Connecting Scotland - how the Scottish Government and its agencies engage internationally

Network for International Development Organisations (NIDOS)

Summary:
We recommend that the Scottish Government builds on current and significant achievements by adopting a more policy coherent approach for development; working across government and with key partners in civil society including the diasporan community, academic and business sectors.

Introduction:
NIDOS is the Network for International Development Organisations based in Scotland. Our aim is to strengthen the contributions of Scottish organisations to tackling inequality and poverty worldwide. Our network has a uniquely global reach, with our 110 plus members working in at least 142 countries with a wide range of specialisms. We help members share their skills and learn from each others’ best practice while challenging them to further boost effectiveness across the sector.

NIDOS was set up in 2000 and since then we have actively supported our member organisations, and other civil society players, to engage with the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament. This has facilitated their input (both collectively and individually) to debate and policy development for Scotland’s engagement in international development. More recently this has also include the facilitation of member input to debate over the last few years on Scotland’s wider international engagement where this impacts on international development outcomes – for example in relation to debt, trade, procurement, climate, global education among others.

In both the context of the global debate on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) framework (and the emerging Sustainable Development Goals post-2015) and the Scottish Independence referendum, NIDOS worked with members to produce a report Scotland’s Place in Building a Just World, which recommended a policy coherence for international development approach. Based largely on the Swedish model, this is the concept that all government departments and policies should act coherently to comply with, and contribute to, the goal of equitable and sustainable global development. The full report can be accessed here and the two page summary here.

This report has been sent to a wide range of stakeholders (including the Scottish Government, Scottish Parliament, civil society networks in Scotland and academic colleagues, as well as individuals) and discussions were held during 2014. We are very encouraged to see both the Cross-Party interest there has been in this and the interest that the Scottish Government has shown in adopting a more policy coherent approach to international development and their inclusion of this in their White Paper for Scottish Independence.
The UK, and therefore Scotland, has committed as a member of the OECD to international pledges on taking a policy coherence approach to international development. The most recent OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) peer review report on the UK highlighted the importance of improving policy coherence for development, laying out additional policy areas of strategic importance. It is therefore useful for the E&ERC to also review the Scottish Government’s policy and approach in this wider UK and EU context of commitments to a policy coherence approach and the recommendations that the OECD are making.

**NIDOS response to the European and External Relations Committee questions**

Please note that as NIDOS’s key focus is on international development (ID) our responses have focused on those elements as opposed to having a focus in relation to Europe.

1. **Is there a clear, coherent and well-resourced strategy for European and international engagement within the Scottish Government and its agencies?**

NIDOS welcomes the fact that both the current Scottish Government and those since 2005, committed to having an international development policy and fund despite this not being a devolved area. We also welcomed the appointment of a specific Minister with International Development as a key priority within their remit. The growth of the SG’s International Development Fund since its inception, to its current £9 million per year and the set up in 2013 of the Climate Justice Fund (CJF) shows the significant cross-party support for Scotland playing its part in tackling poverty globally. NIDOS is also grateful for the funding we have received from the Scottish Government over this time, to support civil society organisations to develop their capacity and strengthen their approach.

While we welcome the commitments to international aid of both the Scottish and UK Governments, we also know that aid alone is not enough to eliminate global poverty. The money given in aid is only a small part of our international impact. How our companies operate, their procurement policies, their human and environmental policies when they operate abroad, their financing policies etc., the things we as consumers buy, and government policies on energy, transport, climate, procurement etc, all impact on international development.

NIDOS is encouraged to see that the Scottish Government is considering the impact on international development of other policies and practices outside of the immediate international aid programme and has in principle committed to taking a more policy coherent approach. This concept of policy coherence for development, which has been successfully adopted in countries such as Sweden and Norway, would see all government departments and policies comply with, and contribute to, the goal of equitable and sustainable global development. Or in other words, ensure we don’t give with one hand and take with the other. The following outlines some of the areas where there is already progress on implementing a more coherent approach.
There are the areas where we can see clear and coherent approaches:

- Innovative and focused partnership with Malawi, with key emphasis on joint partnership with Malawian Government and civil society in Malawi
- Clear process for review and prioritisation in Malawi programme
- Clear commitment to working within global frameworks and approaches – MDGs/SDGs; principles under the Paris Declaration etc; globally accepted principles of good practice
- Increasing professionalisation of project and programme monitoring, evaluation and learning

