

THINK:

Think about the characteristics of a true partnership.

REFLECT:

Consider whether your linking relationship is a real partnership and the steps you can take to improve the relationship.

QUESTION:

Whether you have allowed your partner a real voice?

Checklist

- ✓ Goals for the relationship – what do you want to achieve?
- ✓ What strategy will you adopt to achieve those goals?
- ✓ Have you looked at power inequalities and how they were constructed historically?
- ✓ Who will be responsible for what?
- ✓ What will any diversion of resources mean for the partner organisation?
- ✓ What will be the accountability in each direction?
- ✓ How often will you review the agreement to make sure it still fits your requirements?
- ✓ Who might you turn to if the relationship breaks down or there is serious disagreement?
- ✓ What can be done to reduce dependency on specific individuals?
- ✓ Do you have procedures to review the partnership regularly?

Next steps:

Identifying a partner:

- Clarify what you hope to achieve.
- Consider the commitment necessary from both partners.
- Look at goals and expectations.

Establishing a partnership:

- Look at areas of joint interest.
- Check whether you share values and principles.
- Take time to develop an Agreement to cover key areas of partnership: the process is more important than the document.

Managing the partnership:

- Review your link regularly looking at objectives and achievements.
 - Ensure system for continuity if project co-ordinators change.
 - Look at the structures required.
 - Enable an effective evaluation to be made. e.g. do baseline studies so you can measure change.
 - Acknowledge difficulties and consider how they can be reduced.
 - Look at changing attitudes within the link.

Partnerships

A partnership is a relationship which is mutually supportive and concerned with all aspects of the work and the well-being of those involved. It should be comprehensive with no limits, in principle, as to what the relationship could embrace.

There are many types of relationships between groups and individuals. Partnerships however are relationships based on fairness, support, and trust and are mutually beneficial.

Partnerships may be formalised through the development of a partnership agreement, ground rules, terms of reference or formulating a Memorandum of Understanding.

These are ways for making a mutual commitment setting down objectives and responsibilities. This process involves contributions from both partners to ensure mutual agreement and equality within the relationship. They are important in defining the involvement, contributions and expectations of both partners.

An effective Partnership Agreement should include for both partners:

- Objectives
- Procedures
- Responsibilities
- Financial issues and accountability
- Expectations
- Timeline

Successful linking depends upon forming a good partnership, where the needs and priorities of both partners are identified, acknowledged and acted upon. Partnerships take time to develop.

Partnership means that:

- all partners participate in decision-making;
- activities are managed jointly;
- culture, beliefs and values are mutually respected;
- information is shared;
- there is discussion and agreement before any policy is defined and before any decisions are taken concerning the partner;
- the partners are free to express their needs in a spirit of mutual confidence;
- activities and relations are regularly evaluated with the participation of all partners.

