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10 Years of the Scottish Government's International Development Programme: Distinctive Role or 'Me-Too' Gesture?

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Glossary

CE – Community Enterprise

CEDP - Community Energy Development Programme

CEM - Community Energy Malawi

CES - Community Energy Scotland

DFID – Department for International Development

ISP - Institutional Support Programme

MaSP - Malawi-Scotland Partnership

MREAP - Malawi Renewable Energy Acceleration Programme

NGO – Non-Government Organisation

NIDOS - Network of International Development Organisations in Scotland

SG – Scottish Government

RE – Renewable Energy

RECBP - Renewable Energy Capacity Building Programme

SE4ALL - Sustainable Energy for All

SFTF - Scottish Fair Trade Forum

SMP – Scottish Malawi Partnership

SNP – Scottish National Party

WEPP - Wind Energy Preparation Programme

Summary

In the last ten years the Scottish Government (SG) has spent a total of £60-70m on its international development programme. Although cited as a success and as being unique in its approach, closer analysis reveals a different picture, and raises fundamental questions over the rationale for the programme and over its future direction. This includes whether, in the context of unprecedented growth in UK Government aid spending, to which Scottish citizens contribute at around £450 per household, any SG international development programme is justified.

International development is a reserved power – therefore there is no statutory requirement for an SG. In this context, the origins of the SG programme lie in a spectrum of factors – developmental (contributing to reducing poverty globally), 'formal'-political (a greater international presence for the SG) and 'informal'-political (for politicians, the easy distraction and vanity of development projects).

The programme itself is characterised by a diversity of activity. It consists primarily of a series of small projects (fifty-seven in 2016) and core funding to three Scottish-based coordination and networking development NGOs. Malawi is the main focus of activity, reflecting the historic close ties between the two nations, and consumes around half the programme's £9m current annual budget.

The SG reports on the programme in positive terms. However, in practice there has been little assessment of its efficacy – especially in terms of the SG's own key criteria of 'impact' (has this changed poor people's lives?) and 'sustainability' (will change last?). The only part of the programme which allows this level of insight is its flagship and largest initiative – the Malawi Renewable Energy Acceleration Programme (MREAP). MREAP can be seen as a window into the performance of the whole programme and is frequently cited as a success, especially its headline achievement of increasing 80,000 people's access to affordable renewable energy.

But more detailed scrutiny, from MREAP's own analysis, shows that most of these gains will not be sustained. And the reason for this weak performance lies in basic flaws in its conception, design and approach which, ignoring wider development learning, have pushed an aid-giver's agenda. Rather than make a significant, lasting difference, MREAP's performance, especially its lack of sustainability, bears all the hallmarks of the wider development experience in Malawi - a country awash with, and dependent on, aid resources, most of which have been ineffective.

After ten years, what can be concluded about the performance of the SG international development programme?

- Politically, it has been a 'success'. There exists an implicit consensus between the political parties that this is, somehow, a 'good thing' to do. The common manifesto positions of the main parties at the 2016 Scottish Parliamentary election confirm international development's political acceptance. Pronouncements on the programme referring to its success and its innovative character, and to this being evidence of Scotland's compassionate and influential role, are largely accepted.
- With regard to its support for the Scottish Malawi Partnership, there seems no doubt that the programme has helped catalyse wider interest in and funding for Malawian causes – and this, in itself, is a positive outcome.
- But overall there is little evidence of achievement of substance - meaningful change in the lives of poor people in Malawi or developing countries. From a development perspective, it has not been a success and the SG's repeated assertions of the programme's virtues have an empty quality that serve a political rather than any developmental purpose.
- The development rationale for an SG international development programme remains unclear. Especially now, in the light of the unprecedented growth in aid spending from the UK Government – now equal to £450 per household from £270 ten years ago – and widespread cutbacks in other public expenditure, why spend £4 more per household on aid?

For the future, answering the core question - what is it that Scottish aid can do that UK aid cannot? – is critical. If there is no credible response to it, the Scottish international development effort runs the risk of being seen as a 'me-too' gesture, tokenism dressed up as idealism, cosy political self-interest as development concern.

Introduction

In 2005, prompted by the devastation from the Asian Tsunami, the Scottish Government (SG) established its international development programme. Since then, over the last ten years, £60-70m has been invested under the programme in seven main countries in Africa and South Asia, and in particular in Malawi[1].

International development is referred to commonly in SG communications in a positive light, as being successful and as an example of Scottish international leadership. And it is accorded importance by the SG, even to the extent of awarding it Ministerial status. Yet it is anomalous in a number of respects. It is not a statutory responsibility of the SG, nor is it, relatively speaking, a significant budgetary item. Nor, despite the claims made of its success, has it been the subject of serious independent scrutiny.

[1] If the Climate Justice Fund is included, the total figure is closer to £100m.

Now, with the SG in the throes of a consultation exercise on future priorities, is a timely moment for an independent view of the programme, of its rationale and its effectiveness. And to consider some of the bigger issues which receive comparatively little attention from the SG, the media or from the aid community in Scotland. Why have an aid programme? Does it do any good? How is it serving the cause of international development? This brief paper seeks to throw light on some of these questions.

Its specific objectives are to consider:

1. The origins of and rationale for the SG's international development programme.
2. The overall changes brought about by the programme, including changes to the institutional context for aid in Scotland.
3. The efficacy of the Malawi programme, which has consumed most programme resources, and in particular the 'flagship' Malawi Renewable Energy Acceleration Programme (MREAP).
4. In light of the above, the extent to which the programme is meeting its original rationale and objectives, and on this basis, some preliminary conclusions and potential implications for the future.

The paper does not examine the operational details of how the existing programme works. Its focus is the bigger strategic questions facing the programme. It draws on information in the public domain, and on the author's extensive experience in international development work.

1. The international development programme – origins and rationale

Under the terms of Scotland's devolution settlement – defined in the Scotland Act (1998) - international development is a reserved power for the UK government. In other words the SG is not required to have an international development programme – it chooses to[2]. The initial prompt for the SG to create such a programme may have been the desire to have a better coordinated response to the Asian Tsunami – and more generally a desire to offer help at a time of great need - but the underlying question of why spend resources, from a limited pool, on international aid still stands. Why do this? More than a generic wish to contribute to global development, three sets of reasons appear relevant.

