

1. ORGANISING BASICS

There is no particular blueprint for organising a successful group, but there are a few basics that you will almost certainly need to do.

MEETING REGULARLY

Getting together as a group on a regular basis is important so that you can talk, get to know each other and decide what campaign action you are going to take. Most groups meet once a month, near the beginning of the month to tie in with the *Think Global* mailing.

It's a good idea for as many people in the group to read *Think Global* before the meeting as possible, so you don't have to spend time going through it. As many people as you like can receive the mailing by email, and it is available in the 'Community' section of the WDM website too.

You will need to decide during your meeting how many of the suggested activities you can manage as a group in the coming months. There may also be local events or issues related to global justice which you want to get involved in. WDM local groups are encouraged to prioritise the campaigns we are running nationally to ensure the campaigning effectiveness of the movement. However, there's nothing to stop you getting involved in other issues if you have the capacity.

Think carefully about where you meet. Groups meet in

lots of different kinds of places including community centres, development education/environmental centres, rooms attached to pubs and their own homes. Cost is obviously an important factor to consider but it is equally important to think about how inviting your meeting place might be to potential members. Is it easy to get to in the evening? Is it inviting? Would anyone be happy to meet there?

Meetings in cold and draughty halls, for example, are unlikely to succeed in the long run – but meetings in more pleasant or social surroundings are. Meetings in private homes can seem exclusive (without intending to be) as can meetings in religious buildings. Meetings in pubs may be off-putting to others.

ASSIGNING GROUP ROLES

As part of the WDM Agreement we ask groups to provide us with the details of a contact person, who should have a reliable address, telephone number and ideally an email address so that we can publicise your group and communicate easily with you. The contact person should therefore be prepared to have their details sent out to members of the public by the WDM office. This person also makes sure that all the other members of the group have access to the campaign information and resources that we send your group.

We also recommend that groups have a treasurer who takes responsibility for looking after the group's money and for paying your annual group subscription. Different groups divide up their work in different ways, but the strongest ones tend to share the load amongst a number of people rather than having just one or two key organisers.

In addition to the group contact and treasurer, you might find some of these roles useful:

- **Chair:** organises and chairs the meetings and makes sure that everyone is involved and has the chance to contribute.
- **Secretary:** takes brief minutes, noting action points and keeps the group's records.
- **Current campaign coordinator:** responsible for keeping everyone up to date on what is happening in the current campaign(s)
- **Press liaison:** organises sending out press releases

Tips to avoid boring meetings

Avoid spending too much time poring over previous minutes, just check back on the key action points.

Make sure that you take some form of action in your meeting, whether that be planning a press stunt or even just filling in campaign postcards.

Invite relevant speakers from time to time, either from another organisation locally, or from the WDM office to talk about a campaign.

You could also show a short film if the equipment is available. Contact the WDM office for suggestions and film loans.

to the local press, writing letters and setting up photo opportunities

- Fundraiser: responsible for raising funds for your local group
- Membership secretary: for finding and looking after new members
- Events/stalls organiser: to coordinate public meetings and attendance at the events of other organisations. This could incorporate responsibility for collating materials for stalls.
- MP/MEP liaison person: for setting up meetings with politicians and coordinating visits.

Of course, roles can be combined depending on how many people you have willing to take them on, and you certainly don't need to have people in all these roles when you're starting out. However, it can be useful to assign formal roles, as it encourages people to take responsibility and spreads the work out over a larger group of people.

DEMOCRATIC DECISION-MAKING

It's also important to make sure that everyone has the chance to say what they think and contribute to decisions. In order to work effectively as a group, everyone needs to feel listened to when they want to speak and no-one should make decisions on behalf of the group unless the group has agreed that they can.

Some groups find it helpful to have a set of rules which clarify how they operate. This can be particularly useful in the unlikely event of having to deal with a difficult group member. If you think this would be useful for your group, have a look at the model constitution in the appendices; you can adapt this for your own group.

COMMUNICATING WITHIN YOUR GROUP

Telephone trees are the traditional way for sharing information within a campaign group. All you need to do is to divide your group membership by a sensible number and then give each person 2 or 3 telephone numbers each. Even if you mainly use email to communicate, it's worth considering using a telephone tree sometimes, as it can help get firm commitments out of people!

As well as the secretary simply keeping an email list on their computer, 'elists' or 'egroups' can be a useful way of organising. If people feel they can opt out when they want to, they are more likely to join in the first place.



Bristol WDM run a stall at a local festival

Google groups (<http://groups.google.com>) is one way to set up such a list, or try something more specifically activist-orientated, like Riseup (<http://lists.riseup.net>).

There are two main kinds of email lists. Fully interactive lists allow all members to post and respond to each other. This is the most useful kind of list for the core group of all those who at least sometimes play a role in the group. You could also run a newsletter-style list, where only the list owner can send out emails. This is a good way to build up a wider group of people who don't have time to get involved in organising, but might like to know about public meetings or other events you are putting on.

If you use this kind of list, it's best to send out a regular email, in a standard format no more than once a month. Think of it like a traditional newsletter, just sent in email form. It can also be printed out and sent to anyone who doesn't use email, of course. Whatever format you use, many WDM groups use a local newsletter to keep a wider group of people involved in the life of their group.

KEEPING RECORDS

Try to keep a scrapbook of your activities such as photos or articles in the press, and make sure you know the date and the publication. This can be invaluable when you are putting up displays about your group, telling new members what you have done so far, giving the WDM office material for including in *Think Global*, or just generally making your group members feel good at the end of the year.