Keeping It Together:

a reflective practice tool for faith-based community development practitioners

Steve Miller

Further copies can be obtained from FbRN priced £7.00

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

This Tool **KIT** is one of the products of a programme organised by the Faith Based Regeneration Network UK, Anglia Ruskin University, The Churches' Community Work Alliance and The Community Development Exchange. We aimed to learn more about the perspectives and needs of faith based community development practitioners, and explore the potential for a greater engagement with the wider community development sector.

In March 2005 we ran two pilot workshops to learn at first hand what practitioners need and try out methods for creating a safe but structured environment in which to explore the motivating factors underpinning practice, and the issues that arise. These pilot seminars demonstrated the value in practitioners coming together to share ideas and good practice, and to reflect on the connections between their faith and community development models.

The main needs that were identified were, for practitioners to have opportunities to meet across faiths to explore these issues in a non-threatening environment, to develop tools that would help with reflective practice in the midst of the busyness of the work, and to have a resource that would give a national picture of the role and contribution of faith community development to civic society.

Funding from the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund enabled a programme to begin to meet these needs. Six seminars were held across England attended by practitioners from nine faith traditions.

This Tool **KIT**, a resource for reflective practice is one of the results of that programme. Its companion volume, *Priceless – Unmeasurable?* presents evidence demonstrating the value of faiths in community development, both of the economic value of the faiths contribution, and also of the human value which is both 'unmeasurable' by some government standards, but also 'priceless' by the standards of human experience.

We hope that you find this **KIT** both useful and stimulating. We aim to continually develop our resources and would love to hear your reactions to **KIT** and your suggestions for further development.

Doreen Finneron

Executive Director,
Faith Based Regeneration Network UK (FBRN UK)
www.fbrn.org.uk
admin@fbrn.org.uk

Nils Chittenden

UK Co-ordinator,
The Churches' Community Work Alliance (CCWA)
www.ccwa.org.uk
info@ccwa.org.uk

Adam Dinham

Director,
Faiths and Civil Society Unit,
Anglia Ruskin University
www.faithsunit.org

Amanda Inverarity

Director,
Community Development Exchange (CDX)
www.cdx.org.uk
admin@cdx.org.uk

INTRODUCTION
HOW TO USE THIS KIT

In the spirit of community development practice it is the intention of this kit to empower the user rather than offer solutions 'off the shelf'. We want to offer sufficient ideas, activities and stimulation to be useful to practitioners at various levels of experience, while building in sufficient flexibility to be able to respond to diverse local situations.

We have assembled several elements.

1. Concise narrative exploring themes and issues in faith-based community development.

Although the structure of each section varies according to the specific content, in each of these sections you should find

a] some ideas drawn from the wider world,

b] key issues and questions highlighted,

c] a brief selection of links and resources that relate to the topic.

2. A practical exercise or activity relating to each theme

These activities are designed to assist your reflective practice as an individual or as a group. They are not complicated or esoteric. They are designed to be simple, straightforward and accessible. And although several of them may be familiar to you, that does not diminish their usefulness.

3. A series of personal quotes

These quotes are mostly drawn from the discussions that have taken place at regional seminars across the country over the past year, and at other meetings and events. Their purpose is to be used as triggers for reflection and discussion. They can be used one at a time or several can be used together. A quote might be used at the beginning of a business meeting to focus attention on a particular aspect that needs attention, or several quotes might be used to help initiate a special event looking at aspects of the organisation. These quotes are dotted around the kit but are not specifically tied to any one section.

Is there a place for theory and ideas in our busy lives?

The 'busy' culture affects faith-based community development workers – volunteers, clergy and paid staff – as much as any other sector in society. In this culture 'theory' or 'ideology' is often seen as the opposite of practice. Many would say, "I'm a practical person, I've got no time for theory".

But, even if we aren't fully aware of it, most people operate on a day-to-day basis with what Chris Agyris and Donald Schon call a 'theory-in-use'. This means the underlying, possibly unconscious, way we approach, plan, implement and review our actions. This theory-in-use may actually be quite distinct from our 'espoused theory' – the conscious answer we give when someone asks us what beliefs or ideas shape our work.

But without beliefs and ideas our work is groundless and unless we can build on the hard-earned knowledge of others we are doomed to 're-invent the wheel' or to struggle with issues in isolation.

One aim of this project is to help people think about the beliefs and ideas that shape their work, and to offer models from the worlds of community development practice and our diverse religious traditions.

> **"It's a lonely job – a great job – but it's incredibly important to be able to talk to others in a similar position."**
>
> *Inter-faith project leader in the East of England region*

Perspectives from community development practice

There are many useful resources. Here we are just focusing on two:

- **National Occupational Standards in Community Development Work**

- **Achieving Better Community Development (ABCD) framework**

They have different purposes – the 'Standards' are designed to focus on the individual worker and the way they work, and the 'ABCD framework' is designed to help projects reflect on their work and its effectiveness. Together they can give a useful picture to local groups, helping them to review and plan,

Community development is concerned with strengthening community. **Strengthened community** can be described in three overall ideas:

- **Sustainability** – a stable social, economic, physical and cultural environment in which people feel secure that their needs can be met

- **Liveability** – people are satisfied and comfortable with their life circumstances, where and how they work, rest and play

- **Equity** – how fairly and justly people are treated in employment, housing and access to services

Working towards a strengthened community demands values that are also embedded in faith groups. Key values are:

- **Social justice** – Working towards a fairer society which respects civil and human rights and challenges oppression

- **Self-determination** – Individuals and groups have the right to identify shared issues and concerns as the starting point for collective action

- **Working and learning together** – Valuing and using the skills, knowledge, experience and diversity within communities to bring about change together

- **Participation** – Everyone has the opportunity to participate fully in the decisions that affect their lives

Those working in faith-based action, whether paid or volunteer, can play key roles:

- developing working relationships with communities and organisations

- encouraging people to work with and learn from each other

- working with people in communities to plan for change, take collective action and evaluate their work

- reflecting on their own practice and contribution

Broader social perspectives

It would be easy to turn this theoretical reflection into something that resembles a student reading list. That is not the purpose of this kit but, at the same time, it is useful to introduce some of the thinkers that have influenced community development workers and faith practitioners over the past century.

Paulo Freire was a Brazilian educationalist whose impact on educators, community activists and policy makers across the world has been enormous. He was fundamentally concerned with transforming the world to make it more just. He saw education (in its broadest sense) as a tool to equip people to take control over their lives and introduced the idea of conscientisation – developing consciousness or awareness, but consciousness that is understood to have the power to transform reality. And, of relevance to those working in faith settings, Freire comes out of a religious (Christian) tradition.

Augusto Boal has used theatre as both a tangible tool – working with groups to help them explore political, social and economic issues and then performing to others on the street and in workplaces – and as a metaphor of the human condition. In his "Theatre of the Oppressed" he says, 'all human beings are Actors (they act!) and Spectators (they observe!)'. Boal was a major influence on the 'animateurs' of France, Italy and many other countries who saw their role as using the arts, group dynamics, play and other cultural activities to enable people to understand and then transform their lives.

Saul Alinsky was an American social and political activist whose history of mobilising and organising grass roots campaigns had a major influence on community workers since the 1960s. He is associated with ideas of community organisation and community participation and had a powerful turn of phrase including, 'As an organizer I start from where the world is, as it is, not as I would like it to be.'

Bringing perspectives from our faith traditions

Our traditions speak powerfully about:

- Valuing a sense of self – and the infinite value of each human being.

- Creating a sense of community – and the mutual dependence we all have on each other.

- Valuing the wider environment in which we live – natural and built.

- An awareness of suffering and joy in our lives.

- An ethical framework for our personal and social lives – a sense of individual and social justice.

- The nature of transformation, development and change.

For those embedded in a faith tradition, it is not and should not necessarily be a comfortable or easy place to be. Often our traditions challenge people to break out of the 'comfort zone' and take responsibility for addressing injustice and inequality in society.

Although the religious sources for these ideas may be well known within each religion itself they are often little known outside. We believe that there is work to do to reveal the rich resources that exist within the faith traditions and make them accessible and available, not just to faith-based workers, but also to colleagues in the wider community development profession.

Language – a bridge or a barrier?

Within our faith traditions we are well aware of the power of language. Within some of our traditions we describe the nature of creation itself to have come about through the power of words. So, it should be no surprise that words have the capacity to make things happen or, conversely, to prevent things from happening.

As we form groups – friendship groups, work-groups, community groups and so on – we develop a 'language' that is specific to that group; a jargon of sorts. We have learnt, through the experience of the faith in community development seminars, that the language of faith practitioners is sometimes quite distinct from the language of community development practitioners. We may often be doing or describing similar things but the words we use to interpret, analyse, describe and understand our activities may be very different. The answer is not necessarily to adopt another language wholesale but for all of us – across the different professional and community cultures – to become adept at translating and interpreting.

