The sustainability of communities and their ability to thrive depends on their social capital. Social capital is the glue that holds communities together and the grease that makes the wheels turn.

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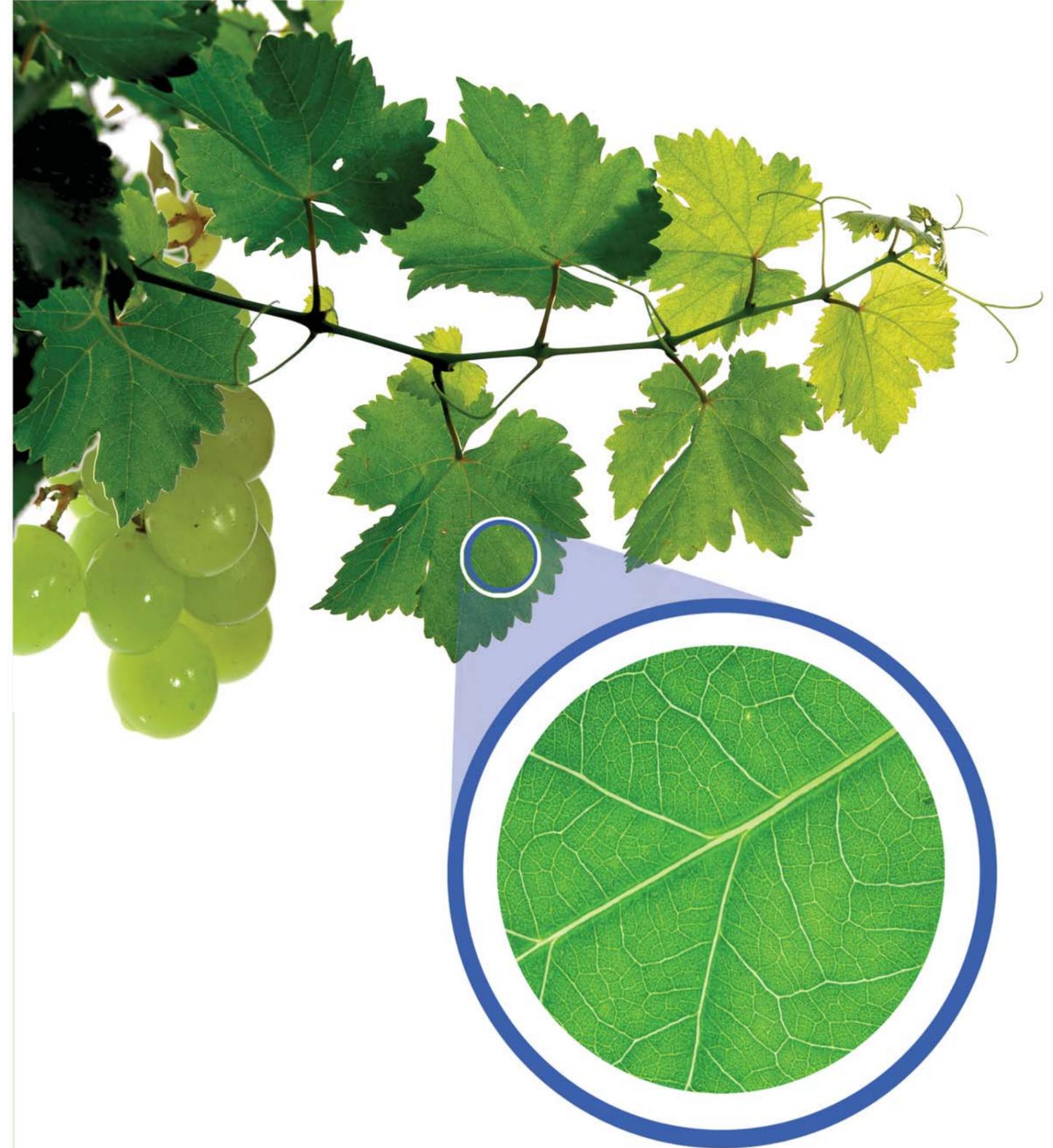
Social Capital Profile 2007

Report by Assist Social Capital

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a benchmark Social Capital Profile Report for the Network of International Development Organisations in Scotland (NIDOS). NIDOS aims to improve the effectiveness of Scotland's international development sector by facilitating and promoting the sharing of experience, ideas and information on international development policy and practice.

Social Capital Profiling identifies structures and activities that facilitate the flow of information and resources available in communities, aiding planning, reporting and benchmarking.

NIDOS' Social Capital Profile provides clear, multi-layered results of the mix in the quantity and quality of relationships and the norms & values of the network being formed. Prior to this Report the social capital being generated by NIDOS was un-reportable and therefore unmanageable.

SOCIAL CAPITAL

There is a growing amount of research that suggests social capital is beneficial to individuals and their communities socially (in terms of health, education and crime, etc.) and economically. Where social capital is high individuals and their communities are healthier, happier and more productive.

Social capital is defined by the OECD (Organisation for Economic and Co-operative Development) as "Networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups." There are four central aspects of social capital including networks (bridging, bonding linking), reciprocity, trust and norms & values.

Networks bond individuals in groups to each other, bridge the divides between groups and vertically link different levels of power and influence.

Bonding: strong supportive ties which occur within a group be it a family, club, religion, etc.

Bridging: weak ties that connect people horizontally across group boundaries; critical to providing access to new ideas, resources, communities and cultures.

Linking: ties occur vertically across boundaries of power and kudos. They connect people that may have similar ideals but who move in different 'circles'. Linking ties are important for strategic outcomes.

Reciprocity: occurs when a person gives to someone else, expecting a fair and tangible return at some undefined future date. Reciprocal interaction will often lead to relationships of trust.

Trust: the highest level of information and resource exchange takes place in relationships of trust. Built on knowledge of others being trustworthy.

Norms & Values: the basis for the underlying culture of any group or community, norms & values dictate the kind of relationships, and hence networks, being developed. Social Capital Profiling expresses norms & values of the 'community' as Well-being scores.

Well-being is assessed using a series of questions that report an individual's knowledge, approach to and acceptance of the norms & values of the community. The more positive the response the higher the well-being score.

