

CPG on Malawi Minutes

22nd November 2018

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Stuart Brown
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Philippa Ramsden
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Dr Alasdair Allan introduced all attendees, and read the apologies. Alasdair also asked that guests not take photographs due to the sensitivity of some guest speakers. Alasdair introduced the Minutes of the CPG from 13th September 2018, which were approved by the CPG.

Alasdair introduced Kenneth Ross, Chair of the Scotland Malawi Partnership, who took the opportunity of the CPG together to give reflections on the lives of two important individuals to the Scotland-Malawi friendship who had both recently passed away. Ken first spoke of David Rubadiri, who was a part of Malawi's independence movement in the 1950's. He became Malawi's first Ambassador to the UN and the USA. After resigning during the cabinet crisis, he held a distinguished academic career at a number of African universities and produced work that gained recognition, and became friends with a number of Scots who were also involved in the struggle for independence. He reflected on the friendship that he enjoyed with Scots and what it meant to him. After many years in exile, he was able to come back to Malawi with the advent of multi-party democracy in the 1990's, and became the Vice Chancellor of the University of Malawi. Amongst his students at the time, was a young man called Matthews Mtumbuka who later would become the Chair of the Malawi Scotland Partnership. Matthews recently posted an article online, called "10 things I learned from David Rubadiri". They included finding the positive in negative

situations, aiming higher, the power of presence and believing in values of honesty and courage, to name a few.

Another significant scholar in Malawi was Timothy Ngwira. He was a scientist, and played a leading role over many years at senior levels of the University of Malawi. In 1970, he married Margaret Gunn, a young Scottish volunteer who was in Malawi at the time, and they formed their own partnership that way. The two were formidable contributors; Margaret as a librarian, and Timothy as a scientist. They were married by the Scottish Minister, Reverend Tom Collin, who was a leading figure in the 1950's. It was Tom Collin who introduced Timothy to his side business of wine making. There was a time when communion wine was running low, so Timothy and Tom came together and created Linga Wines. Two years ago, the CPG had a wine tasting with Linga Wines, and the company goes from strength to strength.

Alasdair thanked Ken and spoke to the important testament to both who have passed.

Alasdair introduced Tumeliwa Mphemo (Tume), speaking on albinism in Malawi. He noted that the issue of albinism has long been a concern to this CPG and the Scottish Government, and they are keen to work with people in Malawi on finding solutions to the crisis. Tume is a member of the Association of Persons with Albinism in Malawi and a Scottish Human Rights Defender Fellow. The Fellowship is a partnership between the Scottish Government and the University of Dundee, supported by Front Line Defenders, Amnesty International, Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund and Beyond Borders Scotland.

Tume thanked guests for the opportunity to speak. She began by sharing her own personal story and how she came to be involved in activism. Tume spoke about the discrimination she experienced in school growing up, the bullying, and the exclusion from being involved in activities or from playing with friends. After school, Tume went to university to study Economics. She noted the challenges of studying while being hindered by short-sightedness. Tume wanted to spread awareness of the challenges faced by those with albinism, and started a community service project in Zomba on albinism. Tume then became involved in the work of the Association of Persons with Albinism in Malawi.

The Association is an advocacy organisation for the rights of people with albinism in Malawi. According to estimates, there are around 8,000 – 10,000 people with albinism in Malawi. The aim of the Association is to defend their rights by creating equitable, enterprising, violence-free and healthy communities which help improve the lives and conditions of persons with albinism. Their vision is to see a community of persons with albinism enjoying their human rights with sustainable livelihoods. The Association has four strategic advocacy areas:

- Education: spreading awareness of albinism in schools, role-modelling, and providing bursaries

- Health: advocating for the availability of sunscreen as an essential drug, training healthcare workers on understanding albinism, planning to have a sunscreen lotion manufacturing plant
- Socioeconomic inclusion: lobbying for inclusion of PWAs (persons with albinism) in development programmes, protecting graves, providing social support to survivors of attacks
- Security and access to justice: awareness raising messages, media engagement in human rights and education and promotion, marches and petitions, in-transit awareness, regional and international human rights engagements

Sunscreen protection awareness and advocacy is a major priority for the Association, where they focus on sun safe practices. The Association is also part of Action on Albinism Africa, which engages this issue on both regional and international human rights levels.

