

Scottish Parliament CPG on International Development

Wednesday 4th November 2020

Scotland's Global Leadership on Water

12:00-1:30 pm

**Please note that it is not the intention of the minutes to record a verbatim account.*

Attendees: Lewis Macdonald MSP (Convenor), Patrick Harvie MSP (Deputy Convenor), Sarah Boyack MSP, Liam McArthur MSP

Member Organisation list: Scotland's International Development Alliance, ACTSA, African Women's Group Scotland (SCIO), Carey Tourism, Clean Water Wave, Comfort International, Christian Aid, Corra Foundation, DEC Scotland, Dundee university, Friends of Chitambo, Glasgow Caledonian University, Islamic Relief, IIED, Rwanda Scotland Alliance, SCIAF, Scotdec, Scottish Fair Trade Forum, Tearfund Scotland, The James Hutton Institute, Thrive, Unicef UK, UN House Scotland, University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow, University of Stirling, WaterAid, Water Witness International, Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO)

Individual List: Frances Sinclair, Hamish Goldie-Scot, Mark O'Donnell, Kristina Lund

Non-member Organisation List: King's Community Foundation, National Justice & Peace Commission, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Scottish Water, Tearfund Ethiopia, WaterAid Rwanda

In attendance: Jenny Gilruth MSP Minister for Europe and International Development, Joanna Keating (Scottish Government), Ian Nicol (Scottish Government)

Welcome: Lewis Macdonald welcomed the meeting and speakers and overviewed the meeting. He spoke to the internationalism of CPG meetings post Covid and its value in building mutual understanding. The Minutes for the last meeting in June 2020 were agreed upon. Lewis went through some items of housekeeping.

AGM was held. Sarah Boyack nominated Lewis Macdonald to remain as Convenor, seconded by Patrick Harvie. Patrick Harvie remains Deputy Convenor and Scotland's International Development Alliance remains secretariat.

Lewis Macdonald welcomed Jenny Gilruth MSP, Minister for Europe and International Development who was invited by the CPG to speak about the ongoing Scot Gov International Development Review.

Jenny Gilruth MSP: Jenny began by saying the Scottish government has a strong record on water through direct funding and peer to peer support.

In reference to review, she cited strong support for ID. She emphasised that difficult choices have to be made and she wants the SG to do the best they can for our partners - prioritising areas where we can make the most difference. Part of the aim to look into the balance of spending in Scotland and in target countries.

We're all being forced to adapt in light of Covid and governments worldwide are having to make difficult decisions about priorities. She said SG are ringfencing £2m of £10m ID fund for Covid-19 efforts in partner countries.

She mentioned that we (SG) are being a lot of things for a lot of people and need to consider efficiency, sustainability and future proofing in making the most of ID funding. She views review as a way to build back better and consider the issue of 'white gaze' in the sector in Scotland.

She spoke to the need to look at who's involved in the conversation – largely white discussion spaces about race, we need to look at race in ID and we can and should aim to lead the way in Scotland, building dialogue with the sector and with partner countries.

White privilege includes putting white people (from rich countries) in charge of programmes that locals could run. Scottish ID NGOs can replicate and amplify whiteness if not careful.

She said she is talking with partner countries about access, engagement and ID needs. She is keen to embrace this wakeup call and make the right calls for a just sector.

Q&A:

- Lewis Macdonald: What reduction in support for organisations in Scotland might this involve?
 - This is not about cutting funding but refreshing and refocusing the programmes in reference to the principles for ID
 - We need to recognise and understand that the world has changed. We can't predict the future but we can work to futureproof.
 - Stressed reconsidering spending balance
 - Working closely with funding bodies on adapting and refocusing
 - Sarah Boyack: The pandemic is shifting everyone's lives. What is the government able to do in terms of supporting resourcing for Covid response from partner organisations?
 - Access to clean water is vital for Covid response.
 - All programmes have been asked to refocus and adapt in light of COVID-19 - moving to digital/non-physical presence, teaching etc
 - 2m set aside, working on what using that to tackle Covid looks like, listening to and working with partners.
 - Major challenges include increase in domestic abuse
 - Minister has referred to SG pivoting and providing additional funding to our projects where needed to allow them to continue in face of Covid. So, for example, we provided additional funding to the College of Medicine initiative to set up Malawi's first dental school - they are

partnered with Glasgow Uni Dental School - due to Covid students couldn't attend the college for vital dental training. We provided additional funding to the college for laptops for students, enabling the programme to continue and in particular supporting some of the most disadvantaged students to keep in the college course.

