

Cross Party Group on Malawi

Thursday 3rd March 2016

17.30 – 19.00

Scottish Parliament

Committee Room 1

MINUTES

Co-Conveners: Liam McArthur MSP and Michael Russell MSP

1. Liam McArthur MSP
2. Alex Fergusson MSP
3. Jean Bareham
4. Keith Bohannon – Scotland Malawi Partnership
5. Mizeck Chagunda – Scotland's Rural College
6. Kathryn Chipperfield – Scotland Malawi Partnership
7. Maria Coogan – Redburn School
8. David Cousland – Fair Finance Agency
9. Robert Donnelly – Mary's Meals
10. Moira Dunworth – The Mamie Martin Fund
11. Jennifer Graham – Redburn School
12. Charlie Henderson – Climate Futures
13. David Hope-Jones – Scotland Malawi Partnership
14. John Lang
15. Laura Maclean – Students for Malawi
16. John Riches – JTS
17. Lucinda Rivers – UNICEF
18. Kevin Simpson – Malawi Fruits

1. Welcoming remarks

Liam McArthur MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from:

Ryan Cassidy (Students for Malawi); Julie Gemmill (Woodford Foundation Scotland); Ian Gibson (SMP)
Pat Hiddleston (SMP Member); Michael Russell MSP; David Stevenson (Edinburgh University); Peter West
(Honorary Consul to Malawi)

Minutes were approved from previous CPG meetings (4th Nov and 2nd Sep).

Liam McArthur MSP commented that he had heard first-hand about the bad maize crop from a Malawian friend who runs a tea company in the Thyolo district of Malawi (south of Blantyre) so he was interested to find out more about the current situation at this meeting.

2. Update on the latest food security situation in Malawi (part 1) from David Hope-Jones (Principal Officer, Scotland Malawi Partnership)

Based on personal observations and discussions/inputs from key stakeholders during a recent visit to Malawi (Feb 2016) David fed back the following information:

- Across most of the country, El Niño has resulted in delayed and poorly distributed rains, and prolonged dry conditions which has led to delayed planting and poor crop development.
- As a result according to DFID “The country is facing the worst food insecurity in over a decade” with 2.83 million people (17.3% of total population) declared at risk of severe food insecurity.
- Information at the start of February suggested that the rains had come just in time but these rains didn’t sustain, leaving Malawi facing a serious drought with rains over one month late.
- There is regional variation. In general: the northern region is doing better; the central region seems manageable but the situation in the south is worse, with wilting of the maize crop and with some communities down to one meal/day.
- Despite reassuring messaging from the Government of Malawi in the media, it is clear Ardmac stocks of maize is low, with 50kg bags retailing at K1,500 privately – three times the official Ardmac price.
- This is the second bad harvest in a row (last year floods, this year drought) and many are commenting that this will have a compound effect, with longer term repercussions.

For more details see paper attached and the following link: <http://www.scotland-malawipartnership.org/news-events/all-news/food-security-situation-report/>

3. Update on the general food security situation in Malawi (part 2) from Robert Donnelly (Director of Programmes with Mary’s Meals)

Key points from Robert:

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- Mary’s Meals are currently feeding 1.1 million children every day, 800,000 in Malawi.
- Malawi is chronically food insecure and the trend in the last 10 years has actually been improving, i.e. severe shortages in 1992, 1994, 1997, 2001, 2002 and 2005; from 2005-2006 the maize crop doubled (due to rainfall and successful agri-subsidy prog.)
- The current situation is caused by a combination of factors: less agri-subsidy, poor rainfall, delayed impact from last year’s poor crop.
- Data from Mary’s Meals suggests:
 - Enrolment in pre-schools (under 6) increased since September
 - Enrolment in primary schools decreased since September as more children are kept at home to work the land
 - A survey one year ago showed 81% feel hungry at school (not in a feeding prog.), now up to 88% in one year.
 - Staff morale is down.
 - Those affected by the 2015 floods are more at risk.
 - The inflated price of maize is not affordable to most people in Malawi.