First, the (Labour) SG of the time (2005), felt that Scotland's *"devolution journey"* would not be complete without the establishment of a permanent international development fund. In other words, the defined set of

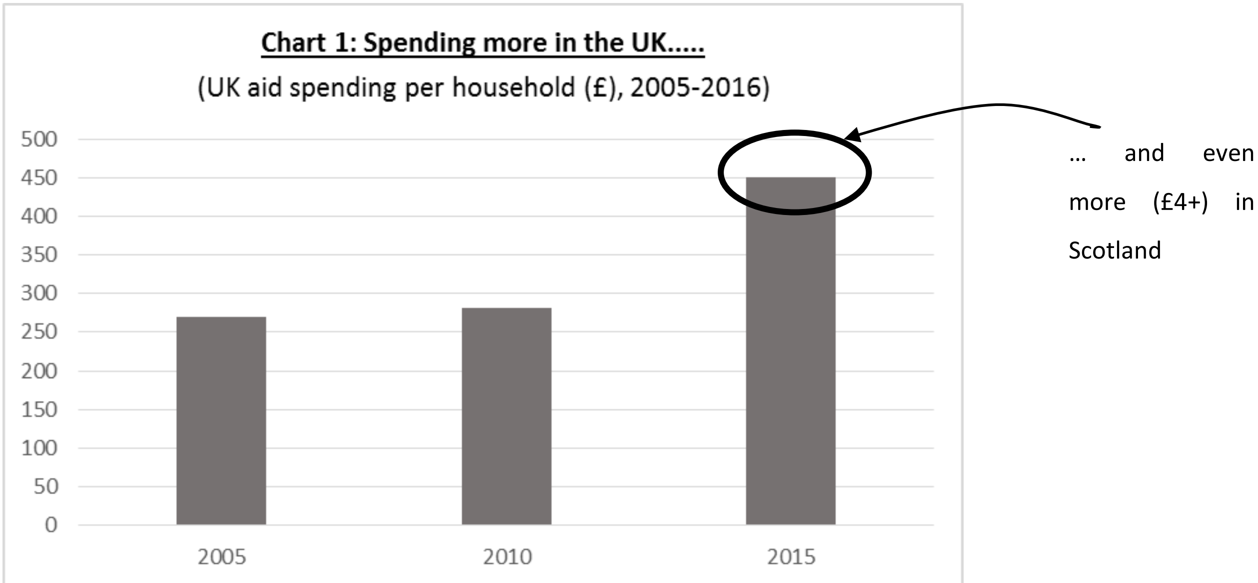
[2] The Scotland Act, while listing international development as a reserved power, also gave the Scottish Government *"powers of assisting Ministers of the Crown with international relations …, including in relation to international development assistance"*, thus providing a space for action.

devolved responsibilities were not *enough*, and that for the SG to be *valid* – and to do the kind of thing that *proper* governments do - it had to have more than this[i]. This wish for a bigger international role and voice is not uncommon in sub-state units[ii] in Europe and North America but is more likely to take other forms – such as culture and foreign investment promotion (which Scotland also does) – rather than an international aid programme.

Second, and related to the above, the decision to develop an international development programme was sourced in a desire to take a more prominent role internationally and establish a stronger identity, or brand, in doing so. The International Development Policy Paper of 2008[iii] spoke of *"advancing Scotland's place in the world as a responsible nation by building mutually beneficial links with other countries…"*. And the current consultation paper[iv] articulates an ambition for Scotland to be seen as a *"compassionate"* nation contributing *"as a good global citizen to reducing poverty and inequality globally"*, as a *"voice for humanity, voice for progressiveness, voice for tolerance"*.

This desire for a more visible role in the international development arena has been matched by a view that the country *"has a distinctive contribution to make in its work with developing countries"*, so that better, more effective development is supported. This distinctive offer is referred to variously as expertise in particular fields such as renewable energy and higher education and as the knowledge stemming from cultural and institutional bonds, especially in Malawi. Within this view of uniquely Scottish expertise and knowledge which could be tapped into by a Scottish aid programme is an implication that these resources could not be utilised effectively by the broader UK aid programme, and that something extra is required to draw on them. This should be seen in the context of a UK aid programme which has changed vastly in the last ten years.

In 2005, the UK aid programme totalled £6.7bn, equivalent to £270 per household. By 2015 this had increased to £12bn, £450 per household (Chart 1). The UK is now the second biggest bilateral donor (after the US) and, aside from some smaller, European countries, spends more on aid as a proportion of GDP than other comparable economies. This unprecedented growth – 50% in real terms since 2010 – in spending comes at a time of significant austerity and large-scale cutbacks in many domestic budgets, affecting all parts of the UK including Scotland. Scottish taxpayers of course bear this burden as much as their counterparts elsewhere in the UK but have the extra load of the Scottish Government's aid budget – at £9m equivalent to roughly £4 per household. Notwithstanding the reasons for this spending explosion at a UK level, still less its efficacy, the rationale for a Scottish aid programme – at least in part because UK aid wasn't 'enough' – might have been challenged by the new reality of a vastly expanded UK aid programme. However, there has been little open debate on this.



The third reason for a Scottish international development programme lies in the realms of the informal and of realpolitik. For politicians, international aid provides a soft distraction from other, more pressing concerns. Aid recipients are not constituents. Comparatively-speaking, aid is not exposed to the same level of scrutiny, by the media or parliamentarians, as other areas of public expenditure. Aid taps into a very human desire to 'help' and offers many easy (and visible) opportunities to demonstrate that 'help' is being offered. For some critics, international development is therefore an ideal place for politicians' (and celebrities') vanity projects[v]. Harder questions on the longer-term impact of aid – such as its real contribution to low-income economies and to sustainable development – are seldom asked. This is less so in the UK as a whole where the vast amounts devoted to aid means that it cannot escape some examination, but here too, much critical comment is superficial and about (apparent) waste rather than efficacy. Certainly in Scotland, if aid is not a criticism-*free* zone it is criticism-*lite*. Protected by an aura of virtue and selfless idealism, aid's intentions are frequently seen to outweigh more humdrum considerations (such as achievements). In such a context, analysis which is remotely critical is deemed unfair, as disloyal to the greater charitable cause of *"doing our bit"* to *"make a difference"*.

This 'doing our bit' rationale was much to the fore when the SG – with the backing of the UK Government - instituted the international development fund in 2005. As the First Minister at the time, Jack McConnell, explained, Hillary Benn, then Department for International Development (DFID) Minister *"responded strongly backing our commitment to use the opportunities of devolution to make a difference elsewhere. He said 'There is more than enough work to go round and everyone can contribute to tackling global poverty'"*[vi].

McConnell, under whose stewardship the international development programme was launched, and fiercely criticised in other spheres of government work, received little criticism for this policy, which was adopted and expanded by his (SNP) successors. Indeed, even although it was a minute part of his Government's work and not part of its statutory responsibilities, international development came to be seen as a McConnell area of expertise. McConnell, now Lord McConnell of Glenscorrodale, was widely expected to be appointed as the British High Commissioner to Malawi had Labour won the 2010 election and he has since set up the McConnell International Foundation to promote development work.

The origins and rationale for the SG's aid programme therefore lie in a combination of factors: government desire for more legitimacy; an ambition to take a more independent place in the world and a belief that in doing so better aid will result; an implied critique of the limitations of the existing (and much expanded) UK aid system; and a political preference to be involved in the comparatively safe and expedient waters of international aid.

