been very beneficial in our relations with the Scottish Government grant’.

a very small organisation said NIDOS helped to devise their funding strategy and they are now almost entirely funded.

A small organisation received advice on the need for more up to date information, so applied for a grant to conduct a feasibility study which is under way.

One very small organisation had little interest in funding advice, as they do not need a great funding base.

One small organisation requested more one-to-one support to help with bid-writing as accessing the data base was not sufficient for them.

ii. **Strengthening members' advocacy capacity**

The positive feedback related to NIDOS' help to build their policy and advocacy capacity is effectively even more impressive as 17 of the 48 members who responded to the questionnaire or were interviewed stated that they do not do advocacy. In some cases this is because they are the Scottish branch of a larger organisation which does do advocacy. One medium-sized organisation said while they do not do advocacy, it is still important for them to understand the issues: 'this is part of being a responsible aid agency and through NIDOS, we have met with Scottish government officials, civil servants and DFID staff'. Another, developing organisation said that as a niche organisation, they see the need for advocacy but prefer to leave this to others, so they can focus their resources on practical action. Equally, some of the large organisations which do conduct their own advocacy, feel their message is stronger if voiced with others through NIDOS.

In terms of statistics:

35% of those who responded to the questionnaire said they do not do advocacy work.

61% said NIDOS had helped increase their knowledge of Scottish International Development Policy

55% noted improvements with regard to understanding of UK International Development Policy

68% with regard to information about the Millennium Development Goals and the Post-2015 debate

16% had improved their media or advocacy skills

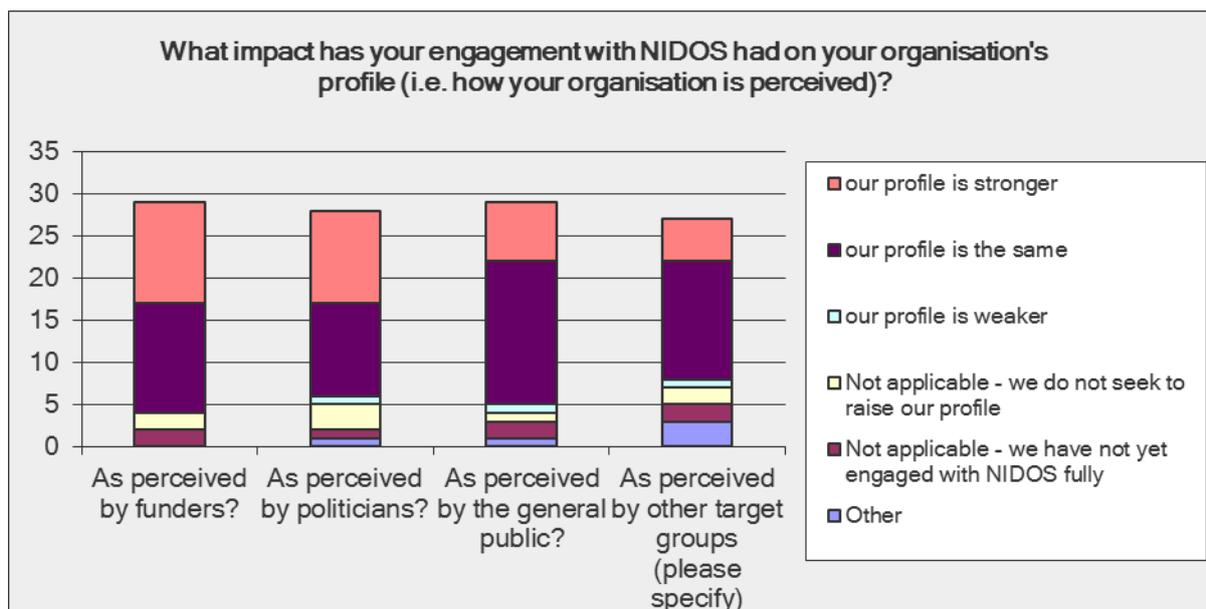
23% noted improvements in their relationships with decision makers

16% said they were now more involved in advocacy activities

13% had built climate resilience into their work.

The statistics indicate a high level of NIDOS impact on members' understanding of the first three issues – the Post-2015 agenda, UK international development policy and Scotland's international development policy, even if not all of those members then go on to do policy advocacy for themselves.

Obviously, one aim of conducting advocacy is to influence decision-makers and this issue is explored below in section 6 where feedback from stakeholders, including decision-makers, is provided. In addition, advocacy can enhance an organisation's profile. The survey posed a specific question about this and the responses are shown below in figure 4:



So, 12 out of 30 (or 40%) respondents to this question felt their profile was now stronger with funders, 11 had a stronger profile with politicians, seven with the general public and five with other target groups, which one specified as meaning their international partners. One comment made by medium-sized member organisation was ‘major and institutional donors and politicians are all impressed that we are a member of our professional body and that we follow their professional development programme’.

