

## Weaving the threads of community

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Building community is very like weaving. In every neighbourhood we can easily name the threads – such as the local authority, statutory and voluntary agencies, faith groups, civic organisations and residents' associations. They form the pattern of a neighbourhood in which every person is a valuable stitch. If we weave with care there is welfare for all, but if even one person is considered unimportant and dropped the fabric of a community begins to unravel. Government policy provides the framework for resources to be woven into a community and give it the ability to respond and support regeneration schemes that knit across its tears. When there is proper tension and cooperation among a community's diverse groups, tears become mended and the social fabric is strengthened. But if genuine participation is missing, the resulting barriers produce tangles that block regeneration from achieving desired outcomes.

Individuals, united in their beliefs across diversities, weave the pattern of faith groups. When they work as partners and collaborate with local authorities they are able to contribute a better understanding of the needs and concerns of the people living in their area. Without the warp and woof, the vertical as well as the horizontal threads, the plan will not hold together. Although similar in theory, each community has its unique pattern. The volunteers and physical resources of the faith communities add immeasurable value and richness of spirit. Often they are willing to sponsor projects that are too small or otherwise not feasible for agencies. They are able to reach a wide audience across ethnic and racial barriers. Lobbying for social justice their people power is synergetic.

## Faiths, Hope and Participation

Celebrating faith groups' role in neighbourhood renewal

Drawing on the 'Taking Part' workshops 1999-2001  
run by the New Economics Foundation, Church Urban Fund and DTLR  
and 14 local faith groups from Cornwall to Newcastle

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## Who is behind this handbook?

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### The New Economics Foundation (NEF)

The New Economics Foundation (NEF) is an independent charity founded in 1986 and now one of the UK's leading 'do-tanks'. It aims to put people and the environment back at the centre of economic thinking. NEF works throughout the UK and internationally with a wide range of partners, and at all levels from the village hall to United Nations Plaza. It has 35 full-time staff and 2,000 community activists and supporters around the country. Jubilee Plus, the successor organisation to Jubilee 2000, is based at NEF. Other areas of work include community finance, local money -flows, corporate accountability and the global economy.

The Centre for Participation at NEF develops practical participation methods that enable people to work together effectively. We are convinced that neighbourhood renewal works best when people from different backgrounds, ages and sectors can break down barriers by really listening to each other before taking joint action. NEF's values of social justice, human scale and sufficiency resonate with many people in faith groups and without. The Taking Part workshops enabled us to explore how people from different faith communities can work together to promote real participation and make neighbourhood renewal more effective for everyone in the community.

### Church Urban Fund (CUF)

The Church Urban Fund (CUF) is a charitable grant making trust established in 1986 as a response to *Faith in the City*, a Church of England report that drew attention to increasing levels of poverty in urban areas, and to the widening gap between rich and poor. The grants CUF awards are a practical demonstration that the church as a whole is concerned for, and stands with, the most disadvantaged of society. The 3,500 projects CUF has funded are not restricted on the basis of religious faith and are based in urban priority areas throughout England. CUF believes that local people know what is needed in their community, and targets its funding to initiatives which they control.

CUF also funds and initiates more strategic work through its Development Programme, using the experience of the local projects and working in partnership with faith communities, statutory and voluntary organisations. It is a varied programme that supports effective and radical thinking – both within the church and outside it – on how to tackle powerlessness, racial discrimination, physical decay, social disintegration and poverty. It also seeks out, publishes, and disseminates good practice in, project management, community development and faith based community renewal.

**For more copies of this handbook, please contact CUF.**

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And all the people who will in the future go and prove that participation works, and take part in making their communities places of identity, hope and belonging.

## Forewords

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Local faith communities often feel themselves to be fragile and weak, yet the truth is that they are often the strongest local community grouping and certainly the most comprehensive. They are well placed to be the catalyst of community development. The theme of this book is that of partnership. People are more effective when they work together, and this is true of communities of faith. The great faiths have much in common, including the belief in the transforming power of faith and love. Many now have the confidence to move from a traditional to a transforming role in the community. This book is the result of a partnership between the Church Urban Fund, the New Economics Foundation and the DTLR's Special Grants Programme. It contains a wealth of useful information but above all it encourages people of faith to enjoy the experience of working together for the good of all.

*+Tom Butler*

*The Bishop of Southwark, the Rt Rev. Dr Tom Butler*

When considering faith, it is important to understand that it is often a key factor in the construction of identity and belonging. This in turn can provide vital personal support networks, which may sometimes meet very real emotional, social or economic needs. At a broader level, faith-based organisations can provide a platform for taking part in community development as faith is increasingly being seen as a unifying factor and a dominant feature behind community and social action in many communities.

I hope that our faith will enable us to participate in creating a world of justice. At the core of most faith beliefs are values of social justice and equality. For people of faith everywhere, we need to extend our embrace to include the forsaken and forgotten section of humanity.

Finally, through active participation in various developmental and regeneration activities, we need to create communities of hope and renewal. Communities where equality, co-operation and mutuality in decision-making become the goals, and structures are evolved that foster creativity and facilitate inclusion. We will thus be re-linking back to age-old spiritual traditions that teach us that all human beings are worthy of being treated with dignity, respect and compassion. This can only truly be done from a basic foundation of social justice translated into reality through social action influenced by the ethics and values of our faith traditions.

*Rumman Ahmed*

*Community Relations Adviser*

*The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea*

Why celebrate the contribution that faith groups make to neighbourhood renewal? Despite the mutual suspicion which often springs up between faith groups and the public sector, the role of faith groups is achieving greater profile. This book examines whether they really can bring hope and genuine community participation to the renewal debate.

According to David Blunkett, "The question today is: how can we mobilise the strength and commitment of faith communities as part of the renewal of civil society?" In one of his first speeches, the new Home Secretary appealed to faith leaders to take a greater role in preventing tensions and healing the "lesions" that have hurt and divided some communities. He said that they are often best placed to energise and mobilise communities and be advocates for "decency and progress".

In fact, faith groups often play more and deeper roles than previously expected in neighbourhood renewal, encouraging genuine community participation, and ensuring that the voice of all local people is taken seriously. This is one of the findings from 14 'Taking Part' workshops held between 1999 and 2001, which brought people from different faith traditions together to explore the dilemmas of local participation, learn from each other's experience, and try out new ways of participating locally. They celebrated people from churches, mosques, gurdwaras, temples and synagogues working to create change.

This book is based on the Taking Part workshops. It explores

- How faith groups contribute to neighbourhood renewal;
- Why local authorities and renewal groups benefit from work with faith groups;
- How faith groups work together to be more effective;
- How faith groups can enable genuine, not token participation.

The workshops were run by the New Economics Foundation and Church Urban Fund and supported by the DETR's Special Grants Programme. Key findings of the workshops follow.

### Regeneration is about love not fear

**Faith groups offer a holistic view of renewal**, as much about communities and people as physical changes, and seeing through the symptoms to the root causes.

**Faith groups have a double motivation** to make a difference in their community: they live locally, and they believe in positive change. Being rooted in the community, they are personally affected by both exclusion and renewal. Unlike many charities or regeneration bodies, they both live and work in most of Britain's inner cities, outer estates and rural areas. As people of faith, they are inspired by stories of everyday people overcoming despair and injustice, and the belief that each person counts.

**Faith groups can bring a sense of hope** to neighbourhood renewal. In an era when communities often have to prove how needy and deprived they are in order to receive funding, they need to balance this negative imagery with a sense of pride

and identity. Faith groups can be prophetic not just by condemning the present situation, but also by helping people set out a clear vision of a better future, and seeing that this is achieved.

**Faith groups can push for genuine participation** by all local people, not just deliver local projects or speak for their members. There is a world of difference between a good project done to a community by outsiders, and a good project that the local community participate fully in. Faith groups can insist that local people have a genuine voice and ownership of the process, and can contribute practically to making things happen. They also need to ensure that their own projects have genuine participation built in!

### Different faith groups are most effective when they work together.

The dangers of not collaborating are real: if different faiths compete with each other for resources, the renewal bandwagon can leave a community more divided than it was to start with. Faith groups are realising that they have more uniting than dividing them. By working together, they can counter accusations that they are only trying to win converts.

**Local authorities and renewal experts also have more in common with faith groups** than they imagine, despite their suspicions. Their values are often heavily derived, sometimes unknowingly, from Buddhist ideas of right livelihood, Gandhian principles of self-determination and equality, and Judeo-Christian/Islamic teaching on social justice and peace. Most public services (education, health, social housing) were started by faith groups. However, the suspicion often remains because today's deeply held values of equality, tolerance and respect are not always seen to be practiced by fundamentalist wings of faith groups. Yet faith groups contain a wider range of people, rich and poor, male and female, young and old, than most secular community groups. The challenge for faith and secular groups is to learn from each other.

Since the workshops started, the political climate has changed so that faith groups are not just kick-starting local projects, but are instead playing more varied roles in existing renewal and participation initiatives. This book is a resource for anyone wanting to explore the role of faith groups in neighbourhood renewal. **We hope that you enjoy it and are inspired to work together to Take Part!**

*Julie Lewis (New Economics Foundation) and Doreen Finneron (Church Urban Fund)*

# 1 Context: Neighbourhood Renewal

## The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal

In recent years, innumerable regeneration initiatives such as City Challenge, Leader, SRB and other local partnerships have arrived on a wave of hope, but often left frustration and apathy in their wake. Areas selected for regeneration were sometimes so large that they often ended up excluding the experience of local people. Now we are starting to understand that if renewal is to make a lasting difference, it needs the solidarity that happens when local people claim ownership. The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (NSNR) published by the Social Exclusion Unit in January 2001 focuses attention on community empowerment and underscores that authentic ownership is the outcome of genuine participation.

The government is placing high priority on the renewal of communities and recent initiatives are focusing on local neighbourhoods, starting with the New Deal for Communities. The good news is that faith communities are in each and every neighbourhood and their influence is significant and to be valued.

