

One World Action is twenty-one

A short history

By Derek Tutchell



ONE WORLD
ACTION
FOR A JUST AND EQUAL WORLD



Glenys Kinnock and Torre, the brother of Bernt Carlsson, at the launch of The Bernt Carlsson Trust, December 1989

The story of One World Action starts with the founding of One World. In 1986 Glenys Kinnock, who had long had an interest in Third World Development (as it was then known), decided that what was needed was a campaign within the Labour party to develop greater awareness of this issue.

Having been a very active member of the Party for so many years and having the encouragement of the then Leader of the Opposition, her husband Neil, she was in a position to approach a number of members of the Party and seek their support and help in setting up that campaign. Notable among these early supporters were Joan Lester, MP for Eccles, and Joan Ruddock, MP for Greenwich. In addition she sought the support of the Trades Unions and chief among those who responded were

Ron Todd, then General Secretary of the T&GWU and Tony Clarke (now Lord Clarke), then Asst. General Secretary of the CWU. The primary aim of the campaign was to make members of the Labour Party and the Trade Unions aware of the need for disadvantaged people in poor nations to take control of their own development with material, support and advice from the developed world.

Tony Clarke writes

▶ *For a time following my retirement from what was then the CWU I had the privilege of working as a volunteer in the offices of One World Action. My role was simple: it was to lobby trades unions*

to affiliate to One World Action. Most unions were very cooperative and a reminder each year would bring in financial support. Help for the developing world is still of major importance to Trade Unions and I hope the relationship between One World Action and our unions will remain as it is, a relationship of concern and assistance to those who need our support. What I remember most from the days I spent in the office is how a relatively small group of dedicated people went about the planning and implementation of the various partnership projects in a number of countries I shall always be grateful to those good people who showed me such patience as I tried to work on a PC. As a paid up member of the Quill Pen Society I never wanted to become involved in the IT revolution, but thanks to those friends I can even send and receive E-Mails. Texting on the mobile is still a bit of a mystery. Perhaps I should pop in to the One World Action office to get assistance.

With a dedicated management committee and secretary/administrator, Jane Winder, the campaign flourished and after a few changes of premises settled down at an office provided by Camden Labour Party. Here early in 1989 it was decided to found a development charity using the experience gained in order to reach out to a wider audience and in the autumn of that year The Bernt Carlsson Trust was founded. The first project to receive help was in Namibia and so it was decided to name the charity after the UN High Commissioner for Namibia who, while on his way to New York for the signing of the Namibian settlement, was killed in the Lockerbie air disaster.

In December of 1989 the Bernt Carlsson Trust was launched. Glenys Kinnock was

its Chair with Jane Winder as Director and Derek Tutchell, a volunteer as Administrator, support and extra aid coming from the Management Committee of One World.

1990 passed with the establishment and development of the charity running in tandem with the continued existence of One World by now a valued voice for development within the Labour Party and Trade Unions and the advent of two experienced and highly knowledgeable staff who had previously worked for War on Want, Andy Rutherford who is the present Head of International Partnerships, was responsible for One World Action's Asia partners and Paul Robson was responsible for work with partners in Africa.

This was a 100% expansion of staff! Andy and Paul were to spend their time and energy on the viability of the Bernt Carlsson Trust, Derek worked full time for One World whilst Jane divided her time between the charity and the campaign. It was a busy, energising time in a small crowded room backed by a very supportive management committee with Glenys as its Chair. By the beginning of 1991 the charity was working with partner organisations in Namibia, Cape Verde Islands, Angola, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, Mozambique, Sri Lanka, Western Sahara, South Africa and the Philippines and there was an urgent need for more staff and larger premises.

Later that year they both were accomplished. With the financial help of a generous supporter both organizations moved into offices in Hatton Gardens, four rooms instead of one. Now with the change of address came a change of name. That of Bernt Carlsson was honourable but a title more descriptive of our aims was needed – so why not name it after the campaign from which it sprang? Thus was born One World Action and a Statement of Aims written down:



One World Action at the 1991 Labour Party Conference with Joan Ruddock, Jane Winder, Tessa Blackstone, Glenys Kinnock, Ken Follett, Joan Lestor and Brenda Dean

One World Action is a partnership between the poorest and most exploited people in the South and those in the North who share their vision of a better, more equal world. One World Action believes in taking bold radical steps to end poverty, inequality and injustice and supports those who challenge the unequal distribution of the world's resources.

