

## Outreach Principles & Action Plan

Institute of Development Policy, September 2019, for approval by IOB Board

As stated in the IOB Research Strategy 2017-2022, we strive to not just *communicate* our high-quality academic research to the broader community, but to *realise development impact* (p18). In order to achieve impact, IOB counts on a variety of impact pathways. This document focuses on impact pathways in the domain of “service to the community”, one of the core elements of IOB’s mission.

While this document focuses on “outreach”, we would be remiss to not point out three other core impact pathways for IOB, namely: rigorous academic research; education; and our alumni community and policy. These three pathways, already well-established at IOB, generate significant impact within their intended target audiences, with spill-over effects into the target audiences of this Outreach Strategy. All three pathways already have established policies and strategies, however, and will therefore not be dealt with further in this document.

### IOB Impact: overview

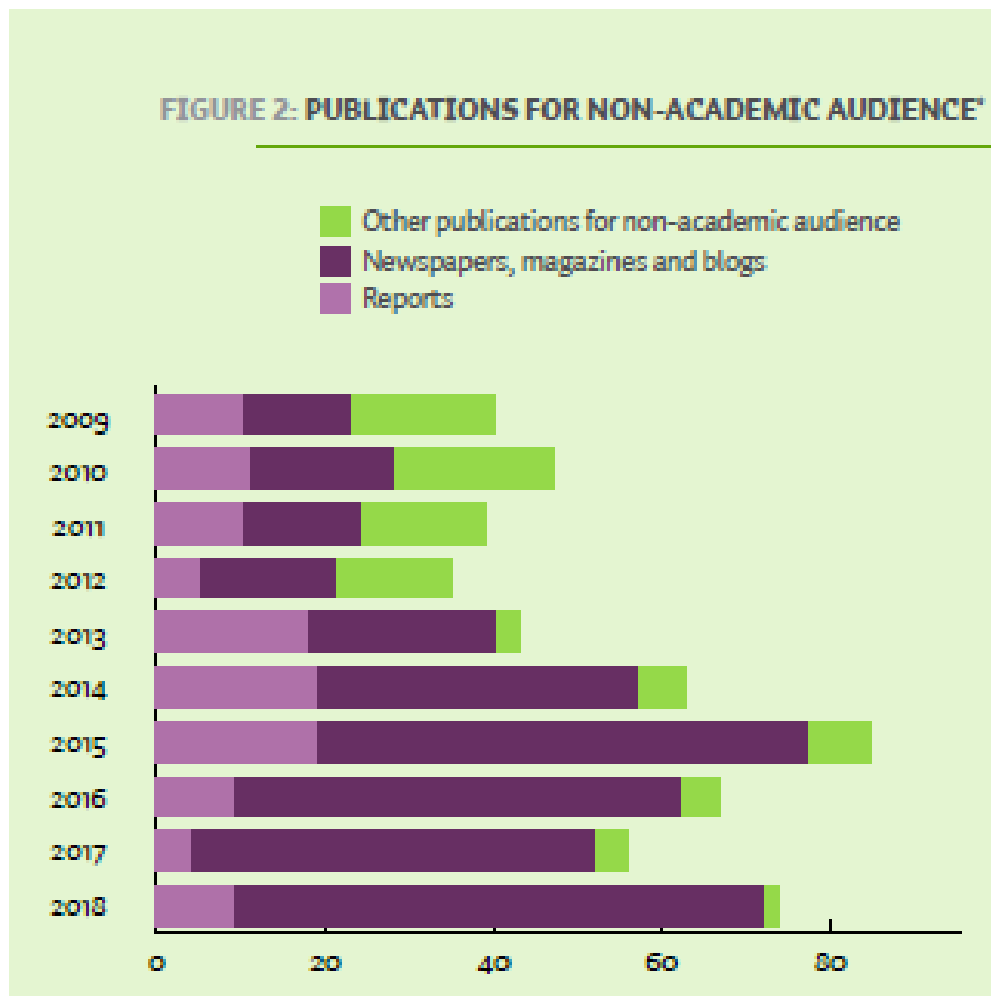
While IOB has always undertaken to communicate its research results to a broader audience and to affect impact on the ground through interaction with a variety of stakeholders, these efforts have not always been made sufficiently visible, and could be further promoted by better institutional coordination.

