

BUILD Newsletter



July 2009

We were together for our annual two day meeting, this year held at Mansfield College, Oxford. Thank you to all those members who came I hope you all felt it was a worthwhile two days. I know I certainly did and always feel grateful for the affirming comments from members and the constructive challenges that are put to us. .

We are particularly grateful to the “expert witnesses” who attended and gave us the benefit of their reflections and wisdom having heard from the sectoral leaders who spoke about what is happening in terms of partnerships within the Local Authority, Diaspora, Health, Community, Faith, Youth and Education sectors and those that presented excellent case studies.

The full report of the conference will be out later this month but the headlines were:

- A greater need for clarity of BUILD’s vision and mission
- A clear communications strategy
- Working more closely with the corporate sector

Strategic Objective

“Advocate at individual, public and political levels, on behalf of cross-cultural community linking”

Commonwealth

We held a day long meeting on “Building Partnerships for Peace” in Cameroon using the participants from 7 countries from West and Central Africa brought into Yaoundé by the

Education

Rafi.ki
SoundAffects
Hamilton Trust
Achievers International

Community

Gold Star in Norway and
Wales
Links Japan
Commonwealth
Foundation

Corporate

Eden Project
Skills Venture

Health

Tropical Health &
Education Trust

News from West & Central Africa

Commonwealth Foundation for their Regional Consultation for West and Central Africa prior to the CPF. The outcome was a strong commitment by participants a) to encourage the development of school and community partnerships in their individual countries and b) to work regionally to promote partnerships at that level.

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At one of the workshops held during the meeting we asked the question “*What should be the principles underlying international community-based partnerships?*” The following 11 points were agreed upon and were named the “**2009 Yaoundé Principles**”

- Inclusivity
- Mutuality
- Equity and Equality
- Integrity
- Sense of Purpose
- Respect for Humanity
- Responsiveness
- Complementarity
- Knowledge-sharing and learning
- Sustainability
- Solidarity

Since the meeting in May there has been activity in West & Central Africa. ([see page 18](#)). A steering group has been set up with key players from each of the countries present (Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Gambia and Nigeria). There is already a plan for monthly teleconference calls between the members of the steering group.

One participant Ngang Eric Ndeh Mboumien the Programme Director of the North West Association of Development Organisations (NWADO) emailed us last week

“During the workshop I took pledges for my network including; contributing to the development of a COWLA-Cameroon One World Linking Association, share with the members of our Network the BUILD experiences in other regions and contribute to stimulate a regional BUILD dynamism in my Country to contribute to a sub-regional BUILD dynamism.

We found it important to start an experience-sharing workshop on BUILD with our 30 Civil Society Organisations members (CSOs - made up of NGOs, Associations, Faith Based Organizations, and Trade Unions) in the North West Region of Cameroon. We visited the BUILD website and found some really interesting materials and tools to run a one day experience sharing workshop on BUILD.

Commonwealth Education Ministers (17CCEM) meeting in Kuala Lumpur 15-18 June

Prior to this meeting we produced a briefing paper on educational partnerships for the Commonwealth Secretary General which was circulated to all officials and Education Ministers attending the 17CCEM.

I attended this brilliantly organised (by the Ministry of Education, the Higher Education Ministry in Malaysia and the Commonwealth Secretariat) Commonwealth-wide meeting in KL along with representatives of Commonwealth Foundation, British Council Global School Partnerships programme, Link Community Development all members of BUILD, and Karen Edge from the Institute of Education who is conducting the research into school partnerships to be published next month.

I spoke at a panel discussion on “Strengthening Education through International Linkages and Collaborations in Education” together with Dr Cecilia Nembou from Papua New Guinea, Andy Egan and Gabriel Waithaka from DFID Global School Partnerships and two young people from Wales and Sri Lanka who had been involved in school partnerships with schools in Ghana and UK respectively. The panel was generously sponsored by Multimedia Development Corporation.

We also had an opportunity to input into the Stakeholders Forum Statement entitled “**Making Connections and Building Partnerships: Towards and Beyond Global Education Goals and Targets**” which was sent to the Ministers.

