

'Going for Gold' A Guide for Wales – Africa Community Links

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Further guides will follow in Summer 2008, looking at a) in depth guidance for each of the ten steps towards attaining Gold Star status, and b) specific issues relating to the 'stars' for community link action on health, children, trade, and environment.

1. What is a Gold Star Community?

A Gold Star Community Link is

- 1 a 'partnership for development' between two communities in north and south (eg Wales and Sub-Saharan Africa) – *"town twinning with a purpose"*
- 2 bringing together a wide cross-section of local 'civil society' pooling people, ideas, resources and expertise – *"developing community cohesion"*
- 3 building sustainable, long-term intercultural friendships and understanding – *"celebrating diversity through learning from each other for life"*
- 4 based upon strong principles of mutual benefit to both communities, and promoting equality of opportunity - *"mutuality, equality, reciprocity"*
- 5 making a distinct contribution towards the Millennium Development Goals – *"making poverty history"*



Gold Star Communities

Wales and Africa Linking and Learning

"The Gold Star Project supports community partnerships between Wales and Africa, to develop a more just and sustainable world for future generations"



★ Proiect Cyswilt Cymuned Seren Aur
Gold Star Community Links Project

What sort of groups form 'Gold Star Communities'?

- 1 Gold Star Communities are 'civil society led' with (appropriate) support from local authorities, and are almost always run through volunteer commitment, and through contribution of employees' time and skills from local businesses, services, authorities and individual generosity / fulfilment.

- 2 Community links usually grow out of initiatives led initially by schools, churches, community fora, local authorities, health workers, business, campaign groups, green groups, youth groups, women's groups, engineers, students, colleges... many 'sectors' that make up any individual community.
- 3 In 'going for gold,' sectoral links recognise the benefits of involving their wider community – maximising the 'social capital' of their surroundings.
- 4 Successful community links will usually take on an organisation and life of their own, drawing in the skills and knowledge of a wide range of individuals and groups.

What are the Millennium Development Goals?

1. Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger
2. Universal Primary Education
3. Gender Equality
4. Child Mortality
5. Maternal Health
6. HIV / AIDS and other diseases
7. Environmental Sustainability
8. Global Partnership for Development

How does a community gain 'Gold Star Community' recognition?

- 1 The Gold Star Framework provides a 'five star' model for community linking development. Any link must first attain the 'community partnership' gold star (working through 10 steps, below); they may then go on to work towards attaining gold stars for community work on health, children, trade and environment.
- 2 Community groups use the ten-step 'Gold Star Framework' to guide them through the process (this is outlined on pages 4-8) to attaining Gold Star Community status.
- 3 Links will submit an application for 'Gold Star Award' status with evidence showing how the communities in Wales and Africa have achieved each of the 'ten step' criteria.
- 4 An assessment panel will review and commend award applications, or specify areas for further work.
- 5 Successful 'Gold Star Community' links will be officially awarded Gold Star status with endorsement from the United Nations, BUILD UK, Welsh Assembly Government and WCVA.
- 6 On achieving Gold Star Community status, a community may then deepen their link through working towards up to five stars in recognition of linking work focused on health, children, trade and the environment in both linked communities. The criteria for these will be fleshed out during May-June 2008.

2. About the Wales – Africa Gold Star Project

The Wales – Africa Gold Star Communities Project is

- 1 **Managed** by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA – the umbrella organisation for the voluntary sector in Wales)
- 2 a **Partnership** with BUILD (Building Understanding for International Links for Development, UK umbrella for agencies involved in community linking).
- 3 **Funded** by the Welsh Assembly Government through their 'Wales for Africa' scheme
- 4 **Endorsed** by the United Nations through the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme, coordinating agency for the Millennium Development Goals) in Geneva.

