

Written submission from Scotland's International Development Alliance, 24 September 2026

Pre-budget scrutiny 2027-28

Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

Scotland's International Development Alliance (SIDA) is the membership body in Scotland for everyone committed to creating a fairer world, free from poverty, injustice and environmental threats. Our membership brings together a diverse range of organisations and individuals including NGOs, businesses, academic institutions and public sector bodies that operate in over 100 countries.

We aim to help our members to build their capacity, improve their impact and strengthen their support base; represent our members and the people and communities they work with, to local, national and international decision-makers; and to engage people and organisations in Scotland with international development issues and encourage their informed support.

We welcome this opportunity to provide evidence to the Committee's pre-budget scrutiny exercise.

The Committee has noted that the Scottish Government's Programme for Government 2026-31 includes the following commitments relating to international development (both on page 74):

- Increase the International Development Fund by 25% and in doing so review our existing programmes while developing new modes of funding and partnership, including the development of an Aid Match scheme.
- Continue support for tackling global emergencies and conflicts through the Humanitarian Emergency Fund, including continued support for the people of Palestine and give particular focus on supporting the efforts related to UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which recognises the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and girls.

We would also note the following commitment, which while falling under the remit of the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action, and the Climate Action Committee, is still relevant to the wider international development and global justice agenda:

- Continue and increase our Climate Justice Fund, up from £36 million, over the course of this Parliament and, following an independent evaluation, deliver new programmes that support communities in the Global South to build resilience and address loss and damage. (page 38)

These commitments are broadly in line with relevant commitments made in the Scottish National Party's manifesto for the 2026 Scottish Parliament elections.

In advance of the 2026 elections, SIDA published a policy priorities document, as did a number of our member organisations and network partners, which can be found [on our website](#).

Our specific budget calls in advance of the election included, on the International Development Fund (IDF):

- Increase the International Development Fund to at least £15 million in 2026/27, with annual increases at least in line with inflation across the next parliamentary term.
- Commit to multi-year funding programmes, enabling partners to plan strategically and ensuring stability across political cycles.
- Consider introducing an 'Aid Match' scheme, enabling public fundraising efforts to be matched by the Scottish Government and boosting public engagement with global development.
- Restore and expand a small grants or 'global solidarity' programme, particularly to support smaller, community-based or diaspora-led organisations.

On the Climate Justice Fund (CJF):

- Maintain in real-terms funding for Scotland's Climate Justice Fund, including a dedicated Loss and Damage element to ensure this is transparently new and additional funding, and ensure that the whole Fund is spent in a locally-led, inclusive, transparent and transformative way.

On the Humanitarian Emergency Fund (HEF):

- Increase the Humanitarian Emergency Fund beyond the current minimum of £1 million annual allocation, with annual inflationary growth and a review of its capacity to respond to simultaneous crises.
- Ensure the HEF is clearly ring-fenced and additional to IDF and CJF budgets, preserving the distinct role of humanitarian response.

The Programme for Government commitments make some progress toward these points, but we believe there is a case for faster, clearer and more ambitious action in some areas.

The commitment to increase the International Development Fund by 25% is welcome, but there is little clarity on when this will be achieved. In the previous parliamentary term (2021-2026), while funding increased early in the term, it then remained broadly flat or fell in cash terms before the major uplift from £12.8 million in 2025-26 to £16 million in 2026-27 (including £1 million for humanitarian crises). This latter increase finally delivered the SNP's 2021 manifesto commitment to bring the core International Development Fund to £15 million per year. We have therefore called on the Scottish Government to deliver the new 25% increase in the 2027-28 Budget rather than back-loading it towards the end of the parliamentary term.

Early delivery would maximise the real value and cumulative impact of the

commitment, while providing greater certainty to partners at a time of significant pressure on global development finance. The core International Development Fund should therefore increase from £15 million to at least £18.75 million in 2027-28, with Humanitarian Emergency funding separately ring-fenced and additional, and with subsequent annual increases at least in line with inflation.

In calling for Humanitarian Emergency funding to be ring-fenced, following the winding up of the Humanitarian Emergency Fund Panel, we also call on the Scottish Government to set out a clear interim plan for responding to humanitarian crises while establishing a pathway to a new HEF delivery mechanism. This mechanism should be co-designed with Scotland's humanitarian sector, recognising its expertise, the role of strong local delivery partnerships and the commitment to shift power in leadership and decision-making towards affected communities. The Government should also set out how its commitment on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 will be reflected in funding decisions, including support for women-led and women's rights organisations in conflict-affected settings. Oxfam Scotland have produced a [detailed discussion paper](#) which explores these issues.