The relevant inputs read as follows:-

Preamble

1.3 The Stakeholders Forum emphasised the importance of building collaborative partnerships and connections to effectively and efficiently go towards and beyond achieving global goals and targets

Making Inclusive Access and Learning a Reality

Recommendation 3.14 Celebrate the rich diversity of the Commonwealth cultures and people in daily life everywhere and within the education system by encouraging and supporting partnerships between educational establishments at all levels and civil society organisations across the Commonwealth.

Realising the Potential of Non-State Actors

6.7 Encourage and support effective educational partnerships locally, regionally, internationally and across the Commonwealth through policy and in practical ways.

Commonwealth People’s Forum Trinidad and Tobago

We are working towards participation at the CPF in Trinidad & Tobago 22-26 November 2009. John Whitaker and Gordon Morris attended a CF Civil Society Consultation at Marlborough House on 20 May to discuss the role of CS in the CPF. An application to be part of the assemblies was put to the CF at the end of May and we are waiting to hear from them whether we have been accepted.

Meeting with UK Borders Agency

A key role for BUILD is to provide access to politicians in order to be able to lobby on issues common to the membership. A particular issue which faces many of our members and their constituents and which seems to be worsening has been that of obtaining visas for incoming visitors

within the context of community partnerships. We are holding a meeting in late July with Mark Walmsley from the FCO UK Borders agency, with Keith Best, Director of the Immigration Advisory Service and members of BUILD representing particular sectoral organisations (Youth, Faith, Community, Diaspora and Health). We see this as the beginning of a ‘conversation’ with the UK Border’s Agency which we hope will be ongoing and will result ultimately in easier access to the UK by partners in the South.

Database

We now have a volunteer who is inputting the partnership links we have received from BUILD members. At the moment we have 1% of school links, 90% of health links and 5% of diaspora links entered. We estimate that we will have finished entering all the data by Christmas. **If you still haven’t let Pepi have the details of your members and their links please do this before you go on your summer holidays!**

Strategic Objective

“Promote and support good practice in community linking”

Gold Star Community Partnerships in Wales

Please see report from John Whitaker in this Newsletter. ([page 11](#))

We have held meetings with :

- Ethnic Minority Foundation
- Development Education Association
- Africa Foundation Stone

We are delighted to have three new members:

- **Africa Foundation Stone** – which aims to support and promote the mobilisation of the Africa Diaspora to actively contribute, through volunteering to fight poverty and work to improve the lives of disadvantaged people. AFS does this by engaging African, skilled professionals to volunteer between 3-6 week in Cameroon and / or in other African countries to support local

NGOs. BUILD sees crucial opportunities for working strategically with diaspora umbrella organisations such as AFS.

- **International National Trust Organisation (INTO)** – assists the National Trust with campaigning techniques at national level and is developing an international advocacy programme that will aim to put intangible and tangible heritage – both cultural and natural – at the heart of global policy making.
- **The Converging World** – an environmental charity that aims to address issues arising from social inequality, creating mechanisms which link communities in the developed and developing world. Their approach aims to reduce the gap between the energy-rich and energy-poor, the opportunity-rich and opportunity-poor and to work towards a world where socially there are equal opportunities for all.

Strategic Objective

“Bring these global links into mainstream of UK life”

- **Faith Partnerships**

We are delighted to have received funding from the Jerusalem Trust for a project “Bringing the World into Faith Schools”. This will enable us to work strategically with the Church of England, Methodist and Catholic boards of education nationally, to promote school partnerships within their dioceses and regions both here in the UK and with their linked dioceses and regions in the Global South.

- **Diaspora Partnerships**

We are currently looking at the potential for collaborating with the Ethnic Minority Foundation to encourage closer working relationships between diaspora partnerships to their home communities and the wider communities, including schools in the areas in which these diaspora groups work.

- **Health Partnerships**

We are working with Medsin (Medical Students International) and THET to develop a strategy for the development of partnerships between medical and nursing schools in UK with counterparts in the South.

EDUCATION

Rafi.ki It's been a busy few months for the Rafi.ki team. The rapid growth of the inter-school program has accelerated with Rafi.ki now in 107 countries as of this month. On average 5 new schools are joining daily.

Recently we've had pupils learning about Fair Trade by working with schools in Ghana, learning about Islam by working with pupils in Iraq and the Palestinian territories and learning about global warming by linking live to explorers in both the North and South Poles.

