

LFS IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

MOVING BEYOND CHARITY TOWARDS DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

Teaching about international aid, water security, poverty, and global justice can be challenging. These are deeply human issues that stir strong emotions, and some pupils may have lived experience of them. Discussing these topics also raises moral questions and sometimes reveal disagreement or frustration in the classroom.

As educators, our goal is not to avoid these tensions but to transform them into opportunities for dialogue, reflection, and hope.

There are well-established LfS frameworks and standpoints to explore and discuss complex global issues, including:

- **Human Rights Approach**
– rooted in international law and focused on ensuring every person can claim their universal rights.
- **Legal / Law-Based Approach**
– exploring how structures and policies protect people and the planet.
- **Social Responsibility Approach**
– encouraging moral and civic responsibility for society.

These frameworks are powerful tools; however, Catholic education provides an additional framework: an approach that deepens understanding and action beyond the legal or moral, into the spiritual and relational.

- **Integral Human Development Approach**
– a holistic model of human flourishing rooted in the inherent dignity of each person, and every person.

This approach goes beyond the frameworks of rights or law by considering the *whole person* and the *whole community* – their physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and environmental wellbeing. It is rooted in Catholic Social Teaching, affirming the dignity of every human being, the interconnectedness of creation, and the pursuit of the common good.

Using an Integral Human Development (IHD) Approach to teaching controversial, challenging and emotive issues helps learners move from “What’s fair?” to “What’s just and loving?”, and “What does our faith requires of us?”. It encourages deeper learning that connects faith with action. For example, instead of seeing international aid as a simple act of charity, we as Catholic educators understand it as a partnership rooted in solidarity and the “burning heart of the Church’s mission” (Pope Leo XIV, Dilexi Te)



As you reflect on your own practice, you might consider:

- How do I currently approach discussions about charity, aid and global justice?
- Where do I feel confident—and where do I feel less sure?
- What kinds of questions do I encourage in my classroom?
- How do I explore complexities?
How might a deeper, faith-informed lens shape these conversations?
- How might we guide pupils towards thoughtful, faith-informed responses?



WATER JUSTICE

Investigating Water Justice using an Integral Human Development Approach

Ware, Ethiopia



WHAT DO WE MEAN BY WATER JUSTICE?

Justice can be understood in different ways. For some people justice means fairness, and the principle that people receive what they deserve, although the interpretation of 'deserving' might vary from one person to another. For others, justice means the imposition of the rule of law, although the interpretation of what is lawful or unlawful can vary from country to country. For us, living our faith as Catholics, justice is not dependant on human laws or what people 'deserve' but is rooted in the principle that every person, made in the image of God, can flourish when their physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and environmental wellbeing needs are met.

Water justice is the idea that every person, everywhere in the world, should have the same access to sufficient supplies of safe water, that is fully accessible and affordable, giving them the power to make decisions that affect their daily lives. For many people around the world, however, this does not happen. People experience water injustice when their right to water is denied.

There are many issues that might be considered barriers to water justice and water security, such as weak laws, infrastructure, cooperation between governments, financing, and peace and stability.

PART 1: SCRIPTURE

Amos 5:24: "Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream."

Prompt a short discussion or quiet reflection on either of these questions:

What does justice mean here?
What helps justice flow in the world?
What might block justice flowing?

Share the justice statement below to explain justice in light of our faith:

Justice isn't just about laws or who "deserves" what – it's about love and dignity.

Some people see justice as fairness or following rules, but our Catholic faith tells us that true justice means helping every person live the full life God wants for them.

Because we are all made in the image of God, justice happens when everyone has what they need – not just to survive, but to flourish: when people's physical, emotional, social, environmental, and spiritual needs are met.

PART 2: EXPLAIN THE CONCEPT OF 'WATER JUSTICE'.

People experience water injustice when their right to water is denied. Water injustice isn't caused by one single thing – it's a web of connected issues.

PART 3: MAP OUT HOW THE ISSUES LINK TOGETHER.

Examples include:

- Climate change – droughts or floods
- Conflict – wells destroyed or unsafe to reach
- Poverty – can't afford repairs or water pipes
- Lack of clean water – disease spreads
- Gender inequality – women/girls spend hours collecting water
- Aid cuts – fewer community projects started or abandoned
- Missed education – children can't attend school
- Livelihood loss – crops fail, income falls

**Add positive connections
(justice and hope flowing):**

- Advocacy – for increased aid funding
- Global Church – SCIAF's work to provide safe clean water
- Participation – Solidarity from Scotland; prayers and fundraising

PART 4: PLENARY DISCUSSION

Where did you see the biggest blockages to justice? Where do you see hope? What would help justice flow more freely?

