

THINK:

Think how far your link incorporates the *Principles of Linking*.

REFLECT:

Consider ways of ensuring the principles and characteristics of successful linking within your link and equality of sacrifice.

QUESTION:

Have you encouraged transparency and honesty in discussions with your stakeholders and your partner?

Checklist:

- ✓ Have you discussed the *Principles of Linking* within your linking group?
- ✓ Have you discussed issues raised by the *Principles of Linking* with your partner?
- ✓ Have your partners had an equal input into the project?
- ✓ Have you ensured that your partner's priorities have had equal consideration?
- ✓ Are women consulted and actively involved?
- ✓ Have you reviewed the characteristics of successful linking within your own link?
- ✓ Are you prepared to raise issues of injustice?
- ✓ Are you prepared to welcome others into your link?
- ✓ Have you considered the regular review process?
- ✓ Have you considered the implications of *Equality of Sacrifice* within your link?

Next steps:

- Discuss the *Principles of Linking* within your group.
- Consider the *Principles of Linking* and how you will try and ensure them within your link.
- Consider possible benefits for both communities.
- Consider potential difficulties for both communities.
- Consider potential power inequalities and the steps which may need to be taken to avoid reinforcing them.
- Make a list of stakeholders and others who might be involved in your link.
- Consider the necessary commitment of time, energy and resources required to form a link.
- Look at alternatives to linking in the *Making a difference* leaflet.

Key Principles in Community Linking

Linking communities offers the opportunity to gain an understanding of other peoples and places, within our own countries and around the world. Many different types of links exist between many different communities, but there are factors, which should be common to any link that aims to develop understanding and true partnership.

This leaflet summarises those key principles.

General principles:

Links may be established as short-term initiatives as well as long term, but they should:

- Recognise, respect and value cultural difference
- Be equitable with a sharing and balancing of the benefits
- Aim for genuine dialogue and decision-making in jointly developing the framework of the link
- Develop the capacity of the people and communities involved in the link
- Encourage and engage women's participation
- Raise awareness and advocate on rights and development issues – civil, political, economic, social and cultural
- Move beyond funding, recognising inequalities, but building on strengths, experience and knowledge
- Be inclusive in strengthening the communities in the link through engaging the young, local institutions, faith groups, the diaspora and others
- Be seen as an opportunity for collaboration with appropriate authorities such as local government.

Principles of conduct:

The conduct in implementing these principles should be guided by:

- transparency of motives and benefits
- honest dialogue
- trust
- listening rather than telling
- flexibility, but accountability
- recognition of the value of enthusiasm and commitment

and be subjected to regular review.

Characteristics:

- Commitment
- Community wide participation
- Mutual understanding and respect
- Equity
- Mutuality of endeavour and sacrifice
- Reciprocity

Successful links:

- Are dynamic rather than static
- Are based on a commitment to mutual understanding
- Define from experience what they mean by equality
- Develop a basis for open and honest communication.

Linking should not be a narrow end in itself, rather it should be a means of helping people to grow in awareness and understanding through real relationships and joint endeavor.

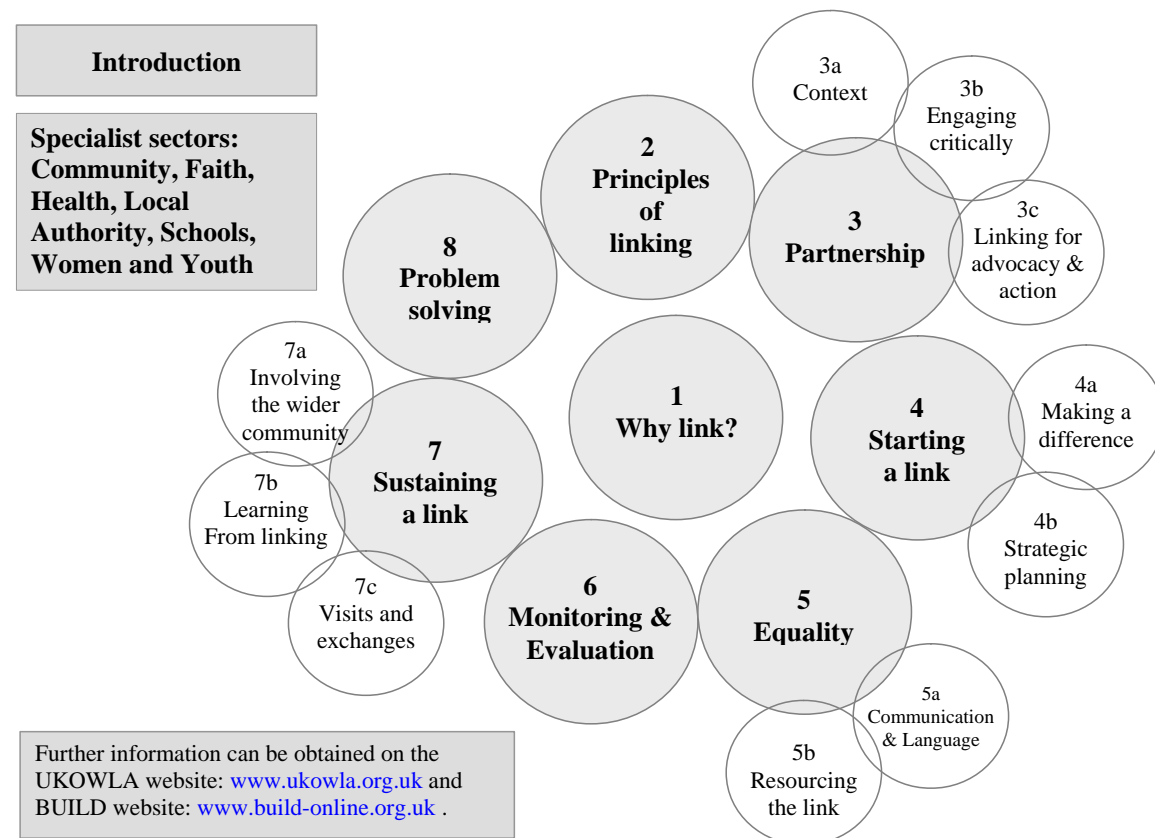
Outcomes:

- Mutual understanding and respect
 - Community cohesion
 - Sustainable development
 - Personal confidence, dignity and empowerment
- leading to improved security, justice, prosperity and peace.

