

Scottish Parliament CPG on International Development

Wednesday 8th June 2022 18:00-19:30

Virtually and in-person

How can Scottish global development programming evolve?

**Please note that it is not the intention of the minutes to record a verbatim account.*

MSP Attendees: Sarah Boyack MSP, Maggie Chapman MSP, Karen Adam MSP

MSP Apologies:

Member Organisation list: Corra Foundation, Friends of Chitambo, Disaster Emergency Committee, Tearfund, Comfort International, Ecologia, Leprosy Mission, Catherine Currie Consulting, Jubilee Scotland, Scottish Fair Trade Forum, Emms International, UNHS, CEID University of Edinburgh, Link Education International, Christian Aid, University of Strathclyde, SCIAF, University of St Andrews, IOD PARC, Water Witness International, Inclusive Development Consulting, ActionAid UK, CBM, ACTSA Scotland

Individual List: Mhairi McLafferty, Monica Dearden, Grace Buckley, Julain Sian, Pam Wilson, John Kennedy, Stephanie Sharkey, Calum Fisher, Chloe Martin, Frances Sinclair, John Roman

Non-member Organisation attendees: Centre for Scotland and Israel Relations, John White and Son Ltd, Edinburgh College, UK National Commission for UNESCO, Centre4solar, DAI, Hadeel UK, Joanna Keating Scottish Government, John Primrose Scottish Government, Edinburgh College, MCF

In attendance (speakers): Frances Guy (Scotland's International Development Alliance), Wangari Kinoti (ActionAid International), Dr Tracy Morse (University of Strathclyde)

Welcome: Sarah Boyack opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

Sarah then introduced the theme of the meeting – considering how Scotland's contribution to global sustainable development can evolve following new Government commitments relating to external affairs and climate justice.

Sarah passed on apologies from the Minister, Neil Gray MSP, and welcomed his officials John Primrose, Deputy Director of International Division and Joanna Keating Head of the International Development team.

The minutes from the last meeting were agreed.

Sarah then passed to Frances.

Frances Guy: Frances referred to the Alliance's draft paper calling for a global solidarity strategy from the Scottish Government published in March. Comments have been received on the paper from Alliance members over the last couple of months and the paper will be re-drafted and published at the end of June. A summary of key recommendations had been circulated to meeting attendees.

Frances highlighted some key points. She said the timing is right for this work based on the new Global Affairs Framework and other government commitments. We also have an opportunity to build on the momentum of COP26 which helped to demonstrate a better understanding of how national policy has a global impact.

Small countries can have real influence on a global stage so whilst the commitment from the Scottish Government to loss and damage funding may not have created the hoped-for snowball effect, it has been a catalyst for a global conversation around loss and damage. Scotland is well placed to do these strategic interventions and to advocate more strongly for them. Lastly Frances pointed out that as we are halfway through the Sustainable Development Goals implementing period, this is a good time to bring the SDGs back to the forefront.

Frances then outlined the report's key recommendations.

We need to ensure that policy is more joined up and better coordinated across programming, which means across government as well as national and international policies.

We need more transparency. Alliance members would like to see Scottish Government funding allocated through open competition. Accessibility is also important, particularly if direct funding is going to civil society organisations in partner countries. This is a great ambition, but effort will be required to ensure that those organisations have equal ability to bid for funds.

Funding should be longer term but also flexible. Rather than one call for proposals during a parliamentary cycle there might be two, for example, but both for three or four year timescales. That would allow for more flexibility in responding to developments on the ground. The key to this is evaluation, which needs to be used to improve future programming. Ideally funding would be more flexible, incorporating iterative evaluations allowing changes of funding direction during the programming cycle.

The Government's commitment to a feminist approach is welcomed by Alliance members but needs to be integrated across all programming and will require real effort to implement properly.

The Alliance recognises the demands of these recommendations and suggests that the International Development department will require more staffing to co-ordinate and collaborate.

Sarah Boyack: Sarah thanked Frances and introduced Wangari who was contributing from Nairobi.

