

3. BUILDING YOUR GROUP

Raising WDM's profile locally is an essential part of campaigning. Quite simply, the more people know us the easier we will find it to get press coverage and the more political clout we will have. If your group has a high profile locally you will be seen as more powerful in the eyes of your campaign targets, you will encourage more people to get involved in your group, and your campaigning and lobbying will be stronger.

NEW MEMBERS ARE IMPORTANT

As a local group your members may not have lots of spare time in which to run special promotion campaigns, but you can make promoting WDM and your group an integral part of all your campaigning activities. Always think of getting more people involved whenever you plan any activities.

Bringing new people into the orbit of your group is important for a number of reasons. There is always some natural turnover in group membership as members move away or have to prioritise other things. Over time new members can take on tasks that others have had to drop and you can avoid any one person becoming overburdened.

New members also bring new ideas, skills, experience and perspectives. This can help keep your group dynamic and ensure you get feedback from sympathetic people who nevertheless are not too immersed to be objective.

And of course, the more people who are involved, the more multipliers there are for the campaigns you are running, and the more significant you will seem in the eyes of politicians and the local media.

MAKING IT EASY TO JOIN

The best way to get new members involved is by doing regular campaign activities. It might sound obvious, but potential members are more likely to join a group that they can see is active. But at the same time, don't forget to actually ask people to get involved.

There are a few simple things to remember in making it easy for people to join:

- Always bring sign-up sheets. A standard one is available from the office, which allows people to express an interest in WDM nationally, in their local group, or both. If you have one to hand at every WDM activity, you can easily collect new people's details.
- Always advertise any meetings you have that involve speakers or a video showing to a wider audience. Whilst you shouldn't expect floods of new people as a result, your meeting can be made to appeal to some extra people who want to get involved.
- If you're giving or hosting a talk, always remember to include an appeal to join.
- Always follow up new contacts efficiently. After collecting a new set of contact details, send an email out within the next few days introducing your group and inviting them to the next meeting.

There is also a standard local groups leaflet available from the office which we can personalise with your group's details. Its great for using on stalls or sometimes even for leaving in particularly friendly



WDM local group members are joined by Nepali campaigner Gopal Chintan to oppose Severn Trent's involvement in the proposed privatisation of Kathmandu's water system in 2007.

or aligned cafés or community centres. Contact the network team at the office to order some of these leaflets.

KEEPING NEW MEMBERS HOOKED

Be as welcoming as possible to new members. If someone new turns up to your group meeting, make sure you run it in a way that doesn't exclude them. At an appropriate point, show them all the latest campaign information and tell them what your group does. You can also direct them to the 'Community' section of the WDM website for past issues of *Think Global* and other information. Always introduce a new person to everybody in the group.

Try not to resist new ideas. If you do not like stunts and street activities but a new member comes along who is keen to campaign in that way try to support them.

Find out what new members' skills are. See if they would like to try doing a simple campaign action or help out with something. Try not to leap on new people or overburden them but do give everyone the opportunity to do something if they wish. This takes the burden off key group members and ensures that new people feel involved.

NETWORKING LOCALLY

There are a number of kinds of local groups who may be useful allies when campaigning locally, or who may be

interested in being kept up to date with WDM's work.

The biggest overlap between WDM and student activism is probably with national student network People & Planet (www.peopleandplanet.org). WDM collaborates with People & Planet at a national level, but some local WDM groups have also developed productive relationships with People & Planet groups at their local university. Be aware, however, that student turnover means some effort generally needs to be put into renewing the relationship each year.

There are also often other groups affiliated to student unions, especially at universities where People & Planet are not present. It may be worth investigating this when in search of new allies. Particular courses may also yield some interest, including development studies, human geography, politics or Latin American, African or Asian Studies. A guest talk to a particular course about WDM's work can be one way in here. Masters students can be good targets for recruitment to WDM as they tend to be less involved in campaigning activities within the university itself.

Peace and justice organisations are local non-denominational Christian groups active on issues which cross over with those of WDM. Some are affiliated to WDM nationally. It is worth knowing them if there is one in your area.

Other groups which it is worth knowing include local branches of trade unions, the trades council for your area (the umbrella group for trade union branches at a local level), and maybe local political party branches.

ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKING

Once you've got your group's web presence sorted out (see section 2), you might want to move on to making the most of social networking sites to help build your group and local campaign work. This will depend a bit on the demographics of your existing group, but something like Facebook can be a useful way to involve new people, especially those in their 20s and 30s. Facebook works well for campaigning because lots of people have a profile on it. It also allows you to set up virtual groups and for those groups to advertise events and invite people to them. An existing group member will have to have a profile already or be prepared to set one up, and then get a feel for how Facebook works.

Of course there are lots of other forms of social networking, with new ones being invented all the time.

Key messages for encouraging people to join

WDM doesn't give aid or run programmes – we campaign against the institutions and power structures that keep people poor. We do this in partnership and solidarity with campaigners in the global south.

WDM achieves results. Give an example of a fairly recent campaign victory.

One of the main reasons we win is our network of local groups, taking action up and down the country.

At a national level we depend on lots of people giving relatively small amounts of money to keep us going.



Bradford WDM group members join 'the wave' climate change demonstration in 2009.

On the other hand, some have already started to fall out of fashion. Think of them simply as extra ways to communicate with the world which might work for your group.

Twitter is another good way of connecting with people online and is particularly useful for getting visitors to your website. WDM's website officer is available to provide advice on how you can best use social media for campaigning and is happy to come out and visit your group.

REVITALISING YOUR GROUP

All groups go through peaks and troughs, but there's usually something you can do to revitalise a group that has lost a bit of steam. Speaking to your area rep or the network development officer can be very useful in such a situation. It will probably also be helpful for them to come to a meeting, where they can give advice and offer an outsider's perspective.

Together you should come up with a plan to get your group back on its feet. This could include prioritising so that you do just one or two things but do them well; start meeting somewhere more inviting; plan an event that helps relaunch the group; and think about other new ways to recruit new members.

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT MEMBERS

Group harmony may be very occasionally disrupted by someone's behaviour that is not acceptable to other members. It is important to emphasise that these are not problems which occur that often, but if they do it is

better to deal with the situation straight away than to hope that the problem will disappear.

Sometimes a group member can be domineering or disruptive in the group. They probably don't realise they are doing it, and good chairing can minimise disruption. Give everybody a time limit on contributions to keep the discussion flowing, and don't be afraid to be politely assertive if someone runs over time.

If you would like help and advice on how to go about dealing with difficult members, please contact the network development officer and/or your area representative. WDM needs to ensure that everyone is treated fairly but we do take these problems seriously and are always happy to discuss difficulties in full confidence.