



Scotland Malawi Partnership submission to the UK Parliament's International Development Committee inquiry on the Sustainable Development Goals

August 2015

Executive Summary:

The Scotland Malawi Partnership (SMP) is the independent, non-governmental, apolitical umbrella agency supporting, coordinating and representing Scotland's many civic links with Malawi. We represent our 700+ members, which include: every Scottish university and many of its colleges, over 160 schools, and hundreds of churches, NGOs, hospitals, diaspora associations, youth groups, businesses, and all manner of community groups. The SMP believes that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will only succeed if we **foster a spirit of dignified two-way partnership**, moving beyond a narrative of "donors" and "recipients". We share the eleven 'partnership principles' our network of 700 organisations and key individuals uses to guide our work: we believe these are as valuable to DFID and the UN as to individual people-to-people links, and we encourage DFID to advance this same spirit of partnership in its implementation of the SDGs. Furthermore, we believe the SDGs can only succeed if we can **inspire and mobilise the great energy that exists within civil society**, and we encourage DFID to explore more pro-active ways of working in synergy with wider civic society as it embraces the SDGs. We celebrate the universality behind the new SDGs: that these are targets for the global north as much as the global south, and we encourage the UK Government to take these domestic obligations as seriously as their international commitments, **promoting the core tenets of Policy Coherence for Development**. Finally, and in response to the questions posed in the terms of this inquiry, we urge the UK Government **not to pick and choose individual SDGs** to prioritise, or to prioritise one country or region over another. We are grateful for the opportunity to feed into this inquiry and look forward to welcoming the International Development Committee back to Scotland to meet with representatives of the 94,000 Scots working in active partnership with Malawi each year, as part of this 156 year old people-to-people friendship.

1 The Scotland Malawi Partnership:

1.1 The Scotland Malawi Partnership (SMP) is the national umbrella body representing Scotland's many civil society links with Malawi. It exists to inspire the people and organisations of Scotland to be involved with Malawi in an informed, coordinated and effective way for the benefit of both nations.

1.2 The SMP represents its 700+ member organisations across Scotland, all of which have links to Malawi. Membership includes: every Scottish university, many of the colleges, over 160 schools, and hundreds of churches, NGOs, hospitals, diaspora associations, youth groups, businesses, and all manner of community groups.¹

1.3 The SMP is underpinned by a historic bilateral civil society relationship based not on 'donors' and 'recipients' but on long-standing, mutually-beneficial community to community, family to family and people to people links. It is a relationship built on trust and mutual respect. This is a new and innovative mode of international development and we believe it is powerful force for change.

1.4 More than 94,000 Scots and 198,000 Malawians are actively involved in this unique bilateral relationship each year, contributing in excess of £40 million, and directly benefitting more than 300,000 Scots and 2 million Malawians a year.² 46% of Scots personally know someone engaged in a Malawi link, and 74% of Scots are in favour of these links (with less than 3% against).³

¹ To search the SMP membership, visit: www.scotland-malawipartnership.org. For a summary breakdown of our membership and work see: [Scotland Malawi: A Short Briefing](#)

² University of Edinburgh (2014) ['The value of Scotland's links with Malawi: building on the past, shaping the future'](#)

³ Scotland Malawi Partnership (2014) ['Public Awareness Study: Examining Scotland-Malawi links'](#) - Data taken from interviews with 516 randomly selected Scots.

1.5 The special people-to-people links between Scotland and Malawi date back to the travels of Dr David Livingstone, more than 150 years ago. The strength and vitality of the contemporary bilateral civic links are often attributed to four innovative features of the relationship: the priority of the relational; the mobilisation of civic society; a reciprocal partnership for development; and government working in synergy with people.⁴

1.6 Maintaining this strong principle of “Government in synergy with people”, the SMP is pleased to have a close working relationship with both the UK Government and the Scottish Government as they implement their respective development programmes in Malawi. We hope to encourage further cooperation and inter-linked working between the efforts of UK civic society and the work of its elected governments so as to maximize overall impact in Malawi.