In some areas, we can see examples of progress towards a more policy coherence approach. While these are developed to differing degrees, they provide a basis for future development:

- Links between International Development Fund, Climate Justice Fund and Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 and associated domestic action on reducing climate emissions. This is a good example of a policy coherent approach between aid programme and other SG policy area of climate (cutting emissions in Scotland, having a climate justice focus to this, supporting climate adaptation projects in affected countries through the CJF, active engagement in Sustainable Energy for All, capacity building of skills and experience of Malawian Government and their development of a Renewable Energy Strategy for Malawi)
- Having a cross-sector Post-2015 steering group including government, academia, business and civil society
- Support for Fair Trade – including the drive in Scotland for achieving Fair Trade Nation Status
- Commitment to Global citizenship education within the Learning for Sustainability strategy, giving all pupils an entitlement to this learning. Also funding for the Development Education Centres and matching funding for 3 European projects on Global Citizenship education
- Adoption of a Human Rights focus in the Scottish National Action Plan) with an element including business and human rights – including elements with an international focus within this
- Evolving thinking and action on engaging business in international development strategy
- Reviewing areas across Government Departments where greater coherence could be developed
- ID Programme covering a focused number of countries and thematic areas, including links with themes where Scotland has particular expertise
• Support for civil society engagement including: funding to networks for engagement and capacity building across international development, Malawi, Fair Trade issues and Global Education Centres
• Some collaboration with DFID, particularly on Malawi.
• Engagement with colleagues in Europe - we hope the joint Ministerial portfolio for Europe and International Development will allow the Minister to pursue greater synergies with the work of the Commission on international development
• Scotland having a National Performance Framework that review wider impact
• Linked Ebola response that includes both financial support for Ebola response in West Africa and clear links with NHS staff volunteering to work abroad in support of related programmes

There are areas where this coherence is not so clear and that we would like to see improved:

**With regard to the International Development programme in particular:**

• We would welcome civil society engagement in any review of the Scottish Government’s broader International Development Policy, before work on this policy is finalised. We also hope that the Scottish Government will have an opportunity within this to review its South Asia and Sub-Saharan Asia programme strategies
  o We recognise the commitment of the Scottish Government officials in the International Development team, and the large number of responsibilities they hold. Some of our members have on occasion experienced delays to agreed timetables and communications, which may be in part due to a lack of overall capacity within the team.
  o We would welcome greater transparency in some areas of decision making, especially in the awarding of grants to organisations outside of formal funding rounds or funding limits indicated in funding guidance.

**Wider policy coherence related:**

  o We put forward the key recommendations in our *Scotland’s place in building a just world* report, including those on setting up cross-governmental and parliamentary structures to develop and implement a more policy coherent approach.
  o We feel the recent Procurement Act was a missed opportunity for strong ethical procurement legislation. However, we look forward to the consultation on the accompanying guidance and hope that this helps to incorporate international standards (such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights) into the Scottish procurement process. Doing so will ensure the Scottish
Government gives meaning to its ambitious targets on climate change and status as a Fair Trade Nation.

- We are concerned that the overall strategy influencing international development is for “Scotland to flourish on the international stage, thus increasing economic growth for Scotland” – i.e. focus of linking international development policy with Scottish economic and business growth. There is a danger that domestic priorities overtake international development ones - for example, the approach on renewable energy in Malawi. It is excellent that Scotland can share its expertise on renewable energy with Malawi however this should not be seen as a key opportunity for Scottish renewable energy companies to pick up contracts to deliver renewable energy services in isolation. The focus should be on how Scotland’s approach to this can enable Malawi to build its own sustainable renewable energy solutions (which may include some engagement of Scottish business or expertise). It is key that Scottish Government international development policy retains a focus on long term positive and sustainable outcomes for global poor and that other parts of Government policy do not undermine this.

- We feel there is a need to further build engagement with the Diasporan community

- We recommend more support more linking between key stakeholders – civil society, academia, business etc – to avoid working in silos. For example in the evolution of policy and practice in relation to the role of business in international development. It is useful for the government to recognise that different players have different perspectives to offer and we would encourage them to seek non-traditional views, for example including those of civil society in relation to business engagement.

