

Minutes of APPG “Connecting Communities” meeting held on 19 October 2010

Present

Claire Perry MP – Chair of APPG, constituency Devizes
Stephen O’Brien MP – Minister in DFID, c constituency Eddisbury
Nick Boles MP – Grantham and Stamford
Stephen Gilbert MP – St Austell & Newquay
Henry Smith MP - Crawley

Rosalie Callway – Local Government Association
Angie Cook – Cambridge Education Foundation
George Cooper – medical student
John Errington
Geoffrey Findlay – UK One World Linking Association
Miriam Kybird – Plan UK
Stephen Lyon
Nick Maurice – BUILD
Emmery Mbaha – Uganda Commonwealth Fellow
Catherine McKenna – Link Community Development
Peter Minhinnett – Chartered Institute of Environmental Health
Joyce Ogberaga – DFID
Pepi O’Neill - BUILD
Craig Owen – WCVA
Karl Oxford – Connections for Development
Janice Price – Partnership for World Mission
Amjad Saleem – The Cordoba Foundation
Miss Sichana – teacher from Makenduchi School in Zanzibar
Cathy Welch – DFID
John Whitaker - BUILD

Claire Perry welcomed everyone to the first appg meeting under her Chairmanship. She explained that she has been impressed with the impact linking has had in the Marlborough / Gunjur example she has seen in her constituency. The impact on those involved at both ends of a partnership in terms of mutual benefit, of volunteering and staying with a family should not be underestimated.

Nick Maurice - introduced the background to the linking movement from the 1980s provoked initially by the publication of the Brandt report “North South –A Programme for Survival”. The formation of the UK One World Linking Association (UKOWLA) in 1985 in response to the growing movement of community based links between schools, faith groups, local authorities, health care institutions in UK with counterparts in the South; the development of the ethos of mutuality, reciprocity, personal, professional and community development at both ends of the partnership; the development of BUILD (Building Understanding through International Links for Development) in 2002; the formation of the APPG in 2003 under the chairmanship of Kevin Barron MP and work done by BUILD and its members with the DfES, DFID and DoH in particular encouraging school, community and health links.

Miss Sichana – part of 20 year school partnership between Aston School in Sheffield and Makunduchi School in Zanzibar. The partnership emphasises long term commitment with full community involvement, small scale sustainable projects, empowerment and gender equality and good governance. Long and short term student and teacher exchanges take place.

Emmery Mbaha– has recently been promoted to Ministry of Health in Uganda. The link between Daventry and Iganga started in 1988 and they are working towards achieving the MDGs. Access to safe water and restoration of the hospital has led to improved maternal mortality and better health for mothers and babies. Brought in at the invitation of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and through the Commonwealth Fellowship programme as a Uganda environmental health worker over in Daventry. They take back their learning to Uganda. When environmental health workers from UK go to Uganda they are always surprised to see how much can be done with limited resources and take that learning back to the UK.

Stephen O'Brien

- Congratulated Claire on getting the appg up and running and said that appg's can have a real effect in changing policy and also reflecting government policy.
- DFID has a budget that makes a difference to the lives of millions.
- Stephen was born in Mtwara in Tanzania which has a long standing and successful link with Redditch. He has just come back from Mtwara where DFID has pre-existing programmes and saw schools in the area linked with schools in the Hereford and Worcestershire areas.
- He has seen firsthand that the pupils in the linked schools in his constituency learn about poverty.
- DFID is responsible for programmes that educate 5m primary school aged children in sub-Saharan Africa, this is at a cost of 2.5% of doing the same in the UK, linking can be part of that added value.
- Linking is part of the Government's Big Society agenda, coming up with a shared sense of ownership as global citizens.
- DFID has ring fenced its international spending and is maintaining the commitment of 0.7% of budget.
- All members of the appg and BUILD can be ambassadors to engage people and disseminate the message of linking and international development.
- DFID is putting a great deal of emphasis on measuring the impact of our spend and on communicating this transparently to the public.
- Government funding - £3m is committed over three years to Global Community Links (GCL) programme.
- *Bath Uganda* link has received £2k to run activities for faith groups and their wider communities in Bath to increase understanding of HIV/Aids. The aim is to reach up to 70,000 people through press coverage and getting people more involved in taking action against HIV/Aids
- *Plymouth Ghana link* has been awarded £10k to organise a series of learning events about health and education in Ghana and in the UK for Plymouth communities and schools. Activities will include promoting the voluntary work that Plymouth medical staff has done in Ghana as well as encouraging youth volunteering in Ghana.