Background:

- 1 The proposal for a 'Gold Star Communities' pilot project came from discussions between BUILD UK and Mark Malloch-Brown, then Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations, in Wiltshire in March 2006.
- 2 The UN as the intergovernmental agency for 151 nations are charged with delivering the eight Millennium Development Goals to halve poverty by 2015. While primary responsibility for meeting this challenge falls to governments north (through providing aid, debt relief and trade justice) and south (through delivering Poverty Reduction Strategy Plans (PRSPs) and policies that realise the MDGs), halfway progress by 2007 is way off track – mainly due to lack of action by rich countries. Counter to this, the post-2005 'Make Poverty History' campaign climate has brought about an overwhelming sense of public pressure worldwide for increasingly local action to meet the MDGs. For the UN, such widespread 'micro-activity' is difficult to coordinate and can lead to duplication of effort and / or bad

practise in development. The Gold Star Framework presents an opportunity to channel local efforts in a way that harnesses energy, creativity and expertise that is focused on contributing towards the Millennium Development Goals at a local level, complementing rather than working against the efforts of governments, NGOs and agencies.

- 3 BUILD UK have a vision for 'the lives of every community and individual in the UK to be touched by the experience of a community link'.
- 4 WCVA established the 'Wales Civil Society Millennium Development Goals Task Force' in 2005 as a response to public and civil society pressure for Wales to make a tangible contribution to international development, despite the restricted powers of the Welsh Assembly Government (who do not have a specific International Development remit). The Task Force, drawn from across Welsh civil society, were charged with identifying ways in which Wales could use its powers and resources to facilitate action on the MDGs while benefiting the people of Wales. BUILD's Gold Star Communities proposal matched this challenge perfectly, and the Task Force offered to pilot the project in Wales.
- 5 WAG (the Welsh Assembly Government) responded to post-Make Poverty History public pressure by launching their 'Wales for Africa' strategy in 2006. A limited fund was established to resource civil society and public sector projects that would enable WAG's strategy to be delivered, and in early 2007 WAG funded WCVA and the Wales MDGs Task Force to develop a Gold Star Pilot Project between Wales and Sub-Saharan Africa.
- 6 The MDGs Task Force advertised in for Wales – Africa community links to join the pilot project, and in March 2007 awarded seed-funding to five groups: Brecon – Molo (Kenya), Brynycwm – Yirga Cheffe (Ethiopia), Crymych – Hlotse (Lesotho), Hay on Wye – Timbuktu (Mali), and Pontypridd – Mbale (Uganda). A Project Manager was appointed in June 2007 and the Wales – Africa Gold Star Communities Project was formally launched on 16 October 2007 by First Minister Rhodri Morgan at the Senedd in Cardiff Bay.
- 7 During its first nine months the Gold Star Pilot Project has drawn in a further 15 Wales – Africa community links, held a number of major events, drawn together the Gold Star Framework and criteria, and drawn up a 3 year development plan to involve 150 Wales-Africa community links by 2011.
- 8 The Gold Star Project is managed by WCVA on behalf of the Wales MDGs Task Force, through a dedicated project management team headed by Wales' Sustainable Development Commissioner, Peter Davies.

3. How can organisations / groups / individuals get involved in Gold Star Community Linking?

There are a number of levels at which groups or individuals can get involved with the Gold Star Communities Project:

We are interested in community linking, but we are not actually a community link organisation or group.

a) Join the Gold Star Communities Network for communications, resources and events information – email cowen@wcva.org.uk or call 02920431700.

We are a community who would like to link to an African community, but we do not yet have a link.

b) Register interest as a community who are 'thinking of linking,' to access support in Wales that will enable you to identify potential community link partners in African nations.

We are involved in community linking, but are just starting and need some support – or our link is not with an African community.

c) Become an 'associate project' through registering for 'Gold START' which supports community groups to develop initial exchanges and forge and explore a relationship with an African community partner through using the Gold Star Framework. WCVA provide some small grants to support 'Gold Start' initiatives, for further information contact cowen@wcva.org.uk.

We have a Wales – Africa community link, and would like to work towards Gold Star Community status.

d) 'Going for Gold' offers a higher level of support that enables established community links to develop good practise and gain recognition for the work being done within any individual Wales – Africa community link. WCVA provide some small grants to support 'Gold Start' initiatives, for further information contact cowen@wcva.org.uk.

We would like to 'go for' a Gold Star Community Award

e) 'Gold Star Community' will be the award bestowed (with UN recognition) on communities who achieve the criteria of good practice for community linking projects and work contributing towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals between Wales and Africa.

We have gained Gold Star Award status, but would like to deepen our work

f) Beyond this award, communities may then deepen their relationship and MDG-specific projects through gaining Gold Stars for work on health, childrens welfare, trade and environmental improvement.