Wangari Kinoti: Wangari talked about her experience working for a women's rights organisation in Kenya, prior to working at ActionAid. She saw the results achieved by work grounded in the lived experiences of women and girls across the country, involving women and girls directly and being led by them. This experience of deep and meaningful work in communities combined with Wangari's current role informs her views.

No other type of organisation can have the impact that women's rights organisations and feminist networks have when it comes to causing the major shifts needed to achieve gender equality.

Therefore, women's rights organisations and feminist networks should get the largest amounts of funding for gender equality work. There is overwhelming evidence that strong and autonomous feminist movements are the most effective in causing sustainable change for women's rights and gender equality.

Wangari spoke about a longitudinal study from 1975 – 2006 looking at 70 countries. The study found that the most important and consistent factor in driving policy change with respect to violence against women was feminist activism. This was more important than left wing parties, the number of women legislators, or national wealth. Feminist movements use international conventions and agreements as levers to influence policy making and have also pushed advocacy that results in those international agreements in the first place.

There is also evidence that strong autonomous feminist movements, more than civil society, are critical actors in women's economic rights – e.g., protection from violence at work or the right to own property.

Wangari pointed out that it is crucial to understand the difference between direct funding to women's organisations and networks, and support for gender equality programmes. Wangari was speaking about funding organisations directly, allowing them to determine what to do with money with the knowledge that they are best placed to effect change, particularly the structural drivers of gender equality.

The key problem is that there is not enough funding for gender equality in the first place. The OECD report that gender equality as a principal objective receives 4% of all bilateral overseas development assistance. A report from CARE and Development Initiatives stated that UK bilateral aid to women's rights organisations increased from 2014 – 2017 peaking at £43.5m but then fell by half to £21.8m in 2019.

Less than 1% of global gender focussed aid goes direct to women's rights organisations and institutions. Between 2017 and 2018, women's rights organisations received 0.13% of total ODA, and 0.4% of gender focussed aid. The Association of Women's Rights and Development found that 99% of development aid and foundational grants do not reach women's rights organisations. Importantly, the groups that have the least funding are those that cover communities most affected by exclusion and marginalisation.

So therefore, Wangari believes that the Scottish Government commitment to the Women and Girls Empowerment Fund is critical and will be important in filling these resourcing gaps. However, it must go where there will be the most impact. This is a chance for a small country to make strategic decisions and lead the way globally. Wangari called for a commitment to resourcing women's rights organisations directly.

Wangari noted that ActionAid are also considering difficult issues around their own funding, and whether they are taking money that could go directly to women's rights organisations. They are reflecting on how they are accountable to women's rights organisations and whether their approaches are aligned. They are working through these challenging areas and support the call for more direct funding to go to women's rights organisations.

Wangari noted that 48% of women's rights and feminist networks in the Global South that were at some point seeking funding from the Global Fund for Women, report that in their most recent fiscal year their budget is less than \$30k per year. Few organisations can survive like this particularly given scale of work required. It is of little surprise, then, that there has been a loss of sight of the Sustainable Development Goals. The SDG Gender Index 2022 shows little progress to achieving gender equality globally. 3 billion girls and women live in a country that has a score of poor or very poor on gender equality according to index.

Wangari noted the global context - that we are living through multiple crises, including the climate & ecological crisis and wealth inequality, which have deep and wide implications to women and girls, on top of violent conflicts. Rethinking, redesigning and evolving approaches to International Development must have women's rights and feminist networks at their centre for significant progress to be achieved. Funding needs to be well resourced, sustainably resourced, long term, core, flexible, and with self-determined priorities.

Crucially, language needs to be considered. These organisations are not 'beneficiaries', but are experts, knowledge producers, mass organisers, carers, change-makers, leaders. Consistent consultation is required with those in the Global South. The Scottish Government must remove stumbling blocks, add flexibility, build relationships, and look at new ways of working. Overall, we need a political commitment to what works best to achieve gender quality.

Sarah Boyack: Sarah thanked Wangari and commented that we need to think about what we can do as a country to inspire those changes. Sarah introduced Tracy.

