SCIAF is the official overseas aid and development charity of the Catholic Church in Scotland. We are members of Caritas Internationalis, the global network of Catholic development charities, 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 responding to humanitarian disasters. As well as providing practical support, SCIAF challenges the underlying causes of poverty through education and campaigning.

Introduction

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Committee’s call for evidence. SCIAF’s experience of the Scottish Government’s European and international engagement is largely related to its work on international development and humanitarian issues. Our response is framed around the core questions asked by the Committee in its call for evidence, using them as an opportunity to expand on key themes and issues we think the Committee should consider.

SCIAF has supported the Scottish Government’s international development programme since its introduction with cross-party support in 2005. We regard its existence and the allocation of a small, but not insignificant, budget to it as a sign of the active concern of people in Scotland for our sisters and brothers who live in poverty beyond our shores. SCIAF has received a number of grants from the International Development Fund in the years since it was first launched.

In SCIAF’s submission to the Smith Commission, we observed that the relationship between the Scottish Government’s international development programme and DFID had worked well, with benefits both to Scotland and to people living in poverty overseas. However, we believe that the continuation of Scotland’s international development programme should not simply be dependent on an agreement of good will between the Scottish and UK Governments. We therefore supported the recommendation of NIDOS (the Network of International Development Organisations in Scotland) that the Scottish Parliament and Government’s current ability to pursue an international development programme, and commit a budget to it, should be formalised.

Committee Questions

Is there a clear, coherent and well-resourced strategy for European and international engagement within the Scottish Government and its agencies?

It is commonly acknowledged that for richer nations, meaningfully tackling global poverty requires more than simply providing overseas aid. In Scotland, many of our national policies – including procurement, education, tax and trade policies - can have a major impact on vulnerable communities overseas.
With this in mind, a ‘policy coherence’ approach must be at the heart of Scotland’s role as a global citizen; with policy decisions across the whole of government being made coherently through a development lens. With a policy coherence approach, international development policy is not just the remit of one specific department. Rather, people living in poverty should be at the heart of all government decisions.

For policy coherence to be successful there needs to be strong political commitment and leadership at a government and parliamentary level. SCIAF contributed to the NIDOS 2013 report *Scotland’s Place in Building a Just World*. The report examines the experience in Sweden, which offers valuable lessons to Scotland. In 2003, Sweden became the first country in the world to legislate for an official coherence policy on international development. The Government has established six inter-departmental working groups to ensure responses to its development objectives are delivered coherently and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs submits a biennial report to the Parliament on progress made. Shadow reports (barometers) have also been published by a coalition of Swedish NGOs; giving their opinion on how they think the government is performing.

SCIAF supports the call from NIDOS for the Scottish Government to adopt a policy coherence approach to international development. The network has suggested that this can be achieved by establishing mechanisms for cross-government planning and policy review, and for parliamentary cross-party scrutiny structures. As with Sweden, any Scottish Government policy coherence approach should include publically reporting on progress through a biennial report.

*What has the Scottish Government’s international strategy achieved since its refresh in October 2012, and what has the EU Action Plan achieved since it was first published in 2009? Has the international strategy enabled “Scotland to flourish on the international stage, thus increasing economic growth for Scotland”?*

The Scottish Government’s stated purpose is “to focus Government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth”. In pursuing increased and ‘sustainable economic growth’, SCIAF believes it is vital that the Scottish Government sufficiently addresses any potential negative impact this may have on its international development, climate justice and human rights obligations. A policy coherence approach should mean the Government considers the impact of all its policies through a development lens, including those it makes as an economic actor. It is also important that the Government adopts a clear definition of ‘sustainable economic growth’, recognising that infinite growth is not possible and that prosperity of society and wellbeing of individuals cannot be measured purely in monetary terms.

