

Global Connect 2010 -11



What we did

Global Connect took a slightly new direction in 2010-11. We continued to pursue the aim of working with communities suffering from globalisation, by developing partnership with organisations already working with them. The Bethany Christian Trust supports people who are homeless or vulnerable to homelessness and run education and support programmes. BCT runs a weekly drop-in session for men where their service users can get a meal, socialise and use computers. We joined in with this session, encouraging discussion and debate on topical issues using GC materials for stimuli.

This programme was then developed with the addition of a standalone session open to all BCT service users, held in the Learning Centre. This has enabled more focussed discussions with fewer distractions! Between 6 and 9 people usually attend, with a huge range of experience and ideas. Topics have covered recycling, community, identity, supermarkets and trade and many more, with suggestions often coming from the group. The discussions are facilitated but often go in unexpected directions. There have been some fantastic moments when participants (including the facilitators!) have learned something, changed their minds and decided to change their behaviour. We start off each session with lunch which encourages people to attend and helps people get to know each other better. The sessions work well because the collaboration between WDM and BCT is effective - both believe strongly that homeless people have a lot to offer and will benefit from the opportunity to express themselves. The thinking from the sessions goes to a wider audience through the BCT's weekly radio slot on Leith FM and in their magazine, The Bugle. We are aiming to take the process forward by lobbying MSPs on issues of interest.

We have also run a more traditional adult education evening class, "A Beginner's Guide to a Fairer World", based on the existing WorldWide materials, in Drummond Community High School, Leith. This attracted 8 participants, and some of the group are continuing to meet and take action independently, focussing on fair trade fashion clothing. The course lasted for 10 sessions, with an average attendance of 5.

We ran a series of three evening workshops at St Paul's and St George's Church who had approached WDM. They particularly wanted to look at how some existing groups in the church could work better together and link their actions more coherently. 25 people attended the workshops and some practical campaigns and actions were the result, including a programme to help the local community insulate their homes better and a swap-shop to re-use unwanted products whilst building up a sense of neighbourliness. Another workshop to review progress and look at next steps is planned for the near future.

Two simulation games have been designed and used at WDM events including the Take One Action film nights. These have given an insight into food speculation (Hunger!) and the activities of banks (The £45.5 billion question) and are good discussion starters. These, together with other activities developed and tested over the year constitute a valuable resource of educational activities which have been placed on the website for anyone to use.

In partnership with Transition Scotland Support we hosted a film and discussion night in Duns in the Scottish Borders, aiming to stimulate debate, help people make links and assess interest in further meetings. A small but enthusiastic audience attended and we are planning some follow-up work.

How we did it

All the workshops are active and participatory, using a variety of methodologies and exercises to get people to think about and question their own views, to share them and listen to others. The facilitator is there to guide a process (and indeed take part in it) by providing a framework for all participants to think through and express their views. Collectively people know a great deal and have done tremendous things already, sharing this with others is energising and

empowering. Global Connect always tries to start from where people are and engage with the issues which are of relevance and interest to them, whilst helping make links between them and particularly between local and global issues.

Taking action is a crucial part of the Global Connect and so helping participants to have the confidence, knowledge and skills is integral to any workshop. Many people already have experience of campaigning, others may not know where to start - though they often have the skills that are needed.

We decided to work in partnership with other compatible organisations where possible. Firstly an organisation like BCT has a ready-made pool of people in the group we want to work with, and a structure for interacting with them. Global Connect gives new opportunities and enhances their existing work, so we both benefit. Secondly of course together we are stronger and it makes sense for those fighting for global justice to work together!

What people said about Global Connect

BCT Discussion group members

"I enjoy learning new stuff and having a good discussion. "

"There's good company, and I like meeting new people and hearing different ideas and giving my own. "

"There's a sense of camaraderie and a warmth about the group, like a family. It's an opportunity to learn skills, it boosts confidence and communication skills. It gives a purpose and a chance to discuss with others. I really like the feeling of belonging. "

"We work with people who have a history of homelessness, and a central purpose to our work is to challenge the marginalisation and social isolation many of our service users experience. WDM's involvement has given many of those we work with an opportunity to discuss issues relevant to their lives and make the connections between local and global issues. The discussion group is structured so that everyone can feel their opinion is valued, and the positive impact on participant's self esteem and confidence is very evident. Moreover, there have been some wonderful "ah ha" moments during the discussions, in which people, through their dialogue, have suddenly had their assumptions or opinions challenged, and see the world in a different way. It's really great stuff, and Eddy facilitates it brilliantly, ensuring a genuine democratic format but also directing gently if required. It has become an important part of the week for those who participate. "

Tim Porteus, BCT education officer

A Beginner's Guide to a Fairer World participants

"I can do things, I'm interested, I've already done things. "

"I learned lots - how to structure a campaign, press releases, about the clothing trade. "

"I feel more confident about the issues. "

"It was friendly and informal, with an enthusiastic, knowledgeable and committed facilitator. "

"Very useful handouts, good activities. "

St. Paul's and St. George's participants

"I feel more empowered to make a (small) difference. "

"Very good and refreshing. "

"I'm more informed about campaigning and more inspired to get involved. "

"Fun, interesting and fast moving. "