

THINK:

Consider what you and your partner both want to get out of the visit and involve them in planning the visit.

REFLECT:

that there may be underlying suspicion of the reasons for the visit on either side.

QUESTION:

Is the visit necessary or could the resources be used more usefully elsewhere?

Checklist:

- ✓ Have you considered the objectives for the visit?
- ✓ Have you shared these with your partner?
- ✓ Is everyone clear about their own objectives: including learning and not just 'teaching'?
- ✓ Have you considered the selection process including criteria for selection?
- ✓ Has everyone participated in the induction process?
- ✓ Is everyone aware of the objectives?
- ✓ Are you keeping your partners up to date with developments?
- ✓ Are all participants aware of both sides' expectations?
- ✓ Have you considered strategies to include less affluent participants?
- ✓ Have you considered any negative environmental impacts?

Next steps:

- Plan as early as possible and liaise with your partner community on the programme.
- Consider both partners' objectives in planning the visit.
- Ensure induction materials on both communities are prepared.
- Develop criteria for the selection of participants.
- Carry out a recruitment process.
- Develop a pre-visit programme setting aside time for pre-departure activities.
- Begin practical activities early including travel arrangements and fundraising.
- Plan the means of reporting back to your community in advance.

Visits and exchanges

Exchange visits enable people to share ideas and experiences and provide an insight into the culture and traditions of another community.

They include:

- **Exchange programmes** and reciprocal visits. These generally involve two organisations in two different countries that are working in a common focus area.
- **Work placements.** Like exchange programmes, these generally involve two organisations working in different countries on a common focus area, but the visits are only one way, with staff from one organisation spending time on work placement with a host organisation.
- **Study tours:** Individuals or group participants from any number of organisations making a series of visits to organisations in other countries.
- **Training programmes:** These can involve individuals from a number of different countries.
- **Gap Years:** In more affluent societies young people are increasingly travelling in their pre-university year.

Visits to partner communities enable people to meet face to face and learn more about each others' communities and each other's views and perspectives. The opportunity to meet can help with the development of partnerships at the planning stage, including development of an Agreement. The enthusiasm and involvement of visitors, both on the visit and on their return help to sustain the link at the later stages.

Visits and exchanges can provide opportunities to identify, and learn from, policies and practice that have worked elsewhere. They can also help to affirm the value and effort of the work being carried out within organisations and communities. Such activities enable members of one community to meet another and thus gain an insight and exposure to other ways of living and working.

By learning through doing, through people to people contact and personal experiences, participants have an opportunity to encounter different contexts, share knowledge and skills, and develop creative approaches to their work.

Visits and exchanges should also be seen as a means of helping create a sense of involvement in a broader movement. They can introduce people to issues in different countries and encourage their participation in challenging injustice. There needs to be recognition that participation by all engaging in the learning process, at all stages of the link, is important to the partnership. Reciprocal visits are important in helping to maintain a balance within the partnership.