### The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal

#### It provides a framework to think about renewal and regeneration:

It strongly underscores the importance of participation. In particular, NSNR recognises that if we are going to improve the prospect of deprived neighbourhoods, we have to begin, by improving the prospects of the people that live there. Local people should be in the driving seat, making the decisions about their own neighbourhoods.

#### It affirms the value of faith groups in achieving this participation:

*"Faith groups may offer a channel to some of the hardest-to-reach groups. A pragmatic approach will be taken to funding faith groups, recognising that they may be the most suitable organisations to deliver community objectives." (paragraph 5.31)*

**We are encouraged by the NSNR, as we believe that working with faith groups is not only valuable, it's pivotal! Faith groups hold the keys to open doors and enable genuine participation by reaching a diversity of people. We recommend faith communities prepare themselves to respond to the inclusive focus of renewal initiatives and partner them to empower local people to be in the driving seat in the re-building of their neighbourhood.**

## Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs)

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) are 'the key vehicle for leading and implementing neighbourhood renewal'. LSPs bring the **public, private, voluntary and community sectors together** in a 'single, overarching, local co-ordination framework'.

LSPs' key roles are:

- setting priorities;
- bringing together service providers with those who use the services;
- assisting other local partnerships to see how they fit into the wider picture.

Government guidelines recommend that they are set up in keeping with local authority boundaries, but the areas they actually cover vary from one district to a whole county. However, each regional Government Office will evaluate all LSPs using resident involvement as one of the criteria. Community participation defines the major requirements:

LSPs' four key requirements, as set out in the DTLR guidance, are:

- effective community participation using a variety of means to consult and work with local people;
- accessing the wealth of resources and activity within communities which are not available to the statutory sector;
- use of capacity-building and training to enhance the involvement of hard to reach communities;
- developing mechanisms that secure genuine involvement from all sectors and the local community as quickly as possible.

In Chapter 5 ('Joining it up locally') of the NSNR, LSPs in deprived areas are encouraged to use neighbourhood renewal as their focus with five floor targets: education, jobs, crime, health and the physical environment. Specific policies and projects are suggested in the rest of the document.

The NSNR provides a framework for all local communities to think about renewal and regeneration and insists they have real influence at every level over all partnership bodies, especially the overarching LSPs. They can also prepare *Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies* for a number of local communities.

The 88 most deprived local authorities can nominate a neighbourhood to receive special funding from a **Neighbourhood Renewal Fund**, which will be channelled through the LSP. These 88 neighbourhoods will also receive funding for **Community Empowerment**. This is different from the New Deal for Communities initiative where monies went directly to an area for regeneration. The primary task of LSPs in the 88 Neighbourhood Renewal areas is to prepare a *Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy* for their chosen neighbourhood by April 2002, working closely with local renewal partnerships.

In addition, 83 local authorities can nominate an area to be a pilot for **Neighbourhood Management**.

### Community Empowerment

According to *Local Government Partnerships: Government Guidance*, in order for LSPs to tackle their tasks effectively, they need to secure genuine involvement from all sectors and the local community as quickly as possible. This means an effort is made to use multiple and varied ways of involving people who are traditionally under-represented, such as faith groups, black and minority ethnic communities.

'Failure to involve communities' is listed as one of the reasons why so many previous initiatives have failed. There are a number of new funds now available to assist with community empowerment.

- **The Community Empowerment Fund** provides £400,000 over three years to each of the 88 areas eligible for the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. This money is to support community and voluntary-sector involvement in the local partnership. It can be used to set up a **Community Empowerment Network** and to pay for training and support for key individuals representing the community in LSP work.
- **Community Chests** will be set up in each of the 88 areas to provide resources for community groups.
- Social entrepreneurs can apply to a **Community Development Venture Fund**.

### Neighbourhood Management

A related initiative, Neighbourhood Management, works 'by placing a single person, team or organisation in charge'. Neighbourhood managers might run services themselves, make service-level agreements with other providers, and advocate or put pressure on the higher tiers of government. The Strategy admits that this idea has never been fully tried. But £45 million is available for three years. One area from each local authority may apply for it initially if they have one or more wards in the category of the 10% most deprived wards in England.

Confused? Details of the key documents are in the resources section at the back of this book. Also read the *Bluffers Guide to 'Local Strategic Partnerships'* and other resources on the Government Office for the South West's website –

<http://www.neighbourhood-renewal.gosw.gov.uk/lsp/bluffer.shtml>

**We will see in later chapters how faith groups can contribute to the neighbourhood renewal agenda.**

### Faith Group, Religious Tradition and Faith Community

Faith group, as used in this booklet, refers to a specific group of people who live in a particular neighbourhood and belong to a certain religious tradition. Practices vary between traditions and even within a local group. But people who see themselves as belonging to the same faith community often overlook their individual differences and work well together for their shared values. Below are some of the insights they bring.

#### Faith groups provide a unique perspective on neighbourhood renewal.

The 'Taking Part' workshops uncovered a variety of roles that faith groups play, both in carrying out their faith activities and in reaching out to their local communities. At best, they have had a transforming effect. They can empower others in their community to participate as they help develop a sense of local identity and pride, provide a local infrastructure, promote self-sufficiency, and begin to speak with a common voice and vision. These extend far beyond their traditionally recognised roles of providing services, giving support to their members and being a voice for their own tradition. When faith communities play these roles well, neighbourhood renewal becomes far more effective and local authorities can respond with confidence.

#### Renewal works when it's based in love and isn't the result of fear.

Re-generating; renewing; breathing life into the dead bones of housing estates; continuing to hope in the unlikeliest of circumstances; not giving up on people; believing people can re-create – these are the beliefs of faith groups that transform communities. Renewal works best when it builds up a feeling of being proud to live in a community where people care.

*Renewal undoubtedly works best when it's envisioned* within a community rather than when it's been implemented based on ideas imposed from without.

*Renewal within faith groups means:* seeking peace, re-telling their stories, celebrating their history and affirming their identity. Often they go on retreat away from their neighbourhood to become refreshed and to reform.

*Renewal for individuals happens* when they realise they are loved, know they are worthwhile, remember they are named as precious in God's eyes, and are valued for who they really are, rather than the work they do or the roles they play.

*Renewal for local communities, when we translate faith groups' language into action,* means taking time to meet each other in a relaxed setting and affirm their sense of mutual identity and value. It means creating places of peace where they are able to celebrate and work; places of strength for individuals and communities to unleash their creativity; renewal based on local people not mere gentrification!

**These are some of the ideals that faith groups bring to the neighbourhood renewal table. But what is the role they actually play?**

## Key roles of faith groups

To become effective partners in neighbourhood renewal, local people need:

- **A sense of local identity, pride and confidence in their ability to influence and change things;**
- **The desire to co-create and care for each other;**
- **A strong vision for their common future that is based on justice and inclusiveness;**
- **Local infrastructure able to organise, finance and resource their vision.**

The record of faith groups is good at achieving these within their own group. Each faith group is unique and chooses to play different roles. Often they form an alternative community, providing a breath of hope for their members in difficult areas. The more embattled a faith group feels, the more likely they are to close their door. On the other hand, they may develop a sense of social mission and choose to provide services to people outside of their membership becoming an avenue of new life for persons living in the wider community.

Providing services alone is not enough to empower others in the neighbourhood to genuinely take part. To include those outside the faith group as partners or foster a stronger sense of a neighbourhood's cohesiveness. However, we found that faith communities increasingly are moving beyond being a provider of services to becoming enablers of their local community; helping them to develop a shared vision and secure needed resources. A healthy faith group, bonded through shared beliefs, that operates in a participative manner, knows how to work effectively with each other. Will what they have learned internally assist them to form and work creatively in partnerships where beliefs differ but there are shared values? Many see this building up of community as integral to their core beliefs. They are moving beyond their traditional roles towards transformative ones; looking for ways they can contribute further to the well-being of their area.

### Transformation means:

Faith groups move to a radical, practical theology. It means they look for the root causes of local problems and search out ways to successfully address deeper issues. It means faith and volunteer groups focus beyond their individual programmes and aim towards developing a cohesive vision. A vision that encompasses what is presently happening in their community and enables them to contribute where there is a need and avoid duplication. It means genuine joining up and asking how they can work together and find creative solutions that make a real difference.

For neighbourhood renewal to be successful, it needs people from different backgrounds to discover a real passion for their neighbourhood. It needs them to become agents of transformation, unblocking barriers and helping people to realise their potential. This will kick-start a sense of community building. Neighbourhood renewal can itself be the factor that draws people together. But it is much easier if some of the barriers have already been overcome and a sense of common belonging is already established.

The following table identifies four key roles faith groups play and outlines how they are moving beyond traditional practices towards a more transformative process that empowers local people to participate.

### Faith groups as transformers

	Traditional roles	Transformative roles
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared culture with other people of faith</li> <li>• Worship</li> <li>• Religious beliefs</li> <li>• Pilgrimage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop community pride</li> <li>• Neighbourhood celebrations</li> <li>• Share values that reflect the common good</li> <li>• Implement change</li> <li>• Place for people to experience spirituality</li> </ul>
Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Care for their members</li> <li>• Serve others</li> <li>• Sanctuary &amp; place of refuge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reach out to others and enable others to care</li> <li>• Nurture others' talents</li> <li>• Place of peace &amp; renewal for all</li> </ul>
Prophetic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See needs and respond</li> <li>• Denounce injustice</li> <li>• Offer alternatives for Members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all local voices are heard</li> <li>• Give the poor a voice</li> <li>• Co-create a common vision of how things could be</li> <li>• Strive for peace, here &amp; abroad</li> </ul>
Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal charitable structure</li> <li>• National organisation</li> <li>• Sole use of buildings &amp; skills</li> <li>• Set moral standard for secular life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentors and nurturers of smaller organisations</li> <li>• Support local economy</li> <li>• Share use of space; incubate social enterprises &amp; community finance organisations; support social entrepreneurs</li> <li>• Practice local and fair trade</li> </ul>

Broadly, the traditional roles bring benefit mainly to people within the faith group. They also describe the ways that people within a faith group bring about change. The transformational roles aim to bring these benefits to everyone in the community, regardless of their faith, and to enable everyone in the community to bring about change.

