Oxfam Response to the Local Government and Regeneration Committee Inquiry into the delivery of Regeneration in Scotland, 15 March

Oxfam Scotland welcomes the opportunity to respond to this inquiry into the delivery of regeneration in Scotland. Oxfam works to overcome poverty all over the world, including in Scotland, and believes that in a rich country such as ours the existence of poverty is completely unacceptable. We believe that poverty, social exclusion and discrimination represent a denial of human rights, preventing people from exercising their full rights to, for example, housing, health care, education, and an adequate standard of living. Oxfam’s vision is that women and men who experience poverty in the UK are enabled to exercise their rights to a decent and secure standard of living.

Our work in Scotland involves partnering a range of community groups to help them build their assets – whether that be their social relations, their health and skills, their physical environment or their financial assets. We also work with policy makers to tackle the root causes of poverty. Both parts work hand-in-hand: we learn from our partners about what is going wrong and we utilise this experience in our campaign for change.

Much of our response to this Inquiry is informed by our partners’ experience.

Strategy and Policy Issues

1. How can the linkage between the various strategies and policies related to regeneration be improved?

If we are serious about tackling poverty and regenerating our communities then there needs to be a clear link between strategies and policies relating to regeneration, the economy, poverty and community empowerment. Yet the economic and regeneration strategies pursued for the past 30 years have failed to tackle poverty or improve community participation. Very often they have had the opposite effect and undermined communities.

Glasgow, where much of Oxfam’s work in Scotland is undertaken, demonstrates how the imposition of a narrow model of economic development (focussed on increasing GDP and not the distribution of that economic activity) negatively impacts upon communities and individuals. Up until 1981 the gradient of poor health in Glasgow mirrored that of similarly-sized UK and European regions. Since then, however,
health inequalities have deepened\(^1\) because of something beyond material deprivation. Glasgow’s level and variation of income deprivation is the same as in Liverpool and Manchester. Yet Glasgow’s poor health manifests in premature male mortality which is 30% higher than in these comparable cities; suicide is 70% higher;\(^2\) there are 32% more violent deaths and 225% more alcohol-related deaths.\(^3\) These excesses emerged only in the last two or three decades – a time when the Scottish economy grew by almost 2% each year\(^4\) and when spending on social problems and social welfare doubled.\(^5\) This illustrates how pursuit of a very partial type of financial assets undermines social and human assets – our friends, our family relationships and our health.

Rather than economic growth, regeneration economic development efforts should focus on reducing poverty and inequality. Both public sector and private sector activity needs to be directed to this end, giving socio-economic equality and sustainability precedence in decision-making, and ensuring a socially-just and sustainable Scotland is the goal of public and private sector action.

Oxfam proposes the creation of a Poverty Commissioner and new socio-economic duties aimed at reducing poverty and inequality. A Poverty Commissioner, working across Government strategies, would ensure a relentless focus on reducing poverty. A socio-economic duty, replicating the Highlands and Island Enterprise brief to pursue social development, and applying to both the public and private sector\(^6\), would ensure all new development and policy was undertaken with long term thinking in mind – benefitting society as a whole and ensuring we do not undermine labour conditions, family relationships or community assets.

2. Can physical, social and economic regeneration really be separate entities? The Committee would find it useful to hear about projects distinctly focussed on one or more aspects, and the direct and indirect outcomes of such activity.

Yes. The Scottish Government’s regeneration strategy defines regeneration as “the holistic process of reversing the economic, physical and social decline of places where market forces alone won’t suffice”. Using this definition Oxfam’s partner groups could all be said to ‘do regeneration’. Tea in the Pot running a women’s drop-in centre in Govan; GalGael offering a sense of purpose and community to those experiencing worklessness, depression or addiction; or the Clydebank Independent

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\(^2\) In 2004, when comparable figures are available, both male and female suicide rates were 50% higher than England and Wales (although the number of male suicides in Scotland has fallen more recently); Scottish Public Health Observatory (2011) p.260


\(^4\) From 1977 to 2007 Scotland’s Gross Domestic Product increased by an average of 1.9% each year


\(^6\) Government support could be withheld if the private sector was deemed not to meet a duty
Resource Centre providing advice and support to help individuals take up their benefit entitlements and deal with unmanageable debt: none of these projects involve physical regeneration, yet the benefits in terms of social and economic regeneration are undeniable. Taking one example alone, the Clydebank Independent Resource Centre - run by a handful of mainly part-time staff and dedicated volunteers on a budget of less than £185,000 - brought in £1.85 million in welfare benefits to those who passed through its doors in the 9 months to December 2012.