These key elements of linking take time to develop, but must be recognised as central to the planning process from the beginning. Linking must mean honest dialogue and engagement with regular reviews and consultation. It is often a tough road but it can be fun.

What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.
Confucius

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

Don't walk behind me, I may not lead.
Don't walk in front of me, I may not follow.
Just walk beside me and be my friend.
Albert Camus (attributed)

White man is a fish who comes out of the river to leave offerings and to return to the water as fast as he has arrived.
African proverb

I am not interested in picking up crumbs of compassion thrown from the table of someone who considers himself my master. I want the full menu of rights.
Bishop Desmond Tutu, South Africa

The North's attitude to going to the South with preconceived ideas perpetuates the superiority-inferiority complex in the North-South relationship. The North seems to say 'we know what you need and we are going to do it for you', while the South tends to adopt the 'wait and see' attitude, since people usually associate themselves with the stereotype you have of them.
Cecilia Obuya, Kenya

Linking should be an equitable partnership, and we will give what we have.
Michael Ndubiwa, Zimbabwe

Linking should involve a sense of sacrifice on both sides.
Gambian teacher

Many Northern link partners see themselves walking into the aid business with none of the knowledge which has built up in NGO circles over the years, so there is a danger, if guidance is not sought, of their taking part in very amateurish aid efforts.
Jane Knight, UK

After 25 years of linking the greatest change that has occurred in our community has been the relationship between men and women. We have reflected through the link and now women have a much more powerful voice.
Mankamang Touray, The Gambia

Principles of Linking

Key areas

Reciprocity:

Give and receive mutually
Recognising that each side has something to give and something to receive. Benefits should flow in both directions and bring satisfaction to both sides. It is not expressed at a material level but through input of expertise and dialogue.

Equity:

Fairness, impartiality
Equity does not mean sameness. Equity in a linking relationship means full acceptance of each other and the commitment by both partners to achieve mutual understanding. Linking should be based upon collaborative actions, providing young people, women and the marginalised with a voice.

Commitment:

Obligation or pledge
Commitment to establishing and sustaining a changing relationship over a period of time. Pledging people, resources and time. Considering concessions each partner might make to the 'other' culture. Communicating openly. Considering implications for preparation of cultural exchange.

Values:

A commitment to work to a set of shared values.
Values are the beliefs, standards or traditions that define an individual or group, and which stand firm in all circumstances, particularly in adversity. An important principle for partnership is that the parties have shared or, at least, agreed principles in relation to the partnership.

Sustainable development:

Understanding the need to maintain and improve the quality of life now without damaging the planet for future generations.
Encouraging commitment at a personal and local level.

Understanding and respect:

Show insight or sympathy; admiration shown towards a person
Respecting partners means listening and valuing their contribution*. Understanding means being aware of the priorities of the partner community, the context and the pressures faced by partners. Can only follow reflection on how your own culture is overvalued or undervalued.

Mutuality:

By each towards the other; shared agenda
Sharing expectations and practicalities. Discussing ideas, beliefs and decisions openly. Discussing finances and sponsorship. Setting out aims in both communities in establishing the link.

Community wide participation:

Although links often start small, the aim should be to gradually involve a range of groups and individuals from the local community. Inclusivity enables more people to share responsibility for shaping their local community. Valuing and encouraging participation contributes to community cohesion. Consider ways to reach people who are not part of the link.

Communication:

Open and honest communication leading to genuine dialogue.

Challenging colonialism:

It is important that links challenge, rather than perpetuate, the unequal relationships of the colonial past. A legacy of racist attitudes and practices continues to have an impact today. Money is power and funding inequalities and lack of access to resources can lead to dependency and a lack of confidence and genuine dialogue.

Equality of sacrifice

Sacrifice may for many seem an unusual word to associate with linking. However for Lalage Bown, an academic from the UK who has worked for over 30 years in various African countries, the idea of *Equality of Sacrifice* is key to successful linking. Where an imbalance of power exists, as in so many links, the efforts to which one partner may go to maintain the link is frequently not acknowledged, or even noticed by the other. The word sacrifice was also used by a Gambian teacher when asked to list key factors in a partnership and he answered: 'a sense of sacrifice'.

Nigel Ringrose of UNDP has used the term 'equality of giving'. If links reflected an ideal community, then it would be based on a mutuality in which equality of giving and receiving was the norm of social practice.

It is important to acknowledge that commitment to a link can be very demanding and can radically affect the balance of personal relationships; the true effect of spending time in a community is not always voiced or obvious.

'I did not work (ie earn anything) for a whole month while the exchange group was here.'

'People who travel to the UK on exchange visits may lose their jobs.'

Community Link Handbook. Peter Batty, UKOWLA1990

Women's participation

Women remain under-represented in governing structures throughout the world. They are frequently absent in local decision-making processes as well as regional and national bodies. Although women are key players at the local level within the household and local organisations, they are excluded from critical decision-making forums.

Links need to recognise the role played by women within the community and not only support women in being properly involved, but take care to avoid reinforcing unequal power structures. Women must be consulted and given a chance to talk about issues which affect them. Furthermore links can also be a means of introducing other perceptions of women and their potential role in society.