1.7 The Scotland Malawi Partnership values the opportunity to feed into this inquiry and looks forward to working closely with the International Development Committee through this Parliament. We welcomed the strong commitment by the Committee in the last Parliament to engage the Scottish sector with an annual visit to Scotland, and hope this is continued. The SMP would be delighted to help facilitate engagements in Scotland for the Committee to meet representatives across Scottish civic society engaged in international development.

2 Partnership as the core mode of delivery

2.1 The SMP believes that the Sustainable Development Goals will better succeed if we can re-centre a spirit of dignified two-way global partnership and move beyond a paradigm of one-way charity, controlled by the global north and implemented on the global south.

2.2 Despite Millennium Development Goal eight calling for a new “Global Partnership for Development”, in reality, all too quickly fine words of partnership soon fell away and the MDGs became part of the well-worn narrative of “donors”, largely in the north, and “recipients”, largely in the south. The SDGs, by contrast, come from a more promising genesis, rising from years of consultations which engaged communities across every country. Despite last minute closed-door negotiations at which a number of worrying concessions were made,⁵ there can be no doubt that, overall, the development process with the SDGs has been far more consultative and partnership-driven than with the MDGs. This is an encouraging start.

2.3 The Scotland Malawi Partnership recognizes the key role Her Majesty’s Government (HMG) has played in the development of the SDGs, with the Prime Minister serving as the Co-Chair of the UN High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons. We were delighted in 2013 when this panel published its report, “A New Global Partnership”, informing the development of the SDGs. In particular, we warmly welcomed the report’s proposed ‘Transformational Shift Five’:

“Forge a new global partnership. Perhaps the most important transformative shift is towards a new spirit of solidarity, cooperation, and mutual accountability that must underpin the post-2015 agenda. A new partnership should be based on a common understanding of our shared humanity, underpinning mutual respect and mutual benefit in a shrinking world. This partnership should involve governments but also include others: people living in poverty, those with disabilities, women, civil society and indigenous and local communities, traditionally marginalised groups, multilateral institutions, local and national government, the business community, academia and private philanthropy. Each priority area identified in the post-2015 agenda should be supported by dynamic partnerships...And since this partnership is built on principles of common humanity and mutual respect, it must also have a new spirit and be completely transparent. Everyone involved must be fully accountable.”⁶

⁴ Rev Prof Kenneth R. Ross (2014) [‘Malawi, Scotland and a Relational Approach to International Development’](#)

⁵ [“Last-minute lack of transparency weakens sustainable development goals”](#) The Guardian, August 2015

⁶ [“A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development”](#) The Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. 2013

2.4 The SMP is pleased that elements of the proposed ‘transformational shift five’ can be seen in the final Sustainable Development Goals, not least in Goal 17, “Partnerships for the Goals”, which calls on countries to:

[17.16] “Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technologies and financial resources to support the achievement of sustainable development goals in all countries, particularly developing countries”

and

[17.17] “Encourage and promote effective public, public-private, and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships”

2.5 The SMP believes this spirit of partnership should not be seen as merely one of the seventeen goals but integral to the whole: foundational and a pre-requisite for success.

2.6 We believe HMG, with its world-renowned Department for International Development (DFID), has considerable influence and an important role to play in establishing the tone and tenor with which the SDGs will be implemented. We believe that by focusing on this spirit of partnership as the primary mode of delivery, DFID can achieve greater impact in its work, have greater influence globally, and move the international community beyond the existing paradigm of top-down western-run aid which has failed to deliver the transformational change it has promised after five decades and trillions of pounds.

2.7 While calling for HMG to focus on a spirit of partnership, we recognise the term can be over-used and under-defined. A clear understanding of what we mean by partnership is key. For example, jockeys often speak of a ‘partnership’ with their horse: for the SDGs to succeed we must move beyond such an understanding of the word, and towards a spirit of genuinely *dignified*, two-way partnership.

2.8 The SMP has consulted more than 200 Scottish and 200 Malawian organisations, asking what they see as the core principles behind a successful partnership. From both countries, the same eleven principles were identified:

Planning and implementing together

Appropriateness

Respect, trust and mutual understanding

Transparency and accountability

No-one left behind

Effectiveness

Reciprocity

Sustainability

Do no **H**arm

Interconnectivity

Parity

2.9 The Scotland Malawi Partnership promotes these eleven Partnership Principles⁷ in both Scotland and Malawi: we support our members to work within this framework, and it is against these principles that we hold ourselves accountable. We do this by supporting and encouraging our members to undertake quick self-reflection exercises, exploring how their work with Malawi measures up against these eleven principles, and we ourselves commit to this same process.

