EUROPEAN AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Connecting Scotland Inquiry:
Third sector – international development organisations

Thursday 21 May 2015
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CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Col.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductions and Welcome</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of the International Development Sector in Scotland</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Projects and Humanitarian Response</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy and Advocacy Work</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Learning Project and the International Development Education Sector in Scotland</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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- Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP)
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- Anne Kane (Oxfam and International Development Education Association of Scotland)
- Susan McIntosh (Scotdec Global Learning Centre)
- Samantha Ross (Link Community Development International)
- Gillian Wilson (Network of International Development Organisations in Scotland)
- Tanya Wisely (International Development Education Association of Scotland)
European and External Relations Committee

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[Introductions and Welcome]

The Convener (Christina McKelvie): Good morning. I welcome everyone to the European and External Relations Committee. This is a slightly different format for us—we are getting a bit of a reputation for doing things a bit differently, so we like to do that. The broadcasting team are filming the event and the official report staff are here, so our witnesses might get a wee note passed to them asking about a word or phrase that they have used or where a quote was from. I get that kind of note all the time, anyway.

We are delighted to have our witnesses along this morning, and we will have all the committee members here—Jamie McGrigor will be along presently. We will have four presentations from the Network of International Development Organisations in Scotland, or NIDOS; the International Development Education Association of Scotland, or IDEAS; and the Scotdec global learning centre.

We will begin with everybody around the table introducing themselves. I am the member of the Scottish Parliament for Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse, and I am the convener of the committee.

Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab): Good morning. I am a Labour Party member for the Glasgow region.

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): I am the Scottish National Party member for Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley.

Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP): I am the SNP MSP for North East Fife.

Anne McTaggart (Glasgow) (Lab): I am a member for the Glasgow region.

Anne Kane (Oxfam and International Development Education Association of Scotland): Hello. I work with Oxfam Scotland and I am here representing IDEAS, the network for development education in Scotland.

Susan McIntosh (Scotdec Global Learning Centre): I work with Scotdec, which is one of the six development education centres in Scotland, and I am representing IDEAS, too.

Tanya Wisely (International Development Education Association of Scotland): I am the co-ordinator of IDEAS.

Sarah Freeman (Network of International Development Organisations in Scotland): I am the policy and communications support officer at NIDOS.

Samantha Ross (Link Community Development International): I am the international programme director for Link Community Development International, which is a member of NIDOS.

Gillian Wilson (Network of International Development Organisations in Scotland): I am the chief executive of NIDOS.

The Convener: I make the usual request that mobile phones be switched off or put in flight mode so that they do not interfere with broadcasting.
Overview of the International Development Sector in Scotland

09:03

The Convener: As I said, we will have four presentations this morning. The first will be an overview of the international development sector and will be delivered by Gillian Wilson. We will have children from Balgreen primary school coming in at about 10.20, so we will conduct that session a wee bit differently from this round-table session—everything is going to be different this morning.

First up is Gillian Wilson. We look forward to your presentation, Gillian—the floor is yours.

Gillian Wilson: Thank you very much for inviting us. We would welcome any questions as we go along. I will give a brief presentation about NIDOS and the sector, our membership and the kind of activity that is going on. That relates to the first aim of the committee's inquiry, which is to map the activities, but I will also say a bit about the second and third aims.

NIDOS is an umbrella body and a network with a membership of 116 international development organisations. They are primarily non-governmental organisations, but we also have some university departments. We are 15 years old this year—we started in 2000. Our overall mission is:

"To strengthen the contributions of Scottish organisations to tackling inequality and poverty worldwide."

When we say “Scottish organisations”, we are thinking about not only our members but all stakeholders in Scotland. We are happy to work with not only our members but other partners and stakeholders in Scotland.

So what do we—the hub or agency—do as opposed to what the members do? We are trying to achieve in three key areas: helping to build members’ effectiveness, promoting networking and collaboration and providing a platform for collective policy work.

I have a few slides about what is happening in our sector, how big we are, who we are and what we do. Our 116 member organisations work in 142 countries around the world and raise a total of about £117 million per year. That is an estimate and is not based on exact figures because some of our large cross-border organisations such as Oxfam and Christian Aid do not necessarily have specific figures for Scotland. I have therefore used a small percentage of their overall figures as an estimate of their Scottish contribution. However, the figures that we can track through the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator show that even our small organisations raise £43 million per year. That is an absolute figure that we know for definite, and it is a lot of money.

Between our members, there are 300 staff, over 3,000 volunteers and tens of thousands of financial and other supporters and activists in Scotland. We are very glad that there is such a lot of commitment to and support for international development and global justice issues.

We have a few not-for-profit organisations among our members, which means that we have a few social enterprises in the network. We have some universities, too, which are the not-for-profit, large ones. The vast majority of our full members—non-governmental organisations—are small, with a turnover of under £100,000 per year. The figures for “Developing”, “Medium” and “Large” on the slide relate to the larger organisations. There is, therefore, a preponderance of small organisations, many of which might be working with one community or in one country and doing project work abroad.

Our members cover many different areas of work, and the statistics show which ones have preponderance: education and health are the big sectors. However, many members also work on gender, HIV, livelihoods, agriculture and types of small business activity, so there is a mixture of activity.

On the contribution that our members make to the Scottish Government’s aid programme, a large proportion of our members are securing grants out of the different programmes. For example, in the Malawi programme, probably about 56 percent of the funding is typically granted to members of NIDOS and they receive a much higher proportion from the sub-Saharan Africa programme and the south Asia programme. A high number of our members also receive grants from the small grants programme. I think that that relates to the fact that we, as a sector, are looking at standards and effectiveness and trying to improve the way in which we do development work, which shows in application results and who secures funding. Our members make an important contribution to the aid programme.

The second question in the committee’s paper for organisations such as ours is about whether we are effective and how we could be more effective. I think that our sector is very collaborative. Over the past few years, our members have been involved in a number of collaborative campaigning programmes—for example, the enough food for everyone if campaign—and there has been a lot of engagement on, for example, climate justice issues through Stop Climate Chaos Scotland. There have been many other such collaborative ventures, and a lot of our members also work with
the academic sector, business and Government agencies both here and abroad. There is lot of collaboration.

Within NIDOS, we have developed an effectiveness toolkit that can be accessed online on our homepage. We developed it specifically to enable small organisations to strengthen their self-reflection and reviews of their work in terms of both their approach—for example, whether they are taking a human rights-based approach as opposed to a philanthropic approach—and practical things such as governance, monitoring and evaluation, people management and financial management. As a network, we provide a lot of support for our members around those things.

