

## UK GENERAL ELECTION BRIEFING 2019



### Mercy, Malawi

*“The rains are now erratic and late in coming and do not continue falling as required. This unpredictable rainfall pattern causes plants to grow at different rates and sizes. This causes a worry because you never know what the yield will be like”*

SCIAF is the official overseas aid and development charity of the Catholic Church in Scotland, working to support some of the world's poorest people in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. Registered Scottish charity No SC012302 Company No: SC197327 November 2019

## A DIFFERENT KIND OF DEVELOPMENT

Important progress has been made in tackling hunger and poverty. The share of the world's population living in extreme poverty has fallen from 36% in 1990 to 10% in 2015<sup>1</sup> and great strides have been made in primary education, sanitation and tackling serious disease.

In 2015, world leaders agreed to build on this progress by signing two important agreements. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to eradicate poverty by 2030, leaving no-one behind and the Paris Climate Agreement commits countries to make efforts to limit global temperature increase to 1.5°C.

Despite this apparent ambition, serious challenges remain. Nearly a billion people are still going hungry – in fact, since 2014, hunger has been rising<sup>2</sup> – and more than 700 million people continue to live in extreme poverty<sup>3</sup>. At the same time, carbon emissions continue to rise, placing great strain on our planet and the world's poorest communities<sup>4</sup>.

If we are to eradicate the injustice of poverty and hunger a transformational approach is needed – one which places human dignity and the common good at the heart of all our decision-making.

1 <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/goal-01/>

2 <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/goal-02/>

3 <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/poverty/>

4 <https://www.tyndall.ac.uk/news/strong-growth-global-co2-emissions-expected-2018>



## APPROACHES TO DEVELOPMENT

Successive UK governments have made a significant contribution to international development and the UK is rightly respected internationally for its record on aid.

To maintain this reputation SCIAF believes Overseas Development Aid (ODA) must be used to support the poorest, most vulnerable and most marginalised communities around the world and cannot be diverted towards the UK's diplomatic or commercial interests. At the same time, it is vital that the Department for International Development (DFID) is able to continue its work as a standalone department, represented in Cabinet by its own Secretary of State. It is also vital that UK NGOs are able to speak out where they feel necessary and are not restricted in doing so by inappropriate legislative constraints or the terms of grants or contracts.

It is essential that vulnerable communities around the world benefit from the UK leaving the European Union. This means any future trade, investment, environmental and tax policies must work for the world's poorest people.

The uncertainty around Brexit is already affecting efforts to fight poverty; with a weaker pound the value of aid falls, meaning less money is available for those in greatest need. We urge the next government to maintain good links with European colleagues so that the UK maintains its influence within the EU.

The UK government made a significant contribution to the debates around the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the framework is an important acknowledgement of the interlinked nature of poverty and hunger. If we are to achieve the SDGs a coordinated and coherent approach is needed – understanding that our decisions on transport, procurement, business and education can all impact on those living beyond our borders. To that end, all government departments should adopt a 'pro-poor' approach to policy making.

### We call on the next government to:

- Maintain the budget of 0.7% of Gross National Income as ODA. This should focus on the alleviation of extreme poverty in line with the OECD definition of ODA
- Protect the long-term future of DFID as a stand-alone department with a Secretary of State at Cabinet level
- Ensure all ODA is used to support the poorest, most vulnerable and most marginalised communities around the world
- Ensure decisions taken across all UK government departments are made with our most vulnerable sisters and brothers in mind, including in Brexit negotiations
- Remove restrictions on UK NGO campaigning, by revising the Lobbying Act and ensuring that public grants and contracts respect civil society's right to campaign.
- Ensure good relations with EU colleagues following Brexit
- Ensure UK NGOs are consulted on the future relationship between the UK and Europe

# 2



## BETTER BUSINESS

Business has an important role to play in tackling poverty and hunger.

By creating jobs, paying taxes and producing innovative products and services, business provide real benefits to people living in poverty. Where proper safeguards are not put in place, however, business can harm communities and workers and damage the environment.

SCIAF believes a new approach to business is needed. Businesses – particularly those that wield enormous power and influence – must be required to look closely at their activities and prevent any harmful impacts linked to their activities and their global supply chains. Given their impact on consumers, workers and producers around the world, it is only right that businesses are held to account whenever harm is caused.

Back in 2013, the UK was the first country to release a National Action Plan to implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Yet communities continue to suffer due to activities related to big business. An international binding treaty is now needed to rein-in excessive corporate power and ensure communities can access justice when they are harmed by business activities.

### We call on the next government to:

- Introduce a new requirement for UK companies to take action to prevent human rights abuses and environmental damage in their global operations and supply chains by carrying out environmental and human rights due diligence
- Use the review of the UK's National Action Plan on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights to create a genuine strategy to support responsible business activities by developing detailed actions and a timeline for delivering on commitments
- Support an international Binding Treaty on business and human rights and engage constructively in the negotiations at the UN Human Rights Council.

### Nefris, Colombia

*"If big mining companies come it will be very difficult. If they come with big diggers it will destroy our environment. It will pollute the rivers and kill the fish. It will contaminate the soil. It will bring more mosquitos. I'm afraid that this will happen...That will mean only bad things for us. We don't want them."*

# 3



## PROTECTING THE PLANET

SCIAF believes nature is a gift for us to cherish and to protect for future generations.

Unpredictable and extreme weather caused by climate change affects us all but it is the world's poorest people, who have contributed least to causing the problem, that are suffering the most. Climate change is already undermining development gains and threatens future progress.

Richer nations, like the UK, must drastically reduce their greenhouse gas emissions as a matter of urgency. They must also take responsibility for their contribution to the problem and support communities to adapt to the devastating impacts of climate change.

The UK has shown global leadership by committing to reach net zero emissions by 2050. According to the UK Committee on Climate Change, however, the UK has failed to take the action needed for it to meet its previous, less demanding target. The government must set out plans to ensure the 2050 target will be met.

The UK Government should be commended for the finance it has committed to help developing countries adapt to climate change and follow a low-carbon path. International cooperation like this is essential if the world is going to meet its Paris Agreement commitments and avert a climate catastrophe. This money must be additional to our existing commitment to spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA, and coherent with our development work, with climate finance complementing our development assistance. The UK has shown leadership in this area and must continue to do so. Hosting COP26 is an opportunity to encourage the urgent action needed from others.

### We call on the next government to:

- Urgently put in place ambitious policies to ensure rapid progress towards net-zero within the next decade through a just transition to a net-zero economy, specifically through investment in clean energy, decarbonisation of homes and transport, and restoration of nature
- Use its influence as hosts of COP26 to increase global ambition to achieve net-zero climate emissions in line with the 1.5°C temperature goal
- Provide new and additional climate finance for mitigation and adaptation in developing countries in line with Paris Agreement commitments
- Ensure all UK support for energy in developing countries is realigned to promote a shift to low-carbon and inclusive energy systems
- Rule out signing trade deals with countries that have not committed to the Paris Agreement or upholding human rights and environmental standards

#### Contact

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