

Written submission from Scotland Malawi Partnership, 28 September 2026

Pre-budget scrutiny 2027-28

Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

The [Scotland Malawi Partnership \(SMP\)](#) welcomes the scrutiny of Holyrood's Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee and appreciates this opportunity to contribute evidence.

Co-ordinating the commitment of civil society's people-to-people links

Scottish schools, universities, church and community groups, individuals, professional bodies and charities from the Borders to the Northern Isles, greatly value the people-to-people links that they have with friends in Malawi. The SMP's [Constituency Guide](#) maps many of these Malawi links, past and present.

Recognising the multiple challenges that Malawi faces, these relationships often find expression in international development projects. The SMP and its Malawi-based sister organisation, the [Malawi Scotland Partnership \(MaSP\)](#) exist to support, connect and represent the links, encouraging collaboration and reducing duplication of effort. The [SMP's 20th anniversary publication](#) gives a sense of the depth and breadth of these people-to-people partnerships and their positive impact on the lives of individuals, families and communities. Case studies are included on many successful partnerships including the Scottish Government-funded [MalScot project](#) in which thousands of women received screening and treatment for cervical cancer and [the MalDent project](#), which created a Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) degree programme in Malawi and enabled \$5.2 million to be leveraged from the World Bank to create the first Dental School building in Malawi at Kamuzu University of Health Sciences.

The adversity Malawi faces

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world with around [76%](#) of the population of around 23 million people living on under \$3/day, in a landmass one and a half times the size of Scotland. Malawi has made progress across a range of poverty indices, such as [life expectancy](#) increasing from just 35yrs in 1960 to 67yrs in 2023 and [child mortality rates](#) of newborns in Malawi, having reduced from 36% in 1961 to 4.9% in 2024.

However, as the World Bank's [Malawi Economic Monitor](#) of July 2026 states:

Malawi's economy continues to face severe macroeconomic and structural challenges, including high inflation, foreign exchange shortages, fiscal pressures, and weak growth that lags regional peers. Despite modest improvements in education and literacy, poverty, inequality, and dependence

on informal labor remain widespread. Agricultural productivity is constrained by climate vulnerability, input shortages, and inefficient support programs, while elevated public debt and low foreign exchange reserves limit economic resilience.

Policy coherence

Many of the challenges that people in low-and middle-income countries such as Malawi experience on a daily basis are interconnected. The fundamental approach of networks such as MaSP and the SMP recognises this, counters silo-working and fosters a joined-up, cross-cutting approach. As Scottish Fair Trade state, policy coherence across government is essential to reinforce international development objectives and **the SMP recommends that the Scottish Government ensure there is policy coherence in their approach to international development.**

Multi-year funding

Whilst much can be achieved in one-year, employment pressures for staff and funding and statutory redundancy requirements for organisations are amongst the many reasons that often greater benefit and better value can be achieved through well-designed multi-year delivery projects.

The SMP recommends that the Scottish Government commit to multi-year funding to enable grantees and partners to plan strategically and maximise the impact of the practical logistics, learning and progress made in the early stages of projects.

Climate Justice

In common with the written submission of [Scotland's International Development Alliance \(SIDA\)](#), **the SMP notes the cross-cutting importance to International Development of the Programme for Government's commitment** (within the remit of the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Holyrood's Climate Action Committee) to:

Continue and increase our Climate Justice Fund, up from £36 million, over the course of this Parliament and, following an independent evaluation, deliver new programmes that support communities in the Global South to build resilience and address loss and damage. (p.38 [Programme for Government](#)).

Malawi is one of the world's most [climate vulnerable nations](#). Erratic weather patterns have disrupted traditional planting seasons for Malawi as a predominantly rain-fed subsistence farming economy. A succession of extreme weather events including flooding, drought and tropical cyclones has led to devastation to homes, crops and infrastructure, causing displacement, food insecurity and loss of life.

Between December 2024 and March 2025, around [6.2 million people](#) in Malawi experienced high levels of acute food insecurity due to multiple economic and climate-related factors including the El Niño weather pattern. The [UN's Food and](#)

[Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#) has warned that in October 2026 - March 2027, an estimated 2.6 million Malawians will not have access to enough safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development, and an active and healthy life with high food prices, inflation and inadequate crop production driving acute food insecurity and strong El Niño forecast.

With Malawi's reliance on agriculture and vulnerability to climate shocks, **the SMP welcomes the Programme for Government's *Climate Justice Fund* commitment.**

A dedicated Loss & Damage Fund

Malawi is one of the countries that has done the least to create the climate crisis but is most affected by it. Decades of advocacy by low and middle-income countries (LMICs) and exemplars such as the Scottish Government's Loss and Damage Fund in Malawi helped bring about the announcement at the UN's climate summit COP30 in Belém, Brazil that a fund initiated in 2022 at COP 27 in Sharm El Sheikh Loss, to help vulnerable nations recover from climate-induced losses, was to be deployed. With approximately \$700 million committed to a Loss & Damage Fund but climate-related economic losses in low and middle income countries estimated to be around \$400 billion per year, it is important that the Scottish Government continues to show global leadership here. **The SMP recommends that the Scottish Government creates a dedicated Loss and Damage Fund.**

Humanitarian emergency funding

Given the importance to the people of partner countries for Scotland being able to respond to Humanitarian crises such as the above, **the SMP welcomes the Programme for Government's commitment to "Continue support for tackling global emergencies and conflicts through the Humanitarian Emergency Fund..."** (p.74 [Programme for Government](#)).

