

Cross-Party Group on International Development

Tuesday 4th February 2025, 18:00 – 19:40
Committee Room 4 and online

Minute

Present

MSPs

Sarah Boyack MSP – Chair
John Mason MSP
Maggie Chapman MSP

Invited guests

Dr Clive Mitchell, Head of Terrestrial Science, NatureScot (in person)
Alex Gerard, Executive Director, Tiyeni (online)
Rose Waswa, Projects Coordinator, Caritas Kabwe (online)

Non-MSP Group Members

In person:

Ross McNab; Vivian Innocent; Frances Guy (SIDA); Tushaani Naidu (SAC Consulting); Steve Vester (SAC Consulting); Sarah Buckingham (SAC Consulting); Hannah Clyne (SIDA); Stuart Brown (Scotland Malawi-Partnership); Jack Vickerman; Eddie Nicholls (Office of Foyso Choudhry MSP); Lun Li (LunDun Tech Company); Frances Johnston (WWF Scotland); Smith Ilcumapayi; Nathanael Smith (Office of Sarah Boyack MSP); Patrick Grady (SIDA / Group Secretariat)

Online:

Gemma Love (Mary's Meals); Anne Callaghan (SCIAF); Ryan Kane; Tracey Morse (U Strathclyde); Beatriz Crespo (U Edinburgh); Ewan Brown; Jenni Argent; Luisa Riascos; Mark Chadwick (CBM UK); Sheila Brooks; Sheila Forbes (U Strathclyde); Tariq Durrani (U Strathclyde); Chad Morse (SMP); Chrissie Hirst (Corra Foundation)

Apologies

None noted

Agenda item 1 - Welcome and Housekeeping

Sarah Boyack welcomed all those attending in person and online.

The minutes of the last meeting on 19th November were formally proposed by Frances Guy and seconded by Sarah Boyack and approved by the meeting.

Agenda item 2 – Panel and Discussion

Each guest speaker was invited to make their presentation in turn.

Dr Clive Mitchell, Head of Terrestrial Science, NatureScot: looked at the challenges presented for food security by an increasingly chaotic climate in Scotland and around the world. Highlighted the need for transformation of use of the land and sea to build resilience to climate risks and markedly reduce emissions from the land.

Alex Gerard, Executive Director, Tiye (online): explained the history of Tiye and its mission to stop soil erosion and increase crop yield through better land management. Deep Bed Farming (DBF) is a climate smart agricultural method that breaks the cycle of compacted soil. The system builds climate resilient farmland and communities and has been formally adopted by Malawi's Ministry of Agriculture

Rose Waswa, Projects Coordinator, Caritas Kabwe (online): outlined the work of the Kumena Project, aimed at empowering resource-poor rural communities in Central Province, Zambia by strengthening income security, fostering well-being of women and promoting renewable energy use. The project was primarily designed and implemented to sustainably increase household income and food security among 1500 vulnerable small scale farmers. Kumena supported farmers to move to agro-ecological farming practices, giving them the power and knowledge to use contextually-appropriate methods.

Following the presentations, there was an opportunity for questions and discussion.

Sarah Boyack asked about connections that could be made between the experiences in Scotland, Zambia and Malawi. Alex Gerard explained steps Tiye were taking to translate their training materials into different languages and dialects, and promote knowledge-sharing. Anne Callaghan shared details of the Agroecology Coalition which aims to bring together practitioners.

John Mason MSP asked for more information about steps to protect soil composition in Malawi. Alex Gerard explained how Deep Bed Farming can help to protect the land from 'baking' in the sun post-harvest.

Nathanael Smith asked about how attitudes toward child marriage were changing in Zambia. Rose Waswa spoke about the effort needed and importance of involving traditional community leaders.

Sarah Buckingham asked about land use and crop yields. Clive Mitchell explained that time was sometimes needed for new systems to take effect.

Hannah Clyne asked about community involvement in developing solutions. Alex Gerard outlined how community engagement was crucial to Tiye's operating model

Sarah Boyack brought the discussion to a close, noting the new connections that had been made between different organisations at the meeting, and offered to look for opportunities to raise some of the issues discussed with Ministers.

Links to the presentations and other supporting documents will be made available on the SIDA website.

Agenda item 3 – CPG review of Scottish Government International Development Programme

Sarah Boyack outlined ongoing work to finalise the review document, which had been discussed in dept at the last meeting in November. A fuller update is expected at the next meeting on 29th April.

Agenda item 4 – Next meeting(s)

The Group agreed to host a joint meeting with the Cross-Party Group on Malawi on Tuesday 11th March at 6:00pm in the Scottish Parliament and online. The meeting will welcome visitors from the Kamuzu University of Health Sciences (KUHeS) in Blantyre, Malawi.

The next formal meeting will be on Tuesday 29th March 2025 at 6:00pm in the Scottish Parliament and online. The likely topic will be an overview of current emergency and humanitarian relief work being supported by organisations in Scotland.

The meeting closed at 7:40pm