We have brought along an exhibition called “Scotland v Poverty” to show the impact of our members. I hope that the committee will have a few minutes to look at it when we have a break. There is also an online version of the exhibition. The online exhibition features 26 stories about the impact of our members’ work, with case studies of the work of 26 organisations detailing the impacts on individual people and communities. That is a good way of seeing how lives have been improved. Please have a look at it online.

We are collaborating with some of the other networks in Scotland, including the Scotland Malawi Partnership, the Scottish Fair Trade Forum and IDEAS, the global education network, which is represented here today. We have also been working closely with universities through our university members and through events and networking activities. We obviously work closely with the Scottish Government, the Department for International Development and funders, because we want to ensure that agencies that might be headquartered outside Scotland take notice of the dynamic and active sector in Scotland and engage with us. We have worked hard—with increasing success—to get DFID to engage with and pay attention to what is going on in Scotland. We have also worked with Comic Relief and, to a slightly lesser extent, the Big Lottery Fund.

During the referendum, we worked with the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations and its policy committee, and we continue to do so to ensure that the domestic debate includes something about international development. We do the same thing in the NGO sector and we have recently developed a relationship with the Poverty Alliance, which represents the anti-poverty sector in Scotland. That work is particularly important with regard to the sustainable development goals, which will be a universal framework. We want to have a joined-up conversation about tackling poverty here and abroad.

There are three key ways in which our members work. Projects abroad are one of the significant ways of working. It is the kind of work that many of you will have interacted with at various times, and it involves people working across the world on the various topics that I have spoken about.

A number of our members, including the International Institute for Environment and Development, which has a significant office in Scotland, carry out research. They also undertake policy and advocacy work within the countries in which they work—their staff work abroad with partners in those places—as well as here in Scotland and the UK and at a European level.

The third way in which many of our members work is through global education, working with the formal and informal education sector and with adults as well, trying to raise awareness of and engagement with global justice issues.

Those are the three key ways in which many of our members work.

At this point, I will hand over to Samantha Ross.

The Convener: Before that, I invite committee members to ask questions.

Gillian Wilson: Sorry—I had forgotten that we were doing it like that.

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I am sorry for not being here when you started your presentation. Is there duplication between you and UK organisations, or do you work completely separately?

Gillian Wilson: There are four UK networks. Bond, which is based in London, is the original one—it is sort of the mother of us all. There is then our network in Scotland, a network in Wales and a network in Northern Ireland. The four organisations are part of something called the UK alliance. We collaborate closely but we are all autonomous. We meet every six months to consider strategy and certain areas of work that we have collaborated on. At our next meeting, on 2 June, we will look strategically at upcoming policy and ask how we can engage with Westminster in a constructive and collective way.

Each of the four networks concentrates on a different Parliament or Assembly. The key focus of NIDOS is the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government, and the other networks engage with the bodies in their areas, but we collaborate on collective, UK-wide issues. For example, we have worked closely with Bond on the sustainable development goal framework. Our effectiveness programme has some common elements, too. There is really good collaboration, but we are distinct and are involved in complementary areas of work.
Hanzala Malik: I have a couple of questions. First, how do you identify the countries in which you wish to work?

Gillian Wilson: NIDOS is a hub, so it does not work abroad at all; we are merely a platform. Our members choose the countries in which they work in a number of ways. Some of the very small organisations might base their choice on personal interaction and relationships. For example, someone might have made contact with a particular person or community through the internet or through travel. Students may have come here, or people may have volunteered abroad, and when they come back they want to continue the relationship and build on the work that they did as a volunteer.

Some of the bigger organisations would be approached by organisations in various different countries, or they would look strategically at their area of expertise and ask which countries have significant problems in their field. They might focus on low-income countries or areas of conflict—for humanitarian response organisations, that is obviously determined by the problem.

Hanzala Malik: Secondly, I understand that you and your members work with the Department for International Development. There is a new United Nations budget for education in south Asia, led by Gordon Brown. Are we tapping into that resource at all?

Gillian Wilson: I do not know whether any of our members are. Our network is not, but I would be happy to look into that—in fact, I was not aware of such a budget.

Hanzala Malik: A substantial amount of money is now being spent on encouraging education in south Asia. Perhaps some of our charities could tap into that to enhance what they are trying to achieve. Some of them are working on education in certain areas, so that would be helpful.

Gillian Wilson: That is great.

Anne McTaggart: Thank you very much for the presentation, Gillian—it was wonderful.

How can Scotland better ensure policy coherence between its policies and the international development agenda?

Gillian Wilson: There are a number of ways to do that. Sarah Freeman will say a lot more about it in her presentation, so I will not say everything.

We believe that it is important that we do not give with one hand through aid and then take the money back through other policies that other parts of Government are undertaking. One way of trying to achieve more policy coherence is to set up some sort of review lens or process whereby other parts of Government can look at their policies and assess them in terms of the impact that they might have internationally—the same as with an environmental impact assessment, a gender review or any other kind of lens. We have been calling for that, and saying that it would be useful for the Scottish Government to set up a structural process to examine some of its other policies in the light of international development outcomes.

We are very pleased that the Scottish Government is focusing on global justice. In some areas, policies are already very coherent. On climate change, for example, the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 is very ambitious, and there is real action across many different departments to try to reduce emissions in Scotland. Tackling climate change is a very coherent activity, because it adds value to the aid programme through the climate justice fund and the work that is done through the international aid programme. Climate change is obviously affecting many of the communities with which many of our members are working. We would like to see more of that coherent activity. That is the bigger-picture coherence that we are talking about when we use the phrase “policy coherence for development.”

Another area that IDEAS will be speaking about is global education. Again, we are acting on a domestic agenda of raising awareness among our children and the community to ask what our role is as global citizens in the world with regard to what we consume and the way that we live our lives. That is a domestic activity, but it has an important international impact and can add value to an aid programme.

There are other examples, and there are areas in which we have been trying to seek extra coherence—for example, through the bill that became the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014. In that area we have not had quite as much purchase and progress, and we would like to push that agenda. A number of our agencies are working alongside other coalitions to pursue 10 asks on procurement. I would be happy to send you some details on that if you are interested.

