



Scotland Malawi Partnership

Consultation on the Scottish Government's (SG) International Development Policy Response from the Scotland Malawi Partnership (SMP)

Who we are

The SMP exists to inspire people and organisations of Scotland to be involved with Malawi in an informed, coordinated and effective way so that both nations benefit.

The SMP is an independent charitable membership organisation. It aims to foster links, consistent with our values, between the two nations, and encourage development of sustainable projects in Malawi.

The SMP currently represents 239 members – both full members (organisations) and associate members (individuals). Our membership is varied, including NGOs, schools, universities, councils, health clinics, churches and numerous Malawians living in Scotland. The following response draws directly from the practical experiences of our member organisations.

Consultation process

Consultation documents were circulated to all SMP members on 11 September 2007. Members were invited to attend a SMP facilitated discussion on 12 October in Edinburgh City Chambers. Members were also encouraged to respond directly to the SG. Organisations contributing to the consultation include Child Survival in Malawi, The Chesney Trust, The Centre for Development Studies (University of Glasgow), Malawi Tomorrow, The Scotland Malawi Business Group, Imani Enterprise, Glasgow City Council, Scottish International Relief, Concern Worldwide, Westgate Medical Centre, The Church of Scotland, and Malawi Millennium Project. During our discussion on 12 October, consensus was reached on a number of points and a first draft was prepared by the attending organisations. This draft was then submitted to the SMP's Board of Directors for approval (Directors are elected by full members of the SMP), resulting in this final version.

Response

The SMP welcomes the SG's continuing commitment to an International Development Policy, and particularly welcomes the consultative process with aid organisations and other interested parties. The SMP encourages such levels of communication between the Scottish Government and stakeholders in order to encourage coordination.

A number of points of agreement were reached in the process of this consultation. However, organisations were also strongly encouraged to respond directly to the SG. SMP members would like to make the following comments and recommendations:

GEOGRAPHIC PRIORITIES

SMP members strongly welcome the continued focus on Malawi – specifically the announcement to ring-fence a minimum of £3 million per year to projects in Malawi. While we recognise that the geographic spread of the IDF will be growing over the next few years, we would suggest that the spread be manageable and small, bearing in mind that the limited financial resources should not be spread too thinly. Scottish money and expertise will have more of an impact in a limited area – as such, we would suggest spreading out regionally via the neighbouring countries, specifically focusing on those countries which already have existing Scottish links on which the SG could build.

THEMATIC PRIORITIES

SMP members recommend that the SG include Sustainable Economic Development in its thematic priorities, recognising the emphasis that many developing countries place on this, as well as both the existing and the developing Scottish expertise in this field.

Individual responses from member organisations may well reflect the various opinions expressed about focusing or widening the priorities during the consultation. If there is to be more of a focus in the priorities, and the delivery mechanism continues to be primarily Scottish organisations, then the focus should take account of Scotland's comparative advantages.

We would encourage the Scottish government, when working from the International Development Policy, to be guided by the national priorities of the government in the host country, as has been the case in Malawi.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

Members spent a lot of time discussing the International Development Fund. Members expressed concern over the assessment and selection process, which is thought to be unclear, less than transparent and not guided by enough expertise. SMP members would like to make the following recommendations:

- The SG should continue with the three funding schemes. Grouping the three schemes together into one large scheme would prevent many small Scottish organisations (and their partners in the developing world) from accessing the funds.
- The SG should continue with the Challenge Fund approach. A tendering process would be more problematic, and would make it harder smaller organisations to access funds.
- The selection process needs to be clarified and publicised well in advance. The public needs to know when each round will be open, when the rounds will close and when the decisions will be made. The Scottish Government should publish this information well in advance (using networking organisations like NIDOS and the SMP), in order to allow applicants to plan their work and their applications better.
- The criteria against which applications will be judged also needs to be publicised well in advance. Applicants need to know what the SG is aiming to achieve, and how their application forms will be assessed.
- In order to clarify the above point to members of the SMP, we would suggest that the SG work with the SMP in order to inform our members of specific Malawi priorities in advance of each funding round.
- Members of the Partnership recognise that the International Development Department cannot be expected to have the knowledge, experience and time required to judge the large amounts of applications. However, we would encourage the SG to make a careful selection of external assessors in order to ensure that the relevant experience and expertise is in place. Stakeholders need to have confidence in the expertise of those assessing the applications.
- Once the selection procedure, timescales and criteria have been established and publicised, they should be strictly adhered to.
- Speedier funding decisions are essential. In previous rounds, the time between the submission of applications and the announcement of a decision has been far too long. Slow decisions have been a recurring course of confusion and frustration.
- The Humanitarian Health Fund (HHF) should be widened and renamed. It should no longer simply be a fund for health projects. Projects falling into any of the thematic areas should be considered. However, this stream should be able to provide funds in a much shorter time,

perhaps a couple of weeks. It could be relabelled as a 'Rapid Assistance Fund' or an 'Emergency Response Fund'.

- The SG should not exclude capital funding. However, capital funding should be limited and proportional to the size of the application.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The SG needs to undertake an evaluation of the work done under the International Development Policy and the Cooperation Agreement with Malawi. Data from such an evaluation would allow the SG to better respond to criticism from the media. This evaluation should be carried out by an independent assessor in order to guarantee impartiality and confidence in the results of the evaluation. The SG should ensure that the evaluation informs future work in other countries, and that lessons learned from the relationship with Malawi should be fed into future work.

In relation to the evaluation of projects in Malawi, the SG should consider funding an independent representative in Malawi to provide practical, logistical and monitoring support to Scottish projects.

MALAWI PRIORITIES

Health and education were recognised as vital areas for the relationship between Scotland and Malawi. Members of the SMP would encourage the SG to ensure that there is more substance to the Sustainable Economic Development Strand of the Cooperation Agreement.

Contact details

The SMP would welcome the opportunity to discuss this document in more detail, and would welcome feedback. For future correspondence, please contact:

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