Tracy Morse: Tracy explained she would be providing two perspectives – one on international development and implementation science based on spending 20 years in Malawi, and the second, looking at how sustainable development needs to be embedded across universities, and considering universities' role as a global citizen.

Tracy started by highlighting the important role that Higher Education has in helping attain the SDGs. Across the key pillars, HE is contributing to the sustainable development agenda. This includes teaching and learning, research and innovation, external engagement and leadership.

Scottish Universities have sustainability at their heart in terms of vision and strategy. Over last two decades Scottish Universities have taken a lead in a lot of SG funding – not alone but working with other partners, e.g., in Malawi. They've had a significant impact on the ground, and also on policies in Scotland and abroad. Funding has been received from UKIR and FCDO which has now been cut. With the impact of global crises on SDGs we cannot afford to have funding cuts at this important moment in time, so it's good to see the Scottish Government increasing funding.

At Strathclyde University they have focussed on five key areas over the last two years and have carried out a range of work in Malawi. This includes renewable energy, including leading the renewable energy acceleration programme, development of a renewable energy strategy and direct research such as evaluating the first smart solar PV grid. Other areas include water - across the climate justice programme; education; and humanitarian work. The fifth area is health which is Tracy's expertise. This has primarily been environmental health and preventative health work, which has influenced strategies and training. For example, Covid guidance influenced community health strategies. The University worked with a team of partners, including Malawian colleagues and partners from NGOs and the private sector. Tracy emphasised the importance of partnerships of equity and equality.

Tracy went on to talk about failures, and explained she encourages organisations to share failures so we can learn and move forward.

Firstly, Tracy said that partnership must be ethical and equitable. We need to move away from Global North agenda and give voice to the Global South as well. We could also do better with partnerships across disciplines and across institutions.

Tracy talked about Interdisciplinarity. She said that engagements and partnerships are more successful if working across different disciplines, sectors, socio-economic levels and cultures.

She then talked about localised priorities. What is an important SDG here in Scotland is unlikely to be the same in Sub-Saharan Africa and will be seen a different way.

Co-design and co-development are important. How do partnerships and localised priorities drive the funding we are applying for and the way we work?

We also need the opportunity of flexibility. Tracy would like the flexibility to fail fast and move on. She wants to develop and co-design a process and have flexible funding so that exact activities are not required at the point of application, as the detail comes out of the co-development process. This also makes for a more equitable and ethical partnership.

We have moved away from a partner in the Global South collecting data and then a Global North partner analysing and publishing the data. We have gone a long way from that but still have a way to go. We also need to give voice and provide platforms to ensure no one is left behind, which academic institutions can provide. Strong mechanisms for engagement must be included throughout programming, not just at the end.

Tracy's final point was that success breeds success, and we shouldn't underestimate the power of small grants. Tracy started work in Malawi in 2006 with a grant of £120k from the first round of SG funding, and since then has secured well over £20m in research funding which has supported capacity building, moved agendas forward and influenced policy. Tracy encouraged the Scottish Government to continue with the opportunity of small grants.

Discussion: Sarah thanked the presenters and opened the discussion to the wider meeting attendees.

Sarah Boyack started by asking how we ensure that feminist principles are built in across the whole sustainable development programme.

Frances responded by saying there is a commitment in the Global Affairs Framework to a feminist approach, so this should frame what happens in future. She also made a practical implementing point, that Canada will not grant programme funding unless a gender analysis has been undertaken which is a basic starting point that could make a real difference. She also supported Wangari's point that if funds are limited then giving funding direct to women's organisations and feminist networks should be considered.

Wangari pointed out that the bigger donors have the least access or reach to organisations on the ground, and the smaller donors do have that reach. Consulting these small donors who have been successful could be worthwhile.

Elizabeth, a student from University of Edinburgh, asked Tracy how she deals with issues of collaboration between partner organisations and government institutions. She felt that often organisations were often trying to implement the same interventions and reinventing the wheel.