- Further build international development elements into the SNAP programme – for example how business approaches not only affect domestic human rights issues but the externalities (i.e. their global impact) of business activity is also important

- Further build commitment to global education both in and out of formal education. Young people have shown recently, that when actively engaged they do have an interest in policy and international issues.

2. What has the Scottish Government’s international strategy achieved since its refresh in October 2012, and what has the EU Action Plan achieved since it was first published in 2009? Has the international strategy enabled “Scotland to flourish on the international stage, thus increasing economic growth for Scotland”?

We have already covered some of the achievements since refresh in 2012 in our response to question 1, however we would like to add the following to these:
• Greater professionalisation of the Aid programme requirements of grant applicants and grant holders – e.g. increased monitoring, evaluation and learning requirements and financial management and reporting requirements
• Further involvement of the Malawi Government, strengthening their ownership and increased accountability and engagement with Strand Leads
• Scottish Government commitment to a policy coherence for development approach and increased scrutiny of how coherence could be increased and developed
• Testing of ideas and opportunities for business engagement – particularly in Malawi, through the investment portfolio
• Greater engagement of a wider range of Scottish Government staff across Government in thinking and debate on international development

NIDOS would be concerned that “increasing economic growth for Scotland” is used as the key measure of success for its international development strategy in particular. Also that its international development policy is solely focused on this and does not have a wider focus on contributing to global justice and tackling poverty in a sustainable way. This is very pertinent in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will follow the MDGs in September 2015 – where a global partnership between government, civil society, academia and business is called on to deliver. Business is key in delivering sustainable development - though business is not homogenous (and neither is any other sector). We hope that the Scottish Government will take a nuanced approach to engaging business such that there is a win-win: benefit for Scotland/business but only where it is focused on delivery of sustainable development and real impact on tackling poverty and inequality. This would follow a similar approach to business engagement in relation to domestic policy too – where business is engaged but regulated and subsidies/support given to those businesses which are supporting the delivery of government policy (such as the renewable sector, etc).

3. What can be learnt from the approaches of other sub-state governments?
   In particular, how do the EU and international offices of other sub-state governments operate and what tangible outcomes do they achieve?

NIDOS has recently produced a report exploring European approaches to policy coherence for development (PCD) called Policy Coherence for Development: Exploring and Learning from European PCD Approaches. We studied six countries’ approaches to enable us to learn from their experience both in relation to government and civil society engagement in PCD.

This research included a review of the approach in Belgium, where federal departments review all new legislation against twenty-one development factors, such as gender, to ensure all national policies are coherent with international policies. Also, the sub-states have a significant portion of the overall Belgium budget for
international development. We have attached our research report with this evidence. However we did not find enough details on how this works in practice between the national government and the Flemish and other federal units and so we hope to do further research on this in the future.

Cross-referencing Scot Govt International Framework country plans and International Development Programme:

We are aware of the Country Plans that the Scottish Government have developed for their cooperation with India and Pakistan, and would like to see further coherence between these and the Scottish Government’s International Development South Asia programme. We believe that there needs to be greater cross-referencing and coherence between these and the international development and Climate Justice programmes. We have identified below, areas of coherence but also further opportunities for strengthening this.

The International Development South Asia programme (SAP) covers:

- Bangladesh, 3 states in India and Pakistan
- The key thematic priority for this programme is “To address poverty alleviation and the Millennium Development Goals through sustainable economic development"

The Pakistan Country Plan:

- Emphasises opportunities that “contribute to the Scottish Government’s overarching purpose of sustainable economic growth for Scotland” while not referring to possible activity under this Pakistan Country plan to add to efforts under the SAP
- Five key areas: culture, business, trade, investment, and tourism – again these mostly focus on the benefits for Scotland, as opposed to benefits in Pakistan
- There is reference to ID programme in this plan, but there needs to be a closer linkup between the Pakistan plan objectives and the international development objectives to ensure they do not undermine the international development ones.

India:

- There is more reference to ID programme and climate justice fund within this plan, but again this could be strengthened.
- Four key areas are highlighted in this plan tourism, education and science, trade and investment, and cultural links – but this plan could show how it would build win:win for both Scotland and India, how this could contribute to tackling poverty and inequality in India.

30 January 2015