This type of community project is arguably far more effective than much of the regeneration formally undertaken by public bodies, regeneration agencies and the private sector.

Rather than focusing on physical regeneration, we should build on what communities want and need, whether that be human assets (such as individual health or skills), social assets, financial assets, physical assets or natural assets.

Such an approach does not require major commercial regeneration projects although it does require local environments conducive to people coming together. Without physical spaces to share, engage and deliberate, there will never be the ‘head space’ for doing things. Accordingly, community spaces – rather than those for shopping – need to be prioritised by planning and economic development.

3. Are we achieving the best value from investment in this area? If not, how could funding achieve the maximum impact? Could the funding available be used in different ways to support regeneration?

No. Over the years Oxfam’s partners have witnessed the announcement, implementation and demise of many initiatives that claim to deliver regeneration and community engagement. Often these are imposed and do not reflect the priorities of local communities. Despite decades of talk about community engagement and participation, the experience of our partners has been that it has been ‘far too difficult – and generally not possible – for communities to exercise meaningful power in deciding how initiatives have been framed and progressed’.

Instead it seems to Oxfam’s partners that decisions are taken behind closed doors, between officials and economic actors (under the guise of ‘commercial, in confidence’). Despite a great deal of rhetoric and official policies heralding the importance of community engagement, it seems political and economic interests are put ahead of the interests of communities. The experience of our partners is that power is skewed towards money and wealth, rather than community need.

For example, major developments are planned in communities such as Linwood and Govan without substantial, genuine community engagement taking place (rather than simply consultation on the margins of a decision). Agendas themselves are never up for debate with the community – they seem to be set by politicians, self-appointed
community representatives and economic interests, only to be announced to communities as a *fait accompli* with only the detail (such as design specifics) subject to consultation.

The communities Oxfam works with told us that they feel that local authorities expect more of them than they do of business. They feel that they are not respected in the way that economic interests (particularly big supermarket developers) are. In Beith for example, processes, requirements and personnel at the local authority were repeatedly changed at the last minute. This contrasts to the support provided to business interests. One of our partners says that ‘while there is only a thin interface between communities and decision makers, there is a strong relationship between businesses and regeneration agencies’. The experience of Clydebank shows that the regeneration agenda of recent times has been less about ‘the welfare of Scotland’s poorest communities, and rather more on the ‘welfare’ of private companies’.  

Even worse, in places such as South Uist and Clydebank our partners have seen that ‘activists and organisations who have challenged this have too often been put under very real pressure for trying to stand up for their communities’. Our partners’ experience has been that ‘community participation became a mechanism for managing and restructuring communities which tended to compound, rather than offset, their fragmentation and loss of cohesion’.

Yet our partners remain active in resisting these imposed agendas – in Linwood where the Linwood Community Development Trust has developed its own community plan and in Govan where local women have created their own space for supporting each other when they felt that no such space was being afforded to them by official mechanisms. The ‘inspiring stories’ that are developed in communities have occurred despite, not because of, official processes. Even when the communities do meet the (fluctuating) demands of councils, their ideas and suggestions are still dismissed.

Whether it be different and more participative forms of funding (see answer to questions 4 and 7); changes to the way local authorities engage with communities (see answer to question 8); or changes to the way we evaluate regeneration (see answer to question 10) there needs to be substantial change in the way that we do regeneration.

**Partnership Working**

4. *What delivery mechanisms, co-ordination of, and information on the funding that supports regeneration are required, to facilitate access by all sections of the community?*

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9 Collins, C. (2008), p8
10 Collins, C. (2008), p82
Funding, and related delivery mechanisms, should be ‘pro-poor’: concertedly directing support to those communities which need it most. Without this, funding and resources will perpetuate the inequalities in Scotland. This seems to be the case with various funding streams currently.