There are ways in which other departments can engage directly in supporting the aid programme, such as teacher exchanges or parliamentary exchanges. Those things are great and very welcome, and they are, to some extent, about policy coherence. However, we are pushing in particular an even bigger agenda in other areas of domestic policy, and doing things domestically that bring added value.

Willie Coffey: My question is similar to Anne McTaggart’s. How is collaboration achieved at a European level? We are the European and External Relations Committee, so we are always interested in what our partner member states are
doing in the European Union. Looking at Mr Juncker’s 10-point plan for growth, I struggled to find tackling poverty in there, which is a disappointment. How do you engage with European member states to try to get a co-ordinated European approach to tackling poverty?

Gillian Wilson: There is a network of networks in Europe—such as our networks, Bond and NIDOS—called Concord. There are networks similar to ours in the NGO sector in each of the European countries, and they collaborate under that umbrella. Concord engages to a great extent with European policy. That is its focus. It has been running campaigns on sustainable development goals and on policy coherence for development. That coherence is much more advanced in some European countries—for example, Sweden and Belgium have been using the policy coherence approach for a number of years.

We recently carried out a piece of research with our colleagues in six different European countries. Sarah Freeman has brought copies of that document if anyone is interested, and we are happy to send it to the committee. We were trying to learn what not only Government but the NGO sector has done in those six countries, and what approaches and learning there have been on policy coherence in tackling global poverty.

Many of the NGO networks have been pushing—as we have—for 0.7 per cent to be an accepted standard across Europe for spending on aid programmes. We know that many countries have reduced their levels of aid; there are organisations in Europe that are arguing against that and arguing for a 0.7 per cent target.

NIDOS does not have a huge capacity to lobby the European Parliament, so we do not do so, but we work alongside our European partners to ensure that there is a Scottish voice. Bond, which is a much bigger network and has much greater capacity, works directly with the European Parliament and the European country networks to try to push that agenda in Europe.

Roderick Campbell: Can you put the climate justice fund, and the grants and funding, in the context of funding overall? Is enough attention being paid to climate justice issues?

Gillian Wilson: We welcome the fact that the Scottish Government has a climate justice fund, because it is quite innovative, and not that many nations have such a fund. We would obviously love the fund to be bigger, but it is a very useful additional fund on top of the aid programme. It is doing the sort of work that the main aid programme is not doing, such as supporting communities with climate adaptation.

The projects that are funded through the climate justice fund have been focusing on supporting communities to be resilient in response to climate change. That involves addressing the most immediate areas such as water, food and agriculture, and looking ahead at adapting people’s livelihoods in response to climate change. The climate justice fund is a very different type of fund from the main grants fund, and we would love it to be an on-going programme that is able to grow.

I do not know whether that answers your question.

Roderick Campbell: Well, yes. I appreciate that that is on-going and that some want to see more. You have answered my question to a degree.

The Convener: Thank you very much for your presentation, Gillian, and for answering all those questions, some of which were technical.
International Projects and Humanitarian Response

09:25

The Convener: We move on to our second presentation, which is on international projects and humanitarian response. For this presentation, we have Samantha Ross, from Link Community Development—the floor is yours, Samantha.

Samantha Ross: Good morning. Through the lens of Link, I will talk about the project side of what Gillian Wilson has just been talking about. I think that that will show that what we do mirrors what other organisations do in their partner countries. Link is an NGO based in Edinburgh, and we work in four sub-Saharan African countries: Ghana, Ethiopia, Uganda and Malawi.

We work in the education sector and we would like to see a world where all children have access to quality education, with the emphasis on quality. We know that more children are getting into school but we want to ensure that they are actually learning something when they are in school. In the districts where Link works, the children obtain exam results that are, on average, 52 per cent higher than those elsewhere. That shows that the work that we are doing has an impact, which is great.

We have worked in those four countries for over 20 years, and have worked in more than 3,000 schools and impacted on nearly 2 million learners and their communities. We currently manage 14 projects across four countries and our main donors are DFID, the Scottish Government, Comic Relief, Voluntary Service Overseas and smaller trusts and foundations.

Typically, we have a four-way relationship in international development between the funders or donors who provide the resources, the headquarters or lead organisation—ours is based in Edinburgh—and our partner offices. We are fortunate to have Link partner offices in each of the four countries in which we work, so we are always working with the same lead partners in those countries. Those offices are independent offices and have their own boards to which they are answerable. We work with them as partners, apart from the office in Ethiopia, because of the restrictions on international development offices there. Those partner offices have very close relationships with their country’s ministry of education and the office is often situated in the district education office of the area where we work. We have very close relationships with the Governments that we work beside.

The typical process in a relationship is for donors to announce a proposal window or to approach an NGO directly when they know that the work that it does has a significant impact. I do not want to refer to us as the lead organisation, because we do not lead delivery, but our HQ organisation, if you like, in Edinburgh will apply for the funds and—we hope—be successful in winning them. When an application is made, we have to state that we have close connections with an office in the country where we want to do the work.

Having such connections obviously has great benefit and means that the work that we do will be more sustainable because we will be working within structures that are already in place in the country and will not be setting up parallel structures, which are expensive, time-consuming and often unnecessary; we will also have much stronger and better contextual knowledge of the area in which we are working and we will have better cultural understanding of how that country operates. Obviously, that all saves time, money and resources.

We will be working in a partner office that has links with its local district office, school or community, other learning institutions, hospitals, clinics or other local interest working groups that might have networks within the country, which can also make the work more contextual and sustainable. The Link partner office might also find its own funds and have its own links with Government. We are part of the complementary basic education network, and our partner offices independently apply for funds from their own Governments to run projects.

09:30

If we have a particularly big programme and we need additional expertise, we will look for additional partners in country. There might be one project with more than one local partner to do the in-country delivery, which makes it more contextual and adds cultural understanding.

The relationship also works backwards. In reporting back to the donors, the partner local office will collect all the data and will write the draft report and send it to the HQ office—although I do not like using that term—for editing and clarification and to adapt the report to the needs of the donors, demonstrating that we have met all the criteria that the donor requires.

I will unpack the roles a little bit more, and I will talk about this through the lens of Link Community Development. Starting with the northern role, we generally find the funds, because the north generally has slightly more money available. It is increasingly apparent, however, that sourcing
funds in country is becoming very important. The team in country needs to have the skill set and, importantly, the time to follow up on DFID Malawi funds or DFID Uganda funds. That requires a different skill set, which local offices need to work on more. The northern offices can support the local offices in carrying out that role.

