

Rebuilding our Common Home

Scottish Election Briefing 2021

COVID-19 has pushed 500 million more people into poverty.¹ It has hit the poorest and most marginalised the hardest and it risks undoing the progress we have made towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Meanwhile, the climate emergency has not gone away. Global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to safe levels have not been sufficient to prevent global warming. For many people around the world, the effects of climate change threaten livelihoods, healthcare and access to food. Every day, communities in the global south face droughts, floods, cyclones and

heatwaves. Those most affected by climate change are also those who have done the least to cause it.

As Scotland begins to recover, we must transform our world for the better by putting people and the planet first. We must not go back to normal. Normal was not good enough for millions of people already facing the catastrophic consequences of climate change. This could be a historic turning point. With COP26 coming to Glasgow, all eyes will be on Scotland and the UK. Now is the time to rebuild our common home and tackle climate change head on.



Climate change doesn't just affect our planet's temperature. Weather patterns are becoming more unpredictable and more extreme, causing crops to fail. For communities in Rwanda, climate change means less food and poorer livelihoods.

¹ World Bank (2020) Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2020: Reversals of Fortune

Priorities for the next Scottish Government:

1. Transform Scotland to meet our target of a 75% cut in emissions by 2030

Scotland's climate targets are some of the strongest in the world. Now we need robust policies to make sure we are on track to meet them. The next Scottish Government must commit to rapid and far-reaching policies that will ensure Scotland achieves a 75% reduction in emissions by 2030. This should include incentives for a fast and just transition to a low-carbon economy, and policies that encourage lifestyle changes to help us to care for our common home.



Across Scotland, SCIAF supporters are already taking practical steps to live in a more sustainable way and rebel against today's notion of a 'throwaway society'. For example, parishioners at Our Lady of Loretto and St Michael in Musselburgh have created a wildlife garden and worked with teachers at the local primary school to explore key themes of Pope Francis' message on the environment, planting seeds, appreciating the wildlife attracted by the garden, and exploring the biodiversity that is needed to keep life going.

"We also organised a 'Swap Night'. We had a mini fashion show, a quiz about landfill and recycling and a make do and mend presentation with fashionable upcycling ideas. What our parish has tried to do is include all the groups in the community and bring them together to be involved in these projects, give information and empower each other to make changes over time, understand that some may feel overwhelmed by the state our environment is in but are unsure of how to make changes."

Karyn Porteous, parish eco-group volunteer

2. Build on the success of the Climate Justice Fund by aligning it with global best practice

Scotland's Climate Challenge Programme Malawi (CCPM), funded by the Scottish Government's Climate Justice Fund and implemented by SCIAF, is a leading example of climate justice in action. The CCPM helps communities in Southern Malawi to adapt to the effects of climate change such as drought and flooding. It supports farmers to develop sustainable techniques that increase their harvests without relying on fertilisers, improves access to water, and brings solar energy to remote communities spurring innovation and business opportunities. Scotland should build on this success by ensuring all future Climate Justice Fund projects follow the CCPM's model of best practice - funding projects that are community-led, promote women in leadership, and reach the most vulnerable groups.



"The best thing about this programme is it does not impose. It didn't come like other projects with a ready-made activity, it came here to discuss with us. I'm very happy with this project because it has empowered us."