The faith groups that are moving to embrace these transformative roles are finding that they can maintain their integrity and hold to their beliefs while respecting the beliefs of others, as they partner to build up the wider community and identify common values.

The following sections explore these four transformative roles in more detail.

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## Community of identity and belonging

Mrs. Thatcher's famous statement: 'There's no such thing as society' – appears to be outrageous when we see people struggling to build a sustainable community in localities throughout the country. Yet, if a neighbourhood is more like a kaleidoscope of groups whose members do not often meet, it becomes fractured. People with jobs, young mothers and the elderly live in fear of the local teenagers and other cultures, who feel alienated by the very people who are afraid of them. They all draw their boundaries even tighter and become increasingly isolated. Real communities are not defined from outside, by governing bodies drawing geographical boundaries, funding bodies red-lining whole areas or mapping surveys providing data. They are built from within, with the real participation of people whose respect for shared beliefs and values provides them a sense of identity.

Faith groups are in fact one of the few places where people cross boundaries and meet regardless of age, gender and income level. Some are also multi-ethnic. Many South London congregations tend to be equally Afro-Caribbean and white, and some mosques serve Muslims originating from many different countries and traditions. Others draw their members from a particular ethnic group.

Faith groups help overcome the barriers of social exclusion through getting sub-groups of people together, such as mothers and toddlers, the elderly and teenagers. When people belonging to the sub-group connect across their natural boundaries with the overarching faith group they then share an identity. In turn, when faith groups connect with like groups nationally and even internationally, their shared identity extends beyond that of the local area and affords them a sense of solidarity. They broaden their understanding of other countries and cultures. Wider spectrums of mini-communities are often more connected in the diversity of faith groups than generally happens in secular groups. Despite their reputation for being insular, faith groups do have practical experience of integrating communities. **The key challenge is for faith groups to extend this broadening of boundaries to local people of other faiths and none.**

A sense of identity and belonging is often essential for persons to develop the confidence needed for them to risk taking part in their local community. Many of the most isolated people are members of minority faiths. Helping them find a place they can meet together often contributes to their taking the first step out of social exclusion. The next is to open the way for them to participate in new initiatives that bring people together across age, race, cultural and social boundaries.

Faith groups are rooted in their communities. They play a significant role in promoting social inclusion by providing a sense of identity as communities who celebrate renewal. The leaders are often professionals who have chosen to live and work in deprived neighbourhoods. They care passionately about social justice and the well-being of people living in challenging circumstances. These leaders are keen to promote regeneration and unequivocally supportive of people-centred renewal schemes.

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## Examples of identity

Faith groups can open out religious celebrations to include others. Members of the new **Balaji Temple** in a multiracial area of Smethwick, West Midlands invited the local community to a joint bonfire night / Diwali celebration. They hope that the temple will be used as a community facility.

Football, arguably another national religion, is connecting cultures. Jewish and Muslim youngsters are playing together at Arsenal football club. The **Mimonodez Foundation** is supporting the project as one of many that get young people from different faiths to explore their shared experience and local identity.

The **Larch** project in Leeds and Bradford is bringing young people from different faiths to work together on neighbourhood renewal. It builds upon earlier work, called 'Belief in their neighbourhood', in which young people contributed their views on how faith impacted on their relationship to personal identity and place in the neighbourhood. The project also hopes that childrens' perceptions of the place where they are growing up and their perspectives on what may need to change will be reflected in neighbourhood action plans.

The **young mothers' group** at a church on a Coventry estate initiated a project with Groundwork to transform the derelict area outside the church into a play area for children. Clowning days brought local people together and set the theme for getting people to discuss local plans with fun wall displays. The key outcome was that young mums were breaking down barriers of fear between themselves and the local youths, who had asked what was going on and stayed to help with building the play area and garden. By transforming one thing themselves, local people see that they can in fact change their own neighbourhood and are starting more local projects.

The **North West London Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre** enables Muslims from different countries of origin (at least 16) in and around North Kensington to contribute fully to the social and economic development of the area, to improve their integration with other sectors of the community and to assist in preserving the richness of their cultural heritage as a resource for the whole community. The Centre provides social and welfare services, education and training, cultural, heritage and spiritual activities. The Board comprises a majority of representatives of the local Muslim community, but also two nominees of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. The Centre was opened by HRH Prince Charles and has already hosted the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The vicar of **St Mary's Balham**, south London was the driving force behind the Balham festival, which has become a focus for celebrating local identity and the variety of local cultures. She also chairs the Town Centre Partnership.

The **Sacred Lands Trust** supports several projects creating environmental oases at religious sites. These often create peaceful spaces for local people with no religious conviction to find refreshment and well-being. Examples include the **Tibetan Peace Garden** symbolically located outside the Imperial War Museum in London.

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## Prophetic Community

Today we are encouraged to be prophets of our own local destiny, to listen to each others' need and build a collective vision. Faith groups become powerful prophets in their communities when they apply the principles of participation and enable people to explore their differences, then create a joint vision for their future.

They build on a powerful tradition of faith-inspired prophetic action. From Moses to Martin Luther King and Malcolm X and the Dalai Lama, prophets and seers have called people of faith to put aside the tyrannical structures that under-gird injustice and live in a more participative way. Gandhi's insistence on faiths working together for a vision of local self-determination changed the face of collective action.

Many participation methods focus on creating a joint vision. In one method, 'Enspirited Envisioning', the emphasis on deep listening, deep questioning and deep visioning resonates with faith traditions of listening for the still small voice in silence before prophetic action. People share their vision with others to discover which parts fit together and support each other. A powerful joint vision can be a real incentive to change. One participant shared her experience: "What a difference this is...to create an imagined future of such detail and concreteness that one can go in and walk around; treat it as a reality, write its history'. See Participation Works (NEF) for details.

Faith groups have a long-term perspective. Local people offer continuity, roundedness and a real vision of urban regeneration. In some of the most deprived areas, they see themselves as a 'remnant'. Their stories, often spanning generations, are the roots that foster solidarity and provide stability. Their deep commitment complements local government which often has to work to shorter political timetables.

By becoming the champion of the local people in powerful local circles, they can press for their views to be heard and become central to the decision-making of local bodies. One community worker said that if he wanted any change, he would put it through the vicar, whose voice wouldn't be ignored. Often professionals are able to act as advocates and pave the way to participation, as they are accepted by both people in the local government and the local community. They can go beyond this to create a culture where everyone's voice is respected and valued.

Faith groups help residents seek positive change and avoid becoming resigned to those imposed on them. They are there to nurture pride in their neighbourhood through celebration and strengthen the bonds that bind a community together. In many cases it has been the faith groups that have been the first to respond to newcomers, particularly refugees. Yet most faith groups need to also engage with the root causes of local problems, fulfilling their vocation by offering a source of hope. Hopelessness is a major stumbling block. With encouragement and support, those who felt excluded can discover their collective creativity and are empowered to make things happen.

New courses in regeneration, like at St John's in Nottingham, ground theology in a new, radical economy of love and inclusion. Overturning the perception of scarcity, it emphasises abundance and encourages caring for and sharing resources.

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**Faith groups in Newcastle and North Tyneside** are arguing for far more genuine participation for local people in regeneration and council initiatives. They join up with wider groups in organised action to campaign for and encourage social justice based on the experience of people on the ground. Local people are not buying into flagship regeneration projects' false promises but are challenging planners to be honest about their intentions and engage in participative renewal.

**The Project in Urban Ministry and Theology** is helping to revitalise the community sector in the East End of Newcastle, trying to model participative behaviour both in the church and local community, and supporting the development of the local voluntary sector. They have worked with the local council to produce a guide to participation, as have Leeds Church Institute (see Active Partners in the resources section).

**Churches Acting Together in North Tyneside** have helped the North Tyneside Partnership to frame its values, the test by which future plans will be judged. They are based on Isaiah's vision of the new Jerusalem, from the Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions. The Isaiah Agenda asks 'What makes a good society?' and answers that children should enjoy their childhood; men and women should have good homes to live in, should have useful employment and enjoy the fruits of their labour; and old people should live in dignity and be treated with respect.

**Church Action on Poverty** hold Poverty Hearings to enable people with direct experience of poverty to share their experiences with and influence policy-makers.

The **Glory House Pentecostal Church** in the Newham Borough, London conducted a community audit in conjunction with local churches, paving the way to participation in regeneration initiatives that would fulfill the real rather than imagined local needs.

The **Anglican vicar in Wednesbury** initiated a future search process for the whole community, getting local people who wouldn't normally meet together to create a joint vision and action plan for the town.

The **East London Communities Organisation** comprises religious groups, along with schools and trade unions. It brings its members together to impact on issues affecting their communities. They are promoting the Living Wage, seen as more realistic than the minimum wage. The **East London Mosque** has promised to pay the living wage to all workers on their major construction project. Practicing what they preach has set an example for the rest of the private and public sectors to follow.

The **Urban Theology Unit in Sheffield** is exploring alternative ways of living and political implications of the theology of regeneration. Most faiths view regeneration as a turning upside down of the narrow economic perspective that is based on greed, selfish competition and consumption of natural resources.

The **Episcopal Diocese of Newark** in the US took prophetic vision to the whole diocese, transforming it into 'our diocese' instead of relying on the bishop for direction.

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## Caring Community

Separating faith groups from social mission is an impossible task. Beginning with the monasteries, that were not only transporters of faith but also keepers of the written word and the first community builders, faith groups are woven deeply into the very fabric of Britain. Dominated by the Christian faith, they have been at the very heart of social reform and service. Patterns have changed through the years to fit the needs. Some concerns stayed constant, like education; others, such as caring for the poor, have been tackled by providing direct services and through policies that reformed unbearable conditions, such as child-labour practices in the mills during the 1800's.