The project funds cycle is slightly artificial, in that funds usually only go for three years. With Link, in order to demonstrate impact on education, it is necessary to follow a child throughout their primary schooling—we work in basic education. To demonstrate impact from standard 1 to standard 3 is completely artificial, and it will be very difficult to demonstrate any kind of improvement in the child’s learning. We really need to follow the child throughout the system, although that would mean a seven-year funding cycle, and it would be impossible to find funding that would ever cover a seven-year cycle. That makes it very difficult. Measuring impact in education means looking at exam results, because that is what everyone understands. However, a long cycle of funding is required to demonstrate that.

Still on the northern role, we would look to disseminate the impact of the projects and any successful innovations that we have enabled through the money that we have received. We would aim to feed that back into policy, whether it is policy in the country or policy where the money has come from, so as to achieve better, more consistent delivery of programmes.

With Link, we have been able to demonstrate impacts, particularly in Malawi with Scottish Government funding. We have had funding from the Scottish Government since 2006, and we are now at the stage when we can show impact. We can especially show impact in our relationship with Malawi’s Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. We have had the time to build up relationships and trust. The people at the ministry know where our expertise is, and they come to us for support and advice. Most recently, that was demonstrated in their coming to us so that we could support them, first, in writing and developing the national education standards and then rolling them out across Malawi. That is a great win for Link. With the Scottish Government funding that and putting their faith in us to continue that relationship over such a long period, we are now at the stage where we can say that the Scottish Government, along with other donors who have supported that funding, have enabled that level of impact across Malawi.

It is important to use the impact data back in the north to secure more funds so as to allow more project delivery, and to enable the Governments in country to use the data to influence their own policy and influence the larger donors who come in with packages of money and offer to do something in education. Those in the recipient country need to have the data at their fingertips. They will know that donors wish to put money into the education system. They know, for instance, that girls are not succeeding in school, so they would like to use the money for girls’ education, not for information and communications technology, say, where the donor might think it would be better used. It is really important that the recipient countries, too, have access to very high-quality data, so that they can influence their own policy and influence the donors who come to them with offers of funds.

It is important that the local communities and districts feel empowered, and that they feel that their voice matters and counts. It is very important to have local partners develop that level of trust and a relationship with local people, so that they know that their participation is important and that their voice is being heard and is being carried back to where it needs to go in order to make a difference.

Very often, the situation with the partners is more complicated, and those complications can bring advantages and disadvantages. Having more than one partner leads to a greater wealth of experience and expertise, and it can bring a number of alternative solutions to challenges. Best practice can be shared among partners, and more learning takes place. Potentially, more mistakes can be avoided, which makes everything more efficient. However, all that takes time and resources.

Working with official bodies means that local policies are adhered to. That avoids the time-consuming, expensive and unnecessary parallel structures to which I referred previously. However, that can lead to extensive bureaucracy and frustrating delays—it takes a lot of time. There are institutional dilemmas such as the payment of per diems and how to tackle that cultural difficulty.

On the subject of a reduction in available funds from donors and restrictions on how those funds are spent, some donors are reluctant to spend money in the north, for example on covering overheads for HQ offices or on northern staff. They might be reluctant to spend money on new vehicles, which are often very important for delivering programmes in rural areas.

It is therefore necessary to look for complementary funding from other areas. That is where partnership with businesses can be very positive. Another positive side of that is that there might be pro bono support with management, strategy and training. Experienced board members might come in to support the organisation. However, those relationships are time consuming,
and they carry a level of risk. If people put a lot of time and money into developing a relationship with a business and it does not pay off, they will have spent a lot of resources to get nothing.

There are some obvious advantages with academic bodies, including in-depth knowledge in the field, the potential to disseminate impact at conferences and through papers. However, bringing academic rigour to the projects can be expensive.

There are advantages and disadvantages to all those relationships. The situation is very complex. There is a balance that occurs between the demands of the donors and—perhaps more important—the demands of the recipient country and community. That balance is delicate but it is very interesting, and hopefully the work is very worth while.

The Convener: Thank you, Samantha. That was a very comprehensive overview of partnership working and of the relationships that you have. I invite questions.

Jamie McGrigor: Thank you very much—that was an enlightening presentation, Samantha.

I note that there was some bad press last weekend about possible corruption, even regarding the Malawi funding. I notice from our briefing papers that “34 out of the 61 grants and 56% of the total grant funding” is represented by the Malawi programme. Is that correct?

Samantha Ross: Yes.

Jamie McGrigor: In any case, it says here in our papers that is correct.

You talked about the donors receiving reports from the recipients. Do those reports say how much money was spent on the projects in relation to how much the donors gave? That would be a good guide as to whether there was corruption along the way.

Samantha Ross: Yes. I am talking from the perspective of Link, which has received funding from the Malawi fund since 2006—£400,000 for a three-year project, which has gone up to £600,000 for this funding round. For each piece of funding, we have to provide accurate and long narrative reports of how the money is spent, listing all the activities that we do, and a comprehensive budget. Every penny is accounted for, and we provide those reports every six months. There is a lot of oversight. Those reports are written by the local office and are fined by us. We have a finance team in Edinburgh that supports the local finance teams. Those reports go up to the Scottish Government for review. We have had no issues with corruption in our organisation.

Jamie McGrigor: I am delighted to hear that, obviously. I am sure that there has been no corruption in your organisation, but are you aware of any potential difficulties in other countries regarding the donations that you are involved with?

Samantha Ross: It has never happened with any organisations that I have worked with, but the organisations are working in difficult circumstances, and basic issues can lead to problems.

I can give you an example from one of the countries that my organisation works in—I will not tell you which country, but it is not Malawi. Opening bank accounts can take years and years, so if you are sending an amount of money there, you will have no secure place to hold it, which means that people will have to carry around lots of cash, which is difficult to track, or give money to a someone such as a local government officer, who can put it in their bank account. That is what we ended up doing, because we could not open a bank account for a project. We were involved in the process of trying to open an account for two-and-a-half years, and we still have not done it. It is was not that we were not doing what the bank was asking us to do—we were providing the documentation—it is just that the system is very bureaucratic. I am not saying that the bank is corrupt; it is just that things take an extremely long time. We have had to give money to that district officer to put into their local bank account. That is what we ended up doing, because we could not open a bank account for a project. We were involved in the process of trying to open an account for two-and-a-half years, and we still have not done it. It is was not that we were not doing what the bank was asking us to do—we were providing the documentation—it is just that the system is very bureaucratic. I am not saying that the bank is corrupt; it is just that things take an extremely long time. We have had to give money to that district officer to put into their local bank account and we have written letter after letter in order to track the money. We have had to give all that paperwork to our donor and explain what we have to do to get around the difficulty. It has worked out, and we have tracked the money, but there are lots of difficulties and additional challenges of that nature.

