

WGIR09 Size of Wales

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

[Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Cyfathrebu, y Gymraeg, Chwaraeon, a Chysylltiadau Rhyngwladol](#) | [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee](#)

[Strategaeth Ryngwladol Llywodraeth Cymru](#) | [Welsh Government's International Strategy](#)

Ymateb gan: Maint Cymru | Evidence from: Size of Wales

1. What is your relationship, if any, to the International Strategy?

Size of Wales is one of the Strategic Partners mentioned in the Wales and Africa 2020-2025 Action Plan and plays a key role in delivering the aims of the plan and also the priorities of the International Strategy.

(i) Tree planting in Uganda: Thanks to funding from the Wales and Africa programme Size of Wales oversees the implementation of the Mbale Trees Growing Programme in Uganda, in collaboration with our partner on the ground, Mount Elgon Tree Growing Enterprise (METGE). This operates in seven districts in the region and employs local people to support farmers on the forefront of the climate crisis.

(ii) Gender equality: Furthermore, the Welsh Government has also supported Size of Wales to implement two pilot projects in Uganda to promote gender equality, thereby supporting Welsh Government's ambition of being a Feminist government and its priority of being a globally responsible nation.

(iii) Safeguarding: Thanks to support from Hub Cymru Africa and WCVA, safeguarding across Size of Wales' operations and the Mbale programme has been significantly strengthened to ensure that high standards are upheld.

(iv) Ethical citizens: Via our education outreach programme, we also teach children across the nation about the importance of tropical forests. Our fun and creative bilingual sessions inspire children to be ethical, informed citizens dedicated to promoting global citizenship. Our workshops are linked to the new national curriculum.

(v) Fairtrade: Trees planted by the Mbale programme provide shade to grow coffee crops. The trees provide protection from extreme weather and increase coffee quality and yields. This supports Fairtrade coffee farmers such as Jenipher's Coffi to improve their livelihoods and protect the environment. Strong connections have been built between Jenipher's Coffi and communities in Wales, particularly schools via activities.

Overall this work has had the following impact:

1. Distributed over 25 million trees to local farmers and schools in Uganda via a network of community run tree nurseries. The trees have sequestered an estimated 1,434,819 tonnes of CO₂ since the project began. That is the same amount as 25% of Wales' transport emissions in 2022.
 2. Satellite imagery show that within 5 kilometres of the community tree nurseries, tree gain is seven times greater than further away.
 3. Built 5,844 fuel efficient stoves reducing the use of firewood by over 4,000 tonnes. They also provide a safer healthier environment for cooking in.
 4. 1,641 bee hives and equipment given to 29 beekeeping groups in the Mount Elgon region who have produced 3.4 tonnes of honey to sell, providing income for families especially women.
 5. Empowered women to tackle gender inequality and improve participation. Women have reported reduced levels of domestic violence, increased incomes, increase confidence to have a voice and be part of decision making processes at the household and community level, and greater ability to own land and engage in tree planting and beekeeping (deemed as a man's role).
 6. The work being delivered in Mbale is shared through inspiring, educational workshops with school children across Wales reaching approximately 200 schools a year via 260 bilingual sessions to over 6,000 pupils, inspiring global citizens of the future. 100% of the schools have recommended the workshops to other schools and have stated that their pupils have gained an understanding of why tropical forests are so important. We have strengthened connections between communities in the global south and children in Wales through visits, talks and resources to ensure that the voices and opinions of those most affected by the climate crisis are heard at an international level and can inspire change.
 7. Size of Wales is the only organisation in Wales producing bilingual education material on tropical forests and climate change with over 40 resources for teachers and young people to access on our website.
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2. What are your views on the Welsh Government's International Strategy – what's worked well and any areas for improvement?

The International Strategy includes a strong commitment to promoting global responsibility and supports rural communities in Uganda who have done very little to cause the climate change that is already impacting their lives through drought, flooding and landslides. By funding this Ugandan led project, Wales is helping some of the very poorest people in the world mitigate the impacts and adapt to climate change and improve their livelihoods.

There are scientific reasons to plant trees in the tropics such as Uganda. Trees grow much faster in the tropics and therefore, for a given financial investment, trees will capture carbon faster than an equivalent number outside the tropics. Planting trees is one of the few ways we can absorb carbon out of the atmosphere at any kind of scale to tackle the climate crisis.