Today there is a widening plurality of faith groups. Many of the urban areas are multi-cultural where ethnic minority communities actively participate in religious organisations. It is no longer the monopoly or responsibility of the Anglican tradition but shared values that provide the framework that continues to bind this nation together. The Prime Minister, Tony Blair, in a speech to the Christian Socialist Movement in London in March 2001, was very clear that values were wedded to politics and politics without values is sheer pragmatism. He further emphasised the fundamental worth of all citizens, and their right to be treated with equal respect and consideration, despite their differences.

Altruistic values such as 'I am my brother's keeper' and a theology based on 'self-emptying service to all' have often resulted in the gaining of power, resources and services on behalf of others who have less. This paradigm of caring is shifting towards one of mutual obligations. Theoretically it is individualistic, but paradoxically obligations can only be fulfilled in communities where no one is left out and all belong. Caring today is framed in participation, partnering and power sharing: reaching out to others, enabling them to care, nurturing talents and places of peace/renewal for all.

People living in an area have credibility. Because of daily contact, they are in the best position to identify needs, know what services and methods of delivery will work and how to contact those who need to receive them. In the past, excellent plans on paper and outstanding projects failed to reach out to the participants. Shared resources, rather than just providing services, empower people who are there and know how best to care and develop projects that work.

Faith groups have traditionally provided a safe and welcoming space in the 'urban jungle of modern life'. A place where people get to know their neighbours and build trusting relationships. Friends they can turn to at crisis points in their life. However, communities increasingly need places where people can build similar trusting relationships with others regardless of their faith or lack of it. An oasis, such as the Tibetan Peace Garden at London's Imperial War Museum, is a site where people, damaged by the daily pressure of urban living, can sit in stillness and feel renewed. Time banks (see opposite page) are a great way to bring people together, nurturing their talents by providing a way for them to contribute their expertise, to deposit and withdraw needed skills rather than feel useless, or do without or feel pushed into asking for hand-outs. The life experience of members in a faith group is often what is needed to incubate new social enterprises.

The Social Action Journey is a programme of the Shaftesbury Society to help faith groups implement their vision in their area, by engaging with people in their communities. Chris Erskine is on 01733 344346, cerskine@shaftesburysoc.org.uk

An Islamic Social Action Seminar was held by the Leeds Faith Community Liason Forum and profiled innovative projects from around the country. Leeds 11, a Muslim-Christian SRB and health project, features a church and mosque being built alongside each other with shared facilities such as community rooms. Details from Leeds Church Institute on 0113 245 4700 or davidhorn@leedschurchinstitute.org

## Time banking

The beauty of time banking is its reciprocity. Unlike 'old style' one way volunteering in which people give, a time bank facilitates two way exchange so that participants are both givers and receivers. It is a measure of trust and self-confidence to be able to receive as well as give. For many people, this is a vital life-line of support and self-development. So often people are passive recipients of services. The time bank makes them active members of their communities with a self-determining role.

Time banks are good at bridging boundaries in the community. Many faith groups are using them to reach out into the communities they serve to bring people together:

- Time bank members in the Gorbals, Glasgow, have been helping the local ecumenical project set up a drop-in facility for asylum seekers housed in the area.
- In Benwell, Newcastle, time bank members from a local church help school children with reading, and the kids help older members with computer skills.
- Time-bankers in south London want to include people with mental health needs from ethnic minority groups, and are making initial contact through faith groups.

An innovative scheme in the West Midlands is a great asset to West Bromwich Baptist Church and the community it serves. The church takes a radically different approach to community volunteering. Called Time Exchange, the scheme acts as a broker between people who have needs, and those who have the skills to meet those needs.

Reverend Andrew Gale explains: "Faith communities are often involved in informal support networks for their members and the wider community. Time Exchange simply increases the capacity of current networks by promoting community self-help, nurturing trust and promoting volunteering." He believes that other faith communities are ideally placed to benefit from this initiative.

As well as providing a range of community-based services, Time Exchange also supports spiritual, personal and community regeneration. For example, Simon is long-term unemployed. He has earned time credits by doing light care-taking duties for the church. This experience has given him the confidence to actively seek employment; he recently spent some of his time credits getting help to produce a professional CV.

Andrew Gale comments: "Time Exchange has lowered a drawbridge to the community, and created a real sense of working together for the benefit of all."

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## Organising Community

The physical and organisational structures of faith groups differ widely but without doubt all are recognised as critical cornerstones of a community. They not only provide a foundation of beliefs on which their members build their lives, they are more and more becoming viable structures to support social enterprises. Their historical role is expanding to include nurturing smaller organisations, developing alternative financial organisations such as credit unions, advocating and practicing fair trade, and fostering micro-social enterprises.

Faith groups are often strong stakeholders in their community with staying power! They can act on behalf of their community when others like the business community are shutting their doors. They open their doors to feed those in need as well as support small businesses like a Caribbean catering business located in a church in Nottingham.

A key role is to act as incubators of the local economy. They can support innovators and initiators of social projects or local people's business ideas. They can support fledgling enterprises with knowledge and experience of their members, as well as their buying power! New organisations can be fostered under the constitution of existing charities until they are solvent enough to go it alone.

Manchester diocese has its own development team able to support social enterprises, and they focused on local economy organisations in their 'Taking Part' day. Other projects supporting local enterprise include projects to create employment in Derby and Newham and credit unions in Nottingham and in Bolton. Faith groups are being encouraged to reclaim their role in the local economy.

Many faith groups are social enterprises in their own right. A number of black led churches support community projects. Meals prepared by community members are frequently available for the elderly, lonely and disadvantaged at the Sikh gurdwaras.

At the level of national or international organisations, faith groups influence political decisions with a theology of regeneration, such as through Jubilee 2000. Gordon Brown has acknowledged that the backing of faith groups enabled the British government to take a leading role in canceling international debt. Faith groups acting in concert have repeatedly demonstrated they have the power to confront entrenched systems and bring about positive changes. Scottish churches advocated for better conditions for refugees in Scotland, and faith groups in America campaigned for legislation allowing money invested in local credit unions to be secure, and required banks to disclose information about their lending in poorer areas.

Sometimes faith groups have been quicker to respond to issues of global justice than to similar issues at home. Many faith groups practice and encourage fair trade, and many other groups have links with communities overseas. Through these successful experiences, faith groups have learned new ways to keep the radical edge and address the issues of fair trade in their own localities, to campaign for regeneration policies and advocate projects that reduce the blight of poverty on the people they love, and to renew the places where they live.

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**Kings Hall New Testament Assembly, St.Anns in Nottingham** shares its kitchens with a new Caribbean food enterprise. It has its own shop-front bordering the church, but shares the running expenses of the kitchens and buildings with the church. Lambeth and Southwark boast many community cafés hosted by faith groups, at the Jamyang Buddhist Centre Buddhist in Kennington, the Hourbank in Peckham Settlement and the BrickLETS (Local Exchange Trading Scheme) café in Brixton.

Many faith groups are involved in finance schemes for local people, such as credit unions, and in Nottingham a group supports faith groups to develop them. The **Clann Credo fund in Dublin** was set up in 1996 to enable religious orders to invest in a socially responsible way. It invests in community development projects such as cultural, enterprise and heritage centres, and community businesses. It has also provided micro-finance to individual enterprises in the private sector and social economy. Clann Credo Ltd hopes to be 'a beacon signalling positive change, a model of whole-life economics'. Tel: (353-1) 453 18 61, e-mail: sdf@eircom.net

**Street Cred, set up by Quaker Social Action**, is a women's micro-credit scheme in East London. Micro-credit was pioneered in Bangladesh by the Grameen Bank, and women in East London are now using loans to set up their own businesses such as 'made-to-order' garments for the Bangladeshi community and cooking Malaysian banquets for dinner parties. Women form small lending groups to mutually guarantee each other's loans – and current repayment rates are 100%! They also give each other moral support and ideas. The facilitator provides business advice and links. Street Cred tel: 020 7729 9267, e-mail: Streetcred.qsa@dial.pipex.com

**First Fruits was set up by people from a church in Newham**, not just to help people into employment, but create the employment from scratch. They try everything from buying houses that trainees can renovate and sell on, to a sewing company which has graduated from a machine in a shed at the bottom of the garden to making outfits for cheer-leader groups across the UK.

**The Third Wave group of companies in Derby** is a "Community Enterprise Organisation founded on a community of Christians who live, work and worship in Derby's inner city". They enable local communities to "develop and initiate social and economic activity, and help them access expertise and resources to the benefit of their community". Before starting, they spent a year talking to over a thousand people, especially those who were unemployed and single parents, about what they needed.

'This is the village shop, inner-city style'. **E5 Enterprise Ltd was established** as an income-generating vehicle for community projects **at the Round Chapel in Hackney, East London**. It started as a food co-op, and now has its own shop. Bula Anderson, manager of 'e.five' says, "All the features of the local village shop are here: noticeboard, basic staples, friendly networking opportunities." Having been a base for a credit union, LETS, and an outlet for locally-made arts and crafts as well as fair-trade goods, it now has computer/internet access at affordable rates and hopes to establish a sandwich bar. "The shop's a tardis!", says Bula. "We are possibly in danger of squeezing too much out of one small space, but it certainly makes for a very buzzy community initiative!" (e.five@cpurc.surfaid.org / www.theroundchapel.org.uk)

## 3 Lambs and Lions: Faith Groups in Partnership

*"The real challenge for each faith group is not other faith groups, but the materialism, greed and rampant consumerism that grip modern society."*

This statement is from Rumman Ahmed, Coordinator of the West London Cultural Heritage Centre, and Chris Erskine speaking from the evangelical background of the Shaftesbury Society at a workshop at the 'Faith makes communities work' conference. It shows that a shared belief in justice can over-ride all that separates people.