Jamie McGrigor: It is interesting to hear what you are saying, because we do not normally hear about those things.

Samantha Ross: It is important that organisations have an open conversation with the donor to outline the problems and the possible solutions that they have come up with, so that, hopefully, the donor can say, “That’s fine; just make sure you write everything down so that you can track what’s happening.” However, the process can be complicated and time-consuming, which is why the three-year time constraints on projects are limiting.

Hanzala Malik: One of the difficulties for charities such as yours is that it takes so long to open a bank account because you are not corrupt—if you were corrupt, it would not take so long. [Laughter.] That, in itself, is a good thing.
Samantha Ross: That is the take-home message.

Gillian Wilson: In answer to the question, the article in the press at the weekend was unfortunate. It picked up some real problems in grants—we are not saying that there are no problems, because, as in any sector, including the domestic charity sector, there have been people who have tried to misappropriate money, and organisations that have not had good systems—but it did not say that those problems had all been reported. They were not things that the Scottish Government had discovered; they were things that had been discovered by organisations that were keeping an extremely close eye on projects, and they had been reported to the Scottish Government so that something could be done about them. The paper did not say anything about that; it simply exaggerated everything.

Jamie McGrigor: How very unusual. [Laughter.]

09:45

Gillian Wilson: Yes—how very unusual. It took a figure of £37 million, which is the cost of the whole of the problem since it started, mentioned a few small problems and said that £37 million had disappeared in bribery and corruption, which is obviously not true.

There are always problems in any programme, domestically or internationally. We cannot deny that. However, the problems in the paper were problems that had been reported. The system is working. There is close scrutiny by the Scottish Government, as Sam Ross said, and lots of detailed reporting. The systems that the organisations had in place to pick up on problems worked, and those problems were reported.

Jamie McGrigor: Is there a way in which you can get those points into the press? After all, reports like the one last weekend tend to put people off giving money to organisations unless the things that you have just explained are made clear to them.

Gillian Wilson: Quite a lot of activity went on behind the scenes in response to that article. Most of the organisations involved, including the Scottish Government, did not feel that making a public response in that paper would produce a positive report, as the paper was just trying to cause a problem, and it was felt that making a direct response to that paper would just give the story more oxygen. Instead, the Scotland Malawi Partnership garnered cross-party support in Scotland to write to the serious papers to say that there were inaccuracies in the report and to ask them not to pick up on it. I think that quite a lot of the other papers respected that, and the story has not gone any further.

We have also begun to think about taking a constructive approach to this and putting out positive stories of what the money has achieved, and we hope to get some more positive stories in the press as a result. That is better than having a public slanging match, because we know that the paper in question has taken a particular position and is probably not going to move from it.
Policy and Advocacy Work

09:47

The Convener: I think that we are ready to move to the third presentation, which is on policy and advocacy work. Sarah Freeman, from NIDOS, will take us through it.

Sarah Freeman: I am the policy and communications support officer at NIDOS, and I want to give you a quick overview of some of the co-ordinated policy work that NIDOS does with its members.

Before I start, I should point out that NIDOS does not do any of its own policy work; instead, we facilitate collaborative work among members. Everything comes from members, and we help to co-ordinate that. Members also do their own independent work that NIDOS does not have the capacity to facilitate, or which they have other groups to help with; for example, climate issues are addressed through Stop Climate Chaos Scotland. Members also work on issues such as trade and procurement, tax evasion, debt justice, food security, gender, the rights of people living with disabilities, peace and security and the rights of children.

NIDOS helps members collaborate on issues such as Scotland’s place in building a just world, which involves the idea of policy coherence for development. It was great to hear Anne McTaggart mention that, as that is one of NIDOS’s main pieces of work. We are also working closely on the post-2015 agenda, which is the new sustainable development goal framework that will replace the millennium development goals at the end of this year. NIDOS has provided information to our members on that on-going process; we have communicated views to DFID to ensure that Scottish views are represented at DFID when the framework is taken to the UN; and we have also fed into the beyond 2015 campaign, which is a global body of civil society organisations that is working on the post-2015 agenda.

We are also engaged in a Scottish Government cross-sectoral working group that comprises representatives from the Scottish Government, DFID, NGOs, the private sector and local authorities and which provides a great space for people to share information about what is happening with the sustainable development goals. We will need to start adopting the framework in Scotland in 2016; because it is a universal framework, it will affect not just developing countries.

Another area of our work is the business forum, where NIDOS members come together to look at the role of business in development. Gillian Wilson mentioned the Scotland v poverty project, which you will see information about at the back of the room.

We also provide information during emergencies such as the Ebola outbreak and the Nepal earthquake; we are able to help members come together if they need to; and we provide accurate and up-to-date information about where they can get the latest data. We were also involved in the enough food for everyone if campaign; we have been involved in the sustainable energy for all discussions in the Scottish Government; and our members engage with DFID and the Scottish Government.

Moving on to the policy coherence for development approach, which is the idea that we do not give with one hand and take with the other, we want to ensure that we do not undermine our international development programme with policies outside of the development activity. Aid alone is not enough to eliminate global poverty. The way in which our companies operate, the things that we as individuals buy—for example, through fair trade—and Government policies on issues such as energy, transport and trade all impact on people and the planet. NIDOS believes that Government departments need to consider the wider impact of their policies on people in developing countries. In essence, we want a Scotland that avoids policies that will have a negative impact, and policy coherence is a whole-of-Government approach, not just something that sits within the international development department.

Policy coherence is being talked about not only in Scotland; the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development publishes periodic peer reviews on countries that look at their work on international development and make certain recommendations. For example, it has recommended that the UK adopt the policy coherence approach. The UK Parliament’s International Development Committee recently published a report called "Beyond Aid: The Future UK Approach to Development", which looked at how the UK as a whole might adopt a policy-coherent approach.

The approach is also set out in the Lisbon treaty, and a lot of countries across the EU have adopted it. With regard to the post-2015 framework, it is, so far, one of the stated means of implementation to meet the post-2015 goal, and it has been assumed by the UN as a really good way of meeting our targets.