Bringing it back down to ground – theory and reality

In practice our beliefs, ideas and theories are moderated by our own experience to become something useful. So, having suggested some theoretical perspectives it is also important to remember that in practice:

- In community settings what is often foremost in daily practice are the emotional and relational dimensions of our work rather than the intellectual or ideological.

- Although charts and models are useful ways of getting some clarity about how things work, they also simplify the real everyday experience. So there is the danger that by simplifying we miss the fact that the reality is complex, ambiguous and often confusing.

- In the end what we are really trying to do is to gain understanding about the narratives of people's lives – building sensitivities and skills and techniques that are meaningful and effective; equipping people with the ability to respond to their environments because we can't forecast or typologise those realities.

So the attempt to 'rationalise' is worthy and valuable – but needs to be located in a context of the disorganised, uncertain and pressured realities of the everyday.

"Faith based organisations have a function to bring disturbance."

Participant in Cambridge seminar

LINKS AND RESOURCES

Theory-in-use

www.infed.org/thinkers/argyris.htm

Community development practice

a] *National Occupational Standards in Community Development Work* – Churches Community Work Alliance (www.ccwa.org.uk) and Faith Based Regeneration Network UK (www.fbrn.org.uk).

b] *ABCD Framework* – Community Development Foundation publications (www.cdf.org.uk).

c] General resources for practitioners on community development – Community Development Exchange (www.cdx.org.uk)

Community Development Policy

"The Community Development Challenge" Department of Communities and Local Government (Available for download from www.communities.gov.uk.)

Paulo Freire

a] *"Training for Transformation"* (3 vols) by Anne Hope and Sally Timmel. Mambo Books, 1984.

b] *"Cultural Action for Freedom"* by Paulo Freire. Penguin Books, 1972.

c] www.infed.org/thinkers/et-freir.htm

Augusto Boal

a] *"Theatre of the Oppressed"* by Augusto Boal. Pluto Press, 2000.

b] www.infed.org/animate/b-animat.htm

c] www.cardboardcitizens.org.uk/theatre_of_the_oppressed.php

Saul Alinsky

a] *"Rules for Radicals. A pragmatic primer for realistic radicals"* by Saul Alinsky. Vintage Books, 1971.

b] www.infed.org/community/b-comorg.htm

"...even if you can't complete the task you are not free to desist from it."

From the Jewish tradition, quoted by participant in Coventry seminar

What elements of theory/professional practice from outside your faith tradition do you find useful when looking at your work?

What are the key source texts or teachings from your tradition that inspire your community activity?

Is there any relationship?
How do these two 'worlds' appear to interact?

Faith contribution to social capital

Social capital has become one of the 'buzz phrases' of the 21st century – a key concept in developing social policy. The government describes it as,

"… the pattern and intensity of networks among people and the shared values which arise from those networks. While definitions of social capital vary, the main aspects are citizenship, neighbourliness, trust and shared values, community involvement, volunteering, social networks and civic participation."

And the World Bank defines social capital as,

"Social capital refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions… Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society – it is the glue that holds them together."

Others, including Alison Gilchrist, have described social capital as having three elements.

- **Bonding** – enduring relationships and strong mutual commitments.

- **Bridging** – connections, less strong than bonding, between people or groups with overlapping interests,

- **Linking** – links that cut across status and similarity enabling people to exert influence beyond their normal circles.

As this idea took hold in public discussion, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation commissioned a study of the contribution made by faith communities to social capital. The study explored the nature of social capital stemming from faith buildings, associations, engagement with governance and participation in the wider public domain – and included five major faith traditions across four English regions.

They concluded that faith communities were already major contributors to social capital but that they could contribute even more if they did not face a series of familiar obstacles – such as misunderstandings, financial and capacity issues, and regulation.

They also concluded that faith communities themselves needed to develop – in particular by removing some of the internal constraints that make it difficult for more than a small number of people to take part in this work.

Spiritual and Religious Capital

As part of a long term research project, Chris Baker and Hannah Skinner at the William Temple Foundation in Manchester have been investigating theological perspectives on regeneration and community development. Taking the ideas connected with social capital as a starting point, they have coined two associated terms.

- **Spiritual Capital**

- **Religious Capital**

Spiritual capital refers to the values, ethics, beliefs and vision which faith communities bring to civil society. They describe spiritual capital as 'more liquid than solid because it refers to intangibles such as ideas and visions'. The seven 'strands' of spiritual capital they describe include:

- hope and transformation,

- accepting the place of strong emotions,

- valuing personal stories and people's inner resources,

- accepting the rejected, and

- God at work.

Religious capital is 'the pragmatic and functional outworkings of spiritual capital and so can be described as the solid dimension'. They go on to describe eleven 'strands' of religious capital These include the following themes:

- Aims to help people communicate deeply. Recognises the importance of saying sorry, and of forgiveness which can free people up from entrenched positions and allow them to work together for a common purpose.

- Is prepared to challenge accepted norms and the 'official line'. Often this involves seeking to address the underlying causes, as well as the results of problems. In some faiths this is referred to as the 'prophetic dimension'.

- Providing physical space in which community engagement can happen; faith groups resourcing the outworking of the values that motivate their engagement.

- Providing local leadership of projects and community programmes, both those organised by the faith groups and secular programmes.

- Offers norms and values that are different from those of the market place or government; where communities are increasingly broken or fragmented, religious capital offers a holistic approach that is concerned for every aspect of a person's life – practical, moral and spiritual. It starts with the question, 'what would make living here worthwhile?'

- Commits to the local through deeper and long-term relationships that recognise the potential of local people

A spiritual dimension in society

In the wider society people are increasingly aware of the importance of the spiritual dimension of life – in debates about work-life balance and the nature of society, for example. Religious traditions have thousands of years of experience of addressing the spiritual aspects of life – many traditions do not even distinguish between the holy and the secular, seeing all of life as one undivided whole. This context gives our organisations a sense of purpose, of ultimate goals – we are working to create a changed society. And it enables us as individuals to tackle often apparently impossible tasks. When faith-based organisations work in partnership with secular organisations in the public and voluntary sectors, they need to be clear about the distinction between simply fulfilling religious obligations by serving society (witnessing to their faith) and actively seeking converts which is unacceptable in these settings.

An overview of distinctive characteristics of faith communities

Distinctive values. Not all faiths are identical but most are rooted in important values that include the following – the infinite value of all human beings, a sense of service or obligation to society, a concern with overall prosperity not just financial gain, a holistic view of society and the individual.

Distinctive history. Churches in the UK have been at the leading edge of the creation of most modern charities and the welfare state. Other faith traditions have all contributed in distinctive ways to global societies for thousands of years and have a long term view of society, rather than being dominated by short term issues.

Distinctive networks. The institutional richness of the faith communities is a huge resource for the wider society we live in – if we can use these networks well. Unlike many other small community organisations we can tap in to advice, experience and personnel who can assist our local efforts. Of course, not all religious traditions are equally well endowed with institutions – this has little to do with size but often reflects our different histories, cultures and traditions.

Distinctive leadership. The motivation and leadership of faith communities derives from a rich spiritual core. This strengthens and motivates individuals and communities particularly when faced with difficult challenges. It is no coincidence that many of the leaders of the great social change movements have been people of faith.

Distinctive membership. In many cases faith communities include the poorest members of the locality, and often people who are amongst the wealthiest. Sometimes this is the case within a single worship community. This diverse make-up within a single working community creates a dynamic with numerous virtues – it is hard to ignore problems when they are within one's own community and it is impossible to de-humanise people who sit alongside you week by week.

Distinctive buildings. Faith community buildings are often the most valuable asset of space within a locality. They offer great resources but conversely, some of these resources are in very poor condition and in dire need of renovation.

It may still be a debatable point whether the faith communities are a part of the **voluntary and community sector** (VCS) or are a separate sector completely. But, either way, in most parts of the country faith community organisations are probably the largest identifiable grouping of voluntary organisations.

Faith communities are often the only trusted and active organisations working with the most **excluded and multiple-deprived groups.** With regard to key groups such as ethnic minority women and disaffected young people, it is often only the faith communities who are active and trusted.

Questions and issues

So far in this section we have emphasised the distinctive features of faith communities. But there are confusing boundaries – and sometimes these confusions are deliberately encouraged by those with particular interests.

So, for example:

- Are faith communities and faith-based organisations part of the 'voluntary and community sector' or are they a distinct sector of their own?

- Is there a sufficient overlap between certain faith communities and certain ethnic minorities to make it legitimate for policy makers to treat them as one entity?