Much of this year's work has been around helping other charities and organisations to engage pupils around key issues. For example we've taught pupils about the work MSF is doing in Darfur by connecting 50+ schools and video linking them to doctors working there. We've also just agreed partnerships with the British Red Cross, The Tony Blair Faith Foundation and Channel 4. The collaboration works because we have a large, safe online space for pupils to learn

about global issues and we can cheaply manage the project and the subsequent collaboration for them.

Recently we won the BESA Education Resources Award for the Best 21st Century Learning Environment beating some very stiff competition with multi-million pound turnovers. We have also just agreed a very exciting new project with the National College for Schools Leadership around Pupil Voice.

Our new community for Primary Schools: "Rafi.ki Kidogo" (it means "little friend" in Swahili) launched in April has already grown to over 200 schools in 45 countries and now has local authorities wanting to bring all their primary schools on board.

Henry Warren, Gemin.i
henry@gemin-i.org

SoundAffects enhances international school partnerships by enabling children, through the medium of high quality pre recorded audio, to hear their counterparts in their linked schools talking about the detail of their lives. The audio project, which is led by radio producers Penny Boreham and Caroline Swinburne allows children to ask each other questions, respond to each other's curiosities, engage in a dialogue and share cross-curriculum projects about subjects that matter to them and interest them.

In 2009, SoundAffects is working with linked schools in Sri Lanka and the UK. Last year (2008) they worked with sixteen linked schools in Ghana and the UK.

Project leaders travel to Sri Lanka in June/July 2009 to record in schools there. They have completed recordings in the UK and they will be played to pupils in Sri Lanka who will respond to their UK counterparts. Many pupils in the UK have been engaged by what their counterparts in Sri Lanka might have experienced during the war and have asked many questions on this subject. Pupils and their teachers have also chosen to work on cross curriculum projects about music, creative writing, role models and passionate

interests, flooding and climate change and conflict resolution amongst other subjects.

The overriding aim of SoundAffects is to make the relationships at the heart of these school links vivid and meaningful for the children involved, and to encourage empathy and the building of understanding through thoughtful engagement with other children. In the course of this project work, Caroline and Penny have become aware that they are collecting an ever growing rich archive of high quality, hugely accessible and child motivated and driven recordings which are an invaluable educational resource. They have decided to produce DVDs, incorporating the audio, lesson plans and still images, to support teachers in raising issues around global citizenship in an intimate and personal way.

SoundAffects first DVD, "Where I live. Denu, a town in eastern Ghana. Tregarth, a village in Gwynedd, Wales" was launched in May and supports the Geography and Citizenship Curriculum for primary schools with six lesson topics. All profits from the sale of the DVD (which will cost £35) will feed directly back into the charity to support project work.

SoundAffects is now trying to raise funds for Ghana Phase Two and Sri Lanka phase two,

when they hope to hand over the Ghana and Sri Lanka ends of the recording operation to local broadcasters in order to make the dialogues truly sustainable and set up lasting relationships between schools and local broadcasters.

(The SoundAffects website www.soundaffects.org.uk has more information, gives you the chance to hear audio recordings and has details about purchasing the SoundAffects dvd)

Penny Boreham
penboreham@ntlworld.com

Hamilton Trust

The development of the cross-curricular Topic for Primary schools based on Africa is now well under way at Hamilton Trust. The Topic themes include: Children's Rights & the Millennium Goals, Amazing Africa (geography & some early history), Water for All, Health, Mandela, Food & Trade, African Art (masks from Cote d'Ivoire Goli Festival, Ethiopian Painting – then and now, batik, bead work & traditional & modern African music) and School to School Links. All themes will relate to the rights of children all over the world with particular examples from various parts of

Africa and children will be encouraged to consider how well their rights are met in the UK and compare this to children in Africa. We are keeping in mind three aims: to learn *about* Africa – a conventional 'topic' approach, learn *through* Africa – hold up a mirror to ourselves... and learn *from* Africa – what can Africa (African children) teach us?

