



## Scotland-Malawi Principles of Good Practice in Responding to Covid-19

### Introduction:

Scotland is rightly proud of the many dignified two-way partnerships that it has with Malawi, as part of a bilateral relationship dating back more than 160 years. The people, parliaments and governments of both countries are committed to continuing to work closely together, with strong constructive synergy between the civic and the governmental elements of this relationship.

Covid-19 presents a unique set of challenges for both Scotland and Malawi. The Scotland Malawi Partnership is helping support coordination of effort and the two-way sharing of information and resources between our two nations, as we both respond to this crisis. For full details of the SMP's work in this area please visit [www.scotland-malawipartnership.org/covid-19/](http://www.scotland-malawipartnership.org/covid-19/), and read our [Covid-19 Response Strategy](#) and [Risk Register](#).

Following requests from members, partners and key stakeholders in Scotland and Malawi, the SMP facilitated an open and inclusive dialogue around the principles of good practice in responding to Covid-19. Principles were proposed by a range of different organisations and were then collated by the SMP and presented at the 13<sup>th</sup> May Covid-19 Stakeholder Meeting, with 70+ organisations, receiving strong endorsement. Members had a further week to feed in before then being presented, still in draft, at the 21<sup>st</sup> May Zoom meeting of SMP and Scotland's International Development Alliance members. Again, there was a strong endorsement of these principles, with final edits and additions from a number of organisations.

Having followed this process, the SMP has agreed:

- 1) **Principles of good practice for Scottish implementing organisations**, including NGOs, community groups and faith-groups. We hold the SMP accountable to these principles and we strongly encourage all our 1,200+ members across Scotland to follow these principles as they assist their partners in Malawi to respond to Covid-19.
- 2) **Principles of good practice for funders in Scotland**. These principles follow established thinking in the sector across the UK and beyond, and we strongly encourage organisations in Scotland which fund work in Malawi, including governments and foundations, to follow these principles. We appreciate it can be an understandably slow process for organisations to sign-up formally to such principles but, in the coming weeks and months we will share information about funders who have chosen to do so and also highlight examples from our members of funders who are following this approach.

Having concluded this consultative process, we are delighted to find that the principles we have identified, which came from members, Malawi partners, and diaspora representatives, mirror almost exactly best practice guidance across the sector and beyond. For example, more than 350 major funders have signed up to the "We stand with the sector" Covid-19 best practice commitments ([www.covid19funders.org.uk](http://www.covid19funders.org.uk)), committing to: 'adapting activities', 'discussing dates', 'financial flexibility', and 'listening to you'. These very neatly align with our own principles, outlined here, and we whole-heartedly endorse [www.covid19funders.org.uk](http://www.covid19funders.org.uk).

We hope that, by establishing principles of good practice for all those in Scotland involved in supporting Malawi through the Covid-19 crisis, including ourselves, we are able to help increase the positive impact the bilateral relationship has at this difficult and dynamic time.

## Scotland-Malawi Principles of Good Practice in Responding to Covid-19 For operational organisations (NGOs, civic links, etc):

We note that the SMP continues to promote and adhere to its 11 overarching [Partnership Principles](#), all of which remain relevant in this area. The principles listed here are specifically focused on the current Covid-19 crisis:

1. **Do no harm** – for example: not taking key healthcare staff away from their important work; not encouraging/expecting travel which might risk spreading virus; not taking vital PPE stocks in Malawi from where they are needed most; never giving advice which is in conflict with Malawi's national response, as led by the Government of Malawi; encouraging equal opportunities in the selection of staff to be paid in this emergency response.
2. **Two-way sharing between Scotland and Malawi**, as we both respond to Covid-19, while respecting important differences in terms of: resources and capacity, healthcare systems, culture, demography, geography and climate.
3. **Understanding the local context**: listening to and being led by our Malawian partners. Working with existing Malawi organisations, and following government direction and leadership. Recognising it is a dynamic landscape and things will change: remaining agile, not afraid to change/evolve plans based on a changing local situation. Helping amplify and disseminate government messaging on social distancing, handwashing, etc
4. **Collaboration and coordination**: Using the SMP, MaSP and other networks to share learning and actively looking to connect and collaborate with others. Investing in understanding who is doing what locally, and looking to make local connections.
5. **Continuity of, and commitment to, existing work**: looking first at what can be done to support existing links and communities which organisations are already working with and know well. It takes time to build trust and understanding, so it is often better to develop existing work than start again elsewhere. Look for *additional* funding, trying not to take away from existing commitments. Giving as much clarity and reassurance as you can to partners, while being honest where there is uncertainty.
6. **Prioritising safeguarding and human rights**, especially of those with increased vulnerability in the crisis. Remaining alert and responsive to the needs of groups who, too often, can become disadvantaged, including women, children, and those with disabilities.
7. **Supporting the local economy** through the crisis. Looking to source locally and support the local economy through appropriate employment. Ensuring, wherever possible, wages continue to be paid.
8. **Dialogue with supporters**: recognising the difficult and dynamic situation, sustaining regular open, respectful dialogue with funders and supporters, providing information and updates in a timely manner wherever possible, and working together to agree necessary project amendments.

## Scotland-Malawi Principles of Good Practice in Responding to Covid-19

### For Funders:

*We note that the above principles for operational organisations, and the SMP's 11 overarching [Partnership Principles](#), are also relevant for funders. This list offers specific additional points, particularly of relevance to funders in the current Covid-19 crisis:*

1. **Additional financial and practical support:** given the scale of the challenge, we encourage swift and significant additional financial commitments where this is possible. We urge funders to resist the temptation to cut from existing international development commitments to fund a Covid-19 response, risking undermining important work by robbing Peter to pay Paul.
2. **Open, respectful two-way dialogue with funded organisations** who, with their local partners, will have the best sense of what can best be done through these challenging times. Looking to maintain an awareness of the local context, through funded organisations, and considering the potential impact on long-term projects.
3. **Supporting, and working through, existing grant-holders:** Encouraging and supporting funded organisations to explore options to pivot work/resources to offer effective and timely Covid-19 support locally, in a timely way. These organisations will have strong existing networks and partnerships, they have local trust and understanding, and will be well attuned to local needs, priorities and opportunities.
4. **Do no harm, by maintaining 'normality' as much as possible.** It is essential health, social and educational services continue to function as much as possible, we therefore urge funders not to withdraw funding from non-Covid-19 specific projects. Just as the UK Government is going to exceptional lengths, through the furlough scheme, to help keep the UK economy and key national structures afloat, it is important the same ethos remains at the heart of international development funding. While Covid-19 requires an unprecedented response, this response cannot undermine other essential developmental and humanitarian work which, if lost, would only exacerbate the overall impact of Covid-19.
5. **Maintaining a flexible and understanding approach:** wherever possible, recognising the stresses and uncertainties projects are working through. Supporting projects to be agile and, as much as possible, trust their short-term decision-making, while making clear that due accountability continues. Where decisions are required by funders, making these in a timely manner, and offering as much certainty and reassurance as possible.
6. **Pausing rather than cancelling funding,** where projects cannot continue in any form as planned in the near-term. Giving strong reassurance that funding will restart when projects can recommence and keeping communication channels open. We urge funders not to abandon communities where commitments have been made and partnership work has begun.
7. **Recognising the impact on the wider sector:** Covid in Scotland has already had a huge impact on the sector, with many organisations' unrestricted operating funds significantly depleted due to cancelled fundraising work. This in turn will have knock-on impact across a number of areas, so we encourage funders to do what they can to support the wider ecosystem across the sector, recognising these difficulties.
8. **Working with Scottish networks in key decision-making** to tap into experience and expertise across the sector in an open and engaging manner.