

Cross-Party Group on Malawi

Thursday 22 February 2024

Minutes

Present

MSPs

Alasdair Allan MSP
Sarah Boyack MSP
Liam McArthur MSP (online)
Alexander Stewart, MSP

Invited guests

IN-PERSON:

Mr. Viwemi Chavula, Malawi Human Rights Commissioner and Head of Centre for Civil Society Strengthening
Ms Chilufya Chileshe, Board member of NGO Centre for Innovating Development, Zambia
Hon. Roseby Gadama MP, Chair of the Malawi Parliamentary Women's Caucus

ONLINE:

Fyaupi Mwafongo, Deputy Director Response Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DoDMA)

Non-MSP Group Members

Rosa Balliro, Tiyeni
Winfred Bunihizi, University of Dundee
Patrick Carrigan, Rosie Birrell Day Care Centre, Blantyre, Malawi
Fatou Drammeh, UNICEF UK
Moirra Dunworth, Mamie Martin Fund
Jane Forster, Balerno Fair Trade Group
Katie Hagmann, SNP National Women Convenor and Elected Member
Ji Eun Kim, SNP Westminster Foundation Development
Patrick Grady MP, APPG Malawi
Scott Martin, SNP WFD
Hayley Street, Co-operative College
Neil Wilock, SNP Westminster Foundation Development
Stuart Brown, SMP

Prisca Conticini, SMP
Natasha Maluza, SMP
Ian Mitchell, SMP
Chad Morse, SMP
Dorothea Nelson, SMP

ONLINE

Angie, Mamie Martin Fund
Blessings C Banda, Agrimec Ltd
H.E. Dr. Thomas Bisika, Malawi High Commission, London
Sarah Black, Changing Lives Malawi
Amy Blake, The Challenges Group
Sheila Brookes
Tione Taweni Chakhwantha, Centre for Human Rights and Community Development
Calum Fisher (Neil Bibby), Scottish Parliament
Frances Guy, SIDA
Chrissie Hirst, Corra Foundation
Charles Howie, Malawi Fruits
Dr Charles Leyman Kachitsa
Brian Kerr, Soko Fund
Sue Kevan, The Raven Trust
Laurel Kilgore
Alan Laverock, SMP
Kayira Lwitikano
Hazel McCorrisken Jailos Mapeza Mhango, Mzambazi CDSS
Hadson Muwisa
Ann Phoya
Ninette Premdas
Gertrude Rood, Formidable Joy Lewis Ryder-Jones, Oxfam Scotland
Cameron Smith (he/him-Scotland)
Pam Wilson
Emma Wood, STEKA

Apologies

Miles Briggs MSP
Allan Dorans MP
Kenneth Gibson MSP
Rev Dr Ken Jeffrey
Steve Mannion
Paul O'Kane MSP
Dr Peter West, Honorary Consul for Malawi
Prof Ian Woodhouse

Welcome, apologies and minutes of last meeting

Dr Alasdair Allan MSP welcomed attendees, including members of APPG, recognised MSPs in attendance and noted apologies where these had been given. The minutes

of the previous CPG were proposed by Alexander Stewart MSP and seconded by Chad Morse, SMP.

Malawi's Current Food Insecurity Crisis

Malawi's Current Food Insecurity Crisis is impacting 4.2million people. We were joined by a member of Dodma, Fyaupi Mwafongo, Deputy Director Response Department of disaster management Affairs (DoDMA), Republic of Malawi who gave an update on the Lean Season Food Insecurity Response Programme and the implementation of the food programme for 4.4 million people.

Support was provided for food parcels and Cash transfers for others to access food from markets.

More months of support will be needed. DoDMA managed to reach all targeted beneficiary within a month or two.

More support is needed to meet all outstanding food requirements of 99,900 metric tons of maize.

Human Rights in Malawi

Mr Viwemi Chavula from the Malawi Human Rights Commission reported on the mandate given and the challenges faced by this national Human Rights institution.

The independent National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) was established with the primary function of protecting and investigating violations of the rights accorded by the Constitution or any other law.

Its mandate was to promote and protect human rights in Malawi in the broadest sense possible and to investigate violations of human rights on its own motion or upon complaints received from any person, class of persons or body.