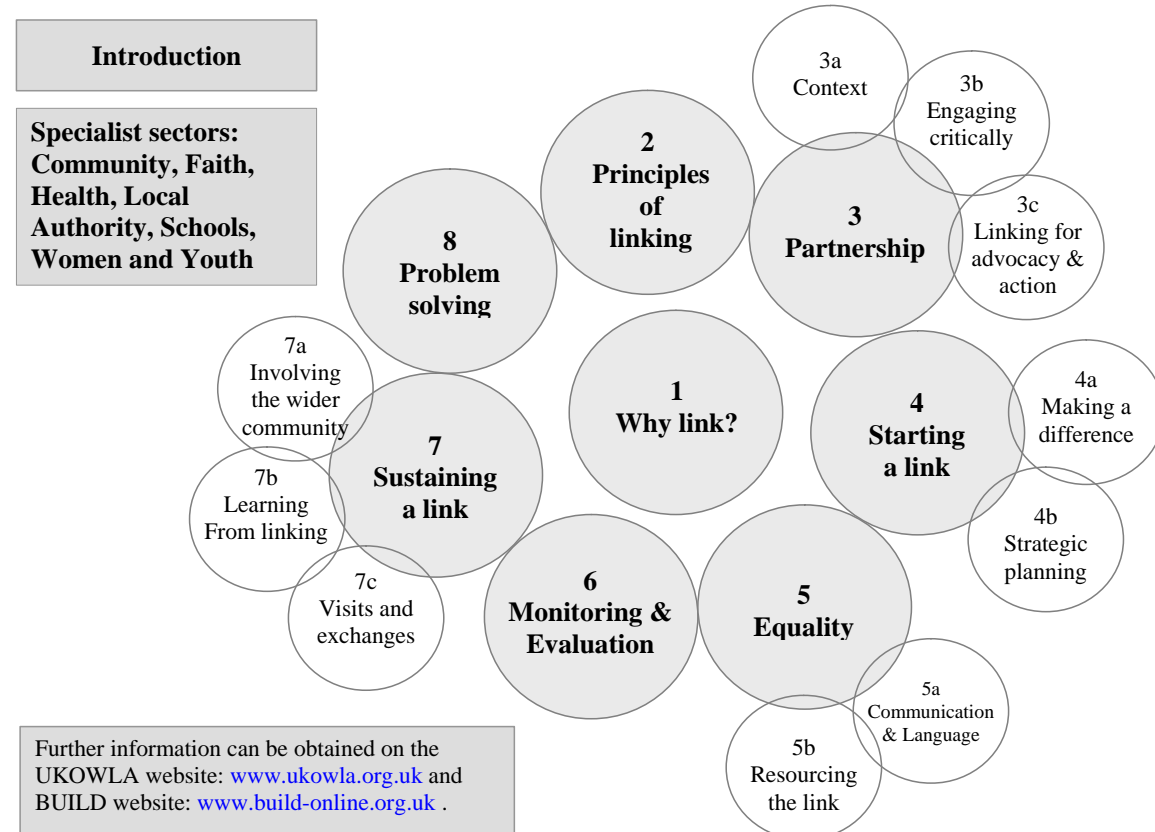
It is important to understand the implications of forming a real partnership. Your partner group is likely to be working in a different educational, social, economic, political and possibly faith environment to the one in which you are working. It takes time to develop a true understanding of the ways of working and ethics of your partner community. Although there may be differences in wealth between the institutions or groups, it is possible to link on a basis of mutuality and reciprocity. It is important to reflect upon the ways in which our own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims in life and social identities shape our understanding of the link. We must be prepared for conflict arising out of the newness and uncertainty of the experience.

A partnership is often seen as being formed once two groups or institutions decide to link with each other; however this is only the first stage in a process which requires time, commitment, openness and honesty if your link is to become a real partnership. The reciprocation of trust, respect and understanding and a willingness to share and learn from each other is key. It is important to reflect on yourself before considering the other viewpoint - try to put yourself in the shoes of the other without taking off your own shoes.

To be successful a partnership should not be about charity and should not be dominated by one partner. As in any relationship, all partnerships will encounter problems and challenges but if mutuality, trust and respect exist such difficulties can be overcome.

A person who ties a parcel alone ends up wasting or using a lot of string. *Ugandan proverb*

Toolkit for Linking leaflets



Partnership: key issues

What others say

The key word in my view is partnership: it is also the source of the problems because no definition of partnership can exclude the notion of equality and equality is one thing Europeans are incapable of extending to others. The hope is that the white man is so curious about the black man he may actually learn to listen to him. The fear is that the white man has found and used so many evasions to replace or simulate dialogue that he may go on doing it indefinitely.
Chinua Achebe, Nigeria

All too often, a common understanding of what lies behind partnership is assumed, even though in reality the partners hold quite different expectations of the relationship they are investing in.
Volker Hauck, Germany

When you suggest a link, are you offering us a relationship or do you just want to sell us your language and culture?
Nidaa Al Ghazal, Lebanon

Being poor does not in any way make anyone a lesser person than any other. Nor does it reduce one's dignity as a person. In view of this, the principle of respect for cultural diversity will be a basic tenet of our partnership.
Agreement TARUD, Gambia and The Marlborough Brandt Group, UK

Respect does not necessarily mean acknowledging equal worth.
Vanessa Andreotti, Brazil

The reason we have two ears and only one mouth is that we may listen more and talk less.
Zeno of Citium, Cyprus

A handful of patience is worth more than a bushel of brains.
Dutch Proverb

As the traveller who has once been from home is wiser than he who has never left his own doorstep, so a knowledge of one other culture should sharpen our ability to scrutinize more steadily, to appreciate more lovingly, our own.
Margaret Mead

Mirror your partner's dreams; the relationship will grow.
Unknown.

