



About Scotland's International Development Alliance

Scotland's International Development Alliance (the Alliance) is 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 organisations and individuals including over 170 NGOs, businesses, academic institutions, public sector bodies and individuals that operate in over 100 countries.

This paper outlines what COVID-19 means for international development organisations operating out of Scotland, the communities and people they work with in other countries and explains why these impacts must be considered by the Scottish Government in order to build back better post **COVID-19**.

Summary

- **Short-term impacts:** COVID-19 has highlighted the huge inequalities people in developing countries face in being able to respond to the public health crisis. Social distancing and hand-washing are difficult for the poorest. Scottish international development organisations are focusing investments on awareness raising, health services and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) interventions as the first line of defence.
- **Medium- to long-term Impacts:** The 'build back better' responses to COVID-19 in international development needs to be aligned with the leave no-one behind goals of the SDGs. The socio-economic impacts will set back poverty eradication locally and globally significantly. The Scottish response must be to re-focus on the economically marginalized and emphasize gender-responsive economic empowerment of the poorest. Scotland should lend its support to moves for debt relief for low income countries.
- **Measures and opportunities:** The Scottish Government should:
 - Increase its commitment to international, sustainable development and take forward the work of the planned Inter-ministerial group on policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD), based upon clearly defined principles¹.
 - Improve stakeholder participation in policy making, through increased collaboration, transparent accountability and holistic measurement of progress towards sustainable development outcomes.
 - Ensure genuine sustainable development impact assessments of all policy and legislation going forward, building on existing tools².
 - Increase funding for the Climate Justice Fund, in addition to the International Development Fund and establish a loss and damage climate compensation fund, recognising the historic role Scotland has played in causing the climate crisis

How Covid-19 and the lockdown restrictions are likely to impact upon circumstances over the remainder of this year, and going forward

The long-term impacts of COVID-19 will be extensive, especially in low income countries. For many of the least-developed countries in the world, the disease is also yet to fully take hold. However, we expect that in the coming months we could see a humanitarian catastrophe amongst the poorest communities in the world. There are lessons to be learned already around why these communities are so vulnerable, and actions to be taken rapidly to reduce this vulnerability.

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https://www.intdevalliance.scot/application/files/6515/8869/4273/Recommendations_for_PCSD_Ministerial_group_Briefing_April_2020_Final.pdf

² https://pcsdscotland.miraheze.org/wiki/Scotland%27s_tools

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They are vulnerable because their health services are underfunded and ill-equipped, because there has been a lack of prioritisation of basic Water, Sanitation and Hygiene services (WASH), and because of conflict, internal displacement and general poverty leading to malnutrition for many. In light of this, our response must be to rapidly promote investment in health services and WASH as the first line of defence, and extensive diplomatic efforts made to ensure the health security of people living in conflict situations.

The experience of Ebola also offers insight into the longer-term socio-economic impacts of the pandemic. Demonstrable increases in food prices and contractions in the regional economies across West Africa characterised the Ebola Crisis. This will only be heightened in the case of Covid-19 – the World Food Programme estimates that the number of people experiencing hunger will double in 2020 as a result of Covid-19.

Across the world, it is the poorest and most vulnerable people who will be worst hit by this pandemic and the ensuing socio-economic crisis, and in some cases they are also being excluded from the response. People living in informal settlements cannot follow ‘social distancing’ and lack the basic sanitation to keep their environment clean. They cannot stay at home in isolation, if they do not have access to safe water or a working toilet at home. The poorest who work in insecure jobs for meagre daily wages cannot ‘work from home’ and cannot afford the bills to keep their water flowing. The public health advice being given by governments is often impossible to follow for people with disabilities, unable to use inaccessible facilities or excluded from services because of stigma. Families caring for a family member with a life-limiting illness are amongst the poorest in the world and can be excluded from services due to not being visible. Around the world, women already carry the burden of the majority of care-taking and health-giving work – burdens exacerbated in the current crisis.

Furthermore, feedback from Alliance members collected throughout April and May 2020, shows that lockdown restrictions here in Scotland have impacted the ability of many NGOs to engage in face-to-face fundraising activities, with limited new donor support, in turn limiting the scope to which they can respond to the emerging needs of their partners overseas.

The loss of charitable funding is also likely to continue to have serious implications for almost all our members and threatens the very future of some. At the same time, requests from overseas partners are growing.