The Flemish Government audit in 2015 asked the Institute to look at its institutional visibility and impact, and to consider working on its brand. As a result, IOB organised a workshop on societal impact with the CERES-doctoral network and contracted the Institute of Development Studies (IDS, UK) to facilitate the process of thinking through its communication challenges and capabilities. This resulted in a workshop including all IOB staff, building on a pre-workshop survey. The results of this workshop, including recommendations, are available in the [post-workshop report](#).

In order to further facilitate strategizing and to provide more targeted institutional support, IOB decided to create a position of Outreach and Communications Manager, which was filled in June 2018. The current policy document is a further step in enhancing a well-coordinated institutional approach to outreach in the domain of ‘service to society’.

## Overview Annual Report

### Publications for non-academic audience, 2009-2018



### Complex and multi-layered process

At IOB, we recognise that development is a complex, multi-layered process that includes a wide variety of actors. Real-world policy problems are intrinsically complex and politically contested. This is why we cherish diversity at the institute and embrace many different (mainly social) scientific disciplines and a diversified 'mixed-methods' approach in our research, and of necessity it will impact our communication and impact strategies.

Simply put, an impact pathway that works for one particular topic may not make any sense for another, or would need to be complemented with additional pathways and strategies. To create a one-size-fits-all strategy is not feasible to address the complexities of development processes, nor do we find it desirable as an Institute. While the diversity of our research and its related impact strategies can be challenging, it is at the very heart of our discipline, and we embrace it.

The impact pathways in this strategy are not meant to be constricting – as their variety indicates – but rather to offer guidance to researchers and support staff on how to proceed with their project-specific impact planning.

### Purpose of outreach activities

The purpose of IOB's outreach activities is to generate development impact by improving the information and knowledge available to a wide variety of policy makers, influencers and stakeholders, and making it readily accessible, to improve the quality of decision-making and development actions.

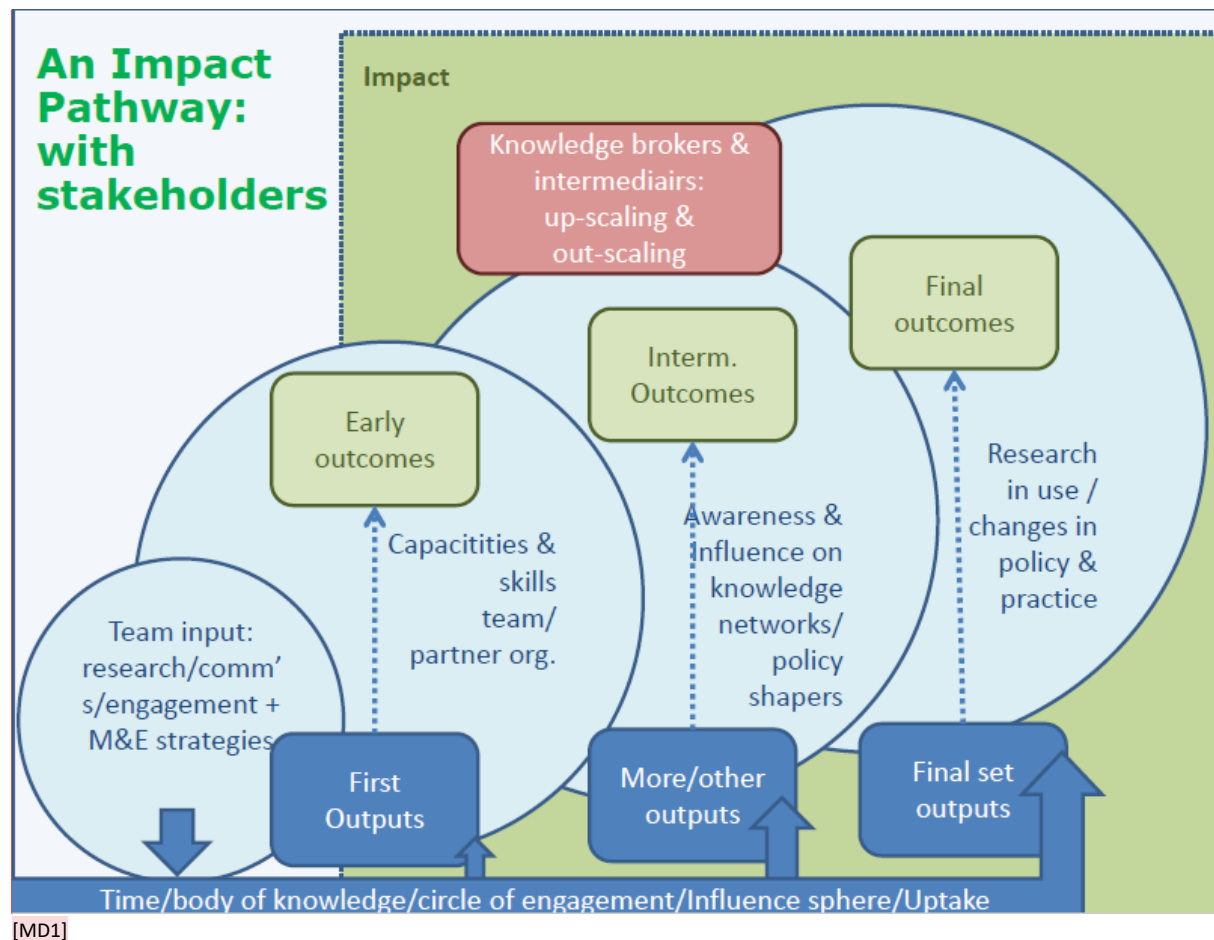
IOB as an institute also acts as a knowledge broker, creating (social) networks for both dissemination and exchange of knowledge between researchers, policy makers and stakeholders, thus also improving the quality and relevance of our scientific research by drawing in information and experience from policy makers and stakeholders into our research activities.