Oxfam research has found that local residents are under-represented on bodies that make decisions about regeneration,¹¹ and that local decision-making structures are insufficiently open to substantial community involvement and shared agenda-setting. More than half the people living in Scotland’s most deprived 20% of areas report difficulties in improving local circumstances, compared to less than one-third of people in the least deprived areas.¹²

Women are often absent from economic decision-making at all levels.¹³ Oxfam has found that even when women attend regeneration meetings, the manner in which meetings are run can discourage them from participating.¹⁴ Exclusion has serious repercussions: disempowerment and lack of control contribute to ill-health and cause adverse health behaviours.¹⁵

As well as addressing issues around decision making on regeneration funding, Oxfam urges the Scottish Government to ensure that adequate funding is made available to help communities build their capacity. Grants should be offered on a multi-year basis to prevent organisations worrying about their existence on a day-to-day and year-to-year basis.

The state should underwrite community solutions in deprived areas by providing financial support for local investment as well as technical assistance. Government should make it easier for deprived communities to own assets for local benefit, as proposed in the consultation to the Community Empowerment Bill. This requires funding, particularly at the start-up stage, technical assistance, increased transfer of publicly owned assets (not just liabilities) and ongoing support to increase community capacity to manage and sustain ownership. As part of a socio-economic duty, council staff should support deprived communities prepare for ownership, with upfront grants offered so communities can assess the merits of an opportunity.

The Scottish Land Fund should give particular attention to deprived areas.

¹³ Escott (2007)
¹⁴ Escott, (2007)
¹⁵ See the Marmot Review (2010), online at: http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review
Finally, more participative forms of funding, including participatory budgeting which has proved successful in providing pro-poor funding in Porto Alegre should also be explored (see question 7).

5. Should funding be focussed on start up or running costs? What is the correct balance between revenue and capital funding? Please indicate reasons for your views

Clearly this will vary from area to area. As SURF’s recent study shows, an area such as Govan - with a range of local physical assets – will face very different issues to an area such as Gallatown.\(^1\)

Rather than focus on the split between start-up and running costs and revenue and capital funding we should be asking – funding for whom? What is the correct balance between funding for the private sector and funding for community groups?

6. How can it be ensured that regeneration projects are sustainable in the long term?

We need to support local communities. They, in some form or another, will always be there. Individual businesses may not. Regeneration expenditure needs to be ‘bended’ towards community groups.

In this context we would also urge the Committee to scrutinise the word ‘partnership’ in its inquiry. Too often for our partners, ‘partnership’ means public and private sector, without community voices at the table. It can also be used to minimise conflict and prevent genuine community questioning of degenerative forces. This is not to say that partnership is not a good thing – of course, partnership can and does work. The story of the Clydebank Independent Resource Centre at various points in its history is a story of partnership between the voluntary sector, local councillors and officials, the Trade Union movement and local business. Yet this success was despite, or perhaps because of, central Government efforts being focussed elsewhere.\(^2\) The crucial point is that partnership only works when genuinely community-led.

Communities that have historically been the focus of various regeneration projects have often been through significant industrial upheaval. This reliance on one form of employment places a community at the mercy of forces beyond their control. To replicate this model by simply replacing big industry with big retail seems to be unsustainable in the long term. It also brings a host of negative environmental and health impacts associated with materialism (as outlined in response to question 1).


\(^2\) Collins (2008)
To be truly sustainable, we need to seriously rethink our economic model. In the UK, businesses paying below the Living Wage cost society between £5.9 billion and £6.3 billion a year in extra benefit payments and lost taxation.\(^\text{18}\) Poverty wages also fail to take account of a business’s ability to pay, or earnings at the top of the organisation. For example, while many supermarket employees receive tax credits, their bosses earn between £3.2 million (Justin King, Sainsbury’s) and £6.9 million (Philip Clark, TESCO) annually.\(^\text{19}\)

Rather than simply trying to entice these businesses into areas for regeneration we need to expand our horizons. Scotland’s communities need to be assisted in generating the work they want, through the creation of employment in activities that address community needs. This means proactively creating those enterprises that increase the power of smaller producers or otherwise vulnerable individuals to enter the market – through collective mechanisms such as employee ownership, trade unions or producer cooperatives.\(^\text{20}\) With more power in the market, people can negotiate terms and obtain a greater share of reward. Rebalancing power relationships in the labour market will bring greater equality to employment, in turn increasing socio-economic equality.

