

### **International Development Policy**

1. The Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) warmly welcomes the External Affairs Minister's announcement that the International Development Fund (IDF) is to be doubled to £9 million, and accordingly, is pleased to respond to the Scottish Government's consultation on how the IDF can be best utilised. The short time available, however, has meant that it has not been possible to study the impact of work generated in the previous funding cycle. The response has been compiled with the assistance of a number of expert Fellows of the RSE in the form of a small working party, under the direction of the General Secretary, Professor Geoffrey Boulton.
2. The Society has increased and strengthened its international role and its International Committee is taking forward the commitment to establish stronger international links. In this context, the RSE is keen to develop its links with Africa but has only been able to provide modest support to enable its Fellows to undertake projects leading to improvements in the basic infrastructure. We would like to establish links with African Academies, recognising these will be of a different nature to those with European and Far East Academies. The emphasis would be on capacity building, rather than research excellence. Creating links with countries on the continent would build upon Scotland's historic links with many African countries. Functional opportunities also exist in twinning Scottish institutions with institutions in Africa, such as teaching hospitals and university faculties. In the future, we hope funding may be available to build upon the Society's existing international relationships, including those with African nations.
3. With regard to the allocation of the IDF, we are of the view that the best use of funds is geared towards "bottom-up" integrated community development projects, with support from local organisations and the use of revolving funds. Employing aid to eliminate extreme poverty should be about stimulating and facilitating behavioural change, in both individuals and institutions. It is important to recognise that the monitoring and evaluation of projects is key to determining the impact of projects and should inform the process for awarding funds to applicants. The outcomes of monitoring and evaluation will also help to shape future policy and transfer best practice between projects. The Scottish policy should imaginatively complement that of the Department for International Development and exploit the good will in Scotland in order to enable capacity building.

## **Subject Priorities**

*Are the current thematic priorities of Education, Health and Civil Society development still appropriate?*

4. One of the very long standing problems of development aid is the constant changing of priorities. The Society believes that it makes sound sense to continue to work with the same priorities. The existing thematic priorities of Education, Health and Civil Society remain appropriate to Scotland, Malawi and other countries with which we are likely to engage. Education and Health are foci for direct practical action, while building on Civil Society is a cross-cutting approach. It is suggested that one other focus for direct action should be Agriculture, particularly in light of climate change and environmental concerns, as well as of globalisation of produce markets. Besides an underlying approach valuing Civil Society (see para 5), it is internationally accepted that all development work needs to involve women as well as men and it is hoped that Scottish policy will be framed with gender issues in mind. Scotland has the experience, skills and knowledge in the three thematic priorities and two cross-cutting approaches of Civil Society and Gender to deliver successful and sustainable packages in these areas and using these approaches.
5. These priorities should be pursued on a community basis with organised groups that can take a lead. As far as possible, development work should be undertaken in partnership with existing indigenous voluntary organisations. People in developing countries do not need to have their civil society “developed”, but to have their NGOs and other civil society agencies used and valued. It will be important, however, that projects are consistent with countries’ national policies and behaviours.
6. It is appreciated that in giving support to major projects relating to a nation’s infrastructure, such projects are subject to 'leakage' due to the bureaucratic procedures that are involved. There is a need for overview of expenditure and outcomes through those local NGOs and agencies who can provide efficient, effective and honest leadership or through Scottish (UK) Charities and agencies. Assistance given with community direction is more accountable and can lead to a long term sustainable future. This support can be through mechanisms such as micro loan schemes, equipment provision, stock or seed. There is also mutual benefit in young, or not so young, volunteers from Scotland becoming involved in community projects overseas. Although, it should be recognised that while volunteers can be of huge benefit and a great resource, such volunteers must have the appropriate skills and commitment to undertake a project otherwise they might actually be a burden to a community. A focus on educational exchange would also be valuable in improving contacts between schools and universities in these areas.