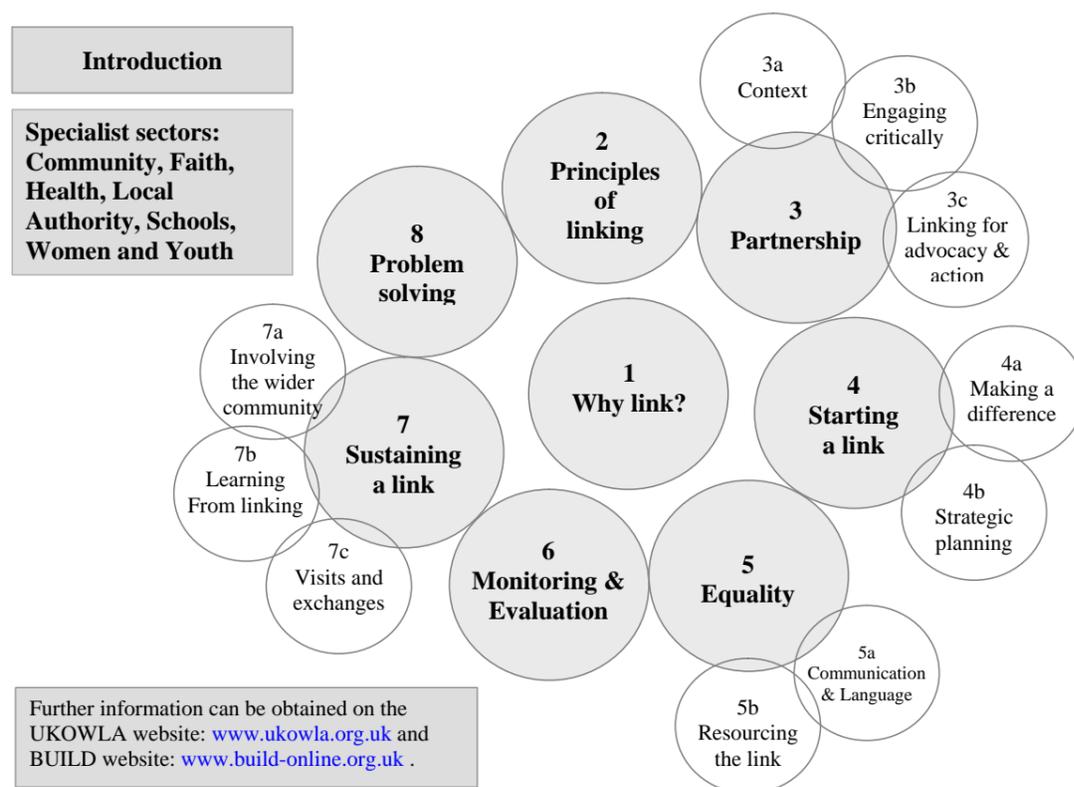
However, visits may reinforce stereotypes and the induction process is crucial in any group visit. Is your community typical of a community in the UK/Ghana/India? Can your partners be introduced to 'another side of life in your country'? Are you going to 'teach' or to learn? Many in resource rich communities have salaried jobs and paid holidays. This may not be the case with partners who may lose their job by taking part in an exchange and who might not be able to work or earn anything while their partners are visiting.

Successful visits need careful planning and preparation. They are expensive and so do consider carefully the best use of the inevitably limited funds available. Practical issues including visas, health, induction, transferring money and resources can be difficult.

It is important to consider the environmental impact of travelling and to offset the amount of carbon dioxide generated by visits.

Where you go, go with all your heart.
Confucius

Toolkit for Linking leaflets



What others say

The exchange has enabled (UK) practitioners to reflect and question their practice from a different and diverse perspective. *Joan Coleman*

You travel, you see, you learn, you return and tell the story. *Ugandan saying*

I don't know how you can live like this. *UK student visiting link community.*

A child that doesn't visit another home thinks that his mother is the best cook. *Ugandan saying*

A participant from the South, for example, a student, visiting Norway and seeing the material wealth of the host could be reinforced in their feeling of the hopelessness of their situation back home. *Linking manual, Norway*

All travel has its advantages. If the passenger visits better countries, he may learn to improve his own. And if fortune carries him to worse, he may learn to enjoy it. *Samuel Johnson, UK*

Friendship makes prosperity more shining and lessens adversity by dividing and sharing it. *Cicero, Italy*

Certainly, travel is more than the seeing of sights; it is a change that goes on, deep and permanent, in the ideas of living. *Miriam Beard, USA*

Small opportunities are often the beginning of great enterprises. *Demosthenes, Greece*

When you travel, remember that a foreign country is not designed to make you comfortable. It is designed to make its own people comfortable. *Clifton Fadiman, USA*

We thought they were coming to convert us. *Gambian Elders*

It's very hard to come home to the same conservative community in Kansas and try to communicate what you have learned. *Farmer, Kansas USA, after visiting Nicaragua*

Visits

Discussion is needed on all of these areas both within the community and between communities.