The international strategy has a strong focus on partnership and strengthening civil society. The Mbale Tree Growing programme has promoted links between Wales and Mbale. This has included visits from our partner METGE for Youth COP which inspired young people and community groups across the nation. Providing long standing support for organisations in Wales and Africa has also strengthened civil society and enabled programmes to take a more long term and holistic approach to tackling structural issues such as poverty inequality and climate change. Funding has also been provided to organisations such as Hub Cymru Africa and WCVA to provide advice and training to organisations on safeguarding, anti racism, gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights.

Funding for much needed work on gender equality has been extremely welcome and the pilot project has had a significant impact bringing about changes to cultural norms.

Areas to strengthen

1. We would welcome more funding being invested in work on gender equality and that funding moves beyond one year programmes to be able to implement societal change.
 2. Opportunities to promote tree growing programmes / climate resilience in more than one country and clustered in regions to ensure sustainability and share knowledge/learn from each other.
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3. The current International Strategy focus is on economic growth and attracting inward investment for job creation and prosperity in Wales. This may overlook critical issues, such as the human rights records of these investors and the importance of promoting ethical employment practices in global supply chains, including those within Wales and environmental harm.

The Global Footprint is now one of the 50 national indicators used to measure progress against the seven well-being goals for Wales and the national milestone relating to this national indicator states that “Wales will use only its fair share of the world’s resources by 2050”. We would welcome the development of a strategy to show how Wales’ will reduce its global ecological footprint, prioritising reducing the consumption of high risk commodities such as soy, palm oil, timber, and imported beef.

4. The international strategy should recognise the role that Indigenous Peoples play in tackling the climate and nature crisis and support initiatives that result in greater funding for their work and recognition of their rights. Wales can build on the UN Pact for the Future recently adopted in New York. There are opportunities for great learning about Indigenous Peoples concept of wellbeing and living in harmony with nature which is reflected in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. We welcome the support from the Welsh Government for the Wampís Nation in Peru to promote solar energy and livelihoods in order to help protect the Amazon forest, their people and culture.

3. What are your views on the Welsh Government’s priority international relationships for 2022-25?

There is a need to distinguish between Wales’ foreign policy priorities and its commitments to international development. The latter should be guided by principles of global solidarity, prioritising the needs of partner countries over domestic economic growth goals. For example, partnerships that focus solely on trade may inadvertently undermine development goals if they fail to account for ethical considerations, including the impact on communities and ecosystems.

We believe that it is important to outline the priority international relationships as this focuses down support and expertise. We welcome the focus on countries in sub Saharan Africa that are already significantly experiencing the impact of climate change due to changes in weather patterns (floods, droughts, erratic weather) and landslides and the emphasis on working in partnership with civil society actors that can bring about change. It also builds on the links with

diaspora here in Wales and the solidarity connections developed over time between Wales and regions such as Mbale.

4. What are your views on the availability of information on the Welsh Government's international activities and delivery of the strategy?

The Welsh Government regularly shares information on social media about the activities and projects funded by the international strategy / Wales and Africa programme. They also carry out communications and press work, supporting for example the production of comms material such as videos and photos to capture testimonies from project participants which help share first hand testimonies from communities that have benefited from the programme. Furthermore, they promote events which enable information to be shared about the work supported by the international strategy e.g. International Women's Day event to share the impact of gender pilot projects.

At an international level, the Welsh Government has showcased the work being supported by Wales. For example, they hosted an event at COP26 to showcase the Mbale Trees growing programme and Fairtrade coffee cooperative / Jenipher Coffi.

The availability and accessibility of information about the Welsh Government's international activities and the delivery of its International Strategy can be improved. This would enhance public understanding and engagement in the important work.

Research conducted by Hub Cymru Africa highlights strong public support in Wales for global solidarity work. Promoting the positive outcomes of international initiatives aligns with this public sentiment and can further bolster support for the Welsh Government's international activities. A lack of communication, however, risks leaving this public goodwill untapped and allows room for misunderstandings or misinformation to take hold.

It would be helpful to have a dedicated page to share project updates and stories from communities in the global south to share tangible impacts that Wales is having. Showing positive stories of change will improve engagement and buy in in the strategy.