OUTCOMES

Nineteen NIDOS Network members were interviewed (in total 21 were selected, two withdrew; one was un-contactable and replaced; the other was not replaced as they withdrew much later).

1.   The evaluation identified a total of 56 organisations. Fifty-three were members of the NIDOS network (83% of the total membership of 64), showing a high density of connection amongst members. Of the three other organisations named; one had been a member but had left; one was a London based organisation that had attended NIDOS events in the last year. Only one organisation named had never been a member or attended any NIDOS activities. This suggests members are clear about the identity of the NIDOS Network membership.

2.   The Social Capital Profile identifies NIDOS as an organisation that is successfully building social capital in its member's Network. As a direct result of NIDOS' activities, relationships amongst Network members increased by 255% after joining. Of the 188 relationships established 41% are bridging, 34% bonding and 25% linking. Eighteen percent of them are Reciprocal and 28% are Trusting. Overall the Network scored 61% for Well-being. Members believe NIDOS is doing an excellent job of disseminating relevant information; providing access to quality services and support, regardless of race, religion or political affiliation; and improving understanding of Scotland's International Development Sector. NIDOS' staff and the Network members themselves are of particular importance to members' involvement in the network. In general the perception of trust in the NIDOS Network is high.

3.   There are two instances of individual Network members showing significant gaps and weaknesses in their scores, putting them at risk of becoming disconnected from the Network. However, social capital theory suggests that in a 'community' with high social capital, even members with low scores will gain benefits from being part of that community.

4.   Social Network Analysis shows there is an extensive spread of relationships throughout the Network. While some members have larger numbers of network relationships, there are no obvious bottlenecks. Also despite Edinburgh and Glasgow having significant numbers of members each, relationships are still quite evenly spread between them and with other geographic areas. This demonstrates NIDOS is functioning as an effective connector for the international development sector within Scotland.

5.   A new NIDOS Network member will become part of an extended network which is working effectively to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes, i.e. the Make Poverty History campaign. Membership will provide them with opportunities to meet and learn from a wide variety of international development organisations based in Scotland and access to an extensive pool of knowledge and resources. A new member can expect to gain around 7 new contacts in the sector.

OBJECTIVES

1.   The NIDOS Network shows a rate of nearly 30% of all relationships as trusting. Trust is critical to social capital and to information and resource transfer. Increasing trust in the Network would be beneficial to the aims & objective of NIDOS. A feasible target might be to increase trust by 5% year on year.

2.   Trust cannot be demanded, but the connection between trust and reciprocity means that increasing activities that encourage reciprocity can help increase trust in a 'community'. A Common Resource Library (copyright free for NIDOS members) could help increase the level of reciprocal activity and maximise resources available to members, at low cost to NIDOS. A resource library could be accessed anywhere in the world by members via an intranet within the NIDOS website.

3.   While there is a broad understanding of why NIDOS was set up and its aims and objectives, there is less clarity around the workings of the Network. A Networking Manual would be a valuable information resource for all members. The Manual should include a 'Welcome and Induction' section. New members need to understand the culture in a community early on, to reduce the prospect of conflict through misunderstandings. This will allow NIDOS to incorporate new members into a culture that promotes reciprocity and mutual support effectively and for new members to feel included; facilitating the introduction of new contacts, information and resources to the Network.

4.   Members would like to be more involved in the decision making process. Input in decision making engenders belonging and commitment. A Working Group on Network development and further encouraging opportunities for open debate at AGMs etc. would help facilitate inclusive decision making.

5.   As Network members are spread across Scotland, some with staff often out of the country, and others with limited human resources, it would be valuable for NIDOS to maximise IT based group communication and decision making, such as the Yahoo Group or Survey Monkey. However, only 2 interviewees used the NIDOS Yahoo Group. An effective IT based communication strategy would strengthen group communication, facilitate dissemination of a Network Manual and promote IT based decision making via online surveys and voting.

6.   The large majority of NIDOS' members are based in the central belt. Focusing events there will tend to maximise benefit for the Network as a whole, and is environmentally more efficient. However, including events hosted by members further a field will help them stay connected and centrally based organisations may welcome the change.

7.   While Social Network Analysis shows the Management Committee are active members of the Network, there is a lack of clarity about the make up of the Management Committee. The Committee's value to the Network could be increased by providing information on its workings and also on its members and their external networks.

8.   Network members are developing links with strategic stakeholders (Scottish Executive, DFID, Lloyds TSB, commercial organisations, etc), however not through NIDOS. A strategy to engage more key stakeholders as Associate Members of the NIDOS Network may overcome this and be particularly valuable to members with limited access to strategic stakeholders (in NIDOS' case medium sized members appear to be struggling to develop linking ties).

RESULTS

Diagram 1 shows a substantial network is forming. As a result of NIDOS' activities, relationships amongst network members increased by 255% from 53 connections in the group pre-membership to 188 relationships post-membership of NIDOS.

This increase is significant; Scotland is a small country where many of the members would already have had opportunities to be in contact with each other prior to joining NIDOS.

The 19 members interviewed for this report had access to a total of 53 members of the NIDOS network (83% of the total membership). Three other organisations were named of these one had previously been a member and left, one was a London based organisation that had attended a number of training events in the last year and only one had never been a member or attended any NIDOS activities. Eighteen of the 19 interviewed showed increased access to Network members as a direct result of having joined NIDOS.

