

THINK:

About the images of your partner community, where the images have come from and how they might be used. Think about the images being used to represent your community and what they convey about your community.

REFLECT:

On how to ensure that communication is a dialogue rather than a series of monologues.

QUESTION:

Not just what your partner says, but to what is not spoken.

Checklist:

- ✓ Whose language will be used for communications?
- ✓ How will you acknowledge the other languages spoken?
- ✓ How will you try and ensure clarity of interpretation?
- ✓ Have you established a system for ensuring information that could affect the flow of information will be shared?
- ✓ What systems have you established for open and honest communications when difficulties arise?
- ✓ How will your partners be sure that you have listened to them?
- ✓ Have you considered how your partners are represented within your community?
- ✓ Have you consulted them on any images you are using?
- ✓ Have you removed jargon from your shared documents?
- ✓ Have you looked at communications as if you were the recipient?
- ✓ Are you trying to listen not just to what is said; but what lies behind the words?

Next steps:

- Agree main language of communications, although you may agree to change later.
- Establish methods, and agree regularity, of communications.
- Establish a timetable including festivals, holidays, school terms etc.
- Try and ensure a regular flow of information, news and stories to sustain interest even at quiet times. For isolated communities this can be very important.
- Try to learn a few words of your partner's language.
- Review the gathering and use of images within your link.
- If using images, always ask permission.
- Ensure communications are part of the review process.

Do ask someone else to check your email or letter to check for ambiguities or lack of clarity.

Communications and language

Communication is the process of exchanging information, usually via a common system of symbols. People communicate in order to share knowledge and experiences using different forms of communication including speaking, writing, signs and gestures. Languages are not just sets of symbols. They also contain a grammar, or system of rules, used to manipulate the symbols. Because a language also has a grammar, it can manipulate its symbols to express clear and regular relationships between them.

People from different cultural backgrounds communicate in different ways so that although the same language is being used, use and interpretation differ. Cross-cultural studies seek to understand how people from different cultures communicate with each other. Cross-cultural studies also seek to improve communications between different cultures.

Images can also be used as a means of communication and understanding of attitudes. The same image can have different meanings or implications in different cultures. Remember too that different faiths and communities have different perspectives and attitudes to images and their use. Portraying the human body is more acceptable in some cultures than in others.

Having a good discussion is like having riches. *Kenyan proverb*

Effective communication is key to the success of a link. Successful linking requires sustained ongoing communication. This does not mean that communications must operate at the same level all of the time. There may be holiday periods, planting and harvest or other local events and priorities which mean that regular communications are disrupted.

But communications are also a major cause of problems. Language is more than words and you need to be sure that you are speaking the same 'language' when agreeing on the aims of your link and areas such as your aims and joint agenda. It is important to be aware of differences in interpretation and understanding due to the way in which language is used. Expectations may be quite different though an apparently similar language is used.

Think carefully:

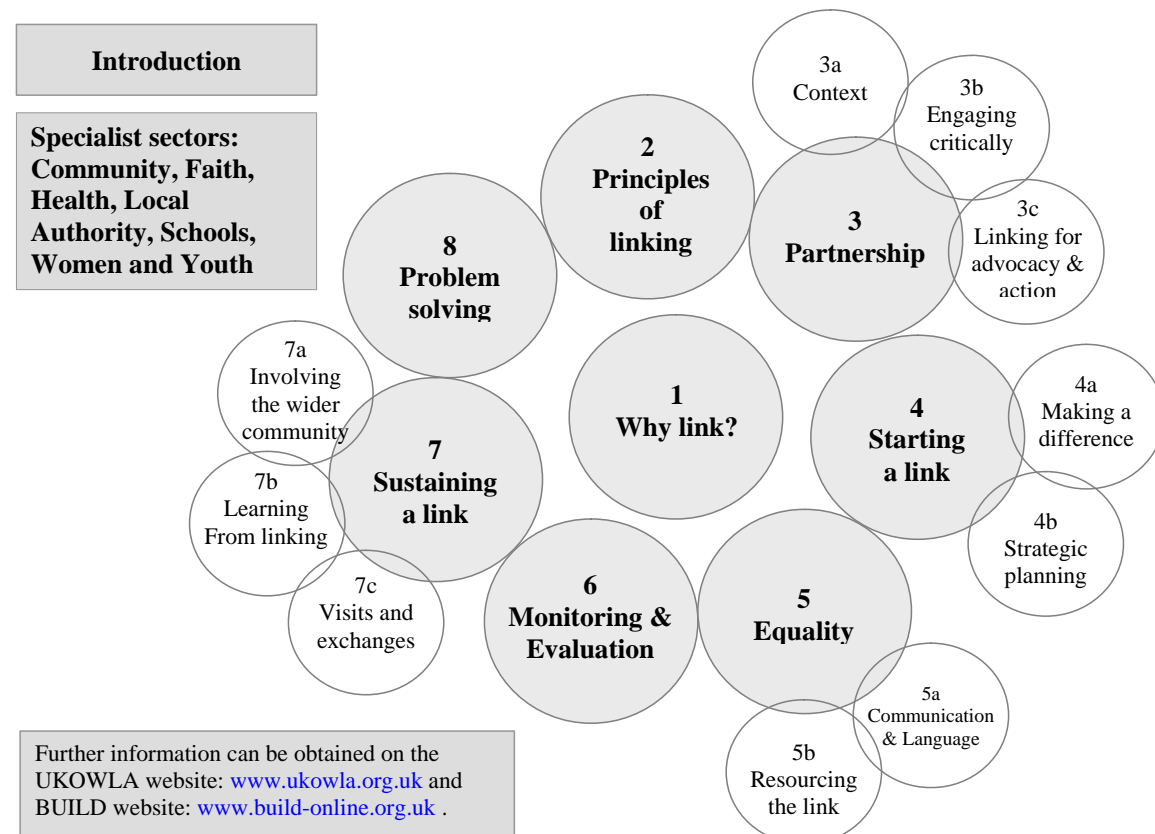
- Whose language will be used for regular communications?
- How will you acknowledge your partner's mother tongue if it is not the main means of communication?

Those with less widely spoken languages are generally expected to adopt widely used languages such as English. This contribution by a partner is often not recognised; nor that they are at a disadvantage when not using their mother tongue and particular consideration should be given to this. Language is not fixed; it is changing all the time. It may be helpful to 'brainstorm' key words and check what people understand by them. Misunderstandings easily occur between speakers of the same language; the potential for misunderstandings is increased with distance, delays and different interpretations.

To reduce the potential for difficulties within your link you should regularly seek the views of your partner on the current state of the link. Share information on events and activities such as harvest and holidays that might affect the regularity of communications and discuss how one partner can continue to work on the link while the other is unavailable.

Linking can be a series of monologues rather than a genuine dialogue. Are you sure that yours is not? Partners have different priorities and ways of working and you should both acknowledge that. Objectives and expectations may be different. So both partners should know, as far as possible, the agenda of their partner. Your objectives may be different but must not conflict and remember that in some countries it is bad manners to disagree in public.

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.

Introduction

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

What others say

If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart. *Nelson Mandela, South Africa*

Language comes closest to culture, it is culturally specific. It is important to value each and everybody's contribution. *Dinyar Godrej, India*

If the North is genuinely interested in helping the South, then it must LISTEN to our views. *Cecilia Obuya, Kenya*

In the 1950s I was a negro; in the 60s I was called a half-cast; in the 1970s I was coloured; in the 1980s I became an ethnic minority, and now, in the 1990s, I am either a third-country national, a member of the visible ethnic minority, or an economic refugee. Comrades, I am Black, British, and a totally committed trade unionist. And I want to be called a European, like the rest of the workers I want to be recognised for what I am, not what someone else wants me to be. *Bob Purkiss, Transport and General Workers' Union, UK*

A Dutch researcher noticed that so called 'water language' is employed to denote the arrival of newcomers to 'our European societies'. Words like 'stream', 'flow', 'the rising tide' and 'wave'. *Towns & Development*

Language is in fact not the problem, but the attitude towards it. *Dinyar Godrej, India*

We tend to listen to what we want to hear. *Isabel Raggio, Brazil*

Everyone hears only what he understands. *Goethe, Germany*

If people in my country spoke about the government like that (referring to a TV programme) they would disappear. *Conference participant*

We'll know we've broken the colonial mindset when we start importing African photographers to cover stories in Europe. *Colin Hastings, kijiji*Vision*

It is impossible to speak in such a way that you cannot be misunderstood. *Karl Popper, Austria*

Language issues: helping effective communications

Whose language?