4. The Gold Star Framework and Ten Step Guide: Overview

The Gold Star Framework is a flexible model for community action that can be adapted to the individualities of local communities of all shapes and sizes in Wales and Africa; from the traditional 'town twinning' approach, to a link between small agricultural hamlets.

The Gold Star Award recognises quality, mutuality and commitment. The ten step guide offers a 'roadmap' to enable groups to work towards 'Gold Star' status. Each step is underpinned by good practise, advice and guidance.

The ten steps are as follows:

'Growing' a Link

1. Develop a community profile
2. Identifying a partner community
3. Establish a geographic link

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4. Set up a coordination group involving the wider community
5. Exchange communications, ideas, people and resources
6. Develop an initial partnership agreement

Going for Gold

7. Formalise link into an independent organisation with sustainable funding
8. Develop MDG specific projects
9. Develop an education and public awareness raising programme
10. Formalise partnership agreement with recognition from authorities

The following pages offer more detailed guidance on the criteria for each 'step'.

IMPORTANT NOTE ON APPLYING THE 'GOLD STAR CRITERIA'

These framework criteria are a guide, for individual community links to adapt as appropriate for their context. A part of the process for community links, is to decide – as a community in Wales, a community in Africa, and as a partnership of the two – what criteria and benchmarks you feel are appropriate against each step.

For example, looking at the 'Step 4 criteria' (setting up a coordination group involving broad cross section of community), two communities may demonstrate very different approaches which both satisfy the Gold Star criteria:

Community A

*Large concentrated valleys town
Population 50,000
Hospitals, colleges, industry
Large local authority hub*

May choose to adopt large coordination group with 6 subgroups focusing on health, schools, local government, fair trade and business, environment and engineering links. Mayor / head of municipal authority may actually sit on coordination group.

Community B

*Small spread out rural community
Population 500
Agriculture & tourism livelihoods
1 primary school, 1 church,*

May choose to adopt small coordination group with 2 enthusiastic organisers, the vicar, the school headmaster, someone from young farmers and the retired postlady from the Merched y Wawr group. Authority involvement may be local councillor, or support from MP.

5. Steps 1-3: 'Growing' a Link

1. Develop a **partnership profile** (guidance sheet step 1)

- 1 This should be a document that details your own community's size, shape, geography, demographics, civil society groups, local activism, social cohesion and key development issues; and what they hope to gain out of a partnership between local Wales and local Africa, identifying benefits for both. This will act as continually updateable reference document throughout the development of your link.

2. **ID community partner** (guidance sheet step 2)

- 2 The leaders in any Wales (or African) community link should identify an appropriate community to link with based upon the needs identified in (1).
- 3 Deciding factors in selecting a community partner might take into account issues such as
 - a. language (are you linking to an English speaking African nation, if not do you have the language skills to draw on within your community to enable effective communication?)
 - b. Travel logistics between two communities (are there direct flights, how much do these cost, how much transfer time would it take to get to and from both communities?)
 - c. Conflict (are there any tension issues and how would these affect your ability to pursue a link?)
 - d. Issues of expertise (is there a concentration of knowledge and expertise within your community that you can share with partners, eg agricultural or academia)
 - e. Poverty levels and key issues

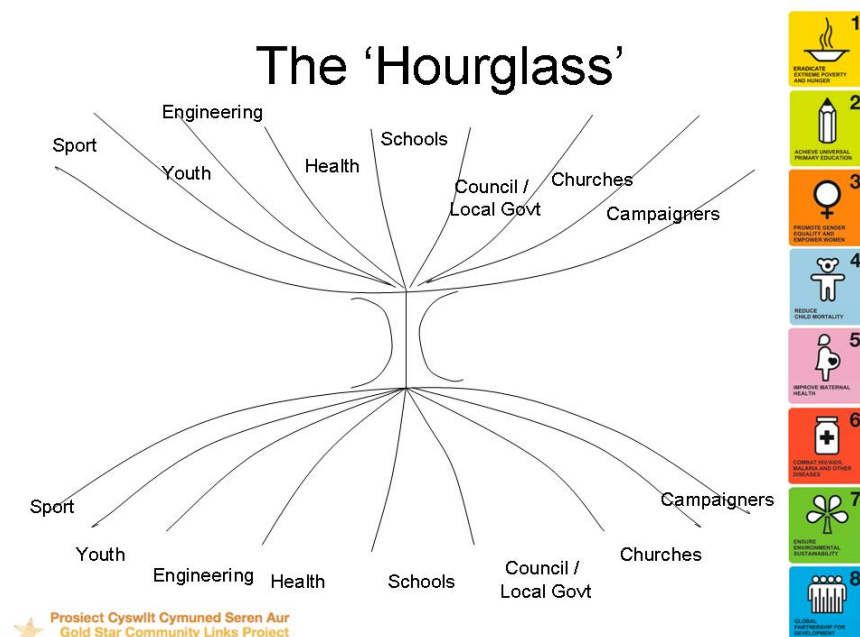
3. **Establish geographic link** between centres of the community (guidance sheet step 3)