DIAGRAM 1

255% Increase in Relationships
Before and After Joining NIDOS

53

188

Before Joining
After Joining

DIAGRAM 2

Means of Communication

NIDOS Yahoo Group | Direct email | Fax | Phone | Other
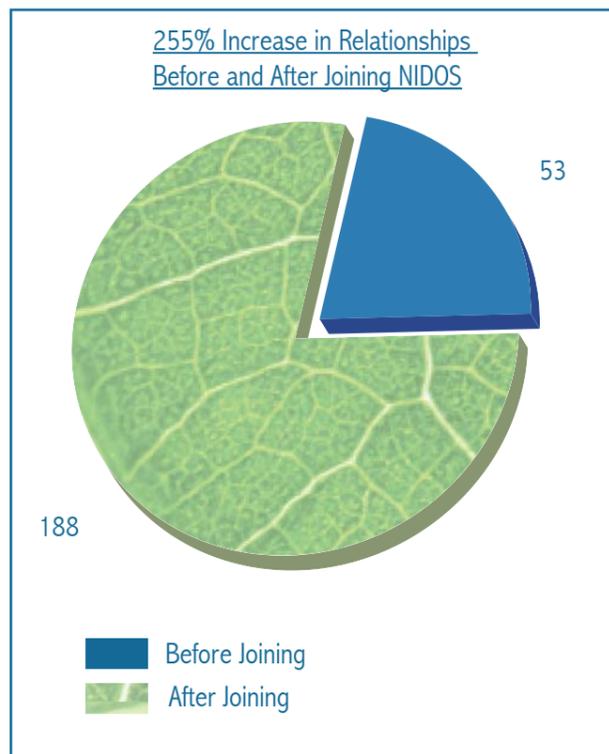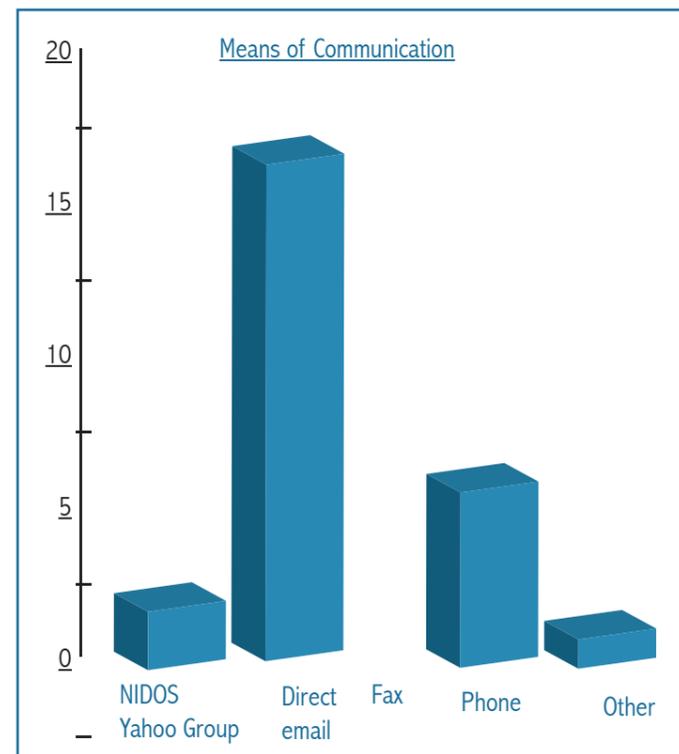
Diagram 2 shows that communication outside of training and networking events is taking place, however the Yahoo Group set up by NIDOS does not appear to be attracting members. As an organisation with a highly mobile and dispersed membership, ICT would a useful means to support communication with and amongst the Network, no matter where they are in the world. This suggests that NIDOS would benefit from a new Communications Strategy.

In Diagram 3 the first group is large organisations, the next medium, then small and finally the Associate member's results are shown. Diagram 3 contrasts the number of Don't Know answers with Well-being scores. While Don't Know answers obviously lower the final score, a lack of knowledge of the NIDOS network may also impact on a member's attitude to being part of the Network. For example, the organisation with the most Don't Know answers (52) has the lowest Well-being score of 42%; however they could have achieved a Well-being score as high as 60%.

DIAGRAM 3

Well-Being Vs Don't Know

Well-being
Don't know
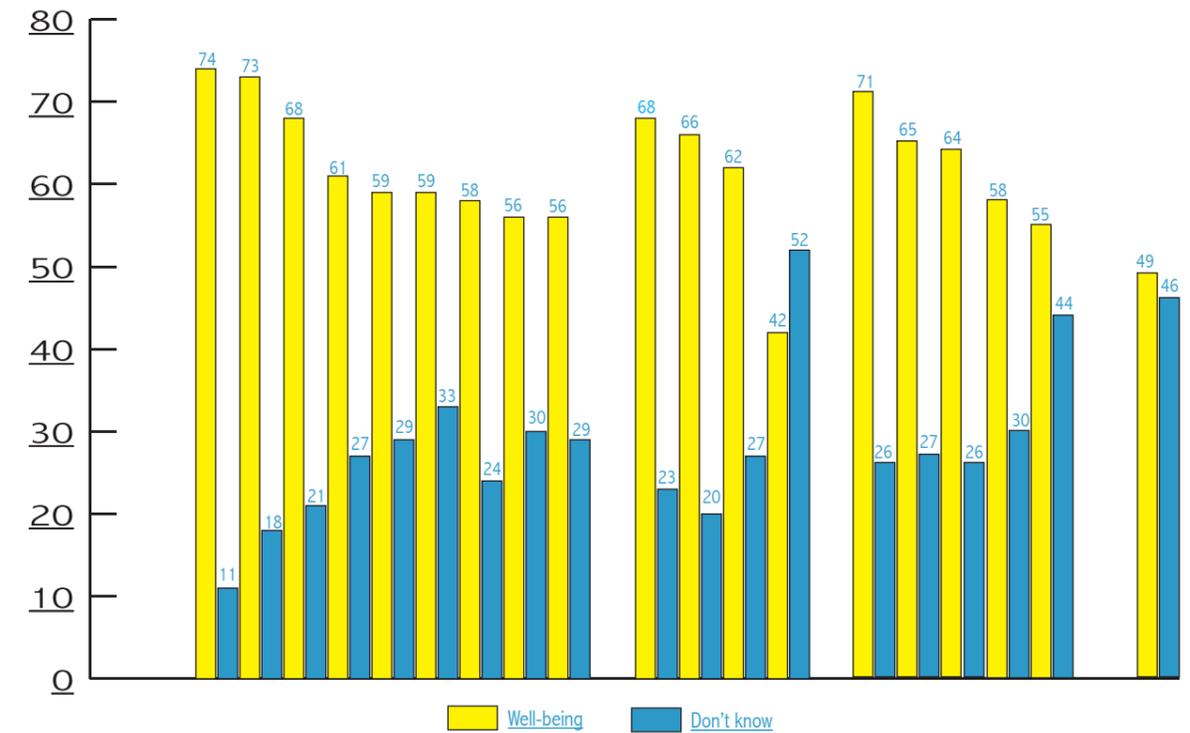
In Diagram 4, while certainly not as strong a correlation as in Diagram 3, there seems to be link between Well-being scores and the number of relationships generated by joining NIDOS. This suggests that increasing the members' knowledge of NIDOS and its Network would increase Well-being, which in turn would add to the amount of relationships being developed, without needing to raise the current level of activities. In turn, the density of the Network relationships would increase and hence the opportunity for information to flow through these relationships.