The School to School Link theme will encourage schools to make links with African schools and offer advice and resources for doing so. Nick Maurice has kindly agreed to be involved in the production of a short video to introduce the linking concept to schools. The UKOWLA Toolkit is suggested as a starting point for schools and we are also using quotes from the SoundAffects CD that is now available. Activities that teachers can undertake with their children in co-operation with their partner schools are provided as well as ideas to help with developing a link and preparing children for their partnership. This Topic should be ready to publish online at www.hamilton-trust.org.uk in August 2009, ready for schools to use from the Autumn Term 2009 onwards.

Dr Deidre Holes
deidre@hamilton-trust.org.uk
www.hamilton-trust.org.uk

Achievers International

Recently, during World Trade Week, students from one of our schools went down to the London Stock Exchange to help promote World Trade Week and launch Global Entrepreneurship Week 2009. They sold products they had imported from their partner school in Berlin and had their story featured on the World Trade Week website. BBC World Class also wrote an article which was linked to the BBC Business News webpage and had 8,000 hits in one day!

In September we will begin a pilot programme with IBM to help put our schools in touch with local IBM mentors in the UK and abroad. The student companies will be supported by the mentors both in visits and online, and the mentors in both locations will also be in touch to help facilitate and support the school link. Following the pilot we hope to be able to roll this out to more of our network.

Over the summer we'll be working on our website further including translating it into German. Other languages will follow at a later date. We have also started a monthly eNewsletter to help connect us to our network and keep them up to date on recent news and activity. Our network of schools is continuing to expand and we recently welcomed our first schools in Russia and Ecuador.

You can read more news on our website www.achieversinternational.org and also sign up to the monthly eNewsletter to be kept up to date.

Max Larcombe
max@enterprise-education.org
www.achieversinternational.org

Gold Star in Norway and Wales

Ole Bjørn Ileby invited me to speak at the Fredskorpset annual conference in Oslo on 27 May. There were over 100 delegates, mainly mayors and representatives of municipal government in Norway. I was asked to share experiences from the Gold Star pilot in Wales and stimulate debate about Norway starting a second pilot.

There was interest in the Welsh experiences. Much discussion was about the way the project has developed, with particular interest in the Welsh achievements.

- The pilot started with 5 known links. Two years later there are 99 – a strong result in the ambition to have a link in every Welsh community.
- Two Communities have received Gold Star Awards. Mbale (Uganda) and Pontypridd received two awards for Children and Health. Sankwia (The Gambia) and Amlwch received one for Children.

We explored learning from the Welsh pilot and how it might make a second pilot into a

prototype for global roll out. Issues discussed included

- The scheme is not yet ready to roll out. A second pilot will help. Norway's great record of support for development and extensive experience in partnerships will be an asset to the development of the scheme.
- We are too Northern led. Our good practice for partnerships lays great emphasis on equal involvement of both partners; but the scheme has not practiced this well enough. A second pilot might be with a single Southern country to give greater emphasis to empowering the Southern partners.
- The awards panel was diverse, and the management of the project tried to be impartial, but all were based in Wales. It might be better if the process is managed by an impartial body. BUILD is looking at ways to do this.

There was much interest in a Norwegian pilot, but for me the greatest inspiration was hearing from some of the amazing partnerships in Norway.

- In the far north, Hamarøy is developing unprecedented cohesion between ethnic Norwegian and Sami people via a link with Cape Town that uses peace and reconciliation techniques.
- Visits between pupils of a special needs school in Vennesla and their partners in Sri Lanka has helped the pupils develop self confidence and profoundly affected even their own parents admiration of them.

These are the WOW moments!

John Whitaker

jnhwhitaker@hotmail.com

In the field of linking, **Links Japan** is working with a partner in Japan, Linking Japan (www.linkingjapan.com) sharing information on community linking in the UK, and the work of BUILD; promoting good practice linking and, in particular, encouraging the development of links between African and Japanese communities, with schools at their heart. This draws on the first hand partnership experience of UK communities. As a result a community link has been established between Kagoshima in Kyushu in Japan and Iganga in

Uganda, thanks to the support of the Daventry Friends of Iganga and their introductions to Iganga. It centres on a three way link between the William Parker School in Daventry, Iganga High School and the Globe Academy in Kagoshima. Links Japan is also promoting the development of these Japan-Africa community links, through the Council of Local Authorities in International Relations, and is working with the Japan Society and the British Council to identify schools in the UK and Japan, who are successfully linked, who could also include an African partner in that link. Links Japan is also lobbying the Japanese government and businesses, who have made commitments under the MDGs' Global Call to Action, to understand the value of community based partnerships, and support them, as much for the benefit of Japanese, especially rural, communities as for African communities. Japan is struggling with the task of learning to approach the world in new ways after the 15 year recession has undermined many of their society's givens – stable, full and lifetime employment and an education system which is fit for purpose.