What are we doing in Scotland? In May 2013, NIDOS members had an event that was attended by the Minister for Europe and International Development, Humza Yousaf. Together, members published “Scotland’s Place in Building a Just
world in which they identified six focus areas for Scotland—the economy and financial systems; trade and procurement; finance for development; climate justice; access to resources; and global education—and made 17 recommendations. Because the report—I have plenty of copies if anyone wants one—was published before the referendum, we said, “Regardless of the outcome, this is what we want to see happen,” and we made recommendations for either outcome. There were also recommendations on issues such as the adopting of fair trade policies. It was all about how we could implement policy coherence in Scotland.

Since then, we have published a second report, which looks at European examples and examines how we can improve what we are doing and what we can learn from other European countries. All the Concord members that Gillian Wilson mentioned are in the umbrella body. Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden already implement policy coherence. Some of them have been doing so for a long time; in fact, Sweden has been doing it for 10 years and has enshrined it in law to ensure that it gets carried over with each new Government. On the other hand, Belgium is fairly new to policy coherence. It has adopted it at an EU level, so it is trying to influence EU rather than domestic policy.

From that research, we drew conclusions on the clear structures that were necessary to implement policy coherence successfully in Scotland. We need to have a clear definition and to agree what policy coherence is and what we want to be coherent with. For NIDOS, it means being coherent with the objectives of our international development programme, which needs political commitment. It is no good just having NIDOS waving a flag in a corner; we need cross-party support, and we have been having meetings with MSPs from all the main parties in Scotland to talk about the structures that we might implement.

Policy coherence requires the involvement of all ministers. Research has shown that, in all of the six countries that we looked at, the issue needed to sit outwith the international development programme to ensure that other departments understood its importance. It is a case not just of making the development programme better but of ensuring that we are not undermining it, which should be the responsibility of all ministries. In some cases, such an approach has worked very well where there has been a high-level responsibility to help arbitrate any disputes that arise between ministries.

Thematic focus areas have helped. In Sweden, they picked specific topic areas and were able to implement change. For example, with regard to the arms trade, Sweden no longer works with countries that it perceives do not have democratic Governments.

It is important to have good reporting and transparency mechanisms. In Sweden and Finland, civil society produces shadow reports on how it thinks the country is doing against its stated policy coherence aims and, in Finland, there is a cross-sectoral unit in which academics, civil society, Government and Parliament come together to review progress.

It is important that civil society and southern partners are involved. For instance, Finland carried out a study on food security in Ghana and worked closely with partners on the ground to examine the effect on Ghana of policies outwith the international development programme.

Building on that work, we are having an evening event in the Scottish Parliament on 2 September, and representatives from some of these countries are coming over to talk to MSPs and explore how policy coherence works in their respective countries. We are hoping that the event will be a good chance for MSPs to learn a bit more about policy coherence and to ask any questions that they might have. If anyone is interested, it will be great to see you there.

That is everything from me.

Willie Coffey: Thank you, Sarah. Your comments lead me back to my earlier question about European policy coherence. All the different countries are doing their own thing but in a co-ordinated way, which is great. However, looking at the bigger picture, who assesses how well we are doing for and with a country such as, for example, Malawi or Uganda? Fifty years ago, friends of mine were thrown out of Uganda and came to live in Scotland. The Uganda of 50 years ago was very different from the Uganda of today. Looking to the future, how do we assess whether all of these initiatives, wonderful though they are, are having the impact on health, education, poverty and opportunity that we all hope that they are having? Who, collectively, assesses that?

Sarah Freeman: For most countries, the responsibility for that sits within the countries themselves. Sweden, for instance, carries out periodic reviews—I think that they happen every two years—on its own policies and their impact. There are also the OECD reports that I mentioned, which are done periodically—the report on the UK was done in December—and which take a broader look at and make a broader assessment of how countries are doing. Of course, the OECD is removed from the country itself. Perhaps the kind of approach that should be taken is what happens in Sweden and Finland, where this or that department or unit does the assessment and
where the country itself takes leadership of the issue.

**Willie Coffey:** Do all the countries assess the effectiveness of their own interventions?

**Sarah Freeman:** Yes.

**Willie Coffey:** Is Malawi, for example, in any better condition now than it was 10 or 20 years ago? How much better will it be in 10 or 20 years’ time as a result of all of these programmes? How do we get a handle on that and find out whether we are doing the right things to help these countries?

**Sarah Freeman:** There are multiple ways of doing that. For example, academics, the UN and the World Bank do that work. There are various snapshots from different angles. I do not think that there is one overarching approach that does it better than any other approach.

10:00

**Gillian Wilson:** There are difficulties because of the data issue to which Sam Ross referred and the capacity to generate and analyse data. That is one of the big topics for the area of sustainable development goals. There is a real push globally through the UN and all the partners who will be trying to implement the SDGs to emphasise the importance of data. If we want long-term change, we must be able to look at trends in, for example, health or children’s education. There is a much greater focus on that.

The data issue was one of the problems with the millennium development goals. There was tracking by the UN and national tracking of the eight targets in the millennium development goals, so it was not that there was no data—there was some data to say that there was progress. However, data will be an increasingly important part of the new framework, because it allows tracking of progress. I agree with Sarah Freeman that it is primarily the nation state’s responsibility to track the progress of its strategy, targets and indicators, but institutions such as the UN and the World Health Organization also generate data through their work. NGOs contribute to that, because they often work in remote areas where other agencies might not be, so it is important that their data is shared. As I said, there will be a much greater focus on data through the SDGs.

**The Convener:** Should there be certainty of funding to allow longer-term programmes? The international development fund has three-year programmes at present. Long-term funding of programmes would be much better at facilitating the gathering of good data in order to have long-term effects than the short, sharp funding programmes that you have now. At the moment, you start a programme, you get into it and then you have to start thinking about winding it up, so it is more difficult to get good empirical evidence and excellent stories or anecdotal testimony. Would more funding certainty alleviate that difficulty?

**Gillian Wilson:** I am sure that many organisations would like to have slightly longer-term funding, because longer-term security allows us to focus on delivery, relationships and partnerships, and on monitoring and evaluation in the longer term. There is still value in short projects, as they allow for innovation, piloting and that kind of activity, but a lot of organisations would value longer grants or longer-term funding.

By drawing money from different sources, organisations often maintain relationships with particular projects or organisations over the long term, because they know that that is what works. If a particular fund comes to an end after three years, that does not necessarily mean that an organisation will abandon the project: it will actively look for other bits of money. However, a lot of time is wasted to an extent in fundraising, so it would be more effective for an organisation to focus with one fund over a longer period of time.