In the individual interviews, one medium organisation had valued the Scotland v Poverty exhibition as a useful way to raise their public profile and others in the same field. Others were not so interested in raising their profile through NIDOS and one major organisation said it may even dilute theirs, as the messages are mingled with others.

The capacity of members to conduct advocacy is closely related to Outcome Four which looks at the impact of that advocacy – the ability to collectively engage with and influence key stakeholders. This is explored in the following section of this report.

iii. Strengthening members’ response to climate change impacts on development

The low level of commitment to build climate resilience into programming shown in the previous section was also reflected in the interviews. One large organisation responded that there was no demand from their partners to incorporate climate resilience – this response could indicate a way forward, namely that international NGOs have a role to play in creating this demand in this relatively new policy area.

5. Findings relevant to Outcome 3 – defined as ‘Increased and strengthened engagement of NIDOS members with Diasporan and Southern partner organisations ‘

Members were asked ‘what impact has your engagement with NIDOS had on your relations with diasporan communities?’ Diasporan organisations were asked to make this clear, and provide information in a separate field. Twenty three per cent of the questionnaire respondents skipped this question and 30% of the remainder said they were not trying to build links with the diaspora community. So, out of the 15 who did reply, five said their knowledge of the diasporan community had improved and two said their involvement had improved. The remainder said their knowledge or involvement had stayed the same.

The one diasporan group which did reply said their contacts with others took place in forum other than NIDOS. They urged NIDOS to promote opportunities for them to engage with international actors, by promoting board vacancies or other voluntary roles in the e-newsletter. One member organisation clarified that while they do not have involvement with diaspora organisations as such, they appreciate the opportunity provided during NIDOS networking events ‘to learn from them and help them to understand us’. Another welcomed the fact that NIDOS had introduced them to the Scotland Tanzania Network.

In two interviews – one with a member organisation and another with a stakeholder – it was raised that while different communities should be free to define themselves, efforts should be made to expand NIDOS’ reach into the Indian and Pakistani communities in Scotland, and the member organisation noted that there had been no follow up to an initiative with these communities in Glasgow during 2014. Another member indicated that their work with asylum seekers brings them into close contact with a range of immigrant communities which could open up opportunities for NIDOS to work with them. A couple of member organisations who are also members of the Scotland Malawi Partnership suggested NIDOS could learn from their positive experience of working with the Malawian diaspora. One stakeholder suggested they and NIDOS should also reach out to diaspora communities in terms of recruitment.

The disparity between the findings relating to diaspora groups and data about more general networking may indicate that if more diaspora groups were members and if more other members attended diaspora-specific events, the networking with them would happen more systematically. This is reflected in NIDOS’ next business plan 2014 - 2017, where there is no separate Diaspora-specific outcome, but rather a number of specific diaspora related outputs across different outcomes in the Business Plan which aims ‘to ensure that diasporan communities are better served by the full range of NIDOS services and activities’.

6. Findings relevant to Outcome 4 – defines as ‘Strengthened collective engagement with and influence on the key stakeholders ‘

Connected to this Outcome is members’ capacity to influence and knowledge of major policy issues – these were covered earlier under 4 (ii). To assess how far this outcome has been achieved in relation to the stakeholders, the evaluation set out to gauge what stakeholders knew of NIDOS’ work and how they understood the Network’s role.

i. Stakeholder awareness of NIDOS activities and perceptions of the Network’s role:

The first question asked stakeholders to identify which specific NIDOS services and functions they were aware of and whether these were useful or added value to the stakeholder’s aims. Figure 5 shows the full set of answers:

Which of following NIDOS services/functions are you aware of? Do you see these as useful or adding value to what your agency/organisation is aiming to achieve? Tick all that apply.				
Answer Options	I am aware of this	Did not know NIDOS did this	Does not add value to achievement of our aims	Does/would add value to achievement of our aims
Increasing effectiveness of its member organisations	7	0	0	2
Organising training courses/workshops	7	0	0	2
Providing networking opportunities	7	0	0	2
Providing funding advice and support	7	0	0	2
Forming member working groups, for example, working group on South Asia	6	1	0	2
Organising member advocacy strategy days	5	2	0	2
Participation in stakeholders' working groups/round table discussions	7	0	0	1
Building links between Diasporan community groups and others involved in development	6	1	0	2

Additional information gathered from individual interviews echoed similarly high levels of awareness.

Another open question asked how the respondent understood NIDOS role and what they believe is its contribution to the international development sector in Scotland. A similar question was posed during the interviews with stakeholders. The way stakeholders perceived NIDOS’ role is partially determined by the type of relationship their role demands – obviously, a funder would interact with NIDOS differently from BOND – the UK membership body for international development organisations and other members of the UK Alliance of National Networks for International Development.