Phillida Purvis

phillida@linksjapan.org

On 8 June 2009 the **Commonwealth Foundation**, in partnership with United Communities, co-hosted a seminar entitled Digital Diasporas at the Foundation's headquarters, Marlborough House, London.

The seminar was attended by UK-based African diaspora groups and representatives from African high commissions.

For the Commonwealth Foundation, the event built on the findings of the Fifth Diversity Matters Forum, an international conference the Commonwealth Foundation co-organised in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2008, which examined the different ways in which diaspora organisations could work with the Commonwealth and how the Commonwealth could better serve diaspora communities. The event also saw the launch of United Communities, a new organisation aiming to leverage the assets and amplify the voices of global communities. Both hoped that the seminar would generate practical recommendations to take forward.

Presenters included representatives of the Edo State Women Association (ESWA), Sudanese Mothers for Peace (SMP), the BBC World Service Programme at Open University, Connections for Development, the

Commonwealth Foundation and United Communities.

Participants were critical of the top-down and donor-driven forms of development, as well as the perceived lack of accountability and waste of some INGOs. In response, participants called for a greater role to be given to diaspora organisations.

They noted the largely untapped remittance flows of diaspora groups, their unrivalled knowledge of local political, economics and customs, and their already established links, making them – potentially – highly effective agents of development.

However, diaspora groups currently receive little attention from mainstream development practitioners, wider civil society, or indeed from governments in either the more or less economically developed worlds. What is needed first, then, is widespread lobbying for greater space for diaspora organisations.

Secondly, participants also called for a renewed emphasis on entrepreneurship, encouraging grassroots innovation and employment for sustainable development. Microfinance was put forward as a tried and

tested method by which funds could be channelled effectively into enterprise.

A third theme of discussion was the need to get the most out of aid: money sent back by the diaspora could generate much more than it currently does if it used gift aid and secured matching pledges.

Finally, participants called for greater efforts to exploit technology. Mobile phones, for example, less susceptible to intermittent electricity supply, could mark a way forward for the exchange of news, knowledge and money.

The seminar highlighted some key issues which will inform the Commonwealth Foundation's and United Communities' ongoing work in the area of diaspora and development. A full report of the event will be made available on the Commonwealth Foundation's website, <http://www.commonwealthfoundation.com/>.

Andy Holmes

a.holmes@commonwealth.int

CORPORATE

Eden, Manchester Aid To Kosovo (MAK) And The People Of Podjueva In Kosovo – An Inspirational Partnership

On 28 March 1999 in Kosovo, the Serbian Scorpions Unit descended on the mainly Albanian town of Podjueva, discovering that the men of the town had fled to the hills, they corralled and massacred thirty women and children of the Bogujevci, Llugaliu and Duriqi families in a walled garden. Five children

survived the massacre; discovered by the British army when NATO liberated Kosova, the severely injured children, five cousins, were medically evacuated to Manchester by the British government. In total they had lost 8 members of their family including their siblings, mothers and grandmother and their friends, the Duriqi and Llugaliu families.

The Bogujevci children felt their recovery was helped by the beauty and tranquillity of

Manchester's parks and gardens and in 2001 a 22 acre site, close to the massacre site was chosen for the Manchester Peace Park, named as a symbol of reconciliation, love received and hope for the future.

In 2003 MAK approached the Eden Project for help with the development; a month later Sue Hill, Eden's creative director and landscape architect Jane Knight, paid their first visit to Kosovo; they drew up designs for the Peace Park in consultation with the community. In July a highly successful workshop was held at Eden involving the 3 Kosovars evacuated to Manchester, other MAK members, the mayor and deputy mayor of Podujeva, and many specialist staff from the Eden Project. In October, Jane and Sue Hill, worked on the Peace Park site revising the design and working closely with Vizioni i Paqes, (Vision of Peace), a group of young Kosovar painters and sculptors, formed to support the creation of the Peace Park. Sue and Jane judged a children's art competition of designs for the Peace Park and 13,000 spring bulbs were planted with the community.

