



Scotland Malawi Partnership: Zoom meeting no.6
Wednesday 1st July, 1.30-3pm UK time / 2.30-4pm Malawi time
SUMMARY OF MEETING

Around 80 organisations and key individuals across Scotland and Malawi joined this, the sixth in our series of Zoom meetings looking at the impact and response to the Covid-19 crisis. For full details about all the SMP's Covid-19 work, visit: www.scotland-malawipartnership.org/covid-19/

You can watch a full recording of this meeting, here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rlxxNKKIQBA>. There are timestamps to help you quickly find the area you are interested in, just click 'Show More' in the description and then click the agenda item of interest.

The meeting provided a space to:

- listen to our members in Scotland and partners in Malawi,
- give a clear sense of the impact of the virus in Malawi,
- share information and updates about who is doing what,
- support shared learning and future collaborative working,
- support, promote and connect the various fund-raising appeals,
- share information about what the SMP is doing so far and explore what more we can do.

The agenda was designed around requests and submissions made by members when signing-up for the meeting. The meeting was chaired by Stuart Brown, Deputy CEO of the SMP, and was split into five main sections:

[Update on the political context in Malawi – Presidential election, Mrs Vera Kamtukule, CEO of MaSP](#)

- On the 23rd June Presidential Election, Vera Kamtukule joined a group of approximately 115 non-partisan professional observers. Vera joined the meeting to share her reflections on the political context of Covid-19 in Malawi following this. The group's task was to observe everything that happened from the time the polling centres were opened to the time the result sheets were transferred to the district tally centres. As Vera mentioned in a previous meeting, many Covid-19 preventative measures had been compromised during the campaign period, and this was also the case for the election period. Handwashing basins and soap were provided, but there was no one in place to ensure handwashing and social distancing was being carried out. Vera was present in the Lilongwe district tally centre, and noted that this was very crowded. As of the morning of 1st July, there had been an increase of Covid-19 infections, bringing the total number of cases to 1224, with 260 recoveries and 14 deaths. Some senior officials have also tested positive for the virus, and people are now beginning to realise the reality of the situation and have become more receptive to the lockdown as a result. Vera observed that, due to lack of testing, the actual number of cases may be much higher than the official number.

[Overview of COVID-19 situation in Malawi, Dr John Phuka, Presidential Taskforce & Prof Mwapatsa Mipando, College of Medicine](#)

- Dr Phuka gave an overview of the Covid-19 situation in Malawi and the work the Presidential Taskforce is doing. His full presentation can be found [here](#).
- This presentation was followed by a Q&A session:
 - **What is the predicted number of infections by August?**
Dr Phuka gave an estimate of 5-10,000, but advised that this is difficult to predict.

- **Can you reflect on the lack of behavioural change in Ekwendeni?**
A targeted, theory-based approach is necessary when educating communities on preventative measures.
- **Is a lockdown likely to be considered again?**
If a lockdown is to be considered, there must be clear goals as to what can be achieved through this.
- **Has the Taskforce considered engaging more academics?**
Universities are being engaged, but additional funding is required to do this more effectively.
- **Has Covid-19 affected the movement of produce from farmers to urban centres?**
Movement of produce has not been largely affected.
- **Are there plans regarding mission hospitals and community-based organisations?**
[CHAM](#) is a very important part of this and should be engaged.

[The relatively low prevalence of COVID-19 in young people, Prof Hugh Pennington, University of Aberdeen](#)

- Professor Pennington shared his observations on Covid-19 and the linear relationship between age and complications resulting from infection. He noted that serious effects of the virus are more common the older someone is, with children experiencing milder effects and being less likely to spread the virus. This is unusual, as with most viruses and many bacteria, children and those in their sixties or older will be more adversely affected, whereas those in their twenties to fifties will face less severe effects. He also discussed the problem of 'super spreaders' and how infection is much more likely in indoor environments when compared to outdoors.
- This presentation was followed by a Q&A session:
 - **Can you reflect on the situation in Malawi with regards to 'superspreaders' returning from South Africa?**
This is reflective of the international experience, and control measures are extremely important in order to stop 'superspreader' events.
 - **What is the impact of the increasing expression of the receptor for the virus (ACE-2) with age and of concomitant infections in Malawi which may be immunopotentiating or immunomodulating?**
More research is needed, which will hopefully result in reducing the effects of Covid-19 infection.