The following box contains a sample of representative responses:

Supports and strengthens Scotland's small but dynamic international development NGO sector

An important network, which provides capacity building support for members and facilitates common policy positions and a common voice

NIDOS provides vital support to their member organisations through general advice and guidance, specialist training and support as well as liaising with the Scottish and UK Governments, funders and other agencies in the field of international development

Raises the profile of Scottish NGOS

Useful for us to gauge the mood of its members on an issue and to get our messages to a range of groups efficiently

Others talk of 'combined weight' and 'representing the interests of members in appropriate forums, including those run by the Scottish Government'.

Of particular value to the Welsh Hub was NIDOS' sharing of experiences during the Alliance meetings.

These comments indicate a high level of awareness of NIDOS role and a generalised understanding of its overall role.

ii. Stakeholder interaction with NIDOS and its members

To assess the level of collective engagement with stakeholders, another question was posed: When/how do you come into contact with NIDOS?

The most consistent way Stakeholders interact with NIDOS is through staff and the network's board. Apart from one respondent who said this was not their role, all stakeholders said they met with NIDOS staff and/or board frequently or occasionally.

In terms of contact with NIDOS members, funding stakeholders meet them in the context of funding requests and those involved in policy making have been lobbied by NIDOS members on a specific topic. One donor commented how the Effectiveness work done through NIDOS has made it easier for them to achieve accountability for the funds that are spent.

Apart from one respondent who said it was not their role, there was frequent or occasional collaboration between stakeholders and NIDOS on joint projects or activities. In the context of a joint DIFD-funded project between BOND and NIDOS, this would be quite intensive. For AFFORD, they welcomed working with NIDOS on a diaspora hearing with the Scottish

Government in 2012: ‘It enabled Scottish diaspora groups to raise awareness of their contributions in international development, the challenges they face, and the policy ideas they proposed’.

The Welsh Hub felt NIDOS played a particularly supportive role “Enabling more inclusive debate on development in Scotland is of interest to us, even if it isn't where the sector in Wales is at. NIDOS provides excellent peer advice and support to Wales to enhance the capacity of the Welsh sector through sharing best practice and through collaboration”. Similarly, CADA Northern Ireland – the Northern Irish member of the UK Alliance - has welcomed the opportunity to learn from NIDOS’ experience and is discussing the possibility of replicating a model similar to NIDOS’ with civil servants in Northern Ireland.

Other interactions might be more structured such as quarterly meetings with the Scottish government, supplemented by specific meetings as issues arise.

iii. Stakeholders’ relationship with NIDOS

Stakeholders were asked what type of relationship they have with NIDOS and its members. The different answers reflect the variety of activities of the different stakeholders, with some using NIDOS as a sounding board for the sector’s views, and others wanting support for their funding activities, rather than any criticism of NIDOS. The table in figure 6 below shows how stakeholders completed the sentence ‘we expect NIDOS, through its members to:

What type of relationship do you have with NIDOS and its members? We expect NIDOS, through its members, to:				
Answer Options	Yes, this is the main focus of our relationship	Yes, this happens occasionally	No, this is not relevant to us	No, NIDOS and its members are not in a position to provide this
Enhance or inform our funding strategy	1	1	4	0
Build the capacity of our grantees	2	1	3	0
Gauge the mood of civil society	1	2	3	0
Provide feedback on our policy proposals	1	1	4	0
Enable more inclusive debate on development in Scotland	1	3	2	0

