



BUILDING LOCAL BRIDGES TOGETHER TO ADDRESS SHARED GLOBAL CONCERNS

Pointers for One World Week event organisers for involving people of many faiths in developing OWW events.

Drawn from OWW's Local Inter Faith Development Project
sponsored by HMG's Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund, 2007-8

ONE WORLD WEEK'S VISION AND AIMS

VISION - What we believe

When we understand each other's perspectives, our lives can be transformed and enriched.

MISSION - What we want to do

One World Week exists to provide the space for people from diverse backgrounds to come together to learn about global justice, to spread that learning and to use it to challenge inequality, discrimination and degradation, locally and globally.



AIMS - How we want to do it

To fulfil its Mission, One World Week aims to:

- * enable groups at local level to work across boundaries such as culture, ethnicity, gender and creed, and to recognise we are part of one world in combating inequality and discrimination.
- * stimulate activities which nurture values of 'ubuntu' (active togetherness) and lead to learning, understanding and action for global justice.
- * work at a national level towards enabling diverse global perspectives to be heard, valued and have an impact.

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INTRODUCTION

The OWW Local Inter Faith Development Project

One World Week (OWW) enables people from diverse backgrounds to come together to learn about global justice, to share that learning and to use it to take action locally and globally. OWW's Local

Inter Faith Development Project builds on this experience, focusing on sharing OWW groups' experience of involving people of many faiths. OWW is based on the belief that when we understand each other's perspectives, our lives can be transformed and enriched. There are many benefits, sometimes unexpected, of joining together across boundaries to tackle a common issue. These include increased networks, friendships, fun,

Hinustani band playing in Newport © Rhys Webber



a greater sense of belonging, a greater voice, achieving more together, sharing the workload, learning more. But it is worth bearing in mind that doing it together is not just more effective but may be, in cases like climate change and building peaceful societies, the ONLY way to do it.

The project was funded by the U.K. Government's Faith Communities

Capacity Building Fund, and forms the background to these guidelines. It built on the experiences of two previous OWW projects, **Voices from the South** and **Reaching out** and **Reaching South**. It was planned, facilitated and written up here by a team from a diverse range of faith backgrounds including various Muslim sects, Buddhist, and several Christian denominations. For a full list of those involved please see Appendix 3.





How the project worked:

The idea was for the organisers of OWW events who have had experience in engaging people of many faiths to share their experience with those who would like to. A series of events involving people from different faiths happened in four pilot regions during the project, with meetings between the organisers and regional facilitators, before and after, to share ideas and to evaluate the events and the process. The aim was for local OWW organisers and groups to develop better links with more communities, in order to organise more inclusive events on local and international issues, by engaging more with people of many faiths and cultures in their communities. The pilot areas were chosen to reflect the variety of areas where OWW activities happen: some, like Manchester, have diverse communities; other places like Worcester needed local knowledge and connections to bring a diverse range of people with different faiths and no faith together.

These learning experiences have been drawn together by a national team and shared here in these guidelines, to be made available more widely across the OWW network.

As well as the four pilots funded by the project, these guidelines draw on the experiences of other OWW events held in the past year, and that of OWW's former projects. As these experiences



and suggestions often reinforce what has come from the pilots they are integrated under the learning points coming out of the pilots, and in the top tips.

WHAT THESE GUIDELINES ARE AND WHAT THEY ARE NOT

These OWW guidelines contribute to the wealth of literature on engaging people of different faiths. They focus on people getting together at a local level across boundaries of many kinds and doing things together that make the local and global community a better place to live. OWW sees inter or multi faith activity as one important aspect of people coming together to celebrate, understand and make a difference. Shared values in people of faith can often be a binding force and a catalyst for action rather than faith being a divisive or aggressive influence as is often portrayed in the media.

These guidelines aim to give advice and encouragement, showing the value and impact of people from many faiths learning together, while also showing some of the difficulties and pitfalls. They are based on real practical experiences of those involved on the ground.

Context:

The importance of faith communities is increasingly recognised by the Government. They recognise the importance of faith communities:

- changing views and values in society.
- encouraging good citizenship through the values that they uphold.
- as a channel of communication to the wider community.

Faith groups also have a perspective on global issues through their involvement in striving for global justice (for example campaigning against unfair debt and promoting Fairtrade or locally supporting overseas projects), in their engagement with alleviating world poverty and in contributing resources to developing countries. Many are involved with other members of their faith family in the international community, providing links with other places, a great source of information sharing and opportunities for learning about global issues. This gives great incentive and potential for OWW organisers to think about involving faith groups, to share in the process of developing local events to raise awareness of and take action on global justice issues.

Many public bodies and community organisations have recognised the need to have a better understanding of other cultures and religious beliefs. The Inter Faith Network for the UK was founded in 1987 to promote good relations between people of different faiths in this country. The Network works with its members and other networks to help improve the mutual understanding and respect between religions where all can practise their faith with integrity. The Network's way of working, shared by One World Week, is firmly based on the principle that dialogue and cooperation can only prosper if they are rooted in respectful relationships which do not blur or undermine the distinctiveness of different religious traditions.

The Resources section [in Appendix 2] provides further information on the Inter Faith Network and other national initiatives and opportunities for faith groups and those working with them that may be relevant. These developments present great opportunities for members of faith communities to gain more strategic representation and a voice on issues of common concern, local and global, in their communities.



CASE STUDY 1: OWW ACTIVITIES IN THE SOUTH WEST

Regional Facilitator, Alistair Beattie, drew together individuals from groups putting on OWW events in the Bath, Bristol, South Gloucestershire and West Wiltshire area and co-ordinated a planning meeting to share experiences of people engaging and involving people of many faiths. Participants discussed their plans and their previous experiences. The events then took place, with the Regional Facilitator attending many of them – see below. After the events, Alistair drew together the organisers from the groups to discuss what could be learned from the events and to evaluate both the process and the events.

