



Introduction

On the 11th June 2020, the Scottish Parliament's Cross Party Group on International Development held its first ever online meeting with attendance of over 80 people, including representation from 7 different African Countries.

The CPG invited international experts to share their experiences of COVID-19 responses in different countries, including Malawi, Zambia and Somaliland.

Presenters

Casterns Mulume, Director of Social Development, Episcopal Conference of Malawi (SCIAF Partner) highlighted that hunger was more of a threat for many Malawians than COVID-19. He told the CPG that the option of staying at home was not available to many, and that it had caused further food price rises. He called for this to be addressed and highlighted the need for more public engagement in Malawi.

Chilufya Chileshe, Regional Advocacy Manager for WaterAid in Southern Africa, highlighted the urgent need to invest in hygiene globally. She told the meeting that 785m people globally do not have access to drinking water, and that 3bn don't have hand-washing facilities at home. She highlighted the impact this has on women and girls, and called for investment in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) to improve resilience to future crises.

Jane Strangways, Country Director for Somaliland, HALO Trust, highlighted the need for locally-led responses to these crises. She explained how the Halo Trust had successfully refocussed their activities from de-mining to a hygiene response, drawing on their local knowledge, expertise and partnerships.

Recommendations

On the basis of these contributions and informed by the subsequent discussion and feedback from our members, the Alliance therefore makes the following recommendations:

- 🕒 To respond most effectively to this global crisis now, the Scottish Government should:
 - ✓ Ensure quick flexibility in funding so that projects can adapt & respond to COVID-19
 - ✓ Support cost extensions to cover salaries and other fixed costs to ensure the continuity of projects
 - ✓ Allow international development projects to benefit from exchange rate gains
 - ✓ Offset inflation in countries that suffer severe economic impacts
 - ✓ Ensure the Humanitarian Emergency Fund (HEF) is not limited to COVID-19, and is open to fund other ongoing emergencies, beyond our partner countries
 - ✓ Increase funding to the HEF whilst maintaining already awarded International Development Fund grants
 - ✓ Continue to track funding to national and international NGOs and adopt an approach that maximises the level of funding that reaches national NGOs.

- 🕒 To ensure we **build a green and just recovery** from this crisis, the Scottish Government and Parliament should:
 - ✓ Ensure that our recovery has international solidarity at its heart
 - ✓ Ensure the planned Inter-ministerial group on policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD), is based upon clearly defined principles
 - ✓ Celebrate internationalism throughout our response, and champion aid effectiveness
 - ✓ Follow Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS) principles and recommendations for a green and just recovery

What the experts said

Jane Salmonson, Chief Executive, Scotland's International Development Alliance

COVID-19 is the worst pandemic in living-memory, and the long-term impacts are likely to be extensive and painful. Although the disease has yet to take hold as drastically as had been feared, the coming months could see new humanitarian crises amongst the poorest communities in the world.

The indirect, secondary impacts to economies and societies are already real and devastating and are likely to worsen as international markets shrink. The world is facing a triple emergency: the primary impact of the virus, the secondary economic and social impacts, and the climate crisis.

Scotland's international development sector has been focusing on raising awareness of COVID-19, and helping partners to provide water, sanitation and hygiene interventions as the first line of defence.

In the longer term, organisations are looking ahead for opportunities as well as threats, to ensure that the messages of the international and indiscriminate nature of the pandemic are built into our way of looking at development. Maintaining focus on the climate crisis is vital, as it also acts to exacerbate poverty and marginalisation, and risks being side-lined or downplayed as economies struggle out of the recession.

There are economic challenges faced by the international development sector, such as the loss of charitable funding, and inability to engage in face-to-face fundraising activities due to lockdown restrictions. Some Alliance members are looking for a resilience fund similar to that made available to domestic charities to help them meet essential core costs until lockdown is eased, while others have asked for greater flexibility from institutional donors. The Scottish Government can set an international example by building back better and ensuring that Scotland's recovery is green and just. At the heart of this green and just recovery, there must be policy coherence and international solidarity.

MSPs should therefore support the formation of the new inter-ministerial group on policy coherence for sustainable development, recently re-affirmed by Jenny Gilruth MSP, the Scottish Government Minister for Europe and International Development.