The SMP further recommends that Humanitarian Emergency funding, be ringfenced with annual increases that are in line with inflation as a minimum and additional to the International Development and Climate Justice Funds.

In March 2024, Malawi declared a state of disaster in 23 of the country's 28 districts severely affected by the climate emergency-induced drought and devastating flooding to allow humanitarian support and to contain the situation. A month before, the [Scottish Government's international development fund](#) provided £500,000 to help address the food crisis in Malawi. The SMP held an [online meeting](#) in April 2024 to hear from Scottish charities and local Malawian implementing partners on how they had disbursed the Scottish Government funding. **The SMP recommends that such activities support transparency, making information publicly available online.**

International Development Fund Increases

The SMP welcomes the Programme for Government's commitment to *Increase the International Development Fund by 25%...*

Consistent with the positions of MaSP, SIDA and SFT, **the SMP recommends that the Scottish Government deliver the 25% increase to International Development in the 2027-28 Budget rather than leaving this until the end of the parliamentary term.** At a time of global aid cuts, this would provide greater assurance to grantees and partners and enable them to maximise Scotland's funding.

The SMP notes that the Scottish Government says in relation to the increase

“...and in doing so review our existing programmes while developing new modes of funding and partnership, including the development of an Aid Match scheme. (p.74 [Programme for Government](#))

The SMP recommends that an appropriate level of review be conducted without causing any interruption to the delivery of funded programmes. This is important given there would be no pause to the multiple forms of adversity faced by many Malawians which, for some will already be compounded by USAID cuts and the British Government's [reduction to overseas development assistance \(ODA\)](#) to Malawi by 60% for 2026 – 27 and by 90% for 2028 – 29, compared to its 2025 – 26 funding. A recent Center for Global Development Paper, [What Results Has UK Aid Achieved in Malawi over the Long Term?](#) indicates the positive impact of UK support in the period 2009-2025 and warns that the UK Government's cuts risk undermining urgently needed economic progress for Malawi.

The SMP recognises the value of exploring “new modes of funding and partnership”, especially where that might lead to the creation of employment opportunities in Scottish partner nations such as Malawi. **The SMP recommends that this should include further support for Scottish Fair Trade's approaches** that strengthen sustainable livelihoods, economic resilience and local ownership.

As part of developing these new modes, **the SMP recommends that Scotland further recognises and leverages the potential value of what it already has in the form of an extensive civil society network with strong and trusted links with Malawi.** The scale and capacity of Scotland-Malawi links have been described by the British High Commissioner to Malawi, Leigh Stubblefield in a meeting with SMP members on July 8 in Edinburgh as “unique” and something upon which she is very keen to draw. Illustrating the power of Scotland's trusted networks to leverage significant sums from Scottish Government funding - £950K of Scottish Government International Development Fund funding to the Scotland Chikwawa Health Initiative 2006 - 2016 in itself significant impact. However, the relationships, trust and capacity strengthening that funding also unlocked was significant with over £16million in research, policy engagement and implementation funding leveraged in Scotland (University of Strathclyde) and Malawi (Malawi University of Business and Applied Science, Kamuzu University of Health Sciences MUBAS, KUHES and Mzuzu University) focussed partnerships from 2008 to date.

The Scottish Government's [Global Solidarity Fund](#) is intended to support small organisations, community groups, and grassroots initiatives that are working in international development. It is the successor to the Scottish Government's successful former Small Grants Programme which funded Scottish organisations

working in Malawi which have gone on to flourish, including:

[Turing Trust](#) which, helping to reduce electronic waste and expanding access to digital education last year alone securely refurbished and shipped 6,000 computers/devices to schools in Malawi.

[Malawi Fruits](#) - successfully working with small scale farmers in Malawi to enable them to increase their household incomes and so provide for the education and healthcare needs of their families.

[STEKAskills](#) - where marginalised and poverty-experienced young Malawians get their voices heard & empower themselves to build sustainable futures by gaining the skills to build their own businesses & reduce donor dependency.

Aid Match

The SMP welcomes the proposed development of an Aid Match scheme which has the potential to increase the impact of funds raised, engages public support and recognises the value of collaboration between Government and Civil Society.

In recent years, a requirement to qualify for some of the Scottish Government's funded programmes is that applicants need to be able to implement projects in all three of Scotland's African partner countries – Malawi, Zambia and Rwanda. **The SMP recommends that this restriction be removed** as it limits the number of organisations that can apply and misses out on the benefit of organisations highly experienced in any one of these nations.

The SMP notes that the Scottish Government continues to provide core funding through its international development budget for four key network bodies: SIDA, Scottish Fair Trade, the Malawi-Scotland Partnership and the Scotland-Malawi Partnership. Each plays a unique, distinctive and complementary role supporting Scotland's international development and global citizenship communities, mobilising diverse constituencies, amplifying the impact of wider international development activity and providing stable civil society platforms through which the Scottish Government can interact with the sector. The core funding has remained unchanged for a number of years, and in a time of rising costs, maintaining funding at a static cash level represents a real-terms reduction in support.

The SMP is committing resources to seek to diversify its income streams and, in common with the other core-funded bodies leverages much *pro-bono* expertise from multiple sectors in Scotland, including Scottish Universities which is important to factor-in when considering value provided. We would welcome a more sustainable funding trajectory that recognises the distinct contribution of each network and provides the stability needed to deliver effectively over the parliamentary term.

Stuart Brown,
SMP CEO
September 2026