*Do they need to be narrowed e.g. should health be in a specific area such as maternal health or be widened e.g. to include economic development?*

7. The thematic priorities are sufficiently broad to allow a useful range of projects within them. For example, Health can be seen in the framework of the current international targets for “Health for All”, while encompassing maternal health or HIV/AIDS as well as animal health; among major preventative health measures, the present push is for safe drinking water and 2008 will be the International Year of Sanitation. Education would include university links, or early childhood, or the theme of this year’s Global Monitoring Report which is looking particularly at skills development for the poorest sections of the population, with an emphasis on IT and communications especially for girls and women. Economic Development should be a dimension that is considered as an accompaniment to a project concerning the thematic priorities identified. Thus, it could be argued that effective education is dependent upon an enabling macro-economic environment.
8. As a learned institution, the Society has a responsibility to underline the continuing necessity for research to back up some of these programmes; for instance, there is a current call in the Commonwealth for more scientific research into renewable energy and economic research into creative ways of financing the various forms of that renewable energy.

### **Geographic Principles**

*Should we continue to focus resources on Sub-Saharan Africa?*

9. Scotland has made a substantial contribution to sub-Saharan development in the past, and there are a number of strong links with the region. A regional focus allows several levels of interaction in the one area, whereas a broad scale intervention could be used to pursue opportunistic proposals as they arise, irrespective of geographic location.
10. We believe that there is some benefit to be gained by concentrating limited resources for development aid to a single nation. This provides the opportunity for a much more integrated approach with measurable outcomes. We understand that such initiatives are much more meaningful when there is an ongoing link with individuals or institutions. It is essential that each project is thoroughly assessed to ensure that the investment strategy has long term sustainability as a key objective.
11. Part of any agreement should include arrangements for the development of valuable links with organisations in Scotland and in particular schools as these are of mutual benefit. In this context, we strongly support the work of NIDOS in improving communication among international development organisations in Scotland and improving the data set on international activities undertaken by Scottish organisations. In publicity terms every effort should be made to bring to the attention of the public the benefit that others are receiving through our concern for the less fortunate and also the benefits that accrue to Scotland

and its citizens from development work being undertaken by Scottish organisations (for example, work conducted by some medical organisations in Africa on HIV/AIDS has been of real use in treating HIV in Scotland). Publicity could also be used to provide a focus on engaging organisations, companies and individuals within Scotland who have expert knowledge in important fields for development, such as energy, transport, planning and telecommunications etc.

12. We understand that the Department for International Development will focus more of its resources into Southern Asia, but by good footwork Scotland can imaginatively complement this activity to some extent by focussing its resources strategically in Sub-Saharan Africa.

### **International Development Fund and Process**

*Should the Humanitarian Health Fund, small grants and main grant schemes continue?*

13. We support the continuation of the three strands of grant; in particular, the small grant scheme is important if civil society and grass-roots are to be involved. Often, they cannot handle large sums and judicious small sums distributed among a number of related groups can achieve a tangible impact quite quickly. They are useful in encouraging SMEs and can be especially helpful in strengthening animal cooperatives and female-led enterprises.
14. With regard to the Humanitarian Health Fund, at least part of it could be utilised to fund visits by experienced African health workers to other African countries, as well as visits by workers from Scotland to Africa.

*Should the challenge fund approach continue?*

15. The focus of our response has been on the funding of community-based activities, although this could operate through a hierarchy of delivery mechanisms, including governmental advisors at one level, and educational activities at another. It makes sense to have a hierarchy of delivery mechanisms, but the challenge fund system may have disadvantages. It encourages the large international NGOs who have the sophistication to prepare proposals, perhaps to the detriment of more local initiatives; and it could limit the impact of the fund if projects are random rather than part of a connected programme.

### **Additional Information and References**

Copies of this response are available from the RSE's Consultations Officer, Mr. William Hardie (email: [evidenceadvice@royalsoced.org.uk](mailto:evidenceadvice@royalsoced.org.uk)) and from the RSE web site ([www.royalsoced.org.uk](http://www.royalsoced.org.uk)).

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