**Jane Winder,
the first Director writes**

▶ *One World Action's work is based on the simple idea that governments can and do cause poverty. If governments are the problem, what can Development Agencies do? Our answer is to support*

grass roots organizations which work with people to improve their lives and become active citizens. Throughout the world, countries with democratic institutions, whose citizens have full range of legal rights, are misgoverned. Services which would make a crucial difference to health, to the environment and to opportunity are either not organized or weakly organized by local and national authorities. Taxes, when paid, just vanish. Incoming Aid, at national level, disappears too. External pressure will not solve this problem. The answer can only come from people themselves exercising their rights. One World Action works to encourage and support them. ◀

So with the new title and new premises came the additional staff, not many but two who were integral to the continued success of One World Action – Andrea Pitter, a very successful fundraiser who sadly died in 2005 and is remembered with affection, and Helen O’Connell, an experienced and influential campaigner well respected in the NGO world whose post was Policy coordinator and who later became Head of Policy until her departure in 2009 and has since been awarded an OBE for her work in promoting gender equality in development.

Helen O’Connell says

▶ *It was One World Action’s commitment to working for women’s rights and gender equity that enticed me to join the staff in 1993.*

This commitment stemmed from the recognition that progress towards justice and human rights for all women and men, girls and boys, regardless of social or ethnic background, ability or other differences, was fundamental to achieving equitable and sustainable development in poor, and rich, countries. Our partnerships with civil society, feminist and women’s organizations in Africa, Asia and Latin America and our policy and advocacy alliances in Europe with like-minded organizations were inspired by this shared desire to challenge injustice and build a more equal world. There have been many successes but more remains to be done. ◀

Meanwhile One World, the political campaign, continued its work within the Labour movement. Stalls were operating and fringe meetings organized at Labour Party conferences and many of the Trade



Claire Short visits the One World Action stall at the 1993 Labour Party conference

Union conferences during the early 90s. The campaign was also the focal point of local Labour party and development group meetings during these years, varying from a dozen people in deepest Dorset to a hundred or more in Bristol.

In July 1993 One World Action moved again – this time to a larger suite of offices near Smithfield Market. More room was needed because later in the year One World Action merged with the development charity The Nicaragua Health Fund, whose Chair Alf Dubbs joined the management committee and whose co-ordinator, Hazel Plunkett joined the staff to work with Central American partners.

Another milestone at this time was the issue of the first publication to be undertaken by One World Action – *Cape Verde, The Challenge of Change* by Paul Robson. This has been followed over the years by the issue of over 50 publications plus scores of newsletters, pamphlets, leaflets and annual, action and seminar reports. An



Helen O'Connell, author of *Equality Postponed*, with Jon Snow at the book launch in 1996

In our fifth year of existence OWA/NHF was in association with 31 Trade Unions and was present at eight Trade Union conferences and both the Labour and Liberal party conferences which included holding fringe meetings and running stalls. Alongside these were seminars and conferences organized either by One World Action alone or in partnership with other NGOs and agencies and also a full programme of social and sponsored sporting events to encourage more support and raise funds.

Perhaps the most notable of these were the annual gatherings at the Red Fort restaurant in Soho hosted by Amin Ali and well-known supporters such as Emma Thompson, Jon Snow, Rory Bremner and Juliet Stephenson. Annual receptions hosted by the Swedish ambassador were also held which recalled the founding of One World Action through the Bernt Carlsson Trust at which such valued supporters as Richard Attenborough and Ben Elton gave the key address and at which an annual award, the Sir Sigmund Sternberg Award was presented – an award given to individuals or partners who had

acknowledgement must be made here of the support in finance and expertise given by the Centurion Press and its owner David Evans (now Lord Evans).



A fringe event at the 1997 Labour Party conference chaired by Robin Day, addressed by Tony and Cherie Blair



Actress Emma Thompson arriving at the Red Fort

done much to further the aims of One World Action. This award ceremony later transferred to South Africa House and memorably featured Lenny Henry.

Most important of course was that by the fifth anniversary there was financial aid and expertise being shared with over 20 partners in 15 countries world wide. It is probably apposite here to quote Elisio Rodrigues, the Director of Citi-Habitat a One World Action partner in Cape Verde.

**Elisio Rodrigues,
Director of Citi-Habitat**

▶ *The partnership with One World Action is based on respect, solidarity and the wish to transform local development and make it globally applicable in a just and harmonious way. It is a partnership that looks for solutions for the most disadvantaged and excluded, through active participation and a real exercise of citizenship by those who, due to poor conditions, have less 'voice'.* ◀

There was one casualty of this era of expansion, activity and success and that was the older development campaign One World. There was too much overlap between that and One World Action and too much misunderstanding and confusion so One World closed and disappeared into the archives!