But when faith groups attempt to put into practice this belief, hidden difficulties emerge. How can we meet the needs of others outside our group when there is so little time? Will our small resources stretch? The smaller the group, the less time there is to liaise. Then one group, probably Christian and traditionally the Anglican priest, is selected by the local authority to speak for the faith community when an area is short-listed and the pressure is on to meet deadlines. The assumption, which is sometimes sadly not valid, is that faith groups in the area are networked and one voice speaks for all. If this is the case, then plans go reasonably well. However, if they are not together, then some faith groups may feel excluded and all may then begin to react competitively rather than work collaboratively; acting in opposition to their shared belief in justice in their scramble for funds.

For faith groups not to work side by side in regeneration initiatives proves to be highly divisive for the wider community. Any assumptions brought to the table about a different faith group are also divisive. Being associated by name and with actions or activities beyond their control, often occurring beyond the boundaries of the UK is unhelpful! Faith groups need to develop a better understanding of culturally diverse practices and beliefs, and working together on a common project is the ideal way to do this. If left uninformed and misunderstood, suspicions fester and become a hidden agenda fostering distrust among members of a partnership.

### Faith groups come together:

**To heal the wounds during a community crisis:** Very divergent groups, such as the gay and Muslim communities and black churches, joined together for a memorial service and solidarity following the nail-bombings in Brixton, Soho and Brick Lane.

**With mentors to pave the way:** Many groups have norms that are not understood by those outside their faith. When working across faith groups, a mentor to coach and guide outsiders facilitates understanding and paves the way to good communication.

**To give voice to shared issues:** Thames Gateway Multi-Faith Forum in Rochester, initiated by the Mothers' Union, focuses on family and health needs in light of the Thames Gateway development. They work closely with North West Kent Council for Interfaith Relations, and attend local authority and development meetings, exercising an advocacy role. Practically, they are seeking a multi-faith community hall. Their meetings include speakers providing an informed understanding of their area.

**To acknowledge the strengths each group brings to renewal:** Lynton Marketing Ltd is a faith sponsored regeneration company. They are working in Sparkhill, Birmingham to set up a community economic regeneration programme managed and run by a multi-faith team. Diversity of experience builds a strong network that enriches community living and supports local needs which concern those of all or no faith.

**To work with people of different cultures:** The International Youth House coordinated a successful Interfaith Gardening Work Camp in Leicester for volunteers from nine countries. Leicester Council of Faiths and Elchanan Elkes Association for Community Understanding sponsored the camp. Leicester was chosen as an ideal example of inter-confessional cooperation – as one participant said, within a single city Indians and Pakistanis, Serbians and Afro-Caribbeans, Jews and Muslims all co-exist in something very like harmony, building peace between the faith groups through dialogue. People from different cultures and of diverse faith traditions can work together and participate in successful activities on a local level that lead to positive changes in individuals, communities and may even spill over globally.

**To overcome resource barriers:** Leeds Church Institute is spearheading a bid for the Faith Communities Liaison Forum that will get computers for each faith group, train volunteers and develop participation. Often the faith groups with more resources can help others with bids and communications. Many groups find participation more difficult as they may not have paid leaders, and if they do, their religious leaders may not speak English. There are often divides between men's and women's cultures. Projects like this must address people from all parts of the faith group and give as much support to volunteers as possible rather than relying on paid leaders.

The NSNR's Minority Ethnic Issues in Social Exclusion and Neighbourhood Renewal highlights their importance, recommending that central, local government and other funders recognise the vital role of faith groups in regeneration. Workshop participants felt that faith groups also need to prepare themselves to participate in regeneration by:

- Increasing and improving coordination between faith groups;
- Established groups supporting smaller ones;
- Becoming more pro-active in dealing with local authorities.

The DETR's Guidance 1997 (on the ICRC website) notes that faith communities may be the only community organisations with substantial resources in some neighbourhoods where the social infrastructure has been eroded.

In terms of active membership, churches, mosques, temples, synagogues and gurdwaras are often among the most substantial local community-based organisations, with as much right to be involved in discussion on neighbourhood renewal as, for example, residents' or tenants' organisations.

## 4 The Taking Part Workshops

The New Economics Foundation (NEF) held 14 'Taking Part' workshops between November 1999 and July 2001 throughout England, are focusing on areas that score highly on the Urban Deprivation indices. They were the result of a collaboration between NEF, who wanted to get good participation more widely practiced by people who might have the energy and commitment to take it forward; the Church Urban Fund (CUF), that wanted to equip faith communities with good participation tools; and the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR), who were keen to find ways of including more people in the regeneration process.

The workshops aimed to help local people to participate more effectively in regeneration by building skills and confidence and providing information about the processes and how to get resources. When we first planned the workshops, few areas had local regeneration schemes for communities to participate in, so the emphasis was on encouraging faith communities to start a local participation process from scratch. Within the two years of the project, the situation changed dramatically. Now many communities have one or more renewal or regeneration initiatives. The emphasis again shifted to: how faith communities could engage in existing or planned processes, and how they could ensure that there would be genuine, not token participation; of local people.

The locations were chosen mainly by the enthusiasm of local people to explore participation in an ecumenical or multi-faith context. Other criteria included avoiding duplication in, ex-Coalfield areas as CUF had a separate project for these areas, and in communities in recent SRB (Single Regeneration Budget) or New Deal for Communities areas, since these programmes were meant to include capacity building anyway. In fact, our experience shows that there was little need to worry about building the same people's capacity twice: many groups who applied thought that there had not been enough involvement or confidence-building among faith groups particularly in regeneration areas. However, since we avoided some of the highest profile areas in terms of faith groups and regeneration, we have uncovered many interesting projects and dilemmas that many other faith groups recognise.

For each location we had a local partner, who organised the venue, invited local participants and provided local information. The brochure stated that workshops are open to people of any faith and people who have no faith connection.

The 14 workshops were as follows:

**Merseyside**, 30th November 1999, with Landlife, National Wildflower Centre

**Preston**, 2nd February 2000, with the Lancashire Development Education Centre and Local Action Global Agenda community activists' network, at Bolton Town Hall

**Newham**, 18th May, with the Aston Charities Community Involvement Unit.

**Nottingham**, 15th June, with local Baptist and Pentecostal churches at King's Hall New Testament Assembly, in St. Ann's

**Ashford, Kent**, 21st June, with Board for Church In Society, in Ashford

**Derby**, 3rd October, with Community Enterprise Training and Advice based at the St. James' Centre. Local heroes who presented their work were Betsy's Green Hat Poetry Café (an Afro-Caribbean training centre led by an ex-Pentecostal pastor), the Third Wave group of companies, and the Islamic Cultural Heritage Centre.

**Leeds**, 21st November, at Leeds Church Institute with Leeds Faith Community Liaison Forum.

**Bolton**, 22nd November with the Manchester Diocesan Office for Social Responsibility and local working party.

**Hale, Cornwall**, 20th January 2001, with the Board for Social Responsibility of the Diocese of Truro and St Elwyn's parish community centre.

**North Kensington, London**, 30th January, with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's Community Relations Unit, at North West Kensington Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre

**Newcastle**, 26th or 27th April, with the Project in Urban Ministry and Theology

**Bradford**, 31st May, with the Shaftesbury Society at the Thornbury Centre

**North Southwark/Lambeth**, 5th July, with the parish of St. Matthew-at-the-Elephant

**Middlesborough**, 18th July, with St. Mary's Centre, North Ormesbury Parish, of the South Trees Faith in the City group

Over 250 people took part in 14 workshops. Each participant received a copy of a NEF publication, *Participation Works! 21 techniques of participation for the 21st Century, or Participation Toolkit*. The recently published *Toolkit* is NEF's successor to *Participation Works*, and looks in more detail at four of the participation tools communities are more likely to use: *Imagine*, *Time Banks*, *Prove It* and *Plugging the Leaks* (for more information on each of these, see further below). Many more books and toolkits were distributed either to contacts of participants, or to groups who wanted to run a workshop but didn't for some reason.

The first evaluations were held three to six months after the workshops, and they show that, the most valuable thing was meeting people from different faith backgrounds, and that people did follow up contacts made on the day. For example, a group of women from minority groups in Newham made contact with Quaker-run Street Cred and 18 women are now involved in the micro-credit programme.

Participants said that they are now more confident in making things happen locally, and almost half are planning on doing further training. They found the participation methods useful, especially visual ones like Plugging the Leaks, and learning about how other projects have worked. Over a third of respondents have either started a new project or are planning to start one in their area, with a similar number having developed ideas for their project.

