Scottish Civic Society Organisations Roundtable Meeting
28 October 2020 - Meeting Notes

Notes from open session

SG outlined that it was keen to engage with those in Scottish sector on the review and on the draft principle underpinning the review. Moved into Questions:

Q1 - Question on the new principles – why are there new principles now? What about those agreed on during the high-level conference in Lilongwe in 2018?

SG Response - The principles agreed in 2018 were to support and how civil society would respond to partnership agreement in Malawi. The principles for discussion today are for the SG's own programme and approach to ID which spans our four partner countries Malawi, Zambia, Rwanda and Pakistan.

Q2 - great to have specific commitment to SDGs – when we do have an internationally set of objectives it would be useful to support those?

Q3 - as Scotland is a fair trade nation – was this included in the principles?

Q4 – question centred around the global goals but there isn't any mention of them in the principles or draft thinking. What implications do you think would have and commitment to working towards global goals?

Q5 – driver behind principle 5 and expertise in Scotland. One thing we do is to source expertise in country before looking at in Scotland.

SG Response - Global goals/SDGs – both points well made. In drafting the draft principles they are draft and subject to change. These are to be high level principles and don't see why we shouldn't bring the commitment into the principles.

Fair trade – Trade is the responsibly of Mr McKee and a matter of policy coherence, it is not something we've explicitly looked at. This is a not a strategic review but more refocus. The FCDO merger changes the landscape for us here in Scotland so there is an opportunity for policy coherence.

Expertise in Scotland comes from the partnership work we've done with NHS and Police Scotland – with capacity building projects there's more work we can do on expertise. A previous group had been critical of the use of expertise – skills in Scotland but likewise there are skills in our partner countries also.

Q6 - principle number 4 – really very happy to see reference to breaking the 'white gaze' this is a classic example from Scotland for the need for an anti-racism agenda for international development. Very happy to work that in.

Q7 – the 11 2018 principles came from consulting a couple hundred Malawian csos – what does a partnership look like? Please and supportive of principles for this review. Keen to provide a bit of context to those widers principles.

Q8 – BLM means something very different to people in different parts of Africa than it does for someone in US, Glasgow etc… Need to be careful that we don't enforce BLM by removing White Gaze. Context is everything.

SG Response – BLM has importance – it poses important challenges. For Scotland to take on this subject and try shine a light on some of the difficulties of the sector and anti-racims approach takes forward our role as a good global citizen. We take on the point about using the movement and imposing it on the countries. It needs to be more about what does it mean in different context.

At the moment we're talking majority white faces talking about international development matters in Africa. BLM doesn't mean what it does over there [America], but what it means if you give it to someone who doesn't know the challenges on the ground and community - that is white privilege.

Session 1 - Inclusive and amplifying global south voices

Q1) What mechanisms do we need, to facilitate breaking 'white gaze' in the ID sector?

- Lots of work is needed - thinking, learning, definition of white gaze, getting everyone on the same page would be a good starting point
- Like to see it married up with debates around localisation
- Have a look at the funding criteria, make sure that as much as possible is done to weave community engagement into all the project criteria - ground projects in community
- Who has done that well? Yes, seen that donors can be demanding to prove that community engagement is centres, have local voices been listened to? Prove that it is rooted in community is needed
- From a funders perspective, comic relief moving towards a localisation agenda, funding directly in country, supporting orgs on that journey, points around that, looking from funders perspective how to integrate participatory planning in the funding core. Programmes designed and informed by those in receipt but also those with lived experience. How can decision makers be best informed? international mental health call - had experts from each country feeding into the application review, make sure proposals relevant, experts by experience who advise, peer reviewing proposals one they get to the next stage. Funding intermediaries, funded orgs for COVID relief who are locally based for them to distribute, refugee led organisations, ways in which we can shift the power
- Conflict between this discussion and the other principles around always wanting to involve project management in Scotland and involving Scottish expertise. Limits the extent to which we can localise, to the extent that we need scots involved, Scotland is ethnically homogenous, likelihood that Scottish project managers are going to be white - potential conflict there.
- There is also a need for capacity building, embedding adult education in Rwanda. Nobody qualified to train people in Rwanda, sometimes there is a need for Scottish expertise. Scottish government funding all goes to the Scottish org but much of the work goes on locally, Scottish Government limits the amount of money that can go overseas. More worried about whether the project will meet community needs, adult literacy not always a priority for those in the local place. Learners there because they're persuaded by local leaders, district, numbers up, districts to hit their targets.
- We need a strong definition, what is what white gaze means, power is shifted,
- Need more concepts to come from in country, how might that work? Use it to put out a call for ideas, putting the call out on the ground at first.
- CCPM is an example of a community based and community led programme, this works for both including point too.