IOB also aims to contribute to a critical reflection on North-South relations in our own community and country (cf. mission statement) on development processes and the changes necessary not just in the South, but the North as well.

IOB aims for quality over quantity in its outreach activities (and indeed in all its activities). While we already do a lot, the aim of this strategy is not necessarily to do more, but rather to improve the quality and reach of our current activities, within the financial and time constraints that all research institutes face.

### Impact Pathways

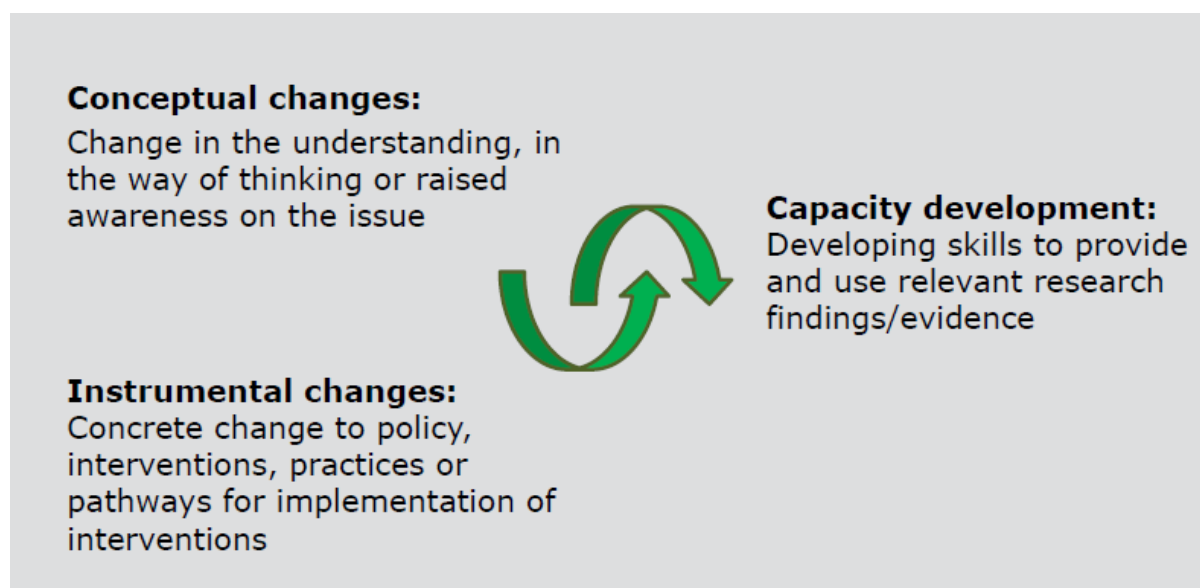
In order to structure our pre-existing outreach efforts and to improve on them in future, we will use the model of impact pathways as outlined below (source: [nwo.nl](https://www.nwo.nl)), but taking into account the *caveats* below.