2.10 We believe these Partnership Principles are universal: as relevant for DFID and the UN as they are for an individual school or church partnership. We therefore encourage DFID to take time to reflect on the nature of partnership within its global operations, perhaps even undertaking the same self-reflection against these eleven principles, for which there is strong popular support. We would be delighted to assist with this process if useful.

⁷ See www.scotland-malawipartnership.org/get-involved/principles/

3 Mobilising civic society:

3.1 It is estimated that just establishing the necessary physical infrastructure for the SDGs will cost in excess of \$7 trillion annually.⁸ Sadly, even if every country met their stated international development commitments, as the UK has, there still wouldn't be enough funds globally to achieve the SDGs through conventional state-led international development channels alone. In this context, we believe it is only prudent to do everything possible to mobilise effectively the energy and expertise of wider civic society.

3.2 By way of example, each year the Scottish Government invests around £3m-£5m into its Malawi Development Programme which actively engages civic society in Malawi and Scotland to achieve tangible outcomes in health, education, sustainable economic development and civic governance. By working in synergy with the wider historic civic connections in this bilateral relationship, the Scottish Government engages a powerful multiplier effect which results in an estimated 94,000 Scots annually contributing in excess of £40m of in-kind support to the people-to-people links. For every pound invested by the Scottish Government, more than ten pounds come from the civic society: this is a model which is starting to receive favourable attention from counterparts around the world.

3.3 In this Scottish model there is a creative synergy between government and people, where popular activism inspires government efforts, while government support stimulates popular engagement. By working with the grain of civic engagement, by valuing the contribution of countless churches, schools and hospitals, the government's programme has strong popular and all-party political support in Scotland, and enjoys very favourable coverage in the media. Such positive media coverage only serves to inspire new generations to become involved, creating a virtuous circle of engagement. Enthusiasm breeds enthusiasm. For example, at the age of nine, Martha Payne was inspired by her grandfather who volunteered for the Scottish charity Mary's Meals; when her school meals blog became a global media sensation she was in turn able to inspire tens of thousands of others to become involved with Malawi, and this virtuous circle continues.

3.4 Despite much initial energy and optimism mobilized through the "Make Poverty History" campaign, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) failed to sustain substantive civic interest or engagement. They too quickly became the realm of governments, not the people they serve; they became a technical language and part of a purely structural understanding of poverty. In this way, the MDGs lost their capacity to mobilize civic society as agents of change, momentum was lost, and governments were left free to pick and choose which goals to prioritize with little public scrutiny or engagement.

3.5 The Scotland Malawi Partnership believes there is a valuable role the UK Government can play, learning from the MDGs, in ensuring active civic engagement is at the centre of SDG implementation. DFID has had some notable successes engaging civic society historically⁹ but the majority view from our 1,000+ members across Scotland and Malawi, is that DFID could do far more to value, engage and mobilise civic society. There is a widely held view within our membership that DFID can too often be disinterested, disengaged and dismissive of the contribution civic society can make to international development outcomes. We actively look to challenge this view and build strong links with DFID.

3.6 With an estimated two million Malawians directly benefitting (and four million indirectly benefitting) from Scotland Malawi Partnership members' work each year,¹⁰ we feel civic society already plays a significant role in the UK's international development effort, and there is strong potential for greater impact if we could better connect what is done at a civic and a governmental level. We believe bridging such gaps will considerably increase the UK's impact against the SDGs.

⁸ [Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing](#) (2015)

⁹ For example, DFID's 2011 "[Global Community Links](#)" programme and its former engagement with school partnerships.

¹⁰ University of Edinburgh (2014) '[The value of Scotland's links with Malawi: building on the past, shaping the future](#)'

4 Embracing universality:

4.1 More than anything else, the core tenet that makes the Sustainable Development Goals distinct from the Millennium Development Goals is the principle of universality: that the same goals apply for the global north as for the global south. In this way, the SDGs are able to tackle inter-related social, economic and environmental issues, and recognise that we now live in a globalized and inter-dependent world. Furthermore, this model of universality builds a spirit of constructive solidarity as each state around the table is required to make sacrifices and contributions, just as each state reaps the shared benefits of global sustainability.