The answers to these questions may vary according to who is giving the answer, who is asking the question, the context and background. So, no one answer will be true in all cases.

Confusion may also arise in the distinction between the worshipping communities or congregations of the religious traditions, and faith-based organisations which are rooted in a tradition but have an independent existence. Faith-based organisations may range from the smallest local playgroup to massive national institutions.

Another area in which faith communities are having to examine their own role is exactly what are their long term goals in relation to the wider society. As there is increasing encouragement to become partners in delivering services does their other role as moral critics become harder?

And, if radical community development values challenge those faith communities who might tend to see the spiritual and political spheres as separate, when faith communities are engaged in community development they are seen as challenging by established institutions.

LINKS AND RESOURCES

Social capital

a] www.infed.org/biblio/social_capital.htm

b] *"Faith as Social Capital: Connecting or dividing?"* by Robert Farbey et al. Joseph Rowntree Foundation/Policy Press, 2006.

c] *"The well-connected community: A networking approach to community development"* by Alison Gilchrist. The Policy Press, 2004.

Spiritual and religious capital

www.wtf.org.uk/documents/faith-in-action.pdf

In the context of ethnicity

"Realising the Vision: The Report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (2000) revisited in 2004" by Rob Berkeley. Runnymede Trust, 2004. Downloadable from www.runnymedetrust.org/publications/briefingPapers.html

DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS

Fruit: what does my practice result in?

Trunk: what supports me and holds me firm?

Roots: what feeds my community development practice?
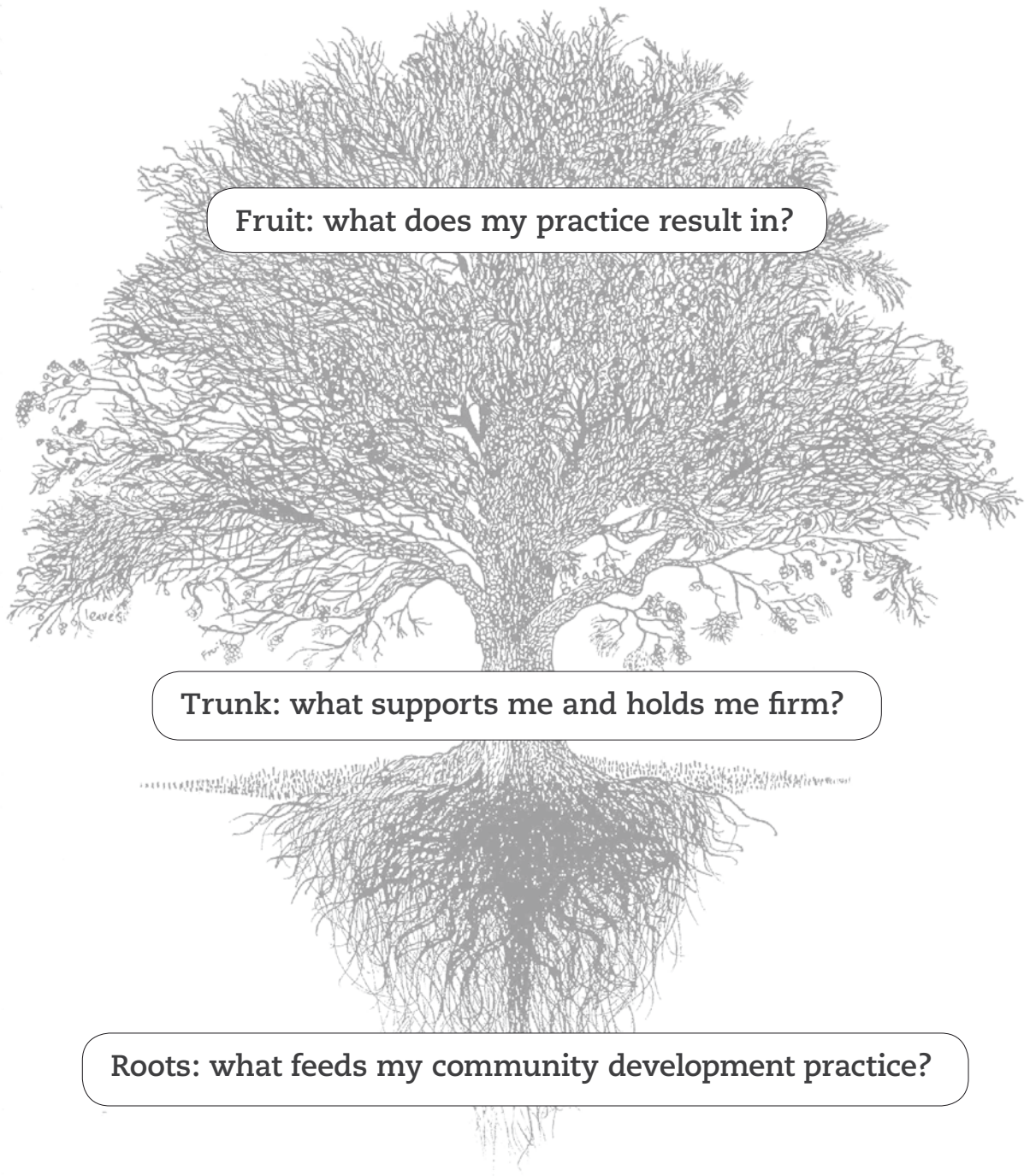
While it is clear that, over the past 5-10 years faith communities have become much more visible and active in the arenas of social policy, community participation, consultation and service delivery, it is not so clear what forces are driving this move.

Has this development been principally initiated by a government keen to deliver social advances but without the capacity to do it by itself? Or have the faith communities been driving this process as a means to fulfil traditional social justice values? Or is it a combination of these factors? And has this development been undertaken willingly or relatively reluctantly by the faith communities?

Whatever the answer to these questions it has become increasingly important for faith communities who are active in their communities to understand the wider public policy context.

"Most of all, we bring a personal passion for the work."

Community project co-ordinator in the East of England region

National policy strands

There are several government policy strands which have a direct bearing on faith communities' engagement with the wider society.

Economic development, regeneration and sustainable communities.

This has been a key plank of government policy for ten years – although it has attracted various labels including social inclusion, neighbourhood renewal and new deal for communities.

National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal

One of the key long term government programmes is the Government's National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal. This has now been brought into the new Department for Communities and Local Government but its key characteristics remain the same. The Strategy states the following:

■ "This work has produced agreement on the vision that, within 10 to 20 years, no-one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live. People on low incomes should not have to suffer conditions and services that are failing, and so different from what the rest of the population receives.

■ The vision is reflected in two long-term goals:

1] In all the poorest neighbourhoods, to have common goals of lower worklessness and crime, and better health, skills, housing and physical environment.

2] To narrow the gap on these measures between the most deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the country."

The government has explicitly recognised the role of faith communities in its flagship programmes by, for example, supporting a pilot programme looking at the participation of faith communities in the New Deal for Communities Programme (a test-bed for the National Strategy).

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) are one of the vehicles for ensuring the participation of local people in the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal. The guidance states that, 'we need to involve people who are traditionally under-represented, such as faith, black and minority ethnic communities'.

The practical outworking of this varies across the country, but this guidance does give a framework and a rationale for faith communities to claim a place on LSPs. The issues that have arisen from the experience of faith representatives on LSPs are about; how far one person from one faith group can represent the faith communities; what the mechanisms for choosing such a representative are; how they communicate with the faith 'constituency'; the fact that those faith communities which do not have paid staff find it difficult to be fully involved. There are also issues shared with the community sector about the high volume of work and lack of resources for representatives.

A recent study of local faith representatives by FbRN and the Church Urban Fund recommended the establishment of a national network of faith representatives to help them communicate more effectively and draw upon the support, experience and expertise of one another. The study also showed that local representatives would like to:

- Work more closely with their local Voluntary and Community Sector

- See the recruitment of a new generation of representatives from a wider selection of faiths, as well as the recruitment of more women and young people

- See a wider number of public partnerships understand the value of having a faith representative

- Stress the independence and vision of the faith voice.

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill

This important Bill is based on a previous White Paper – "*Strong and Prosperous Communities*" and is due to become law in 2007. It has far-reaching ambitions for making local government more accountable at a local level and for creating opportunities for communities to become more involved in decision-making. The Bill explicitly uses the language of 'empowerment' but questions have been raised regarding how effective this might be unless there is a wholesale culture change within local government alongside the legislation.

Community cohesion

The original ideas connected to community cohesion were born out of the worst possible circumstances – inner city 'riots' which were perceived to have an ethnic and/or a religious dimension, and, more recently the perceived links between terrorist activity and ethnic and religious minorities.

Nevertheless, out of these troubled circumstances a positive concept was born – community cohesion. So, while it is possible that some policy makers perceive religious communities as 'part of the problem', they certainly do see the religious communities as 'part of the solution'.