A few *caveats* before we continue (see also [ODI ROMA](#))

1. No impact pathway is ever straightforward or linear. Any issue in development studies is by its nature complex and achieving impact will therefore be equally complex and non-linear.
2. As individual researchers, research projects or as an institute, we control input, output and (to some extent, but not wholly) outcomes. The broader (policy) impact is beyond our control – although not beyond our influence. We must acknowledge that limitation.
3. Attributing and measuring impact – whether qualitatively or quantitatively – is highly difficult. Controlling for all the variables in changes to policy/actions and determining our role in it, is next to impossible. What can be measured is our level of engagement with specific, pre-determined actors. Measuring success is therefore conducted on the level of outcomes, engagement and dimensions of change (more on which later).
4. The impact pathways as defined below are *general pathways* for IOB as a whole. Therefore, they do not include specific outputs or outcomes, as these are to be determined on a project level rather than for the institute. These pathways are a framework and model for individual projects to use in determining their project-specific outreach efforts, outcomes and indicators.

## Dimensions of change



(source: nwo.nl)

While change can come in many different shapes and sizes, generally speaking these three dimensions will cover most. Depending on the pathway, one of these dimensions is likely to be more crucial, but undoubtedly there will be times when multiple dimensions are part of one pathway, at different stages of outcomes.

### Impact Pathway 1: Public Debate

*Substantial and high-quality contributions to public debate in media, based on academic expertise*

#### Theory of Change

Purpose(s)	To contribute to critical public debate on North-South relations To influence policy makers responsive to public opinion
Input	Research activities and output
Output	Earned or paid media: opinion articles, blog posts, social media (shares) Owned: social media, vlogs, blog posts
Outcome	Engagement with public opinion 'in the Global North'
Impact	Improve quality of debate by providing high-quality expertise in an accessible manner
Assumptions	<i>Specific assumptions to be identified per project/outreach activity</i>

#### Why does this matter to IOB?

Taking part in the public debate better informs public opinion of development issues, which in turns impacts policy through public opinion influence on policy makers

## Main dimension(s) of change?

Conceptual: awareness raising and changing perceptions
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## Communication Channels

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Research output (journals, books, special issues, ...) (paid/earned media)</li><li>• Website (owned media)</li><li>• Social media (Twitter, FB) (owned + earned)</li><li>• Blogs/Media (African Arguments, Open Democracy, Monkey Cage, op-eds, etc.) (earned media)</li><li>• IOB Blog (re-publish + write original content)</li><li>• Press releases</li></ul> |
|--|

## Support available

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Technical support: Graphic design (infographics, lay-out, etc.)</li><li>• Language support (language check, effectiveness, ...)</li><li>• Network support: press network maintained at institutional (and university) level</li></ul> |
|---|

## Allies

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Other academics (at IOB or elsewhere)</li><li>• University-level staff</li><li>• Friendly journalists/editorial boards</li><li>• Issue-specific networks (e.g. EADI, debt relief experts, ...)</li></ul> |
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## Next steps

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|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Network mapping of stakeholders</li><li>2. Perception audit with stakeholders</li><li>3. Channel effectiveness audit</li><li>4. Network strengthening through direct contact</li></ol> |
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## Impact Pathway 2: Specialised Development Actors – External expert

*Produces development/policy-relevant reports, evaluations and expertise for specialised development institutions (government, NGOs and other civil society organisations, international institutions) as external expert*

## Theory of Change

Purpose	Increase quality of actionable knowledge, necessary for policy-making and interventions/actions in short term
Input	Research activities and output
Output	Development/policy-relevant reports and expertise
Outcome	Improve knowledge base at SDA
Impact	Improved policy-making quality and development strategies
Assumptions	<i>Specific assumptions to be identified per project/outreach activity</i>

