

Cross-Party Group on International Development

Tuesday 5th March 2024 18:00-19:30

Minute

Present

MSPs

Sarah Boyack MSP, Maggie Chapman MSP, John Mason MSP, Foysol Choudhury MSP

Invited guests

Anupama Ranawana, Research Advisor, Christian Aid; Eva Peace Mukayiranga, International Institute of Environment and Development and The Green Protector; Laura MacLaughlin, Scottish Government International Futures team; Tasha Boardman, Scottish Government International Development team; Ulemu Hannah Kanyongolo, Young Feminists Network, Malawi

Non-MSP Group Members

Aliandra Barlete, University of Edinburgh
Isola Barrios de Montania, University of Edinburgh
Peg Bavin, Ripple Effect
Annika Bergman Rosamond, University of Edinburgh
Fatsuma Bubaram
John Cairns
David Cunningham, Scotland's International Development Alliance
Louise Davies, Scotland's International Development Alliance
Claire Duncanson, University of Edinburgh
Liam Farrow, Scottish Government
Sarah Gibson, EMMS International
Rebecca Gindele, FICONPAZ
Mary Beth Graham, University of Glasgow
Frances Guy, Scotland's International Development Alliance
Clare Hollowell, Gender Based Violence in Emergencies Consultant
Hatice Ikizler
Will Joy
Joanna Keating, Scottish Government
Becky Kenton-Lake, Stop Climate Chaos Scotland
Gillian Lawrence, Augustine United Church
Gemma Love, Mary's Meals

Manon Luquand, University of Edinburgh
Chad Morse, Scotland Malawi Partnership
Lonjenzo Ngala
Joanna Pearce, Zambia Therapeutic Art
Elaine Pritchard, Lloyd's
Philippa Ramsden
Cathy Ratcliffe, EMMS International
Lewis Ryder-Jones, Oxfam Scotland
Nathanael Smith, Office of Sarah Boyack MSP
Charlotte Springham, University of Edinburgh
Julia Sproul
Andrew Tomlinson, Christian Aid
Adam Wilson, Office of Sarah Boyack MSP

Apologies

Alasdair Allan MSP
Karen Adam MSP
Liam Kerr MSP
Maurice Golden MSP

Agenda item 1 - Welcome

Sarah Boyack MSP opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

Sarah introduced the focus of the meeting – The Scottish Government's new Feminist Approach to International Relations (FAIR).

The minutes from the last meeting were agreed.

Agenda item 2 Discussion

Sarah Boyack MSP introduced the Scottish Government officials working on FAIR.

The Scottish Government Team briefly explored the background of FAIR, mentioning a commitment programme in 2021 within the Scottish Government, followed by efforts to understand its implications in the Scottish context. They delved into the concept of feminist foreign policies, tracing back to Sweden's introduction of 'Feminist Foreign Policies' in 2014, but also acknowledging its roots in feminist movements worldwide. The adaptation of these policies across various regions, particularly in the Global South and South America, was highlighted, emphasising the common theme of prioritising human security over traditional state-centric approaches, with a focus on uplifting marginalised women and girls.

The team shared the extensive engagement process undertaken, including literature reviews, expert interviews, and evidence gathering, culminating in a report that serves as a policy position piece. The report outlines guiding principles for decision-making within the Scottish Government, emphasising support for women's

organisations and grassroots movements, funding alignment with feminist principles, and international knowledge exchange. Structural changes and policy coherence are also addressed, along with four key priorities: international development, climate justice, human rights support, and trade.

The team provided a detailed overview of the SG's policy development process and commitments on taking a feminist approach to International Development and progress made regarding the implementation of some of these commitments.

The team underlined that the feminist approach should extend beyond gender equality to encompass broader societal issues, including a focus on taking an anti-racist, decolonial approach.

Officials also provided an update on progress made in relation to implementation/launch of new international development programmes following the 202/21 review of SG's approach to international development, including both live and upcoming competitive funding rounds for the international development health and inclusive education programmes.

Officials also made the CPG aware that the SG is in the process of drafting their latest Contribution to International Development Report, which will provide further information on the development of the SG's Feminist approach to International Development, as well as an overview of International Development spend over the last 3 years.

Sarah Boyack MSP thanked the speakers from the Scottish Government, and welcomed Ulemu Hannah Kanyongolo, who joined virtually.