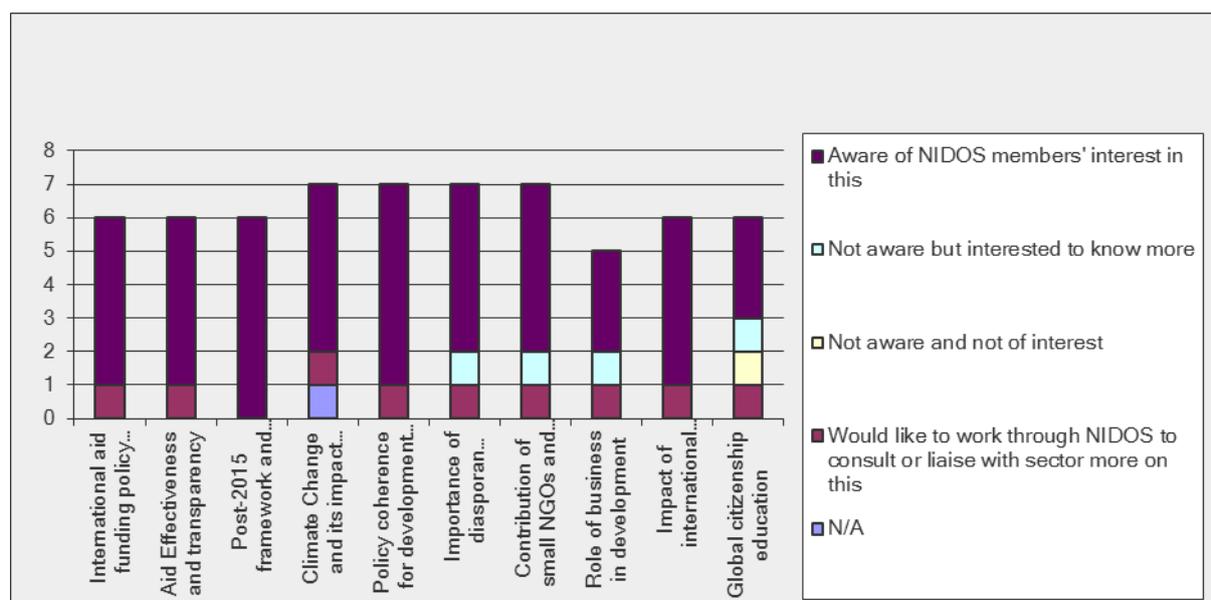
Individual interviews provided information about other types of relationships with NIDOS and its members. One funder has been able to reach out to smaller NGOs thanks to their membership of NIDOS

One issue which emerged relates to providing funding advice and support. A government representative felt NIDOS should support their push for new reporting requirements but felt NIDOS had instead voiced members’ concerns about these requirements.

Another issue raised by questions by stakeholders and members was about whether it is NIDOS role to generate debate, or respond to policy proposals. With reference to the debate around policy coherence, one respondent – a fellow network – welcomed NIDOS taking the lead on this issue. By contrast, a government representative felt NIDOS should collaborate more closely on such issues, bringing a civil society perspective to government policy and both government representatives felt the government was already incorporating good policy coherence practice, and so saw little added value to NIDOS’ work on this issue. One Scottish Government representative did not think NIDOS should be developing policy recommendations and then seek government buy in. This tension is summed up in the following statement: “Both the Scottish Government and NIDOS have grown since their formation and NIDOS needs to re-evaluate its role, as the Government has done”. However, it may also indicate a misunderstanding of NIDOS’ independence.

iv. Stakeholder perceptiton of NIDOS advocacy role

Figure 7 below shows high levels of stakeholder awareness of NIDOS members’ interest in a range of issues



A few stakeholder comments raised queries about NIDOS’ advocacy role and require further consideration, for example:

One respondent would welcome more clarity about NIDOS' role and suggested the network's mission and core values could be spelled out on their website, as the Scotland Malawi Partnership does. This would include clarity that NIDOS represents its members, rather than speaking on behalf of civil society as a whole.

There was some confusion about NIDOS' role with the UK Government on UK-wide issues. One suggested NIDOS interact directly with UK-wide funders, rather than relying on links with the funders' Scottish offices. While BOND felt they collaborated well at times with NIDOS, they also made clear that they retain the overall representation role for NGOs across the whole of the UK and NIDOS is one of their stakeholders, like many others.

And connected to this point, is an issue that NIDOS has not made clear what/whether there is a special role for Scotland and Scottish NGOs in international development - if that is to happen, Scotland (including NIDOS) have to take that message to the rest of the UK and beyond – 'the world won't come to Scotland – we have to go out to them'.

These comments go beyond NIDOS' interaction with the stakeholders who responded and suggest other ways NIDOS might achieve its goal to influence stakeholder policy or practice more broadly. While these comments represent a challenge to NIDOS, they also indicate that NIDOS is seen as a serious player, whose role is evolving and worthy of expansion, if clarification.

In conclusion with regard to Outcome 4, the evidence provided through this evaluation clearly indicates a high level of engagement with the responding stakeholders on a range of issues. This has been well received, although questions have been raised as to who NIDOS represents and what its role is. The trickier question of what influence NIDOS and its members may have had on those stakeholders would require further interrogation and a full impact assessment, which was beyond the scope of this evaluation.

7. Other findings:

Specific comments on NIDOS advocacy work

This issue emerged from interviews with a few members and stakeholders. The prominence given to this issue may have been influenced by the October Annual Seminar where the main focus was on the future of international development and the potential for Scotland to influence and the fact that the Smith Commission process was underway at the time of this Evaluation. It had not featured as a specific question in the survey.

With reference to the content of the reports NIDOS has prepared, two related questions emerged : how does NIDOS choose what to advocate upon? Who is it speaking for? One small member felt their voice and experience was not heard and that the positions taken reflected the views of an inner circle, while another small member organisation had the opposite experience – felt neither excluded nor on the inside – feeling at ease to raise a voice and be heard when a topic was relevant.