Bath International Evening: this event took place at the Guildhall, Bath on 27 October. There were samples of food from a number of different communities, with the opportunity to meet the people from these communities who produced the food. The event was attended by around 200 people and had support from the Lord Mayor of Bath. While this event did not have key messages about taking action for global justice (an aim of OWW events) it did provide the opportunity for people with different international interests and experiences to get together socially and celebrate, sharing information and forging relationships.





Bath International Evening (annual event, 2006 pictured) © Bath OWW 2006

Somerset Faith Forum launch: the Forum was launched on 24 September. There were presentations from members of different faith communities, outlining their faith's response to working together and living in harmony. The Forum is working on the production of a mobile exhibition which will go around schools and other public places, illustrating the contributions that diverse faith groups make both to our local society and understanding and acting upon global issues.

South Gloucestershire Faith Forum – 'What can we all do about teenage pregnancy', held on 31 October, was an event bringing together members of faith groups, professionals working on teenage pregnancy issues and members of the local community to discuss the contribution faith groups can make to raising awareness and providing resources on this issue. This was one of an ongoing series of events, some of which were tackling more local issues and some more global. Bringing together people of many faiths to discuss local issues of concern can be a valuable step in the process of bringing people together around global issues.

West Wiltshire Inter Faith Group: 'Understanding Diverse Communities in West Wiltshire' took place in Trowbridge on 21 October. It included presentations by two speakers giving their perspective of living in the south west of England having moved from their home culture. The speakers were: Wilfred Emmanuel-Jones, better known as 'the Black Farmer', and prospective parliamentary candidate for Chippenham, Imam Rashad Azami, Director of the Bath Islamic Society. This event encouraged participants to consider similarities and differences across national and cultural boundaries. It challenged perceptions and stereotypes, an important element of global education and a good basis for establishing the respectful relationships necessary for tackling global issues effectively.

Thornbury and District Make Poverty History Group – 'All together now': faithnetsouthwest supported an ecumenical OWW event, held on 9 October, to discuss issues for faith groups concerned about how best to support developing countries. It was organised by the Thornbury and District Make Poverty History Group, which has representatives from all Thornbury Churches and was supported by Christian Aid, CAFOD, Jubilee Debt Campaign and Oxfam amongst other agencies. Bishop Mike Hill, Anglican Bishop of Bristol, made a presentation, drawing on his experiences in African conflict zones.

These activities were all different, but had one thing in common. They brought people together around specific issues or celebrations. OWW experience tells us that people do come together around issues and that this may be a catalyst for further development of relationships. The range of events shows us that there are different focuses for faith groups getting together. One World Week events are not just about groups getting together, but about them doing so in the process of planning and delivering and participating in events that raise awareness and facilitate action on global issues. It may be that some OWW groups are in a position to tackle global issues with people of many faiths at this point

- while some need to find ways of engaging with faith groups first – getting people talking and sharing and understanding
- as a building block for future joint action on global issues.

What we learned about... reaching out to involve:

The process of doing things together from the beginning is as important in developing relationships and breaking down barriers as is the event itself, so try and involve potential participants or attendees from many faiths in the planning as well as the participating. The following suggestions of who to get in touch with might help you to reach out to those individuals and networks:

- local or regional organisations that have links with different faith communities e.g. inter faith groups, multi-faith fora.
- Infrastructure organisations
 - organisations bringing together the voluntary and community sector - will also be useful contacts, as they are likely to have organisations working directly with diverse communities within their membership e.g. councils of voluntary service, racial equality councils and rural community councils.
- Community organisations looking to bring together diverse groups from within their own locality will also be useful contacts. For instance, the South Gloucestershire Faith Forum supported a social event organised by the Southern Brooks Community Partnership
 - which brought together people from the different communities living in their area. Likewise two Community Associations in two different areas of Portsmouth supported separate OWW events with venues and grants.



Preparing sushi at Bath International Evening © Bath OWW 2006

- Community groups working with specific communities are also good contacts even if they do not have a specific role with faith communities – as they are bound to work with people of faith e.g. the Bristol Muslim Cultural Association.
- Groups supporting newly arrived communities will certainly be supporting people of faith from these communities e.g. groups working with asylum seekers, refugees and economic migrants.
- Local authority equality officers and those from public or statutory services, such as the Police or National Health Service and Primary Care Trusts, have to engage more with faith communities, as faith is now officially recognised as part of the equality and diversity agenda. They should be keen to work with you, and it may be a very mutually beneficial relationship – they can show they are working with diverse communities and they may be able to provide venues, other services in kind and, possibly, even money.
- Don't forget the business community as some of the larger employers will have a number of people from different faith communities within their ranks – many may have chaplains who would be able to put you in touch with key contacts.
- You need active people! Much can be done even with limited resources if you have at least one person dedicated to the task – but it is better with a group of people sharing the load. For instance, the West Wiltshire Faith Forum benefits enormously from a very active and imaginative secretary supported by a small group of committed volunteers.
- Identify people who are influential and active within their communities as they are the most likely to be able to involve others. Spiritual leaders may not have the inclination or expertise to participate in the organisation of an event, although their support would be invaluable. Even if they are supportive, they are often just too busy to take an active role.

- Getting spiritual leaders involved: getting spiritual leaders to an event and giving it their blessing would be highly desirable. However, they will usually need a long period of notice to give you any chance of getting them to your event. The Thornbury and District Anti-Poverty group's event succeeded in getting the Bishop of Bristol as their main presenter, but they needed to give him a year's notice to ensure his attendance.