Back at Eden Sue Hill constructed a Peace Park 'shrine' meticulously crafted using debris from a disused Serb Orthodox church above the Peace Park site and Kosovar children's art; this was exhibited in the temperate biome

in the Transforming Violence/Eden exhibition 'Cultivating Community'. More collaborative events followed; Eden dedicated one of its celebrated 'Sessions' starring Ian Brown to raising funds for the Peace Park, Sue Hill ran workshops in Manchester for the 'Fragile State' – art from Kosovo Exhibition, Finally in 2008 Jane Knight led a group from Eden to Podujeva to carry out a mass planting of the Peace Park.

On the 28 March 2009, the tenth anniversary of the massacre, the Peace Park was officially launched, a group of 30 people attended from the UK, including a delegation from the Eden Project.

For the future, the park is still a partnership project in progress, Jane Knight and her partner architect Peter Sandover, are researching the possibility of setting up an advisory forum to focus on Podujevë's potential for development into a model environmentally sustainable dormitory town.

This Kosova Peace Park Project has demonstrated tangibly the physical and emotional healing power of growing trees and plants in an area devastated by war and ethnic cleansing; it has given Eden the potential to participate in the renewal and regeneration of that area and to foster the

understanding that nurturing the interdependence between all living things can bring about social change and the wider understanding that we are all part of one world.

Howard Jones

howard.jones@edenproject.com

Skills Venture has had an unexpectedly busy three months, despite the recession. Our first paying client went out to Kenya as a volunteer business mentor in June 2009, and spent a week working with four entrepreneurs. His background was in corporate banking and he worked with entrepreneurs in a variety of sectors who needed help in working out their growth strategies.

The businesses in question included a small family-owned flower farm, a high-tech start-up in the mobile phone sector, an aloe vera exporting business and a pharmaceuticals wholesaler. In many cases the mentor was able to help the entrepreneurs to re-examine whether they needed an injection of finance so early, and how else they could grow their business; one of them commented that “it was like having a mirror held up to my face”.

Skills Venture is sending out a further four volunteer mentors to Kenya in July and August, with more in the pipeline for the autumn. This time round our mentors have backgrounds in corporate HR, business strategy, small business management and non-profit planning.

Meanwhile, Skills Venture is working with BUILD to engage UK companies in international partnership linking activities. We propose to organise a BUILD roundtable meeting for business leaders (and senior representatives from Government, NGOs, the media and academia) in London in early 2010. This meeting will explore the benefits of such activities for corporates, going beyond corporate social responsibility, including the particular benefits of employee volunteering schemes in developing countries (such as developing and attracting the best employees). We will look at best practice and how these activities can be further developed and improved, drawing on a range of case studies.

We are looking for other BUILD members to get involved in planning this meeting, both by inviting their own corporate contacts and by contributing to the content. This is a great opportunity to engage with a corporate

audience. We will be holding a planning meeting in late August in London and will keep you informed of the outcome.

Will Snell
will.snell@skillsventure.com

HEALTH

THET is a UK charity committed to improving health services in developing countries. We have over 20 years of experience working with health institutions around the world – promoting action that is practical, sustainable and responsive.

The last few months have been a busy time for us with our annual conference, the release of new publications and new developments regarding funding for Links.

On 2 April, 121 delegates joined THET for our annual National Conference for Health Links held at Cardiff University. It was an excellent day of workshops, presentations and plenary sessions that brought together Health Links from all over the UK to network, share their experiences and learn from one another. We were thrilled to have Roda Ali from the Institute of Health Sciences in Hargeisa, Somaliland join us as our keynote speaker to share her experiences of the nurse tutor training

programme there. Other speakers included Tony Jewell, Chief Medical Officer for Wales, and John Gibb from DFID who shared news of two new Government initiatives to strengthen the work of Health Links. Journalist Eleri Evans wrote a full report of the day's events which is available on the THET website.