- Acknowledge and value the languages spoken by your partners.
- Support each other's language.
- Ensure all participants are aware of the potential range of languages within the link.
- Remember that your partner may not be using their mother tongue to communicate.
- Be aware of, and acknowledge the need for translation of materials and communications by partners.
- Efforts to learn your partner's mother tongue will be welcome and help with relationships.

Mother Tongue:

- Recognise and value the Mother Tongue of your partners, particularly if your own language is the dominant language within the link.
- Encourage your partner to use their mother tongue at different stages of the project such as when drafting vision statements and objectives.
- Listen to the Mother Tongue recordings of your partners with translations if possible. Ask for recordings of the spoken word – poems, prose and greetings.

Appropriate language:

- Ensure language is appropriate and at the right level for understanding.
- Look out for racist language, intentional or otherwise.
- Think about the consequences of what you are saying.
- Avoid jargon and culturally specific language.
- Review your communications as if you were the recipient. Ask your partners' views.
- Look at clarity of terminology both in the organisation and planning and the messages and communications.

Information exchange:

Exchange information in as many different forms as possible: drawings, text, photographs, maps, cassettes, video, leaflets, booklets and so on. Remember people may have different perceptions of visual images and unfamiliarity can lead to difficulties in interpreting data.

* Children's involvement: there are difficulties with encouraging one-to-one communications. These may become too intimate; children with difficulties forming relationships may be unable to sustain a long distance friendship and the numbers of children involved rarely match so some children may feel left out. Projects are likely to be more successful when children work together in groups on a common task.

Communications:

- Involve as many people in your community as possible to share ideas and experiences.
- Encourage open dialogue.
- Ensure clarity in understanding at the development stage of link.
- Try to facilitate direct contact for as many groups of participants as possible to stimulate and motivate the group. *
- Use as many different means of communication as possible: telephone, post, fax, email, text.

Sensitivity to style and context in language:

- In many cultures communications follow an elaborate pattern of greeting – make sure you respect them.
- Curt 'Business like' communications may be seen as abrupt and discourteous. Even strategic planning language can seem like this.
- It may be seen as bad manners to disagree publicly.

Terminology:

- Look to a shared understanding of linking terms. Linking, partnership, exchange can all have different meanings and connotations.
 - Meaning of terms such as international and global may also need to be checked within the terms of reference.
 - Beware of using jargon.
 - Be aware that a particular title may reflect different powers and responsibilities.
 - Be aware that organisations with similar names may be very different.
 - Targets may be expressed as promises, objectives or quality standards. Make sure that both partners agree on what they mean.
- Exercise:* brainstorm key words and check what people understand by them.

Barriers to communication:

Problems with the means of communications whether postal, telecommunications or electronic can be frustrating and test the patience and perseverance of partners to the extreme. But don't give up – keep on trying.

Promoting World Photography: helping create new opportunities for indigenous photographers

Very few published images of developing countries (the South) are taken by local indigenous photographers. They don't get a fair deal. Development NGOs, Fair Trade organizations, and the travel industry need to discover, develop, support and promote indigenous photography. The result will be a better image for development and fair trade organisations, better livelihoods for indigenous photographers, and a better balanced understanding of life in developing countries.

Why the image market is unfair to indigenous photographers

More than 90% of the published images of developing countries are taken by white photographers from rich countries. Most are taken by staff of development and fair trade organizations. A few are taken by professional photographers, many of whom do it free of charge.

Major photo-libraries also provide images free to registered development charities. The source of most published images is not acknowledged thus hiding the problem. There is no simple way for an image buyer to find an indigenous photographer in a particular country.

One reason why indigenous photographers are not used is that "they lack experience" Indigenous photographers cannot compete...it's not a level playing field.

What are the consequences of the current unfair trade practices?

Development and fair trade organisations have become used to a culture of "photography for free".

Indigenous photographers are invisible, excluded, and marginalised by lack of experience, training and technology. Image buyers face real difficulties finding relevant high quality images.

Publishing poor quality photography can damage the image of development and fair trade organizations.

Many agree that the situation is not right, but feel powerless to do anything about it alone. There is no mechanism for these organizations to act together to make a difference.

www.kijijivision.org & www.majorityworld.com