Thus far, the Association has made significant achievements, including:

- Having enhanced the visibility of PWAs and the Association as an organisation at national and international level
- Some related laws have been amended, such as the Anatomy Act and the Penal Code
- National Action Plan for Persons with Albinism was developed, and the Association developed a five year strategic plan
- Strengthening community networks
- Reduced incidences of attacks in targeted districts
- Addressed and incorporated intersecting issues relating to women, children and discrimination

The National Action Plan was developed by different stakeholders, the Malawi Government, development partners and the Association. It focuses on 1) civic education, awareness raising and training; 2) administration of justice and the support of victims; 3) safety and security of PWAs; 4) human rights monitoring, reporting and research; 5) mainstreaming and the empowerment of PWAs; 6) access to affordable and quality healthcare; 7) access to equitable and quality education. However, the Plan has not yet been implemented due to a lack of funding.

Challenges to the strategic advocacy areas of the Association are as follows:

- Education: discrimination, attacks, poverty, and access to learning needs
- Health: inaccessible sunscreen lotion means that many PWAs suffer from skin cancer, leading to death
- Socioeconomic: unemployment, marriage problems, and no affirmative action targeting PWAs
- Access to justice and security: lack of necessary forensic investigation equipment to facilitate provision of evidence, problems with cases involving cross-border nationals, lack of mechanisms to strengthen

security governance system, and inability to adequately respond to attacks

Further institutional challenges are funding for programmes, administration, construction of office structure, and sunscreen.

This was followed by a Q&A, where Tume answered questions from the attendees.

Q: What help do you get from the faith community?

A: At the start it was just us. We were surprised that organisations weren't helping our cause because we are part of society, but stakeholders did start coming in. The approach is reactive, and not a preventative approach. We want our members to be safe, and there was a case where a priest and police officials were involved, and they betrayed us. We advise our members to take care of themselves and be safe on their own, and they shouldn't trust anyone.

Q: Many don't realise this is an issue, and it is coming to light because of the killings. I've never met someone with albinism who has gone to university. Is the Malawi Government doing the same thing as Tanzania, by building communities for people with albinism?

A: We didn't want to implement it in Malawi because we thought it would be isolating PWAs. They are already not accepted and then you isolate them further. We realise that albinism is genetic, yet anyone can give birth to someone with albinism, so if we take them away then how many people would we be taking away altogether? It's better for them to integrate rather than be taken away.

Q: What could we do to enable girls with albinism to go to school? Security is an issue, but have you seen anything successful in community policing or community engagement?

A: You can help by providing reading aid materials, like telescopes, magnifying glasses and supplying materials in large print.

Q: How far have the plans for the sunscreen lotion plant gone, and how likely is it to come to fruition? Is sunscreen provision free or subsidised?

A: We get it for free, but it is not available at health centres. They procure them from the medical schools, but it is not seen as a top priority due to low demand. We are seen as a minority, and therefore the demand is not high enough, so we are still left suffering.

Q: In the past, I wasn't aware of the social problems associated with albinism. Has something changed to attitudes in recent years?

A: In the past, there would have been more PWAs. Many are now killed in infancy. They used to believe that PWAs couldn't die, and could only disappear.

They would be killed so you can see they are dead. There has also been a money exchange for body parts from PWAs.

Dr Alasdair Allan thanks Tume for her presentation, and for the active role she is playing in seeking to address this issue. Alasdair invites Ken Ross to speak about the recent Malawi-Scotland Conference, held in Lilongwe in November 2018.

