SCIAF is the official aid agency of the Catholic Church in Scotland. We are part of Caritas Internationalis, the global network of Catholic agencies dedicated to ending poverty and working alongside the world’s poorest people, whatever their faith.

The main focus of our work in developing countries is helping people overcome hunger, conflict and disease; and we respond to humanitarian disasters. As well as providing practical support, we are passionate about challenging the underlying causes of poverty through education and campaigning.

The Scottish Government’s Draft Budget 2012-13

In advance of the 2011 Scottish Parliament Election, SCIAF called on any incoming Scottish Government to:
- protect and maintain the International Development Fund (IDF);
- fully implement the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, and create a Climate Adaptation Fund of £9million to help people in developing countries adapt to and survive the impacts of climate change;
- ensure that, wherever possible, fair trade criteria are applied to government procurement.

Thousands of people across Scotland signed SCIAF campaign action postcards and emails in support of these calls. We recognise the current pressures on public spending, and in this context the decision to protect the IDF can be seen as a strong demonstration of Scotland’s commitment to its role as a global citizen and a recognition of its obligation to act in solidarity with those most in need in developing countries. SCIAF has worked with the Scottish Government since the IDF was first introduced to ensure the fund’s impact is effective and long-lasting, and we will continue to do so.

We warmly welcome the decision of the Scottish Government to maintain the International Development Fund at £9million in the coming year, and the indication that it will be protected in future years of this spending round.

Our call for the introduction of an international Climate Adaptation Fund was shared by a number of international development organisations and the Stop Climate Chaos Scotland coalition. While it does not appear that finance for such a fund has been identified in the current budget document, we recognise that in recent correspondence with SCIAF supporters the Scottish Government has committed to “work with partners in business, charitable foundations and non-governmental organisations so we can co-ordinate efforts to build a Scotland-wide climate adaptation fund”. We look forward to that process continuing and will engage with Ministers, officials and MSPs to seek progress. Our forthcoming report “Balancing the books: Making climate adaptation funding a reality”, which
was previewed at an event in the Scottish Parliament in September, provides further detail on how such a fund might operate.

The current Scottish Government Spending Review places considerable emphasis on preventative spending. We would argue that spending on international development and climate adaptation fit well into this perspective. Funding that supports civil society organisations and global citizen education, and sustainable development programmes both at home and abroad, by its very nature improves wellbeing and minimises the risks of future costs associated with global poverty. Additional public funding to assist people in developing countries to adapt to climate change could prevent the need for future spending on dealing with the consequences of crop failure, water shortages, population displacement and conflict. The approach taken by the IDF, of small amounts of public funds leveraged by Scottish-based NGOs to work closely in partnership with civil society in developing countries, is an excellent model for a Climate Adaptation Fund. Scotland showing ambition in these areas helps to repay some of our share of ‘ecological debt’, and acts as an encouragement and example to other governments around the world. **We encourage the committee to press the Scottish Government for clarity and action on its commitment to building this fund.**