What we learned about... successful events:

Social events are a great way of bringing people from different cultures together. Food and music go a long way to attract more people and enable more members of the community to experience the richness of other cultures. For instance, Bath International Week, although not aimed specifically at faith groups, brought together members of a number of different communities by offering food and entertainment. While the event itself did not address global issues, it brought people together to learn about each other and to build the relationships that might enable that to happen in the future.

Support from influential people in the community helps. The Bath International Week has benefited from the support from the Mayor of Bath for most if not every year since its inception and this has made possible the use of a prestigious location like Bath Guildhall.

Use the student population: it helps to have a student population in the vicinity; they are likely to have students from diverse communities, who could be a source of potential voluntary support and contact within their own communities.

Look for areas of common concern: having a pressing issue, which is a common concern of all faith communities, may be a way of attracting interest e.g. teenage pregnancy, environmental issues – both the subject of events organised by the South Gloucestershire Faith Group. As a One World Week organiser, you would want to deliver events which had a clear message about global or environmental justice. It is worth remembering, however, that many successful community development initiatives and campaigns grow out of people getting together over an issue they care about or are angry about at a given time, often very local, and the group then sticks together, attracts more people and campaigns on other issues.

Tying in global concerns to match those of local faith communities

may help participation. For instance, concerns about global climate change would match the needs of the Bangladeshi Community, who will probably have family members they are worried about and who would benefit from flood relief operations co-ordinated internationally. The Thornbury and District Anti-Poverty group event was an example of this.

Challenges and pitfalls

“There are difficulties of getting some faith groups involved. They may either want to go their own way and stick to events only for their own community, or they do not feel secure enough or confident about taking a more prominent role in the community. This would particularly apply to faith groups who are not numerically well represented in the community, or who are more recently arrived and therefore less well established in the region e.g. asylum seekers, refugees and economic migrants.” South West Regional Facilitator reflects.

Sampling food from many different communities at Bath International Evening © Bath OWW 2006



CASE STUDY 2: WORCESTERSHIRE WAIFS ALTOGETHER NOW

[WAIFs originally stood for Worcestershire Active Interfaith Forum, but in evaluations many people of faith and non-faith suggested that this be changed to 'inclusive' which we took on board as a group]

In Worcestershire the project grew out of the commitment of the Regional Facilitator, Dr Rosemin Najmudin, to use the opportunity to bring a group of people together to put on an event, and to launch themselves as a community group tackling diversity and global issues locally. The issues of concern were the changing nature of the society in Worcestershire with respect to where people have come from, why they have settled in Worcestershire and the contribution they make to the local economy and culture. The event, called 'Altogether Now Worcestershire!', was held in the Angel Centre in Worcester City on Thursday 26th October 2007. It stemmed from a desire to get people who offer services (statutory and commercial) to meet and have open dialogue with the diverse people in Worcester.

The main aims were:

- A chance for people of different professions, backgrounds, faiths,





concerns and opinions to meet in a safe environment.

- To have fun, be creative and have their say through informal and formal activities.
- To communicate through different channels and across boundaries.
- To start discussion about how to work together as a wide community.
- To look at the journeys of how people have ended up in Worcestershire from every area of the world and the UK and the contribution people have made to the local economy such as in agriculture, transport, factories and the health services.
- To keep the work sustained and long-term.
- To have a crèche so children could be present, in order that mothers, particularly BME (black and minority ethnic) stay-at-home-mums, could participate more easily.
- To build on the work already existing of the various charity and community-based organisations such as Ethnic

Access Link, DanceFest, the Beacons Centre, Asha Centre, the local race equality and inter faith organisations and the local WEA office.

This event took as its starting point the OWW aim of building relationships of mutual respect that cross boundaries, recognizing that engaging respectfully with people of other faiths should be a first step towards striving for peace and justice everywhere. It also addressed the fact that, for people who are consistently marginalized within UK society, gaining the confidence to engage with service providers, and service providers gaining an understanding of their needs, is an important step to getting involved with initiatives outside of their immediate community. As with previous examples, the opportunity for people with different global experiences and interests to talk to each other about issues pertinent to them, challenge perceptions and find similarities of interest, is a step towards tackling global justice issues. It also recognized that prejudice, racism and exclusion locally is a facet of a wider global injustice or imbalance of power and that, in order to tackle that on a global level, it is appropriate to explore it at home. Worcestershire is classed as a mainly white, rural area with elements such as the BMP being rife in the neighbourhood.

Methodology

There were two main activities. “Swapping Culture” is a communication tool/model based on creativity and dialogue. Many of us think we know the people around us but, actually, we usually only know people on the surface. This tool stimulates participants to learn to talk to each other more deeply, using simple, searching, difficult and controversial questions to get people to learn, listen, talk and trust. It starts with non-verbal communication.

Navtaj and Elizabeth (photo page 18-19) communicate through sight and sharing to demonstrate the concept of ‘conversation’ – ‘con’ means ‘with’ and ‘verse’ means ‘poetry’. So effective

conversation/communication, if done well, should be like poetry!

The second activity involved a worksheet (You can see a copy in Appendix 4). In pairs or small groups, people work through the questions on the sheet. The questions are initially simple, non-threatening and they become searching and challenging, designed to really get people talking and thinking about things that are important to them, and sharing concerns and ideas.

The end-point of the session was to look at how we can work together to meet the needs of all in the services on offer in Worcester, thus making them more accessible and appropriate to all. It was also to look to issues further afield that impact locally and on which we impact

Mrs Hassan sharing her knowledge and experience with service providers Gerry and Angela
© Dr Rosemin Najmudin, Waifs



globally, such as trade and food – global competition with local produce reducing food miles etc.

Twenty adults and about eight children attended the meeting. Also about twenty people from near-by offices either passed through or networked over lunch and shared the food. A further twenty people over a two day period looked at a poster exhibition. Our local development education centre, called Beacons, in Malvern, 10 miles from Worcester, supplied the exhibition. It consisted of poster-sized photographs of themes and images around international perspectives on gender, participation, communities and faith.