This is not to say that business does not have a role. Oxfam’s experience is that businesses can be part of poverty-reduction efforts through creating jobs that provide decent and fair working conditions, and enhancing skills of women and other marginalised groups. But that type of business activity seems to be far removed from much of the businesses that we see regeneration activity supporting today.

**Practical Issues**

7. **What actions could the Scottish Governments forthcoming community capacity building programme include to best support communities to “do regeneration” themselves?**

We are not entirely clear what the Scottish Government’s forthcoming community capacity building programme is; although we look forward to seeing the detail. We presume there will be substantial crossover with the forthcoming Community Empowerment Bill. Below we set out some practical proposals based around three


\(^{19}\) See, for example, Williams, 2012: [http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/jan/18/pays-tesco-ceo-wages-we-do](http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/jan/18/pays-tesco-ceo-wages-we-do)

\(^{20}\) This is different from the role of Benefit Corporations or social enterprises discussed elsewhere. Such organisations have a specific socio-economic remit, whereas the (related) priority discussed here is greater market power for those currently unable to exert influence on the market.
themes of ‘our economy’, ‘ways of engaging’ and ‘change in communities, changing communities’.

Our economy

1. Scotland needs a community-led economy underpinned by redistribution of power via substantial community participation in decision-making and agenda-setting, with a state that underwrites community solutions.

2. Actual, tangible responsiveness is crucial, demonstrably changing plans and ensuring that delivery accords with what communities want and need.

3. We need a real shift in power to women and men experiencing poverty, so their solutions are pursued and underwritten by the state.

4. Any audit of the effectiveness of Community Planning and delivery of ‘best value’ needs to assess the extent to which both have been delivered in a ‘pro-poor’ manner. This necessitates recognition of the constant challenges that deprived communities face and the barriers to their participation in mainstream engagement processes.

5. The public sector should underwrite community solutions by providing the premises, space and resources to develop community initiatives. It should provide finance for local investment as well as technical assistance and ongoing support.

6. Local environments need to be conducive to people coming together: communities need to be together to do together. Community spaces need to be prioritised by planning and economic development.

7. Local authorities need to recalibrate how they view local communities – as partners and their ultimate master, rather than nuisances who do not know what is best for them.

Ways of engaging

8. As with all channels of participation and engagement, socio-economic barriers to participation need to be recognised. The challenges of living in poverty, of struggling to make ends meet, providing for one’s family on a limited income, often working several jobs and having little time for oneself, means that, unless there are appropriate mechanisms to support people’s involvement, they will, understandably, feel that the process is not genuinely for them.

9. To avoid perpetuating inequalities, supportive infrastructure needs to be put in place to enable deprived communities to participate on an equal footing, including, but not limited to, finance and technical support skewed towards deprived communities to enable them to participate in planning processes. Otherwise another two-tier system will develop and perpetuate the inequalities in Scotland.

10. Accessible involvement requires a range of outreach processes to reach the poorest communities. They need to be delivered by practitioners sensitive to issues around culture and gender.

Our response to the consultation contains our views in more detail and is available at: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0041/00412024.pdf
11. Deprived communities require financial security, core funding, longer time frames to develop programmes and the scope to take part in local decision making processes.

12. All community engagement plans need to demonstrate how socio-economic inequality will be factored into the process.

13. Clear terminology, jargon-free and precise language is important in making engagement accessible.

14. Any duty to engage in the upcoming Community Empowerment Bill should incorporate an arbitration mechanism open to communities who feel their views have been insufficiently taken account of.

15. A named officer with considerable autonomy and knowledge of other agencies would help provide a productive conduit for the community to interact with local authorities. However, all officials, not simply the named officer, must see it as a core part of their remit to interact, engage and support the local community. Existence of a named accountable official must not become an excuse for other officials to shut out the local community.