2. Changes (overall) from the Scottish Government aid programme

The SG international aid programme comprises a series of components (Table 1). The largest of these is for projects in Malawi (approx. half the budget) with other significant amounts aimed at South Asia (India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) and Sub-Saharan Africa (Kenya, Rwanda and Tanzania). Smaller amounts are available for an open small projects window and scholarships. In addition approx. £0.5m is provided as core funding to support three networking/advocacy organisations in Scotland: the Scottish Malawi Partnership (SMP) and its sister organisation in Malawi, the Malawi-Scotland Partnership (MaSP), the Network of International Development Organisations in Scotland (NIDOS), and the Scottish Fair Trade Forum. The current annual budget is £9m, an amount that has been unchanged since 2010 – having started at £3m before growing to £6m in 2008.

In reality, the programme mainly comprises a number – fifty-seven in 2016 - of small projects in different theme areas such as health, education, renewable energy and water, with the specific themes varying from one region to another. After ten years of support, worth £60-70m, what do we know about the effectiveness of this aid? What can be said about the efficacy of this aspect of government policy?

The first thing to be noted is that the SG's national performance framework[3] for assessing 'progress' in Scotland doesn't apply to aid. Of the 55 listed indicators only one, Scotland's international reputation, might be said to be

[3] The national performance framework; http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00497339.pdf

linked – and then tenuously – to international development. So international development is, in this sense, an 'off-the-books' anomaly, in terms of accountability and performance.

Second it is difficult to assess performance. To do so properly means gaining insight into two related broad aspects of change: 'impact' – meaning change in poor people's lives and 'sustainability' – meaning the capability of the systems around people to continue to deliver benefits.

For example, in education this would mean not simply training teachers but looking at the effectiveness of teachers in terms of child learning and the ability of teacher training systems to provide and develop further appropriate training. Or in renewable energy, this would mean not simply looking at the use of solar-powered electricity and the benefits people derive from this but the functionality of the system of demand and supply (in a market) for solar panels and its ability to adapt and grow in the future. The SG itself has identified sustainability as a critical indicator of success - *"Long-term viability/sustainability is absolutely crucial"* - allowing development to continue without further infusions of aid.

Table 1: Key spending components of the international development programme

Description	2014-15 funding
Main Development Programmes	Malawi Programme (£4.2M) Sub Saharan Africa Programme (£1.22M) South Asia Programme (£1.46M)
Renewable Energy Programme	Malawi Renewable Energy Programme 2012-15 (MREAP) (£349,878)
Small Grants Programme	3 year pilot Small Grants Programme, launched 2013 (£431k)
Sport Relief Partnership	Partnership with Sport Relief and UNICEF in Malawi & Bangladesh (£165k)
Scholarships	The Pakistan Women Scholarships (£150k) The Pakistan Children Scholarships (£110k) The David Livingstone Scholarships programme in Malawi (£100k)
Core funding for international development networking/fair trade organisations	The Network of International Development Organisations in Scotland (NIDOS) (£135,000) The Scotland Malawi Partnership (SMP) in Scotland and its sister organisation the Malawi Scotland Partnership (MaSP) in Malawi (£231,542 in total) Support for fair trade via the Scottish Fair Trade Forum (SFTF) (£155,600).
Humanitarian Funding	In 2014/15, donations to: Gaza; Ebola in West Africa and Malawi floods appeals.

Source: *Meeting global challenges and making a difference,* The Scottish Government, 2016

In this light – given the accepted importance of impact and in particular sustainability – it is notable that, after ten years, so little is known about the efficacy of the Government's international development effort. The only overarching independent review of the programme was conducted in 2008[vii]. However, this was early in the programme's life and the review's focus was primarily on process - whether projects were being delivered according to their plans (it found they were) - and had little substantive to say on impact and sustainability. In the absence of rigorous attempts to assess impact and sustainability, at times the programme conflates 'impact' with 'activities delivered' to give a misleading impression of achievements. For example, in 2015, the SG's report to a Parliamentary committee on its "achievements" in international development highlighted its commitment to supporting *"critical global concerns"* and to projects that *"would be funded"* – not changes that it has caused[viii]. More specifically, in 2013, on the occasion of a visit from the International Development Minister Humza Yousaf to India, the SG issued a press release entitled *"Impact of aid on India"*[ix]*.* This provided a list of activities that had been undertaken through supported projects:

- *"Trained more than 350 physicians and surgeons in diabetic foot disease management.*
- *Helped more than 3,200 farmers to develop better farming techniques.*
- *Supported almost 200 young entrepreneurs.*
- *Supported around 30,000 women to expand their businesses.*
- *Provided rights awareness training to 600 women".*

In all cases this then was about things which had been done (trained, helped etc). But whether any of this had any meaningful impact on people's lives let alone whether it was sustainable – more than a simple puff of subsidised activity, virtuous in intent but hoping for the best in terms of meaningful change - was not assessed. To assert this to be 'impact' is factually incorrect. This is more than nit-picking pedantry; the 'so-what' challenge - does it make a difference? will change last? - is fundamental to 'good development'. Projects' focus, and what they report on following the guidelines laid down by the SG to grant recipients, is on activities delivered; they don't (and can't) ask the more difficult 'so what' question. Of course, all projects are able to cite – and to show visiting dignitaries – examples of people who have benefitted from aid. But the majority of projects supported by the SG have little more than a perfunctory view of their longer-term impact or sustainability. The one project that has looked at these issues in more depth is MREAP in Malawi which we explore in more depth below.

If substantive enduring changes to people's lives are not evident from the international development programme, one area of change is more visible and more clearly attributable to the programme. Core government funding is provided for three organisations – SMP, SFTF and NIDOS. Though different, in each case their role is concerned with networking among other development and civil society organisations, with providing information and educating the Scottish public, and with influencing decision-makers. In each case the prominence of the organisation has risen and they have become more established fixtures in the development institutional landscape over the last ten years. But in doing so, each organisation has become financially dependent on the Government. NIDOS for example, formed in 2000, has grown from an organisation with an annual income of £35,000 in 2003 to a one, ten years later in 2013, with an income of more than four times this amount (£161,000), but has done so almost entirely on the basis of grant funding from the Scottish Government. In recent years this has accounted for three-quarters of their funding.

The effect of SG support, it might be argued, has been to raise the capacity of NIDOS to do its work more effectively. But a more insidious effect is possible as well. Part of NIDOS' role is to be an advocate on aid issues but its ability to play this role with the SG – for example to hold it to account – is undermined by its crushing financial dependence. The potential dangers of NGO dependence on state funding is an ongoing debate in development circles[x], in particular the risks to NGO legitimacy and independence. In the case of NIDOS it has, *de facto*, become a quasi-state organisation. Government support therefore may have increased the prominence and role of Scottish-based development organisations – and developed an aid constituency for the SG – but in doing so it has undermined the plurality of voices within the sector.

