Supplementary leaflet to the set of core leaflets on linking.

What is community linking?

Community linking is the building and maintaining of partnerships and relationships between communities in two different localities in countries in the North and South. These links are formed for mutual development and well-being. Linking is also a tool for building up knowledge and understanding of each other's lives as well as wider global relationships with shared efforts to bring justice and peace to the world.

Background:

Origins of community linking

During the 1980s following the publication of the Brandt report, development issues became part of the wider political agenda. Involvement, inclusion and grassroots activism grew accordingly and became part of the wider political agenda and led Northern organisations and community groups to challenge the status quo. Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) were the 'experts' in aid, but some communities in the North wanted their own input into development, they were not satisfied with donations to charities and wanted their own direct involvement with communities in other countries. They wanted to challenge the issues related to aid. Formal twinning allowed for this; however, many preferred the concept of 'community linking' because it allowed for a more direct, informal, flexible and 'non-political' grassroots approach.

Opportunities: Linking can help your to:

- strengthen communities North and South as their common interests and concerns draw people together within and between the partner communities. The community focus enriches the range of experiences because of the cross-fertilisation of ideas and exchanges of personal experiences in quite different cultures.
- bring personal understanding of global issues to members of the wider community beyond and across specific communities of interest, ethnicity, culture and occupation. This can include young people at school and adults in various occupations.
- provide support to other links, cutting across society as well as enhancing sector specific links.
- bring communities, that is people from a variety of walks of life, together on both sides helping to bring cohesion and inclusion.
- share a range of learning across class, race, sector etc.
- provide a focus on common issues and challenges and bring a 'different set of eyes' or perspective, to an understanding of our own communities.
- enable people to gain experiences beyond life chances.
- put 'global' issues on an 'everyday' level and help people to see connections between the local and the global.
- increase understanding at a personal level through seeing the impact directly "on one's friends".
- enable people to engage in varying depths of linking activity: from general awareness to long-term personal relationships and friendships facilitated by its informal and flexible structures.

Checklist:

- global education and awareness
- local community support
- local authority support
- community champions with influence
- pro-active – out of own group
- public awareness events
- cross section of the community
- focused and disciplined purpose, priorities and commitment
- ongoing publicity, persuasion & contact making

Below is a list of things you will need to be able to maintain a link:

Committed group of activists from different sectors of the community Open-mindedness and pluralism patience and commitment to own and others learning	champions from amongst the 'shakers and movers' in the community time a partnership agreement or memorandum of understanding

If you find that you can't tick all of these boxes then you should think again about linking.

Challenges: to maintaining a truly mutually beneficial and equal partnership

communication in terms of logistics communications in cultural terms managing different expectations on both sides racism, paternalism and prejudice continually challenging assumptions commitment	not relying on particular individuals and their contacts is vital to sustainability regular and structured reflection, evaluation and planning on both sides using the link to challenge, strengthen and widen **own** notions of 'community' on both sides

Resource rich communities: specific issues

'Aid' mentality: with some individuals and their communications lack of understanding of constraints on, and sacrifices made by the other community materialism leading to undervaluing of non-material resources	attitude towards own giving, that is, relevance and rubbish culture of 'newness' and speed and time expectations of travelling and reasons and motivations

Resource poor communities: specific issues

'Aid' and dependency mentality lack of understanding of constraints on, and sacrifices made by the other community cultural attitudes to learning lack of recognition and understanding of the value of one's own contribution to one's partner	expectations of travelling and personal benefit – who travels is political materialism leading to undervaluing of non-material resources