

CROSS PARTY GROUP: INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
18 MARCH 2014
COMMITTEE ROOM 4, SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT
5.30PM – 7PM

Attendees: Sarah Boyack MSP, Siobhan McMahon MSP, Jamie McGrigor MSP, Maureen Watt MSP, Fiona Trafton, Hilary Homans, Colin Pritchard, Elaine Mullan, Alan Dixon, Pat Hiddleston, David Hope-Jones, Murray Tyrell, Rachael Owhin, Rebecca Marek, Euan Fraser, Jonathan Ssentamu, Cathy Crawford, Rachel Campbell, Janey Andrews, Kirsty McMahon, Manuela Coletti.

Apologies: Mario I. Aguilar, Linda Todd, Lorna MacDonald, Fiona Forsyth, Agnes Holmes, David Stevenson, Lorna Brady, Kevin Simpson, David Kenvyn, James EBB MacLean.

Welcome and Introduction:

Sarah Boyack MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting. Sarah led a tribute to Dr Alec F Gaines, who died on March 5, aged 83. Dr Gaines was an internationalist, with a life time commitment working passionately for global peace and disarmament. Dr Gaines was a highly respected academic, and spent a considerable amount of time working in University departments in Turkey and Thailand. He was Secretary of the United Nations Association (UNA) Branch in Edinburgh and as Convenor of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Working Group. Sarah expressed her condolences of behalf of the Cross Party Group.

The minutes from the January 2014 CPG meeting were signed off with no suggestions for amendments.

Janey Andrews, International Development Manager, University of Strathclyde:

Janey provided a brief introduction into the work of Universities across Scotland, including Strathclyde, who are actively involved in international development activities and initiatives, such as the Centre for Sustainable International Development, University of Aberdeen, Global Development Academy, University of Edinburgh and Graduate School of Natural Resources, Law, Policy and Management, University of Dundee. Additionally, a number of further and higher educational institutions have linked up with the Scotland Malawi Partnership which supports mutual understanding, shared learning and collaborative working opportunities for both Scotland and Malawi.

Janey provided further information on the work of the University and the dedication of a number of academic staff and students who have strong interests in issues relating to international development. Some of the initiatives and programmes that Janey discussed included:

- Scotland Chikhwawa Health Initiative;
- Water and Sanitation – Climate Justice Grant;
- Malawi Renewable Energy Acceleration Programme;
- Primary Education Capacity Building (e.g. B.Ed and M.Ed in Primary Education);
- Civic Governance programmes (e.g. David Livingstone Journalism Scholars Programme)

The presentation also highlighted what we gain from international development partnerships, such as international educational opportunities, enterprising young people and accessing

international skills and research base. Janey concluded her presentation by highlighting the challenges of scale-up, including the role of multilateral donors, geographic spread, business engagement and Governance.

For further information on the Universities International Development Network please visit:

- <http://www.strath.ac.uk/internationaldevelopment/>

Kirsty McMahon, Client Manager, Challenges Worldwide:

Kirsty opened her presentation by focusing on the pitfalls and challenges related to the concept of „volun-tourism“. Kirsty highlighted some of the problems surrounding volun-tourism, including:

- The provision of short term placements;
- Volunteers with a lack of cultural awareness and of the Region where they are placed;
- The needs of the volunteers being met, but not that of the wider community.

Kirsty gave the example of a large scale project, such as the construction of a building, has been rushed to meet the timescale of the volunteers, and structural issues occurred – including problems with wiring and the piping. There are also incidents across the world where individuals are unknowingly volunteering in „fake orphanages“ which is a growing problem.

Challenges Worldwide recruit and train volunteers with professional skills and experience to work in developing countries, supporting the development of fair local economies which can help alleviate poverty.

Challenges Worldwide operate a structured and rigorous recruitment process for volunteers, and the stages include: Application, Selection, Interview, and Training.

The recruitment process is selective and comments such as “I want to help Africa” does not necessarily show an in-depth understanding of the issues surrounding volunteering and the responsibility of a volunteer in the developing world.

Kirsty highlighted some of the key aims and activities of Challenges Worldwide, including:

- Rigorous training programmes;
- Capacity Building for Enterprise;
- Help to generate income, sustainable economic growth and impact.

Kirsty concluded her presentation and explained that Challenges Worldwide have a new programme launched with DfID to provide business consulting opportunities for young British business students or business people in Ghana, Uganda and Zambia. They would work within an SME to assist in the development of their business model in order to achieve more sustainable growth for their future. UK volunteers would work in partnerships with local volunteers increasingly the employability for both and remove any over reliance on foreign assistance in the future. The programme, although it couldn't be named at the time has now launched. It is called ICS Entrepreneur.

For more information on the work of Challenges Worldwide, please visit:

- <http://challengesworldwide.com/>

Questions and Answers

Please note that it is not the intention of the minutes to record a verbatim account but to provide an overview of the discussion.

John Mason MSP raised the issue that on some occasions it may be more appropriate for volunteers or workers from the host country to embark on a project than young people from the UK.

Dr Hilary Homans introduced herself as Director of the Centre for Sustainable International Development at the University of Aberdeen and provided an outline on the work she and the University are involved in. Dr Homans also raised the point that she is supportive of their being a Code of Conduct for anyone working in international development.

Murray Tyrell made the point that some people who are involved in volunteering are doing it for their own CV and are not qualified for the positions that they are taking up. This can increase project corruption and levels of cynicism in the field

Sarah Boyack raised the point that it's important to focus on the projects that are worked on and the skills required, not just the age of the volunteers.

David Hope-Jones raised the importance of school/educational projects and the strong link between Scotland and Malawi. David also mentioned that we cannot assume that young people going out to volunteer overseas are not useful and many initiatives are worthwhile. This point was widely accepted at the meeting and Kirsty McMahan agreed that some initiatives are worthwhile for all parties, but not all are and challenges can arise which could damage local communities.

Rachael Owhin asked for further information on Challenges Worldwide 's recruitment process.

Rachel Campbell provided an outline of working in Tanzania for one week and how positive exchanges can be.

Concluding Remarks

Sarah Boyack MSP closed the meeting and thanked the speakers for their thought provoking and lively presentations. Sarah also provided an outline on her experiences volunteering in countries including Bangladesh and Malawi, and how useful it was to see the projects on the ground, in particular those focusing on climate change and health.

Forthcoming meetings

17 June 2014 – Annual General Meeting of the International Development Cross Party Group (CR4, 5.30-7)

18 October 2014 - Norman Chipakupaku reminded members he is involved in the organisation of an event to mark the 50th anniversary of Zambia. Norman encouraged members to speak to him direct if they would like further information.