Glenys Kinnock was first elected as an MEP in 1994 and ceased being Chair of the Management Committee becoming President of the charity. One World Action now had at its head someone directly involved with Europe and development. There is little doubt that this and the expertise of the staff allowed One World Action to exert influence within development affairs over and above its weight. Small it may have been but unknown it was not.

By its 10th anniversary One World Action was in its fourth and present set of offices in Islington. A gift of a five year lease had



Children in the Musseques, Luanda (Angola)



A fringe meeting at the 2001 Labour Party conference

funded the move in 1997. By 1999 and 10 years old the income of the charity was £1,711,000 (in December 1989 there was £500 in the Bernt Carlsson account) and by then One World Action was working with 33 partners in nine countries in Asia, Africa and Central America. With this growth there was also need to strengthen the financial administration of One World Action. With the appointment of Gareth Richards as full time Head of Finance and IT came stability and confidence in that department.

Having guided One World Action through 11 years of successful achievement Jane Winder, its founding director decided to change direction and resigned to take up the position of Chair of a Primary Health Trust in East London. Her successor was Graham Bennett whose extensive experience included work with VSO, field work in the Philippines and Director of Information at Amnesty International.

There was now also a change in personnel within the Trustees and One World Action said farewell to the Chair, Mary Chadwick, one of its strongest supporters and welcomed Eric Lovett, a national organizer in the CWU, in her place. After five years valuable service he was followed by Maureen Donnelly and then the present Chair of Trustees Tess Gill. The Trustees, usually twelve in number, act as a Management Committee, sounding board and advisory body and are a valuable and integral part of One World Action.

Participation in and organising seminars and conferences has continued but in the last eight years or so as great an emphasis has been given to participation in standing committees, workshops, round tables or on going consultative and advisory bodies. The content and agenda of such have been varied but an on going priority for One World Action has been to focus on gender, equality and women's rights. A quote from

One World Action's Action Report for 2002/3 sums up why; 70% of people living in extreme poverty are women; two thirds of school age children in the developing world without access to education are girls; one in every three women globally has experienced violence in an intimate relationship; globally women hold only 13.7% of seats in national parliaments.

In its 20th year, 2009, One World Action was working with over 40 partners in 16 countries (see Appendix A) and employed a staff of 17 assisted by a number of volunteers and it is fair to say continues to enjoy a reputation well in excess of its size. Having started in 1989 with £500 it now had an income of over £3,000,000 of which 90% went towards the programme and policy work and 10% towards administration and fund raising. Earlier in this story were some words from one of our earliest partners in Africa and here is a quote from one of our longer established partners in Asia, Zakir Hossain, Co-ordinator of Nagorik Uddyog of Bangladesh.

Zakir Hossain, Co-ordinator of Nagorik Uddyog

▶ We started working with One World Action in 1996. We aim to get social and gender justice for the poorest women in rural Bangladesh by working in communities at grassroots level. Our experience has been that there are other agencies operating in Bangladesh who do not really practice the true partnership ethos. When I met Andy Rutherford in 1996 he explained the vision and mission of One World Action. He listened to our experience and approach of how to promote human rights in Bangladesh, rather than imposing One World Action's own beliefs on us. He said that Nagorik Uddyog understand the needs of Bangladesh people better than a donor agency and our relationship has always been on this basis. This is the true nature of partnership. ◀



Partners in Nagorik Uddyog (Bangladesh)

And finally a quote from a more recent partner in the third region in which One World Action is involved, Latin America.

Sandra Darce, President of FEMUCADI (Federation of Women with Different Capacities) writes

▶ *The project has enabled us to generate awareness and empower women with disabilities. It has helped to build their capacity on political advocacy, citizenship, gender awareness and development of activities that generate confidence and security for the families of the women members of the federation. One World Action is respectful of its partner's democratic structure. Thanks to One World Action's support, the Board of Directors and the disabled women's organizations that are part of FEMUCADI have been empowered and have developed an ethical working relationship of solidarity.* ◀

In July 2010, after almost 10 years as Director, Graham Bennett resigned. Over that period One World Action has become much more focused on women's rights and empowerment in One World Action's work and he felt it was time to leave space for the next phase of the organization. It was ten years of dedicated work across Africa, Asia and Latin America with successes in lobbying and advocacy work. He also had not recovered as much as he would have liked from his operation in 2009 and felt the need for some real rest.

So as One World Action enters its 21st year, it has an Acting Director in the person of Andy Rutherford. Andy has been the Head of International Partnerships for the last 20 years. In February 2011, One World Action welcomes its new Director, Hannah Davies, who brings with her a wealth of experience from working in media and education, and in the United Nations. Hannah will oversee the continuing work and development of One World Action in the coming years.



