

18th February 2021

Dear Delyth Jewell,

Thank you for the recent opportunity to give evidence to the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee, on the 2nd February 2022. As requested during the session I am following up with some further points. They relate to the wider points made by the committee and Alun Davies' specific comments around areas we would like to see mainstreamed and embedded.

Wales Overseas Agency Group is made up of several organisations with differing priorities, and having read the WCIA written response, I know several of the wider issues including the disconnect between the International Strategy focussing on economic growth and the tensions with principles of sustainable development have been highlighted. We agree with WCIA's response, so I am taking this opportunity to focus in on some specific issues highlighted by WOAG members and issues relating directly to international development and solidarity. I hope they will support the committee with their future deliberations and support future scrutiny.

- I highlighted a need to consider the relationship between the Welsh Government and the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office. The Department for International Development has been disbanded, the 0.7% official development assistance budget has been cut and the Wales and Africa budget has remained static for at least 5 years. These have all had a real impact on Welsh civil society and could potentially limit our ability to deliver a globally responsible Wales; a key priority in the international strategy. The strategy also states that **'...We will work more closely with the UK Department for International Development and seek to ensure that more of its funds are spent in Wales and through Welsh organisations and companies...'** The context changed very shortly after this was published, and it is important to review it and communicate progress, given the cuts and changing structure of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. As development is not a devolved issue the committee could look at the relationship with the UK Government, as well as exploring arrangements for increased powers and autonomy.
- There is a need for a separate international development strategy that, from the outset, includes the participation of indigenous people in the countries that Wales wants to work with; as well as Diaspora of these countries living in Wales. Community ownership and locally led development are important for the success of this kind of work. International Development and Global Solidarity should be delivered with the priorities of partner countries at the forefront. It is an important principle that development and global solidarity are separate from domestic trade and economic growth. The strategy could be scrutinised from this perspective.

- The current strategy also states the Welsh Government will ***“Demonstrate global responsibility by rebranding and expanding the successful Wales for Africa programme to become the Wales and Africa programme with a focus on sustainability.”*** The programme has been rebranded. However, we are still unclear about what resources are committed to the expansion or indeed the areas under consideration. The Scottish Government recently committed to a Loss and Damage fund for countries vulnerable to climate change; WOAG would welcome the opportunity to discuss similar ambitious goals for Wales. The committee could consider what expansion could look like in the short and long term.
- We believe that there needs to be an international strategy that better considers the trade offs between economic growth and global responsibility. Sustainable development, if a priority, should be a consideration in trade and economic development. WCIA has covered this point at length in their response. However, it is important to highlight the work of WOAG member Size of Wales and WWF and their [‘Making Wales a Deforestation Free Nation’](#) report, which highlights some of the ways Welsh Government would be able to enact global responsibility. This is particularly important given the increasing urgency of the climate and biodiversity crises, and should be a focus of scrutiny.
- There were discussions about improved mechanisms for civil society to engage with the Welsh Government on international issues and ensure cohesion across all portfolios. Having listened to the evidence across the course of the day, it seems that there was a mixed picture. WOAG has been able to engage well on specific campaign issues like the People’s Vaccine. However, we need more mechanisms to support all departments to enact global responsibility and plan longer term; and not focus solely on short-term campaign issues. With a broad range of issues to advocate on, it can be difficult for organisations to communicate with the Welsh Government in a purposeful way in order to make change, particularly where for the last two years focus has rightly been on Covid-19 and recovery. We would like to see a future where there was capacity to consider both domestic and global simultaneously.
- While there currently isn’t a prospect of a separate strategy for international development and global solidarity. There is a need for the current International Strategy to be reviewed based on the seismic events of the last two years including Covid, the increased awareness of racism as a result of the death of George Floyd, the nature and climate emergencies and commitments made at COP26. While these were not unknown issues and should have been given importance, the increasing awareness around them should enable deeper and more radical decision making. We are particularly interested in the integration and monitoring of the commitments made at COP26.

- In relation to the specific example of the draft Social Partnership and Procurement Bill, there has been specific concern that global responsibility is absent. The International Strategy has as a priority ‘...**Cement our reputation as a Fair Nation – a nation committed to Fair Trade, Fair Work and Fair Play, especially through our work on equality...**’ The reach of this work should include our global footprint. The Social Partnership and Procurement Bill is an example of an opportunity for the Welsh Government to exercise commitment to the ‘fair’ principle acknowledging our impact on rights, biodiversity, climate and economies of lower and middle income countries. This omission perhaps demonstrates where ‘globally responsible’ has been siloed into specific themes like Wales and Africa and climate change, and there needs to be leadership to ensure it is implemented across all of the Welsh Government.

Thank you for the recent opportunity to give evidence to the committee. As Co-Chair of Wales Overseas Agency Group, I was pleased to see the active interest in the issues and the searching questions that were asked of people giving evidence. There are many excellent initiatives happening in the international space, and Wales has much to be proud of in terms of its ambitions to be a globally responsible nation. I hope that our contribution helps to drive this forward in a positive way.

As mentioned earlier, Wales Overseas Agency Group has a very diverse membership with many competing priorities from sustainable and ethical supply chains to relief efforts during humanitarian crises. If the committee would like to further understand our collective work I would be very happy to arrange a round table discussion.

We are looking forward to continued work with the committee. Please get in contact if there are areas that you feel need further expansion.

Yours Faithfully,



Claire O'Shea

Co-Chair Wales Overseas Agency Group