



## **Scotland Malawi Partnership: An Introductory Briefing**

The [Scotland Malawi Partnership](#) (SMP) is the national civil society network coordinating, representing and supporting the many people-to-people links between our two nations. We represent a community of 109,000 people in Scotland with active links to Malawi. This is part of a shared history that dates back 160 years to the travels of Dr David Livingstone.

We believe the hundreds of partnerships which unite Scotland and Malawi represent an innovative new approach to international development. This is an approach based not on 'donors' and 'recipients' but on long-standing, mutually-beneficial community-to-community, family-to-family and people-to-people links, each on its own quite modest in scale but, together, a formidable force for progressive change.

We exist to inspire the people and organisations of Scotland to be involved with Malawi in an informed, coordinated and effective way for the benefit of both nations. We do this by providing a forum where ideas, activities and information can be shared on our [website](#), through our [online mapping tool](#), [publications](#) and through regular [forums, training events and stakeholder meetings](#). In this way, we harness experience, expertise and enthusiasm from across Scotland and help inspire each new generation of Scots and Malawians to become involved together, in a variety of innovative new ways.

The SMP is core funded by, but independent of the Scottish Government, as part of its own outstanding [Malawi Development Programme](#). We are extremely grateful for this far-sighted investment by successive governments.

We are a membership organisation representing more than [1,220 Scottish organisations and key individuals](#), including half Scotland's local authorities, every Scottish university and most of its colleges, 230 primary and secondary schools, dozens of different churches and faith-based groups, hospitals and health boards, businesses, charities and NGOs, and a wide range of grass-root community-based organisations. Our work permeates almost all aspects of Scottish civil society. Any Scottish organisation or individual with a link to, or interest in, Malawi is welcome to join the Scotland Malawi Partnership. It is [quick and easy to join online](#).

By creating a single space for all organisations and individuals in Scotland currently engaged with Malawi to come together, we help reduce duplication of effort, add value to Scotland's historic civil society relationship with Malawi, and contribute towards poverty alleviation in Malawi.

A [2018 University of Edinburgh](#) study estimated that the SMP membership contributes over £49 million in time, resources and money to their links with Malawi each year. This activity directly benefits 2.9 million Malawians and 260,000 Scots annually. In total, more than 208,000 Malawians and 109,000 Scots are actively involved in links between the two countries, making the SMP one of the UK's largest cross-community networks engaged in international development.

A separate [2018 paper](#), by a University of Glasgow researcher, working from a randomly selected sample of 449 Scots, found that roughly 45% of Scots could name a friend or family member with a connection to Malawi, and more than 75% of Scots were supportive of these links, with less than 1.5% opposed. There is arguably no comparable north-south, people-to-people bilateral relationship with this degree of public engagement and support.

The Partnership continues to be buoyed by the growth in both the quantity and quality of civil society connections between Scotland and Malawi. The difference these links make in terms of combating poverty in Malawi and inspiring greater awareness in Scotland has been widely recognised from the outset as something immensely worthwhile.

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[www.scotland-malawipartnership.org](http://www.scotland-malawipartnership.org)

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We are an energetic coalition of civil society actors who believe in sustainable development through *dignified* partnership. We asked around 200 Scottish and 200 Malawian organisations to identify the principles which underpin such a partnership and were excited to find a great convergence of opinion. This has been enshrined in our eleven [Partnership Principles](#): we, and all our members, hold ourselves accountable to these published principles.

Our work is not confined by a conventional understanding of charity and international development, with donors on one side and recipients on the other. It is about partnership, joint-working and friendship. In keeping with this model, we have a sister network in Malawi (the '[Malawi Scotland Partnership](#)') that manages all coordination in Malawi and is 100% Malawi-owned and Malawi-led.

The SMP is itself non-governmental and politically neutral. We are, however, active in representing our members' work in Holyrood (where we provide the secretariat for the [Malawi Cross Party Group](#)) and in Westminster (where we provide the secretariat for the [Malawi All Party Parliamentary Group](#)). [All 59 Scottish MPs](#) have SMP members in their constituency and [all 129 MSPs](#) have SMP members in their region or constituency. There is unshakeable [all-party political support](#) for Scotland's historic friendship with Malawi amongst Scotland's elected leaders (see overleaf).

We are led by our members and exist to support them to inspire the people and organisations of Scotland to be involved with Malawi in a way which benefits both nations. We are active in coordinating, representing and supporting two-way dignified partnerships across a diverse range of areas including: [cultural links](#); [diaspora leadership](#); [environment and renewable energy](#); [faith links](#); [further and higher education](#); [gender](#); [governance](#); [health links](#); [local authorities](#); [primary and secondary education](#); [sport](#); [sustainable economic development](#); [tourism](#); [trade and agriculture](#); [water](#); and [youth](#).

Our project is to build connections and collaboration on a multi-sectoral basis between two small nations in ways that are transformational for both. There is no template for doing this. So far as we know, we are the first to develop this model of partnership. Our work is delivered by a small but highly effective [staff team](#), and governed by a large, experienced and committed [Board of Directors](#), elected from and by our Membership.

Every month, we deliver an ambitious series of diverse, high impact [events and activities](#), attended by members, partners, civic leaders, policy makers and other key stakeholders. Events such as our [Youth Congress](#) are co-designed by the SMP's Youth Committee. We share information and updates with our members and partners through the regularly updated [news pages of our website](#), through a dedicated weekly electronic bulletin, and through social media ([Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#)).

