THINK AGAIN

REFLECT:
Consider possible constraints and assumptions carefully:
People: the resources and skill to do their work
*Resource*s: the capital and revenue available
Time: look at the deadline for you to achieve your aims

QUESTION:
Have you considered all implications of establishing a link; both for yourselves and your partners? Goodwill and good intentions are not enough in themselves.

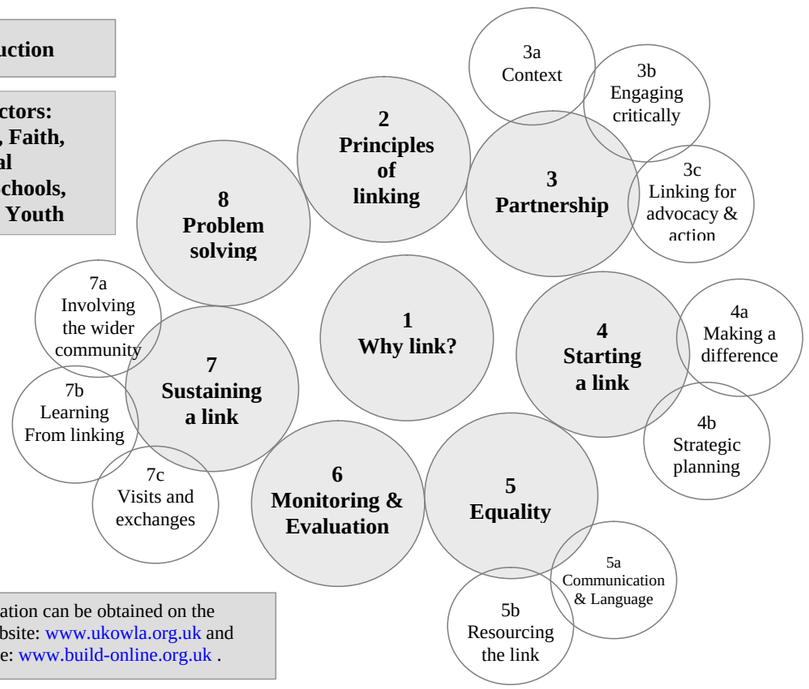
Checklist:
- ✓ What are your criteria for choosing a partner?
- ✓ Are you clear what your partner wants to get out of developing the link?
- ✓ Are you each clear about your own reasons for developing the link?
- ✓ Is a link the most effective way of achieving your objectives?
- ✓ Does each group have the necessary knowledge, ideas and experience or capacity to acquire them?
- ✓ Is learning from each other implicit within your objectives?
- ✓ Are you working towards a shared joint agenda?
- ✓ Have you established effective means of communication?
- ✓ Have you involved as many local groups as possible?
- ✓ Have you referred to the *Principles in Community*
- ✓ *Linking* in your discussions?

Next steps:
- Set up an initial linking group in your community.
- Consider the impact of a link within the community with the help of a 'critical friend'.
- Seek a suitable partner.
- Make contact with a potential partner.
- Discuss and try to agree the aims and outcomes together.
- Look at resources needed at both ends to sustain the link.
- Agree clear lines of communication.
- Establish a linking committee with a link co-ordinator at both ends of the link.
- Develop a Partnership Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding.
- Agree a small initial project using SMART objectives (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic, **T**imebound)
- Review progress with your partner regularly.

Toolkit for Linking leaflets

Introduction

Specialist sectors: Community, Faith, Health, Local Authority, Schools, Women and Youth



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

TOOLKIT

For Linking: Challenges and Opportunities

4

Starting and running a link

Planning for success

Planning is deciding in advance what to do, how to do it, when to do it and who is going to do it.

Thorough preparation and planning are the basic principles on which a successful course of action depends. Flexibility, and openness to different ideas and approaches, is also important.

Everyone should have a clear understanding of the aims and potential outcomes. Also the purpose, that is, why we do what we do, must be clear to all involved.

The objectives, that is what is expected; and how are we going to judge whether we have succeeded, need to be agreed.

Resources, including access to the necessary skills, need to be considered: the ability to do the job, act appropriately and do what needs to be done. Capacity, or the time available to everyone every day, also needs careful consideration. People may be keen to be involved, but if they already have too many obligations they will not be able to contribute the time needed.

Planning should be a team activity. Involving many people with different perspectives will lead to greater understanding, acceptance and commitment by everyone of the project.

No one tests the depth of the river with both feet. *Ghanaian proverb*

Links may start through an existing tentative relationship or through a community seeking a partner. But no matter how the link starts there are a number of stages, as in any project, that are important to the development of any link.

Forming a group:
The most successful links are as inclusive as possible. Although the idea for a link may have started with one individual, no one can maintain a link on their own and others need to be involved. Do involve several people at both ends of the potential link.

Objectives:
In establishing *objectives* for the link, members of both groups need to be open about their *motives* for involvement. Motives may be focused on the benefits likely to be gained by one's own town, school or group or on the perceived benefits for the partner community. But honesty and transparency are key. Perceptions of what the relationship is about will probably differ as partners may come from very different educational, social, economic, political and possibly faith environments.

Potential resources:
At an early stage consider potential human and financial resources for the link. This should involve matching your objectives to the skills you have available. Don't be ambitious. Start small; with a defined and attainable goal for the first stage of the link.