DIAGRAM 4

Well-Being Vs Increased Relationships

Well-Being
Increase in Relationships
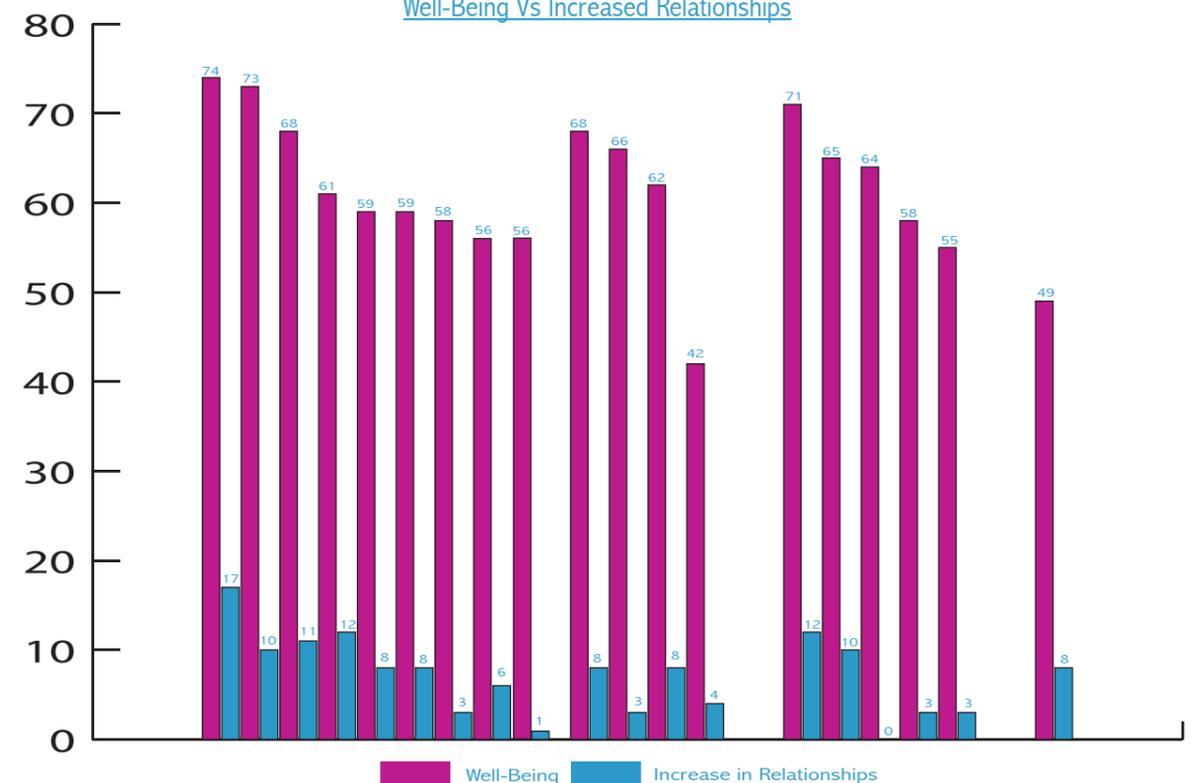
DIAGRAM 5
## Trust and Reciprocity

Legend: ■ Reciprocity ■ Trust
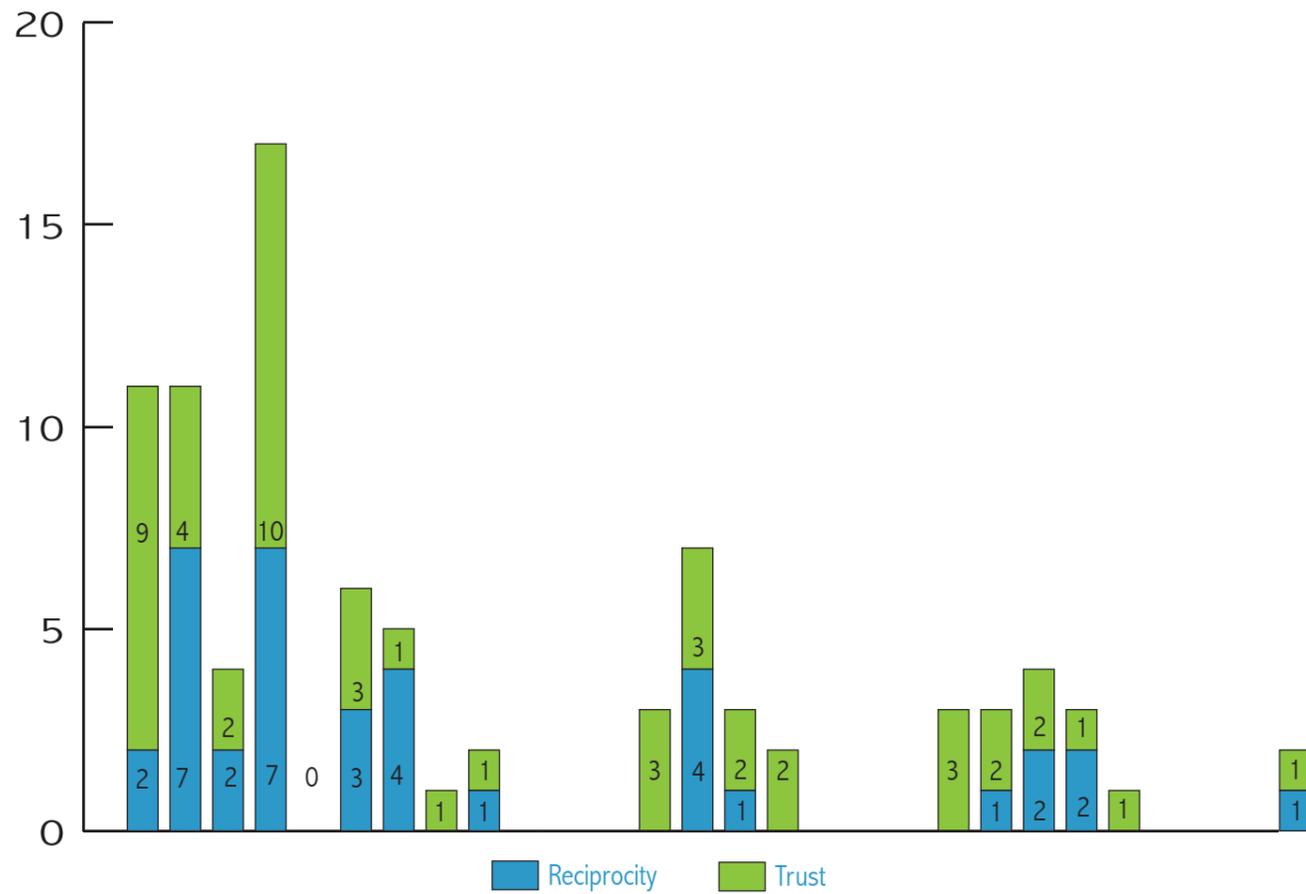
Diagram 5 shows the amounts of trusting and reciprocal relationships being developed by the interviewees. There would appear to be a generally low level of reciprocity with trusting relationships being more prevalent than reciprocal. It is not possible to force people to trust each other but it is possible to put in place mechanisms that will tend to increase reciprocal interactions.