In May, THET was pleased to release the second edition of its International Health Links Manual. This revised Manual, written by THET's Programme Coordinator Maïa Gedde, provides guidance, shares experiences and offers examples of good practice from those directly involved in Links. Its aim is to help both UK and developing country Link partners to think more strategically about their work. As a reference document for Link Partnerships, this Manual is aimed at those seeking to form a Link, or already involved in an established Link. It can be read from cover

to cover, or can form a useful resource for dipping into at any time.

As announced at the April Conference, THET has been awarded the contract to manage one of the two new Government initiatives for Health Links. This is a new International Health Links Funding Scheme, funded through DFID and the Department of Health, and jointly managed by THET and the British Council. Through the

Funding Scheme, £1.25 will be made available each year for 3 years to provide grants, information and support to Health Links. Full details of the Funding Scheme will be released shortly.

For more information on our programmes, work with Links and how to get your copy of our latest publications, visit www.thet.org.uk.

*Amy Cudmore
amy@thet.org*

NEWS FROM WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

This news comes from organizations that were involved in the BUILD meeting in Yaoundé “Building Partnerships for Peace” in May 2009 and demonstrates the commitment by those organisations to taking forward the community linking initiative both in terms of working towards national linking bodies and a regional BUILD. We are thrilled to have acted as the ‘catalyst for action’ - Nick Maurice

The North West Association of Development Organisations

Linkages for Development Workshop

On June 15, 2009, NWADO hosted a workshop for its members entitled: “Linkages for Development”. The workshop stemmed from the BUILD initiative.



NWADO's workshop focused on the concept that organizations and communities of Cameroon's Civil Society should link locally first. Before thinking internationally, it is important to recognize and value the contributions, skills, and resources that are available in Cameroon.

Linkages should recognise, respect and value cultural difference, aim for genuine dialogue, encourage the equitable and inclusive participation of all, and develop the capacity of the people and communities involved in the link. Links can also be seen as an opportunity to improve collaboration with not only other CSOs, but local authorities and government as well. Establishing links at home first, will help lead to better social cohesion and positive development in our communities.

During the workshop, ten guiding principles of linking were identified: reciprocity, equity, commitment, values, sustainable development, understanding and respect, mutuality, community-wide participation, communication, and women's participation. Discussions surrounded the benefits of links, such as increases in knowledge and understanding of other cultures, lifestyles, and global issues.

It was mentioned that solidarity is one of the main reasons why communities form links. NWADO's mission and activities as a network, to strengthen Civil Society, demonstrate the usefulness of such links. Instead of competing for resources amongst themselves; groups, organizations, or individuals can undertake activities together. This will help address issues of inequality or advocate on behalf of issues affecting the lives of Cameroonians in the North West Region. Thus, the task for Civil Society: quality partnerships and reciprocal relationships, where all are working and learning together.

*Ngang Eric Ndeh Mboumien, Programme Coordinator, NWADO. P.O. Box 1132. Mankon-Bamenda, Cameroon. Tel: (237) 77 82 92 59
(For detailed report, see www.nwado.wordpress.com)*

"Linkages are not just about funding opportunities or inequalities, but should build upon strengths, experience, and knowledge." ~Sherry Stevenson, VSO Volunteer, NWADO

THE LONG ROAD TO CAMEROON ONE WORLD LINKING ASSOCIATION (COWLA)

Better World Cameroon (BWC) is an umbrella grassroots NGO for youth associations and nature clubs in communities in Cameroon.

In 2008 I attended the Inter Agency Forum at British Council Cameroon and introduced Better World's Community-based Partnerships Initiative and then at the BUILD conference in Yaoundé on May 2009.

One of the outcomes of the BUILD's conference in Yaounde on 8 May 2009 was my pledge to work on voluntary basis:

1. with Ibrahim Peghouma of VSO and Emmanuel Ngungoh of British Council at personal levels to set up a provisional secretariat.
2. connect the Diaspora in the UK to the COWLA application process.
3. share the work already done on COWLA with the Cameroon Team.

I have already:

1. discussed with Mr. Ibrahim on the strength of our VSO-BWC MOU about our joint agenda on developing a framework that challenges assumptions on development education, skills, youth entrepreneurship and renaissance of African Solidarity Values in the Cameroon's approach to linking.
2. had a brief meeting on the 18 June, 2009 with Dr. Tangunu Fosi of Young Cameroon Professionals (YCP) UK in Yaounde and he promised to engage their Diaspora Group in facilitating communication in partnering communities.
3. had talks with Gabriel Waithaka of Global School Partnerships about extending the Program to Cameroon. He has since forwarded BWC's application to British Council UK.