4.2 We believe the principle of universality is a very significant success of the SDG development process; it will make the SDGs far more likely to succeed, and will in turn make such successes more sustainable. However, to succeed, a fundamental attitudinal shift is required such that the SDGs do not become the domain solely of DFID but become embedded within every department of central and local government alike. We should not underestimate the challenge ahead.

4.3 While of course the focus of the International Development Committee will continue to be matters pertaining to HMG's international development efforts, we urge the Committee to do everything possible to encourage their colleagues and counterparts across Parliament and Government to commit to the delivery and scrutiny of the SDGs within the UK. This must be done on an all-party basis for the SDGs to succeed.

4.4 Furthermore, we strongly encourage HMG to consider the principle of Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) as it looks to the implementation of the SDGs and turn to the International Development Committee to champion this concept. The premise of PCD, that *all* government departments and policies should recognise the global impact they have, is not new but is more relevant now than ever before given the universality within the SDGs. Here we turn to the excellent work done by our partner network, the Network of International Development Organisations in Scotland (NIDOS), in collating PCD learning from across Europe and making tangible recommendations for the Scottish and UK Governments on how PCD could be effectively implemented.¹¹

5 Ensuring global reach

5.1 In recognition of the specific questions and themes raised by the Committee within the terms of the inquiry, we end by considering some of the more practical points of delivery. We recognize that the Committee asks which SDGs the UK should focus on and which countries the UK should prioritise. To these points, we urge against thematic and geographic prioritisation of the SDGs.

5.2 The SDGs have come from years of global consultations. Latterly, every possible effort was made to reduce the number of goals but we remain with 17 because there is now a strong realization that sustainability sits on three distinct pillars: the social, the economic and the environmental. No effective solutions can ever be found for one of these pillars alone: they are inter-related and inter-dependent. It would be hugely damaging if, having reached this global understanding, HMG decided to pick and choose certain SDGs over others with which to prioritise – those of greatest political interest, those that are least contentious, or those that seem the easiest to achieve.

5.3 DFID has a tremendous global reach at present and an enviable international reputation. However, in recent years there seems to have been a shift away from some of the poorest countries in the world in favour of post-conflict states, and there seems to have been a shift to increasingly work through multilaterals instead of through civic society and NGO-led work, budget support and DFID's own programmes. We urge caution on both fronts, as HMG considers how best to implement the SDGs. Concerning this first trend we highlight that, according to DFID's published figures, DFID's budget in Malawi has halved since 2015,¹² despite increased

¹¹ See "[Scotland's Place in a Just World](#)" NIDOS 2014

¹² This fact continues to be disputed by DFID despite all evidence on DFID's website and in DFID annual reports. At the point of this submission, the [DFID Development Tracker website](#) states that £128,796,093 was invested into Malawi in 2012/13 and £65,456,115 will be invested in 2015/16, a reduction of 49.8%.

poverty and humanitarian need, including devastating floods at the start of this year. Concerning the second trend, while we welcome international coordination of effort, we caution against the increasing reliance on vast global agencies which too often see ownership and decision-making move from the communities concerned, to New York, Washington or Brussels.

6 Closing remarks

6.1 We are immensely proud of the UK's contribution to the global international development effort. We have an outstanding Department for International Development, staffed by experts in their field who are passionate for the cause, working tirelessly to improve lives across the world. We applaud HMG for meeting its commitment to investing 0.7% of Gross National Income and it is every credit to the UK Parliament for passing the world-leading International Development Bill. It is out of this great sense of pride that our network offers every encouragement to DFID, and to the IDC in scrutinizing DFID, to: focus on partnership as the core modality for SDG delivery; work with and mobilize the great energy from civic society; ensure our domestic commitments are not forgotten and we strive for greater policy coherence; and resist the temptation to pick and choose priorities and regions. We believe, in this way, HMG can be a world-leader in delivering the Sustainable Development Goals.