Commissioner Chavula then mentioned the achievements of the commission as well as outlining the areas that require the Commission's support.

The Malawian Parliamentary Women's Caucus

Hon. Roseby Gadama MP, Chair of the Malawi Parliamentary Women's Caucus spoke about the many issues affecting women standing for parliament.

There were 48 female members in the Malawi Parliament, representing 21% of seats (12 of the 48 women stood as Independent). Some parties didn't accommodate women candidates and often endorsed a male candidate so women ended up standing as an Independent. Many issues in Malawi were better tackled by women as they understood the issues better. However, women found it harder to find sponsors for their campaigns and therefore experienced a lack of campaign materials and, if standing as an Independent, ended up having to sponsor their own campaign. Women candidates also experienced hate speech and even physical

assault. When reported to the police there was no follow-up. Both voters and candidates should be given more civic education.

Sustainable Development Goal 2

Ms Chilufya Chileshe, Board Member of NGO Centre for Innovating Development in Zambia spoke about the efforts going into achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2 – to end hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition as well as promote sustainable agriculture.

There were many opportunities to find a global solution for food security in trying to end food insecurity in this lifetime. Many factors were delaying/hindering amongst these Covid, the ongoing Ukrainian crisis as well as the Climate emergency. A global comprehensive plan needed to be established to help the most vulnerable.

Due to the climate emergency crops were failing – production for future needed to change and be adapted to cope with changing climate.

Global comprehensive plan was needed to address issues in global platform. Food parcels could help in short term but with the problem likely to persist for next 4-5 years other solutions would need to be sought. School-feeding programmes for instance needed to be sustained long-term.

Chileshe noted that there was a failure to note the connection between a lack of food and a large debt in the country.

Q&A

Q: When money is given as a handout, do households have control over what to spend when and how?

A: Chilufya Chileshe: Cash transfers do work and can have more impact than food. They had a more positive return as households have better control what to spend, when and how. A food parcel does not give flexibility. Households use money to invest to bring a return. However, if a household was destitute, a food parcel was needed.

A: Viwemi Chavula: Worth noting Human rights as behind a statistic/number there might be a woman single-handedly looking after six small children

Q: From a charity feeding children in rural North of Malawi. Community near Mfenge hills was very isolated, nobody else was working in the area. They were feeding 500 children once a week. Some had to take a 15 km walk to get to school and get that decent meal. They were also working on sustainable sources of income for future. They were struggling to feed all children and were needing someone bigger to help feeding the children.

A: This illustrated the point on long-term commitment to school feeding as previously made by Chilufya.

Q: Even though Malawi had one of the biggest fresh water lake in Africa on its doorstep, people were still waiting for rains to come. The Attendee's project provided free education and nurturing at a day care centre and at home. They were tackling two problems in community, education and food. Most Malawians were farmers, but had no money to pay for fertiliser and could benefit from learning other ways of fertilisation. Malawi needed life-skill academies.

Q: Sarah Boyack commented it was good hearing from an elected female politician in Malawi. She encouraged as much networking as possible. It was important to support Women's representation, supporting each other using different networks. With reference to the comments about debt and supporting farmers – how much more work could we do in Scotland to help with that?

Q: Charles Howie: Malawi is spending money, foreign currency, importing fresh food, produce which I believe the country can produce itself. What are the GoM's policies to stimulate the development of medium scale, commercial scale farming?

There needed to be policies to support medium scale farmers of bank linked to extension services loan that comes with agriculture or business extension.

A: *(this question was asked by an online attendee and could not be understood in the committee room. Therefore, panel could not respond)*

Q: Appreciated to hear honest narrative around what it feels to be a woman politician in Malawi. Their organisation had partners in and around Blantyre. There were reports of Sexual initiation camps and Kusasa Fumbi, how was it best to support women and girls?

A: These practices going back to old traditions encouraged transmission of diseases. The Minister of gender had looked into that. If they happen the girls were encouraged to come out and report to social welfare, the Ministry would then be of assistance.

AOB and Close

Thanks from Chair – Alasdair Allan MSP

Alasdair Allan MSP thanked speakers, attendees, MSP colleagues, MP of the APPG and the Scotland Malawi Partnership. After the meeting closed, in-person attendees had the opportunity for networking over Malawi gin and tonics or soft drink.