[Update from DFID Malawi, Anthea Kerr, Deputy Director of DFID Malawi](#)

- Anthea gave an overview of DFID's analysis and what they have done so far with regards to Covid-19 in Malawi. Early models forecast potentially up to 50,000 deaths in Malawi, with a large portion of the Malawi population facing infection and possible hospitalisation due to factors such as underlying health risks and low access to basic sanitation. DFID's investigation of the Malawi health system showed that only 37 ventilators were in the country, and critical care capability was very limited. Risks facing the health system include disruption to supply chains and human resource shortages. There is also the concern that Covid-19 will have an impact on other diseases, with one model predicting an up to 50% increase in HIV, TB and malaria. The funds needed to tackle the pandemic are likely to increase exponentially as the situation in Malawi becomes clearer. The most proximate humanitarian risk is likely the loss of livelihoods, due to very little in the way of employment protection. With regards to the wider economy, IMF has lowered its growth forecast and predicts a slow recovery. DFID has carried out the following measures to tackle the challenges of Covid-19:
 - Strengthen capacity of National Laboratory
 - Strengthen capacity of points of entry
 - Ensure the procurement and distribution of clinical equipment
 - Funding setup of standard emergency treatment units
 - Development and update of training packages for District National Rapid Response Teams
 - Development and distribution of awareness campaigns
- This presentation was followed by a Q&A session:
 - **Will DFID consider re-funding WASH?**
Anthea confirmed that this was integrated into the Covid-19 response, but funding for future standalone WASH programmes was unlikely.

- **What are DFID's thoughts and plans towards education?**

Anthea confirmed that their Education Adviser has remained in Malawi, and is working closely with the Ministry of Education with regards to reopening schools and the necessary protocols surrounding this.

[PPE distribution and local production, Callum Wilson, PhD student at University of Strathclyde & Amy Blake, CEO of Classrooms for Malawi](#)

- [A group of students at the University of Strathclyde](#) with engineering and biomedical backgrounds has been assembled to support Covid-19 response. Given the University's existing links with Malawi, it was decided that it would be a good target country for their work. They are looking to establish local links in order to facilitate knowledge exchange, creating partnerships with Malawian universities and learning from the excellent work they are already doing. Their initial direction of the project was the manufacture of CPAP devices, and some funding has been secured to start building prototypes, procure materials etc. However, they are prepared to change direction as the situation in Malawi develops and new needs arise.
- [Classrooms for Malawi](#) has launched a campaign to raise money in order to install handwashing stations in the schools that they work with (31 schools across 9 districts). Within one week, they have raised all funds needed to install 300 handwashing stations across these schools, and distribution is scheduled to start w/c 6th July. Although the schools are closed, the handwashing stations will be provided to the mother groups in these communities, who will carry out an education program around the importance of hygiene. Amy invited other fellow SMP members to get in touch if there is anything that Classrooms for Malawi can do to help while their representatives are in these communities carrying out the distribution.

[Actions arising, David Hope-Jones, CEO of SMP](#)

- David thanked the speakers and attendees, summarised the main points of the meeting and highlighted some of the SMP's plans going forward:
 - [The Scotsman article](#) on cooperation between Scotland and Malawi on Covid-19
 - [Slack group](#) for discussion of Covid-19
 - Permanent section in weekly bulletin giving updates on Covid-19 numbers in Malawi
 - SMP welcomes perspective pieces on Covid-19
 - [Fundraising appeals](#)
 - [Principles of Good Practice](#)
 - Proposal that next Covid-19 Zoom be scheduled for end of July, but date to be decided based on participant feedback
 - David to write to President Lazarus Chakwera with message of support from the people of Scotland to Malawi through Covid-19 crisis

Stuart thanked participants and closed the meeting.