The Angel Centre is a former church in the city centre of Worcester, with a beautiful central training area and side rooms. It offers dance, music classes, counselling services, classes in English and IT as well as space for hire, and office space for various community organisations. An unexpected outcome was that most participants had never been to the Angel Centre and it was useful for them to know what happens there and meet the various charities hosted there. It was also, as most of the staff at the Angel Centre commented, good for them at the Angel Centre to see diverse people attend and use their 'space'.

Concluding thoughts of Dr Rosemin Najmudin, Regional Facilitator:

"All stated that they found the day useful. It was very good for non-white people to meet such diversity, be able to talk so openly and release the stress of often being the one/two black people who take on board all the issues like diversity and antiracism. As was expected many of the 'white' people who attended were the retired, they were not the ones often with powerful positions who had booked to attend the event, such as Service Providers, but who did not then bother to attend. We need to think how to change/access the people who need to be educated into diversity issues, especially in Worcestershire, where the BNP are rife and, as we know, the issues being discussed are not new, and yet the hatred and debates around oppression/exploitation of poorly paid workers persists and now spreads to the newly arrived Eastern Europeans especially the Polish communities. This will be a slow process, but one that we need to persevere with and without a start there will be no change. Already impact is being seen from the event: two more events around globalisation have been planned: a world music and awareness day in the central city Gheluvet park and a Police funded picnic with stalls and performances based on issues such as the abolition of the slave trade and the persisting modern slave

trade as well as an open forum debate on issues affecting people in the area.

Beacons Centre is working with our members in planning an annual sixth form conference on global issues. In Worcester we believe in working both with the affluent and the marginalized, if we do not change the minds and attitudes of those in power, change will be slow and short-lived."

What we learned about... barriers to inclusion, and how to remove them

- Mind set or prejudice – thinking that certain groups won't want to be involved in looking at global issues and the links with the local. Be open minded – you don't know until you try! And don't tell them what you are doing – ask them what they are doing. If they are not explicitly involved or keen to be involved in activity around global issues, it is up to you to make the links between their concerns and global justice and explore it with them. Whatever their concern or activities, the links will be there if you are creative enough!
- Transport – hold your event or planning meetings somewhere accessible, offer lifts, encourage car sharing, send people bus timetables and maps.
- Choose a venue that those you want to involve already use and feel comfortable in.
- Timings – time of day is important, as people will be available at different times. Ask potential participants what times would suit them, rather than assuming. WAIFS members in Worcester found Sunday afternoons and evenings a good time to hold meetings or events.
- Timings – days and dates: Be aware of important days and dates for different faith communities. Planning meetings always on Friday may exclude many Muslims, while most practicing Christians would object to Sunday mornings, for example. Events during Ramadan or around Diwali or Easter, for example, may clash with other family or faith commitments.
- The Usual Suspects. It is often difficult to get beyond the people who always come to meetings, and have been coming for years, and are likely to come until they die or move away. If you are failing to attract new people, it may be necessary to re-think your

Drummers drumming @ Pembroke One World Week event 2007 ©



publicity mechanisms. Word of mouth is great, but will often fail to break out of the 'usual suspects' social circles. Try approaching the groups suggested in relation to case study one above and pushing out emails, flyers, posters and conversations through those networks.

- Another suggestion for avoiding the 'usual suspects scenario' is to use existing events, forums, meetings to publicise what you are trying to do. Beg for five minutes on the agenda of local committees, or a slot at a local youth event; take along some information to distribute.
- You can't please all of the people all of the time. It will be impossible to arrange events that will get everyone excited. The most important lesson here is not to assume that you know what people want, but consult them. Talk to people and ask them what kind of thing they would get involved with. Then encourage them to help organise it, remembering to make the links with global justice at every level!

What we learned about... inclusive events:

- Training the right people. Training does not have to be formal – it just means passing on and sharing skills and confidence. Make sure that as you draw in new people, you involve them at all levels and help to prepare them for taking leading roles.
- Don't give up! It takes time to build relationships and there is no quick fix. Persevere, share the load and enjoy.
- Don't just have food and music at food and music events. Make sure you have varied refreshments at all events; asking people to bring a contribution to share is a good way of ensuring there will be something everyone can eat.

CASE STUDY 3: SCHOOLS EVENT IN MALDON, ESSEX

Here, the Regional Facilitator, Claude Muya, worked with schools to look at how to bring people of different faiths together locally, so that they can contribute to community cohesion, discuss and take action on the shared global issues that link us all. The contact to develop the event came through someone involved in OWW locally in the past, who knew of schools that might be interested – showing the importance of personal contacts. The project took place in Maldon, Essex, which is perceived as a white, Christian, middleclass community. The school taking the lead on this OWW project was St Francis Catholic Primary School. The other school involved is Maldon Primary School. According to Mrs M Mann, the Assistant Head teacher, two other schools willing to take part were Maldon Court and Maldon County. Other schools showed interest after the initial events: All Saints School and Wentworth School. The event was reported in the Maldon & Burnham Standard Newspaper of 31st January 2008.

The event consisted of:

1. A display of art, craft, holy books, literature, symbols, ceremonial clothes, traditional





clothes, from some of the main religions represented in Great Britain, notably: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Judaism, Buddhism.

2. Storytelling from countries and religions from around the world, carried out by teachers, parents and guests from various religions.
3. A BBC video show presenting different religions.
4. A "Touch and Try" session allowing people, especially children to touch, feel and try various religious objects displayed.

Because Maldon is perceived as a white, Christian, middleclass community, the project gave an opportunity to think about:

- What knowledge do participants have of other faith groups?
- Have they an image of other faith groups which is different from the stereotypes portrayed by the media?
- How can they reach out to other faith communities?