### Workshop designs

Each workshop was planned with the local partner, and unique in many ways. Some of the workshops followed a pattern of using Imagine to explore participation in the morning, and then exploring techniques like Plugging the Leaks and Time Banks, or other visioning methods from *Participation Works*, in the afternoon. In Liverpool, a facilitator from the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation brought along a giant

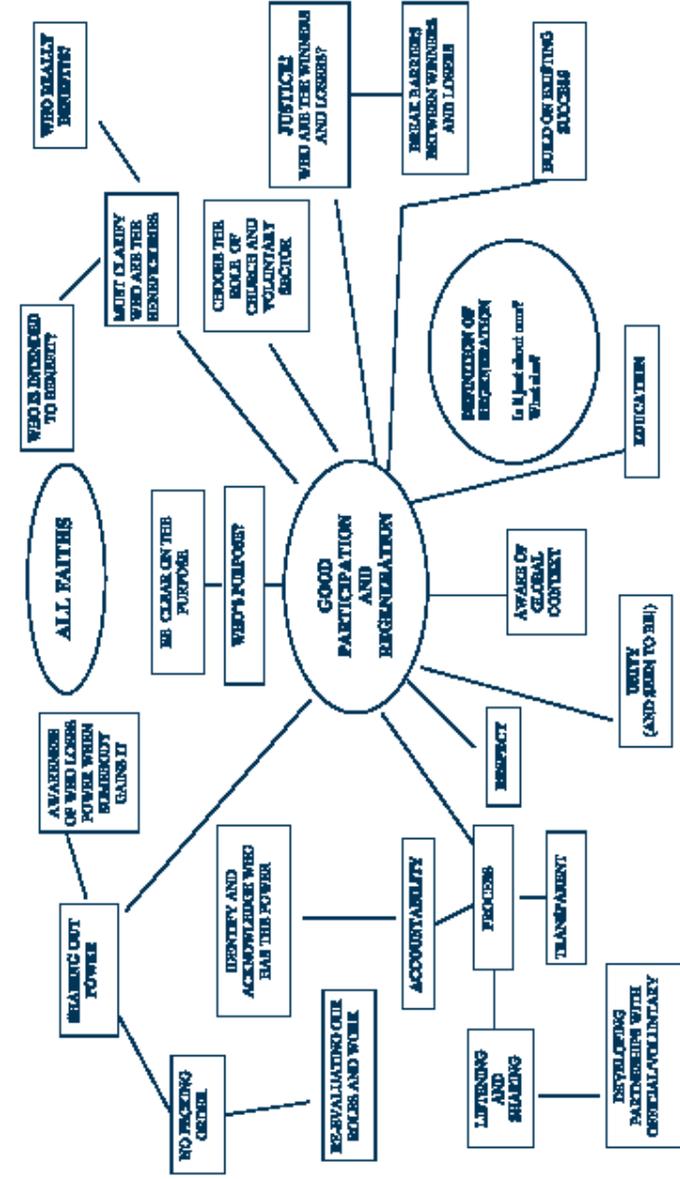
model of a village to demonstrate one participation technique, Planning for Real. In Newcastle, we explored the Guided Imaging method explained below.

Many groups also brought along their own 'Local Heroes', local people from a faith group engaged in the community who told their story and answered questions, drawing out lessons for others. In the Nottingham workshop, which focused on bringing black and white Christians together, we had a break for Pentecostal worship at lunchtime, and explored the theology of regeneration. Some workshops had breaks for prayers, in Bolton we were entertained by an Indian dancer and her small sister, and sometimes children came in at lunchtime from the crèche and showed us all what we should really be doing with our flipcharts and marker pens.

The main topic of the workshops was participation, and the following section outlines some of the ideas about good participation. This is followed by outline workshops for exploring participation, community visioning and four tools to help develop the four roles of the faith groups in regeneration explored in earlier chapters.

Stage	What happened
Introductions	Go round: names and one good thing that happened in the last 24 hours. Getting everyone to say something is important.
In Pairs: discussion using three Imagine change questions (following instructions for the Imagine workshop exercise)	Imagine Questions from Newcastle: 1. When have you most felt part of your local area? 2. Tell me about a time when local people got together to things for the better. What made it happen? 3. Imagine that you are in the year 2006 talking to somebody who back in 2001 was extremely sceptical about this Walker Riverside Development Company. They are now very excited about it. What changed their mind? While reading others stories, think what strikes you? Any good stories? What does this tell us about good participation?
Whole Group: mind-map or brainstorm	Stand round the mind map on the wall, with " Good Participation" in the centre of the sheet. Note key points as spokes of a wheel as discussion continues. Once a point is up, the next person has a turn to speak.
Whole Group: The participation ladder	Relate the mind map to the Participation ladder, and congratulate group on
Divide into three groups: " What sort of participation do we want?"	To discuss participation in relation to: (a) The Council (b) The Walker Riverside Development Company (c) The Wider Community's Voluntary Groups
Whole Group	Share what came up in the discussion

## Good Participation Mind Map



People often exclaim about The Mind-Map: "We did that! All by ourselves!" From: Middlesbrough

"Taking Part" 18th July 2001

## Participation: The key to making regeneration work

Guided Imaging works without writing anything down, and explores all five senses. Most people relate to one of the senses and can use this to explore their hopes for the future. It is great with young people, but many adults expressed their pleasure at taking time to recapture their lost hopes for once in their lives. It is important to have more than one facilitator as people may become upset if they let themselves think of a future they don't like, and may need someone to talk to.

First explain Guided Imaging, and explain that even if people are afraid it won't work for them, at least they get a chance to sit down and be quiet for a few minutes!

Relaxation	Use whatever method the group find comfortable, e.g. relaxing into the chair, stretching and relaxing groups of muscles.
Practice Visualising using each sense, for example:	Imagine a red circle on a white background, changing into a square, then a triangle. It is turning pink, then white. Imagine a phone ringing, then getting softer, till it fades away. Imagine walking in your favourite place outside, and putting out your hand to touch something – e.g. a tree – then moving away. Imagine your favourite scent is wafting faintly toward you, you get nearer it, breathe deeply, then walk past. Imagine cutting into a lemon, picking it up and tasting the bitterness in your mouth, then drinking some water.
Feedback	Ask who found which sense most real. Most people surprise themselves by relating to one or more. Tell people not to worry if not.
Relaxation	Repeat the relaxation which worked best.
Imaging a walk around the area	Ask people to imagine they are going on a walk in their area as they want it to be in the future, e.g. in 2010, and to notice what their senses tell them.
Discussion	Ask people to share their findings if they want to. Encourage them to practice Deep Listening, i.e. not judging what others say, but imagining that the same experience is happening to them. Note on a flipchart key elements of people's visions. Explore what is similar and how that could be implemented. How might we use this? Explore what settings this might be useful in.
Close	Final Go Round – everyone has one last comment.

## Workshop session: Questions about participation

The following questions have been derived from Yorkshire Forward's Active Partners, Benchmarking Community Participation in Regeneration. Local partners Leeds Church Institute helped their regional development agency to produce this document. Asking these questions helps communities to assess the validity of their participation.

- Are we being asked to contribute our ideas and provide local information or to comment on and confirm preliminary plans developed by people outside the area?
- Who is being asked to participate from the community? Is the membership inclusive? Will meetings be held when they are available to attend?
- How will we know we have been listened to and our input included?
- In what ways will we be involved in the development of our ideas?
- Who will make the final decisions and how much influence will we have?
- Is there a partnership agreement attached to or directly within the proposal bid that states how the community is included and will continue to be involved?

## Workshop session: Exploring the participation ladder

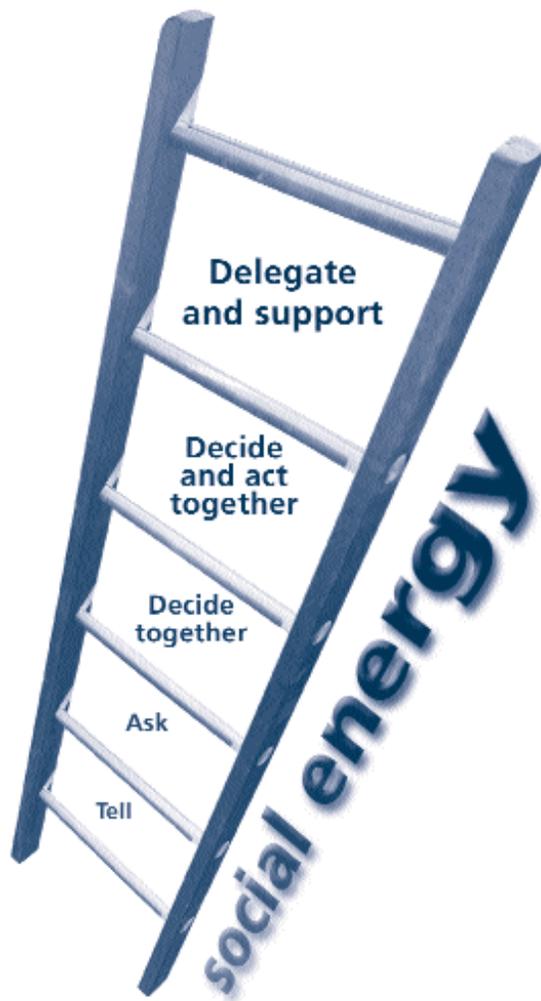
All of the workshops explored what makes for good participation. Renewal is successful and sustainable only when there is participation by people living in the community. Often local communities are consulted, but not given the chance to actively participate. Over the page is an adaption of Sherry Arnstein's participation ladder.

## The participation ladder

Participants' experiences resonated the ladders steps

When the community expect one sort of participation, and the body with power expects another, there's usually trouble.

Using the ladder can help broaden out ideas of what participation is about and clarify any misunderstandings.



Adapted from Sherry Arnstein's

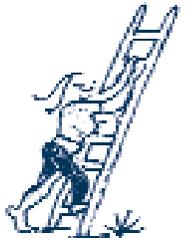


### What about us?

When decisions are taken about an area, Remember to bring along the Participation Ladder. The sooner local people get involved in the planning stages, the better.

### That first step...

Taking the first step towards getting involved in local affairs, and encouraging other people to do so, is often the most difficult and the most important. If people see they will be listened to and can change things, they are much keener to stay involved. Participation, once started, can be addictive!



### Deciding where to be on the ladder

Different stages in the project often require different levels of participation. I might want to know when my bins will be emptied, to have influence about local schools, and to be part of a local group owning the local neighbourhood renewal process.



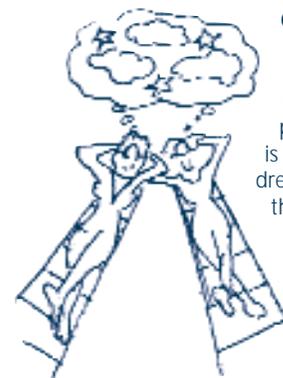
### Remember all the ladder players

Each of the players in a project could be on a different level of the participation ladder. A low level of just one player can scupper participation in the whole project. Suppose a local authority is supporting a local partnership to develop community facilities, and are trying to involve local people through the church or temple. If the faith leader assumes they know local people want and pretends to speak for them with no real participation, then local people will be un-involved and resentful. Alternatively, if the faith leaders really encourage people to work through their differences and come up with lots of ideas, and the local authority in fact has already decided the issue and so takes no notice, the overall level of participation is equally bad.



