

Director's Report for the Newsletter April – June 2011

It's all change at BUILD!

The last quarter has been somewhat overshadowed by my upcoming retirement as Director of BUILD and the consequent resignation of Pepi O'Neill my assistant to take on a new job from August 1st with the British Forces Foundation based in Wiltshire which raises funds for "boosting the morale of men and women soldiers serving on the front line". Boosting morale comes naturally to Pepi as we know and undoubtedly she will be very well suited to the job.

Pepi will be hugely missed by all of us who have worked with her and known her since BUILD was founded in 2002. It is not possible to list all her many attributes and those who read this and know her will have their own impressions and memories of her extraordinary efficiency, sense of humour, panache and commitment to the cause of linking, which, you may not be aware, goes back 14 years, to the time when in 1997 she joined the Marlborough Brandt Group and its link with Gunjur in The Gambia as MBG's administrator, through the administration of UKOWLA, to the formation and life of BUILD. It is a measure of the impact that Pepi has had over the years that she has formed friendships through linking in Gambia, Nigeria, Cameroon, Kenya, South Africa and Norway.

For an organisation that undoubtedly 'punches above its weight', most of that weight has been as a result of the hard work of Pepi behind the scenes, running the admin side of the organisation, ensuring that annual reports and newsletters are produced on time (which includes bullying the membership!), keeping the database of members and 'linkers' up to date, booking conference venues and meeting rooms for BUILD meetings, organising attendance at international meetings in Cameroon, Gambia, Kampala and Malta, and the APPGs in Westminster, thanklessly taking innumerable minutes and not least keeping the Director on his toes and in the right place at the right time! It is probably not until she is absent that we will feel the full force of her abilities and how much we have all depended on her.

There will be an opportunity for us to say "Farewell!" to Pepi personally during our two day meeting at Charney Manor on the evening of Monday 26th September and we will keep you informed of that, but I know you will in the meantime want to join me in wishing her all the best for the future.

In the meantime we have been going through the process of appointing a new Director. Inevitably, the process imposes a huge additional burden on the trustees in terms of drawing up job descriptions, person specifications, advertisements, short-listing and finally interviewing and I am grateful beyond words for the amount of time and commitment that John Whitaker and the trustees have put into "getting it right!" And there is no doubt that they have! We will let you know the outcome as soon as possible.

So with this all in the background, it has not been an easy time but the work has gone on within the framework of our new strategic plan with ever greater intensity it seems.

Strategy

Advocacy; by lobbying national and global bodies for policies and practices that will support community partnerships; the main targets are HMG, the Commonwealth and the EU.

BUILD Meeting

A highlight of the past three months was the meeting of members on May 18th at which we were delighted to welcome, Vijay Krishnarayan, Deputy Director of the Commonwealth Foundation, Denis Huber Director of the Council of Europe's North South Centre and Mark Poston. This gave us an important opportunity to look at linking communities in the Commonwealth, European and UK contexts. While there is no doubt that we are working in a very different and less politically and economically secure environment than we were two years ago, nevertheless the core message of the vital importance of people to people partnerships is getting through.

Commonwealth. As a Commonwealth accredited organisation and with Danny Sriskandarajah as the interim Director of the Commonwealth Foundation we have been discussing the potential for the development of a new Commonwealth strategy for community linking and were grateful for a meeting with him at which BUILD trustee George Anang'a from Plan, David Hope-Jones from the Scotland Malawi Partnership and I were able to discuss in more detail the potential for these partnerships. I know BUILD members are grateful for the opportunities and framework that Commonwealth accreditation provides for supporting pan Commonwealth community-based partnerships, advocacy work and encouraging peace, prosperity and justice.

In that context we attended an inspiring meeting led by the Chair and Interim Director of the Commonwealth Foundation at which a number of High Commissioners were present to explore a new strategy for the Foundation within the framework of "people to people partnerships", recognising that there will be a major opportunity in 2012 to launch a new strategy during the Queen's Diamond Jubilee year.

European Union We had a very useful meeting with Denis Huber at which we learnt a lot about the role of the North South Centre in promoting global education. We saw this as the beginning of an ongoing conversation and can see great potential for using the NSC networks for promoting N/S partnerships within Europe. It is clear that we in UK are considerably further ahead in terms of community based partnerships and development awareness than in other parts of Europe.