Overall, the international development programme has unquestionably increased the volume of development-related activity from a plethora of small projects and the raised profile of key coordinating NGOs. However, the latter may have been at the expense of organisations' independence while there is no evidence to show that the growth of project activity has resulted in meaningful or sustainable outcomes amongst poor people. In general, there is an absence of detailed data on the effectiveness of projects. The exception to this situation is in Malawi where the greatest concentration of activity and budget has been made. If the Scottish Government's international development programme was successful anywhere one would expect it to be here – and it is the Malawi programme that it is the focus of our analysis in the next Section.

3. Unpicking the Malawi experience

Scotland's international aid is aimed at seven priority countries in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, with Malawi being by far the most significant of these. The SG signed an overarching Cooperation Agreement with Malawi in 2005 and at that time, all of the international development budget (then £3m) was for projects in Malawi. Currently a minimum of £3m per annum is spent there, and this is closer to £5m in reality. With other climate change projects in addition to this, Malawi is the main focus of funding. This prioritisation reflects the considerable historic connection between the countries, stemming from David Livingstone in the nineteenth century, manifested in continuing strong personal and institutional networks and linkages between the countries.

The SG regards its approach in Malawi, building on these links, to be *"unique in world terms"*. Its so-called *"relational approach"*, it believes, using the extensive links between the two nations, brings greater efficiencies and impact. Its emphasis on *"people"* and *"partnerships"* and on being *"needs-based and culturally-sensitive"* contains within it a rebuke to other development practices and their *"top-down"* and *"impersonal"* ways. The SG's approach therefore is seen to be 'better' and logically to be more likely to generate better results.

The decision to focus efforts on Malawi primarily stemmed from the strength of the relationship but is also justified on the basis of developmental need. A raft of indicators show the impoverished and parlous state of the country. In relation to the Human Development Index, which assesses countries with respect to income, education and health achievements, Malawi ranked 170th out of 176 countries in 2013; life expectancy is barely 54 years; more than 40% exist in severe multi-dimensional poverty; more than 80% survive on less than $2 per day; ill-health is prevalent and child mortality rates are high. It is also subject to periodic drought and in 2016 faced its worst food shortage in a decade.

Malawi's economic development weakness is compounded by weak institutions and poor governance. Although it is more than 20 years since the demise of Hastings Banda, who ruled for 33 years, the era of multi-party democracy in Malawi has not delivered either competent government or rulers of integrity. In 2013 these flaws came to a head when the so-called 'cashgate' scandal was exposed[xi]. After a series of incidents including the shooting of the Finance Ministry's Budget Director and the discovery of bales of cash in the car boots and homes of junior civil servants, a broader and long-established case of corruption around a computer-based financial information storage system emerged. Some donors, including DFID[4], temporarily suspended aid in the light of the scandal. Since then the Malawian Government claims to have rooted out the problem. However, there remains little confidence in the political class, the culture of corruption is widespread and, given the disparities between the aid world and the 'real economy' world, the incentives for corruption are strong and often irresistible[xii]

3.1 The diverse Malawi portfolio

In the 2013-2016 period, twenty-four different projects were supported in Malawi under the international development programme with an allocated budget of £8.1m. These covered projects under three sectors –

[4] Scottish Government aid does not go directly to the Government of Malawi – and Scottish aid was not stopped in this instance

health (ten), education (five) and sustainable economic development (nine) - and were implemented by NGOs, academic organisations and commercial contracting firms. They covered a range of activity, for example:

- *Transforming the Education and Training of Clinical Professionals Delivering Maternal and Child Healthcare*; the University of Edinburgh: in partnership with the University of Malawi, supporting the development, delivery and management of Masters Degrees in maternal and child health.
- *Developing a Sustainable Programme of Cervical Cancer Screening*; NHS Lothian: developing a sustainable cervical cancer prevention programme through: increased provision of screening clinics; a 'train the trainers' skills model; and, improved staff skills in data collection and monitoring.
- *Mary's Meals School Feeding Programme Expansion*; Mary's Meals: establishing school feeding operations in 18 primary schools, in turn increasing access to education and improving nutrition for children.
- *Social and Economic Empowerment of 19,200 Smallholder Producers*, Oxfam: addressing the inter-related problems of economic and social insecurities faced by 19,200 poor households, by improving skills and access to technologies and financial services, and capacities for advocacy.
- *Mangochi Livelihoods and Economic Recovery Project*; Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF): working with vulnerable groups to support 3,000 households in to increase their income and food security through effective crop and livestock productivity and small scale business.
- *Chancellor College Masters in Primary Education*, Strathclyde University: developing a Diploma in Primary Education aimed at encouraging more trained teachers to teach in primary schools.

The supported projects are diverse. They include those aimed at specific aspects of public sector strengthening – typically in health and education – and, with Malawian public sector partners, others that work more directly with the poor – often organised in groups – and are concerned with economic and social development, and others (notably Mary's Meals) which are more welfare-oriented (feeding children). Generalising over the portfolio of projects of course runs the risk of drawing inappropriate conclusions, but certainly it is the case that with none of these has there been the depth of analysis to throw light on their impact or sustainability. MREAP (see below), not included in the above list and costing an additional £2.3m - the largest single programme in the portfolio – has been more shaped by analysis and allows more detailed learning and conclusions to be reached.

The resources expended in Malawi - £10.4m over three years – represent the greatest concentration of Scottish aid resources. But it is important that this is put into the wider Malawian aid context. In the same 3-year period DFID has spent approximately £270m[5] in the country – 'official' SG aid, even here at its point of most intense

[5] This figure covers only country office spending and excludes centrally-managed programming resources, such as the Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund. Inclusion of these would take the figure closer to £300m.

focus, is therefore less than 4% of the DFID total. In Malawi, as elsewhere, DFID spending has generally increased but, privately, aid officials are known to be concerned about the absorptive capacity of Malawian institutions. To say that Malawi is 'full up' in relation to aid is a simplification but the dangers of aid – in the absence of appropriate partners (in the private and public sectors) – becoming a means of direct delivery only, and of inducing not development but dependence, are openly acknowledged.

Concern over Malawi's dependence of foreign aid is hardly a new topic – indeed, one authoritative analysis of this was published in 1975![xiii] But there is no indication that it is diminishing. The statistics are revealing; per capita aid spending in Malawi at $70 per head in 2013 is on a par with other comparable countries in Africa. But because the economy is so weak, its aggregate dependence on aid is much greater. Aid to Malawi is equivalent to 30.3% of gross national income[6], much higher than in neighbouring countries - in Zambia the figure is 4.5%, Tanzania 7.8% and Kenya 5.9%. Aid accounts for around 40% of government expenditure in Malawi.

3.2 The Scotland Malawi Partnership – the core of the relationship

At the heart of the Scottish Government's international development programme in Malawi is the Scotland Malawi Partnership (SMP). Set up in 2005, the SMP exists to *"help coordinate, support and represent Scotland's many civic links with Malawi"*[7]. These links are numerous. The SMP has 800 member organisations. 94,000 Scots are said to have personal links with Malawi; 46% of the Scottish population are estimated to personally know someone with a connection to Malawi.