Joshua Konkankoh, Chief Executive Officer, Better World Cameroon.

Report On Follow-Up Activities in Nigeria towards the Realization of Pledges Made During the Build Meeting In Yaoundé on 8 May 2009

Background

Following up on pledges made during the BUILD meeting which underscored my commitment to participate in BUILD's vision and work towards the introduction of the initiative and subsequent establishment of community-based linking body in Ikot Abasi L.G.A, Akwa Ibom State, South-South, Nigeria, I engaged with representatives of few community-based organizations. It is expected that the consolidation of the Community-based partnership in the state (as pilot) will lead to spread and acceptance of the initiative and the successful creation of a national linking body in Nigeria.

Outcome of The Meeting On 22 May, 2009

I convened a meeting in Ikot Obioko village, Ikot Abasi L.G.A through the assistance of a representative of a NGO, Schools Network for Community Development (SNCD). The following were recorded as marked outcomes.

- Renewed commitment between participating social groups
- Identification of a Co-ordinator for the CB-partnership initiative in the community
- Proposal to constitute participatory committee involving key stakeholders for the CB partnership
- Indications by participating groups to kick-start mapping exercise to find suitable schools and potential CB groups for linking
- Commitment to undertake mobilization for increased awareness and support from all members of the community
- Confidence-building among stakeholders achieved
- General understanding of the essence and principles guiding international partnership understood

- Understanding of mutuality of obligation in the whole process of linking achieved

Strategy

The proposed strategy to be adopted for the CB-partnership is an ideal bottom-up participatory development approach. Creation of linking structures will start at the community level with participating communities articulating their own priorities and having equal stakes in the setting of the agenda. They will be in charge of the management of the CB-partnership structure at the community level but will be under the supervision of the Co-ordinator (Programme Co-ordinator, Schools Network for Community Development, Aniekebo Gabriel).

State-Level: Proposed Framework

It is expected that state government will participate in the initiative, share in the dividends, support and provide executive backing for the project

It was suggested that the initiative be known as *Akwa Ibom State Communities – UK partnership*.

Justification for the Choice of Akwa Ibom State and Education as an Element for Partnership

1. Poor quality education and lack of direction, lack of skills and capacity.
2. Constrained by parochial perspectives due to poverty.
3. Complacent attitude towards broad development
4. The people are disenchanted and separated from national integration.
5. Education in the state is not transformative and does not help in broadening ambition and enhance socialization and self-development
6. Huge prospects at securing government's support for the linking initiative due to the present democratic administration's priority on education through the effective implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE)ⁱ policy and by extension the MDGs
7. Education is targeted at white collar jobs which are rarely available rather than entrepreneurship and self-independence.

Hence, students from this state will have opportunity of learning new perspectives to education, global citizenship, and how education can be used for the actualization of socio-cultural and economic independence.

Akwa Ibom state and its people are known for and characterized by the following attributes:

- Akwa Ibom indigenes are undoubtedly the best behaved people in Nigeria. They are known for their rich culture and high moral and civic values
- A people of high integrity, trustworthiness and committed to agreements and understanding
- Blessed with abundant natural resources to include crude oil (4th largest oil-producing state in Nigeria), rich ecosystem, some important mineral resources and most friendly climatic condition yet housing the poorest and most educationally-deprived people

So linking will help communities in the UK to understand and appreciate the following:

- Traditional values in Akwa Ibom state which can enhance community cohesion examples hospitality, sharing, respect for elders and communal responsibility.
- Traditional means of mediation - traditional authorities play key roles in conflict resolution
- Social safety nets, a value system where Africans support one another in times of crises providing special safety nets
- African women are economically independent having little reliance on national macro-economic systems. This has helped to insulate them from the economic recession.
- How students cope with schooling in the face of economic hardship yet remain law-abiding

Nsikan-George Eman

ⁱ UBE Policy is a federal government policy on education aimed at achieving increased school enrolment through the implementation of a free and basic school programme, UBE. It was introduced in 2000 during President Olusegun Obasanjo's democratic administration.