Q2) What mechanisms do we need to amplify global south voices who are able to articulate development problems, opportunities and solutions for the global south perspective?

- CCPM, strengthen existing mechanisms, looking at principles, looking at orgs already engaged in those areas. Organisations to identify the real needs in the communities, engagement with partner organisations in country is very important.

- How to amplify, look for partners already involved in the area, speaking out, civil society orgs holding duty bearers to account to work with communities. Supporting and building capacity, working with orgs already involved, building community capacity, knowing their rights, where to go to address the issues they have climate change and others.
- Embedding in what is already going on, build local capacity, rights based work, very important.
- Both come together, problems and challenges in trying to address this with Scottish government. We need to engage with the diaspora as well, giving people fish rather than giving people the knowledge to fish. Capacity building, it's about directing the money well, even if it's a small amount.
- Problem with defining "who is the expert", how many Malawians attend the CPG? Why is that so, why is there lack of engagement on the Malawi side? Some people feel they are not being listened to, who is making these priorities, it is key to involve diaspora organisations in order to direct aid.
- Consider how to broaden engagement.
- Consultation that SMP and MASP did some years ago, report form this, how to engage the diaspora, what was discussed, rather than us reinventing the wheel.
- In terms of amplifying voices, appetite for SG to be different, innovative, maximise impact, doing more advocacy - if SG really trying to be different, not worrying too much about development in the traditional way - so could it just use all of its money to fund advocacy? Can have more of an impact, in country, regional level, global level.
- Brave thing to do, steps away from the programmatic side, steps away from the side of helping with definitive results.
- Engagement on local level has already an awareness, engaging with universities, student activists, amplifying local voices,

Q3) How do we better amplifying the voices of marginalised and vulnerable groups in the global south?

- What I'm advocating isn't talking to local NGOs but talking to local community members, what their concerns are, using that to bring them to local government, like literacy in Rwanda. But NGOs know more about what the local lives of people in rural areas are like rather than the people in Kigali.
- Processes going on here, how inclusive we are? Recognising diversity here, but separate to that is how to amplify voices coming from partner countries, how to be more inclusive and diverse?
- about supporting and educating people, supporting also the donors in Scotland, need to balance this, also about donors and what they want. Donors need to realise that the local communities need to drive development, how to make donors understand this, that is the root of challenging the white gaze.
- Time NGOs in Scotland listened to partners on the ground, they are the experts. Try and renew the voices of the people from the global south, rather than "creating jobs for ourselves" we should focus on problems in the global south. Status quo is maintaining our jobs. A Scot working for 10 years in Malawi doesn't make an expert.
- Clarify, the Kigali elite don't know what it's like in the rural communities. Arguing for that local NGOs and academics don't necessarily know, need to involve people who aren't just the local elites.

- This is where the diaspora come in, utilise the people who speak the local language, we get the phone calls, we remit the money, we are in some sense experts.
- Personally no problems with orgs partnering up, appreciate that the beneficiaries are those who are living day to day, as long as the local orgs are spending time in the communities and identifying local needs, then they are consulting the right people, identifying what the projects and programmes are that would help.
- I see orgs not spending enough time with communities because of the pressures of time and this is the main problem I see. Even when there is no problem.