- How can these get together across perceived boundaries and come together to learn from each other?
- What instrument within the community can allow this learning to take place?

The feedback from the event was positive:

- A teacher of RE commented that she thought that this was the best way to teach children, especially in a Roman Catholic school; she was impressed by the interest shown by children.
- Children asked questions that showed that they wanted to learn more about other religions. *"Why do Muslims bow down to worship?", "Why do Jews not eat pork?"*
- The Touch and Try Session facilitated learning. *"Seeing art crafts from other religions and touching them made learning easier. It was the visual effect that made the difference"* (Mrs Thurston).
- Story telling was a gentle way to talk about other religions and tackle stereotypes. *"It gave children an idea of other*

religions which is different from the violence they hear talked about in the Medias” (Mrs Thurston).

- Some parents admitted their ignorance of other religions and claimed to have learnt a lot during this OWW event. *“As an adult I didn’t know anything about Sikh religion” (Mrs Barker).*
- Other schools in Maldon are showing interest in this experience. It is possible that this model will be replicated.
- There was only one OWW event taking place at school in this area; now there are at least three schools involved.
- Working with local schools could be a good way of reaching out to parents from other faith groups and bring people together for learning.

While it would seem that there was no explicit emphasis here on the international global dimension, there was an implicit understanding that this was a first step to getting the schools working together to explore issues. The organisers were in no doubt that this event offered the opportunity for some local schools to connect with each other and open up dialogue between them.

Indeed, feedback from Mrs Mary Mann, Assistant Head Teacher of St Francis Catholic Primary School suggests that it will lead on to further collaborative working:

“The School Council enjoyed their visit to Malden Primary School, and the children interacted well. It opened up dialogue between them... Following the day, they [the children] were able to suggest ways to develop and build on their experience.”

The challenge will be for these future events to build on this dialogue and interest around exploring faith, and channel it into exploration of international issues.

What we learned about... learning about faiths in a school setting, and with children

- A school is a place where parents have the opportunity to meet regardless of their faith background.
- Any member of the school community can be involved with school activities without feeling excluded or marginalised. And not only parents and carers – schools are increasingly involving their local residential

and business communities in their activities.

- A school offers learning opportunities for both parents and children and for all other members of the local community.
- Claude's experience with faith communities suggested that people are cautious about attending events organised by other faith groups which do not share their own religious convictions – the school setting is neutral and non-threatening.
- The local library worked well as a partner in delivery as well as provider of resources
- Having items to touch, feel and try on was a success. Children love kinaesthetic learning, and so do adults, secretly! But beware of artefacts being displayed as exotic or different – include the familiar and the unfamiliar, and don't just think that by trying on a sari you are learning about issues facing Hindus.
- Rather than professional story tellers, it is effective to draw stories from participants, parents and children, of what their faith means to them.
- In the process of children learning, their families learn too.
- Getting children talking is a great way of getting adults listening and talking to each other. Children become the thing in common that is shared across the different faith groups.
- Schools are integrated into clusters, and feeder clusters etc, which is a good way of encouraging the spread effect.
- Children can claim the ownership of this event: letters sent to parents and story tellers and contacts made with other schools were written and carried out by children.
- School diaries can be very full up from the beginning of the year. Finding physical space and time for a new event within what is already a busy school agenda can be a challenging task. Think about it at least a term in advance.

What we learned about... working with a majority white Christian community

*“Maldon isn’t a multi-faith or
multiracial community; we
don’t attract a lot of people”*
(Shirley, former teacher)

- Exploring perceptions of other faiths is a good way to start
 - people may feel more able to say what they think about other faiths if it’s done in the more abstract – how are faiths portrayed in the media, for example.
- Religious structure: identifying the religious structure of the community could provide useful information for defining a starting point.
- Opportunity for making contacts: there are places, such as schools, where people from different faith groups have the opportunity to meet under circumstances other than religious activities.
- Outreach agents: there are people, within the community, whose role and activities offer opportunities to connect with other faith groups and allow them to influence others (e.g. children at school, parents’ activities at school, parenting activities, leaders, etc.).
- Interfaith messengers: a messenger carries the responsibility to teach the right values and provide the right information. He/she is the channel for community cohesion. This is the role played by story tellers, teachers, lecturers, etc.
- A local school can, through pupils and parents, become a useful link between different faith groups. However, other ways of linking faith groups, such as sports, social clubs, etc, need to be explored.
- If members of faith groups are given the responsibility of sharing the values of their own religion with others, it brings pride and gives them the opportunity to claim ownership of their community cohesion. At this OWW event in Maldon, parents have shown their pride in telling religious stories to children.
- If there is a lack of commitment at the beginning, don’t give up easily. Sometimes, people need time to understand the project and see a successful outcome. The commitment will come and with it pride and joy for achieving something.

"Although, initially, members were not particularly committed to such a day, the feedback received from them, the children and adults who took part, was all very positive." (Mrs Mary Mann, Assistant Head teacher)

The OWW Local Inter Faith Development Project national team acknowledge that this event developed into a valuable inter faith activity but did not really extend into a OWW event addressing global issues of shared concern, encouraging participants to take action. While it addressed British intercultural and inter faith issues it did not focus attention specifically on global issues. As we have seen before though, increased understanding and cohesion locally promotes the ability to develop a sense of global justice based on understanding rather than prejudice. While it is important that local OWW organisers do not switch their attention to interfaith activity as a substitute for addressing global poverty issues, this case study recognises that exploring faith diversity locally can be a way in to a more inclusive approach, and to exploring global justice issues.





CASE STUDY 4: MANCHESTER

How it worked:

The Greater Manchester area is home to a hugely diverse population. Regional Facilitator, Saleem Oppal, a Muslim working with the Black Environment Network, made the decision to target two areas for the events. Central and East Manchester were chosen, two areas with particularly diverse communities and recent incoming migrants, where tension was perceived as a result of recent immigration. Three projects were planned here, with two happening, and a third deferred until autumn 2008.