Carsterns Mulume, Director of Social Development, Episcopal Conference of Malawi

The first case of COVID-19 in Malawi was confirmed 2nd April 2020. The Government of Malawi declared a state of emergency and issued a national lockdown. The lockdown was challenged by civil society and blocked by the High Court, because of the lack of social safety nets for rural communities. Since then, Malawi has registered 443 cases of COVID-19, with four deaths and 55 recoveries. Cases have been widespread, across 21 of Malawi's 28 districts. Malawi has 18 testing centres and 6 treatment centres.

More than half of Malawi's population depends on daily livelihood activities for survival. The Malawi Government's 2.5 billion kwacha (£2.7m) has been insufficient to address the pandemic. For rural communities, lack of knowledge about preventative measures, a lack of PPE, and a limited number of ventilators in hospitals. There is a lack of sanitation equipment to prevent the spread of the virus.

Public transport fares have doubled in response to government restrictions on the number passengers per bus. This has significantly affected the poorest. At the same time, lockdown restrictions in neighbouring countries has inflated the price of some goods.

Initially, most COVID-19 cases were migrant workers who had been living in South Africa and other neighbouring countries.

Presidential elections were not postponed, and political campaigning has led to large crowds without social distancing of protective masks. There is a fear that such rallies will increase the spread of COVID-19, and there is limited capacity to deal with a surge in cases.

The Catholic Church, with funding from SCIAF, is leading sensitisation campaigns on social distancing, hand washing and staying at home. There is a general fear in Malawi that hunger is a greater threat than COVID-19. For most, food security is a bigger priority. There is a need for effective messaging to address this.

Chilufuya Chileshe, Regional Advocacy Manager for WaterAid in Southern Africa

The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown light onto the importance of achieving SDG6 on WASH, which is the first line of defence against this crisis. You cannot stay at home when you do not have access to clean water, like 785m people globally. You cannot protect yourself and your family from catching the virus, if you are one of 3 billion

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people globally who do not have access to handwashing facilities at home. When you do get sick, or if you are a front-line health worker, then you are likely also to not have protection, as 2 in 5 health centres globally do not have access to handwashing facilities, and 1 in 4 do not have clean water on site.

This crisis has also exposed existing inequalities, and disproportionately attacked the poorest. Progress on SDG6 has been poor globally because it is usually the most marginalised groups who lack access, and the burden of women and girls to toil more when water is scarce. We have seen significant global pledges to the production of a COVID-19 vaccine – this is vital, and it is also vital that when it is produced it is accessible to all. However, our response right now can also put the poorest first by making sure they have access to good hygiene facilities to keep themselves and their families safe. Investment in WASH now is a “no-regrets” policy and can significantly help catch up on SDG 6 to help build community resilience against future health emergencies and other threats, including the climate crisis.

Jane Strangways, Somaliland Country Director, Halo Trust

COVID-19 saw borders closed and in the evacuation of international aid and diplomatic staff from many locations. Some organisations chose to stay, including the HALO Trust in Somaliland. HALO has been active in Somaliland since 1999, clearing landmines and unexploded ordnance. HALO’s Somaliland programme has a significant workforce, almost entirely comprising locally recruited and trained staff.

HALO’s Somaliland team adapted programming to support the national response. The capital, Hargeisa, had limited hospital capacity to support COVID-19 patients, with no ventilators and a lack of PPE. As an internationally unrecognised state, Somaliland did not receive the same support as others. HALO teams supported the Somaliland government’s response, including by establishing the COVID-19 response centre at Hargeisa’s hospital and manufacturing PPE. Teams also provided sanitation and COVID-19 healthcare messaging at a major border crossing with Ethiopia.

The response in Somaliland shows the importance of local identity, networks and capacity in responding to rapid-onset crises, especially behind closed borders. It also demonstrated that the skills, knowledge and capability of organisations can have utility beyond the activities for which organisations are typically known. In this case, HALO applied its capacity to support a national healthcare response, alongside the demining operations for which the organisation is best known.

About Scotland’s International Development Alliance

The Alliance is the membership body in Scotland for everyone committed to creating a fairer world, free from poverty, injustice and environmental threats. [Our membership](#) brings together a diverse range of organisations and individuals including over 200 international NGOs, faith-based organisations, companies, universities, charitable trusts and individuals that operate in over 100 countries.

We also act as secretariat for the Cross Party Group on International Development at the Scottish Parliament.

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