Glenys Kinnock with Emily Sikazwe (Women for Change, Zambia) and Ana Maria Encina (ACOBOL, Bolivia) at One World Action's 20th anniversary celebrations, November 2009

At the beginning of this short history you will have read the original mission statement. This has been regularly revisited and updated and now reads:

OUR VISION

A Just and Equal World, where there is full gender justice and no need for One World Action

OUR MISSION

To create the power and opportunity for the poorest women and men to transform their own lives, and to challenge the policies that make and keep them poor.

OUR VALUES

- ▶ We will work alongside partners, South and North, in ways that respect different perspectives and build on strengths of diversity and solidarity.
- ▶ We will work directly with genuine people's organizations that are democratically accountable to their communities and committed to engagements with their governments and elected representatives.
- ▶ We will pursue a feminist approach to development, that promotes and respects women's rights in our work and our own organization, and challenges all forms of oppression and unjust use of power.
- ▶ We will address explicitly the power imbalance that exists between ourselves as a source of funds and our Southern partners as 'beneficiaries'.
- ▶ We will continue to explicitly reject the field office/expatriate approach; we don't need or want fleets of vehicles or the other symbols of power.
- ▶ We will put into practice principles of openness, accountability, transparency, good governance and democracy in our partnerships and our own organization and behaviours.

The final words are those of the founder and now President of One World Action.

Glenys Kinnock

▶ *If anyone has to say to me what kind of things in your life would you be proud of, I'd have to say that One World Action would be up there as something I am really proud of being associated with. It is a very special NGO because it never deviates from its values and principles. It is about making a commitment to an equal world, to justice – social justice, and equality. It is about a vision that we share, and certainly we recognize that gender rights are something that are central to the objectives that we have. We will move forward... we will have new challenges to meet together.* ◀

Appendix A

One World Action's Programmes and Policy Partners as of 2010

Africa

Angola

LUPP (Citizens' participation in Basic & essential services)

Development Workshop

Malawi

COWLHA (Women working and living with HIV/Aids)

CAPLWHA (People working & living with HIV/Aids)

MANET+ (HIV positive women & men)

Malawi National Women's Lobby and Rights Group

Mozambique

MULEIDE (Women working on law and Development)

South Africa

ON PAR Development CC

Tanzania

Children's Dignity Forum

Equality for Growth

Women's Legal Aid Centre

Zambia

SALAN (Legal assistance)

Women for Change

Zambia National Women's Lobby

Asia

Bangladesh

Nagorik Uddyog (Rights to information Campaign)

Bangladesh Dalit Human Rights (BDHR)

Partnership of Women in Action

Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement (BDERM)

Dalit Women's Forum (DWF)

Cambodia

Cambodian Independent Teachers' Association

COMFREL (Works for free & fair elections)

Free Trade Union

India

Participatory Research in Asia

Self Employed Women's Association

Navayana

National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR)

Philippines

Institute for Popular Democracy

Institute of Politics and Government

Europe

KARAT Coalition, Poland

Gender Studies, Czech Republic

Slovak Centre for Communication and Development (SCCD), Slovakia

AUR – A.N.S.R.U, Romania

Gender Education, Research and Technologies

Foundation (GERT), Bulgaria

Latin America

Bolivia

ACOBOL

El Salvador

Las Melidas

ASCES

COMUCES

COMUS

Collectiva Feminista

Guatemala

Tierra Viva

Honduras

CEM – H

Nicaragua

Grupo Venancia

FEMUCADI

IMMUN

Procurator for Disabled Peoples Rights

Appendix B

Networks in which OWA has been represented and active since 2000

BOND (British Platform of CSOs)

CONCORD (European Platform of CSOs)

Open Forum for Development Effectiveness

SOLIDAR

UKAN (UK Aid Network)

Asia-Europe People's Forum

Dalit Solidarity Network UK

International Dalit Solidarity Network

CIVICUS

People's Health Movement

Trade Justice Movement

WIDE (Women in Development Europe)

CIFCA (Network of European NGOs working in Central America)

UK Gender & Development Network

Pathways of Women's Empowerment (IDS)

CAWN (Central America Women's Network)



Derek Tutchell retired from teaching in July 1989 and in September started working as a volunteer for One World, a development agency rooted in the Labour party with Glenys Kinnock as its Chair and Jane Winder its Secretary. In the autumn of 1990 One World's small office in Camden became overpopulated and overworked with the appointment of extra members of staff and the founding of a development charity, the Bernt Carlsson Trust, within a short time to become One World Action. Derek became a waged member of One

World which lasted until 1997 when One World disappeared into the archives. He then joined One World Action and worked in various capacities and at various tasks until leaving paid employment in 2004 and becoming a volunteer once again. He still works as a volunteer when a need arises.

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December 2010

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