The SMP's activities take different forms – cultural, economic, social – but as an umbrella, coordinating body are as much about promoting their members' endeavours as their own. A number of broad points can be made in relation to the SMP:

- It has helped to instigate a growth in activity and linkages. The number of members has increased from 450 in 2010 to 800 now – including NGOs, businesses, education organisations, churches, local authorities and individuals. There is a higher profile to the Scotland-Malawi relationship than ever before; there is more and more diverse activity than ever before. There is evidence that the SMP has helped to catalyse this growth.
- Given its diversity it is difficult to measure the strength or value of this relationship precisely. However, a study by the University of Edinburgh[xiv], using a 'social return on investment' framework, estimated that the value of inputs, including in-kind donations, finance and volunteering was £40m per annum. This has clearly not all been caused by the SMP or by SG support to the SMP. But the SMP itself has stated that it believes

[6] Net overseas development assistance as a proportion of gross national income; http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/DT.ODA.ODAT.GN.ZS
[7] http://www.scotland-malawipartnership.org/

support has been very important, *"unleashing a powerful and enviable multiplier effect", "a virtuous circle between Government and people where popular support inspires Government efforts while Government support stimulates popular engagement"*.

- Leaving aside reservations over the 'additionality' of this £40m amount, there seems little doubt that the SMP has been successful in stimulating more activity and 'buzz' around Malawi and a rare level of civic engagement for a developing country.
- However, it is also notable that the University of Edinburgh report did not estimate the 'return' from the 'investment' made by the SMP's members. It was concerned with putting a value on inputs only. Accounts of the impact of the SMP's members' activities are anecdotal and subjective and, as with so much else in the SG aid story, say little or nothing on longer-term sustainability.
- The SMP has also sought to develop an ethical framework to shape the many activities undertaken, based around a belief in *"dignified partnership"*. Underpinning this is a series of partnership principles including appropriateness, mutual respect, sustainability, trust and transparency. Although not a methodology for intervention, these principles are seen to be important in guiding activities, and as an embodiment of the *"relational approach"* advocated by the Scottish Government.
- The SMP is more than 90% funded by the Scottish Government, as it has been from its inception. A partner organisation has also been established in Malawi, the Malawi Scotland Partnership (MaSP). This exists *"to support Malawi's many civil society links with Scotland"*. It sees itself as a *"Malawi-owned and Malawi-led network"*[8]– which may be true but it is also entirely SG-funded. The SMP and MaSP are, to a considerable degree, creations of the SG and dependent on it.

Overall, the picture that emerges on the SMP and the Malawian dimension to the Scottish Government's international development efforts is certainly that there has been a significant growth in aid activity. Some of this has been supported by the SG directly but much of it has been separate from 'official' aid, tapping into personal and institutional networks, and a deep well of goodwill. But on the efficacy of this – real and lasting achievement to enhance the lives of poor people in Malawi – there is little analysis. For that we need to turn to MREAP.

3.3 MREAP - the troubled flagship

If Malawi is the central country focus of the Scottish Government's international aid effort, the lead initiative within this is the Malawi Renewable Energy Acceleration Programme (MREAP). MREAP is the showpiece, the programme which has attracted most attention and which has been the recipient of more public funds than any

[8] http://www.malawiscotlandpartnership.org/

other initiative. As an action research programme, it has also – and unlike most other aid activities supported by the SG – been the subject of a relatively high level of scrutiny and analysis, much of which is available publicly. MREAP therefore provides a unique window into the overall SG aid experience.

MREAP was a 3-year programme that, in its initial phase, ran from 2012 to 2015 and received £2.3m. Its overall objective was to improve the prospects for renewable energy (RE) in Malawi. More specifically, it sought to improve the 'enabling environment' for RE – the institutions and services supporting the development of RE – and increase the access of poor Malawians to affordable and appropriate energy. The key thrust of the programme was enhancing 'community energy' (CE) which (although there is no universal definition) refers to projects based on collective action to manage and generate energy and emphasise engagement and control by local communities who benefit collectively from outcomes[9]. Scotland was seen to have relevant competence in this sphere that could be of benefit for the Malawian context. The programme was implemented by a consortium of eight organisations in Scotland and Malawi, led by the University of Strathclyde. From the Scottish 'side' this also included Community Energy Scotland (CES), a membership and support organisation for the community energy sector and IOD PARC, a consulting firm. The Malawian side included NGOs, academic organisations and the Malawian Government.

MREAP was delivered through four related components:

- The Community Energy Development Programme (CEDP) – instigating new community RE projects – especially solar electricity, biomass and cookstoves - and developing a new community energy network and support organisation.
- Renewable Energy Capacity Building Programme (RECBP) – developing Malawian capacities, especially in higher education institutions (for example a new course on RE), related to training and research on RE.
- Wind Energy Preparation Programme (WEPP) – concerned primarily with feasibility and other technical analyses to support wind energy projects.
- Institutional Support Programme (ISP) – monitoring and evaluation of MREAP's work to ensure that activities were grounded in detailed analysis and to provide an evidence base for learning and policy advice.

Implementing these components involved a range of activities but at their core, and the uniting feature of all the various workstreams, and the headline indicator for the SG, was the objective of improving access to more affordable renewable energy.

[9] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/community-energy

From the perspective of 2016, with the programme (at least the first phase) completed, what can be said about the performance of MREAP? Certainly a plethora of activities have delivered a range of outputs – for example, 46 different CE projects in 11 different districts, a new CE support and network organisation (Community Energy Malawi – CEM), toolkits and handbooks on RE, a new MPhil on RE, a grant-giving RE entrepreneurship fund, research and feasibility studies ... the list is long. By the project end, 80,000 people, according to MREAP's own analysis, have benefitted through improved access to RE, from these activities. It shows also that, six months after RE technologies were provided through MREAP, 93% of these were functional and being used, for example, in improving lighting for schools and health centres and providing cookstoves for households.

The achievements of MREAP, at first sight at least, appear significant. Certainly, the view from the SG on MREAP is positive. The Minster has commented on MREAP's "success"[xv], MREAP features prominently in Government discussion, and a successor to MREAP focused on RE in a new phase of funding for 2015-18 is being developed. Press coverage has also been largely positive[xvi].

Closer study of the MREAP experience, however, suggests a more nuanced view is appropriate. MREAP was always conceived as an action-research type programme from which lessons – *"the good and the bad"* - could be learned.

The SG's own criteria for 'good development' centres on the degree to which sustainable outcomes are being achieved, allowing external aid, as a temporary input, to exit. This emphasis on sustainability echoes wider views in international development on sustainability (and scale) as being the essence of what development is about. It is of course particularly apposite in Malawi where, as noted above, limited impact and increased dependence (ie lack of sustainability) have characterised the development experience.

