

7 suggestions we would make in the delivery of this strategy

1) Coordination of effort and transparency:

The Covid-19 pandemic has made clear the vital importance of working in a coordinated way for maximum effort. There are hundreds of organisations and key individuals, with considerable expertise, across Malawi and Scotland working together to help fight the crisis. Having strong systems to listen to our partners in Malawi, understanding the situation locally and nationally, and to connect-up those working in similar areas is hugely important. We have seen what can be achieved by working in this way and, conversely, what can be wasted through unilateral action, risking duplicating other's work. We therefore encourage the Scottish Government to work closely with the three core funded networks, integrating into systems of sharing, openness and coordination of effort, for maximum positive impact. We also encourage transparency of working in this digital age: with recordings of meetings shared wherever possible, to ensure those not able to take part live (especially our partners in Malawi) are able to catch-up when they have internet access.

2) Civic multiplier effect:

A key feature of Scotland's distinctive approach to international development, most especially in its relationship with Malawi, has been the constructive synergy between the governmental and the non-governmental. Through this synergy the SG is able to leverage far greater inputs by working with and inspiring the full breadth of civic and associational life, mobilising considerable experience, expertise and energy from across both Scotland and Malawi. This allows a relatively modest central, governmental aid budget to achieve scalable impact across Malawi. We encourage the SG to continue to work closely with wider civic society, in Scotland and Malawi, for maximum impact.

3) Partnership-led and accountability to partner's priorities:

Much of the dialogue around the review has been around re-balancing the north-south power relationship within Scotland's development work. We actively welcome this and believe, crucial to success here, is an approach that looks to understand, and be accountable to, dignified, two-way, respectful partnerships. This is an area in which we have been facilitating an open discussion with our friends in Malawi for more than a decade: listening to what makes a respectful, equal, meaningful, effective partnership and then holding ourselves accountable to this. We believe dignified, mutually accountable partnerships are crucial at every level, whether it be a school or community partnership, an NGO project, or an inter-governmental relationship and we encourage the SG to continue to be led by a partnership approach.

We are aware that there is a real fatigue in Malawi, with a frustration amongst many that the same or similar questions are repeatedly asked of broadly the same people, without a clear sense of delivery or accountability to what has been said. We have seen this with our sister network when facilitating events, conferences and consultations in Malawi. This is why the SMP is clear that it is accountable to our partners in Malawi for the delivery of the outcomes of the September 2018 'Malawi and Scotland: Together for Sustainable Development' conference in Malawi. This was the biggest consultation of, and discussion with, Malawian organisations working with Scotland ever funded by the SG. The conference involved government Ministers, cross party Parliamentarians and hundreds of civic leaders from both Malawi and Scotland. It was partner led. This conference involved two days of really detailed discussion and listening, and all the working groups came together in a very democratic way to write a detailed 128-page report, giving clear direction for the next decade in the bilateral relationship. This was then presented to the FM and the

President, and the Malawi CPG and APPG. In October 2020, the President of Malawi [directly asked Scotland](#) to have a return high-level conference in Scotland within five years to track and celebrate progress made in implementation since 2018, and we feel it is important that we step up to this challenge as a country.

4) Global South Programme Panel:

We welcome the commitment in this review to actively listening to southern partners and feed these voices directly into decision-making: this is hugely important and will only strengthen the impact, appropriateness and effectiveness of the programme. We favour systems for doing this which are open, transparent, accountable and democratic. We therefore encourage the Scottish Government to work with partner countries to decide who will sit on this panel, be transparent about membership and publish the recommendations of the panel. It is important that partner organisations across Malawi, large and small, feel appropriately represented in such panels and are able to feed their views into discussions and can see how these views have been taken forwards and influenced decision-making. This is an excellent opportunity to show strong, accountable good governance in action, actively listening to a diverse range of voices and being accountable to what is said.