- 1 Starting within one sector or coordination group
- 2 Growing into the wider community
- 3 Open up communications

6. Steps 4-6: Gold 'START'

4. Set up **coordination groups** involving **broad cross-section of community at both ends** (guidance 4)

- 1 A coordination group must show evidence of involvement of the wider local community, with involvement of at least 5 community sectors (see 'hourglass' diagram below).
- 2 Should involve people with interests in health, children, agriculture / trade & business, environment (the Gold Star areas) - and with involvement of / support from local authorities.
- 3 The coordination group should show evidence of meeting / communicating regularly to discuss issues around the link.



5. Exchange communications and ideas, people and resources (guidance sheet step 5)

- 1 Initial communications will often be with specific individuals by phone, letter or email.
- 2 Evidence of exchange of project ideas, and some analysis of key issues affecting both communities in relation to community development.
- 3 There should have been exchanges of people in both directions, for which there should be evidence of planning and outcomes.
- 4 The link should have identified and documented potential project areas they might explore in future growth and development both in Wales and in Africa.

6. Forge a partnership agreement focusing on mutual development issues, needs and understanding, and considering the growth of the link in both communities. (guidance sheet step 6)

- 1 There should be a documented partnership agreement between the two communities.
- 2 There should be evidence that this has been developed through a process of listening, learning and understanding.
- 3 There should be evidence that some thought has been given to future sustainability of the link

7. Steps 7-10: Going for Gold!

7. Formalise link groups in Wales and Africa into standalone community-based organisation (CBO) with its own sustainable funding base (guidance sheet step 7).

- 1 A community 'going for gold' must demonstrate that it has evolved into a standalone link group ie not dependent on any one individual or community organisation.
- 2 It should have its own bank account
- 3 It should have its own charitable status or suitable equivalent
- 4 It should have passed its own organisational constitution both in Wales and Africa.
- 5 It should have developed a community-based mechanism(s) for funding the link sustainably, both for core costs and specific development projects, that enables the link to function fully without dependence on outside funding sources. (examples may include membership / subscription fees, monthly direct debit / payroll giving, carbon offsetting schemes, trading or joint social enterprise).

8. Develop specific partnership projects and activities **impacting upon the MDGs**, in **coordination** with stakeholders, funders and development practitioners (community, NGOs, government agencies). (guidance sheet step 8)

- 1 The link must demonstrate that it is supporting / resourcing / pursuing projects that are directly impacting upon the MDGs, and have been clearly selected as priorities by their African partners.
- 2 The link should demonstrate how it is coordinating its work with local development actors in Wales and in Africa.
- 3 The link should demonstrate how it is drawing in wider resources to develop community link projects through facilitating cooperation between appropriate Community Based Organisations and Authorities, in particular in funding projects.

9. Develop programme of education / awareness raising and community action at both ends of the link (guidance sheet step 9)

- 1 The link should demonstrate how it is streaming learning around key development issues into local schools.
- 2 The link should demonstrate how it is raising awareness in the wider local public around key development issues, eg through local media.