Ulemu Hannah Kanyongolo: Ulemu addressed the challenges faced by feminist networks and grassroots movements, particularly in Malawi, highlighting the lack of support and resources as a significant barrier. Ulemu emphasised that this issue is not unique to the Young Feminist Network, but is a reality for many similar organisations. Due to this lack of support, these organisations and grassroots movements are often ignored or deemed illegitimate.

Ulemu stressed the importance of shifting power dynamics from established institutions to informal networks and movements, emphasising that young women across Malawi and the globe are active participants with agency, acknowledging the challenging nature of advocating for women's rights and the need for collective action. Ulemu said that the Scottish Government's FAIR is seen as crucial for several reasons: it will amplify marginalised voices, build the capacity of networks and movements lacking technical expertise, and legitimise the work of feminist networks and grassroots movements, enabling them to make a real impact in the lives of those in need.

Ulemu also highlighted the broader significance of gender equality for societal participation, economic growth, sustainable development, and poverty reduction, further emphasising the importance of the FAIR.

Sarah Boyack MSP thanked Ulemu, and welcomed Anupama Ranawana who joined virtually.

Anupama Ranawana: Anupama discussed one of Christian Aid's research projects which aims to respond to the FAIR regarding the inclusion of faith communities in discussions about feminist foreign policy. Anupama outlined the study's focus on examining the intersection of faith, feminism, and foreign policy, seeking to understand the connections between school and faith communities and transnational feminist networks. The goal is to identify sustained relationships, key needs at these intersections, alternative discussions, and the requirements for building inclusive dialogues based on feminist foreign policy principles.

Anupama then outlined the project's methodology, involving conversations with feminist faith groups in Scotland and faith-based feminist activists within global international aid networks, including Christian Aid, and key expert interviews.

A notable finding from these conversations is the desire of activists to have their feminist perspectives understood within their faith-based contexts, emphasising inclusivity rather than exclusion based on religious affiliations. Anupama then shared how gender justice work within faith groups, whether local or transnational, is often intertwined with broader social issues such as anti-nuclear movements, combating human trafficking, addressing climate change impacts, and promoting women's leadership roles, highlighting the interconnectedness of various social justice initiatives within faith communities.

Sarah Boyack MSP thanked Anupama Ranawana and welcomed Eva Peace Mukayiranga, who joined virtually.

Eva Peace Mukayiranga: Eva applauded the Scottish Government on taking the lead with FAIR, and stressed the importance of providing space for Women and Girls to participate in discussions. Eva highlighted the success youth engagement in decision making with the Loss and Damage Coalition.

Agenda item 3 – Q&A

Sarah Boyack MSP thanked the presenters and opened the discussion to the wider meeting attendees.

Claire Duncanson, University of Edinburgh: Claire raised a question regarding structural changes desired by feminist groups in the Global South, particularly the need for fiscal space, debt cancellation, fair trade terms, and taxation systems. Claire wanted further insights into how a feminist approach to international relations in Scotland could address these issues beyond mere expenditure on women, focusing on the root causes of gender inequality.

Scottish Government officials responded by highlighting the importance of exploring the root causes of inequality and mentioned the ongoing consultation on the Wellbeing Sustainable Development Bill. They also underscored the commitment to advocating for structural change and amplifying voices in the Global South. They said that issues such as debt cancellation have been raised in discussions with partner country governments. They emphasised the importance of integrating gender equality aspects into all conversations and encouraging them to be mainstreamed across partner country governments' agendas.

Maggie Chapman MSP: Maggie raised concerns about the power structures in partner countries that may hinder efforts like debt relief and cancellation, and whether the Scottish Government has the necessary mechanisms to understand power dynamics in these countries. Maggie suggested exploring conversations with partner organisations and governments to address these challenges.

Scottish Government officials acknowledged the complexity of power dynamics and discussed steps the Scottish Government is taking to engage directly with organisations in the Global South. Examples provided included the application of feminist participatory principles to programme design, delivery, and evaluations, as well as providing funding directly to grassroots level organisations, and considering the future scope, remit, and membership of the Global South Advisory Panel. They emphasised the relationship between the Scottish Government, and its partner country governments in addressing these issues, especially in gathering evidence from both from government and civil society in partner countries.