"So many hoops to jump through."

Participant in London seminar

The Cohesion and Faiths Unit

In 2004, the Home Office produced *Working Together: Co-operation between Government and Faith Communities.* The new unit, now in the Department for Communities and Local Government, leading on government engagement with faith communities is the Cohesion and Faiths Unit. Its purpose is to 'ensure that policies and services across government are delivered appropriately to create a shared sense of belonging'.

The Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund, offering grants in two rounds (2006 and 2007) was also part of the Government's strategy in respect of faith communities. It was the first time that a government fund had been targeted specifically at faith communities and has supported hundreds of local and regional projects around the country. Although welcome questions have been raised about the sustainability of this initiative relating both the uncertainty of future rounds and the much larger group of excellent, but unsuccessful, proposals.

Active citizenship, community participation and third sector development

There are two separate but linked strands to this aspect of policy. On the one hand the Government sees participation by individuals in their communities as one way of re-building the social capital that has been 'lost' in recent decades. On the other hand, there has been a growing realisation that the institutional aspects of the Third Sector (which includes voluntary and community organisations, social enterprises and faith communities) were grossly under-supported. So a programme of capacity building has developed which has taken several forms but most notably through the ChangeUp programme which is now called Capacitybuilders. This aims to provide capacity building support to the voluntary sector and has been delivered primarily on a regional and local level, but with national 'hubs' focusing on specific areas.

This is separate but linked to the government's ambitions to encourage the voluntary and community sector to be a more active partner in delivering public services. To assist this, another funding programme, Futurebuilders, has been designed to help third sector organisations deliver public services. The Office of the Third Sector in the Cabinet Office has recently funded a programme to map and support faith communities involved in public service delivery. The initial mapping of this programme seems to show that, nationally, although thousands of faith communities are involved in a wide variety of social action programming, only a very small number are currently directly contracted to provide public services.

"Obstacles can block you or make you more determined."

Participant in Middlesbrough seminar

Regional Structures

Government activity at a regional or sub-regional level is becoming increasingly important in England. (Obviously, as a result of devolved government, a different structure exists in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.) For the nine English regions there will normally be at least the following:

- A regional assembly (elected in London, appointed in other regions).

- A regional development agency (accountable to the Department for Trade and Industry except in London where it is accountable to the Mayor and Greater London Authority).

- A regional Government Office – which has staff members representing all the major government departments.

- Regional or sub-regional bodies for health, transport, planning and environment.

Largely in response to these regional tiers of government there has been a growth in regional multi-faith structures. The regional structures (usually called the regional forum of faiths) differ in their constitutions and the way they operate. Many have undertaken surveys of the contribution of faith communities to the economic, social and civic life of the region.

The local level

For regeneration to be effective, it has to be undertaken at the local level. This is where the challenges and opportunities exist, and it is where the innovations and solutions will come from. The key players at this level are the local authorities and community organisations.

The Role of the Local Authority

After extensive consultation with the faith sector, the Local Government Association issued *Faith and Community, Guidelines for Local Authorities and Faith Communities*, in 2002. It is a valuable resource for both local authorities and faith communities. This excellent and much neglected document can be found on the LGA website. A local authority can facilitate good practice with faith and other communities in a variety of ways:

Profiling

By evaluating the census data, the authority can identify who makes up the community at large, how big it is, where the different communities are, what is their economic and domestic status and what are the needs of the community.

Developing a local strategy

This could reflect national or regional priorities (e.g. social exclusion, youth offending team). The strategy should target the most disadvantaged sections of the community. The strategy may also target a geographical area or ward. An increasing number of Local Authorities are identifying a staff member – either as part of their work or occasionally as a full-time role – who is responsible for relationships with faith communities.

Targeting of resources

Leading on from the local strategy the council could then concentrate its resources on those most in need and have exit strategies to shift resources back from developed organisations. Assistance with resources could come in many forms, including officers' time, use of premises, subsidised rents etc.

Awarding grants

The council could set aside budgets for specific community development or regeneration work. This should be a combination of short-term funding and longer-term assistance.

Sustainable regeneration

Communities should be developed strategically so that progress is sustainable, and there is a mutually agreed and understood plan of action for each community in which the work is carried out. Expectations should be realistic.

Partnership building

Communities should be encouraged to become active partners with their local authority and other statutory bodies in funding bids and projects.

Community involvement

The council should develop the skills, credibility and commitment to engage in regular consultations with the wider sections of the community. This applies in particular to traditionally excluded sectors and disadvantaged groups.

LINKS AND RESOURCES

"A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal: A National Strategy Action Plan". Cabinet Office, 2001. (Downloadable from www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/page.asp?id=3)

"New Deal for Communities Faith Pilot Project". ODPM Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (now Department for Communities and Local Government), 2005. (Downloadable from www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/publications.asp?did=1317)

"Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future". ODPM (now Department for Communities and Local Government), 2003. (Downloadable from www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1502377)

"Strong and Prosperous Communities". Department for Communities and Local Government. (Downloadable from www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1503999)

"Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society". Home Office (now Department of Communities and Local Government), 2005. (Downloadable from www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1500185)

"Faithful Representation: Faith Representatives on Local Public Partnerships" by Nigel Berkely et al.. Church Urban Fund with Faith Based Regeneration Network UK and Coventry University, 2006. (Downloadable from www.cuf.org.uk/default.asp?id=147)

Government's Office of the Third Sector www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector/index.asp

Capacitybuilders www.capacitybuilders.org.uk; www.changeup.org.uk (These two sites are not yet fully integrated and both contain useful information.)

Futurebuilders www.futurebuilders-england.org.uk/

EXTERNAL FACTOR ANALYSIS

This is sometimes called PEST analysis. What are the external factors which affect your community or project?

Use this sheet or reproduce on a large flip chart. Take time to reflect/ brainstorm those issues which may have an impact on your work.

The wider political and community issues that affect you

Economic issues

Social and demographic issues

New ideas, innovations and new ways of working

4 PARTNERSHIP – MESSY REALITY OR ADDED VALUE FOR ALL?

In an era when no single agency, even government, has the ability to deliver the wide ranging public service that we expect, partnership has become a key aspect of social policy.

Faith communities are attracting interest from a wide variety of potential partners – in the public, private and voluntary or third sectors. This interest might derive from perceptions that faith communities are able to:

■ Build social capital

■ Bridge divides

■ Do work (but is this just seen as cheap labour?)

■ Assert values and morals (which may be inconvenient for some)

For those who are charged with involving all sectors of society in their work, faith communities are essential partners – and increasingly statutory agencies are developing strategies to work with faith communities.

For the faith communities themselves the main perceived advantage in such partnership work may be the increased capacity to undertake activities that they have been wishing to do for some time.

But in any partnership, initial motives need to be, at least temporarily, put aside while openness to the other partner is explored, so that an outcome which is more than the sum of its parts can be established.

Faith communities engagement with public bodies might take any of the following forms:

■ voices of local communities

■ forces for civic renewal and social cohesion

■ points of contact with marginalised people

■ faith communities as advocates of social justice

■ faith communities as partners in regeneration

■ faith communities as sources of volunteers

■ faith communities as managers of projects

Issues and questions

Partnership working is very new for many faith communities – and also for potential partners. The reality is that working with organisations from a very different cultural or professional background is always a steep learning curve for both partners.

The essential first step for faith communities is to simply be seen to be active – go to local meetings, get involved in local area plans and strategies, see key workers, be effective networkers, and aim to listen and learn. This can be hard if your group mostly consists of volunteers with limited time, but it is essential. A track record of mutual trust and understanding is essential. The last thing you want is that the first time your local authority sees your name is when you are asking for money.
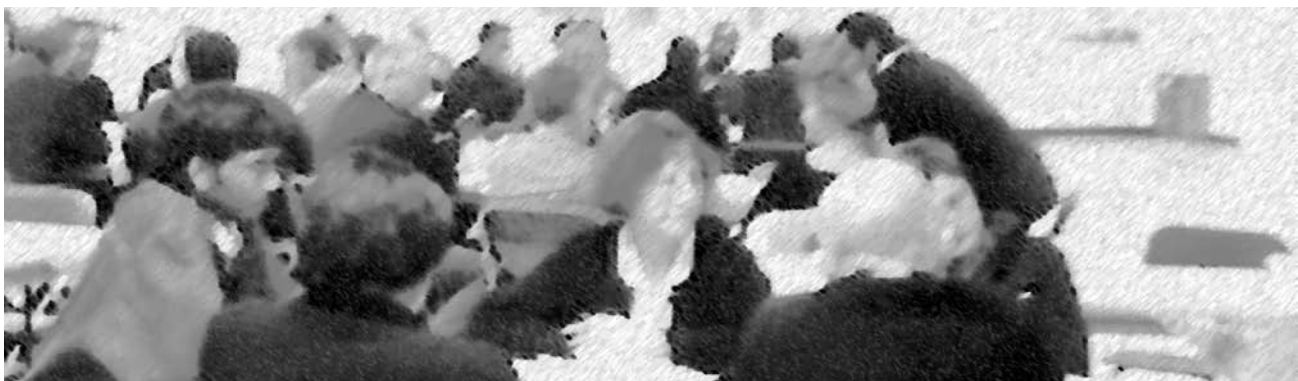
It can be a burden on small faith groups to engage in partnership. Not only do they have limited capacity to start with, but also they are invariably entering into a partnership with a body with far greater capacity so there will be concerns about power and control.