**Samantha Ross:** To take the data issue to another level, we are working in Malawi with the Department of Inspection and Advisory Services, which is one of the departments of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. We work closely with Mr Agabu, the head of DIAS, who has said to us on many occasions that he wants to know what is happening in each of the schools in Malawi so that he knows where he needs to put the resources to make the biggest impact in his schools. He has told us that he has a very small budget to send out advisers and inspectors to get reports back to him and, even when he gets them out, he does not get the reports back because the advisers and inspectors laboriously write out by hand 40 or 50-odd pages for a report, which then goes to another office to be typed up and that version then generally sits somewhere. There can be months between an inspection and the report on it being written up.

Mr Agabu does not have time to read all the reports, but he rarely gets a chance to see an amalgamation of the analyses of the data to see what the issues are in his schools. With him, we are grappling with the issue of what kind of database would be the best system for him to use within his resource limitations. It could be a file of papers, an Access database or whatever.

Schools do not have laptops from which they can send data. They rarely have electricity. How can we get what is happening in each individual school in Malawi back to Mr Agabu in an accessible format so that he can go to a computer, see all the data and conclude, for instance, that he...
needs to get more girls going through school and to ensure that there are toilets for them to use so that they will go to school? That is the biggest issue facing Malawi right now. He does not have access to the data—it is not there for him to tap into.

It is important to have data that can be used, and there need to be longer periods for projects in order to address that.

**The Convener:** I saw an excellent project and I met some people from Rwanda when we had a visit a few years ago from, I think, the director of education there. In one of the projects there, specific statistical information was missing when it came to building resilience back into communities following the genocide and the war and in relation to the restorative justice stuff that was going on. Funding had been secured to provide a laptop for each village, using solar batteries. Somebody—it was generally a woman—was designated to upload the education and health statistics for that village at the end of every week. She would know what was happening—how many babies were born, whether there were any complications, how many kids had attended school that week and what the challenges in the school were that week—and could upload all that data. Rwanda now has a very good database of information on what is happening, and the people there are now able to turn some situations around.

There are examples of how to do things. We should perhaps find out about that example and share it with our Malawian friends.

**Samantha Ross:** We have a solar connect project in the district where we work, which enables such information to be sent. That is just in one district, however, and there are 33 in Malawi.

**Hanzala Malik:** The other difficulty for people who provide education in different countries lies in the choice between building a new school and upgrading or giving equipment to an existing one. I came across that situation in Pakistan, where we do a lot of charity work. I spoke to someone at the education ministry, who said to me, “Frankly, Mr Malik, we have two choices: we either build extra rooms for schools or we build schools where there are none. You tell me what I should do.” There are stark decisions to be made by providers. Those are the sort of basic decisions that they have to make. It is difficult—it is not easy.

**Jamie McGrigor:** In your presentation, Ms Freeman, you spoke about giving with one hand and taking away with the other. I am aware that that is a problem with charities. Governments charging charities VAT always seems infuriating to me, when we think of people walking around the street with tins trying to collect money.

Anyway, that is another story. What I really want to ask about is this: the donors obviously do not intend to take anything back so, if your message is that we should not give with one hand and take away with the other, can you give examples of where donors have given money and it is taken away by somebody else?

**Sarah Freeman:** It is a matter of coherence for the whole country. Responsibility does not lie just with the donor, the Government, the public or NGOs—there needs to be a whole-country approach. Fair trade provides one of the better examples. If a donor is funding an agricultural project in a developing country and if, at the same time, we have procurement policies that are undermining that and are not supporting ethical trading—

**Jamie McGrigor:** Who is “we”?

**Sarah Freeman:** “We” refers to the country—Scotland. It is not just about Government policy. Public support is required for ethical trading. That means a completely whole-country approach.

**Gillian Wilson:** It is not a matter of literally giving with one hand and taking it back again. We are trying to express a bigger-picture issue in clear, everyday language.

We might give to Malawi through our aid programme but, at the same time, Malawi will be making debt repayments. Some of that money will come back to Scottish banks or institutions and some will go back to other countries. That is the kind of giving with one hand and taking with the other that we mean. A country such as Malawi might be given quite a lot of aid, but there is a drain on its economy or revenue through other means, such as trade barriers. We might be subsidising farmers and exporting agricultural products, but there are barriers that mean that they cannot benefit from the trade and there is a negative trade balance. Alternatively, although we are giving Malawi money through the aid programme, we are also influencing climate change, which represents costs to Malawi through excess flooding or less secure agricultural production due to changes in rainfall or whatever. We are talking about money being taken away in that bigger sense.

**Jamie McGrigor:** I understand that there is a bigger picture, but I was looking for some examples, which you have given me pretty well.

Is some of the taking back happening within the countries, or is it the donor countries that are taking back?

**Gillian Wilson:** The implication is that the situation is much more complicated than that. I agree that there is a loss to development in the country, just as there would be in Scotland—
Jamie McGrigor: It happens in Scotland, too.

Gillian Wilson: Yes. There is corruption, diversion of funds, lack of prioritising people living in poverty and Government spending money on people who do not need that money as much as other people do. Domestically, within those countries, there is undermining of aid programmes.

The big dynamic with international development has been about aid. That is typically what people think about when they think about the subject. However, with the sustainable development goals, we are thinking about the issue much more holistically and saying that it is not only aid flows that will support the development of countries and tackle global poverty but support for private sector engagement and securing national revenue in those countries through establishing better tax systems and ensuring that the domestic and international companies pay their taxes in those countries. It is a much more complex picture of the money and effort that should be invested to tackle poverty. It requires a domestic as well as an international effort.

Scotland should not think about how we support international development only in terms of our aid budget, because we could unconsciously be undermining what we are trying to achieve through the aid programme. We need to reflect on that and try to add value in other ways, rather than undermining it.

Hanzala Malik: Is it not fair to say that, in some countries, you rely on local government to assist NGOs, and that there is evidence that not all of the money is spent exactly where you would want it to be spent, as there might be sharing of funds? Is that a compromise that you sometimes need to make? Do you agree that it is worth making that compromise if the alternative is not making the investment at all?

Gillian Wilson: It would be accurate to say that our members want the focus to be on what local people feel are priorities, rather than what we or external funders feel are priorities. The projects, and their direction and priorities, must be locally owned. That is different from money being misspent.