## Why does this matter to IOB?

SDA are most directly involved in strategic (policy-making) decisions that immediately affect the development arena. Providing high-quality information to SDA will lead to the most direct consequential outcomes and impact

## Main dimension(s) of change?

Conceptual, capacity building and/or instrumental

## Communication Channels

- Consultancies and report-writing
- Research output (journals, books, special issues, ...) (paid/earned media)
- IOB Open Access (policy briefs, working papers, etc.) (owned media)
- Website (owned media)
- Social media (Twitter, FB) (owned + earned)
- Networks (LinkedIn, ResearchGate, Academia, SSRN, ...) (owned + earned)
- Blogs/Media (African Arguments, Open Democracy, Monkey Cage, op-eds, etc.) (earned media)
- Annual Report (owned media)
- Personal contacts with policy makers
- IOB Blog (re-publish + write original content)
- Non-academic events (policy panels, networking events policy makers – development actors, summer schools, seminars, “ambassador training”, ...). Stream/record when possible/desirable.
- Alumni

## Support available

- Technical support: Graphic design (infographics, lay-out, etc.)
- Language support (language check, effectiveness, ...)
- Network support
- Process support (e.g. for consultancies): assist in writing impact section of project proposals/applications

## Allies

- Other academics (IOB internal and external)
- Issue-specific networks, either formal or informal
- Partner organisations

## Next steps

1. Network mapping of stakeholders
2. Perception audit with stakeholders
3. Channel effectiveness audit

### Impact Pathway 3: Specialised Development Partners – Internal Expert

*Contributes to management or policy for cooperation with development partners (as internal expert)*

#### Theory of Change

Purpose	To create a medium- to long-term policy impact by providing sustained improved quality of knowledge base within organisations
Input	Research activities and output
Output	Informal expertise-lending (informal internal networks) Formal expertise-lending (e.g. board member) Internal reports, briefs, etc. Participation in organisation-internal (research) activities
Outcome	Long-term improved knowledge base at partner Creation of knowledge network, with increased access to organisational expertise for IOB
Impact	Decision-making based on better info Better info for IOB research through network and organisation expertise
Assumptions	<i>Specific assumptions to be identified per project/outreach activity</i>

#### Why does this matter to IOB?

To create long-term, sustainable impact, IOB needs to build long-term partnerships, both for the dissemination and acquisition of knowledge and expertise

#### Main dimension(s) of change?

Conceptual, capacity building and instrumental

#### Communication Channels

Directly with actors

#### Support available

- Language support (language check, effectiveness, ...)
- Training? Persuasive communication
- Network (mapping) support
- Tech and language support for expert profiles

#### Allies

Other internal experts

#### Next steps

1. Network mapping of stakeholders
2. Perception audit with stakeholders
3. Create expert profiles and disseminate



## Impact Pathway 4: Institutional Visibility

*Initiates and/or participates in the organisation of events (presentations, debates, exhibitions, etc.) or other initiatives that contribute to the visibility and reputation of the IOB with a broader audience*

### Theory of Change

Purpose	To establish IOB as a centre of expertise in its field with a broad spectrum of policy-makers and influencers
Input	Research activities and output
Output	Non-academic events (presentations, debates, exhibitions)
Outcome	Increased visibility (measured through increased engagement)
Impact	IOB is known as a centre of expertise on development issues
Assumptions	<i>Specific assumptions to be identified per project/outreach activity</i>

### Why does this matter to IOB?

If we gain more (national and international) visibility, policy makers will likely turn to us more readily for expertise

### Dimension(s) of change?

Conceptual: awareness raising

### Communication Channels

- Research output (journals, books, special issues, ...) (paid/earned media)
- Website (owned media)
- Social media (Twitter, FB) (owned + earned)
- Blogs/Media (African Arguments, Open Democracy, Monkey Cage, op-eds, etc.) (earned media)
- Personal contacts with policy makers
- IOB Blog (re-publish + write original content)
- Press releases
- Institutional partners (museums, exhibition spaces)
- Advocacy-oriented NGOs (11.be for example)

### Support available

- Language support (language check, effectiveness, ...)
- Training: media training, video-making training
- Network (mapping) support
- Tech and language support
- Event organisation expertise
- Press network support