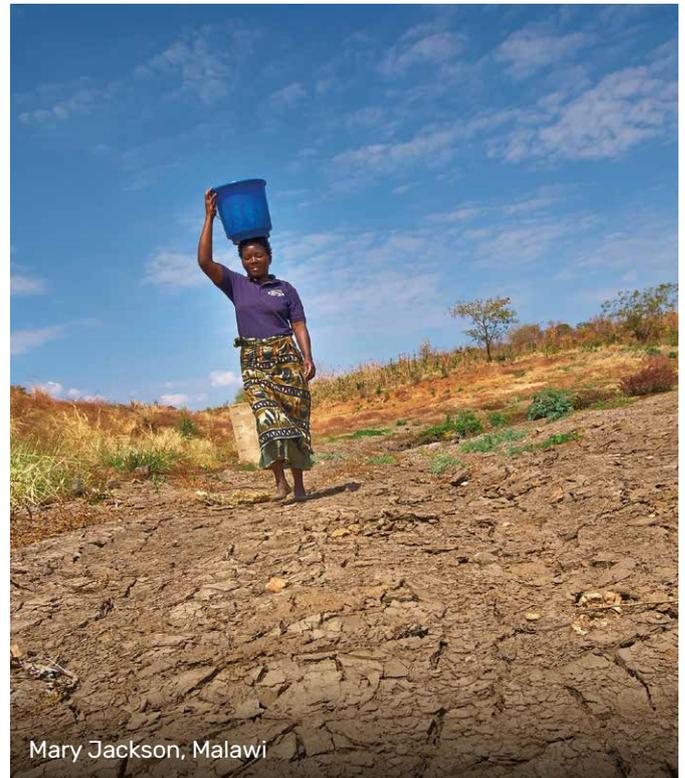
Norah Saini, CCPM participant, Malawi

3. Hear the voices of communities most affected by climate change

Climate justice is not just about supporting the communities most affected by climate change. It is also about making sure communities' voices are at the heart of decision-making. The next Scottish Government should provide platforms for communities in the global south to identify their own priorities for climate change, including on issues such as finance for adaptation and loss and damage. Scotland should provide space for communities, civil society and national governments in the global south to meet before COP26 to highlight their priorities.

4. Increase the Climate Justice Fund to £10m from new and additional sources

Climate change is not a problem for the future; it is a crisis now. It is affecting communities who were already fighting the daily challenges of poverty. With its stand-alone climate fund, Scotland has already made a strong step towards climate justice. The next Scottish Government should increase the Climate Justice Fund to £10million, to match the International Development Fund. It must continue to recognise that the impacts of climate change are additional to other poverty challenges by ensuring this comes from new and additional sources of finance. It must not be repurposed from existing funding initiatives. In line with global south priorities and the Climate Change (Scotland) Act, the Climate Justice Fund should prioritise adaptation programmes, supporting communities to adjust to the effects of climate change that are already happening.



5. Maintain funding for the International Development Fund and adopt a community-led approach

COVID-19 has pushed millions of people further into poverty, and Scotland's International Development Fund has never been needed more. The next Scottish Government must maintain current levels of funding as a bare minimum, and embed a community-led approach at the heart of all programmes to ensure communities lead their own change. This is vital for programmes that are truly sustainable and create lasting change. The next government should also recognise the importance of key networks, including Scotland's International Development Alliance.

6. Put forward a Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill

Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) ensures that decisions in Scotland do not have negative impacts on the livelihoods of people in low-income countries. Scotland has already made positive steps towards PCSD. A Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill would make it a statutory requirement for public bodies and local authorities in Scotland to think about the short and long-term impact of their decisions, both in Scotland and elsewhere. It would ensure that Scotland not only contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals and our climate commitments but, crucially, does not undermine them.



Climate change in Zambia

In central Zambia, climate change is already having a devastating effect on communities. Most of the population are small-scale farmers who rely on agriculture for income and for the food they eat. Drought hit Kabwe in August 2018, and again in 2019, causing widespread crop failure. Families have been surviving on just three meals a week. High malnutrition and limited access to water has led to outbreaks of preventable disease.

COVID-19 made things worse. Protective face masks and hand sanitisers are expensive, and poor diet and poverty-related diseases put people at greater risk. Food prices have increased, trade has been disrupted, and restrictions on movement have led to high unemployment rates. There's no furlough scheme in Zambia.

Women are the main farmers, and they are bearing the burden of this double crisis. Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is on the rise. Children are forced to leave school to work, or into child marriage.

"We experienced crop failure due to drought. I did not harvest anything and neither did my neighbours. We are starving. We only eat three meals in a week"

Esther Chimboyi, farmer, Zambia

Fratelli Tutti

The new papal encyclical from Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, is a letter to "all brothers and sisters" worldwide. It lays out a vision for a post-pandemic future where human dignity and the bonds of fraternity between all people and nations are at its heart.

At a time when faith in politics is at an all-time low, Pope Francis holds out the prospect of a better kind of politics that has the potential to be the greatest form of charity: love between people. At SCIAF, we support his call to our leaders to exercise this form of charity and display 'political love' by changing the structures in our society and economy in order to benefit the poorest and most marginalised people at home and abroad.

"Once this health crisis passes, our worst response would be to plunge even more deeply into feverish consumerism and new forms of egotistic self-preservation. God willing, after all this, we will think no longer in terms of 'them' and 'those', but only 'us.'" (FT 35)



Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund

SCIAF is the official overseas aid and development charity of the Catholic Church in Scotland and a proud member of the Caritas family. We work to serve the poorest and most vulnerable people in the world, irrespective of their race, religion or background. 7 West Nile Street, Glasgow G1 2PR. Tel: 0141 354 5555. Scottish Charity No: SC012302. Company No: SC197327. Photos: Colin Hattersley, Simon Murphy, Thomas Omondi.