Nothing happens all at once – creating effective partnerships can take time as the partners get to know each other. In a similar way to building personal relationships, organisational relationships go through stages and do not need to be rushed. But that does not mean that the partnership needs to wait – it can be established, even as almost total strangers, as long as there are clear parameters and terms of reference.

Some of the negative suspicions from both sides …

Suspicions by faith groups

- Are we just cheap labour?
- 'They' won't even try to understand our concerns
- Will our independent voice be quietened?
- "What's their agenda?"

Suspicions by voluntary and statutory sector

- Faith leads to conflict
- Religious groups promote conflict with the law
- Religious groups cannot deliver services neutrally
- Why favour religion over irreligion/ secularism/humanism/atheism?
- And probably the most widely held suspicion … don't religious groups just want to convert people to their belief?

These suspicions and others are probably inevitable but there is no reason for them to become an insurmountable barrier.

"Integrity in what we do leads to the building of trust."

Participant in Bradford seminar

LINKS AND RESOURCES

"Faith and community: a good practice guide for local authorities" by Local Government Association (LGA). Available by download only from www.lga.gov.uk/Documents/Publication/Faith.pdf

"Working together: Co-operation between Government and Faith Communities". Home Office, 2004 (and progress report 2005). Downloadable from www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1502453

Civic society

a] The Commission on Integration and Cohesion www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk

b] The Institute of Community Cohesion www.coventry.ac.uk/icoco/a/264

c] The Citizenship Foundation www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk

"Our language can be an obstacle. Sometimes the same words can have completely different meanings."

Participant in Manchester seminar

Who are your potential partners?
Statutory/public sector

Voluntary and community sector

Private/commercial sector

a) Who wants the partnership to succeed?

b) Who would like the partnership to fail?

c) Whose support is necessary for the partnership to succeed?

d) Who is offering resources to the partnership?

e) Whose success does the partnership affect?

f) Whose success affects the partnership?

g) Who will benefit from the work of the partnership?

h) Who might be damaged by the work of the partnership?

The strengths of the religious traditions – and some weaknesses

Leadership has played a key role in the history of our faith traditions. Our leaders have been **spiritual geniuses, organisational builders** and **supreme communicators**. They inspire us and act as role models for existing and future generations – and many of their spiritual descendants are leading our faith community organisations today.

In fact one whole strand of leadership literature is devoted to analysing 'great' leaders in order to understand them better and amongst the 'great' leaders religious figures form a significant group. We all look to religious founders, early leaders and contemporary religious figures for broad visions which inspire. These visions are based on timeless values which still speak to contemporary issues.

But, the very concept of the 'great leader' is contended by many community development practitioners whose fundamental values are concerned with building widespread empowerment rather than dependence on a few individuals. This is a real challenge to many faith communities. We haven't always been good at supporting and facilitating **emerging grass-roots leadership**. We haven't always been effective at creating **democratic structures** where multiple voices are heard and taken seriously. And we haven't always been good at acquiring the **technical skills and knowledge** that are required for the management of modern community organisations. In many community development settings these latter qualities are also required alongside the inspirational leadership that is a part of our traditions.

Yet, without leadership of any kind, communities may flounder. It presents us with a core paradox both in our geographical communities and deeper within our faith traditions.

Concepts and ideas relating to leadership

The term 'leadership' generates probably the largest quantity of written material amongst the literature relating to organisations and management. Yet, it is an elusive concept. We recognise it and can often describe it when we see it. But it is much more difficult to analyse the key aspects of the nature of leadership and even more difficult to create leadership development strategies that work.

Amongst the maze of literature on leadership we are highlighting some interesting issues that may relate both to faith-based organisations and community development.

"**Leadership without listening prevents participation and limits sustainable work.**"

Participant in Cambridge seminar

Systems theory and the learning organisation

Systems theory suggests that organisations, large and small, are not just a sum of individual people – but, to an extent have a life of their own. One of the key terms that has grown out of this approach is the 'learning organisation' – the idea that an organisation, being more than the sum of its parts, can learn and change as much as individuals. In such an organisation the role of leadership is decentralised so as to enhance the capacity of all people to work productively toward common goals. This approach envisages a cornerstone position of human values in the workplace; namely, that vision, purpose, reflectiveness, and systems thinking are essential if organisations are to realise their potentials.

Values-based leadership

Basing themselves on Freirean ideas and community development practice, Ann Hope and Sally Timmel write the following:

- All members of the community are thinking creative people with a capacity to act. The aim of the leader is to facilitate a common search for solutions to problems.

- No one person has all the answers and no one is totally ignorant. The role of the leader is to create a real learning community where each shares their experience.

- Most real learning and significant change takes place when a community experiences dissatisfaction with some aspect of their present life. A leader can provide a situation in which they can stop, reflect critically upon what they are doing, identify any new information and skills they need, get this information and training, and then plan action.

This kind of approach to leadership is not just restricted to community settings. Hugely influential writers such as Stephen Covey promotes something he calls a 'character ethic', which is about aligning one's values with universal principles. In *"Principle Centered Leadership"* he takes this further, saying we need a paradigm change to 'center our lives and our leadership of organisations and people on certain true north principles'. Robert Greenleaf published a short but influential essay in 1970 – *"The Servant as Leader"*. This concept is drawn both from ancient Indian texts and from the Christian tradition. Servant leadership emphasises collaboration, trust, empathy and the ethical use of power. It challenges authoritarian structures and stresses the desire to lead in order to serve better, not to increase one's amount of power.

Shared leadership

If leadership is a contended notion, then shared leadership appears to address some of its challenging aspects. From this perspective leadership is "a social process – something that happens between people. It is not so much what leaders do, as something that arises out of social relationships. As such it does not depend on one person, but on how people act together to make sense of the situations that face them. It is happening all the time." (Michele Doyle and Mark Smith – see link below). This perspective recognises that something called leadership exists but suggests that it is happening all the time in different situations and exhibited by different people. It also makes explicit some ethical dimensions of leadership and pays attention to three characteristics:

- Ownership – taking responsibility (and having the opportunity to take responsibility)

- Learning – acquiring wisdom through thinking and evaluating

- Sharing – encouraging dialogue and being open to others

Similar concepts to these have been developed in other spheres where they are variously called delegated leadership, distributed leadership or democratic leadership.

Spiritually intelligent leadership

In the section above, on distinctive characteristics, the idea of 'spiritual capital' was introduced. Danah Zohar has also coined this term – to mean, "what an individual or an organisation exists for, believes in, aspires to, and takes responsibility for. Our spiritual capital includes our moral capital." Although she explicitly distances herself from formal religion she is concerned with people's 'deepest meanings, values and purposes'. In this context she proposes an idea of leadership with twelve key characteristics including:

- Self awareness

- Spontaneity

- Vision and value-led

- Holism

- Humility

"Leadership which is strong does not need to be controlling/ managing everything"

Participant in Manchester seminar

Vision or nightmare?

There is universal acknowledgement both amongst the writers and thinkers, and also in discussions among local faith-based projects, that vision is important. Tired, overworked and pressured communities need to be lifted by inspired vision. But, it's never that simple. As seminar participants put it, "one person's vision is another's nightmare" and " a leader needs **vision** but not necessarily **A VISION**". Each project or organisation will vary but, if we are true to community development values, as well as to our religious traditions, then our vision should be shared and not just one person's view

Your vision needs to be flexible enough to respond to change, but not so vague as to mean all things to all people. A tall order? But not an impossible task and worth spending time on, which means thinking about the kind of process that might lead to a shared vision. Some methods of doing this are similar to those described in the final section in this booklet on reflection and evaluation.

Issues and questions

The difficulty of encouraging people to take on leadership roles is a widespread issue not just within faith communities. Taking on a leading role may not be seen as 'cool' … unless an environment can be created which pays attention to the needs of your potential leaders as well as just getting the job done. As with other seemingly intractable problems – fund-raising and volunteer recruitment – a systematic approach can be a good starting point. Potential leaders need a proper structure of recruitment and retention just as much as paid staff. Such a structure might include:

- A sophisticated recruitment effort – not just sitting back and waiting

- An attractive 'working' environment – is this experience going to be enjoyable?