### Overcoming divisions with practical joint visions

Successful participation needs both present and future impacts. Taking immediate practical steps about a current issue gives people a sense of hope and influence. – lets hod a party, a clean up and get a new bus stop outside. Equally key is people getting together, hearing and respecting each others dreams, then agreeing a joint forward plan for the future of their community.



### How can you use this locally?

- Participation tools for the four roles of faith groups
- The workshops explore a participation
- Tools relevant to each of the four roles of faith groups
- You can download...

## Imagine: Prophetic Community

Imaging is a way to create understanding, dialogue and joint action through telling stories and recovering memories of past success. It builds on a long religious tradition of prophecy, where the prophets had a triple strategy of denouncing injustice; reminding the faithful of good times in the community; and building a promise of a better future. We're all good at doing the first of these! When we've identified an issue, we can then use over imagination to follow on with the second and third stages.

In an Imagine process, people explore an issue, then a core group designs some questions that will pull out people's experience and insight. The community then use these questions, preferably pairing with people unlike themselves (e.g. old and young people, new and long-standing residents, people of different faiths) to tell and record their stories. The core group then review the stories, pulling out the lessons and outstanding moments. They create a collage of words or pictures capturing the future as if it were built on the best moments and visions of the community. The community come back to agree on specific goals they want to achieve using Imagine. A wide variety of groups are usually inspired to work together and bring the desired change about.

### Imagine workshop exercise:

Time	What	How and materials
5 min	Introduce Imagine and the questions, each written on separate pieces of flipchart paper. It's easiest to number the questions.	Use <b>bluetack</b> to overlap the 2nd and 3rd <b>flipcharts</b> on top of the first so all three questions are visible.
15 min	Ask participants to find someone they don't know, and spend 7 minutes asking them the three questions. They then swap roles of listening and talking. Each records the others answers to each question on a separate post-it note, either in words or pictures.	Give each pair enough <b>post-its</b> . Towards the end of the session, move the flipcharts to separate places on the <b>wall</b> .
5 min	Ask them to note similarities/differences as they collate their answers.	Participants stick their answers to each question on the relevant flipchart.
10-25 min	Ask 1) how the process of being asked positive questions felt: 2) What they noticed about the answers – key themes or unusual, striking stories.	If time permits, make a <b>mind-map</b> of their answers using <b>4 pieces of flipchart paper taped together</b> . See page 27

## Prove It: Exploring Identity and Belonging

*Prove It* is a way of exploring the social energy, of the invisible fabric that holds a community together and represents its ability to change things for the better. It has been used to measure the impact of local projects on the community, not just on the number of jobs created, or trees planted. The *Prove It* framework sets out the key components of social energy in an area. In practice, local residents and community volunteers answered questions based on the framework before the project started, and after it was completed. The difference between the two enabled the project to prove the effects that it had had on the otherwise 'invisible' aspects of community life. Questions also need to check about other changes that might have influenced the outcome. The results showed that where projects had been designed well, the number of networks that people had in the community grew dramatically, pride in the neighbourhood and feelings of safety increased. Local people were much readier to believe that they could make a difference.

Prove it can also be used to plan projects and make sure that they bring long-term as well as short-term benefits to the community.

### Prove It! workshop session:

Time	What	How and materials
5 min	Introduce Prove It and the questionnaire below	Distribute individual A4 copies of the questions.
20 min	Divide into groups to discuss a past or present project. Ask each group to pick a couple of the questions and suggest how their can modify their project to achieve the desired outcome.	Give each group a A3 copy of the questions.
10 min	Groups look at each others posters, then discuss key points with whole group.	Groups post their A3 posters on the wall.

### Things to include in your project – from Prove It:

- Will our project improve...
- How could it do this?
- Trust in neighbours or authorities?
- Hope that things could change?
- Pride in our area?
- Knowing who to contact for help?
- Connections between people who don't usually meet (old / young, different background, etc.)?
- Feelings of safety?
- Reciprocity – can people both give and receive?

## Plugging the Leaks: Organising Community

Plugging the Leaks is a participative way for people to understand what is happening to the local economy, i.e. the livelihoods of people in their community, and how they can influence it. Local people are often concerned about livelihoods, but don't think they know enough about it to be able to change anything. NEF's plugging the leaks programme aims to change all that, by giving people simple images that let them understand for themselves what is happening in their area.

A participant from Luton said, "Other community members have said that we should just do what the local authority says – they are the economic experts. But learning about the leaky economic bucket has given us a language that we can use to better understand what is going on in our estate and to push for what we believe overall will be best for us".

If you think of your economy as a leaky bucket, you can imagine that the money that comes into your area, i.e. into the bucket, flows straight out again if there are numerous holes in the bucket. This is exactly what happens in many poorer areas. However, if there were very few leaks in the bucket, then any water (money) coming into the bucket would swish round in beautiful patterns and circulate a few times before spilling out over the top of the full bucket to water other local communities. So the ideal is to find out how to get money circulating several times in a community before it leaves.

### Plugging the Leaks workshop exercise:

Draw a bucket with a handle on a flipchart.

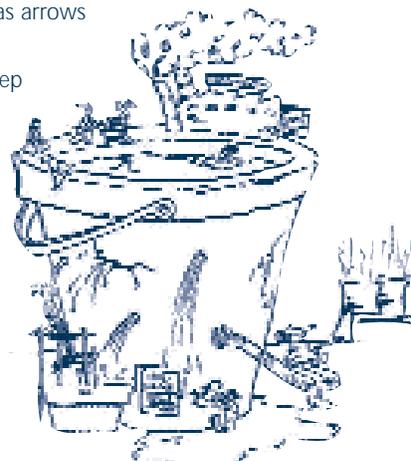
Ask people:

- How money comes into the area. Draw this on as arrows coming into the bucket from above.
- How money leaks out of the area. Draw these as arrows leaving holes in the side of the bucket.
- Ways they could plug some of the leaks and keep money in.

Examples might include:

- money leaving in debt repayment
- a credit union to plug this gap
- money leaving to pay for energy
- an insulation campaign or local energy-generating scheme

Details of organisations that help plug leaks are under the gateway section on the NEF website, or on the CD-Rom Brave New Economy.



## No more throw-away people: Caring Community

The phrase 'No more throw-away people' represents a way of building communities where everyone, even those who normally get left out, is valued and included. Often there are lots of people who don't feel wanted or that they matter to their community. At times the very 'busy-ness' and 'helpful-ness' of people who are trying to look after the 'less fortunate' will make them feel much worse. Although material needs are being 'taken care of', it may bear the hidden cost of their dignity. Simply thinking about the contribution that people who 'get helped' can make, just by doing what they love and are 'good at doing', often starts the ball rolling towards including them. Faith groups can use these ideas to get a wide range of people involved in a community project. Then we begin to think beyond 'what needs doing' and start to work creatively together to make it happen generating social energy and developing skills, confidence, trust and shared values.

A number of new projects are now moving beyond one-way volunteering, towards helping local people connect with persons they would not normally meet. It's useful to have the safety of a tested structure. Time Banks are one of the many templates available, where people exchange time and everyone's contribution is valued equally and for an hour. They have started in doctor's surgeries, schools and community centres. Swapping skills enables people to learn a skill rather than 'having it fixed for them.' Even prisons are setting up schemes for fathers to deposit: writing letters to their children and then withdraw presents them. Many faith groups are becoming involved. They are finding these schemes are excellent for working beside refugees and the unemployed as the time spent is zero-rated for benefits. When people from different faith groups work together in this way, it becomes a place of mutual belonging without compromising religious identity.

### Time Banks: Caring Community

Time banks are a tool for building community. This is a crucial but often difficult aspect of renewal. By encouraging local people to help each other – and get their time recognised – time banks create ways to tighten the fragmented bonds of communities through schools, health centres and housing estates. Time banks generate social energy – by developing skills, confidence, trust and shared values.

The time bank is operated by a broker who recruits members, finds out how they would like to make 'deposits' and 'withdrawals' and gets them giving and receiving. The free TimeKeeper software helps keep records and sends out time statements. Time banks involve people on the basis of what they enjoy and can do. They provide the missing ingredient in public services – people's participation – by encouraging time givers of all ages and abilities to deposit their time and get that time back when they want some help themselves. Everyone is a giver as well as a receiver.

Time banks aren't about public services on the cheap. They ARE about enlisting the skills and time of people who have a lot to give but whose assets are currently wasted – old people and young people, people with disabilities and health problems who are seen as a burden on over-stretched services. These 'throwaway' people are vital to the creation of healthy, vibrant neighbourhoods and time banks are one way of measuring and encouraging their participation.

### Time banks! workshop exercise:

Time	What, how and materials
5 min	Introduce Time banks
5min	Brainstorm: list the people who normally get left out (e.g. elders, children etc)
5 min	Each person chooses a member of that list and writes on separate <b>post-it notes</b> five things that that person can do.
2 min	Now on two <b>sticky labels</b> , write one thing that a faith group might need and one thing an individual might need (could be you!).
8 min	Stick your two "Needs" labels on your back, and with your yellow "Offers" go round the room looking at other people's backs and try to match up your offers with other people's needs.
10min	Discuss your experience! People are usually surprised at how many needs matched up. This often demonstrates that a Time bank is more than a skill and needs swap; it builds connections, can focus on those who normally get left out, and can also revitalize community projects.