- David Kenvyn: access to clean water vastly affected by climate crisis – what are we do to tackle that?
 - Being looked at in the context of review
 - We are trying to be too many things to everyone and we need to centralise thematic priorities – eg water as a climate issue
- John Francis: Is there any risk to the 0.7% GDP provision for aid with the FCDO merger?
 - Written to the foreign secretary and confirmed commitment, but things may change over time
 - Remember that everything we offer in Scotland is additional to 0.7%
- Murray Simpson: HydroNation working with other organisations – could you speak to your views on HydroNation and how it's going in terms of coordinating the water sector in Malawi?
 - That sits with Rosanna Cunningham
 - Effectively a capacity building group, which is a primary priority for ID – keen to develop and strengthen
- Benjamin Carey: Interested in a national performance framework that treats international as separate – what are the advantages of separating national and international outcomes?
 - Unsure – will research but it probably shouldn't sit separately. Could look at NPF in review
- Lewis Macdonald: How should people respond to the review to share their views
 - Really good response to date with civil society events
 - As review progresses will aim to return to CPG

Lewis Macdonald: Lewis welcomed the other speakers to the meeting who would share inputs on the importance of water to the fight against COVID-19, poverty and climate change. The speakers were:

- Dorcas Pratt, Deputy Director, Water Witness International
- Ephraim Tsegay, Country Director, Tearfund Ethiopia
- Maurice Kwizera, Country Director, WaterAid Rwanda

Dorcas Pratt, Water Witness International: Dorcas began by saying that we are working in challenging times – returning to business as usual will lead to catastrophe in a post-COVID world.

She said we cannot meet commitments to address coronavirus, climate and poverty without talking about water.

Water is a fundamental human right. The provision of safe water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) is essential to protecting human health during all infectious disease outbreaks, including COVID-19.

The most severe impacts of climate change felt around the world are water related. Typically, 170 million people are severely affected by droughts and floods each year.

78% of jobs globally are water dependent. 42% of these are heavily water-dependent

When water problems occur, it is consistently poor and marginalised people and particularly women who lose out first and most dramatically – and often irreversibly.

Water security is central to so many of our partner-country's own prioritised needs and essential to realising their national and local plans. Working to become the first Hydro Nation, Scotland has an important leadership role to play in sharing the value of Scotland's water resources globally.

Explicit in this role is working with others in the face of the challenges ahead, to "leave no one behind" in line with the ethos of the UN SDGs. The voices of those who are vulnerable and marginalised in society must be heard.

For example, citizens in vulnerable communities without access to the safe water they need are supported by Water Witness to activate their rights, raise their voices, demand accountability and advocate constructively to unlock sustainable water security. Under Hydro Nation, Water Witness recently joined forces with the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), the James Hutton Institute and Baseflow, to work with the Malawian Government on sector governance – each partner bringing their particular strengths to the table - to help achieve Malawi's plans to meet SDG6.

Collaboration and partnership are at the heart of this project, maximising the offer of Scotland to address priorities - as identified by Malawi.

Ephraim Tsegay: Water is Life, but water insecurity makes the most vulnerable even more vulnerable. Often women and young girls are responsible for the collection of water and when local water sources dry up due to climate change, they are having to walk 15-20km each day to collect water in jerry cans and bring them back to their families. This significantly affects the schooling of younger girls and leaves all the girls and women vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence. Therefore, having local access to potable water is so important.

The issue of climate-change water insecurity also compounds other issues. In Ethiopia this year, not only have there been climate-change induced droughts and floods, but also a plague of locusts and COVID-19 - all of which affect the most vulnerable.

Maurice Kwizera, Rwanda: Maurice began by saying that since 2017, the Scottish Government have been supporting Nyamagame-Alba hygiene project focused on hygiene in schools particularly for women, girls and disabled people. This provides clean water, toilets and menstrual hygiene rooms, plus microloans for household sanitation.

Girls are more able to come to school and hygiene resources make schools desirable and more able to provide good education particularly for girls.

Rwanda is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change; specifically, floods, landslides and droughts. The increased frequency and intensity of these extreme events have a devastating impact on water infrastructure, diminishing water quality and causing fluctuation of groundwater levels. Climate change is a water crisis, and in such hostile climate conditions, rural poor households are most affected. We work with poor communities daily and we know that because of their geographical location, their reliance on climate-vulnerable resources and infrastructure, like water, they are feeling climate effects first and most severely, despite having done least to cause climate change. And again, most at risk categories of the population include women, girls, elderly and people living with disabilities. Access to water changes tremendously power dynamics: the flow of capital to clean water would mean flow of power to women, girls and persons with disabilities.

Access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) should be considered an integral part of climate action. The Scottish Government is already implementing effective projects which help build WASH access and therefore improve climate resilience, such as funding to WaterAid Rwanda via its Rwanda Development Programme.