- Challenging opportunities – particularly for younger leaders they need to know they can be allowed to get on with the job

- Early identification and support – this might include mentoring or young leadership programmes

- Planned development – which might include induction, training, placements outside the organisation, new assignments

Another problematic area for some communities is that of dealing with conflict or control and power. It may be conflict between a designated leader and other people in the community, or between individuals or groups within the community. Traditional understandings of the role of the religious/clerical leader may complicate this – it may be difficult to challenge someone in this role when there is a tradition behind it of great authority. Accountability at one level may only be to God – or at least to the senior religious hierarchy – which may make it difficult for a community to hold someone accountable. And on the other hand a religious leader has the freedom to take risks that someone always looking over their shoulder would never have.

We also need to acknowledge that there is a difference between leadership and management although there is clearly an overlap. The classic formulation is that "the manager does things right; the leader does the right thing". Faith communities need both.

Finally, and for some most importantly, we need to recognise that the concept of leadership emerges out of a widespread culture that may, in many respects, be discriminatory. Classical concepts of leadership are closely tied to images of male, hierarchical power. Those outside the powerful elite may not only be excluded from positions of leadership but have radically different approaches to leadership. There is a growing emergence of literature asking the question of whether women lead in different ways to men – but this is not just a gender issue. It relates to issues of disability, ethnicity and age at least as much.

LINKS AND RESOURCES

The governance hub

www.governancehub.org.uk).

The Third Sector Leadership Centre is a new body – not yet many resources on their website but hopefully more coming soon www.thirdsectorleadership.org.uk

Systems thinking

a] *"The Fifth Discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization"* by Peter Senge. Doubleday, 1990.

b] www.infed.org/thinkers/senge.htm

Values based leadership

a] *"Training for Transformation"* (3 vols) by Anne Hope and Sally Timmel. Mambo Books, 1984.

b] *"Principle-Centered Leadership",* by Stephen Covey. Simon and Schuster, 1990.

c] *"The Servant as Leader"*, by Robert Greenleaf. The Robert K. Greanleaf Center (originally published 1970, current version 1991)

Shared/distributed/delegated leadership

a] www.infed.org/leadership/ shared_leadership.htm

b] www.northernleadershipacademy. co.uk/distributed

c] www.ncsl.org.uk/research/ research_activities/index.cfm

Spiritually Intelligent Leadership

"Spiritually Intelligent Leadership" by Danah Zohar. Leader to Leader Institute, USA (www.pfdf. org). Downloadable from https://www.pfdf. org/knowledgecenter/L2L/fall2005/zohar.html

"Sustainability may not be essential – sometimes things 'die'."

Participant in Middlesbrough seminar

VISION AND LEADERSHIP

All of our traditions embody stories. How would you tell the story of your project or organisation as a fable or parable – a simple tale that encapsulates the essential characteristics? Or just the story of a single event (a 'critical incident') that captures the essence of some key factors in your organisation.

How would you tell the story of the leaders (yourself or others) in this organisation?

What visions (there may be several) exist for the future of the community you serve?

How might your organisation develop to make the greatest impact on your community?

And who is going to do this work?

6 PEOPLE AND PARTICIPATION

The term 'participation' is used in at least three different ways in the context of faith-based community development. It refers to the desire to have as many people as possible participate in activities, programmes and projects. It can be used to mean the people who do 'a little bit more' – getting involved in the management and running of activities as volunteers. And it also has a broader, more political, sense that refers to participation in the decisions that affect our communities on every level. It is the latter two senses that we will be discussing here.

Volunteer recruitment.

It is a well known paradox of faith-based organisations that they perceive themselves and are perceived by others as **rich in volunteers**, but often cannot find sufficient people to play a part in key programmes. One of our strengths is the **wide diversity** of people that meet together in our faith communities. In any one community or congregation it is common to find people of different economic backgrounds, professions and countries of origin. We are rich in people with diverse skills and experiences. The trick is to find ways of tapping in to them. **Careful planning** pays off – before you start, think about what they will do, how you will support them, and what procedures you will have for selection. You will need to consider what policies (such as health and safety, payment of expenses etc) need to be in place, and how you will continue to motivate your volunteers. Above all you should think of ways you can make it easy for someone to volunteer.

The UK Volunteering Forum (which combines the volunteering agencies for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) has adopted a successful local pilot programme to establish "Investing in Volunteering Standards". This a practical tool to help organisations develop volunteers. The ten key indicators for the Standards are as follows.

1] There is an expressed commitment to the involvement of volunteers, and recognition throughout the organisation that volunteering is a two-way process, which benefits volunteers and the organisation.

2] The organisation commits appropriate resources to working with volunteers, such as money, management, staff time and materials.

3] The organisation is open to involving volunteers who reflect the diversity of the local community, in accordance with the organisations stated aims and procedures.

4] The organisation develops appropriate roles for volunteers in line with its aims and objectives, and which are of value to the volunteers and create an environment where they can develop.

5] The organisation is committed to ensuring that, as far as possible, volunteers are protected from physical, financial and emotional harm arising from volunteering.

6] The organisation is committed to using fair, efficient and consistent recruitment procedures for all potential volunteers.

7] The organisation takes a considered approach to taking up references and official checks which is consistent and equitable for all volunteers, bearing in mind the nature of the work.

8] Clear procedures are put into action for introducing new volunteers to the organisation, its work, policies, practices and relevant personnel.

9] Everybody in the organisation is aware of the need to give volunteers recognition.

10] The organisation takes account of the varying support needs of volunteers.

Paid staff

It is the aspiration of many small faith-based organisations to employ professional staff. It is beyond the remit of this kit to go into all of the issues involved – more information is available from many sources including *"Tools for Regeneration"* published by the Faith Based Regeneration Network UK (www.fbrn.org.uk) But one point should be made – employing staff should add additional value and capacity to any project and not simply replace volunteers.
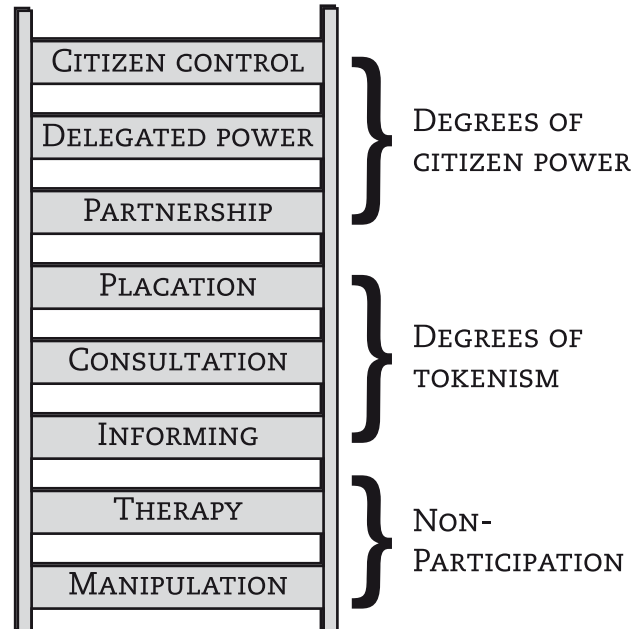
Participation

With the growth of the concept of sustainable communities which is embedded within the ABCD framework (see section on belief and ideology) greater attention is now being given, by practitioners at all levels, to the importance of community participation.

But participation can be a double-edged sword. Anyone who is approaching this topic from a community development perspective will need to ask themselves such questions as, "Who holds the power in this process?" and "What is the purpose of this exercise?". Participation is not the same as community development. In participation an audience is 'invited' into a space; in community development a group will have established their own space. Empowering communities can be about demanding space for dialogue and not just being willing (or unwilling) participants in what might appear to be a public relations exercise.

"We need humility – mistakes are an education."

Participant in Bradford seminar

Sherry Arnstein writing in the 1960s describes a 'ladder of participation'.

The steps on the ladder are explained more fully in her article – see link below.

While many of us might find some of these terms contentious what they do is to signal clearly that participation is not a value-neutral activity.

So, for community development practitioners, the key to engaging in participation processes is to understand their general limitations and specifically to be clear what the benefits to the community may be in any particular setting.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation in their study of effective participation identified 10 key ideas that can aid thinking about participation.

- The level of participation – making conscious choices about what level is appropriate.

- Initiation and process – participation doesn't just happen; it is initiated and managed.

- Control – the initiator has the opportunity to set the tone for the process.

- Power and purpose – the study emphasises the difference between "power to … and power over…"

"Formal representation can sometimes block active participation."

- The role of the practitioner – must be constantly reviewed to ensure it is facilitative.

