

# Scotland Malawi Partnership – Youth Congress held in Edinburgh

200 young Scots gathered in Edinburgh for the Scotland Malawi Partnership's (SMP) Youth Congress last Thursday. It looks as though they had a great time at the event organised by the newly formed SMP Youth Committee at the McEwan Hall.

Young people came to discuss how they can use their voice to make a difference. They looked at cultural exchange and how important that is in developing a partnership between two countries.



PHOTO Kirsty Stroma Bain

They took part in drumming workshops, bought things from the marketplace and chatted with more than 15 organisations about the opportunities in Malawi open to young people.

£10,000 has been awarded by the Year of Young People National Lottery Fund to establish the Young Committee and promote cultural exchange between Scotland and Malawi. Now over 1,000 young people aged 14-24 will benefit from training and activities run by SMP.

Rachel Cameron from The Community School of Auchterarder is one of the committee members and she told delegates about her trip to Malawi in 2018.



*PHOTO Kirsty Stroma Bain*

Rachel said : “I think it is really good that the Youth Congress has been organised by the Youth Committee because I feel like young people will relate to us and understand us a bit better.

“I think they will listen to what we are saying rather than having an adult talking at them.”

*VIDEO by Pedro Matos*

She added: “I can’t think of any organisation anywhere that is so closely and strongly connected and is really specific with

Malawi which, to me, I think makes it stronger because you can put all of your time and all of your effort into it on both sides.

“We have the Malawi Scotland Partnership in Malawi working strongly on it and we are working strongly on it. There’s a lot of mutual respect between the two partnerships. It is a partnership, not a charity.

“I think our job is to get young more people involved. I hope by the time we are finished with the Youth Committee, it will be clear how many more youth members have joined so that we know we are doing something.”

David Hope-Jones OBE, Chief Executive of the Scotland Malawi Partnership, said: “Each year, more and more young Scots get involved in the 160-year-old friendship between Scotland and Malawi. With more than 45% of the population of Malawi under the age of 15, youth leadership is more important than ever.

“We were delighted to be bring together hundreds of young people from across Scotland, to share information about their own Malawi links and learn from others.

“There is fantastic energy and creativity around young people that have had the chance to build friendships with Malawi. It was wonderful that every aspect of the Youth Congress has been designed by young people themselves.”



*PHOTO Kirsty Stroma Bain*

The history of the Scotland Malawi relationship stretches back to the days of Dr David Livingstone. Now there are over 1200 links with Malawi including half of Scotland's councils, every Scottish university and most colleges, many schools and churches as well as businesses and charities.

The SMP's work looks to move beyond a conventional one-away understanding of charity and aid, with donors on one side and recipients on the other, instead celebrating an approach underpinned by thousands of two-way, dignified, people-to-people partnerships. This is widely seen as an innovative new approach to international development and is increasingly being emulated elsewhere.



The magnificent setting of the McEwan Hall