### Allies

Other researchers

Civil society Government stakeholders Press University communications team
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### Next steps

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| 1. Network mapping of stakeholders<br>2. Perception audit with stakeholders |
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## Impact Pathway 5: Academic Cooperation with South Partners

*Contributes to cooperation with South partners and/or academics from the South and/or supervises PhD projects with candidates from the South*

### Theory of Change

Purpose	Increase individual academic capacity Increase institutional academic and organisational capacity for education, research and outreach Increase visibility of pre-existing capacity in Global South Amplify voices from the Global South on development issues
Input	PhD supervision Institutional capacity building projects (e.g. Bukavu, Nitlapan) Cooperation in academic research and societal outreach in partner countries (and possibly beyond)
Output	Institutional cooperation PhD projects Cooperation in outreach activities Co-authored articles/books/papers Non-academic output (blogs, video, social media, events)
Outcome	Increased visibility of Global South partners Increased individual capacity (PhD) Increased institutional capacity (e.g. VLIR-UOS)
Impact	Increased attention in academia and policy for voices from the South
Assumptions	<i>Specific assumptions to be identified per project/outreach activity</i>

### Why does this matter to IOB?

IOB wishes to present a wide variety of voices on development issues, and to decolonize development studies by increasing capacity, access and by amplifying South voices
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### Dimension(s) of change?

Conceptual (awareness), capacity building, instrumental
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### Communication Channels

PhD projects Research output
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## Support available

- Network (mapping) support
- Tech and language support
- Event organisation expertise

## Allies

VLIR-UOS  
Partner universities  
Alumni  
Civil society  
International institutions

## Next steps

1. Network mapping of stakeholders
2. Perception audit with stakeholders
3. Disseminate possibilities for cooperation among prospective partners/PhD students, audit effectiveness of communication channels for this (e.g. sometimes low uptake of applications from focus regions)
4. Continue to actively pursue funding and opportunities for South cooperation

## Impact Pathway 6: Cooperation with UAntwerpen

*Contributes substantially to the cooperation between IOB and UAntwerp*

## Theory of Change

Purpose	To strengthen the University of Antwerp as a development actor through IOB teaching/training and joint research To recruit students from adjacent UAntwerp faculties
Input	Expertise
Output	Teaching (“korfvak” & development courses) Debating Development USOS (exposure visits, masterclass, etc.) Expertise (e.g. travel experience, expertise for development projects) Cooperative research projects, international conferences, etc.
Outcome	Increased number of students Increased demand for expertise
Impact	IOB is more broadly recognised and more functional within the University as a centre of expertise
Assumptions	<i>Specific assumptions to be identified per project/outreach activity</i>

## Why does this matter to IOB?

It is part of the mission of IOB to contributing to inter-cultural and global awareness of UAntwerp students as well as to cooperative with the broader University of Antwerp to enhance our capacity and impact as an academic development actor (both IOB and UAntwerp)

### Dimension(s) of change?

Conceptual, capacity building (i.e. teaching), instrumental

### Communication Channels

Teaching  
Debating Development  
Participation in (advisory) commissions and committees (e.g. travel committee)  
Student recruitment events  
Social media  
USOS  
Conferences/public events

### Support available

- Network (mapping) support
- Tech and language support
- Event organisation expertise
- Internal network: creating links with other university staff

### Allies

University communications team (particularly student recruitment)  
University high-level staff (rectoraat, Board)  
Friendly staff in other faculties  
USOS

### Next steps

1. Network mapping of stakeholders
2. Perception audit with stakeholders
3. Strengthen links with UA central services

## Impact Pathway 7: Contribution to Development Spin-Off

*Actively contributes to a relevant 'development spin-off'*

### Theory of Change

Purpose	To create a medium- to long-term policy impact by providing sustained improved quality of knowledge base within a development organisation or initiative generated by IOB and its partners (e.g. governmental or non-governmental expertise center, developmental service enterprise)
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Input	Research activities, research output, organisational expertise
Output	Internal expertise (e.g. members of board, etc.) Reports (internal or external) Access to IOB network
Outcome	Long-term improved knowledge base at the spin-off Creation of knowledge network, with increased access to organisational expertise for IOB
Impact	Decision-making based on better knowledge Better info for IOB research through network and organisation expertise
Assumptions	<i>Specific assumptions to be identified per project/outreach activity</i>