Diagram 6, opposite, provides a pictorial reference to the Social Capital Profile of the Network and for the 4 membership groups interviewed. Of the 4 membership groups, the large organisations show the best mix. This information puts NIDOS in a position to set targets, for example to increase Well-being to 70% and Reciprocity to 45% by 2010.

DIAGRAM 6

NIDOS SOCIAL CAPITAL PROFILE

26%   40%
34%

Well-being 61%
Trust 28%
Reciprocity 18%

LARGE MEMBER'S SOCIAL CAPITAL PROFILE

30%   26%

Well-being 63%
Trust 38%
Reciprocity 25%
44%
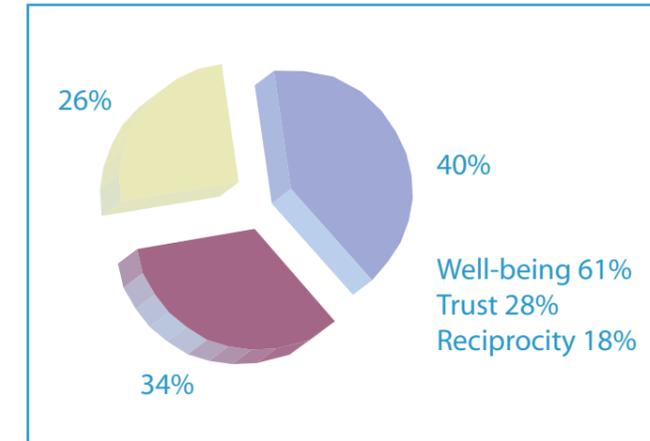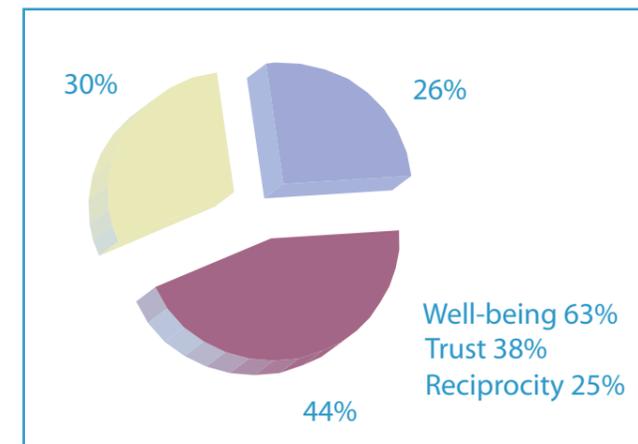
MEDIUM MEMBER'S SOCIAL CAPITAL PROFILE

8%
30%

62%

Well-being 59%
Trust 25%
Reciprocity 13%

SMALL MEMBER'S SOCIAL CAPITAL PROFILE

35%   42%

Well-being 63%
Trust 17%
Reciprocity 12%
23%
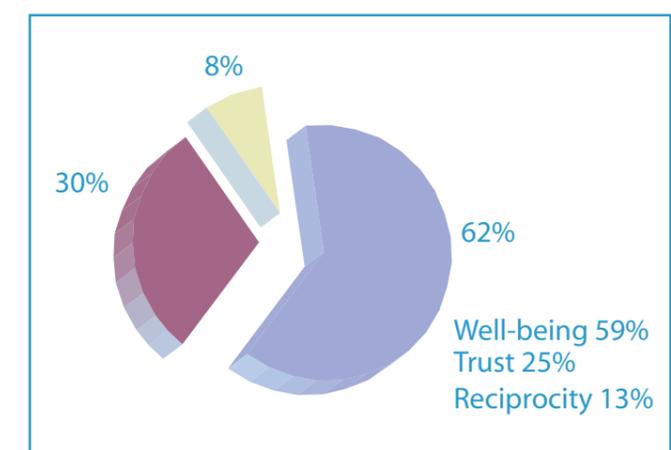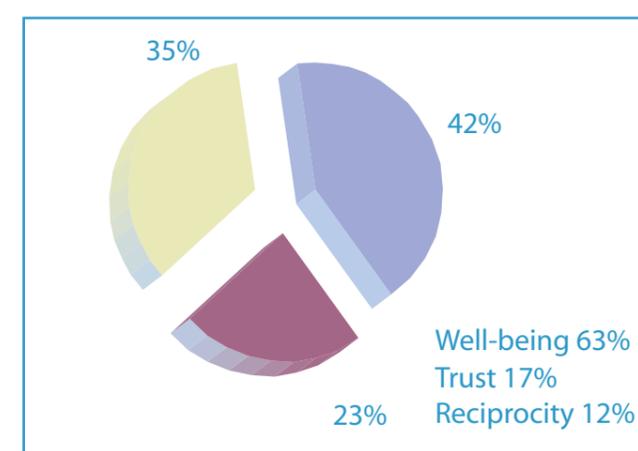
ASSOC MEMBER'S SOCIAL CAPITAL PROFILE