The Climate Justice agenda, which recognises that those most affected by climate change have the least historic responsibility for the emissions causing it, is closely connected to the wider international development agenda. Increasing climate crises threaten to reverse progress towards poverty eradication and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. We therefore welcome the commitment to grow the Climate Justice Fund and call for it to increase from £12.7 million to at least £15 million in 2027-28, with subsequent annual increases at least in line with inflation. This would make progress towards parity with the core International Development Fund, while ensuring that Climate Justice Fund resources remain distinct from and additional to wider international development funding.

The Climate Justice Fund should also include a dedicated Loss and Damage element, transparently new and additional to wider climate finance. This could include a contribution to the global [Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage](#), alongside continued support for locally led approaches. At the same time, climate-related extreme weather events can create immediate humanitarian emergencies, as previous Scottish Government funding has recognised. The future Humanitarian Emergency Fund mechanism should therefore retain the flexibility to respond to such crises, including where communities are experiencing climate-related Loss and Damage. These roles should be complementary: the Climate Justice Fund providing sustained and dedicated Loss and Damage finance, while humanitarian funding enables rapid response when climate impacts create acute emergencies. This would build on the Scottish Government's own experience in the previous Parliament, when £1 million of Loss and Damage funding was delivered through the Humanitarian Emergency Fund to test rapid humanitarian responses, while longer-term Climate Justice Fund programmes supported recovery, resilience and community-led responses.

While increased funding in these areas is vital, especially as other governments

around the world reduce their Official Development Assistance budgets, how the money is spent, and how actions across government impact the global justice agenda, must also be taken into account.

This is why we have called on the Scottish Government to consult on and publish a new International Development Strategy. This should take a whole-of-government approach, ensuring coherence between domestic and international policy and embedding transparent, participatory, feminist and anti-colonial principles. The Scottish Government has already adopted a Feminist Approach to International Relations, but should now publish the detailed monitoring and evaluation framework previously committed to, with clear outcomes, responsibilities and reporting across relevant portfolios.

A whole-of-government approach also means that the Scottish Government should ensure that its forthcoming revision of the National Performance Framework remains fully aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and takes account of the recommendations and indicator framework developed by the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Expert Group on Beyond GDP. The Scottish Government should also commit to regular public reporting on Scotland's progress towards the SDGs and consider submitting its own Voluntary Local Review.

We also note that the Scottish Government continues to provide core funding through its international development budget for four key network bodies: SIDA, Scottish Fair Trade, the Scotland-Malawi Partnership and the Malawi-Scotland Partnership. Each plays a unique, distinctive and complementary role supporting Scotland's international development and global citizenship communities, mobilising diverse constituencies, amplifying the impact of wider international development activity and providing stable civil society platforms through which the Scottish Government can interact with the sector. The core funding has remained unchanged for a number of years, and in a time of rising costs, maintaining funding at a static cash level represents a real-terms reduction in support. We would welcome a more sustainable funding trajectory that recognises the distinct contribution of each network and provides the stability needed to deliver effectively over the parliamentary term.

We therefore recommend that the 2027-28 Budget should:

- increase the core International Development Fund from £15 million to at least £18.75 million, with future annual increases at least in line with inflation;
- retain separately ring-fenced and additional humanitarian funding, while establishing an interim response mechanism and co-designing a successor to the HEF Panel model;
- increase the Climate Justice Fund to at least £15 million in 2027-28, with subsequent annual increases at least in line with inflation, including dedicated and additional funding for Loss and Damage
- protect and expand multi-year, flexible and accessible funding

arrangements, including through the new Global Solidarity Fund, for smaller, diaspora-led and Global South organisations

- provide sustainable core funding for Scotland's international development network organisations
- resource the development of a new International Development Strategy and the implementation and monitoring of the Feminist Approach to International Relations
- support the forthcoming revision of the National Performance Framework to ensure it is fully aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, takes account of the UN's Beyond GDP framework, and includes clear mechanisms for regular public reporting on Scotland's progress.