Muslim Young People visiting Holy Trinity Church

This was a project involving young people aged 11 to 14 from the Muslim community around the Aston area of Tameside visiting a local church, Holy Trinity.

The young people were from a local Madrasa and the idea was for them to explore myths and understanding, develop knowledge and become aware of the similarities and the main fundamental differences between Islam and the Christian faith from a real practical experience. Fifteen young people met with the vicar of the church in a coffee





morning, a non-threatening and positive forum. While the conversations focused on faith, this interaction was positive in that it opened up dialogue and sewed the seeds for similar forums in the future where global issues, particularly those affecting Muslim – Christian relations, could be tackled more directly.

The project at the outset raised some concerns amongst the parents who questioned the validity and the purpose of the visit. The community was not familiar with One World Week, which led to scepticism as to the purpose the visit. Some parents felt that their children's social and educational needs, including religion, were being met at home, school, mosque and at the madrasa. They, therefore, concluded that the visit was not necessary and expressed concerns as to what the children would gain from such a visit. A great deal depended upon the level of trust between the organiser and the parents and also upon the credibility of the organiser: whether he could have addressed the questions which the parents from the Muslim communities might have raised.

Because Saleem and those working with him knew some of the parents prior to the start of the OWW project, they were able to alleviate any major concerns or, indeed, any misconceptions that parents had or that arose. However, this trip raised the consideration of credibility

as an issue – how difficult it is even for someone from the same faith to try and suggest activities which take people out of their local faith community, if there is not a shared understanding of the aims and background to the idea. It also highlights that personal relationships are a good way to start talking about potentially difficult ideas, as there is likely to be less prejudice.

The “Community Cohesion” conference

This conference, organized by Tameside Inter Faith Forum Group, provided immense opportunities for networking and integrating with diverse individuals, community groups and faith groups.

The venue (Dunkenfield Town Hall - Tameside) was an excellent choice as it provided a safe and a neutral environment for communities to integrate and feel at ease. Religious, faith and community based venues would have created difficulties for some members of the communities to attend. Timing was also pitched appropriately, with an early evening start.

In total, four workshops were held, which were well coordinated and facilitated and provided sound platforms for discussion in relation to the following topics. Faith and non-faith organizations were also able display their work.

1 Community Cohesion

2 Social Inclusion

3 Community faith groups and the Media

4 Police and BME [Black and Minority Ethnic] faith groups

5 Integration of religious venues

6 Young people and faith

7 Impact on religion and communities since 11th September

8 Tolerance, understanding, and acceptance

9 Culture change

10 Image and clothing

Despite a diverse audience involving 150 individuals from local organisations and community groups there was a lack of representation from the Muslim community, although faith leaders of all faiths had been invited. There is work to be done to build trust and inclusion with the Muslim communities in the area, as reflected in the learning points.

Tameside Inter Faith Forum Food Event

In the initial meetings to do with the project there was a proposal to hold a food event involving the BME and the faith communities around the Tameside and the Manchester regions. This event would have taken place outside the Town Hall on a particular market day when the area would have been busy with shoppers and the general public to create a joyful, educational and a fun event. Various light snack foods would have been prepared and cooked on site and free samples would have been given to the public to experiment, understand and explore foods from different regions and parts of the world.

Due to time constraints, this event was postponed until Autumn 2008, when it would aim to involve different faith groups in creating a better understanding, awareness and tolerance of each other, through sharing food; to address some of the tensions and issues of community cohesion and social inclusion, and begin to tackle some of the barriers within the communities. This event would draw people in through the sampling of global cultural food available locally, and provide an opportunity to draw attention to growing global food shortages, malnutrition – perhaps through a leaflet handed out or through an exhibition in a place local communities go to.

What we learned about... Muslim communities engaging with other faith groups was that:

- **publicity and promotion is vital.** The biggest issue was lack of awareness of One World Week, particularly within the Muslim communities. Publicity can make use of local community networks: choose those that are “resourceful, resourced and meeting regularly” is the advice of Saleem. If the concept of OWW is familiar, people will be much more likely to embrace the idea of getting involved.
- establishing trust, representation and understanding within any faith community is key. It is perhaps particularly important when working with groups who feel they are best able to meet their own needs from within, or who have a history of being misunderstood or misrepresented by the dominant culture. For example, if wanting to work with people from a local Muslim community, find the medium through which they communicate about community issues and get involved in that. Perhaps utilise community radio/community slots on commercial or regional

radio (try to establish a One World Week slot!).

- use of the words ‘Muslim community’ is an issue. There is not a single Muslim community. This is of course true of other faith communities or communities of interest.
- The key is **confidence** of people to talk to each other and, also, to hear what is actually being said. This case study showed that this is difficult enough from someone of the same faith as those he or she is trying to reach out to and is likely to be more difficult for someone with no connections. The key to really communicating is finding what you have in common and taking time to get to know people. Talking about a global issue of common concern might be a great way of achieving that – focusing on something bigger than the local and the immediate.

What we learned about... getting groups together in an inner city context

- Effective events take time. Give time to take up the opportunity to get involved with actions that will make a difference both to local communities but also have a global impact.
- It is a big challenge to win the trust of some faith groups – different approaches using creativity and personal connections, and not giving up, is key.
- Use neutral venues – the town hall is a good venue because not only is it neutral, but it lends credibility as it belongs to the geographical local community, not to a particular community of interest.
- There may be situations where it is helpful for some events to be taking place within ‘communities’ initially to build up understanding of OWW and develop confidence to undertake shared ventures with those from outside that particular community.

Working across ages and generations is effective – children or young people may take a lead on dialogue with those from different communities, their parents overcoming initial scepticism and taking an interest themselves. This was also borne out by the Maldon case study.

