

Scotland and Global Sustainable development: time to chart a new path?



Introduction

The current Scottish Government International Development Strategy dates from 2016. The International Development Review in 2021 clarified some key principles that should govern future strategies, but did not fully take into account the changes that have happened in the world since 2016, including a growing consciousness of the global and unequal impacts of the climate crisis; and an improving understanding that colonial legacy continues to shape today's global injustices. The recent launch of the Scottish Government Global Affairs Framework and the publication of the UK Government's International Development Strategy offers further reason to take stock.

This briefing presents recommendations for the Scottish Government to develop a new 'Global Solidarity Strategy' to replace its 2016 International Development Strategy. The recommendations result from consultation and input from a range of organisations, global partners and stakeholders from April to June 2022. The full paper of recommendations is available [here](#).

Key Recommendations

A. Build a new strategy fit for the future and resource this appropriately, by:

1. Clearly defining what is meant by 'global solidarity', and outlining the scope and scale of what a new strategy aims to achieve.
2. Transparently setting out detail of the processes, mechanisms and progress indicators that will enhance policy coherence for sustainable development, including assigning senior Ministerial leadership and laying out how international trade (i.e. 2021 Vision for Trade) can meaningfully support global solidarity.
3. Committing to an open, transparent and inclusive consultation process to shape the new strategy.
4. Allocating additional resources to internal Scottish Government capacity in order to support continuity, learning and coordination between all elements of SG's global sustainable development programming and external affairs.

B. Enhance direct contributions to global sustainable development, by:

5. Systematic alignment and learning across the portfolios of international activities, including the Climate Justice Fund (CJF), to improve co-ordination and coherence, and ensuring all global sustainable development policy is actively underpinned by a transformative 'feminist approach'.
6. Guaranteeing transparency in how and why all grants are made to ensure trust and support from all stakeholders.
7. Continuing to support civil society directly and championing a strong, vibrant civil society here and elsewhere as the most effective vehicle for global solidarity.
8. Developing suitable mechanisms to support funding local organisations directly in partner countries.
9. Re-imagining grant-making to support arising need and a broader understanding of who is a 'partner'.

C. Broaden the ambition of Scotland's role, by:

10. Focusing specific SG resources on influencing the national and global context on international issues such as vaccine equity, climate justice, and gender equality, building on potential small country influence as demonstrated at COP26 and lead by example through ensuring national policies are fully aligned with international advocacy positions.
11. Pioneering new approaches and solutions to development finance and by doing so leveraging support from other national, sub-national and private actors in global development.
12. Supporting holistic SDG implementation and the realisation of related international agreements, such as the Paris Agreement.

Fundamental Underpinnings

Despite setbacks resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the UN SDGs remain the best starting point for creating holistic global sustainable development interventions. The SDGs also offer a key framework for joining national policies more directly to international impacts. The upcoming review of the National Performance Framework (NPF) offers a unique opportunity for Scotland to tighten up its national and international objectives and progress measurement in a transparent and accountable way, open to public scrutiny.

Scotland demonstrated at COP26 that it is possible for small countries and sub-national governments to take bold policy positions and influence wider global development outcomes. The commitment to a Loss and Damage financing facility has not yet generated momentum but has been an essential step in framing the global debate. Scotland could and should take the time to reflect on where it might advocate for change in other areas of development policy that could be amplified by other actors. This could go beyond current partner countries.

The Scottish Government can also lead by example in the implementation of its own programming by ensuring everything it does links to a clear strategy. Some existing commitments can be developed further, such as direct funding for civil society in partner countries, and coordination between climate justice and external affairs. Collaboration and coordination must be systematised between all aspects of external affairs and clearer alignment is needed between global and national objectives.

It should also be clear what contribution new institutions like the Global Affairs Council and the Peace Institute will make towards global sustainable development. The commitment to a feminist approach to global affairs offers a unique opportunity to restructure and redefine all programming. Our recommendations on transparency, collaboration and coherence echo those made in the recent report of the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee (CEEAC).

Practical Implementation

The Alliance recommends some specific changes in how global sustainable development programming is implemented. Above all, there is a need for greater transparency, and this should include public statements on the rationale behind partner country selection as well as all grant making processes. The majority of our members believe all grant-making should be competitive.

In future, we recommend funding timescales should be for the longest period possible, whilst also integrating dynamic and adaptive processes to allow for participatory learning to influence programming. The Scottish Government has carried out important evaluations in the past but has not always used that learning to influence programmes. A more iterative process would build genuine partnerships and set an example of how funding can be responsive. The Alliance fully supports direct funding for civil society in partner countries but recognises that for this to be done successfully and combined with our other recommendations, more staffing resources will be needed in the Scottish Government teams implementing its new 'Global Solidarity Strategy'.

In short, the review of international development in 2021 set out some important principles to guide programming but the Scottish Government could do more to encourage innovative, joined-up policy and practice through the creation of a new detailed strategy. It must take fully into account the impacts on climate and be guided through a feminist lens. A full and open consultation process is needed to develop this new strategy.

About Scotland's International Development Alliance

We are the membership body in Scotland for everyone committed to creating a fairer world, free from poverty, injustice and environmental threats. Our membership brings together a diverse range of over 200 organisations and individuals, including NGOs, businesses, academic institutions and public sector bodies that operate in over 100 countries.

For more information, visit our website or contact admin@intdevalliance.scot