In this light, closer analysis reveals a picture markedly different from the positive image presented. Of critical importance here, the community enterprises which have been supported/instigated – and which are central to the initiative – are very unlikely to be sustainable. According to MREAP's own analysis[xvii] two-thirds of projects are likely to fail within three years without further support. Community enterprises lack the capability (financial, technical and organisational) to maintain and further develop their projects. The envisaged means of support to remedy this was the establishment of CEM as a provider of technical and other services to projects. However, CEM itself is completely dependent financially on MREAP - and therefore the SG. There is no realistic chance of it being financed from local sources; if it has any future it can only be as a foreign-funded entity. MREAP's own analysis provides a brief review of potential funding sources for CEM but these are highly speculative, and it describes CEM's position as *"overwhelmingly vulnerable"*. In other words, the aid dependence that has marked Malawi's experience is inherent within MREAP's approach to promoting RE.

MREAP's support for cookstoves raises particular sustainability concerns. Cookstoves accounts for more than half of the stated MREAP beneficiary outreach of 80,000 people. Benefits from use of energy-efficient wood fuel stoves are environmental (less fuel required) and social and economic (less time required to collect wood) in nature – and these benefits are being realised. However, stoves are finite; sustainability requires that sustainable systems for making and selling stoves are developed. MREAP's own evaluation found that *"producer groups' sustainability will depend on increasing adoption rates and rolling out appropriate marketing"*. It also found that the development of local markets was proving to be very problematic. That this should be the case is not surprising. Although MREAP sought to have an action-research emphasis, its approach on cookstoves mirrors common failings – going back many years (indeed decades) – that have characterised the experience of international development organisations. The traditional approach of setting up and working with women's producer groups as community enterprises, tried in many countries, has generally resulted in limited impact and sustainability. This experience – much of it of failure - prompted the largest agencies and organisations to develop a different, market development perspective based less on groups as producers but more on individual entrepreneurs and on the stimulation of demand. German development organisations, for example the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves[10], have been at the forefront of this evolution. MREAP's approach appears to have bypassed this learning.

Similar concerns are raised in relation to solar lanterns (for lighting). As with stoves, real sustainability requires that systems of supply and demand (a market) for these are established. MREAP's approach has been to develop group community enterprises as the key player in developing this market. But its analysis highlights a range of fundamental problems with this approach. Community groups/enterprises are *"associated with charity work"* and people fail to pay off the outstanding balances on loans given for lantern purchase, with many regarding them as donations from distant aid benefactors. MREAP's own evaluation concludes that sustainability would have been better pursued if solar lanterns were seen as a 'normal' business rather than one that was the preserve of community groups.

The sustainability challenge in Malawi was one that MREAP was aware of. As part of the programme, although strangely towards its end (June 2015 – and therefore too late to influence its activities), MREAP studied the sustainability of other previous solar photovoltaic initiatives throughout Malawi. It found that *"the majority of installed projects can be considered 'unsustainable' and at risk of failure. Many projects are now unsupported, are partially or completely non-functional and are without reliable and effective means to resuscitate performance"*[xviii]. In practice, this description could be seen as equally applicable to MREAP's own experience.

[10] http://www.cleancookstoves.org/market-development/

Notwithstanding the immediate value of many of the outputs generated and the relevance of the technical expertise brought to bear, and even taking a positive view of the longer-term benefits of other aspects of MREAP's intervention – for example its work with academic organisations – its approach has been seriously flawed. Like much of the historic development experience in Malawi, the rush from immediate impacts is likely to recede quickly as benefits – and the systems that can deliver these – are shown to be unsustainable in the longer-term without further direct infusions of aid. Obviously, given the profile of and optimism around MREAP this is a disappointing finding. Why has this happened? Two underlying causes can be highlighted.

First, MREAP's approach has been based on the false premise that the Scottish experience in promoting community renewable energy has particular relevance for Malawi. Scotland's overall record in relation to renewable energy is well-known. In 2014 production from renewable sources was equivalent to almost half of the country's gross electricity consumption, having been only 20% in 2007. Renewables output has doubled in a 7- year period. Testing targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the significant renewable energy resource in the country and further investments in preparation mean that the share of electricity from renewable energy will continue to grow. RE is seen as a policy priority by the SG and is central to its energy and environmental strategies.

Scotland is also a formal partner in the UN's Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) campaign having been requested by the UN's Secretary General to sign up because of its *"international leadership on renewable energy and climate change"*. In this context, it might be understandable therefore that RE should feature in Scotland's 'offer' in relation to international development (and climate change).

But if renewable energy is important – and is a success – in Scotland, and potentially offers some relevant experience and expertise from which other countries can benefit, it does not follow that *community* RE is either important or relevant. In 2015, the total 'community and locally-owned' renewable energy capacity in Scotland was 508MW[xix] out of a total for RE overall of 7444MW, equivalent to 7% of the total. However the majority of this capacity was actually owned by private business and estates. If this is taken out, the actual total owned by community groups, charities, housing associations and local authorities was 146MW, less than 2% of the total. At best therefore, community ownership is a peripheral part of the overall Scottish renewables story. More than this, the prevailing mode of renewable energy community enterprise that has developed has been dependent on major public subsidy and investment, with over £40m of essentially grant funding being provided from public sources. Community enterprises are also assisted by a membership organisation that provides ongoing technical and other services, CES. According to its annual accounts, CES is 40% funded by grants, from both public and private sources. Indeed its single biggest grant in recent years has been through MREAP to promote the community energy model in Malawi!

These facts on the role of community enterprise in renewable energy in Scotland – overall, its marginal significance – and the 'model' of community energy that is supported, especially the expectation of continual external support, raise major questions on why this should be seen as relevant to Malawi, a country whose energy sector is fundamentally underdeveloped and where aid has often caused increased donor dependence rather than self-reliant development? The SG clearly sees community energy as being a success story - *"Scotland leading the way across UK in how we support local and community ownership of renewable energy"*. Irrespective of the validity of this view, which is not the focus of this paper, the promotion of community enterprise RE in Malawi appears to owe more to a domestic agenda – the apparent virtues and success of community RE – rather than any analysis of the appropriateness of this to address the needs of Malawi. This has been development as ill-considered supply-side push - the aid-giver's agenda - rather than analysis-based response to Malawi's situation.

The second reason for MREAP's weak performance in relation to sustainability is that its approach has taken little or no cognisance of wider learning in international development. Given its fractured and increasingly politicised nature, there is seldom harmonious consensus on 'good practice' in development among donor agencies and implementing organisations such as NGOs. One clear trend however, voiced with growing force over the last twenty years, has been recognition of the failure of development interventions that focus on group/community enterprises. From the 1980s-onward, especially among NGOs, loosely categorised as the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach, this was a common approach to development. At its heart this seeks to focus financial and technical resources on groups of beneficiaries with the objective of developing them into socially-oriented entities that drive development - managing 'public' resources (such as water), providing services and inputs (such as finance, seeds, storage etc.), and advocating to governments on behalf of their communities. However, in practice the difficulties of group management, limitations in capacities, and most important, the mixed incentives inherent with a group setting undermined their functioning and meant the experience was, chiefly, one of failure, addressing symptoms rather than underlying causes[xx] [xxi] [xxii].