- Interesting to see how OWW helped Muslim parents to open up their minds.

In this case study, the links between local activities getting people from different faiths and communities talking together and better global understanding is clear. There is so much stereotyping and misconception regarding Muslim individuals and communities by other communities, both in the UK and in the international context, that greater understanding based on the development of personal relationships is key to seeing beyond those prejudices. In other areas of the country, OWW events took a different approach which did explicitly include a global context when dealing with ‘isolated’ communities. In Portsmouth the local OWW organisers focused on environment and climate change as a hook to draw faith communities together, with a degree of success.

TEN TOP TIPS

1. Getting Started

Identify, with as many of the potential participants as possible, the global issue you are focussing on at the start and keep looking for links to it as planning for the event develops – you may be surprised at the links that emerge.

2. Allow plenty of time

- Planning events needs an appropriate time-scale – try not to rush it.
- Allow time for communication – and don't underestimate how long it takes to get things going. But when things do get going, they may quickly accelerate, so be prepared to respond to keep the momentum going.

3. Who to contact to get started?

- Start with someone who is familiar with One World Week, or build on previous experience of doing OWW.
- Ask for help: the more people involved in the planning the greater the likelihood of finding resources and using them effectively; spreading the word

through 'word-of-mouth' is often the best marketing tool to encourage people to attend events.

- Use personal networks, or friends of friends initially, but beware of the 'usual suspects' syndrome.

4. Shout about it! using a range of communications

- Word of mouth and personal contacts can be much more effective than letters and emails. Although in terms of publicising events, word of mouth does tend to spread the word between people who know each other already, so can't be relied on as the only method of publicity.
- Don't forget to use any media available to you for publicity – community radio, newspapers, newsletters of local faith groups, posters, email contact lists.
- Go to where people are. Get a slot on the agendas of local meetings, call in at local drop-in sessions, make yourselves known and enlist others to do the same.

5. Getting people involved

- Participatory events and processes – make sure your planning meetings are dynamic and give

everyone a chance to join in. Don't rely too much on spoken and written communications – get people drawing, planning on flip chart paper, talking in pairs before talking as a whole group. For an example of the 'getting to know you' tool used in Worcester, see the appendix 4 below.

- Summarise the decisions made at planning meetings, and produce a list of who has agreed to do what, and follow it up.
- Building trust and relationships is important – it is these relationships that will make your event work and will take the message out to the various communities in your area. Take some time to understand the reasons that might prevent people from getting engaged, and ask people how they want to shape the event.
- Contact people in power/ those well known in the community to support your message and give kudos to your plans and events.

6. Food

Food is a great asset at any event, not only those which focus on food. It not only nourishes people and makes them feel welcome but it is a good conversation

starter. Make sure you provide a variety of snacks and drinks so there is something for everyone. Ensure that most of what you provide can be eaten by most people you expect to come. Don't be afraid to ask people beforehand what food they would like that would be appropriate, rather than guessing. Or ask people to bring contributions, and share them with the group.

7. Location and transport

Try to choose not only a neutral venue, but one that is accessible by public transport, and, of course, accessible to those using wheel chairs. Many people will be put off if they don't know the venue, so including public transport links as well as a map with any information you send out is a good idea. Further than that, make personal contact with those you are inviting and try to arrange for car shares or for those who know where they are going to accompany those who do not. Not only will this overcome the travel issue, but may result in people getting to know each other better. And do make sure that, if you have the means, you reimburse travel costs for those who would find it a struggle.

8. Choose dates carefully

It is impossible to find a time which suits everyone but, again, try asking rather than guessing. Dates to avoid because of religious festivals, or school

holidays, are also important to bear in mind – check out the Inter Faith Network website [www.interfaith.org.uk] for more guidance on this. Some people may be more flexible if you can offer a crèche during planning meetings and children's activities at events. Not only will this enhance the event by encouraging cross generational interaction, but it will enable those with childcare responsibilities to feel welcome.

9. Find out who your allies are!

Don't feel you have to do all the work yourself. When trying to find and make connections with local action and global issues, find out who is doing it already. There may be local branches of campaigning organisations, such as Make Poverty History groups, or World Development Movement groups. Your local Development Education Centre will be able to help you locate these (www.globaldimension.org to find the nearest to you) as well as being able to supply information, artefacts, local contacts and other resources. Also of use locally might be your local Council for Voluntary Service or CVS – they will have a register of any local voluntary groups or organisations and may also be able to help you find volunteers for your events. Find the nearest to you at www.navca.org.uk.

10. What next?

Take every opportunity to ask participants what else they would like to be involved

in and, better still, if they would be able to help organise it! Make sure someone has a list of contact details of anyone willing to be involved in future ventures. Collect quotes from people who have enjoyed your event, for use in publicity. Write a brief account of the event and get it in the local paper or on local radio.

Use the event to publicise any other events you or any other of the participating groups are planning.

Enter your event on the OWW website [www.oneworldweek.org] so other OWW organisers can get ideas and learn from what you have done.

CONCLUSIONS

This inter faith development project has shown that focusing on drawing people from different faiths together to plan and participate in One World Week events is: a) possible and b) has a potentially lasting impact on community cohesion and understanding of diversity. The challenge is to use the inter faith nature of these initiatives not as an end in itself (while very valuable, this is not the OWW remit), but as a means to involving more people in effectively exploring issues of global justice, working together to take action locally.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON ONE WORLD WEEK

One World Week is an opportunity for people from diverse backgrounds to come together to learn about global justice, to spread that learning and to use it to take action for justice locally and globally, by:

- working together in caring for the Earth and its resources
- taking action for justice, equality, peace and fullness of life for all
- building relationships of mutual respect that cross boundaries
- running local events that celebrate the diversity of cultures in our communities

One World Week (OWW) was founded in 1978, by the World Development Movement, out of a desire that, for one week in every year, the churches should draw the attention of their communities to the fact that the world consists of one human race which shares one planet in which all may enjoy fullness of life.

