

Quaker Africa Interest Group (QAIG)
Priory Rooms, Birmingham, 26 January 2019

Notes

- Present:** David Bale, Colin Bartlett, Kendall Clarke, Alison Crane, Dorothy Crowther, Nancy Fee, Ann Floyd (co-clerk), Margaret and Andrew Gregory, Theresa Haine, Bronwyn Harwood, David Jones, Steve Kaim Caudle, Abdul Kamara, Marian Liebman, Margot Lunnon, Stuart and Wilhelmina Morton, Alick Munro, Brian Osborne, Deana Owen, Bal Saini, Hazel Shellens, Lee Taylor (co-clerk), Tobi Wellner
- Prevented:** Rosemary Andoh, Jessica Bishop, Gretchen Castle, Elizabeth Cave, Petronella Clarke, Margaret Clarke, Christine Hapgood Coote, Teresa Holland, Diana Jeater, Nick Jewitt, John Lampen, Susanna Mattingly, Brian Morphy, Margaret Moss, Catherine Putz, Alan Quilley, Robert Stocks, Roger Sturge, Nigel Walker, Gwen Prince, Paul Lynch

We started with worship, and moved on to brief introductions – our name, Local and Area Meeting and connection(s) with Quaker work in Africa.

Report back on progress since the last Network meeting

1. QAIG is now a Quaker Recognised Body of Britain Yearly Meeting, with Tobi Wellner as our link person.

It was reported that it is a straightforward process, with the main advantage for groups being that Britain Yearly Meeting recognises the group as an authentic Quaker body and this can support “brand recognition”. Meeting for Sufferings makes the decision.

From 2020, only QRBs can ask for BYM Special Interest Group slots or a table at Groups.

A document of guidance for QRBs is being prepared.

Tobi can provide ‘signposting’ to existing resources, Friends House staff who may be able to give advice and/or act as sounding boards for new ideas and /or dilemmas.

The Quaker Africa charities meeting asked Michael Booth to consider training or informative sessions for QRBs on, for example fundraising, safeguarding in the context of our type of work, and the preparation, support and return debriefing of overseas volunteers. Michael commented on points for charities confronting a crisis – see Appendix.

2. The Quaker charities networking day held in October 2018 at Watford Meeting was a useful smaller event, appreciated by those who attended, informative and lively. The notes have been made available to the whole Network. Another day is planned for October 2019.

There were two presentations: getting a Quaker charity up and running, and some issues down the line for an established charity, with two afternoon discussion groups on:

- Trustee responsibilities
- Fundraising

It is planned to hold another day in October or November 2019. (*note: this has now been arranged for Thurs 7 Nov at Watford MH*)

3. QAIG Finance

Colin Bartlett reported on the funds held in 2018, expenditure and the cost of the Network day; we

have been asked to donate a minimum of £15 (or less if no lunch ordered) to cover costs. The network continues to work on a shoestring, covering costs.

Introduction to the theme: Sustainability – climate change and capacity

The day planned to approach 'sustainability' in two ways:

- right ordering of world resources/climate justice
- organizational sustainability, particularly in terms of capacity building

FWCC and BYM - updates and links to the theme of Sustainability

Friends World Committee for Consultation

We viewed two videos (see qaig.org.uk):

1. Susanna Mattingly, Sustainability and Communications Coordinator, FWCC in dialogue with Gretchen Castle, General Secretary, FWCC on the the work of FWCC, the principles underpinning FWCC's work on sustainability (notably the Kabarak Call for Peace and Ecojustice, and the Pisac minute), and Susanna's recent experience at COP 24 in Poland on behalf of Quakers, alongside Lindsey Fielder Cook, QUNO;
2. Friends from the Philippines and Kenya reflecting on the questions:
 - a. what are your experiences of how climate change is impacting people in Africa?
 - b. How much are those you work with in Africa concerned with climate change issues?
 - c. What are the main spiritual challenges you encounter around sustainability?
 - d. Where do you find joy in your sustainability journey?
 - e. How does your Quaker faith inspire you to take action on climate change?