### Government resources

Some resources are available free over the web in Adobe Acrobat format. The necessary software, the Adobe Acrobat Reader, can be downloaded for free from <http://www.open.gov.uk/howto/acroread.htm> Viewers with visual difficulties can investigate services provided to improve the accessibility of Acrobat documents <http://access.adobe.com/>

**Neighbourhood Renewal Unit:** <http://www.neighbourhood.dtlr.gov.uk>

**New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal: National Action Plan** can be ordered from **020 7944 8383** or found at the neighbourhood renewal website, [http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/seu/index/national\\_strategy.htm](http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/seu/index/national_strategy.htm)

### Department of Transport, Local Government & the Regions.

For Information from the government about latest policies: <http://www.regeneration.dtlr.gov.uk/>

**Regen.net** is DTLR's information network for regeneration partnerships: <http://www.regen.net>

**Local Strategic Partnerships: Government Guidance** can be ordered from 0870 1226 236 or found in Adobe Acrobat format on <http://www.neighbourhood.dtlr.gov.uk/partnerships/index.htm>

The **Urban White Paper** outlines urban issues and policy. Tel: 020 7944 3770, <http://www.regeneration.detr.gov.uk/policies/ourtowns/index.htm>

**Active Community Unit (ACU):** <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/acu/acu.htm>

### General resources

The New Economics Foundation: Tel: 020 7089 2800 <http://www.neweconomics.org>  
NEF's publications include:

- Participation Works – 21 Techniques of community participation for the 21st century
- Prove It: Measuring the effect of neighbourhood renewal on local people (hard copy available free from [info@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:info@groundwork.org.uk) / tel: 0121 236 8565)
- The Complete Guide to Running a Time Bank
- Brave New Economy (CD-Rom)
- Low-Flying Heroes on micro-social entrepreneurs.

Community Relations Section of the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea.  
Tel 020 7598 4633 / <http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/communityrelations> Publications include:

- Ethnic and Faith Community Development, Rumman Ahmed & James Salter
- Making Organisations Work, Rumman Ahmed & Deepa Korea
- The Role of Faith Based Organisations in Community Development
- A Guide to Fundraising

**Unleashing the potential - Bringing residents to the centre of regeneration**  
Marilyn Taylor (Uni of Brighton), Joseph Rowntree Foundation, London 1995

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***Building Community Strengths - a resource book on capacity-building***

Steve Skinner, Community Development Foundation, London 1997

***Locating the Energy for Change: An Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry,***

Charles Elliott, ISBN 1-895536-15-4, IISD, \$15 including p&p at info@iisd.ca or fax +1 204 958 7700

***Active Partners - Benchmarking Community Participation in Regeneration***

Yorkshire Forward, the Yorkshire & Humber/Regional Development Agency  
Tel: 0113 243 9222

**Joseph Rowntree Foundation**

Social policy research and development charity, with good briefings on all aspects of regeneration as well as funding. Tel: 01904 629241 <http://www.jrf.org.uk/home.asp>

**Community Action Network (CAN)** is a mutual learning and support network for social entrepreneurs: <http://www.can-online.org.uk/aboutus/what.htm> 020 7401 5310

**Communities Online.** Encourages the use of new communications technologies in communities and neighbourhoods, to address issues of sustainability, regeneration, social inclusion and healthier economies <http://www.communities.org.uk/index.htm>

**Partnerships Online.** Useful toolkits, and info on how to use the internet to build networks and benefit communities - particularly neighbourhoods and villages. <http://www.partnerships.org.uk/index.htm>

**Ethical Junction.** A one-stop shop for ethical organisations and ethical trading. <http://www.ethical-junction.org/>

**Landlife: bringing people and wildlife closer together** works with many religious groups. For beautifying the inner city - why not have wild flowers in the cemetery or along the verges? Tel: 0151 737 1819 <http://www.landlife.org.uk>

**Black Environment Network,** Wales Tel: 01286 870 715

**Time Banks UK** for help and advice in setting up a local Time Bank  
Tel: 0870 702 428 <http://www.timebanks.co.uk>

## Faith-based resources

**Multi Faith Net:** For information on world religions operating in the UK. <http://www.multifaithnet.org/> It also publishes:

***Religions in the UK: a Multi-Faith Directory*** with a useful section Making Contact on setting up inter-faith meetings and projects. Tel: 020 7388 0008  
<http://www.multifaithnet.org/mfnopenaccess/pubs/rituk.htm>

**The Interfaith Network** works with over 90 member bodies to help make Britain a country marked by mutual understanding and respect between religions where all can practise their faith with integrity. <http://www.interfaith.org.uk> Publications include:

- ***The Local Inter Faith Guide: Faith Community Co-operation in Action***
- ***Building Good Relations with People of Different Faiths and Beliefs***
- ***Inter Faith Co-operation, Local Government and the Regions: Councils of Faiths as a Resource for the 21st Century.***

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**Interfaith Refugee Network.** Produce useful booklet on setting up refugee projects Tel: 020 7798 9027

**Norfolk Education & Action Centre (NEAD) resource catalogue** has sections on faiths and citizenship and children. [www.nead.org.uk](http://www.nead.org.uk). Tel: 01603 610993

- **Regarding Religion: Education for Citizenship and Shared Values**  
Handbook containing sections on using literature and story, beliefs and values, learning about and from religions, from Bradford Education.
- **Take Part! Speak Out! Education for Citizenship in Primary Schools.**  
Suggests practical ways in which children can be encouraged to express their views and take part in decision making, from Manchester DEP

**UK Social Investment Forum (UKSIF)** Tel: 020 7749 4880 [www.uksif.org](http://www.uksif.org) Publications include Islamic Finance, information from an UKSIF seminar in May 2001

**Church Urban Fund** Tel: 020 7898 1000 [www.cuf.org.uk](http://www.cuf.org.uk)

- ***The Project Worker - A guide to employing staff in church projects*** Alison Peacock, Church Urban Fund & William Temple Foundation, 2000
- ***Flourishing Communities - Engaging church communities with government in New Deal for Communities*** Peter Musgrave, 1999

***Faith Based Groups in Partnership with the State,*** A Briefing Paper on Policy and Practical Issues, Greg Smith CIS: University of East London, 2001  
Tel: 020 8223 4290

***Churches' Community Work Alliance - Briefing*** - A quarterly newsletter  
Tel: 01709 873 254 Email: [ccwa@btinternet.com](mailto:ccwa@btinternet.com)

***Strategic Planning for Churches: an Appreciative Approach,*** Charles Elliott, ISBN 1-88-562-29-4: published by Christian Ministry Resources, PO Box 1098, Matthews, N. Carolina, 28106 USA.

***Local Lives and Livelihoods in a Global Economy*** Kevin Bundell, Church Action on Poverty, Christian Aid, 1999 Contact: Christian Aid, Tel: 020 6204444, [www.christian-aid.org.uk](http://www.christian-aid.org.uk)

***'Faith in Politics' 29 March 01-Speech by P.M.*** Tony Blair to Christian Socialist Movement, available from [http://www.christiansocialist.org.uk/csmnet/blair29\\_3.doc](http://www.christiansocialist.org.uk/csmnet/blair29_3.doc)

***Mind, Body and Estates - Outer Estate Ministry and Working Class Culture,*** Joe Hassler, National Estate Churches Network, London

***The Social Action Journey.*** Contact the Shaftesbury Society on Tel: 020 8239 5555

**Clann Credo** Tel: (353-1) 453 18 61 Email: [sdf@eircom.net](mailto:sdf@eircom.net)

**Muslim Community Work Alliance** co Rumman Ahmed 020 7598 4631

**Churches Commission for Racial Justice** 0207 523 2130 [www.ctbi.org.uk](http://www.ctbi.org.uk)

**Commission for British Muslims and Islamophobia,** has members of many faiths on its board. Tel: 0207 932 5368

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**The Churches' Commission for Inter Faith Relations** is committed to nurturing positive inter faith relations at every level. **Religious Discrimination: A Christian Response** suggests practical ways in which the churches could play a part in combating discrimination. Tel: 020 7523 2121 <http://www.ctbi.org.uk/welcome.htm>

**The Churches' Commission for Racial Justice (CCRJ)** Tel:020 7523 2121  
<http://www.ctbi.org.uk/ccrj/welcome.htm>

**The Runnymede Trust** is an independent research and policy agency supporting the development of a successful multi-ethnic society. It provides information, research and advice and to promote the value of diversity in communities.

Tel: 020 7377 9222 <http://www.runnymedetrust.org>

**Inner Cities Religious Council** supported by the DTLR Tel: 020 7944 3704  
<http://www.icrc.dltr.gov.uk>

**Sacred Lands Trust** c/o ICOREC Tel: 0161 248 5731

## Training

**The Black Environment Network** hold conferences on participation, training on working with people from different cultures, and develop intergrated socia-cultural-environmental projects. Tel: 01286 870 715 E-mail [ben@pfrost.demon.co.uk](mailto:ben@pfrost.demon.co.uk)

**Community Planning** – training seminar on community planning strategies, organised by The Prince's Foundation and the Civic Trust Regeneration Unit. Tel: 020 7613 8500  
<http://www.princes-foundation.org>

**Black Training and Enterprise Group** c/o NCVO, Tel: 020 7713 6161

**The Church Development Department – The Shaftesbury Society.**  
Offers training and support to help churches to engage with their communities.  
Tel: 020 8239 5555

**Institute of Cultural Affairs** run 'Technology of Participation' training courses.  
Tel: 0161 232 0550 <http://www.ica-uk.org.uk>

**The Neighbourhood Initiatives Training** – Practical Tools for Community Action training programme. Tel: 01952 590 777 <http://www.nif.co.uk>

**Projects in Partnership** – runs a series of seminars, training courses, manuals and toolkits based on creating sustainable solutions through participation and partnership.  
Tel: 020 7407 8585 Email: [pip@pship.demon.co.uk](mailto:pip@pship.demon.co.uk)

**PEP – National Programme of Training for Residents**, a series of training courses designed to develop knowledge and skills to have an impact in communities.  
Tel: 020 7281 3178 <http://www.pep.org.uk>

**Trafford Hall – Home of The National Tenants Resource Centre-** runs training courses for tenants and community volunteers including **Making Cultural Diversity Work on Estates** Tel: 01244 300 246 Email: [n.gibbs@traffordhall.com](mailto:n.gibbs@traffordhall.com)