The above information has been informed by a rapid member research exercise using mixed methods, through: three quantitative surveys (an annual membership survey issued on 1 April, two polls taken during a COVID-19 webinar on 14 April and an Alliance Community poll open from 30 March) and one qualitative semi-structured survey (14 phone interviews conducted between 9 and 24 April). Seventy-two organisations and individuals responded. (33% of our organisational membership). This research was published on 5 May 2020³ and is available at <https://www.intdevalliance.scot/news/impacts-covid-19-our-members-and-their-partners>.

Since then, we have also held further focused meetings focusing on Malawi, Rwanda and Zambia, the Scottish Government’s partner countries in its international development strategy. Notes from these meetings will be available [here](#) from 2nd June 2020.

How people’s lives may be different in the medium to long term

It is clear that there is a big risk COVID-19 could make many people’s lives more difficult in the medium to long-term, exacerbating and emphasising many of the problems the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) seek to solve⁴, reversing decades of progress in the fight against poverty and reducing global commitments to climate action at time when the climate crisis demands the opposite.

It is therefore imperative that we keep our long term vision for a sustainable, prosperous future for all. Our collective response must continue to focus on the most marginalised across the world, doubling down on our efforts to support those in need, and helping others to see why it is so important. In this sense, COVID-19 must be seen as an accelerator for action on global, sustainable development.

As the Scottish Government develops priorities and policies for recovery and renewal, it must therefore use every lever it has to ensure that it builds back better, not just for people here in Scotland, but set a global example by ensuring what we do here reinforces and supports efforts to build back better elsewhere too.

³ The Impacts of COVID-19, Scotland’s International Development Alliance, May 2020, <https://www.intdevalliance.scot/news/impacts-covid-19-our-members-and-their-partners>

⁴ SHARED RESPONSIBILITY, GLOBAL SOLIDARITY: Responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 March 2020, https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_report_socio-economic_impact_of_covid19.pdf

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The current COVID-19 pandemic has brought into sharp focus that the health of everyone everywhere is only as strong as its weakest link and that we are all responsible for each other's health. But this is not only true for collective health, it rings true across all dimensions of sustainable development - our economic prosperity, our climate and our environment.

What measures might make a difference to their outcomes and why

The world is at a critical juncture, with multiple crises nested within one another. No longer can we separate our nature crisis and our climate emergency from our consumption habits and fossil fuel dependency. And no longer can we decouple our own economic prosperity from the poverty experienced elsewhere.

With the global economy heading for a deep recession, we must recognise that it is the most disadvantaged in the world that will suffer most. It is therefore more important than ever for the Scottish Government to maintain and increase its commitment to international, sustainable development which leaves no-one behind.

There are a number of measures that can be put in place in Scotland in order to ensure we build back better and put sustainable development at the heart of policy-making.

We must improve the way we involve stakeholders, assign responsibility and measure progress. We must create more opportunities for participation and ensure structures exist in and outside government to systematically and transparently assess all policy decisions, domestic or otherwise. Crucially, we must ensure we consider their effects on sustainable development outcomes everywhere, both now and into the future.

To do this we require new and existing tools to be used when developing, scrutinising and evaluating legislation and policy as highlighted in our new report on policy coherence in Scotland⁵.

In this report, we have identified important measures that could help ensure Scotland builds back better. These include:

- **Work collaboratively with civil society** to develop systematic ways of enhancing coherence, including using and developing this [open source wiki on policy coherence](#) in Scotland. Through an open, participative and transparent processes of policy development with a range of stakeholders, the end product is more likely to minimise trade-offs and maximise synergies.

We know already that enhanced coherence is possible across [a range of policy areas](#) that the Scottish Government leads on and influences.

- **Ensure responsibility for achieving the SDGs is embedded and aligned** vertically (from national policy and practice, through to local policy and practice) and horizontally (across sectors & across-ministerial portfolios) at all levels of government to ensure a joined-up approach to SDG implementation.
- **Develop accountable and transparent structures that promote joined-up thinking and broad stakeholder engagement** on SDG implementation on issues that affect different sectors. The new Inter-Ministerial Group on Policy Coherence announced by the Minister for Europe, Migration and International Development in September 2019 could be a powerful vehicle for this, but only if it ensures regular and systematic involvement of stakeholders from a different interest groups and is open to regular public scrutiny.
- **Measure Scotland's global footprint holistically.** As indicators are developed and honed that aim to measure progress towards the 11 National Performance Framework (NPF) Outcomes, particularly our 'positive contribution internationally', we must ensure they go some way to measuring coherence in relation to our global footprint across a full range of sectors, such as trade & investment, supply chains in procurement and waste management.

