

TOOLKIT

For Linking: Challenges and Opportunities

7b

Learning from Linking

THINK:

Consider whether learning is still at the heart of the link.

REFLECT:

Look at what you are learning from the link and how that is being shared with others outside the link.

QUESTION:

Constantly review the learning within your link.

Checklist

- ✓ Have you considered what learning might look like in your link?
- ✓ What do you hope to learn from the link?
- ✓ What do your partners hope to learn from the link?
- ✓ How will you look at what learning is taking place in your link?
- ✓ How will you ensure that the learning from the link is constructive?
- ✓ How will you ensure that your partner's views are reflected within the learning?
- ✓ Have you allowed your partners to share their own learning experiences?
- ✓ How will you reflect on the impact of your work?
- ✓ How will you ensure that your partners' priorities for learning are not overridden by your priorities?
- ✓ How will you share learning from the link more widely?
- ✓ How can I use the learning I have gained from my link and not just keep it to myself?

Next steps:

Make time to:

- Plan for the learning opportunities within your link.
- Understand your partner community and their context.
- Allow issues to be raised that may not surface in everyday linking activities.
- Look at how the link affects your attitudes, values and behaviour.
- Reflect on the learning that is taking place.
- Enjoy shared learning.
- Share what you've learned.
- Extend the learning and root it in the wider community
- Review what you have done.
- And make time to have fun.

Learning

Learning: knowledge acquired by study. This definition from the Oxford Dictionary doesn't capture the excitement and potential of learning: the questioning and discovery that leads to understanding, making connections and using this new information.

Development education, which teaches about global issues and challenges poverty and injustice, recognises the importance of active engagement in learning leading to real and effective action for change. Development education helps people to make links from the local to the global and the global to the local.

Development education:

- Enables people to understand the links between their own lives and those of people throughout the world.
- Increases understanding of the historical, economic, social, political and environmental forces which shape our lives;
- Develops the skills, attitudes and values which enable people to work together to bring about change and take control of their own lives;
- Works towards achieving a more just and sustainable world in which power and resources are more equitably shared.

Until lions have their own historians tales of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.
Igbo saying, Nigeria

Learning is about acquiring and using knowledge and skills. Linking is about reciprocity, mutual growth and learning together. Learning within linking provides an opportunity for us to look afresh at our own society and question and understand it better. Often we may gain more than we give.

Links can help us to challenge stereotypical thinking and perceptions of development. They can increase our understanding of the world and our place within it leading to recognition of our increasing interdependence. Linking enhances our understanding of the local within the global and encourages us to reflect on the impact of our actions, within and, outside of our own communities.

Through links we learn that communities are complex, diverse and changing. Links can lead us to value difference and diversity within our community and to bring that understanding to a wider audience. Links give us the opportunity to speak directly to each other; to answer each other's questions and enable the voices of the young and marginalised to be heard. Linking can raise awareness of issues of injustice and inequality on a scale to which we can relate and understand.

Linking should play a role in delivering global education in schools and communities, and in helping people understand what it means to be a global citizen. Links can help us gain an understanding, and contribute to the achievement of, the Millennium Development Goals*, the need and scale of the ambition. They should encourage active participation and motivate participants to become 'agents for change'.

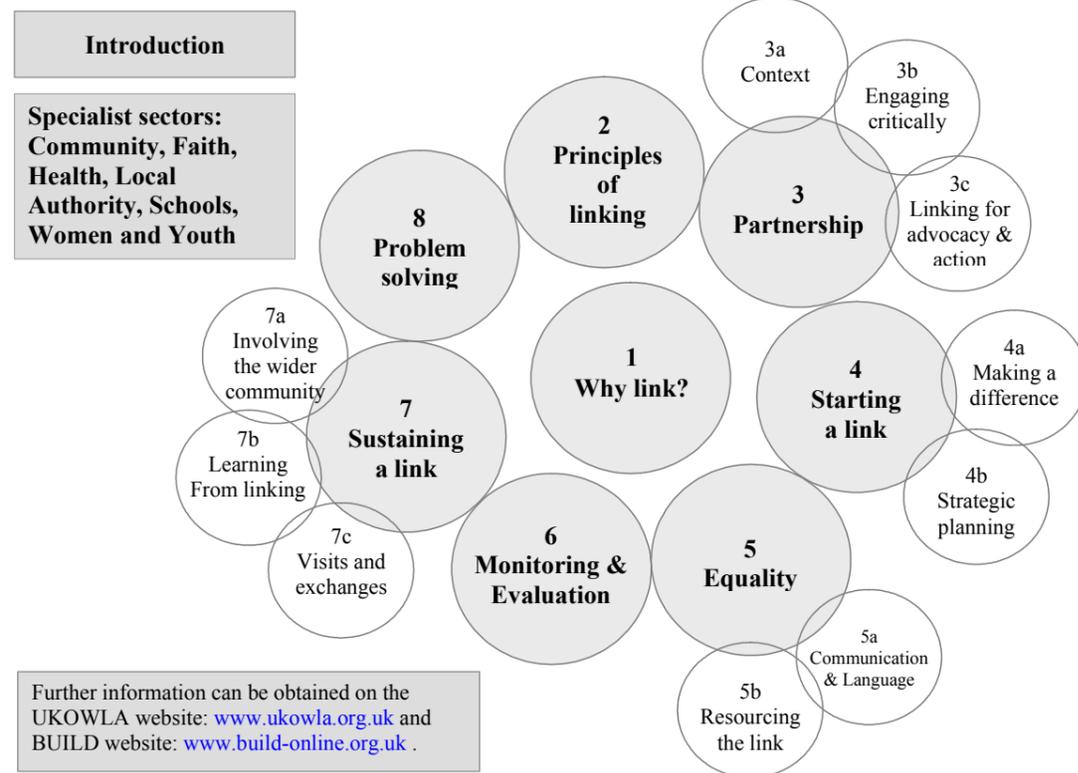
But linking can also result in the opposite. It can cultivate paternalistic attitudes, reinforce stereotypes and lead to entrenched narrow minded positions. It is important to review learning within the link and to recognise that the reasons for linking can influence openness to learning. We need to constantly question whether we are linking for our own agenda, whether we are trying to form real partnerships across the world or at least whether the balance is fair.

