

Inquiry on Scottish Government transparency in international development – process

Inquiry purpose

The Scottish Government's funding for international development (encompassing international development, climate justice, and humanitarian response) makes an important contribution to supporting people impacted by poverty, the climate crisis, and humanitarian emergencies internationally. The nature of this contribution has evolved in recent years, both in relation to the thematic foci and the modalities used to distribute the funding. This inquiry seeks to build the CPG's understanding of this evolution by understanding where and how funds have been committed since the last National Outcomes review, and how this is changing. Some information is published by the Scottish Government, and the last 'Contribution to International Development' report was published in February 2021 (three so far: [2017-18](#), [2018-19](#), [2019-20](#)). We understand a new report will be published in April 2024 which will inform our desk-based research. We are seeking to build a full picture, including to capture change over time.

This Inquiry seeks to explore: what money has been committed; what mechanisms were used to distribute it; where funding has been committed; the types of organisations receiving funding; and the level of alignment to the Scottish Government's strategic intent. In doing so, it will also consider international best practice on aid transparency to assess whether improvements could be made to existing Scottish Government processes.

Objectives of the inquiry

- To collate information on Government decision making since 2018
- To document Parliamentary scrutiny since 2018
- To hear views from the sector on the current process
- To make recommendations for a more transparent approach

Timeline

Note these are indicative timings and dependent on resources.

| Item | When |
|---|--------------|
| Launch inquiry | 3 April |
| Online consultation live | 3 April |
| Desk based research | May |
| Consultation closes | 31 May |
| Write up desk based research findings | May - June |
| Face to face discussions/roundtable tbc | Mid June |
| Collate responses | June/July |
| Develop recommendations | August |
| Present findings to CPG | 17 September |

Scope

The inquiry will consider transparency of spending of the International Development fund, Climate Justice fund and Humanitarian funding.

Process

1. Desk-based research

- Collate information on Government spending allocation across International Development Fund, Climate Justice Fund and Humanitarian funding (including but not limited to the Humanitarian Emergency Fund).
- Compare the International Development reports that began in 2018: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/contribution-international-development-report-2017-18/> with analysis and scrutiny of funding allocations more broadly as laid out in the 'aim to establish' section below.
- This should include scrutiny of public announcements of funding available, resulting awards made, answers to Parliamentary questions¹ with particular attention to non-competitively awarded grants, due diligence reports of organisations directly funded, Scottish Government FOI logs, searches of Ministerial diaries, Public Contract Scotland emails, and the Scottish Parliament Lobbying Register (including professional lobbyists such as Holyrood PR), all giving due attention to the timings and chronology of meetings and awards.

Aim to establish:

- The number and amounts of grants and/or tenders awarded through competitive process, the number of live grants per year, whether this has increased or decreased over time, whether rationale has been given for any non-competitive status, and whether totals allocated add up to stated commitments
- The recipients of grants, particularly looking at size, location and status (i.e. profit/non-profit) and how this has changed over time – including the balance of spend between partner countries. To include Small Grants Programme.
- When the Humanitarian Emergency Fund Panel has been used to allocate humanitarian funding, when it has not, and what rationale has been provided.
- Communication processes. How calls are currently promoted, relationships and communication with CSOs.
- To look at the extent to which funds are utilising a participatory framework with beneficiaries in the design and delivery of projects; and what learning there may be derived from each of the funds
- Availability and adherence to current strategies
 - o the current core strategy remains [Global Citizenship: Scotland's International Development Strategy](#) – 2016
 - o the International development programme - review: summary report - 2021: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/summary-report-review-scottish-governments-international-development-programme-light-covid-19/>
 - o the Coronavirus (COVID-19): international development review – principles – 2021: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-international-development-review-principles/>
 - o Scotland's Global Affairs Framework – 2022: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-global-affairs-framework/>

¹ E.g. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/international-development-funding-schemes-letter-from-minister-for-culture-europe-and-international-development/>

- It could also usefully include the recent re-shaping of IDF funding rounds with the shift in focus to NCDs, Education, Global Solidarity
- Availability of reporting, how this has changed over time, and whether commitments to reporting have been adhered to
- What Parliamentary scrutiny has taken place, e.g. parliamentary questions
- Consider best practice from other governments and parliaments - United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway as possible examples, but also considering best practice of sub-national actors (cities and regions, e.g. Wallonia)

If capacity allows we will seek to explore:

- Whether funding can be tracked by thematic focus and what this tells us about past allocations
- a retrospective application of the DAC gender equality policy marker
- What international standards on transparency exist? For example, the International Aid Transparency Initiative's [Standard](#) and the [Aid Transparency Index](#)

2. Call for evidence

To hear views from the sector on the current and historical processes and the impact on their organisation we will create an online survey. All questions should allow for text answers, not just Yes/No or scoring.

Questions:

1. Name & organisation [include option for anonymity]
2. Have you applied for Scottish Government international development fund, climate justice fund, or humanitarian funding in the last five years?
3. Have you received funding from the Scottish Government international development fund, climate justice fund, or humanitarian funding in the last five years?
4. If yes, please provide details:
[fund] [amount] [year] [option to add more examples]

The following questions relate specifically to the Scottish Government **international development fund**.

5. How would you rate your understanding of the funding strategy? [score 1 – no understanding to 5 – excellent]
6. How would you rate how funding opportunities are currently promoted?
7. How would you rate your access and/or relationship with the staff team?
8. Do you have any other comments about how this fund is operated?

The following questions relate specifically to the Scottish Government **climate justice fund**.

9. How would you rate your understanding of the funding strategy?
10. How would you rate how funding opportunities are currently promoted?
11. How would you rate your access and/or relationship with the staff team?
12. Do you have any other comments about how this fund is operated?

The following questions relate specifically to Scottish Government **humanitarian funding**.

13. Are you a member of the Humanitarian Emergency Fund panel?
14. If not, are you aware who is and how to become a member?
15. How would you rate your understanding of the funding strategy?

16. How would you rate how funding opportunities are currently promoted?
17. How would you rate your access and/or relationship with the staff team?
18. Do you have any other comments about how this fund is operated?

19. Do you have any other feedback on how the current international development, climate justice and/or humanitarian funds are allocated?

20. Would you be willing to participate in follow-up interviews about your views and experience?

Call for evidence promotion

The call for evidence will be open to anyone to participate. Survey to be promoted via the following channels:

- CPG mailing list
- Scotland's International Development Alliance monthly newsletters
- Scotland's International Development Alliance chief executives mailing list
- Scotland's International Development Alliance global citizenship group
- Other Parliamentary routes tbc
- Press release
- Listing in parliamentary update services eg NewsDirect

3. Face-to-face meetings

Depending on responses to the online survey, one-to-one interviews or a roundtable meeting could be held to delve more deeply into the impact of the current approaches.

The relevant Scottish Government teams will be invited to input as part of the consultation.

Consideration to be given to other stakeholders who may be able to contribute to the process. For example:

- FCDO ideally someone who is senior in allocation of ID funds
- Mannion Daniels (as they run FCDO's funds for INGOs/civil society)
- Former civil servants, e.g. Nicola Munro, a retired senior civil servant who worked at Director-General level and had responsibility for budgets and can advise on spending procedures
- People who have audited in the public sector
- Audit Scotland
- Prof. James Mitchell, expert on social policy and how governments work, especially SG

4. Recommendations

Recommendations to be developed based on desk based research, survey responses and follow up interviews. Recommendations paper to be presented for discussion at the September CPG.