Ulemu Hannah Kanyongolo, Young Feminists Network, Malawi: Ulemu highlighted the need to shift power away from established institutions toward smaller independent groups and grassroots movements.

Anupama Ranawana, Christian Aid: Anupama shared insights from a research project undertaken by Christian Aid that developed a toolkit to recognise power relationships, suggesting questions to assess who talks and acts in a process, whose knowledge dominates, and who has been silenced. Anupama emphasised the importance of coalition building to address these power imbalances.

John Cairns: John raised a point about the UK Government's decision not to provide further reparations to Kiribati, expressing concern over the lack of acknowledgment of the damage caused by the UK historically, particularly in countries affected by nuclear testing. He contrasted this with the United States, which he stated offered compensation to the Marshall Islands due to previous nuclear tests. John highlighted the need for accountability and responsible action in addressing loss and damage.

Annika Bergmason, University of Edinburgh: Annika submitted a question in advance of the CPG, asking for clarification on the Feminist Approach to International Relations, and how this differed from a fully fledged Feminist Foreign Policy.

Scottish Government officials responded by acknowledging that this as a key question faced in developing Scotland's feminist approach, considering the limitations in place to foreign policy being reserved to Westminster. They said that while Scotland can learn from other countries, its impact is different due to its devolved status, which influenced the development of the four key themes outlined in the paper. They highlighted Scotland's efforts in international engagements since devolution and emphasised the need to utilise other available avenues to adopt a feminist approach.

Sarah Boyack MSP: Sarah further emphasised alternative methods through which Scotland can exert influence on international politics, citing examples like COP26 in Glasgow.

Lewis Ryder-Jones, Oxfam: Lewis raised concerns about the retirement of the business pledge and asked about its potential replacement, particularly in relation to embedding global impact elements. Lewis emphasised the importance of collaboration across government teams to implement a coherent approach to foreign policy.

Scottish Government officials acknowledged the importance of this issue, clarifying that it extends beyond the scope of the international Futures team's responsibilities. Despite this, they acknowledge the need for policy coherence across government departments and expressed willingness to address the issue further. Officials confirmed the SG's existing commitment on policy coherence across Government, set out in the 2016 International Development Strategy so led by that Team, with a strategic approach having been taken to working across a range of Ministerial portfolios for positive development outcomes, including climate, energy, health, education, trade. Specific examples of SG policy coherence to date given by SG officials were: Scotland's policies on Climate – part of a “do no harm” approach in terms of Scotland's ambitious climate targets, but also the additional contribution made through our separate Climate Justice Fund; working with Health on Global Citizenship; International Development co-funding with Education Scotland's Development Education Centres (DECs) to support global citizenship education in Scotland's schools; and working with Trade in development of Scotland's Trade Vision, with its commitment to international development and a do no harm approach.

John Mason MSP: John asked Anupama about examples of progress made by feminist networks within faith communities, and instances where barriers hindered progress.

Anupama Ranawana, Christian Aid: Anupama mentioned the Side by Side network, a global coalition of faith-based feminists, as a successful model for collaborative work.

Andrew Tomlinson, Christian Aid: Andrew highlighted the active feminist networks within faith communities, which often face marginalisation. Andrew mentioned issues

such as leadership opportunities and promoting gender justice within these communities as focal points for progress. The emphasis is on mapping out and supporting these networks more fully to address barriers and advance their objectives.

Frances Guy, Scotland's International Development Alliance: Frances highlighted the importance of public procurement in enhancing gender equality, citing examples from the Global Bank's efforts. Frances said that influencing public procurement spending can have a significant impact on gender equality, particularly in less developed countries where it accounts for 30% of spending.

Scottish Government officials acknowledged the importance of this issue, noting that it emerged during the consultation process. They mentioned the Scottish Government's Procurement Strategy 2022-24 (published 28/2/22) which explicitly recognises the use of public procurement to support ethical and fair trade producers and suppliers, links to the SG International Development Strategy, and its alignment with international development goals, emphasising the commitment to strategic approaches across government departments.

Agenda item 4 – next meeting

Sarah Boyack MSP gave the date of next CPG as 28th May. Anyone with further suggestions of topics or speakers should contact louise@intdevalliance.scot.

Sarah Boyack MSP closed the meeting.