Global Learning Project and the International Development Education Sector in Scotland

10:15

The Convener: We are up against the clock, so we will move quickly on. Tanya Wisely will now give us a presentation on the global learning project and the international development education sector in Scotland.

Tanya Wisely: Thanks again for the chance to talk about our work. My presentation is about development education in Scotland, and my colleagues Anne Kane and Susan McIntosh are here to help me answer any questions that you might have.

Perhaps strangely, there are a number of terms by which development education is referred to. Gillian Wilson referred to global education, but the most common term in schools is education for global citizenship. That term emphasises the fact that we are talking about an active learning process that is fully engaged with the world beyond school. Back when we were at school, development education was probably presented to us in the form of talks in assembly or charitable appeals. Now, however, we are talking about deep critical thinking that is developed through curricular work.

IDEAS is a civil society network. We have a range of members from the large NGOs such as Oxfam, Christian Aid and Red Cross, organisations such as the Scotland Malawi Partnership and the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund and small organisations such as Rainbow Turtle, which is a fair trade organisation in Paisley. An important part of our network is the six development education centres—the DECs—which are regional centres across Scotland that offer local support. They are currently in receipt of Scottish Government funding for two years, in the form of a contribution to core funding.

Our core work, obviously, is education in Scotland. As well as working in schools, we work in universities, particularly in initial teacher education, and we do youth and adult work in the community. We will see some fantastic children and educators later. Our work is very much focused on educators and is less focused on pupils and students. That is because, obviously, our aim is capacity building and one teacher influences classes and classes of pupils.

Development education does not take place on its own. An important part of our work involves advocacy. In recent years, this has been very much focused on education policy. We have a
long list of strategic groups that we have been involved in over the years. The policy context in Scotland is very good now, with global citizenship being embedded in the curriculum for excellence. Learning for sustainability is also a key aspect of teachers’ professional standards and is an entitlement for all Scottish pupils.

We are trying to free up capacity to work with NIDOS and others in relation to policy coherence development in order to articulate the important role of development education in Scotland with regard to the international development framework. The “If” campaign is an example of that, as is the “Scotland’s Place in Building a Just World” report.

Gillian Wilson referred to work with the Poverty Alliance. Again, that concerns policy coherence. In education, there is a particular emphasis on closing the attainment gap, so there are important linkages across there, too.

As well as advocacy, we need to pull funding into the area. IDEAS has played an important role in bringing funding in. We do not have core funding ourselves, but we have been able to bring in some project-based funding. I mentioned the funding for DECs and I will talk about the match funding that the Scottish Government has put into European Union projects. We have also had significant funding from DFID over the years for education. The global learning programme Scotland is a major four-year national project, with a target of reaching 50 per cent of Scottish schools. The main funding stream for that is from DFID, whose focus is very much on those national programmes. Previously, there was a much wider range of funding streams and different sectors were covered more widely, so there is a different emphasis there.

It is also worth saying that the context in which DFID is working in England on this area is one in which there is not really a crossover with education policy. That situation is quite different in Scotland. As a result of that, DFID has reformulated how it articulates development education within its remit.

I mentioned EU funding. There is a variety of funding streams within Europe that involve development education and awareness raising, or DEAR. The next DEAR funding call is coming up in the first half of next year. In one of those calls, we successfully received funding for the three projects that are listed at the bottom of the screen: teach global ambassadors; youth of the world; and changing habits for good. Teach global ambassadors was an IDEAS project; and youth of the world and changing habits for good are Scotdec projects—Susan McIntosh is here from Scotdec. Those bids brought in £680,000 from Europe, and the match funding from the Scottish Government was £108,000 over two years. That demonstrates that there is a significant amount of funding to be taken into consideration in that area. The issue is not only about EU funding; there are a lot of sharing and networking opportunities that I will come back to shortly.

On the question of what is working in this area for us, as is the case with NIDOS, the IDEAS network enables people to work together in a way that brings coherence to the area and allows further development, and it allows the Scottish Government to deal with the sector through one body rather than through individual organisations.

The development and education centres that I mentioned are crucial because education is delivered through the local authorities in Scotland, and the centres provide that regional co-ordination and allow us to work more strategically with local authorities, which is important. They also give schools and teachers a local access point.

The Scottish policy context has been extremely important to us and is beneficial. As I mentioned, the changes in education policy are hugely important. There are still challenges in implementing the policy and retaining the critical thinking aspect of the work as it becomes mainstreamed in the sector. The fact that Scotland has its own international development policy makes tying things together much easier and is important in terms of raising public awareness.

On the issue of what could be strengthened, we have two-year funding for the development education centres, and we talked earlier about issues to do with lengths of funding. In 2013, some of the DECs and IDEAS itself were about to disappear. That happened in Wales—the DECs and the network organisation are gone, although there are some efforts to build them back up. In England, the global learning programme is run by a private sector organisation, which was the case in Wales. It is important to flag up how important civil society is in this context and how important it is to have expertise built up in the third sector.

The third thing that could be strengthened, which has been flagged up before, is strategic consideration of what is going on this area in Europe. That is not just in relation to funding, although there is good evidence from other countries. For example, over about six years, the Czech Republic moved from having zero European projects of the type that are referred to to 31. That is partly because the Government had a strategy, which meant that it could build up its focus on the area quite dramatically.

As I said, it is not just about funding. There are various third-sector networking opportunities, but there is also networking in which the Governments that have committed to a development education
policy look together at how that works. In relation to policy coherence, that can bring other departments into play and look at how things are working across departments.

We have the regional organisations, but we also have our other members. Everyone is very welcome to come and see our work. You will see some children today, but there are always opportunities for members to visit the DECs and understand what is going on in their areas. I just wanted to extend that invitation.

The Convener: I would echo that—I have been to the Glasgow one a couple of times. I do not know whether you have come across Carol Clark. She is one of my constituents.

Tanya Wisely: I would have been hard pushed not to. She is wonderful.

The Convener: She is a very good friend now.

Are there any questions? We are running over a wee bit and I do want not want to keep those lovely children waiting. We now have about 10 minutes of downtime. Some refreshments are available just outside the door. It is an opportunity for all of us to meet the children and put them at ease. Is that okay? It will allow the kids to meet us and not be too intimidated by us. They are likely not to be intimidated—maybe we will be more intimidated by them. We can have informal introductions before we get back round the table in a formal situation. Let us go and be refreshed.

Meeting closed at 10:27.