5. In your view, what information on the Welsh Government's international activities should be in the public domain?

Progress should be measured and reported against specific well-being indicators, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting ethical supply chains, and supporting global partnerships for sustainable development. This would provide the public with a clear understanding of Wales' contributions to global challenges and its commitment to long-term sustainability. Specifically it could focus on:

1. Information about the projects being funded and impact achieved and changes in people's lives to make a difference .
2. Case studies, videos, testimonies and photos from project participants.
3. Importance of global responsibility and making connections to actions we can take here in Wales that will have a positive impact globally.

This could be done via a dedicated page on the Welsh Government website.

6. What are your views on how the Welsh Government's international activity is resourced?

Long term and sustained support for the Wales and Africa programme and the projects supported by organisations such as Size of Wales' work, has provided invaluable support to civil society organisations to enable them to bring about long term change.

With current budget restrictions and the cost of living crisis, we are concerned that funding for this work may decrease in the new budget. At a time when global temperature rises are reaching 2C , it is vital that funding is maintained / increased to be able to support communities already impacted by the climate crisis to adapt to the new context and be more resilient and implement strategies to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Without sufficient resources, Wales risks falling short of its ambitions to be a globally responsible nation. It is essential to align funding and resourcing strategies with the values and priorities underpinning the Welsh Government's international activities.

There are opportunities for the Welsh Government to reach out to other key stakeholders, such as governments and other development agencies to forge alliances to create a joined-up approach and more secure funding and sustainability.

It has been very useful having knowledgeable and experienced staff based in the Wales and Africa team to support organisations that are implementing parts of the Wales and Africa / International Strategy. The Welsh Government has also supported the tree growing programme via technical expertise on data capture systems and forestry systems.

7. What priorities and priority relationships would you like to see included in the Welsh Government's approach to international relations beyond 2025?

The Welsh Government's future international relations strategy must prioritise addressing the global climate crisis, which poses the greatest threat to future generations and exacerbates vulnerabilities in already fragile regions. Climate change acts as a threat multiplier, intensifying existing crises and creating new humanitarian challenges. Addressing these urgent issues aligns with Wales' commitment to global responsibility as defined by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

1. Focus on Climate Justice and support for vulnerable regions: Make climate change the core priority of the international strategy, with clear goals to reduce Wales' ecological footprint and enhance global partnerships addressing climate resilience. This could include:

i) Supporting tree growing initiatives in degraded land in sub saharan Africa to provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for local communities, stabilise degraded land, protect watersheds and increase tree cover.

ii) A strong focus on gender justice issues as we can not achieve climate justice without tackling underlying causes of inequality.

iii) Regional approach securing partnerships in climate priority areas/hotspot areas.

iv) Support for Indigenous Peoples and forest communities who are key guardians of tropical forests to protect rainforest and other forests for carbon sinks and increase biodiversity.

2. Develop a clear plan on how Wales will reduce its global ecological footprint. This should be done by promoting ethical supply chains to ensure that Welsh imports do not drive environmental harm such as tropical deforestation and abuse of Indigenous Peoples rights overseas. Wales can be a leader on global responsibility if we recognise the interconnectedness of how our actions here in

Wales impacts globally. This could be done by supporting Size of Wales' Deforestation Free Nation campaign

- i) Introducing requirements for supply chains to be free from deforestation and social exploitation, as part of the transition to utilising locally produced and sustainable goods. This should be included in the statutory guidance of the new Social Partnership and Public Procurement Act Wales (2023).
- ii) Support Welsh farmers to eliminate imported livestock feed that is linked to deforestation and habitat conversion overseas, and design the Sustainable Farming Scheme so that it incentivises farmers to adopt nature and climate friendly farming methods, such as organic, agroecological or agroforestry systems.
- iii) Implement a Community Food Strategy so that it both drives and rewards local sustainable Farm & Fishing to Fork supply chains and prioritises only sustainable goods from overseas to support livelihoods at home and abroad.
- iv) Work with the UK Government to ensure that new trade agreements will guarantee high environmental and social standards, particularly around deforestation, accompanied by strict enforcement measures.
- v) Work with the UK Government to introduce a new Business, Environment and Human Rights Act which will require companies to proactively identify, prevent, mitigate and remedy adverse impacts across their operations and value chains through due diligence.
- v) Encourage Welsh Councils across the nation to sign up to becoming Deforestation Free Champion Councils and follow in the footsteps of Monmouthshire County Council (the first Council in Wales to sign up to the deforestation free champion charter on 12th December 2024).

8. Are there any other matters you would like to draw to the Committee's attention regarding the Welsh Government's international relations?