Learning about the lives of others does make the world a smaller place for everyone, highlighting our interdependence, and in the words of one African saying 'He who learns, teaches'.

The learning journey is at the heart of a link.

* Millennium Development Goals: see inside

Toolkit for Linking leaflets



Further information can be obtained on the UKOWLA website: www.ukowla.org.uk and BUILD website: www.build-online.org.uk.

What others say

Take every penny you have set aside for aid for Tanzania and spend it in the UK explaining to people the facts and causes of poverty. *Julius Nyerere, President of Tanzania*

To give lower priority to education and action at home in preference to funding and organising work overseas would be to undermine one of the most important long-term objectives of linking – changing attitudes, views and behaviour in the North. *Barbara Bond, UK*

Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world. *Nelson Mandela, South Africa*

The perceptions of our children have definitely shifted and they are now more open to change and difference, not just in Mutare, but also in other contexts. *Susan Watson, UK*

Linking should make us hold up a mirror and reflect critically on our own attitudes and behaviour through the eyes of our partners. *Nick Maurice, UK*

A new awareness should spread at each end, by so doing, your own perception of Britain might change quite radically. *Moni Malhoutra, Commonwealth Secretariat*

Almost every country in the world is represented in my supermarket. *Pepi O'Neill, UK*

Learning without thought is labour lost; thought without learning is perilous. *Confucius, China*

Much learning does not teach understanding. *Heraclitus, Greece*

If you really allow yourself to sit back and listen to people, you will never be the same again... *Farmer, Kansas USA, after visiting Nicaragua.*

Knowledge is a fire which people share and give to others. *Ugandan proverb*

The biggest human temptation is to settle for too little. *Thomas Merton, France*

Learning from Linking

Learning about others, learning about ourselves

Real voices; real experiences

Learning from linking:

Participating in activities related to linking can encourage the development of a range of skills including:

- questioning;
- discussion;
- critical thinking;
- participation;
- facilitation;
- co-operation;
- evaluation;
- investigation;
- problem solving;
- research

which can lead to effective advocacy.

Individual learning:

Linking allows people to:

- set their own agenda
- take responsibility for their own learning
- have their own questions answered directly
- have their views and opinions valued
- encounter and understand a different world view
- understand issues of fairness and justice
- change attitudes to learning and motivation

Linking can increase self-esteem, independence, initiative and confidence. It can provide stimulation and vitality and increase creativity.

Stereotypes:

Linking provides the opportunity to:

- challenge stereotypes and prejudices, to move beyond superficial analysis and simplifications.
- develop empathy and understanding
- learn that communities are complex, diverse and changing.

However learning from linking can also be harmful, with links confirming existing stereotypes rather than challenging them and reinforce patronising attitudes.

* **Millennium Development Goals (MDG):** All UN member states have pledged to achieve the UN MDG by 2015:

- Halving extreme poverty and hunger
 - Achieving universal primary education
 - Promoting gender equality and empowering women
 - Reducing the mortality rate of children under five by two-thirds
- Reducing the rate of women dying in childbirth by three-quarters
Reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria & other major diseases
Ensuring environmental sustainability, including halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water
Developing a global partnership for development, with targets for aid, trade and debt relief

Sharing learning from linking:

Learning can be shared with others through:

- Workshops
- Training sessions
- Exhibitions and displays
- Team meetings
- Booklets, leaflets and reports
- Presentations
- Seminars
- Web pages and website links
- Video and CD ROM
- Case studies

Learning together:

Working together to the same end helps us to:

- learn about each other;
- discover and share each other's experiences and values;
- become more aware of our own culture;
- raise awareness of the outside world and our roles and responsibility in it;
- inform debate and heighten awareness of issues;
- provide a voice for marginalised groups and individuals;
- explore solutions
- develop resources and ideas

Diversity:

Understanding and respecting differences and relating these to our common humanity. Valuing different national, religious and ethnic identities with our partner community and within our own community.

Conflict resolution:

Understanding how conflicts are barriers to development and why there is a need for their resolution and the promotion of harmony.

Learning does not end:

We have a popular saying where I come from which translates as *Learning does not end*. As you continue to learn and reflect on the sources and motivations for your involvement in the linking process, you will discover that there is much to unlearn in your views, perspectives and attitudes, as evolved in the past, to people of other cultures. Much that you come across in the ongoing learning may well shock and frighten you; it may even be profoundly discouraging in your commitment to the new endeavour. However such is the unpredictability of the educational process that you might equally discover much that is exciting and liberating and which might elevate you to new levels of commitment.

Peter Nyoni in Community Link Handbook, Peter Batty, UKOWLA

I learned a lot from that ...

We want to challenge the assumption that learning is an automatic process, that just because we are involved in doing something that appears to be worthwhile we will necessarily learn from it.

I learned a lot from that ...

What does a statement like that actually mean? WHAT precisely did I learn and how did I learn it? Learning for us is the assimilation and interpretation of experience. You do not get photographs just by clicking the shutter of a camera. You need a film and when the film has been exposed it needs to be processed before you can have your photographs. In just the same way, learning takes place by processing what you do.

Taken from: *Safari. Musa Njiru and Peter Batty, UKOWLA*