5) Corra Foundation expertise:

We are sorry that the decision has been made to end the Small Grants Programme as we feel that this has been an innovative and effective programme, empowering a broader range of actors in Malawi and Scotland, with strong comparative value for money. We believe a strong factor behind the success of this programme has been the management and outlook of the Corra Foundation in running this programme. The Corra Foundation have been unfailingly supportive, engaging and empathetic towards those involved in the programme, in Scotland and Malawi. This mindset and approach is crucial if a government programme is to reach a more diverse audience, both in terms of practitioners and beneficiaries, as it creates a supportive, constructive, welcoming space. We feel the Corra Foundation has played a pivotal role in helping bridge government machinery with smaller grant-holders. It is quite understandable that civil servants, with many competing demands on their diary, do not have the time to take part in many direct conversations with dozens of smaller organisations and hence we feel the Corra Foundation intermediary role is crucial if the SG is to succeed in its stated intention of this review, of broadening the range and diversity of grant partners in the partner countries. We encourage the SG to explore opportunities for the Corra Foundation continue and expand its management role within the wider programme, tapping into their expertise and proven experience to engage and support more diverse communities. If this role is to be provided in partner countries by Comic Relief, as has been suggested, we hope there is the same level of transparency, openness, accountability and constructive sector engagement as offered by the Corra Foundation.

6) Capacity implications of brokering new partnerships:

We recognise that some Malawian organisations feeding into the review have expressed frustration at not having had the opportunity to develop a new link with Scotland in the past. The report notes: *“we will separately also take forward with the networking organisations that we currently core fund the issues raised by certain stakeholders, as above, of their longterm struggle to find and be connected with Scottish partners”*. The SMP is keen that the bilateral relationship is a welcoming space in both Malawi and Scotland, able to inspire and support new civic links for the friendship to continue to grow and develop. There is, however, a practical

challenge around capacity and an important point around honestly managing expectations. The SMP currently supports its 1,200+ members, with hundreds of different links and partnerships across every section of civic and associational life (200+ schools, every Scottish university, half the local authorities, hundreds of churches, communities, NGOs, etc). To our knowledge, this is the largest international development network in the UK. We have always been welcoming and responsive to requests for new links from Malawi, both through direct, organic routes (helping connect and signpost individually where we are able) and in more systemic ways (forms to be filled in at the Malawi side to populate a database of prospective new links). However, our experience with the latter suggests it is important to manage expectations carefully: we stopped actively managing a database of prospective new links when we had several hundred such entries from the Malawian side, without significant numbers of new partnerships resulting. The result was understandable frustration at the Malawi side, with organisations feeling an implicit contract of expectation had been broken. We have since, therefore, been very careful to manage expectation: helping broker individual new links where there is a clear route and obvious stakeholders at both sides stepping forwards, but also being honest about the challenges and capacity limitations. As a small charity, it is appropriate to use most of our capacity supporting existing Malawi-Scotland links, supporting, coordinating and representing these partnerships and facilitating the sharing of learning amongst this community. We would be very happy to look again at what could be done to broker new civic links at a more systemic and scalable level but it is important to be honest about the capacity implications of this endeavour.

7) Clarity on the programme:

We welcome the level of detail given in this latest report, which includes reasons for many of the decisions made, often linking this back to discussions at roundtable meetings. However, moving forwards, it is important to have a clear and concise description of the programme making clear what elements of the 2016 Strategy remain and what has changed. There are a number of new funding streams, and it seems some existing streams have been renamed with some potentially significant changes to how they will operate. We would therefore welcome a refreshed policy document summarising the different streams and their relative budget allocations after the May election. As already noted, we encourage the SG to prioritise open calls for everything other than long-term funding arrangements and, as far as is possible, we would encourage the SG to include indicative information about what can be expected when: when calls for applications will be launched and broadly who will be able to apply and for what. This would help build confidence and certainty for this coming chapter across key stakeholders and, most importantly, southern partners. We feel this is especially important given the SG's stated commitment to funding more southern partners directly and the great many expressions of interest our sister network, MaSP, has received since. We feel it is important, having raised expectations, that there is clarity about what funding opportunities will be available when, how, and to whom.