Planning for the future: anticipating and acknowledging difficulties

Considering your own group:

Who are you?
What sort of people are you?
What sort of group are you?
What is the social profile?
How many men/women?
What age-range?
What ethnic background?
What range of political views do you represent?
As individuals? As a group?
What religions are represented, if any?
Who is marginalised without and who is excluded?
What existing or previous links do you have with the partner community?
How did they come about?

Roles and responsibilities:

As many areas as possible should be jointly addressed:

- Decision making, common agenda, planning, work plan, communications etc.
- Managing problems and challenges.
- Information should not be in the hands of one individual alone.
- Named individuals should have specific areas to oversee within the link.

It is also important to note that:

- If government, or local government, are involved it is particularly important to establish where decision-making authority lies.
- In some countries groups or organisations may have considerable powers and resources, in others few may exist.
- In some countries local authorities may be part of central government.

Partnership agreement: Partnerships may be established with minimal organisational and legal infrastructure. Other partnerships may be more formalised through the development of a joint mission statement and objectives; memoranda or agreements between participants may include statements about:

- Rights and responsibilities
- Decision-making mechanisms
- Involvement of intended beneficiaries
- Accountability
- Conflict resolution

It may be helpful to have an outside facilitator in developing the memorandum or agreement.

Considering your partner group:

Who is your partner group?
Do you think you have done sufficiently thorough research into who they are, what they stand for, 'where they come from'?
How much do they know about you?
Does the partner group know enough about you to enable them to make a choice?
Have you (and have they) a check-list of what you (they) would need to know about a partner group, before deciding to initiate the link?
Have you both considered the potential effect of historical, colonial and power relations on the partnership?
Through what processes are both groups making their decisions and choices about linking?

Values and principles: Examine the underlying values and principles in the partnership. Establish and monitor the principle of mutual trust and respect.

- Agree indicators of mutual trust and respect, such as sharing meeting notes.
- Consider indicators of a breakdown of trust and/or respect such as secrecy over accounts.
- Consider mechanism to be used to share concerns and to rectify problems.
- Consider what will happen if there was a major breakdown of trust and respect.

Accountability: to partners, the community and funders exists in all links. With the need to manage expectations and decision-making, conflicts can arise. Planning for the link should include a system to handle disagreements:

- Partners need to set up a joint committee, with a mutually agreed membership and preferably an independent chair.
 - A system for independent arbitration needs to be agreed to settle unsuccessful disputes.
- Money is often the cause of mistrust and the transfer of funds can be a real source of tension. Ensure clear lines of accountability are understood by all.

Review: All organisations change, so a yearly review should be inbuilt into all agreements. The evaluation procedure should examine the various challenges faced. It can provide answers to questions such as:

- Have we met the goals we set?
- How has this process helped us change our attitudes towards each other?
- Have we really changed or could our time have been better spent?
- Have both parties got the benefits we planned?
- What have we learned for use in future years?

Exploring different perceptions:

A school in Zimbabwe and a school in the UK started a link with an activity about what the students in one country thought about their own country and the country of the partner school. They soon realised they had very different perceptions about one another – especially in relation to Margaret Thatcher! Students in Mansfield were very surprised with the positive view the students in Harare had of their former Prime Minister. They then decided to explore why this perception gap existed. Students in Mansfield studied Thatcher's relationship to Zimbabwe (her role in the independence process) and students in Zimbabwe studied Thatcher's relationship to Mansfield (miners' strike of 1984). By exploring different perspectives, they challenged each other's views and 'discovered' things about the connections between their countries and between global events and their 'local' histories.

Linking: an analogy of relationships between two people.

No two relationships are the same, but ...

- Many of the happiest relationships are between partners with very different backgrounds, capabilities and interests.
- Many of the most fruitful are between partners with starkly contrasting needs, aspirations and earning capacity.
- Some relationships are arranged, some are the product of a chance meeting, some grow from a basis of joint interest – but all take time to build and commitment to sustain.
- Some set out with a formal structure, some grow into formality and some never reach it or need it

And some relationships founder, or fall apart, or simply fail.

From: *Community Link Handbook*, Peter Batty, UKOWLA