Ken introduced the conference as having arisen out of prior inspiration taken from the Malawi after Gleneagles Conference in the Scottish Parliament in 2005. It was a time when Scotland was rediscovering itself in many ways. One thing it rediscovered was its relationship with Malawi, which had been there for many years, and taking the next step together into the 21st century. The Malawi after Gleneagles Conference came as a response to the G8, which Scotland had hosted, and which had held an Africa focus. It created a climate and a focal point. The Scottish Parliament offered to host the event, and the newly formed SMP offered to organise it. With significant government involvement led by then-First Minister Jack McConnell and representatives from different sectors of Scottish civil society, joined by a delegation of 60 Malawians with a similar spread of backgrounds and experience. Coming together, there was an element of celebration and great warmth and affection, but also of a Conference that had a cutting edge. It suggested that the conventional model of international aid had sadly done little to overcome extreme poverty that remained the experience of too many Malawian citizens. We've seen this evening that these challenges are with us today, but the drive that came through the conference was that if Scotland and Malawi would attempt a common initiative, it would have to be something different and innovative. Working with partnership, friendship, trust and mutual respect, meaningful initiatives to combat poverty in Malawi would be a primary focus. It would be a two way street with Scotland recognising it had much to learn from Malawi, and this found expression in the intergovernmental cooperation agreement with the four strands: health, education, civic governance and sustainable economic development. Reciprocity was named as a guiding principle, and there was a natural expectation for Malawi to host a return fixture and with the signing of a renewed intergovernmental agreement in 2018, the Global Goals Partnership Agreement. MaSP took the lead in organising this conference under the heading: Malawi and Scotland: Together for International Development. It was held in Bingu Conference Centre in Lilongwe on 28-29 September 2018. It brought together representatives of government, parliament and civil society. After 13 years of partnership and collaboration across fields, it was time to take stock of progress and look with ambition to the future, particularly with the 2030 Horizon of the UN Global Goals. Urgent concerns about safeguarding and youth participation was also present. With more than 300 participants, it was around double the size of its 2005 predecessor and was predominantly Malawian in its composition and organisation, though with a significant contingent of Scottish delegates. With the UN Global Goals resting on Number 17: Partnerships for the Goals, it made sense that the two small nations could offer a model of what that might mean in practice. Over 13 years and longer, we've built up ways of working together in mutual respect recognising that both partners have a valuable contribution to make. Trust and mutual confidence have been built up over generations to provide invaluable social

capital that can be put to work today. This is further strengthened by an ethic of collaboration where different actors work together to strengthen one another by working for a common good. The spirit of collaboration breaks down barriers between different players in each country. Partnership model opens up ways of working together and the conference demonstrated that. The plenary identified 15 cross cutting commitments in each of the working groups, and which the conference believes essential for the success of the SDGs and GGPA. They include:

1. Government, parliament, and civil society
2. Sharing impact
3. Continental understanding
4. Influencing others
5. Holistic working
6. Governance
7. Government policy
8. Capacity building
9. Partnership
10. Delivery
11. Sustainability
12. Local Ownership
13. Youth Participation
14. Safeguarding
15. Equality

Q: There are some areas in Malawi where things are the same as before, maybe even worse. Can you actually get to those areas where nothing has been done yet? Education, especially.

A: One of the things Scotland can take pride in its fundamental belief of partnership and discussing those priorities. The conference provided an opportunity to really listen to the Malawian side and their experience of the aid industry. Education was one of the seven working groups there, looking at what has been achieved and looking forward where need has not yet been met, and the need for further work and identifying the best ways and principles and priorities. Scotland can take pride in ensuring that it has worked in Malawi with humility and wouldn't look to claim it hasn't solved their problems, especially in remote areas and education. There are the beginnings of a plan to work together there but listening is key and the government top-down approach is not going to help compared to working within established partnership principles.

Q: What is the relationship between Scotland and Malawi's Parliaments?

A: There have been Parliamentary visits back and forth. What came out oldest from the groups was good governance as an essential platform on which all partnership needs to sit. There needs to be good governance in NGO's, government and parliamentary links. There is a sense that inter-parliamentary cooperation is put on hold until elections in May 2019. Westminster promotes the female caucus in Malawian Parliament. One of the major challenges faced for

women is being re-selected as candidates and re-elected as Members of Parliament.

David concluded the Q&A by thanking the CPG and thanking Patrick Grady MSP for communicating some of the frustrations over visas in the recent adjournment debate in the House of Commons.

Dr Alasdair Allan thanked everyone for attending and gave special thanks to Tume and Ken.