Q&A

There is genuine frustration with getting the message of the GCL programme out there. Claire offered to email all members of the appg to let them know about the GCL programme so they can inform their constituents.

The Minister asked if the appg could generate evidence to be captured in a report and published, DFID would like live operational research.

Angie Cook

- DFID is focussed on measuring impact short and long term, there is also a need to look at the multiplier effect.

The Minister

- DFID are looking for additionality. Part of that is to recognise where HMG needs to push harder.
- Empowering girls and women is the key to the future.
- Look at food and nutrition and agriculture.

John Whitaker

- There is a range of evidence at grass-roots level on both sides of the partnerships.
- The Development Education Association (DEA) has produced research that shows through linking there is major impact of awareness and understanding of international issues and also in terms of social cohesion in UK, understanding the nature of different societies.
- The Gates Foundation is looking for evidence and BUILD has many stories from our membership, there is an opportunity for the Government and BUILD members to get that message out to a wider public through whatever channels are appropriate.

The Minister

- Twinning makes you learn about yourself as you are going to where people have no pre-conceived idea of who you are.
- Need success stories, Bill and Melinda Gates also want success stories; it is easier in the health sector than in education.
- Twinning is living proof refuelling the demand and need and description of why we are involved in this work. The private sector must be included.
- Subject to the usual data protection, share information to give people access to greater opportunity. Parliament Channel has a regular slot that shows the needs that MPs need to address eg international development.

The Minister said that he thought it would be possible to collaborate on collecting stories about the positive impacts of development, drawn from Links. Officials would need to look at how to do this.

Karl Oxford

- The focus on aid and donor support means that we lose sight of the diaspora remittances made to their countries of origin; this can overwhelm the amount of aid going into countries.
- There is a restricted view of diaspora communities, many groups and individuals operate at strategic levels and support their communities and the wider agenda, but they have a fight to be taken seriously within their own community.
- Can DFID recognise the role diaspora communities have here in the UK and in their countries of origin.
- How can the diaspora communities be supported.

The Minister

- DFID have a very full understanding of the diaspora.

- Many of diaspora communities are in inner city areas; there is poverty in the countryside as well as inner-cities. Need to take huge steps to reduce economic deficit and at the same time not have an impact on the poor and vulnerable.
- Remittances back to the diaspora's country of origin are private and not captured by DFID statistics.
- Maybe there is more than can be done, between diaspora and UKTI .

Rosalie Calway

- How does DFID see itself working with the LG sector?
- There are many two way exchanges in Local Authorities.

The Minister

- Unfortunately there are preconceptions of twinning in Local Authorities as Mayoral jollies
- Need to change the perception, twinning work at LG level has become discredited, use the word partnership to differentiate between the two.

Craig Owen

- Where does contribution to the MDGs fit into the Big Society agenda?

The Minister

- Public awareness – advocacy is seen as good development and it can be measured.

Geoffrey Findlay

- Funding is always very important, it is only a catalyst and it can start a link but it doesn't necessarily make it sustainable.
- There needs to be an impact assessment of the raising of public awareness.
- DFID did study in Marlborough and showed a greater awareness of international development against other similar towns.

The Minister

- Third sector finance multiplier factors, there are lots of small activities and not always easy to see what is going on, DFID working on it.
- Governments should pump prime, encourage and incentivise others to take it over, look to the diaspora, third sector, private sector to take over.
- Look at private sector for extensive investment resources.