Walking for water, Ethiopia





INTERNATIONAL AID

Exploring the role of aid and the impact of cuts, and
SCIAF's aid and development approach

Recent years have seen significant cuts to global aid budgets in both the UK and the USA. These decisions affect not only communities abroad but also global stability and wellbeing.

This can be a complex and political issue, so we explore it through the lens of Catholic Social Teaching, Scripture, and Integral Human Development.

We'll ask: 'What does our faith say about these issues – and how should we respond?'

Collecting water, Ethiopia





PART 1: UNDERSTANDING AID

Notes:

- International aid is when richer governments set aside part of their national wealth to support programmes in less wealthy countries – to reduce poverty, improve health and education, and respond to crises.
- The UK Government manages the main aid budget through the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).
- The Scottish Government oversees a smaller devolved International Development Fund of between £11 and 15 million, which supports specific countries such as Malawi, Rwanda, and Zambia, often through organisations like SCIAF.

Key Facts:

- During 2013–2021 the UK maintained its commitment to spend 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) on aid (about £19 billion).
- From 2021 the target was cut to 0.5 % of GNI, and the government has recently announced further big reductions
- For context, the UK Government spends around £1.28 trillion a year on all public services – so aid is less than 0.3% of total spending.
- Globally, funding for water, sanitation and hygiene programmes (WASH) has been cut by approximately 82%.

What this means:

At the projected 2027 level, UK aid would be less than half of what it once was, and less than half the support reaching people in need. Returning to 0.7% is a promise of justice, not charity. It is a relatively small amount for us, but a lifeline for millions.

But aid is not only about survival – it's about stability, peace, and shared progress.

When people have clean water, food, education, and healthcare, communities can rebuild and thrive.

Stable societies mean less conflict, less forced migration, and greater global security – benefits that extend to us here in Scotland too.

Aid puts the principle of solidarity into action – recognising that our wellbeing is connected to the wellbeing of others and actively working for their good.

**Aid that
invests in clean
water, education, and
livelihoods nurtures
human potential,
creativity, and dignity
– the seeds of a better
future.**

**Have a 5 minute discussion on
these key facts.**

PART 2: ASK

Use shoulder partners, small groups, or polls to explore these questions:

- Should wealthier countries give aid to poorer countries? Why or why not?
- Why might governments reduce aid?
- What impact might this have on communities relying on long-term projects?
- What kind of aid builds independence? How does partnership (like SCIAF's approach) support sustainable aid and development?
- How can aid reduce conflict over resources such as water or food?
- Is aid an act of charity, or a form of re-balancing justice – remembering how wealthy nations gained wealth through colonialism/ resource extraction etc?
- How do modern trade systems still favour richer countries today?

PART 3: LINKING TO OUR FAITH

How does Catholic Social Teaching challenge us to think about global justice, development and aid?

International aid is not a charitable after thought in Catholic Social Teaching (CST) – it is a concrete expression of the Church's call to solidarity, the universal destination of goods, and the preferential option for the poor. CST grounds the obligation to help the needy in Scripture ('the least of these' Matthew 25) and in Papal documents such as *Caritas in Veritate* and *Fratelli Tutti*.

From these foundations emerges a clear moral imperative. Share these infographics either individually or with small groups to read and discuss.



Solidarity with the poor

Aid is a concrete way of living the Church's preferential option for the poor, turning "charity toward the poor... into a more solicitous, more effective, more generous" reality.

(Pope John Paul II, 1988)

Integral Human Development

Assistance must promote not only material well being but also cultural, spiritual, and social dimensions, reflecting the 'integral development of man' highlighted in *Populorum Progressio*.

(Pope Paul VI, 1967)

Peace and security

By reducing poverty and its structural causes, aid contributes to global peace, a point Pope Benedict XVI links to the market's need for 'mutual trust' and to Pope Francis's observation that fighting poverty builds peace.

(*Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI, 2009)

Reciprocal gifts

Fratelli Tutti reminds us that 'development aid for poor countries... creates wealth for all,' urging a sharing of decision making and market access that benefits both donors and recipients.

(Pope Francis, 2020)

Promotion of dignity

"The Church views international aid as an essential tool for promoting dignity, reducing poverty, advancing global solidarity, and enhancing peace and security throughout the world. International assistance is a moral responsibility to assist 'the least of these' (Matthew 25). Assistance must be an expression of our solidarity with all people living in poverty"

(United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2020)