Some the larger members have the capacity to take a lead role in drafting advocacy papers and have done so when this complements their own individual interests. Equally, one small member with close organisational links to a larger group, felt NIDOS provided an opportunity for them to share their learning and get their message into the International Development sector. This points to another issue raised about NIDOS overall role – as a network, it should not replace the work of individual members and certainly its resources are slim compared to many.

Another related question raised was whether the messages should reflect the range of members' opinions, or be more directive. One government representative valued the far-ranging reports reflecting contrasting views, one member felt NIDOS should feel freer to float ideas to generate debate, and another government representative said it might be better to keep quiet rather than produce something which represents all views, preferring instead a more decisive report that is evidence-based. One large member organisation felt policy debates were not NIDOS' strong point – they risk falling prey to becoming the mouthpiece of the powerful players who want their message to pass and smaller ones who are not prepared to take any potential backlash.

Members' suggestions for changes/improvements:

Changes to newsletter:

- Include a reading list of articles and novels relevant to development issues. The example given was 'It's our turn to eat' by Michaela Wong
- More analytical and article-driven, like the re-vamped Third Sector magazine – members could contribute and coordinate this section of the newsletter.
- A diaspora community group would value NIDOS promoting opportunities for international engagement in its e-newsletter e.g. promoting board vacancies or other

volunteer opportunities. This service does exist, but is clearly not used by all who could benefit from it and NIDOS could raise awareness of this opportunity more.

Other communication ideas:

- Regular column in national press featuring articles about international development. This could be a vehicle to members' voices, or to discuss
- Less communication! This member did not see NIDOS communications are requiring immediate attention as there is so much.

Additional working groups:

- International development's role in industrialising countries with a view to influencing Scottish Government policy on its selection of partners and countries of focus
- Scotland's role in asylum issues and the social support offered to asylum seekers
- Faith-based groups, with the aim of exploring their strengths and weaknesses and encouraging them to become development organisations

Further support for small NGOS:

- More attention to smaller members ensuring their experience is valued and their voice reflected in publications and activities.
- NIDOS to support members in finding and training interns - this might include a preliminary selection process and basic training in report writing – as mistaken selection presents a major burden to a small NGO.
- Providing consultancy support for small NGOS (this does in fact exist, but is currently underused – again NIDOS could do more to raise awareness of their mentoring programme).
- Timing of events: a couple of members suggested that trainings be organised at weekends or in the evening so that NGOs without paid staff can attend. Another suggestion was that by using web-conferencing small member organisations can access these when they are available.

Other ideas emerging from the survey and interviews:

- NIDOS should consider whether its current approach to bad practice – namely, encouraging good practice through the effectiveness toolkit, and providing space for members to share their mistakes- is sufficient. , Should there be another response to initiatives which may do harm to local initiative/businesses by sending clothes, for example?
- Re-think some events/activities– if they are not so well attended, why is that? Are there too many?
- Open up the debate on the Scottish Government's focus on Malawi where corruption is a major problem

- Unlock funding streams beyond Scotland
- NIDOS to work more closely with BOND and secure preferential rates for their training courses which are beyond the reach of many Scottish NGOS when travel costs factored in
- NIDOS should be more open to social enterprise/fair trade groups and allow them full NIDOS membership
- More events in Glasgow, as travel to Edinburgh costly and time-consuming.
- A couple of members – one large and one small - expressed concern that NIDOS’ involvement in the Scottish Referendum debate had been partisan.

C. Concluding comments – lessons learned – from the evaluation

NIDOS provides an excellent service to the international development sector. Through its support, many member organisations are increasingly professional and aware of the global context in which they work. In addition to the activities and formal services, the readily available and sound individual advice was highly prized by members as well as NIDOS’ openness to new ideas and suggestions.

It is clear from the evaluation process that international development in Scotland is at a turning point:

- Globally, the post-2015 debates are likely to entail a ‘beyond aid’ approach to development which will present a challenge to the international development sector, including in Scotland. NIDOS’ has already stepped into this debate through its advocacy on Policy Coherence.
- Within Scotland, the Smith Commission has made recommendations for further devolution of powers and NIDOS has presented its submission.
- The intensified debate on devolution leaves room for Scottish civil society, including NIDOS and its members, to define what Scotland’s contribution to international development is
- If the Sustainable Development Goals are adopted and remain similar to those currently proposed, the demand for policy coherence will present a challenge to government and civil society alike.
- And, the Scottish Government is tightening its procedures over the grants it makes for international development.

| This will require NIDOS to ensure- its role evolves in such a way as to face these challenges. This could mean embracing a broader membership, adopting new approaches to embrace the new Sustainable Development Goals, including acquiring expertise on development finance or adopting a watchdog role in terms of policy coherence.