We were encouraged to share any stories we have/know about of thinking about/working on sustainability in Africa.

Quaker Peace and Social Witness work in East Africa

Tobi Wellner, QPSW Programme Manager, talked about sustainability of projects, in the light of the East Africa centrally managed work – see the presentation at qaig.org.uk.

He interrogated the term 'sustainability' in terms of:

- Different projects;
- The British Quaker organisation;
- The partner/s' organisation?
- The approach(es) taken

Tobi had asked the East Africa Turning the Tide partners for their comments, and the key elements that came out were:

- Authentic partnership
- Community ownership
- Going with the energy/starting small

He asked: how then can QPSW support this?

An update on Quaker World Relations Committee work

Ann Floyd, Clerk to BYM's Quaker World Relations Committee gave an update on its work since her report at QAIG 2018 – see the presentation on qaig.org.uk

She reminded QAIG about the QWRC remit:

Enriching understanding between BYM and Friends worldwide
Engaging Quakers in Britain on Quaker issues and concerns around the globe

She talked about QWRC's work in 2018, and plans for 2019 and beyond, including intervisitation plans.

FWCC World Gathering planned for Durban, SA 2023

Nancy Fee, Clerk to Pretoria Meeting, Southern Africa YM, gave an update on the plans for the FWCC World Gathering provisionally planned for June/July 2023, Durban, hosted by SAYM.

- The theme will be discerned by the FWCC Central Executive Committee at its meeting in Toronto in June 2019.
- Likely to be 800 – 1000 people
- first meeting of the Local Arrangements Committee at Southern Africa YM in April 2019
- SAYM keen to have a strong African/Southern Africa input, involving all 8 countries in SAYM
- SAYM is unprogrammed Qs – but plenty of singing!
- All will be welcomed, and invited in due course
- SAYM – and FWCC World Office– are small, so will be looking to Friends for assistance and support

There was a query whether Ki Swahili would be one of the languages used.

Other reports

1. Margaret Gregory has provided an update on the Election Monitoring in the Democratic Republic Congo (see qaig.org.uk);
2. Carole Rakodi has provided an update report on the Peace Centre, Cape Town (see qaig.org.uk). Nancy Fee mentioned that Peace Centre Cape Town members had been invited to SAYM in April 2019 to continue the dialogue on their work;
3. David Albert, Friendly Water for the World (<https://friendlywater.net>) has invited offers of partnership/working together to Quaker charities working in sub-Saharan Africa.

Project presentation

Marian Liebman spoke about her work on restorative justice in Uganda (see the presentation at qaig.org.uk). She gave background on the principles and process of restorative justice, outlined 3 projects, and offered some thoughts about achievements and pitfalls.

Lunch provided an opportunity to network and look at information

Discussion topics in two groups

1. Capacity building, facilitated by Tobi Wellner

a. What does capacity building mean to you?

- Ability/capacity to do things
- Local partners translating/technical capacity to do what is necessary
- Partners should be able to identify needs and real purpose, including analyse, planning, management, implementation
- Partners should bring skills in governance and accountability to the community
- A key stone of community work is the '11th Commandment': development is a two way process
- Capacity building is a key issue for fundraising
- We should be development partners, not donors to communities
- Example of Quaker work in Sierra Leone: establishment of a college, but BYM QPSW critical of funding request, re needing much greater detail at the planning stage
- Project account: essential to get project accounting and finances in good order, "right ordering"
- Tensions between what the community wants, and the demands of paperwork/external donors

Key Capacities and Skills

- Concentrate on areas where capacity is weak
- Importance of inspirational leaders to a movement (empowerment?)
- Accountability and accounts/financials
- Election monitoring in Uganda: money spent on activities but poor accounting. Use of daily accounting app.
- Capacity building: training, skill development as a positive and upward development
- Negative mind set: rather, focus on skill enhancement
- Congo Partnership water supply issues: women not much involved in management, despite carrying the water. Women wanted a focus on literacy needs. Project sustainability: small water change to families, to ensure funds for repairs and maintenance
-

b. Who builds capacity?