- Stakeholders and community – the term community often hides a complex range of interests.

- Partnership – another over-used term; partners must trust each other and share a commitment even if they are not equal in capacity.

- Commitment – this is the other side of apathy; people are committed when they think they can achieve something.

- Ownership of ideas – one of the biggest barriers is "not invented here" and the antidote is "we thought of that".

- Confidence and capacity – ideas and wish lists are of little use if they cannot be put into practice.

Participation relates to other similar concepts which sometimes overlap.

Consultation. All public authorities and many other large institutions undertake consultation before embarking on a major initiative. But the experience of many people is that these processes are simply there to make the institutions look good … and they take up precious time.

Engagement. Sometimes this term is used interchangeably with consultation but, where a distinction is made, it normally refers to a more serious attempt to build long term relationships with stakeholders of various kinds.

Accountability. Accountability can be democratic – through something like a ballot box, and many of our faith community organisations build in this kind of accountability. Or there can be accountability in other ways to various stakeholders.

Representation. Representation is a potential goal that appears desirable in all cases but, is so rarely possible in practice that it often causes more frustration that satisfaction.

Empowerment. Classically this is the aim of much community development work – that people are able to be in control of their lives and community.

We need to recognise that faith communities themselves are often not very open to participation so work needs to be undertaken to address internal issues before a faith community can be a catalyst for encouraging wider community participation.

LINKS AND RESOURCES

Volunteering

a] Volunteering England www.volunteering.org.uk

b] The Investing in Volunteering Standard is described at iiv.investinginvolunteers.org.uk

c] The workforce hub relates to both paid and voluntary staffing www.ukworkforcehub.org.uk

Participation

a] *"Guide to Effective Participation"* by David Wilcox. Now out of print but summary at www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/housing/H4.asp and full text at www.partnerships.org.uk/guide/index.htm

b] *"A Ladder of Citizen Participation,"* by Sherry Arnstein in Journal of the American Planning Association, Vol. 35, No. 4, July 1969, pp. 216-224. (Downloadable at http://lithgow-schmidt.dk/sherry-arnstein/ladder-of-citizen-participation.html)

PEOPLE & PARTICIPATION

In the section on Ideology and Belief the community development aim of participation was identified as: ***everyone having the opportunity to participate fully in the decisions that affect their lives.*** Applying Alinsky's principle, discussed in the same section: ***I start from where the world is, as it is, not as I would like it to be*** use Arnstein's ladder of participation to establish where you are at the moment. The following questions may help:

a) Who initiated the participation process?

b) Whose space are we in?

c) Whose questions are we answering?

d) Whose agenda does it serve? (It may serve more than one)

e) Who benefits?

f) Who has power to effect change?

g) Identify the point on the ladder that best describes where you are at the moment.

h) What would it take to move up to the next step?

7 RESOURCES – FINANCE, BUILDINGS AND ICT

It is easy to characterise any small group – including faith-based organisations – as primarily seeking resources from others. But all organisations, large and small, are both recipients and donors of resources. The pattern will vary from organisation to organisation and from time to time.

Money

Just about every small community development project – whether faith-based or not – will specify funding as their greatest need; but others can also be 'make or break' factors.

Any fund-raising advisor will emphasise the importance of a strategic approach – even for the smallest projects. The key stages are:

project strategy – Before you even begin to try to raise money you need to sort out your project priorities, what you are aiming to achieve and how you hope to deliver it.

screening – This is the process of looking across all the options to identify possible sources of funds. Local Councils of Voluntary Service or your faith's support staff (at regional or national level) will often be able to assist with this

short-listing which fund-raising channels you are actually going to pursue bearing in mind your own, possibly limited

diversity – try not to rely on one source, but consider adding other outside or self-generated sources

In order to receive public funds (or funds from other large institutions) faith-based organisations will often have to consider the following:

- The importance in some cases of building a long term relationship with a potential funder before any actual cash is forthcoming.

- Presenting an organisation or piece of work in a way that meets the funder's criteria without compromising the organisation's own values.

- The possible importance of organisational structure to a funder – some funders prefer that an applicant is a registered charity or is incorporated.

- Demonstrating clearly the social and economic value to the wider community – often this will be a new way of thinking about a project.

- Quantifying the value of voluntary time and effort.

- Demonstrating how a piece of work arises clearly from community needs and not just perceptions of those outside the community.

- Demonstrating how a project fulfils all anti discrimination criteria.

- Demonstrating proper processes for reflection and evaluation.

- Ethical issues raised by, for example, lottery funding.

"No short cuts to funding or building."

Participant in Coventry seminar

Buildings

Faith groups are often rich in buildings – a mixed blessing, as they may not be fully suitable for community use and/or old and expensive to maintain. Some faith communities have abandoned their original buildings for new multi-use centres in which worship can take place but is no longer the only, or even main activity. Taking such an approach, possibly in partnership with others, can renew buildings that have become a burden to their host community.

Information and communications technology (ICT)

Local mapping projects have revealed the extent to which some faith community organisations are not using computers at all, or don't have e-mail access. Others have the equipment but are struggling to make it as effective as possible. Even some who have made significant investments may find that the technology is absorbing far more time and money than can be justified by the results.

So, like other resources, ICT must have a strategic plan to ensure that the organisation is getting the best out of this resource. With an effective plan ICT can:

- save you money, time and resources
- help you communicate with more people quickly and easily
- manage information
- provide services in more innovative ways

Issues and questions

Faith communities and funders often come from very different cultural backgrounds and see life through different lenses. This mutual lack of understanding can lead to much frustration on both sides. For example, funders may feel that faith communities, in the end, only want money for 'undercover proselytism' and faith communities may feel that funders do not understand the moral and ethical traditions which underpin their work.

Many faith-based organisations are concerned about the problems of dependency on institutional funding. Such a dependence may distort or limit the way you work, or limit your freedom to criticise those who might be current or future funders.

The lead-in time for new funding can be very long so long term planning is essential. Institutional funding is often time limited so, almost as soon as you receive a grant, it is important to move beyond your natural excitement and think about the exit strategy (what you do when the grant finishes) and long term sustainability.

Researching and writing repeated funding applications can be a draining experience and can, by itself, have a negative impact on your organisation or project. So, a balance has to be found between allocating time and effort to dealing with funding, and continuing to be active in your community project.

It can be enormously frustrating to feel like a small part of some larger institution's plan. When, for example, they give money to some and not to others; or when they say that funding is 'all or nothing' rather than a partial or staged implementation. This frustration is shared by all – faith communities and others. There is no simple way to overcome it, especially when it appears that some organisations are 'money magnets' and others struggle just to have enough for the paper clips.

LINKS AND RESOURCES

Fund-raising

The 'finance hub' for the voluntary sector has some useful introductory leaflets downloadable from www.financehub.org.uk.

Buildings

"Building on Faith" by Doreen Finneron and Adam Dinham. Church Urban Fund (www.cuf.org.uk), 2002

ICT

For those who are just setting out, assistance can normally be found at your local Council of Voluntary Service and often both basic training and access to the internet is available at local libraries. For those who already have some access see the national ICT hub (www.icthub.org.uk).

"Rejoice in what we have rather than bemoan how much better it could be."

Participant in Bradford seminar

It is sometimes easier to recognise what resources you are missing rather than what resources you have. Build a map of the resources available to your group.

people

buildings

equipment and
material

finance

knowledge and
abilities

Learning from experience

There are several key thinkers in the history of experiential learning. The most well known model is that of David Kolb who described an experiential learning cycle –

CONCRETE EXPERIENCE

ACTIVE experimentation

REFLECTIVE Observation

ABSTRACT CONCEPTUALISATION
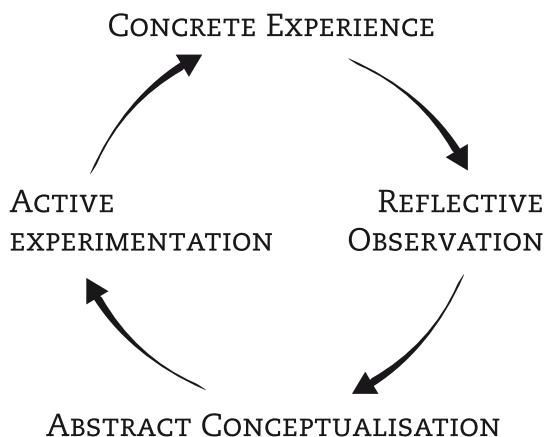
This suggests that there are four stages which follow from each other: Concrete Experience is followed by Reflection on that experience on a personal basis. This may then be followed by the derivation of general rules describing the experience, or the application of known theories to it (Abstract Conceptualisation), and hence to the construction of ways of modifying the next occurrence of the experience (Active Experimentation), leading in turn to the next Concrete Experience. All this may happen in a flash, or over days, weeks or months, depending on the topic, and there may be a "wheels within wheels" process at the same time.