Over the years OWW has broadened its approach to include people from all

backgrounds. In a series of projects including 'Voices from the South' and 'Reaching Out and Reaching South' or ROARS, OWW focused on incorporating the perspectives of people from developing countries though providing mentors (from the diasporas) to local OWW organising committees and involving people from varied ethnic and religious backgrounds in planning and writing resources.

OWW has become known throughout the UK and developed an international reputation for bringing people together to learn about global issues, and to take action locally on things which have an impact on the whole world. One World Week now involves people of many nationalities and has events all the year round.

Thousands of local organisations and schools use OWW as a focus for a range of activities, events and celebrations to raise awareness and take action on issues of global justice. OWW is constantly reaching out to new groups from different faiths and cultural backgrounds in the UK and beyond. We now estimate that almost half a million people each year will take some part in One World Week.

OWW is a development education charity; it is non-political and non-sectarian. OWW's Vision, Mission and Aims emphasise the importance of working inclusively with everyone to address global and local challenges to achieve justice, peace and sustainability for all. For more

details about OWW, history, current developments, resources, contact details and how to get involved, look at www.oneworldweek.org.

Britain now has a richly diverse cultural landscape. Most of the major cities in particular now have organisations addressing inter faith issues and racial equality networks. Some local One World Week events already embrace the opportunities this offers for mutual understanding and developing shared values to address the challenges facing us all.

APPENDIX 2: RESOURCES

Rather than list references and websites here which may become out of date we suggest you refer to the websites of One World Week and the Inter Faith Network where they will be updated regularly.

If you do not have good access to the internet, or confidence using it, we suggest that you find a volunteer either within or from outside your group who does. Your local CVS may be able to help you find a volunteer. Local libraries will have internet access, and often people to help you use the computers if you are unfamiliar with them.

The One World Week Web Site [www.oneworldweek.org] gives links to the websites of many faiths which indicate

what they are doing about global poverty, and about global education both in and out of schools. It has links to the work of faith based aid organisations on, for example, poverty, trade, environment, which will help OWW organisers interest people of other faiths in global issues. Many have resources available to download or order, and some have speakers from the UK and international visitors who may be able to come and contribute to your events.

The Inter Faith Network produces a good practice booklet, with background information, case studies, and advice on setting up groups, available free to download on their website [www.interfaith.org.uk]. It focuses on partnership working between different inter faith structures and local government, and you will find it an excellent resource to complement these guidelines. Some OWW planning committees have already taken up ideas from this source – for example inter faith walks - the OWW website has a photo gallery showcasing one in Portsmouth.

But remember that, while these are good sources for the methodology of getting people together, YOU the OWW organisers need to ensure that there is a focus on global issues through local understanding and action.

APPENDIX 3: THE OWW PROJECT TEAM

National Project Co-ordinator:

Helen Garforth, Director of consultancy Just Ideas.

Regional Facilitators:

Alistair Beattie, Sufi, is a Heart Rhythm Meditation teacher; he has worked for over 30 years in the voluntary sector and currently works for Faithnet South West.

Claude Muya, Evangelical Christian, originally from Democratic Republic of Congo, is an architect, consultant, and was previously involved with One World Week as a Voices from the South Mentor, and then as Project Co-ordinator for Reaching Out and Reaching South.

Dr. Rosemin Najmudin is from a liberal Gujarati (Indian) sect of Muslims called B(V)ohras. She came as a refugee with her family from Uganda in 1973 and grew up in Worcester. She is an international educationalist and a health trainer.

Saleem Oppal, Muslim, works for the Black Environment Network in Manchester.

OWW Management Team involved:

Stephen Harrow, Treasurer
Sarah Hirom, Trustee
Milind Kolhatkar, OWW Chair
Ingrid Wilson, Trustee and Project Manager

OWW staff team involved in the project:

Administration: Vartika Mishra to 31st Jan 08; Almenia Comrie from 1st Feb 08

Finance: Julie Marshall to end Oct.07; Anna Palmer from Nov 07

APPENDIX 4: SWAPPING CULTURE: AN EXAMPLE OF A 'GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER' TOOL USED IN WORCESTER

© Dr. Rosemin Najmudin

Getting to know each other...
(Time 15 minutes)

Spend time listening and letting each other speak. Use as many questions as you can in the time allocated to learn more about each other.

1. Tell your partner your name, do you like your name and who gave you your name?
2. Where were you born?

3. Where do you see yourself in 5 years time?
4. What do you like most about yourself?
5. Do you have any religious or spiritual beliefs?
6. What irritates you the most?
7. What qualities in a person do you think make a good friend?
8. How would you describe your cultural background?
9. Do you find it challenging to talk to other people about your beliefs or culture?
10. As a child, what did you want to become when you grew up?
11. In your area of work, what gives you complete satisfaction?
12. What makes you laugh?
13. If you had the opportunity to create a diverse community group, what would it ideally look like for you?
14. If you had your ideal diverse group, what would you want to achieve with them?
15. How do you want other people to see you?
16. What gives you inner peace?

The Same, Similar and Different...

(5 minutes)

From your discussions, take a few moments to reflect with each other what things you shared were the same, similar and different.

Introductions...

(5 minutes)

Now join with another group and introduce your partner to the other pair. Were there things you learnt about each other surprising to you?

Sharing Ideas...

(10 minutes)

As a group of four people, share with each why you have come today, and what would you like to take away from today. Then as a group share one thing you would want a community group, such as the one you are in today, to begin to achieve for people locally and globally.

Please prepare one person to share the group idea with the whole group.

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