The Scottish Parliament also has an important role to play. It should:

⁵ Improving Policy Coherence in Scotland, Scotland's International Development Alliance, May 2020: <https://www.intdevalliance.scot/how-we-help/policy-and-advocacy/policy-coherence-sustainable-development>

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- **Ensure systematic scrutiny of government legislation and activity using a policy coherence approach.** All new bills and legislation should be assessed through a sustainable development lens. Existing tools can be used for this, such as the Parliament's own [Sustainable Development Impact Assessment Tool](#) developed by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe).

This tool has been found to highlight cross-cutting issues and unintended consequences, and could help to mitigate against individual Scottish Parliament committees working in silos, thus supporting the delivery of policy coherence across devolved policy and practice. It is not currently being routinely used in committee scrutiny, as there is no staff resource in place to support its use.

- **Ensure Parliamentary Committees align their remits to both the SDGs (and targets) and the National Performance Framework (NPF)** outcomes to improve understanding of where responsibility to achieve the SDGs lies.
- **Commit to holding regular debates** on SDG and NPF progress and implementation, to hold government to account on their commitment to achieving the SDGs.

What opportunities to do things differently in the wake of this crisis

From our perspective there are two main opportunities to do things differently in the wake of this crisis, both of which relate directly to the need to ensure priorities and policies are not set in isolation from our broad commitment to global sustainable development and building back better everywhere.

The new Inter-Ministerial Group on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development

In light of the medium and long-term socio-economic implications of the coronavirus outbreak domestically and globally, nested within the ever-present climate and environmental crisis, the time has never been more apt to enhance policy coherence for sustainable development and ensure our societal priorities have long term global prosperity at their heart.

Taking forward the Scottish Government's commitment to forming a new Inter-ministerial group on policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD), as re-affirmed on 18th March 2020 by Jenny Gilruth MSP, Scottish Government Minister for Europe and International Development, presents a great opportunity to do things differently in the wake of the crisis.

This group could help to ensure PCSD principles⁶ are embedded into policy debates at the highest level, helping to:

1. Encourage reference and attention to PCSD by all Government Ministers in all policy documents going forward, and indicate how policy focus areas can interact with others using the SDGs as the framework for comparison.
2. Identify and work on specific thematic areas that overlap ministerial portfolios to minimise unintended consequences and enhance impact on SDGs/NPF outcomes, e.g. the business pledge (international development and trade portfolios), climate proofing (climate and international development), etc.
3. Ensure regular and systematic communication with and involvement of stakeholders from different interest groups including local government, the private sector, public sector and local and international NGOs. Promote and facilitate regular parliamentary scrutiny of the work undertaken by the Group and ensure that there is a lead Committee in the Scottish Parliament to do this.
4. Promote a common approach to Sustainable Development Impact Assessment for policy teams across government that goes beyond standard impact assessments (tick box exercises) like [this one](#) developed by the Scottish Parliament.

Crucially, this group has the potential to help achieve better coherence and joined up action on domestic issues as well, such as embedding gender equality, moving towards a well-being economy or decarbonising the economy.

For more on the potential for this group, see our recommendations briefing here:

https://www.intdevalliance.scot/application/files/6515/8869/4273/Recommendations_for_PCSD_Ministerial_group_Briefing_April_2020_Final.pdf

⁶ <http://www.oecd.org/gov/pcsd/recommendation-on-policy-coherence-for-sustainable-development-eng.pdf>

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Scotland's Climate Justice Fund

As the world entered into this pandemic, the most vulnerable communities were already facing increased risk and threat from the ever-present climate crisis.

The recovery from this pandemic provides an opportunity to change the way we do development to focus on climate-resilient, inclusive development and move away from a dependence on fossil-fuels. A just, green recovery needs to be joined up across government and apply both at home and overseas.

Scotland's Climate Justice Fund provides £3 million every year to adaptation and mitigation work overseas. Climate financing improves communities' resilience to future emergencies and supports them to recover from the double threats of COVID-19 and climate.

The Scottish Government should therefore

:

- Increase funding for the Climate Justice Fund, in addition to maintaining the International Development Fund
- Establish a loss and damage climate compensation fund, recognising the historic role Scotland has played in causing climate change
- Champion sustainable food systems and agriculture (agro-ecology) through the Climate Justice Fund
- Transform our society and economy to meet our Paris Agreement obligations, build resilience in the climate crisis and implement a just transition away from fossil fuels.

For more information on any of the above, please contact Lewis Ryder-Jones, Deputy Chief Executive, Scotland's International Development Alliance: lewis@intdevalliance.scot