### Why does this matter to IOB?

Directly contributing to innovative sustainable development spin-offs is a way of generating development impact

### Dimension(s) of change?

Conceptual, instrumental and capacity building

### Communication Channels

Providing internal expertise: meetings, reports, advise, ...  
Events (public or organisation-internal)

### Support available

- Network (mapping) support
- Tech and language support
- Event organisation expertise

### Allies

Spin-off members (staff)  
IOB staff

### Next steps

1. Network mapping of stakeholders
2. Perception audit with stakeholders

## Next steps

### Network Mapping

IOB researchers are all actively engaged in various forms of outreach with a wide variety of target audiences. This means we already have an extensive network of stakeholders, but also that the

knowledge of that network is not institutional, but rather individual. This potentially causes individual researchers (as well as support staff) to miss out on communication opportunities. While there will always be some of this knowledge that remains individual (for example for reasons of confidentiality), we need to centralize this knowledge somewhat by mapping out our networks.

The O&C Manager will take the lead in this exercise, which will have three phases:

1. Requesting individual researchers to provide an overview of their contacts (as well as potentially the quality of the contact?) for the various audiences identified in the impact pathways
2. Mapping out these contacts and identifying potential gaps. O&C will come up with initial map, support from academic staff will be needed to identify and fill in gaps.
3. Investigate potential channels to reach out to missing stakeholders

### Perception Audit

While we already have an extensive network, for many we don't necessarily know how they perceive us and through which channels they are in contact with us (cf. infra), an issue identified by the IDS consultancy. Once stakeholders have been mapped, the next step is to establish their perception of us (for those who already know us) and their expectations (including for new network members).

This exercise will take place after the stakeholder analysis and consist of a combination of (electronic) surveys, focus groups (e.g. with alumni, find convergence with alumni service at IOB), and interviews with stakeholder representatives (e.g. politicians, government officials, civil society).

### Channel Effectiveness Audit

We currently employ a variety of channels, from social media to policy briefs and events. Concurrently with the perception audit, we aim to check if and how these channels are used by stakeholders and whether improvements are necessary. We will also investigate whether stakeholders wish for new channels (e.g. podcasts), while taking into account financial limitations and time restraints.

### Channel Development

Dependent on Channel Effectiveness Audit

### Network Strengthening

TBD

### Expert Profiles

We need to establish easily accessible public profiles for all our research staff, for press, UAntwerp staff looking for expertise, policy stakeholders looking for experts, etc. While the main purpose is outreach, of course these profiles can be used for academic purposes if desired. UAntwerp provides an "expert database" that can be used for this purpose, but it is limited for PhD students. Another avenue may be to use the personal webpages as a profile. In either case this needs to be coordinated by the O&C. Potentially we could aim at publishing an additional booklet each year as an accompaniment to the annual report.

## Planning

Period	Activity	Main	Support
October 2019 – February 2020	Network mapping (stakeholder analysis) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• October: create template</li> <li>• October: request contacts from ZAP/AAP</li> <li>• October (end): deadline contact</li> <li>• Mid-November: compile contacts, create initial map</li> <li>• Late November: first mapping exercise in group</li> <li>• December-January: compile additional data from exercise</li> <li>• January (end): second mapping exercise</li> <li>• February: compile final map</li> </ul>	O&C	ZAP AAP
March – May 2020	Perception audit/channel effectiveness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early March: identify survey audiences</li> <li>• Early March: identify survey questions</li> <li>• Mid-March: contact audiences, identify ideal survey form (interview, focus group, online survey)</li> <li>• April: first round of surveys/interviews/focus groups</li> <li>• April (end): first compilation of data, review of targets</li> <li>• May: second round</li> <li>• May (end): compilation of all data</li> <li>• Presentation provisional results at final Board 19-20</li> </ul>	O&C	ATP UAntwerp
June – August 2020	Channel Development/Network Strengthening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• June: in-depth analysis data</li> <li>• July/August: Identify next steps</li> </ul>	O&C	ZAP
Ongoing	Expert profiles	O&C	ZAP AAP UAntwerp