In the modern global economy, where the dominant understanding of development or ‘progress’ has become almost synonymous with achieving economic growth, an imbalance has emerged between the needs and interests of some businesses and the needs of people living in poverty.
In its policy paper *Taking Care of Business*, SCIAF highlights some of the negative impacts of big companies on poor people. We make a number of recommendations to the Scottish Government to ensure its trade and investment policies do no harm to those living beyond our borders, promote good business behaviour and protect Scottish companies from potential risks. These recommendations include: raising human rights concerns during diplomatic meetings; creating a Scottish implementation plan for the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and engaging with the business community in Scotland to raise awareness and promote the uptake of standards like the UN Guiding Principles.

We also recommend that the Scottish Government use its role as a consumer to promote good business behaviour. In 2013, SCIAF, along with others, ran a public campaign calling for an ethical procurement Bill. We feel the subsequent Act was a missed opportunity for strong ethical procurement legislation. However, SCIAF looks forward to the consultation on accompanying guidance and hope that this helps to incorporate international standards (such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights) into the Scottish procurement process. Doing so will ensure the Scottish Government gives meaning to its ambitious targets on climate change and status as a Fair Trade Nation.

SCIAF welcomes the Scottish National Action Plan on Human Rights (SNAP), supported by the Scottish Government, and particularly the recognition that Scotland’s human rights obligations do not stop at its borders. We regard this process as a key way of ensuring coherence in Scottish Government policy and we look forward to continuing our work within the SNAP working group on business and human rights.

A coherent pro-poor approach also requires that Scottish citizens have the opportunity to learn, reflect and act on poverty and injustice. To that end, SCIAF supports the work of the network of Development Education Centres in Scotland, and welcomed the announcement of additional funding for the Centres by the Scottish Government in October 2013, partly in response to calls from the *Enough Food For Everyone IF* campaign. Global Citizenship Education is about understanding the need to tackle injustice and inequality, and about having both the desire and ability to work actively to do so. It is a way of thinking and behaving. It is an outlook on life, a belief that we can make a difference, and should be an essential part of any International Development policy.

In terms of overall achievements of the Scottish Government's international programme, it is worth noting the real and lasting difference made by the International Development Fund and Climate Justice Fund. Through Scottish Government funding, SCIAF’s projects are supporting and empowering thousands of people living in poverty. In Malawi, for instance, one Scottish Government funded project is supporting 3,000 households in Mangochi to increase their income and food security by providing training on income generation activities, training on agricultural techniques and improving farmers’ access to local markets by improving rural link roads.
What can be learnt from the approaches of other sub-state governments? In particular, how do the EU and international offices of other sub-state governments operate and what tangible outcomes do they achieve?

Through its work on climate change the Scottish Government has demonstrated the kind of positive action that can be taken by sub-state governments. Scotland’s Climate Change Act is amongst the most ambitious in the world and its Climate Justice Fund demonstrates the commitment and compassion needed from other governments. As a member of Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, SCIAF has worked in partnership with the Scottish Government to promote Scotland’s climate action example to other nations, including at international climate conferences.

We welcome the participation of Scottish Ministers at such events and we are grateful for the time taken by the Government to meet with SCIAF partners directly impacted by climate change. We believe greater representation at an EU and international level would allow the Government to further share the positive experiences (and challenges) as a result of its climate change action. The UNFCCC Conference of Parties in Paris this year is a key opportunity for Scotland to share its experience.

For Scotland to maintain credibility in this area of work, however, it is vital that Scotland now meets its ambitious climate targets. This will involve making bold decisions in key policy areas such as transport, home energy efficiency and renewable energy. SCIAF is encouraging its supporters to play their part by making changes to their lifestyles.

This year will also see the Millennium Development Goals replaced by a new development framework (to be known as the Sustainable Development Goals). SCIAF participates in the SDGs working group co-ordinated by the Scottish Government. The meeting of stakeholders and sub-state actors facilitated by the Scottish Government in Brussels in 2014 to discuss the SDGs is an interesting example of how Scotland can engage on global issues at an international level. We look forward to continuing to work with other stakeholders in considering the impact the SDGs may have on the Scottish Government’s international development framework, and any wider implications for global and domestic anti-poverty and inequality policies.

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