13%

Well-being 49%
Trust 13%
Reciprocity 13%
87%
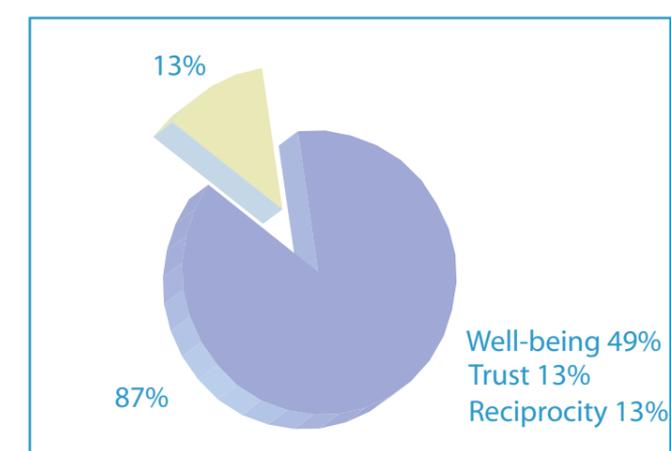
Legend: ■ Bridging ■ Bonding ■ Linking

SOCIAL NETWORK MAPS

Figures 1-4 below are sociograms, pictorial representations of the relationships in the NIDOS Network. This format helps give a quick idea of the size of the Network, and of the different kinds of relationships that make it up.

The sociograms are built up from the information gathered in the Social Network Analysis. In contrast to an organisation chart, social network analysis shows informal relationships - who knows who and who shares information and knowledge with whom. It clarifies the relationships, that normally go unnoticed, that can either facilitate or act as a barrier to information sharing. Sociograms can be used to: identify groups and individuals playing central roles, identify isolated individuals, detect information bottlenecks and raise awareness of the importance of informal networks.

The following 4 sociograms are laid out on a generally geographic basis (e.g. North South, East West). This gives an indication of the relative spread of membership based on location, most of which is based in either Glasgow or Edinburgh.

KEY: Interviewees are coloured Yellow, Management Committee Members Blue, other network members are coloured Grey.

Figure 1 – Pre-Membership Relationships. On its own this figure suggests that there would be network of relationships amongst International Development organisations based in Scotland, even if NIDOS did not exist. However, comparing this with Figures 2-4, suggests that NIDOS' work is having significant impact on the relationships amongst organisations in the sector.

Figure 2 – Post-Membership relationships. The impact of NIDOS' work can clearly been seen here. Both Glasgow and Edinburgh are densely networked, yet there are well developed links between the two, which means the identities of these two large cities are not perceived as a barrier to the Network. In addition, a number of organisations outside of these two membership 'hot spots' are seen to be quite well connected and not hindered by their location.

Figure 3 - Reciprocal ties, relationships where interaction takes place in both directions. Reciprocal ties provide opportunities to discover the credibility of another person/organisation and find common ground, increasing opportunities for transfer of resources and information. Figure 3 shows that there is a substantial dropping off between the number of total connections in the Network and those that are mutually supportive. While not ideal, it also suggests that a lot of the necessary ground work to develop reciprocal activity has already been done. There now needs to be concerted effort put into devising activities and mechanisms to increase reciprocity.

Figure 4 - Trust Relationships are where maximum information and resource transfer takes place. Further cultivating norms & values that enable trust to flourish will benefit everyone in the NIDOS Network. While there is obviously room for growth in terms of building trusting relationships, we can see from Figure 4 that the Trust Network already in place does not tend to focus on only a few Network members. This means there are no information bottlenecks.

Many facilitation organisations can fall into the trap of becoming a bottleneck, acting as gatekeepers to information, thereby limiting opportunities for information transfer. Alternatively it can be an easy option to rely too heavily on a small group of 'chosen' members. Happily, NIDOS does not appear to be falling into either of these traps.