However, globally, there is not enough support for WASH initiatives, and especially too little climate finance addresses water access. To address this, WaterAid has launched a “Water and Climate Campaign” in March 2020. We are working closely across our global networks to push for action at COP26 on climate adaptation, and specifically for WASH to be recognized as a vital component of building resilience communities. We would welcome partnership with Scottish Government on these efforts.

Dorcas Pratt: Dorcas spoke again at the end of presentations summarising what Scotland is doing, and what more it can do going forward.

We need to work together both learning from the knowledge, skills and technical expertise in our partner countries and sharing ours. This includes looking together at policy, systems and governance to see why water insecurity and injustices persist. Scotland is well positioned to play a leadership role in water, and in many respects, it is already doing that. As we stand in the face of the climate crisis and the global pandemic, there are great opportunities to draw our efforts together, do more and to do better. The Scottish Government has the opportunity to show greater leadership, enhancing its role through more and better aid, beyond aid and in climate leadership. She said, we need:

- More and better aid:
 - Refunding and focus on WASH
 - Must allocate more resources to water
 - Give sufficient time to build strong relationships
 - Align with global good practise
- Beyond aid:
 - Domestic policies need to be assessed in terms of global impact

- What is the impact of our water footprint globally (water committed globally to consumption and trade)?
- Where does our water cost come from?
- Importers of embedded water must commit to ethical water use through sustainable stewardship
- Ethical and responsible finance
- Climate leadership:
 - Updated climate change act supporting climate justice
 - Can be stronger and do more strategically to harness COP26
 - Push for accelerated action on water and CC at COP26
 - Lead the way to domestic net 0
 - Deliver commitments to new and additional climate finance for resilience, adaptation and loss & damage

Q&A

- Frances Sinclair: Water forum postponed to 2022 – how disappointing is that and what level of positive outcome would you expect?
 - Dorcas: It's disappointing. They could take place and should, it's vital to discuss water in the current circumstance
- Hamish Goldie-Scot: Ephraim particularly – are you aware of work being done by COST to bring together civil society and governments for blame-free infrastructure building
 - Ephraim: Currently Ethiopian gov is deploying technical assistance for community infrastructure support, but there are real issues geographically because of population distribution and crises. No direct government initiatives but technical support deployed and community financing. Over 100m people without access still.
- Kim Burn: Menstrual pad provision – are materials sourced in country? Is this a project stipulation the SG holds?
 - Maurice: Ongoing initiatives on menstrual hygiene management provide demonstrative materials but work on building in-community sustainable continuance. Sanitary pads are too expensive to access so training women's groups locally to manufacture pads.
- David Kenvyn: Important that WASH projects have no strings attached – what can we do to ensure it doesn't happen
 - Dorcas: It is absolutely an immoral debt. From the sector we can raise the issue and identify impacts of interest loans
 - Ephraim: In Ethiopia we are paying the price for a crisis we didn't cause. We have a moral obligation to tackle climate issues but we don't contribute
- Bertha Yakuba: As women's group, we constantly get requests for sanitary towels and training to produce them. How can we key into these projects in other countries?
 - Maurice: Financial support is vital – it needs scaling up. Empower women to share their experiences on marketing, production, usability and effective work. Menstrual hygiene programme groups can empower women to advocate for prioritising tackling period poverty with their governments.
 - Ephraim: Introducing pads but also underwear – see the big picture and the details. People are teaching their children and communities,

but shortage of underwear is an issue. Menstrual hygiene requires facilities require access to fresh water.

- Lewis: Look at bringing to the government
- Jill Matthews: Aid budget is relatively small compared to impact, how do we ensure this is prioritised through trade as well as aid
 - Dorcas: Setting standards on embedded water. Policy coherence to enable informed and responsible decision making.
- Mark O'Donnell: Financing infrastructure is a difficult topic. The availability of capital for new infrastructure is larger than the vital area of infrastructure maintenance. Should SG support strengthening governments and gov projects?
 - Maurice: Effective governance of WASH is a vital building block and in many countries WASH governance is weak. Important areas for responsibility include strong accountability processes to hold corporations to account, needs strengthening within government. Governance of WASH is more important than infrastructure.
 - Dorcas: Countries must control their own development, but it's also vital to ensure marginalised communities have a voice. Not just strengthening policy but strengthening inclusion and access. Constructive advocacy and engaging in good faith. Governance is often at the heart of sticking points – really important to dig down into accountability.

Close: Lewis thanked speakers and minister. Congratulated attendees on building strategy and partnerships through the Zoom chatbox. Next meeting early next year – please contact to develop themes.