It is also important to be realistic. NIDOS includes 15 large members, with a budget of over £1m – including some major international development agencies – but just over half of the members are small or very small, with an annual turnover of less than £100,000. NIDOS has

five staff and a turnover of around £190,000, and is between 75 and 80% funded by the Scottish Government. This financial landscape creates some imbalance in terms of capacity and level of interest.

Of equal importance is the fact that NIDOS members secure funds of over £50 million a year, while the Scottish Government has a development budget of about just £10 million per year. So, while NIDOS and the Scottish Government are keen to define Scotland's added value, this touches upon the much larger political and UK-wide debate of devolution.

The diverse membership of NIDOS is a strength in that the cross-fertilisation of ideas is seen as very beneficial to many members. It does present some challenges too:

- How to professionalise those who are too busy to look at their own policy and practice and MAY not be in line with the aim of sustainable development
- Who NIDOS is speaking for when, for example, it presents its submission to the Smith Commission? The voice may be stronger for being united, but how should NIDOS reflect conflicting views? If the full range of views are reflected, does this still have a value?
- What influence the high level of government funding has on NIDOS' autonomy and relationship with the Scottish Government? The evaluation did not come across any implication that NIDOS had been circumscribed by the amount of government funding it receives. However, it did seem to confuse relations with the government, over how NIDOS should respond to stricter reporting requirements, for example. It was also interesting to observe that eight members of the Scottish Government's International Development team attended NIDOS' Annual Seminar, which followed the 2014 AGM.

A couple of other issues emerged which deserve further consideration:

NIDOS is one civil society network in Scotland among others. Even closer collaboration with other networks could bring greater value.

NIDOS' experience is observed and admired by the Alliance members in Wales and Northern Ireland. Enhanced exchanges between all Alliance members, including the much larger BOND, could strengthen the contribution of these different components of civil society to UK-wide development thinking.

D. Suggestions for further consideration:

This Section provides some recommendations arising from Evaluation which the Evaluator believes deserve further consideration. They represent an informed 'outsiders' perspective. It is for NIDOS to decide how best to tackle the issues raised.

1. Developing a Theory of Change could help to clarify NIDOS' contribution and strengthen future evaluations. To achieve this:
 - a. It should clarify NIDOS' overall role,

- b. It should explore how NIDOS should best interact with members and different types of stakeholders
 - c. It should clarify the role of policy statements in achieving that change
 - d. This should be an inclusive process
- 2. Consider the pros and cons of securing a broader funding base. This could be part of a process of clarifying relations with the Scottish Government and strengthening NIDOS to allow it more freedom to prepare its own materials
- 3. Consider encouraging membership from social enterprise groups and others in preparation for the application of policy coherence. This may require an internal debate on how to relate to business-oriented approaches to development
- 4. To further meet the needs of smaller member organisations and volunteers working within the sector, use web conferencing facilities wherever possible and consider the proposal to provide basic training to prepare interns that small members would welcome
- 5. Consider additional working groups as suggested by evaluation respondents, which would provide an opportunity to share experience on:
 - a. International development's role in industrialising countries with a view to influencing Scottish Government policy on its selection of partners and countries of focus
 - b. Scotland's role in asylum issues and the social support offered to asylum seekers
 - c. Faith-based groups, with the aim of exploring their strengths and weaknesses and encouraging them to become development organisations

And perhaps a fourth one on NIDOS role (see recommendation 2)

- 6. Re-think approach to climate resilience as the current strategy is not having significant impact. Members need encouragement to take this seriously and to ensure commitment from their partner organisations.
- 7. Interaction with Diaspora groups should be mainstreamed as reflected in the next business plan. However, this may still require pro-active approaches, such as offering internships or mentoring to meet the groups' needs and reaching out to other diaspora groups.



ANNEX 1: Terms of Reference for this Evaluation

**NIDOS – External Evaluation of NIDOS impact assessment
3 years: 2011 - 2014**

Terms of Reference – updated August 2014

A. Background and Aims:

For the period April 2011 – March 2014 NIDOS worked to the summary business plan in Appendix 1, which has one overall aim and five planned outcomes as follows:

Aim: To improve the contributions of Scottish organisations to poverty reduction worldwide

Planned outcomes for achieving this aim:

- II. Improved effectiveness of more Scottish International Development CSOs in relation to their Accountability, Transparency and Governance, Partnerships, Sustainability and Learning approaches
- III. Strengthened capacity of individual NIDOS member organisations, particularly in relation to financial base, advocacy capacity and response to climate change impacts on development
- IV. Outcome 3a: Increased and strengthened engagement of diasporan organisations and community in NIDOS and in using our services
Outcome 3b: Increased and strengthened engagement of NIDOS with Southern platform organisations
- V. Strengthened collective engagement with and influence on the key stakeholders, particularly in Scotland, that have influence on international development.
- VI. Strengthened NIDOS good practice and sustainability.