This idea of the learning cycle has been expanded and adapted in many ways and is seen in many forms within the religious world – as the 'pastoral cycle' of learning (create a learning experience – investigate further – reflect – take action) or in terms of repentance – Act – Reflect – Repent – Act.

The model doesn't have to be a straight-jacket – you can enter at any point and take from it what is useful. Some critics have said that it's just too esoteric. Phil Race, an experienced trainer and teacher, suggests that it can be more straightforward – people should be focusing on the simple (but not always easy) task of trying to 'make sense' of what they have done.

Either way, the process of reflection or making sense is a crucial part of the learning process. Some people would draw a distinction between reflection as a personal and subjective process, and evaluation as a formal and objective process but most people would agree that both are rooted in your value system – they are not value-neutral.

What the faith traditions bring to the process of reflection

These ideas are directly drawn from *"Values and Visions"* a project which brought together members of many faith traditions to explore issues of spirituality and global awareness.

> **"Reflection is like prayer; it isn't the absence of activity, it's activity that can unlock great power in its own right."**

Participant in Cambridge seminar

Encounter

Encounter is about:

- relationships – how we relate to others and to the environment around us,

- points of convergence – a meeting with a willingness to participate and with a sense of safety,

- openness to change, exchange, balance, listening,

- shifts in perception and an acknowledgement of this.

Listening

Listening is about:

- giving time, quiet, empathy, respect for the other person's feelings, making an effort to understand, undivided attention.

Story

Story is about:

- Understanding your experiences through the telling of them,

- listening to the voices of others and learning from their wisdom,

- being open to the truth within a story so that the story becomes part of our own experience, tradition, history and culture,

- community – the story-teller and the listeners or readers,

- expressing the inexpressible,

- imagination and creativity,

- fun and enjoyment.

Stillness and contemplation

Stillness is about taking time and making space to make sense of experience.

Contemplation is about taking time to be truly present in the here and now, to savour it, to enter into it, to allow awe into our lives.

Stillness and contemplation are about:

- making an empty space in our lives where we can respond to that inner sense of being part of something greater,

- a way of life.

Sensory awareness

Sensory awareness is about building a greater appreciation of the world about us, using all our senses, being open to experiences that come to us in a variety of different physical ways and being alive to the present.

Celebration and grieving

Celebration is about:

- making a song and dance about life; treating the day as something special,

- recognising and experiencing gifts such as hope, joy, compassion, thankfulness, love and sorrow.

Grieving is about:

- our response to our own and others' suffering,

- acknowledging anger and frustration.

Grieving and celebration are about:

- expressing the inexpressible and integrating that into ourselves; knowing that there is more to all this than meets the eye,

- transformation.

Visioning

Visioning is about:

- using our imagination

- creating and exploring images to look at the present, to return to the past and most significantly to visit the future,

- allowing images to come to mind, valuing those images and responding to them,

- the ordinary and everyday, the local and global.

Some methods for reflective practice

Distance networking – newsletters, e-mail and the internet

"Networking in community development is important because it provides access to information, support, resources and influence. It enables co-operation between practitioners, researchers and policy makers in different sectors through the development of trust and understanding. Networks can draw together a range of voices into a collective whole, thus adding weight to individual perspectives." (CDX). Distance networks – whether maintained through traditional media like newsletters, or electronic media like e-mail or internet – enable practitioners to build relationships and share practice. Sharing best practice in writing helps both the writer (by the requirement to focus and clarify their thoughts) and the reader – who can compare and contrast others' experience with their own.

Face to face conferences and seminars

Nothing can quite match the benefits of meeting people face-to-face whether in a small or large group. Even the most traditional of lectures gives us the opportunity to reflect on our own practice but, as most people are aware, it is the opportunity to talk to people in smaller groups – either formally or informally – that brings the greatest opportunities for reflection and learning. Organisational 'away days' are another form of this approach in which a group of stakeholders – staff, volunteers, management committee members and so on – take the time to reflect, often with the help of a facilitator – on their day-to-day work.

Individual consultancy

This goes under many titles. In some professions the term 'non-managerial supervision' is used, and currently work and life coaching is an approach seen in many settings. At heart these all share some simple characteristics – a person who is not engaged with your work on a daily basis and who has some skills at active listening and giving feedback, takes the time to help you talk about and reflect on your work.

Group discussion

The basic idea is, again, simple and straightforward – a group of people discussing some aspect of the work they are doing. But you will need to consider some key factors:

- Who is a part of this group? All those engaged in the activity? advisers, managers or voluntary management? users or participants? colleagues from similar neighbouring groups? 'outside' professionals? funders and supporters? other stakeholders?

- When and where do you hold this discussion? As a part of a regular business meeting? on a regular basis? at a venue away from your normal meeting/workplace?

- What kind of format do you wish? A businesslike agenda? creative activities or reflective activities incorporating some of the aspects mentioned above? facilitated by an outside person or members of the group?

Action learning circles

Knowledge does not just come from experts – others who are in a similar situation can be just as valuable. Many practitioners are keen to learn from the experience of others on a more regular basis than the occasional conference or seminar. A *learning circle* is a group of people who meet on a regular basis to share experiences and to give each other feedback. *Action learning* focuses the discussion on particular issues which group members bring in order to help them work out their next steps.

Individual reflective learning

Reflective learning can take place by talking on a regular basis in a structured way with a friend or colleague. It can also take the form of a journal. A contemporary version of the journal is the 'blog' – short, informal reflections or bits of information put on a simple website – often in such a form that others can engage and give feedback.

Creative approaches

Any of these different opportunities for reflection can be enhanced by building in some creative approaches which might include photographs, group drawings, maps, storytelling.

Evaluation

The two main reasons for evaluating are:

- Evaluating for **accountability**: when the main purpose is to show others what we are doing, and to provide evidence for judging merit or worth.

- Evaluation for **learning or development**: when the purpose is to enhance personal, and organisational learning and development. *(Charities Evaluation Services)*

The four most common types of evaluation are:

- **Process**; which focuses on the way we achieve our aims, the activities we engage in and the processes we use.

- **Impact**; which focuses on the difference the work is making.

- **Performance**; which measures the extent to which the objectives and targets have been achieved. This is in terms of both quality and quantity.

- **Strategic**; which focuses on overall purposes or goals of the organisation.

Issues and questions

One of the things that faith-based groups should be good at is reflecting on the process of reflection! We know the importance of seeing the big picture and ensuring that reflection is holistic – taking into account many different factors. We know that to grow we have to be able to let go and learn from each other and to step back from our immediate concerns. Reflection resonates with our traditions and allows us to open up to a world of possibilities.

Yet there are questions that remain.

Despite our desire to make reflection a process led by the needs of the people involved in the activity, outside forces can introduce requests for performance measures that seem a world away from our experience. On the other hand, if we are trying to gauge whether we have been successful we may require some formal measurement.

Amidst a myriad of pressures the need to reflect and evaluate can seem to be a low priority. Yet most of us are aware that failure to undertake these activities on a regular basis can lead to the quality of the work suffering, burn out and mis-directed activity. If we don't take the time for this we can end up doing more, but less focused, work.

LINKS AND RESOURCES

Experiential learning

a] *"Experiential Learning: experience as the source of learning and development"* by David Kolb. Prentice-Hall, 1984.

b] www.learningandteaching.info/learning/experience.htm#Elaborations

c] www.phil-race.com/downloads.html

Reflective practice

a] www.infed.org/thinkers/et-schon.htm#_The_reflective_practitioner

b] *"Values and Visions: a handbook for spiritual development and global awareness"*, by Sally Burns and Georgeanne Lamont/Manchester Development Education Project – www.dep.org.uk. Hodder Murray, 1996.

Action learning

a] www.actionlearningassociates.co.uk This is a commercial group but the information on the web-site is a good introduction to the topic.

b] *"Action Learning"* by Krystyna Weinstein. Gower Books, 1999.

Networking

"Networking Resource Pack". Community Development Exchange (CDX). Pack (without linked booklets) downloadable from www.cdx.org.uk/networking/resourcepack.htm

Evaluation and performance improvement

a] Charities Evaluation Service www.ces-vol.org.uk

b] The Performance Hub www.performancehub.org.uk

Reflective Practice:

REFLECTION AND EVALUATION

What opportunities do you currently have for reflection?
...as an individual? ...as part of a team or group?

What new opportunities would you like to develop over the next
six months? Choose one to try. What benefits – for yourself,
for your group – would you hope to see from this activity?

What criteria would you use to evaluate the achievements
of your organisation or group? How often do you think you
should evaluate your work and who should be involved?