10. Review / revise partnership agreement and gain **formal recognition** / endorsement of the link from appropriate authorities in Wales and Africa (guidance sheet step 10)

- 1 The link should demonstrate how, on the back of developing specific project foci, they have involved the communities on both sides in refining partnership agreements that aid each others' long term development.
- 2 There should be evidence of formal recognition as a community 'twinning' link from the appropriate local authorities – eg. Documented resolutions of community council, tribal elders or similar in Wales and in Africa.
- 3 There should be evidence that this community link is recognised by appropriate local development actors.

8. Applying for Gold Star Community Status

A community partnership who feel that they have achieved the objectives 1-10 will be asked to submit evidence (of steps 4-10) to an assessment panel.

The assessment panel will look at the evidence, and there will be an opportunity for the group to make a presentation and for a Q&A session between the panel and some community representatives. The panel will also seek the views of the links' African partner community, either through the designated link contact or through the Gold Star international networks. The panel will make a judgment as to whether the criteria have been met appropriately, and the community link represents a role model for linking that others can follow.

For groups who succeed in applying for Gold Star status, they will receive a letter of endorsement from WCVA, BUILD, WAG and the UN conferring this status upon both sides of the community partnership. They will also receive feedback on areas for improvement and future development opportunities. The Wales community will be presented with an award plaque by WAG and the UN. This awarding process will be done once a year, with awards being made in the summer; in summer 2008, this will be at the National Eisteddfod in Cardiff.

Communities unsuccessful in their application will receive feedback on areas for improvement and future development opportunities, and will be encouraged to re-apply for status the following year.

It is currently anticipated that the Gold Star assessment and awarding process will take place once a year, during the Spring / Summer period, though this may become more regular once enough communities are participating.

The awards assessment panel will include:

- 2 representatives from the Wales Civil Society MDGs Task Force (Cathrin Daniel, Head of Dolen Cymru the Wales Lesotho Link, and Kevin Higgins, Head of the British Council in Wales)
- 1 representative from Welsh African civil society (Mutale Nyoni, Chair of ABESU the Wales Zambia Link)
- 1 representative from BUILD (John Whitaker, BUILD Trustee and ex-Deputy Director of Oxfam GB)
- 1 representative from the Fairtrade Foundation (Bruce Crowther, founder of the fair-trade towns movement)

The role of the Gold Star Project Manager through the assessment process, will be to support and advise applicant community groups.

9. Next Steps...

A community who have been awarded Gold Star Community status may then wish to deepen their linking work through going for a further four 'Gold Stars' (often one-by-one) focused on health, children, trade and environmental issues. Project work to 'flesh out' the criteria for these stars will be ongoing through 2008, with initial proposals put forward in August 2008.

10. Health Gold Star

This is a recently proposed 'star,' yet to have criteria developed. This will be fleshed out in May-June 2008 with recommendations proposed in August 2008.

11. Trade Gold Star

- 1 Wales community working towards 'fairtrade' status under the 'Fairtrade Towns' criteria of the Fairtrade Foundation / Wales Fairtrade Forum.
- 2 Demonstrable analysis, applied learning and action on issues of trade justice affecting livelihoods in both linked communities.
- 3 Building capacity for local livelihoods through developing job / resource opportunities, knowledge sharing, a trading relationship or through advocacy and campaigning.

12. Children's Gold Star

- 1 At least 50% of the schools within both defined communities are developing long-term, sustainable and equitable school links.
- 2 Using the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as a basis, groups develop understanding of key issues affecting children's welfare, rights and learning / development opportunities in the specific contexts of the linked communities and develops action plans / projects to tackle specific issues, involving the appropriate authorities in championing children's issues.
- 3 Communities develop mechanisms for involving children at both ends in the development, decision making and activities of the link..

13. Environment Gold Star

1. **Contraction.** Each Wales community as a whole would commit to reducing their carbon footprint. Each sector would identify their contribution, set and report on benchmarks and progress.
2. **Convergence.** Working with each African community, the link would identify specific approaches and projects by which energy and development needs can be met through renewable sources and sustainable / transferable technologies.
3. **Offsetting.** The community link would set up a resource transfer mechanism – such as a 'community offset fund' – that people / groups / in the Wales community can contribute to in order to resource development in the African partner.
4. **Education.** Communities would need to demonstrate how they are using the experience and observations gained through their linking activities with Sub-Saharan Africa, to stream awareness raising work into local schools, colleges and and in shaping local public ideas and beliefs around action on environmental issues.