Learning from this failure has contributed to major re-assessment of the fundamentals of development and in the last 10-15 years, to the emergence of new 'systemic' approaches. Variously termed market systems or market development approaches[xxiii], the essence of these is that development agencies should (a) focus their attentions on the functioning of the overall systems or sectors within which poor people exist and concentrate on addressing the underlying constraints that prevent these from working effectively and (b) exit once this has been achieved – with an overt priority given to sustainability. The emergence of these approaches also illustrates development agencies' recognition of the reality in Africa of far-reaching changes in people's lives from market development – such as mobile phones – which have had little or no involvement from development agencies.

Operationalising a systemic approach often means working with a range of partners, including government and established businesses, as well as communities. It has been - and is being – applied in a range of contexts, for example with considerable success in the Kenya financial sector where eight million more people have access to services than was the case ten years ago[xxiv]. Although not applied extensively in the energy sphere, Kenya also offers a flavour of the potential here as well. M-KOPA is a business which provides pay-as-you-go solar installations for off-grid households, developed with some initial support from development agencies. 300,000 households in East Africa currently use M-KOPA solar systems for electricity. M-KOPA was launched commercially around the same time as the commencement of MREAP in October 2012, but its achievements (2000 households per week are now reported to be buying M-KOPA) - stand in marked comparison to those of its Malawian counterpart (small-scale projects sliding into 'failure' and dependence without continued external support).

M-KOPA is now expanding into clean burning cookstoves[11]. M-KOPA does not operate in Malawi but there are organisations there – such as SolarAid[12] - that recognise that innovative new business models offer hope in addressing the country's energy plight[xxv].

Overall, thanks to its relatively detailed level of analysis and documentation, MREAP offers a useful and transparent basis for lesson-learning. This would have been strengthened had the SG followed MREAP's own recommendations and commissioned an independent evaluation at the programme's conclusion. However, they chose not to do this, on the basis that it was too soon for such an exercise[13]. While of course the perspective of several years hence will be valuable, not to have an evaluation of this, the SG's flagship programme, before then is a surprising decision in two respects. First, it assumes that the likely impact and sustainability are distant results that somehow, mysteriously, happen, and that it isn't possible to develop a real insight into projects' effectiveness prospectively, a position which does not stand up to considered analysis[14]. Second, it means that learning – perhaps hard but necessary – is, *de facto*, postponed for several years. In the meantime policy

[11] http://solar.m-kopa.com/about/our-impact/
[12] http://www.solar-aid.org/
[13] Private correspondence with author
[14] It is standard practice in most development agencies to have an external, independent end-of-project review.

decisions are taken without the benefit of this learning, a consequence that seems at odds with the SG's *"ambition to improve the International development programme"*.

The decision not to have an independent evaluation has also allowed MREAP's headline 'impact' – 80,000 people benefitting from improved energy access (mainly cooking stoves) - to be highlighted without challenge and without the essential caveats which MREAP's own analysis reveal: most of these gains are not likely to last without continued 'propping-up' support from the SG. In other words, the same limited-impact - dependency-creating development that has characterised Malawi for decades - has been largely replicated here.

What then can be learned from MREAP? Overall, it has done much of what it said it would do – and communities throughout Malawi are currently benefitting from the multiplicity of projects supported. But in the longer-term the impacts from these projects are unlikely to be sustainable. Given that *"long-term viability/sustainability"* was seen by the SG to be *"absolutely crucial"* for MREAP, this is an obvious and fundamental weakness. In this sense, MREAP – flagship programme in the International Development programme - has not succeeded, and if appropriate learning is not extracted from the experience it will have failed as an action-research programme too. This analysis shows that this 'failure' has happened for two underlying reasons.

1. The programme was based on the incorrect premise that the Scottish experience in community energy provides a useful model for Malawi (it doesn't).
2. The design of and approach of MREAP, especially its ill-conceived focus on community/group enterprise, ignored basic learning that has taken place in the international development arena over the last 10-15 years.

Both of these problems were set into the conception and design of MREAP and meant that, no matter the diligence and commitment of the assorted partners, to a large degree, the programme was bound to fail.

4. The international development programme: conclusions and the way ahead

4.1 Overall conclusions

As noted in Section 1, a spectrum of objectives ranging from the political to the developmental, lie behind the SG's international development programme. After 10 years, what has been achieved with respect to these and what can be learned from the experience?

1. As a political project, the international development programme has been 'successful' ….

Politically, international development is not an actively debated policy area but there exists an implicit consensus between the political parties that this is, somehow, a 'good thing' to do[15]. In the 2016 Scottish Parliamentary elections, all the main parties represented in Parliament offered their tacit or overt support for the international development policy. Indeed both the ruling SNP and opposition Conservatives stated that they would increase its budget to £10m – an 11% increase[xxvi][xxvii]. The SNP Government's decision to create a Ministerial position for international development is further confirmation of its political acceptance. This has happened despite its non-statutory status and its small budget size – £9 *million* out of a total budget of £37 *billion*. Beyond Parliament, the core funding of coordinating/networking groups – and a range of organisations for small projects – has created a constituency that is generally (and naturally) very supportive of the SG's efforts in the aid space. In this sense, the original rationale for an international development fund of completing the *"devolution journey"*, to allow the SG to be more nation-like in its appearance, has further advanced. The political class, it would appear, are in unison.

2. …… and created a positive appearance, supported by much self-acclaim

The consensus on the validity of the international development activity extends to the media, where aid is seldom exposed to deeper or more critical analysis, and policy researchers. In May 2015 an internal government report was critical of the international development programme's arrangements and management capacity – currently 11 civil servants - and this received some media exposure[xxviii].

At the same time, a more detailed article on Mary's Meals in Malawi – a key recipient of SG support who provide food for one quarter of Malawi's school children – questioned the extent to which this was contributing to a long-term solution[xxix]. But these are exceptions – the norm is for media coverage, if there is any, to accept broadly the message that emanates from the SG.

And that message is unremittingly positive! As the budget has increased to £9m and as the policy area has assumed a Ministerial level of importance, so the language used typically to describe the international development programme has ascended to new heights of (self) acclaim and congratulation. So, SG documents refer to the programme variously as *"successful"*, *"leading"* and *"ground-breaking"*, a programme that has *"been praised globally"*, as a *"pioneer"*, as evidence that – much as was originally intended – the programme shows that *"Scotland recognises its place in the world as an innovative, influential and caring nation"*.