DFID Mark Poston gave us a clear picture of the state of DFID's thinking in relation to its development programme, although was not able to reassure us of a positive outcome of the DFID review into development awareness spending in the UK. We await with bated breath particularly having made a significant contribution to that review.

In the meantime we are attempting to attract a meeting of the APPG "Connecting Communities" with Nick Gibb the Minister for Schools and Lord Howell Minister in the FCO to gauge their level of interest in and support for school partnerships.

Strategy

Develop projects that support the Communications work ; by demonstrating impact; by generating inspiring stories about partnerships that increase global peace, prosperity and justice; and by developing resources where none exist

We have continued to accumulate stories on the BUILD website and have supplied stories at the request of DFID that we have collected from the membership for a cross governmental, civil service discussion on the Big Society which is currently taking place and we look forward to the outcomes of that discussion.

We spoke at a teacher's workshop which took place at the Global School's Forum, run by the Damaris Trust which provided an opportunity for some 80 teachers from secondary schools to discuss some of the positive outcomes of their school partnerships and some of the problems they were confronting.

Strategy

One Stop Shop; by becoming the place where can be found access or signposts to materials about impact; tools that help to improve practice; and networks of relevant contacts. The main targets are partnerships.

We have continued to accumulate research from a number of bodies into impact and have been publishing that on our website. We are always looking for more and if members of BUILD are aware of research that has been carried out and would like that to be available more widely we would be happy to publish it.

It is clear that there is very inadequate research into impact of linking on Southern communities and there is an urgent need for such research. We are holding a meeting on July 12 at the University of London, thanks to Doug Bourn, Director of the Development Education Research Centre at the Institute of Education to discuss with practitioners and academics how we might address this issue.

Strategy

Projects

Develop projects that help develop exemplary practice in sectoral or cross-sectoral partnerships; including continuation of the Church Schools and Diaspora programmes.

A. As part of our ongoing Jerusalem Trust funded programme, 'Bringing the World into Church Schools', during the past quarter we have held a meeting at Liverpool Hope University with teachers from Church Schools in the Liverpool diocese exploring the opportunities for building on the links that the Church has with partners in the South, but particularly focussing on the potential and real impact that school partnerships have on the ethos of Church schools. We were pleased to have BUILD members in the form of British Council and Liverpool DEC present to discuss the resources that are available to enhance and support school partnerships. We are laying plans for two further Church school meetings in Wales (Cardiff) and London in October. We have held an end of year meeting with the Grants officer of the Jerusalem Trust Jo Ecclestone at which we gained approval for the work. We hope to get further funding to carry this work forward.

B. "Building on UK Diaspora International Partnerships" funded by the John Paul Getty Trust

This has aroused considerable interest and meetings have been held in Bristol, Swindon, Sheffield, Cardiff (as part of an excellent Wales International Development Summit) and Edinburgh.

These meetings have all concluded with the recommendation that there should be a larger meeting/conference in those centres at which the opportunities for building on the diaspora's links to their home communities can be discussed in detail. We have been very grateful for the voluntary assistance of Karl Oxford of Connections for Development and Amjad Saleem of the Cordoba Foundation at these meetings.

One outcome of the meetings has been the strong feeling that members of the diaspora feel remote from Government. Using the All Party Parliamentary Group (appg) structure we are organising a series of meetings between representatives of the diaspora with the appg for that particular country.

The first of these meetings, sponsored by BUILD, between representatives of the Nigerian Diaspora and the Nigeria appg took place on June 28. It was an excellent meeting chaired by Meg Hillier, Chair of the Nigeria appg with 20 or so leaders of the Nigerian diaspora including Bimbo Folayan Chairman of the Central Association of Nigerians in the United

Kindom (CANUK), representatives of British Council and DFID present. It was an opportunity to hear about the role of the diaspora in the development of Nigeria and the contributions at strategic and community level that they are making and was also an opportunity to explore the potential for building on the partnerships that the Nigerian diaspora have to their home communities.

We are hoping to hold further meetings with the APPG for Sudan and Ghana in the coming months.

Support for and discussions with BUILD members is a central part of our work and we have held meetings and conversations with many members during the quarter. Not all of these have been happy given the increasingly difficult economic climate in which we are all operating.

Fundraising

We were delighted during the quarter to receive grants from the Waterloo Trust of £10,000 and from donations from individuals and from events that we have held in Marlborough of £4,000.

Nick Maurice
Director