Inclusivity:
Once preliminary thoughts are clarified try to float ideas more widely within the organisation and community. Although difficult to start with, inclusivity enhances the link, aids sustainability and reduces the potential for conflict and disillusionment. But remember that stakeholders may have differing interests in the outcome of the link.

Steering committee:
A steering group or committees should be formed at each end with a strong link co-ordinator. It is vital that the group members will be in post, or remain committed, for a long time. Sensitising the community is critical to gaining community support and key members may act as collective champions for the link. If you are involving local government, try to involve all political parties. It is also important to match the people on the committee to the skills required such as finance, legal, public relations and fundraising.

What others say

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. *Lao-tzu, China*

For tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today. *African saying*

Those embarking on a link should appreciate the fact that most of the Southern countries you will be attempting to link with have suffered exploitation at the hands of most European countries.
Buddy Larrier, Barbados

We have to accept that by and large people who are involved in setting up links from the South are those who have been fortunate a) to attend school to a certain level, mostly beyond secondary school b) have made contacts with people from the North either back home or when they have travelled. As such, in addition to being involved in the main with world development, international justice, raising interest, etc they may also have very personal reasons. *Johannes Mallah, Sierra Leone*

The more elaborate our means of communication, the less we communicate. *Joseph Priestley, UK*

There is a sense of being used to suit the needs of the North. *S-N partnerships*

Failing to prepare is preparing to fail. *Unknown*

Learning about other cultures does not necessarily teach us anything about the racism of our own. *A. Sivanandan, Sri Lanka*

Note: Partnership Agreements or Memoranda of Understanding can only be developed once some discussion has taken place between partners.

Getting started

Discussion is needed on all of these areas both within your own community and between communities

Aims
Clarify the aims through discussion with others in your community. Find out about other local initiatives or previous international experience.

Finding a partner*
There are a number of routes: existing links within your wider community; Diaspora groups; educational establishments; local authorities; national linking organisations such as UKOWLA** and the Internet.

Strategy
Develop a strategy for a set period of time, with aims and objectives.

Communications:
Agree the main means of communication, but use all channels available. Be aware of who are the key contacts, in order to avoid crossed wires. Keep in touch at all stages.

Roles and responsibilities Ensure everyone is clear on their roles and responsibilities.
Ensure everyone is committed to the long term.

Type of link
Explore the type of link that is most appropriate to both communities – it may not be the one you first thought of. The link may evolve to include many different linking groups.

Time
Consider a modest, achievable, project or specific piece of joint work to begin with. Agree a timetable to review progress.

Partnership Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding

Co-ordination
Appoint a strong link co-ordinator at each end of the link, but ensure means for knowledge to be shared with others.

Schedule
Establish a joint agenda with joint activities and timetable - everyone must recognise its usefulness and potential.

Profile
Prepare a profile of your community on an agreed format to try and explain yourselves, your environment, your social groups etc. Encourage your partner to do the same.

Outcomes
Agree what the outcomes are intended to be and how you will measure them.

Accountability
Agree who is responsible for strategic, programmatic, financial and management operations of the link. Preferably agree on named individuals.

Vision
Both groups should share and try to agree a common vision for the link and refer to this regularly. Use it as an important reminder.

***** *United Nations Development Programme:* exploring partnership facilitation through the country offices of the United Nations Volunteers.

** *UKOWLA*: United Kingdom One World Linking Association

Review process
Agree how and when you will check if you are achieving your outcomes. Agree review process ensuring involvement by as many participants as possible.

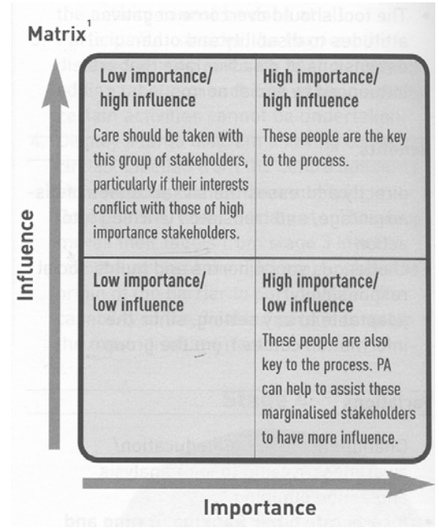
Committee and Skills:
Consider the range of skills it would help the Committee to have. These could include:
Financial: in handling funding,
Legal: for charitable status,
Media: publicity and promotion,
Access to wider constituency: doctor, priest, headteacher, local government, health

Vision and flexibility

What happens when the vision of the South reinforces Western supremacy? What happens when the vision of the North reinforces Western supremacy? What happens when people romanticise the South?
How can these concepts/ assumptions be negotiated to create a level playing field for real dialogue and mutual learning?
In order to begin this process, it is necessary to engage critically with our own assumptions about reality and about knowledge and with different perspectives. Exploring these concepts with partners can be a way forward, but it will require trust and openness to dialogue, to difference, to constructive conflict and to mutual transformations.

Further information and resources can be found at:
http://www.osdemethodology.org.uk

Stakeholder Analysis
This approach can be useful in identifying who you think are important to your link; and who can influence its success. They may not be the same people, and will need different treatment.



Participatory Approaches: A facilitator's guide, VSO, 2004