B. Evaluation remit and clarification of terms

NIDOS plans to evaluate its achievements and impact against this aim and these outcomes so as to be able to strengthen its impact in the future. The results will also inform NIDOS about directing its scarce resources in the most effective way in the future and in strengthening the delivery of its new Business Plan for 2014 - 2017.

We are therefore looking for an agency to externally evaluate NIDOS and its work against the above aim and outcomes. We have also outlined key outputs under each outcome and also indicators that we have been using to measure our impact in relation to these outputs and outcomes.

C. Scope of evaluation work:

In evaluating NIDOS's work over the last 3 years, please use the frameworks in Appendix 1 which includes both a summary of the workplan outcomes and our monitoring and evaluation framework which should inform the external review.

We have three key Evaluation aims:

1: To gather feedback from NIDOS members about the impact of use of NIDOS services and collective facilitation efforts in relation to the first four Outcomes and related indicators - as

outlined in our business plan – the evaluation would review progress against the outcomes and indicators outlined in relation to this in Appendix 1.

The key services and collective facilitation efforts include:

- NIDOS Effectiveness programme services: through website; the Effectiveness toolkit and associated support services and outreach work, including mentoring service and provision of template policies and examples from other organisations; effectiveness related events; enquiry support service
- NIDOS training courses and workshops
- NIDOS networking events and conferences
- Funding advice and support services, including: Trustfunding.org access; Funding Directory; fundraising advice surgeries; funding information sessions with funders including Scottish Government, DFID, Comic Relief and Big Lottery;
- NIDOS working groups – including Small NGOs group; Funding Group; South Asia group; Good Practice Group
- NIDOS Advocacy strategy days and follow up activity on Post-2015, Scotland’s place in building a just world report, Scotland v Poverty exhibition, Small Grants programme with Scottish Government
- NIDOS work with the African and Asia diasporan community, including under Africa-UK

(NIDOS’s information services – Newsletter, general website and enquiries service will be reviewed separately through an internal review process)

- Key issues to evaluate: have these services, and which ones:
 - Increased access to and use of resources (information, events and peer learning) about effectiveness
 - Supported review of effectiveness within their organisation
 - Enabled action to strengthen their effectiveness, particularly where weaknesses have been identified through the review – particularly in the following areas:
 - strengthened organisational governance: improved knowledge of good practice and strengthened practice among Trustees and senior officers in management of resources (financial, human and assets)
 - strengthened monitoring and evaluation systems
 - strengthened relationships with southern partner organisations with whom members work to plan and deliver their work (both projects and advocacy)
 - Has NIDOS engagement strengthened their organisation’s financial resilience: - e.g.through:
 - improved knowledge of potential relevant funders;
 - improved relationships with these funders;
 - improved fundraising skills, confidence and expertise;
 - increased success in fundraising
- Has NIDOS engagement increased their policy and advocacy capacity: - e.g. through
 - improved knowledge of international development policy in Scotland and UK:
 - increased advocacy skills;
 - improved relationships with key decision makers (and if so, which ones)
 - increased engagement in advocacy activity (and if so, which activities)
- Has NIDOS engagement increased their organisation’s profile and marketing? E.g. through increased profile with funders, politicians, the public, etc.
- Has NIDOS engagement increased their knowledge of and engagement with

diasporan community in Scotland with an interest in international development?

- Has NIDOS engagement increased either/both:
 - the number of new relationships that have been built with other organisations
 - value and nature of networking relationships with other organisations.

It would be useful to also ask members to rank the top three benefits of using NIDOS Services, the top three impacts of being part of the NIDOS network and identify top three things that NIDOS should do / offer that we do not currently, if any.

Also, how they rank value for money of NIDOS membership cost.

2. To gather information from Stakeholders / Partners, about how NIDOS has increased their understanding of Scotland's international development sector and contributed to the delivery of their aims: main stakeholders to be contacted:

Scottish Government;

DFID;

European and External Relations Committee members, Scottish Parliament;

Comic Relief;

Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland;

Scottish Universities with international development departments;

Bond, Welsh Hub and CADA Northern Ireland (i.e. other members of the UK Alliance)

Other international networks in Scotland: Scotland Malawi Partnership, Scottish Fair Trade Forum and IDEAS

Diasporan led organisations: Africa Council and their International Development Forum; AFFORD

Southern Partners: TANGO and AWAAZ CDS

3. To review what we learn from this feedback and how we can improve our performance, activities and services in the future.

