

WEE BOX talk for parishioners and Caritas pupils.

4-5 mins to read aloud

Good morning/evening.

Thank you Father..... for welcoming me to speak a little about the life-transforming work of SCIAF.

The Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund was founded 60 years ago this year. Since 1965 SCIAF has been an integral part of the Church's mission to serve the poor and vulnerable across the world.

There is plenty in this world that discourages us. So much for organisations like SCIAF to respond to. War and conflict, injustice and poverty tear lives apart. So many of our brothers and sisters endure so much pain, heartache and suffering every day simply because they were born into this world in a country or community in extreme poverty. But with your support, SCIAF brings hope to people at their time of greatest need.

This year's WEE BOX appeal focuses on our peacebuilding work in Colombia. Together with our amazing partners we are supporting families caught up in conflict. We're providing essential food and water, safe places for children to play and helping those forced from their homes to return safely.

It is this work in Colombia and across the world that shows that our Church continues to bring hope to millions of our brothers and sisters.

Luis features on your WEE BOX this year. He was 17 years old when his whole village were sheltering in a church from armed men. A bomb was dropped in through the roof killing 119 people inside the church. Miraculously, Luis and his family survived. As you'd expect, it has not been easy for Luis and after spending 10 days in hospital he said he returned home and just cried.

That trauma, understandably, has shaped Luis' life and outlook. He told us
"I feel it was God that helped me survive that day. I work with the Priest here now and I have found purpose in my life. I used to find it hard coming back to the church where the attack took place but now, I find it healing."

Our local partners stand alongside those in Chocó, the poorest part of Colombia, despite huge danger to themselves. Communities here feel forgotten by everyone, except the Church. Luis told us

"The truth is, the Church is the only organisation that is always here."

Sadly, conflict exists in many places around the world. It can feel like peace is impossible. But in this Jubilee year, we are called by Pope Francis to keep hope alive – to be pilgrims of hope. Through your support of SCIAF, we help keep hope alive for people around the world to endure their darkest days.

Canon Hutson of the Diocese of Argyll and The Isles visited Colombia with SCIAF to see the amazing work that is providing hope to thousands. He said that the Catholic Church is at the frontline of addressing many issues. In Canon Hutson's words he said,

"When we put money in our WEE BOX and contribute to our collections, we are helping to build God's Kingdom of justice and peace".

Thank you once again for your generous support of SCIAF. Let me end with some words that we can take great comfort in, and they come from the hymn 'Christ be our light'.

'Longing for peace, our world is troubled. Longing for hope, many despair. Your Word alone has power to save us. Make us your living voice.'

Thank you and I will be around after Mass for any questions you may have.