

CULTURE, TOURISM, EUROPE AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS INQUIRY

SUBMISSION FROM SCOTTISH CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL AID FUND

The Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF) is the official overseas aid and development charity of the Catholic Church in Scotland. Last year SCIAF provided long term development support and emergency help to more than 220,000 people in 27 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. We work in Scotland providing development education programmes within schools, parishes and community groups, developing policy responses to issues of global poverty, and advocating for change at the global and national level. Our vision is a world in which all people, especially the poor and the oppressed, can survive and thrive.

SCIAF's submission to this inquiry focuses on the aspects that are most relevant to our work and experience. The world faces a multitude of interlinked and complex challenges and Scotland has rightly committed to playing its part in tackling these. To meet these commitments SCIAF believes Scotland must take a coherent, whole-government approach to external affairs, one which places priority for the poor at its heart.

What principles should form the Scottish Government's international engagement? For example, should economic priorities be the key priority or cultural/ 'soft power' priorities?

How our companies operate, the things we as consumers buy, and government policies on areas such as energy, transport, and trade all impact on people and the environment across the globe. SCIAF, therefore, advocates a policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD) approach to policy-making – including external affairs. This approach would ensure that all government departments consider the impacts of their policies through a pro-poor lens, avoiding contradictory policies that may have a negative impact globally. This PCSD approach to external affairs would ensure that Scotland does not 'give with one hand and take with the other'.

Scotland was one of the first nations to sign up to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs recognise that many of the world's challenges are interlinked and advocate a PCSD approach to tackling them (see SDG 17.14). Scotland has aligned the SDGs with its own National Performance Framework and in 2016, the First Minister said: "*Scotland is now pursuing approaches which have been pioneered by Sweden and others – such as the idea that all government policies, not just aid policies, should be consistent with international development goals*". This recognition of policy coherence should be commended but it is crucial that Scotland steps up efforts to implement PCSD.

SCIAF, along with others, has been working with the Scottish Government to promote policy coherence in key areas including climate justice and trade. On climate justice, the government has made great strides; it has proposed ambitious climate change legislation; continued to fund climate adaptation projects overseas; set targets for phasing out the need for new petrol and diesel vehicles and increased

the budget for active travel. Yet inconsistencies remain; our carbon-emitting industries and Scotland's consumption continue to generate excessive emissions which impact unfairly on the world's poorest people (some of whom we support through aid). If Scotland is to contribute to international efforts to keep the global temperature rise to 1.5°C (as set out in the Paris Agreement) the Government must ensure that its domestic policies are in line with its international obligations on climate justice. The current Climate Change Bill offers an opportunity to ensure this. SCIAF, for instance, is calling for mechanisms to ensure that domestic policies to reduce emissions don't negatively impact on the ability of other countries to reduce their emissions, and for the Parliament to have to consider international development when setting out climate change plans or amending their targets.

A PCSD approach would also suggest that Scotland's approach to business and trade is not solely driven by economic benefit to Scotland. While SCIAF recognises that the private sector has an important role to play in global sustainable development, we believe that businesses should be held to the highest human rights and environmental standards. We understand that the Scottish Government is in the process of developing a National Action Plan to implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. SCIAF would be interested to know what stage this plan has reached and how it might be implemented. We believe it is crucial that this plan explores mechanisms for holding businesses to account for any overseas operations that violate human rights or damage the environment. Similarly, the Scottish Government should use its procurement policies to ensure only companies that meet the highest labour and environmental standards are rewarded with government contracts.

In addition to the principle of 'do no harm', SCIAF believes that Scotland should also use its 'soft power' to move 'beyond aid'. This approach involves sharing Scotland's technical expertise and knowledge as a way of meeting development aims. Indeed, with regard to climate justice, the Paris Agreement (see articles 10 and 11) requires that developed countries help developing countries to tackle climate change. SCIAF understands that the Scottish Government is championing this approach and expertise in health, education and policing have all been shared internationally as part of cross-government efforts to meet Scotland's development aims. We welcome this approach alongside that of policy coherence but believe it must be considered sensitively. Wherever possible, local knowledge and expertise should be prioritised and where Scottish expertise is used it should bring clear added value to partner countries. It is also crucial to recognise that learning can occur both ways between Scotland and southern partner countries. Sharing of best practice and learnings is a crucial part of this knowledge exchange.

How should the Scottish Government prioritise its international engagement? For example, should the locations be based on a geography or policy focus?

With regard to international development, SCIAF's experience suggests that with limited funding and capacity, most impact can be achieved by focusing on a small number of thematic areas in a limited number of countries. Recognising that the Scottish Government's total budget for international development is limited, focus should be on the poorest and most marginalised groups (such as displaced persons, people with disabilities, orphans and vulnerable children) and finding Scotland's

added value for long-term impact (wherever possible, for instance, the Scottish Government should seek to add value to – and not duplicate – work being carried out by DFID).

SCIAF also believes that developing effective partnerships and achieving long-lasting impact is best achieved through long-term, sustainable partnerships and we would, therefore, suggest the Scottish Government adopt this approach. SCIAF's commitment to collaboration and partnerships is based on the concept of Catholic Social Teaching and Integral Human Development, and the belief that real and lasting change to the lives of the poor, marginalised and vulnerable people can only be achieved by empowering individuals and communities to achieve their basic rights as human beings, and to be authors of their own development. We aim to embody the Caritas Partnership Values: a learning culture, stewardship and professionalism, respect, equality and mutuality, transparency, openness, honesty, accountability and trust.

How can the Scottish Government's international engagement be evaluated effectively?

SCIAF would like every Minister, department, and Parliamentary Committee to make policy through a pro-poor lens; helping to ensure Scotland's policy is made with our long-term international development objectives in mind. Scotland can learn from international best practice in implementing policy coherence. Lessons from elsewhere, for instance, suggest utilising both internal government measures and Parliamentary mechanisms to scrutinise commitment to policy coherence.

One Parliamentary mechanism, for instance, could involve building more time into the current Parliamentary scrutiny process to allow existing Committees to scrutinise legislation for policy coherence. The Government's Contribution to Development Report is also a good place to report on policy coherence across departments and explore any inconsistencies in policy or share good practice. Producing a biennial report as opposed to an annual one would allow more time to analyse policies across government rather than focusing on international development funding and activities. Civil society, academia and southern voices should be consulted to give their input into such a report and any case studies. SCIAF was disappointed, for instance, that international voices have not been heard as part of the formal Parliamentary proceedings on the Climate Change Bill. Wherever possible we would advocate southern voices being heard on legislation or policy that could impact on their lives.

As mentioned, the Scottish Government has already started working with civil society on adopting a PCSD approach, focusing on a few key areas. SCIAF welcomes this and is keen to continue this work.