Through the Covid-19 pandemic our work has been more important than ever, with both Scotland and [Malawi severely affected](#). We quickly agreed a [Covid-19 Response Strategy](#) and [Risk Register](#), and have been delivering well against these. Since March 2020 we have been hosting [Covid Coordination meetings](#) every 4-8 weeks, with upwards of 250 Scottish and Malawian organisations and key individuals taking part in each. We regularly have Ministers and senior civil servants briefing us through these coordination meetings and our coordination efforts have been [praised by the President of Malawi](#). We have led the sector in agreeing [Principles of Good Practice](#) in responding to Covid; we have promoted and supported more than 20 [Malawi Covid appeals](#); and we have had specific impact supporting the [coordination of oxygen supply](#) to Malawi hospitals.

Other priorities for 2021 include: delivering on our [Black Lives Matter statement](#); achieving the [three challenges set for Scotland by the President of Malawi](#); extending our '[Year of Governance Strengthening](#)' into 2021; and amplifying Malawi's voice at COP26 through our '[Malawi@COP26](#)' campaign.

**More information on the Scotland Malawi Partnership and our work can be found on our website ([www.scotland-malawipartnership.org](http://www.scotland-malawipartnership.org)). We also recommend Rev Prof Kenneth Ross' excellent book '[Friendship with a Purpose: Malawi and Scotland for Sustainable Development](#)' (2018) which sets out the historical and contemporary context of the SMP, and the [Official Report](#) from the September 2018 High Level Conference in Malawi, which articulates Malawi's vision for the next chapter in the bilateral friendship, and updates the 2005 '[Malawi After Gleneagles](#)' conference in the Scottish Parliament.**

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The Scotland Malawi Partnership SCIO is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SC050781)



HM Government

## All-party messages of support for the Scotland Malawi Partnership



*"The links between Scotland and Malawi are strong and enduring. Even in this past year, which has presented us with difficulties we could scarcely have imagined, our friendship continues to grow. The work that the Scotland Malawi Partnership and the many organisations the length and breadth of Scotland do to support and nurture these links is extremely welcome and I am proud that the Scottish Government can continue to fund these efforts. I hope this report inspires many more communities to take an interest in the relationship between Scotland and Malawi, so we can sustain it for many years to come."*

**Nicola Sturgeon MSP, First Minister of Scotland and Leader of the Scottish National Party**



*"I am delighted to welcome the publication of this report. The links between Scotland and Malawi are deep, and it's right we celebrate them. This report stands as a testimony to that – highlighting the civic partnerships which exist across each Holyrood constituency and region. At heart, this is about friendship. Not just between governments, but between two peoples. Each year thousands of Scots and Malawians stand side-by-side and work together to achieve common goals. We should be proud of these bonds and I congratulate the Scotland Malawi Partnership for everything they do to further this cause. The Scottish Conservatives are deeply committed to strengthening Scotland's partnership with Malawi for the benefit of both our countries."*

**Douglas Ross MP, Leader, Scottish Conservative Party**



*"Our links with Malawi continue to thrive and flourish, and are a testament to the efforts of those who have worked hard to maintain this enduring friendship. The community of over 300,000 Scots and Malawians has helped deliver benefits and real change where it's needed - across communities, in trade, business, medicine, education and tourism. We should be proud of our work together and continue to build on the unity between our two nations."*

**Anas Sarwar MSP, Leader, Scottish Labour Party**



*"It is truly impressive that over one thousand Scottish organisations and key individuals have active links with Malawi. Through education, communication and engagement we are forging a lasting relationship with this fascinating and creative country at the heart of Africa. Together Scotland and Malawi can grow and prosper together. I am particularly pleased to see the deep links with schools in my constituency including my old primary school of Strathmiglo."*

**Willie Rennie MSP, Leader, Scottish Liberal Democrats**



*"I am delighted to see Scotland's long-standing friendship with Malawi continue to grow from strength to strength. More and more communities the length and breadth of Scotland are now involved in the people-to-people partnerships. This represents the best of Scottish internationalism, which will contribute to sustainable development and to global challenges such as equality and human rights. I congratulate the Scotland Malawi Partnership for its work coordinating these many civic links and look forward to continuing to work closely with the network."*

**Patrick Harvie MSP, Co-Convenor, Scottish Green Party**

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### **House of Commons, Westminster Hall Debate:**

*"...I pay tribute to the Scotland Malawi Partnership—genuinely one of the most unique, remarkable, interesting and human inter-weavings of two nations anywhere in the world.*

*"There are three things from which we can learn [from the SMP]. The first is ... the civic multiplier—the way in which the Scotland Malawi Partnership, with a relatively modest amount of money, can draw on all the institutions to create a much richer partnership and be more than the sum of its parts. The second element, which has come through time and again ... is mutual respect... we can learn as much from Malawi as it can learn from us. Finally, there is the genius of co-ordination and connections. Since 2005 the work of the Scotland Malawi Partnership has been not to create the connections, but to find them and mine them—to draw them out of the soil and reveal to us that thick web of connections between two nations, essentially putting Malawians on the board. That is a very important part of the work of the Scotland Malawi Partnership.*



*"...What is so striking about the Scotland Malawi Partnership is that it has found ways of engaging a whole human population. Britain could do that in Malawi or in Tanzania, Uganda or Nigeria. It is a very exciting way of thinking about how to do development in the 21st century... these human connections give us the legitimacy and centre to make progress..."*

*"...More broadly, the big lesson from the Scotland Malawi Partnership may be for the Department for International Development itself. The Scotland Malawi Partnership shows us a great deal."*

**Rory Stewart OBE, former Secretary of State for International Development (then Minister for Africa)**

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