D. Evaluation activities:

- Develop an interview questionnaire to gather the relevant information from members in telephone or face to face interviews, and a sub-set of this questionnaire to circulate to all members by survey monkey
- Develop a survey monkey based questionnaire for stakeholders/partners to gather the relevant information and feedback and circulate this
- Carry out interviews with a minimum of 20 NIDOS member organisations (including 10 small organisations, 4 medium organisations, 4 large organisations and 2 associate organisations) – this can include a mixture of at least 15 telephone/face to face interviews and one focus group (the latter in Edinburgh or Glasgow)
- Follow up stakeholders to secure their engagement with the online survey – one email follow up and one phone follow up maximum
- Collate and analyse data from both online and face to face responses and produce a written report on the results of the evaluation and their implications / recommendations for strengthening future NIDOS work under the new Business Plan for 2014 - 2017.

NB NIDOS will have a volunteer who will follow up with NIDOS Members who are sent the survey monkey and are not chosen for interview, to build online engagement with the survey. However they will not be available to arrange interview times or for follow up of partners.

E. Timetable: though this is flexible to some extent as the notice is short!

Tender to be re-submitted by
First drafts of the two questionnaires produced by

9 September 2014
late Sept 2014

Discuss and agree final version of questionnaires with NIDOS	late Sept 2014
Final version of questionnaires on survey monkey by	early Oct 2014
Individual interviews /focus group	During Oct 2014
First draft of key outcomes of evaluation	mid November 2014
Final report on evaluation	late November 2014

We anticipate that this research will require about 15 days maximum and our budget for this research is a maximum of £5,500

F. NIDOS payment schedule:

First payment (30% of fee) at satisfactory set up of final survey questions on survey monkey
 Second payment (40%) at submission of evidence of completion of face to face interviews

Final payment (remaining 30%) on successful completion of work

What NIDOS means by successful completion:

- A minimum of 15 but hopefully 20 (telephone/face to face) interviews secured and successfully carried out (at least 60% of questions answered) with the noted profile of participants by type of organisation – where an interview does not secure 60% of answers then a further interview will be carried out to complete the minimum of 15 successful interviews.
- Provision of records of each individual interview
- Provision of collated data set for interviews and online survey responses, broken down by outcome and by type of organisation (large, medium, small and associate)
- Summary report of key findings and implications/recommendations
- Provision of final report including key findings, analysis of results and recommendations for future strengthening of NIDOS work and approach

(please see Appendix 3 on next page)

If you want to bid for this work please send the following to Gillian Wilson, Chief Executive by emailing gillian@nidos.org.uk by 9 September 2014:

ANNEX 2:

RECORD OF INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS CARRIED OUT FOR NIDOS EXTERNAL EVALUATION

Wednesday 22 October - EDINBURGH		
Neil Mathers	Save the Children and Children of Songea Trust	Full member, Large Full member small
Thursday 23 October		
NIDOS AGM		
Friday 24 October		
Gillian Wilson	Chief Executive, NIDOS	
Joanna Keating	Stakeholder – Scottish government	
Fiona Buchan	Union against TB and lung disease	Full member, medium
* Manuela Coletti	Youth for Economic Justice	Full member, very small
Monday 27 October – Glasgow		
John Briggs	Glasgow Centre for International Development, University of Glasgow	Associate member, non profit, large
Alisdair Barron	Children in Distress	Full member, medium
Diana Rix -coordinator	Refugee Survival Trust	Full member, developing
Tuesday 28 October		
Philippa Bonela	SCIAF and RST trustee	Full member, large
John Nelson	ACTSA	Full member, very Small
Wednesday 29 October – by phone		
* Mhairi Reed	Big Lottery	Stakeholder – funder
Afia Aslam	Islamic Relief	Full member, large
George McLaughlin	DFID	Stakeholder – UK government
Friday 31 October by phone		
May East	Gaia Education/CIFAL Scotland	Both organisations are full members, small
Monday 3 November		
Andrew Parker	Imani Development Foundation	Full member, small
*Sarah Mistry	Head of Effectiveness, Bond – in person	Stakeholder - UK wide ID network
Wednesday 5 November – by phone		
Kerry Dixon	Signpost International	
Richard Morrisson	Cairdeas International Palliative Care Trust	Brief exchange, as Richard had also completed questionnaire
Nick Hepworth	Water Witness International	
		Full member very small

Thursday 6 November – by phone		
John Riches	Just Trading	associate member non profit, small

*Indicates people who requested interview, rather than fill in the questionnaire, as opposed to those randomly selected for interview.

Interviews divided into categories:

4 x **Stakeholders** – from different domains

15 people, representing 17 member organisations:

3 X full members, large

2 X full members medium sized

3 x full members, developing

7 X full members small/very small

1 X associate member, non profit large

1 x associate member, non profit small