16. Local authorities should include in their publication of asset registers not just local authority owned assets, but also those of other public agencies (such as the health service and the forestry agency) and assets held by the private sector.

17. We also suggest that documentation associated with publication of asset registers include clear and jargon-free descriptions of what demands local communities can make of bodies that own assets in their local area and what support is available to them in doing so.

18. We urge the Scottish Government to listen to and act according to its own existing advice, including the report of the 2003 Community Planning Task Force.

19. It is imperative to provide statistics disaggregated by gender so communities can see the differential impact on men and women of various government policies.

**Change in communities, changing communities**

20. We call for conceptualisation of ‘assets’ to move beyond a narrow focus on physical assets. The assets needed by communities to be prosperous and vibrant go beyond physical and even financial assets. They include human, social and environmental assets.

21. Within the upcoming Community Empowerment Bill we recommend incorporating a right to buy private property at certain junctures and also the right to buy property from a wider range of public bodies.

22. However, caution needs to be exercised that greater opportunities for non-public ownership do not translate into a model of widespread privatisation.

23. There should be a socio-economic test to ascertain whether transfer of assets will reduce inequality (scrutinised and enforced by a Poverty Commissioner).

24. As part of a socio-economic duty, council staff should help deprived communities prepare for ownership, with upfront grants offered so communities can assess the merits of an opportunity.

25. Oxfam calls for establishment of a Poverty Commissioner with the power to scrutinise the performance of officials, take feedback from communities and investigate complaints. In particular, a Poverty Commissioner needs to have the power to scrutinise the extent to which service providers deliver the duties
and standards discussed in this consultation, especially the extent to which services deliver greater socio-economic equality. The Poverty Commissioner should arbitrate to ensure a fair and just outcome, rather than let local authorities have the last say. National government (represented by a Poverty Commissioner) should be able to ‘call in’ the decisions of local authorities when they do not favour the community (the way they do in cases of economic interests).

26. Cultural and attitudinal change is urgently required in the public sector. Training (and retraining) of public officials will need to accompany a socio-economic duty (of which a duty to engage should be a subset) so that officials appreciate the extent of socio-economic inequality in Scotland and the barriers this creates for deprived communities.

27. Decisions should not be delegated to officers: they should be taken by elected representatives to preserve accountability.

28. Oxfam suggests that the Scottish Government consider a community discount scheme and that public authorities waive purchase costs altogether in instances where communities explicitly wish to own an asset.

29. For community groups to access public service contracts on an equal footing there needs to be recognition of the capacity-deficit faced by deprived communities. They do not lack the ideas, initiative and energy, they do, however, sometimes lack the technical skills and resources to be able to enter the market for public service contacts on a competitive basis with less-deprived communities.

30. Community groups delivering public sector contracts must do so when they are best placed to deliver the best outcome for the service user. This will be because local community organisations know the problems, know the solutions and care deeply about local people, not just profits.

31. Participatory Budgeting should be deployed more widely, following the principle of subsidiarity that locates decision-making as locally as possible. Participatory Budgeting, in which communities determine budget expenditure, is a proven mechanism that brings local communities closer to public budget decision-making processes. Budget decisions must be: open and accessible; representative; taken using mixed methods of consultation; gender sensitive; at all times seek to reduce socio-economic inequalities.

8. What role should CPPs play in supporting the community in regenerating their communities?

Community engagement needs to be pro-poor, concertedly directing support to those communities which need it most, otherwise another two-tier system will develop and perpetuate the stark inequalities in Scotland.22 As with all channels of participation and engagement, there needs to be recognition of the socio-economic barriers to participation. The challenges of living in poverty, of struggling to make ends meet, provide for one’s family on a limited income, often working several jobs and having little time for oneself means that unless there are mechanisms to support people’s involvement, they will, understandably, feel that the process is not genuinely for them.

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Ensuring a gender balance in engagement requires recognising that women and men experience and respond to engagement mechanisms differently and that forums which are ostensibly open to all may actually represent rather intimidating spaces for women, especially women from some minority ethnic backgrounds. Therefore a range of outreach processes need to be constructed to reach the poorest communities. They also need to be delivered by culturally and gender sensitive practitioners.

