

Toolkit for Linking Opportunities and Challenges

Youth Links

Supplementary leaflet to the set of core leaflets on linking.

Background:

There is a long history of North – South, as well as East – West and other, youth links and exchanges. Some youth links have subsequently developed into wider community links whilst others are expressions of already established linking schemes and partnerships. International youth links are not just about international and intercultural understanding but should also be a good vehicle for young people's development and their involvement in their communities. Youth links can be found in all types of linking and partnerships – e.g. churches, youth organisations such as the Scouts and Guides, schools, fair trade and other wider community linking. They operate on a number of levels and use different methods from low tech pen pal schemes through to online conferences, school visits, two way youth exchanges and individual volunteering in partner communities.

Opportunities: Linking can help your to:

- create friendships and mutual respect across cultures.
- provide a vehicle for learning about one's own self as well as one's partner.
- community and global issues and challenges.
- develop important communication, personal development and project management skills.
- explore similarities between cultures and issues faced by young people.
- create globally aware young citizens.
- provide insight into, and empathy with, others and promote a sense of social justice.
- give young people the self confidence to bring about positive change.

Checklist: questions to ask:

- What is the link for?
- What do young people want?
- Why?
- Does it have clear objectives?
- How will young people be involved in the design and management of the link?
- Will / should they be in control of the link?
- How will learning be shared with other young people and the wider community?
- What resources will you need to sustain your link?

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

- commitment from young people after the trip or event – maintaining skills base is vital.
- reliable method of communication
- a co-ordinator or focal resource person in both communities (young people move on)
- appropriate resources

Challenges: To maintaining a truly mutually beneficial and equal partnership

- regular communication
- honest participatory feedback and evaluation
- appropriate partner organisations
- periodic formal evaluation and review of link and its objectives
- recognising cultural differences and values – valuing partners and what each side brings to the link

Resource rich communities: specific issues

- Think about the link, its purpose and the resources at both ends of the link – to what extent will transfer of resources be appropriate and a feature of the link?
- Consider partner's goals in the link. Are they the same as yours and, if not, are they compatible?
- Ensure that the 'richer' partner does not dominate decisions.
- Give attention to the preparation of young people for link activities so that they are sensitive to resource issues and the sacrifices that will be made by partners.

Resource poor communities: specific issues

- Think about the link, its purpose and the resources at both ends of the link – to what extent will the transfer of resources be appropriate and a feature of the link?
- Consider partner's goals in the link. Are they the same as yours and, if not, are they compatible?
- Have realistic expectations about the 'richer' community – they too may have resource constraints albeit different ones.
- Recognise that all the resources, including non-financial ones, brought to the partnership are equally important.
- Understand the efforts that partners will have made on behalf of the link.

The Toolkit can be obtained from UKOWLA
(United Kingdom One World Linking Association www.ukowla.org.uk) and
BUILD (Building Understanding through International Links for Development www.build-online.org.uk)

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