Figure 1 - Pre-Membership

Glasgow

Edinburgh

Figure 2 - Post-Membership

Glasgow

Edinburgh

Figure 3 - Post Membership Reciprocity

Glasgow

Edinburgh

Figure 4 - Post Membership Trust

Glasgow

Edinburgh
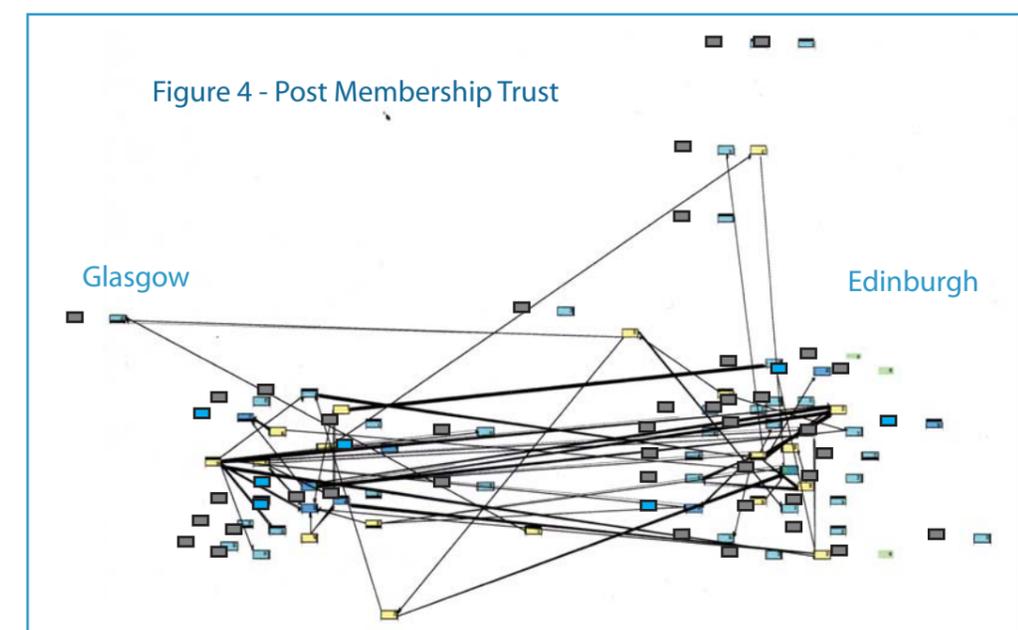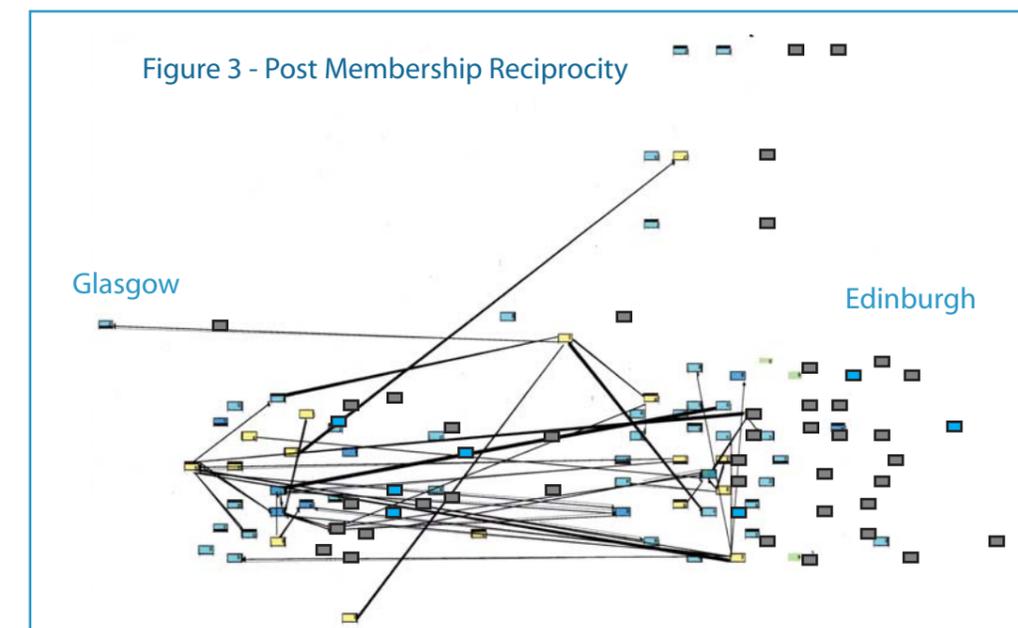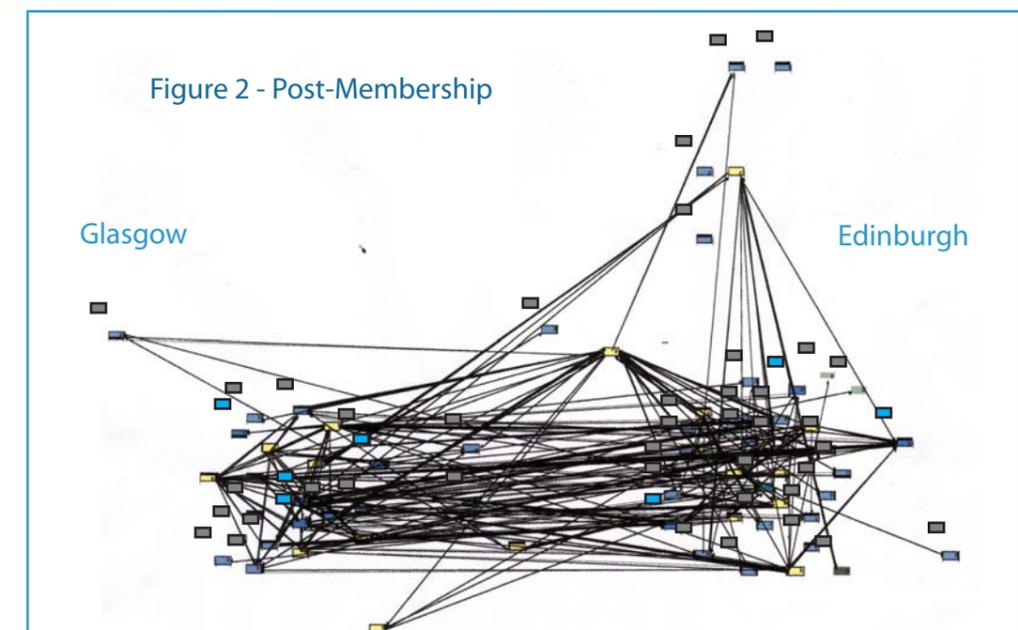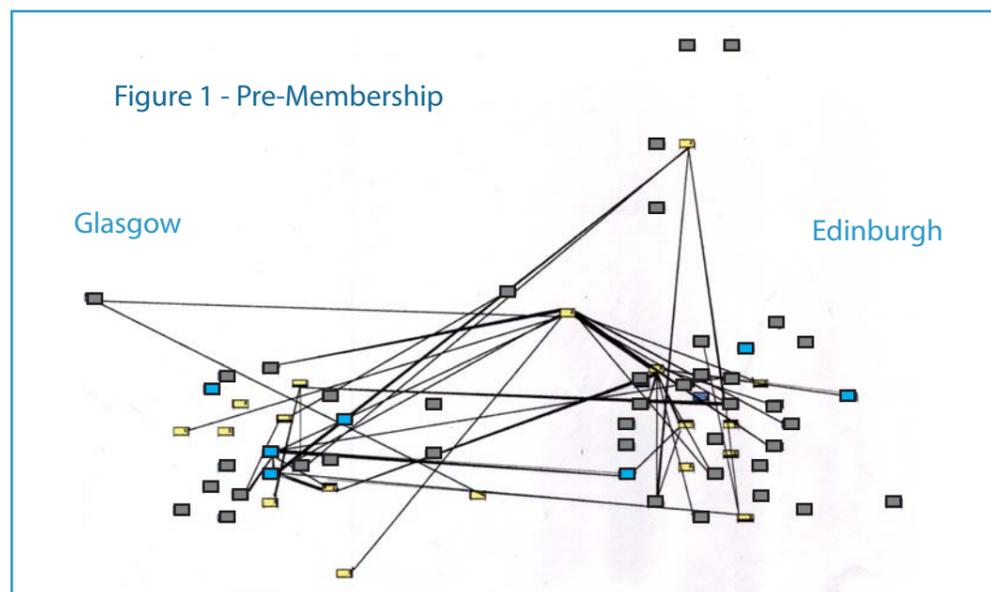
WELL-BEING INDICATORS