Real community engagement is also about accountable decision-making – this is only possible if information is provided in a manner that is usable. This means using clear terminology, jargon-free and precise language is important in making engagement accessible. It also requires provision of statistics disaggregated by gender so communities can see the differential impact on men and women.

Yet, opportunities, no matter how ‘genuine’ to ‘consult, engage and involve communities’ are not enough. Actual, tangible responsiveness is important, demonstrably changing plans and ensuring that delivery accords with what communities want and need. Ultimately, ‘effective engagement’ will be evident via policies enacted that reflect and deliver community needs. Individuals and communities will feel in control, they will feel that have the ability to determine the result of decisions that impact them (which has a positive impact on health).  

9. How can CPPs best empower local communities to deliver regeneration?

Community Planning processes draw on institutional structures and representative democracy. Yet in Oxfam’s experience representative democracy is not working for Scotland’s most deprived communities – as evident in their ongoing plight. Supposed intermediary organisations and institutions that are at the forefront of official community planning processes are rather remote from communities and so do not adequately reflect the views and needs of communities.

Real community engagement is about putting disadvantaged communities at the heart of policies and programmes. They need to set the agenda, rather than simply offer their input to the detail on the margins of an imposed agenda. State revenue and civil service targets should be directed to areas and projects that people themselves determine.  

One way to do this could be to top-slice some of the funding CPPs and other public bodies are responsible for and re-direct this to community groups through

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23 Marmot (2010)
24 Public contracts are an obvious example of this distinction – compulsory community benefit clauses need to deliver real, tangible benefits for local communities from business activity that takes place on their terms (not simply token benefits at the margins to secure consent). Community participation in this sense thus goes beyond policies purporting to ‘empower communities’ or community benefit clauses in development contracts that, at their core, do not necessarily seek to deliver what communities actually want. Extracting community benefit from such developments otherwise unaligned to enhancing local assets is mere mitigation.
participatory budgeting. Thus far used only on a small scale,\textsuperscript{25} Participatory Budgeting can help ensure that public expenditure serves community need and reflects community priorities. Evidence from a successful pilot in Govanhill in Glasgow suggests participatory budgeting has had very positive results (see box below).\textsuperscript{26} We believe participatory budgeting should be deployed more widely, following the principle of subsidiarity that locates decision-making as locally as possible.\textsuperscript{27}

**Participatory budgeting in Govanhill**

In addition to facing a range of social, economic and health inequalities, Govanhill in Glasgow is a diverse neighbourhood where over 50 languages are spoken. In 2010 the Govanhill Community Action group (GoCA) – comprising representatives from local community groups – was allocated £200,000 from the Scottish Government and tasked with deciding how it should be spent locally. Oxfam supported the group and facilitated the participatory budgeting process. GoCA embraced the responsibility – they discussed strategic priorities and then invited wider community groups to participate. Funded projects were innovative, diverse and ambitious, emphasising people, rather than place: the Govanhill Family Support Group; Govanhill Community Justice Partnership; and the Govanhill Baths Trust. This selection demonstrates a strong understanding of local issues. The process was a positive and beneficial experience for all concerned; it enabled structured and purposeful dialogue between community members as well as the public and third sectors. It also reflects a welcome cultural shift towards devolving decision making power to the Govanhill community and, as a result, trust and respect has increased. The community demonstrated strategic prioritisation of wider community interests – they knew the issues and directed money in the direction of practical, efficient and effective solutions.

Please provide any examples of best practice or limitations experienced that you think the Committee would find useful in its scrutiny.