Tracy responded by saying that being based in Malawi made her experience easier for collaboration. She also said time, effort and perseverance were important. Collaboration with NGOs needs to be resolved and is a challenge, particularly when it comes to funding. Collaborating with HE is important to build sustainability into programming, otherwise there is a risk of repeating interventions. An outcome mapping approach looking at who will be engaged and influenced can also help.

Claire Duncanson, lecturer in international relations at University of Edinburgh, asked what else we can think about as well as funding. Scotland needs to think about what else it could do to support women's organisations to develop alternatives to the current economic model and to encourage wellbeing economies internationally. Feminism is about challenging the structures that drive inequality in the first place so what can we do in that regard?

Wangari said she is working in this area but was asked today to talk specifically about funding. We need to support women's organisations and feminist movements that are already proposing economic alternatives and bring them to a platform where

they need to be heard. We also need to ensure that what we are calling feminist foreign policy is responding to their realities.

Frances referred back to the Alliance's paper on global solidarity. Frances was calling in from a conference on women, peace and security in Iraq where the women activists were calling for more solidarity. This means collaboration and advocacy – and Scotland can play a role in advocating around key points. She also mentioned that we need to do at home what we're advocating abroad, for example the wellbeing economy. Tracy supported the 'walk the talk' point and that Scotland should take advantage of our small but mighty position.

Bernadette from University of St Andrews asked what Scotland can do about losses from the continent of Africa and debt injustice.

Sarah Boyack said that the MSPs could take that issue away and reflect on it. Wangari said that Scotland could back the calls for a UN body on tax. It would be multilateral and would address, for example, poor tax practices including by large multinational corporations.

Maggie Chapman MSP followed up by talking about decolonisation, saying we need to consider the colonial and imperial past of not only the UK but other countries if we want to achieve genuine ethical and equitable partnerships. We cannot get to a feminist foreign policy without tackling the culture of institutions like the IMF and World Bank.

John Francis, a founding member of the CPG, asked how the panel relate to the UN and its agencies at the moment. There are competing demands within the UN system and as the UN originated the SDGs, what can the UN continue to deliver for the panel?

Frances pointed out that Scotland isn't an independent member of the UN. SDGs are about everybody participating, not about the UN helping individual states but a sense that everyone should participate from public to private sectors. So, the SDGs should be beyond the UN.

John asked whether Frances would agree that this is a pressing moment for the UN. Frances said she felt there have been many pressing moments for the UN.

John Primrose from the ID team said thank you for the invitation and gave apologies for the Minister who is currently in Poland, seeing the humanitarian work that the SG is supporting and engaging on refugee issues. On the UN point, John said that Scotland fully supports multilateralism and that the withdrawal of multilateral support through the new UK aid strategy feels like a mistake. He also said it has been a really inspiring conversation from the ID team's perspective. There is a great deal they would want to engage on with the Alliance and members, with a view to presenting their recommendations to Ministers. He also said the points Wangari raised were thoroughly inspiring and he looked forward to engaging further on these challenges. Decolonisation as mentioned by MSP Maggie Chapman is central to the International Development review and something they take very seriously at the Scottish Government.

David, Action for Southern Africa, took up the point on debt. He said that the Zongo commission has set out how Bain & Co assisted with the embezzlement of funds in South Africa. Bain & Co are a US company based in the UK. David asked that the CPG request that the Scottish Government do not assign any contracts to Bain & Co until the matter of state capture in South Africa has been resolved.

Sarah suggested that the government officials on the call may be able to pick this issue up with the Minister.

Sarah Boyack MSP: Sarah thanked everyone involved in the Alliance's report and will be sharing it with colleagues. She thanked all speakers and summarised the themes discussed: ensuring international development funds and strategy reflect challenges outlined, involving organisations on the ground, and using the strength of our universities. Sarah also mentioned she is doing some work to try and stop the global fund cuts and around vaccine inequality. She thanked Lewis Ryder Jones from the Alliance who has handled the secretariat for the CPG for several years and introduced Louise Davies as his replacement.

The next meeting will be 5th October at 6pm.