Q4) What does this mean for our programme and how do we (SG, civil society) apply these?

- Is there something around core funding here, letting orgs engage communities themselves rather than having a programme based funding model?
- How would we know if we were doing it right?
- Would want to see when we go to Malawi, people in my village would mention Scotland, people on the ground would identify with Scottishness. Scottish funding - hear the Scottish Government mentioned in the cities, but not in rural areas, something tangible SG is doing, don't create stones and pillars but working with partners.
- More clarity on where SG sees lack or deficiency, difficulty with very small programme, don't have the funding to have as much ability to do the measuring, monitoring and evaluation, no money to evaluate in country, tis at the design stage, local people integrated.

Session 2 - Innovation, Adapting and Sustainable

Q1. How do we better imbed the four pillars of sustainability (environmental, social, economic and governance) in *what we do* and *how we do it*?

- Currently we focus too much on impact assessments and evaluation support structures that make us look successful – this can be counter-productive.
- The key output of assessment should be learning. The fear of failure should be excluded. The less we are prepared to have a process around success and failure the less sustainable we will be. We must prioritise learning and not be frightened of failure.
- Preliminary impact assessments before interventions can better embed sustainability. The scope is vital to ensure sustainability – we need to be transparent – the more we are the more the principles are embedded. We need multiple stakeholders to feed into this. Sustainability is only achievable when we do things in a more complex way.

Q2. How do we scale global challenges (climate change, extinction crisis, economic depression; rising inequalities) to the local level, so people feel empowered to act?

- Risks on developing countries are imposed by global development. You must innovate around how you put resources in the hands of people who are willing to take risks. We must prioritise our resources based upon participatory budgeting. There's is a danger that we give money based upon levels of risk rather than what communities want.
- We are placing burdens onto our partner countries - impact assessments is not necessarily a priority for them. It was asked how we handle that. ID is a risk but we need to demonstrate impact. We must have more trust to hand over resources to communities to manage their own funds and priorities.
- We shouldn't see consultation as an extra. We should be bringing people together. 70/80% of some budgets are focussed on ensuring everyone is consulted from the project design stage. If you have proper conversations which proceed projects, you empower the people to take ownership of projects.
- SG might consider funding projects that have a six month lead in time so that more detailed consultation can take place, thus ensuring better governance.
- Community consultation is a huge process and can cause conflict and disagreements. This has to be managed carefully so that it doesn't have unintended negative consequences.

Q3. How do we handle the risks associated with innovation?

- Gender equality and women's empowerment should be dimensions of the ID review as innovative – sharpening the focus of the review, adaptive.
- A successful trial of an innovation project does not necessarily mean a successful project, even failure can provide useful learning regardless of whether the project would ultimately be successful.

Q4. How do we build in adaptation into the ideas we have; the way we work; and the way we fund?

- Adaptation can be built in. Local decision making needs to be well supported. We need to build in climate proofing so that things like climate and pandemics cannot destabilise development so we need to be flexible.
- We also need to stop seeing achievements as linear. 1/3/5 year projects don't necessarily follow
- The positive aspect of the SG small grants was it allowed scoping, trialling and then moving onto delivery, each as a self-contained grant. This aspect should be retained in any future model of international development.
- By funding directly in country you ensure there is no duplication but there is lots of work involved.
- If there is no Scottish based partner, then there will be a need for another actor to play the role of co-ordinating in country with relevant government policies and actors, other NGO's and national NGOs and actors. This is important in terms of planning, but also during implementation and of course in terms of sharing learning at project end. Proper in country co-ordination is a key element in quality interventions and sustainability.

Q5. What does this mean for our programme?

- One of the most positive aspects of small grants was scoping grants. If this was rolled out to large grants we could then involve communities to plan the projects which will address their needs.
- Whilst not a universal opinion some thought that in terms of programming we need a thematic approach to how we seek applications for work in some regions.