4. Discussion / Q&A

Liam McArthur asked if the maize was replanted too early after the flooding and if so what alternative were there?

- From the discussion that followed there was broad agreement that a dual response was required: emergency response to meet the immediate need and also support for a longer term investments to increase future resilience and preparedness.
- Important that the emergency response is swift but also well thought through, e.g. rather than providing people with free maize DFID are providing people with cash/vouchers for people to buy maize so as to minimize market distortion.
- Mizeck Chagunda commented that for the long-term, irrigation was key and this needs more support. Needs a “whole package” approach of improved knowledge, inputs (seeds) and irrigation. Mizeck also mentioned that the periodic climate effects were still affecting some areas even where good progress had been made.

Keith Bohannon asked about the role of diversification and if this was an important factor in the regional variation?

- John Riches commented that in the north (Karonga) rice production was good and was being used as both a food and cash crop.
- Kevin Simpson said that farmers near Livingstonia were growing paprika and ground nuts as cash crops.
- Robert commented that crop diversification was challenging for those with small plots of land and presented a high risk dependent on rainfall

John Riches raised the issue of land rights and land access and asked if this was an important factor for food security?

- Robert commented that in the south the population densities were higher putting more strain on the land, also small plots (see above comment)

5. Climate Smart Agriculture

Charlie Henderson (from Climate Futures) gave a short briefing on the Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) Programme:

- A three-year programme from Climate Futures and the James Hutton Institute funded by the Scottish Government and in partnership with the Kusamala Institute of Agriculture and Ecology in Malawi.
- CSA aims to equip communities in Malawi to broaden their diets, and re-adopt natural farming methods.
- It is hoped that one of the outcomes of this project will be strengthened resilience against the increasingly erratic weather patterns affecting Sub-Saharan Africa.
- The programme engages 2500 farmers in programmes promoting intercropping (e.g. onion), diversification (e.g. millet, potatoes, mangoes), permaculture for creating food gardens near their homes, agroforestry to improve soils and yields in their fields, water saving and soil improving techniques (including mulching, natural composting and field landscaping).
- For more details see:
 - <http://www.climatefutures.co.uk/case-study/climate-smart-agriculture>
 - <https://vimeo.com/channels/581615/149211289>
 - <https://vimeo.com/kusamala/videos/page:2/sort:date>

Alex Fergusson commented that perhaps such projects need more than one three year cycle to really make an impact.

There was general agreement that the lessons learnt from such work should be disseminated more widely in Malawi.

- David offered that SMP could assist with this by working through the National Farmers Association of Malawi (NASFAM) and the Malawi Scotland Partnership (MaSP).

Action: Charlie to send on more information on CSA.

Action: Keith to circulate this with the minutes and David to pass on to MaSP and NASFAM.

5. Any other business and closing remarks

Upcoming events:

- David encouraged attendees to feed into the current Scottish Government International Development consultation, for more details on how to do this see: <http://www.scotland-malawipartnership.org/news-events/all-news/scottish-government-launches-major-international-development-consultation/>
- Linked to the Climate Futures work Charlie mentioned that there is a crowd funding campaign for a documentary on participatory video, for more details see: <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/push-the-red-button#/story>
- Keith announced that there will be a Malawi Governance forum meeting in May on Land Rights in the SADC region. If you are interested in attending please contact keith@scotland-malawipartnership.org
- David announced that as part of a recent campaign with Action Aid calling for a renegotiation for the UKs outdated (1955) tax treaty with Malawi there will be a debate in Edinburgh on April 22nd. For more details on the campaign visit: <http://www.scotland-malawipartnership.org/get-involved/make-tax-fair/>

It was noted by David that this will be the last meeting of the CPG before the elections. David took the opportunity to thank Liam McArthur MSP and Michael Russell MSP for co-convening the group and all other MSPs who supported the meetings over the last year.

Liam McArthur MSP thanked the Scotland Malawi Partnership for their work to co-ordinate the CPG on Malawi.

The next meeting of the CPG on Malawi is planned for June 2016, date to be confirmed following the re-forming of the CPGs after the Scottish Government election in May.