Besides the example of participatory budgeting, our partner, the Linwood Community Development Trust, recently undertook what Oxfam considers ‘leading practice’ in engagement:

- Every house in the area was leafleted
- All organisations were spoken to (such as the pensioners’ association and local football teams)

\textsuperscript{25} In the UK PB project funds have ranged from approximately £500 to £2.5m.
\textsuperscript{26} For a full evaluation report, Harkins and Egan, Glasgow Centre for Population Health (2012) *The role of Participatory Budgeting in promoting localism and mobilising. But where next for participatory budgeting in Scotland?* online at [http://www.gcph.co.uk/publications/321](http://www.gcph.co.uk/publications/321)
\textsuperscript{27} European local government is much smaller, closer to the people: 2000–12,000 people in each, compared to Scotland where each local authority has an average of 162,000 people (Riddoch, L and Bort, E (2012) *Size Matters*, Scottish Left Review, online at: [http://www.scottishleftreview.org/article/size-matters/](http://www.scottishleftreview.org/article/size-matters/)
Social media (such as a website and text messaging) were used
Young people were encouraged to discuss the issues
Wide thinking and generation of ideas was encouraged, rather than presentation with a limited number of scenarios
At a large public meeting people were welcome to respond via a range of mechanisms (emails, writing, verbally and so on)
The public meeting was participatory and hands on, relevant for all ages
Participants were presented with examples from action in other areas
The techniques used to record people’s priorities distilled them into categories that then fed into creation of the Linwood Community plan

To a large extent the Scottish Government’s own guidance replicates this. In March 2004 the Scottish Government published an advice note about ‘Effective Community Engagement’ following the Local Government in Scotland Act the previous year.28

This note stipulates that the ‘main aim of community engagement should be to improve the planning and delivery of services by making them more responsive to the needs and aspirations of communities’. Oxfam agrees with the ‘key principles’ for effective community engagement that the Scottish Government set out in 2004, including:

- Demonstrating genuine commitment to working with communities, using a range of methods and not just involving the ‘usual suspects’
- Engaging with communities in ways that lead to meaningful and tangible outcomes (significant improvements in services and quality of life)
- Not expecting communities to relate to official structures and processes but engaging communities at levels they best relate to
- Acknowledging range and diversity of communities
- Recognise that the most effective representation of community interest is via community bodies that are independent and accountable
- Supporting community action focusing on real issues affecting people’s lives
- Reach out to socially excluded groups
- Recognise practical needs – the timing of meetings, childcare, public transport, interpretation etc
- Use plain language and use Braille and other languages if needed
- Carry out community needs assessments

Our disappointment is that, despite such official guidance existing for some time, it is not translating to action at community level. It is not surprising that communities are experiencing consultation fatigue, and becoming tired and disenchanted with government. There is a gulf between rhetoric and reality and, when challenged, government is defensive. Our partners have told us that when they highlight and utilise existing official guidance, officials change the criteria and dismiss the community as against regeneration.

10. How can the outcomes of regeneration truly be captured and measured? What are the barriers to capturing outcomes and how should the success of regeneration investment be determined?

Oxfam’s Humankind Index for Scotland aims to find out what really matters to people, particularly the most disadvantaged. The Index is an attempt to move away from an economy and society based on inequalities of wealth and pursuit of relative status, and towards an economy and society which promotes health (mental and physical) and equality, and reduces poverty, inequalities and over-consumption. It is intended to help policy-makers and communities focus on what is required for a sustainable and socially-just Scotland – one in which resources are built together and their benefits better shared.29

Developed through widespread public consultation, including focus groups, community workshops, street stalls and an online survey, the Oxfam Humankind Index enables Scotland to measure itself by those aspects of life that make a real difference to people, particularly the most disadvantaged. The factors or ‘sub-domains’ that make up the index are detailed in the table below:

29 http://humankindindex.org/
These priorities are matched with Scotland wide data indicators (from a range of sources including the Scottish Household Survey and the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey) allowing progress to be measured. This shows that efforts to create

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30 This process was undertaken by the Fraser of Allander Institute
nuanced performance frameworks—decided by what matters to individuals and communities is possible.

More importantly however, it shows that communities and individuals can define what matters to them in a way which is often very different to the priorities of policy-makers. Our concern with current efforts to measure the impact of regeneration and economic development (such as the Scottish Government’s National Performance Framework) is that there is an undue focus on specific financial outcomes, such as economic growth, which do not match the reality of what people view as important.

Of course, what is important to people will differ from area to area, so it is crucial that outcomes are decided by the community for the community. We believe the Humankind Index could be replicated to plan and evaluate regeneration at a more localised level.

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