Session 3 - Innovation, Adapting and Sustainable

Q1. How does the wording work for draft principle 5? Do others have thoughts on how best to capture the essence of this principle?

- The wording provides a basis for equal partnership and doesn't put focus on just those in Scotland or diaspora in Scotland. Diaspora in Scotland do not always know the realities on the ground. This partnership reaffirms the success seen in joint learning with academics.
- It recognises equal partnership. There needs to be a way to recognise the mutual expertise so that we can use it for co-creation. Raised a challenge of now looking at practical ways to identify expertise in country.
- Need to mutually recognise expertise.
- Diaspora can have strength in understanding both countries and can make it easier when identifying expertise in country.
- 'partnership' can very easily become a buzz word.
- There needs to be a recognition of Scotland's role in colonialism and the need for economic reparations also.

Q2. What does respectful partnerships mean in practise? When have you seen it done well / poorly?

- There's a lot of debate and many are getting caught up between partner led and respectful partnership. What's needed is a political decision being made in country to support development in education and identifying expertise.
- There are many skills in Rwanda that Scotland could use and learn from. One example is the skills and preparedness Rwanda built following the Ebola outbreak. This could have been used here.
- There is a need to develop a way of understanding expertise in partner countries and challenges of doing this without having to go there.
- Many people use out-of-date terminology for partnerships. Many donors still talk about beneficiaries as if we're bestowing upon them. Some organisations have reassessed their terminology and instead use the term primary actors. Experience working with partners in Malawi and Rwanda is that they all tended to look abroad for support rather than to one another.
- Many of the most creative ideas have been from other Africans.
- Countries should only be reaching out to Scotland when they cannot find solutions from their neighbouring countries. This would allow Scotland only to engage where it can really add value.
- There are opportunities for partner countries to explore partnerships with neighbouring countries but not to the exclusion of the Scottish links.
- Believes Scotland can add value in a variety of areas. However raises the challenge of partnerships not being developed remotely. There is a need for physical meetings to build trust and relationships. This is a challenge in the current Covid-19 environment but also with climate impact of travel.
- It is hard to create relationships without meeting face-to-face. Travel should not be one way travel, it is just as important for those in our partner countries to visit Scotland.
- It would be impossible to understand things on the ground if the relationship was only held through videoconference. Videoconferencing can help sustain relationships and keep in contact but it is through face-to-face meeting that trust and understanding is built.

Q3. Taking in account the other principle, especially 'white gaze', how do we ensure we are developing and maintaining the most impactful partnerships and collaborations?

- There are some issues with 'white gaze' and assumed audience when looking at funding applications, terminology used and how it's worded.
- When writing funding applications often the words you're using are tied to your expected audience of who is assessing the funding, it's also important to think about how would it come across and be interpreted by the community you are working with.
- There is a need to develop cultural competence and confidence in talking about a partnership.
- There is no one solution to this as there is variety of challenges and power imbalances in variety of partnerships whether it's a kitchen table organisation or larger NGOs.
- There is a huge opportunity to fund advocacy and partnerships around COP 26. Scotland has a position that is quite unique in partnership with partner countries.
- It is important to raise the power imbalances. Interested in how we make a difference to the grassroots people who are dealing with basic life challenges. If we are going to overcome certain power imbalances we need to be able to understand people on the ground.
- Diaspora in Scotland can use their strengths to understand both cultures so that there is an equal partnership which understands and respects each side of the partnership.
- Important to be aware and understand the economic disparity and developing a cultural understanding. Learning the language is hugely important in showing respect and understanding people.
- There is a question about where we would be able to learn about expertise on the ground and where we go to identify it.

Q4. How has technology changed this landscapes and what have we gained and lost in the shift?

- Technology has made it a lot easier to be in contact which allows the maintenance of relationship and help.
- Even the most marginalised in our partner countries will have access to phones.
- Look at how you blend technology with their projects. It really needs a whole systems approach to be able to look at technology on the ground and sustainability.
- Technology can helped in monitoring and evaluation. Engaging communities to gather information on phones.