Overall the NIDOS Network scored 61% for Well-being. This knowledge provides NIDOS with the chance to set a new target for Network Well-being, perhaps 70%+ in 3-years. Drilling down into the individual responses further uncovers information with which to inform future Network activities, to increase the overall Well-being score.

HIGH WELL-BEING - SCORES TO BE PROUD OF!

Of the 136 questions asked, 92 received a well-being score of over 50%. From the 49 highest well-being scores over 70%, we can see that Network members believe NIDOS is doing an excellent job of disseminating relevant information; providing access to quality services and support, regardless of race, religion or political affiliation; and improving understanding of Scotland's International Development Sector.

NIDOS' staff and the Network members themselves are of particular importance to their involvement in the Network. Members feel they have benefited from their involvement by gaining new information or skills. Network members are active in their communities, regularly contacting their elected representatives, becoming Board members of other charities. Members report that they regularly speak to people outside the Network of their involvement with NIDOS.

Network members believe that NIDOS encourages members to contribute time and resources toward common Network development goals and to get involved in Network activities and that involvement in Network activities has increased over the last year. Members believe mutual support provided through the Network is important. They feel accepted as part of the Network, that most members are trustworthy and willing to help out if needed and that in the last year the NIDOS Network has been successful.

LOW WELL-BEING - SCORES TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT!

Scores for 44 questions on well-being were below 50%. These scores fall into the bracket of high risk and suggest that NIDOS would benefit by looking at ways of improving or enhancing activities in these areas as a priority.

Network members do not appear confident in the Network's capacity for broad debate or NIDOS' capacity to raise members' profile within key institutions or to raise its own and members' profiles in public. It seems that there is only a narrow mix in social status of Network members. Mixing with individuals outside ones own sphere of reference tends to bring new knowledge and understanding so this might be a limiting factor in the Network.

There is limited awareness of the Management Committee, of its quality and skill and its relationship with the NIDOS staff. Network members do not feel the Management Committee is important to their involvement in the Network.

Members feel the process for identifying needs of the Network and for joint working on Network development is not sufficiently clear. There is a lack of knowledge of the procedures, norms and tasks of the Network and of conflict resolution procedures that may be in place. The Network also believes that NIDOS has limited capacity to confront damaging behaviour.

While Network members often have links to other key stakeholders these often do not originate via NIDOS. Also there is uncertainty amongst member of NIDOS' relationship with other umbrella or networking organisations in Scotland.

Setting up a Working Group to carry out the Social Capital Action Plan (produced for NIDOS as part of this evaluation process) would be a reasonable response to tackling some of these weaknesses including the Network's desire to be involved in the decision making process.

SUMMARY

The final results of the investigation into the social capital being generated in the NIDOS Network are summarised in the Social Capital Profile below. This Score Card format will enable NIDOS to use their Social Capital Profile to benchmark future efforts to invest in social capital. The Social Capital Profile can also be used to compare the social capital being generated by NIDOS to that of other agencies or organisations.

NIDOS Social Capital Profile

	Increase in Ties	Bridging	Bonding	Linking	Reciprocity	Trust	Well-being
Network	255%	77	63	48	34	53	61%
Benchmark Score	7	40%	34%	26%	18%	28%	61%

NIDOS has successfully increased the level of relationships within the sample from 53 pre-membership to 188 post-membership, an increase of 255%. Disproportionately high levels of bonding ties can result in cliquiness; however, NIDOS is successfully providing members with opportunities to develop more bridging (40%) than bonding ties (34%). A community dependant on strong, close bonding relationships will probably find it difficult to access new information, ideas and resources and may well show suspicion when new ideas are encountered.

With the level of linking ties at 26% increasing the number of important external-stakeholders who are Associate members could be of great benefit. Low levels of linking ties can lead to a situation where a community is well connected horizontally, but lacks the access to power and strategic decision makers vertically, to achieve real progress.

The number of 'Don't Know' answers in the NIDOS sample impacts on its Well-being score (61%) and suggests that members may benefit from learning more about NIDOS, the norms & values of the Network and of the wider benefits the Management Committee bring to the work of the Network.

A lack of understanding of the norms and values of a community, may lead to a community constantly in dispute. Information is critical to the workings of a network. The more a community understands itself, the greater the likelihood of a sense of ownership and responsibility. The community will be more likely to pull together to achieve mutual goals. A Manual of Network Practice: a 'story book' about the do's and the don'ts, and examples of the Network's successes, and perhaps failures, would be a valuable resource. NIDOS would benefit by increasing activities which reinforce Reciprocity (18%) and which promote NIDOS and its members at the same time. A recent successful example of this kind of activity is the 'Make Poverty History' campaign, which caught the imagination of the public. Such activity is likely to increase the levels of Trust (28%), facilitating the flow of information and resources in the Network.

To facilitate the use of this new knowledge and information for maximum benefit, Assist Social Capital presented NIDOS with a Social Capital Action Plan.

With its Social Capital Profile now in place, NIDOS is better placed to report to funders on the added value it is generating. A clearer understanding of the processes involved and a Social Capital Action Plan to implement provides NIDOS with the opportunity to use social capital strategically as a valuable resource that can help increase its vitality, success and sustainability.