- QAIG: we should undertake skill mapping among ourselves, so skills can be shared and further developed
- Skills need to be developed locally, local skill empowerment
- Cooperatives have a role
- Capacity building.... for what, exactly?

- Local partners, well connected into local development, CSO networks
- Infrastructure not there in Africa to meet the (UK) Charity Commission Requirements
- Essential that trust be built and maintained between the UK and African groups in the project.

2. Climate change: facilitated by Lee Taylor

We used a process called ‘concentric circle discussion’ to consider the following questions:

- a. what are your experiences of how climate change is impacting people in Africa?
- b. How much are those you work with in Africa concerned with climate change issues?
- c. What are the main spiritual challenges you encounter around sustainability?
- d. Where do you find joy in your sustainability journey?
- e. How does your Quaker faith inspire you to take action on climate change?
- f. What can we, as British Friends living in a high emitting country, do to help achieve the changes needed?
- g. How can QAIG help to achieve the changes needed?

Worship sharing

In worship sharing, the following ministries were shared:

- What joy can we find in our own experience of grappling with sustainability? Early Quakers found joy in tough matters;
- One of the best things we can do is to develop the capacity to listen, to influence, to change;
- Our collective effort to change could be described as mystical or magical;
- Thanks for the ways Quakers are bearing witness (in Africa) – perhaps more obvious in this kind of network than in our local Meetings;
- Useful to think about sustainability on a global/bigger level, whilst also grappling with it on a local/personal level;
- Quaker Congo Partnership has found the network a valuable place for sharing rather than ‘searching for answers in a vacuum’, although noting that one group’s way may not be someone else’s. The huge amount of involvement and work from small groups all around the country is impressive;
- Deep appreciation of the skills and wisdom of those in the room – albeit still many questions to confront/answer;
- The network is helpful in clarifying ways to think about matters such as sustainability and capacity building;
- The question: ‘how does our Quaker faith inspire me/us to.....’ – possibly it’s more of a sense of being nudged as A&Q 1 suggests. Ludwig’s comments in the video underpinned this;
- Lucy Duncan, AFSC, always comments that people doing humanitarian work need a lot of support, commiseration etc

Evaluation and next steps

Much of the evaluation came through the worship sharing.

- Yet again, we noted that there were few younger F/fs at QAIG: how best to involve?

Perhaps a link up with YFGM and/or inviting younger F/fs who are involved in work or projects in Africa.

- Sharing information – how about posters?
- Can QAIG help foster more involvement in countries like Namibia or Sierra Leone, noting the small number of Quakers in each country? We recognise we are a network, so QAIG's major function is to link/inform/share.

We agreed to hold another meeting at about the same time of year – and to see if another location might work for us. Manchester or Westminster Meetings?

We could offer a letter of support to those wanting to seek funding from their Local or Area Meetings if cost is an issue.

Would an article in The Friend be useful?

BYM: we were reminded that Eden Grace, FUM, is giving the Swarthmore Lecture on the spiritual basis of sustainability, and about the two QWRC invited guests: Ludwig bon Quirog (Philippines) and Arne Springorum (Prague Recognised Meeting). There may also be at least one African visitor from Kenya.

BYM's Q World Relation Committee's email network: all QAIG members were invited to join this network to share information – contact Michael Booth, QWRC secretary, michaelsb@quaker.org.uk

LT

February 2019.

Appendix: what to do if a programme gets into major difficulty (advice from Michael Booth)

- Individuals in the UK organisation can seek personal support from their own elders and overseers;
- Issues around reputational damage and the urgent closing of a programme should be discussed with the Friends House contact. They can advise, for instance, on how to handle unwelcome press attention;
- Other QAIG members may have experience in managing a similar crisis which they would be glad to share;
- It is very helpful to have trusted contacts in the recipient country who are not members of the partner organisation/s but do know it or the context.
-