[15] This mirrors the consensus that has characterised the UK political parties on aid, all of which, officially at least, support the UK Government's increased aid spending.

3. <u>But there is little achievement of substance to match this appearance …..</u>

Beneath this barrage of apparently ceaseless achievement, there are few if any specifics cited to merit such glowing prose. If there is one 'achievement' that is mentioned repeatedly it is the 80,000 people in Malawi that now have improved access to energy because of the flagship MREAP programme. This features in the current consultation paper, in First Minister speeches and in press releases. Yet, mentioned without caveat or context, this is an extremely misleading figure. MREAP's own analysis shows that in practice, far from being unalloyed success, without continued external support, most of the projects that contribute to the 80,000 are likely to fail. Far from being a paragon of self-reliant, sustainable development, the evidence suggests the opposite; the impact is likely to be similar to the bigger aid experience in Malawi – a short-term burst of impact which, without continued infusions of external support, will dissipate quickly, inducing cloying dependence rather than instigating development. While MREAP's own analysis is commendably transparent, an independent end-of-programme evaluation, especially important for this flagship programme and recommended by MREAP itself, would have been expected to bring out this learning more clearly. Although the decision by the SG not to go ahead with this – or indeed an independent assessment of the wider programme - may be politically expedient, from a development perspective, it is an opportunity missed.

The international development programme has therefore placed greater emphasis on appearance than substance. Whether or not it has contributed to enhancing perceptions of Scotland's role in the world is a moot point beyond this paper's scope to address; what is less debatable is that there is little evidence to show that it has resulted in meaningful change in the lives of poor people in developing countries.

4. <u>…. And the oft-mentioned 'different' approach does not translate into good development practice</u>

Where does this leave the claims of the SG having a distinctive approach and offering to international development? Well, there is clearly a different relationship between Scotland and Malawi, and the programme, through the catalysing efforts of the SMP, has tapped into and stimulated a wellspring of good intentions and energy – seen in the growth in funding for a multiplicity of Malawian causes. In itself, this is a positive development and potentially a strong resource to promote change. Unfortunately there is little evidence to show that this is having a significant impact. Still less is there any evidence to support the efficacy of the much-vaunted distinctive approach that the SG follows. Characterised by repeated reference to key principles – partnership, dignity, respect, personal, etc. – none of these translate into a coherent approach to development practice. On the contrary, the MREAP experience illustrates that interventions which are wrongly conceived and take little cognisance of wider practical learning in the international development sphere, are more likely to fail. Self-declared principles can easily descend into the realms of self-righteous platitude. In this light, the SG's repeated assertions of its programme's virtues – without substance or evidence – have a hot air self-righteous quality, a 'what's like us?' bluster that serves a political rather than developmental purpose.

5. Leaving the essential development question – what is distinctive/better about the Scottish Government's international development programme? - largely unanswered.

Despite the assurance that it collaborates closely with the UK Government, decisions and discussions on the SG international aid effort appear to have proceeded without adequate recognition that the aid context in the UK (including Scotland) has changed. The unprecedented, astonishing growth in aid spending – which is set to continue because of the UK Government's commitment to maintain spending at 0.7% of GDP[16] - has changed the context for SG aid. With Scottish households now contributing £450 each to international aid – from £270 ten years ago – the rationale for spending more (the £4 Scottish international development levy) needs to be clear. Even in Malawi, Scottish aid amounts to less than 4% of UK spending. In many countries, DFID struggles to spend its hugely enlarged budget. Developmentally, what is it that Scottish aid can do that UK aid cannot? This basic question is largely unanswered and as long as this is the case, the Scottish international development effort runs the risk of being seen as a 'me-too' gesture, tokenism dressed up as idealism, political self-interest as development concern.

Regrettably, this changed context has not sparked any notable reassessment of what Scottish aid is there to do. Indeed, if anything it appears to have only triggered a political race to pledge to spend more. In 2014 Minister Yousaf stated that Scotland (were it independent), and not content with the UK level of effort, would seek to go further than the UK Government in terms of aid spending – *"not only will we ensure that we meet the 0.7% target, but we'll look to go to 1%"*[xxx]. It was, he said, a matter of *"showing our political intent"*. Self-evidently, it is the political objectives of Scotland's international development experience that have been prioritised – but development goals are a secondary concern.

4.2 Suggestions for the future

Given the above conclusions on the SG's international development experience, what are the implications for the future? Three broad suggestions are made.

1. Make a decision - but for the right reasons: does Scotland have a distinctive offer?

The SG should decide if it wishes to have an international development programme or not. That decision should not be based on an abstract notion of 'wanting to help' – a have-a-go instinct that confuses amorphous

[16] Although now fixed in law by the UK Parliament, it is not certain that this commitment to further substantial increases in aid spending in a context of continued public expenditure frugality can be maintained.

intentions with specific achievements, and whose essence is that more is always better. Rather it should be based on an analysis of what additional value such a programme can offer relative to other development spending, especially in the context of the UK's expanded aid effort.

- Saying no here would not imply a closed insular view or one that is morally inferior; it would merely be a recognition that the SG's capacity to *do* international development well doesn't exist now and that, anyway, at £450 per household, Scottish citizens already contribute significantly to development goals.
- Saying yes would require that there is a considered analysis of what the oft-referred to 'distinctive' Scottish offer to international development really is in practice. What is it that Scotland can potentially do/do better that bigger programmes cannot? Malawi might well feature in this search for a Scottish aid unique selling point but other features may emerge, for example, related to being small, flexible, specialised and focused? One implication of this would be that a programme would be narrower and tighter and less broad-based, and that fewer of the broad constituency of organisations that currently feed off the programme would find a role or funding. In such a scenario, developmental concerns would take precedence over political factors[17].

2. <u>Assuming it's yes, put analysis and measurement at the heart of any future programme</u>

From the outset, any such programme should be based on rigorous analysis, measurement and learning. The current programme's claims to be based on a unique relational approach are unfounded. Its claims on effectiveness are optimistic veering to disingenuous. Yet, in the absence of a commitment to be more analytical, development interventions can slide into an ambiguous grey zone of doubt, claim and counter-claim. Certainly, any programme which is seeking to be different and more specialised – and more effective because of this – has to be strongly analytical and focused.

3. <u>Locally-based perhaps – but shaped by international experience</u>

Any future programme should be informed by wider development experience, and learning on successful practice emerging from this. A careful balance has to be struck between, on the one hand, a programme that draws on 'national' strengths – that are common/specific to Scotland – and on the other ensuring that relevant experience and expertise from elsewhere is not excluded. Without this there is a danger of a limiting, 'backwater-ism' setting in – undermining the prospects for achieving significant change.

[17] According to informal reports referring to the Chancellor George Osborne, one of the reasons for the UK Government's aid spending growth, has been to "keep the charities off our backs"; Ian Birrell, *We can't pay 0.7% on foreign aid*; Mail on Sunday, 3rd April, 2016

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