

OXFAM SCOTLAND BRIEFING FOR SCOTTISH GREEN PARTY DEBATE: EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

16 September 2026

Overview

- **Nearly 840 million** people live in extreme poverty worldwide.
- **More than 255 million** people globally are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance and protection.
- **Every 14 minutes**, a civilian dies in armed conflict.
- At present, the UN has raised just **41%** of the **\$35 billion** needed to support people experiencing crisis due to conflict, climate disasters, epidemics and crop failures.
- Humanitarian funding **fell by 30%** from 2022-2025, with the UK planning to cut Overseas Development Aid (ODA) from 0.5% of Gross National Income to 0.3% by 2027. The **steepest cut of any G7 country**.
- The UK Government plans to **cut aid** by **90% to Malawi** and by **over 80% to Zambia and Rwanda** – Scotland's partner countries – by 2028/29.
- Just **0.1 per cent** of ODA directly reached women's rights and women-led organisations between 2014 and 2023.

Nearly 840 million people – more than the entire population of Europe – live in extreme poverty worldwide, with [conflict](#) the main cause of death, displacement and hunger. Conflicts are becoming more regular and protracted with approximately [130 armed conflicts](#) taking place across the world. International law is crumbling with red lines not only being crossed, but completely disregarded, hard won rights are at risk of being eroded, aid is vanishing, and strong man politics is dominating international systems and institutions. Meanwhile, the climate crisis is making life significantly harder for many communities who did very little to contribute to it, from extreme weather and flooding to damages to homes, livelihoods and food systems. These impacts are already being felt globally and are “intensify with every extra fraction of a degree and every year” and are [potentially becoming irreversible](#).

The Scottish Government rightly believes that “[smaller nations can have a disproportionate international impact](#)” and contribute to addressing global challenges. Acting on this belief, it has carved out a small but powerful role in showing what global solidarity can look like: principled, impactful, and led by human dignity and respect. Now, while other nations in the Global North step back, Scotland has an opportunity to choose a different path. To act in solidarity with those experiencing crises and rights violations and demonstrate what acting with integrity, ambition and leadership looks like in practice.



OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

Despite the increasing need, 2025 saw funding for humanitarian crises fall to the [lowest level in a decade](#). Consequently, aid reached [25 million fewer people](#) in 2025 than the year before, meaning millions of people faced hunger, limited access to life-saving health care and poor or non-existent shelter. At present, the UN has raised just [41%](#) of the \$35 billion needed in 2026 to assist 255 million people experiencing crisis.

This woeful situation is the inevitable consequence of aid cuts by multiple Global North countries. Last year the UK Government announced it is cutting ODA from 0.5% of Gross National Income to 0.3% by 2027. Its own [Equality Impact Assessment](#) acknowledges that any reduction to health spending could ultimately result in “deaths impacting in particular those living in poverty, women, children and people with disabilities”.

Meanwhile, [rights are being rolled back](#), specifically women’s and LGBTQIA+ rights. This is particularly damaging in context where just [0.1 per cent](#) ODA globally directly reached women’s rights and women-led organisations between 2014 and 2023.

We ask MSPs to join us in calling on the Scottish Government to:

- Fast-track the promised 25% increase in Scotland’s International Development Fund by the end of the Scottish Parliament and ensure inflationary increases each year.
- Grow the Climate Justice Fund to at least £15 million annually from year 1 of the parliament.
- Call on the UK Government to restore aid to 0.7% of Gross National Income.

FEMINIST APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Globally, strongman politics is rising, diplomacy is weakening, and international red lines are not merely being crossed, but decimated. These masculinised behaviours do not make the world safer. Scotland must take a different, feminist approach and publish a Feminist Approach to International Relations (FAIR) Action Plan which implements the [Scottish Government’s FAIR 2023 position paper](#) across all portfolios. This should transparently set out specific, time-bound actions to help address the root drivers of crisis, including wealth inequality, the climate crisis, food and water insecurity, natural resource exploitation and extraction, corruption, and more.

Scotland must act in solidarity with those facing oppression. It must use its voice – without fear or favour – to speak out and challenge oppressive systems and actors. And it must always respect and uphold international laws and norms. Scotland must also give voice to ‘neglected crises’ which are systematically under-reported in the media and therefore result in limited public awareness and humanitarian support.

We ask MSPs to join us in calling on the Scottish Government to:

- Publish a fully resourced and timebound Feminist Approach to International Relations Action Plan.
- Use the Scottish Government’s devolved powers to challenge the erosion in respect for international systems, laws and norms.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The world has changed substantially in the decade since the last [International Development Strategy](#) was published in 2016. The Scottish Government should consult on and publish a new Strategy. This should explicitly commit to implementing an intersectional feminist development policy which responds to the interconnected challenges of inequality, conflict, climate, gender and racial justice. It should embed a locally led, feminist and decolonial approach that rebalances power by changing how we see and act in the world, by moving more money, decision-making, and influence to communities and organisations in the Global South.

The Strategy should be coherent across the Scottish Government's three existing funding streams: international development, climate justice and humanitarian response. It should also support growing global calls to reframe aid as a part of a broader reparatory justice framework for the damages inflicted by conflicts and the ensuing impunity; climate impacts; and the enduring legacies of slavery and colonialism.

We ask MSPs to join us in calling on the Scottish Government to:

- Publish a cross-cutting, intersectional and fully resourced International Development Strategy, which embeds safe, feminist, antiracist, decolonial and locally-led principles.

OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY (OPT)

- In Gaza, more than **73,500** people have been killed, including at least **20,000 children**, **173,000** people have been injured, and **1.9 million** have been forcibly displaced.
- **UNICEF** has found that **1 in 8** children under five have **chronic malnutrition or stunting**.
- **\$71.4 billion** is required for the recovery and reconstruction of Gaza over the next decade.
- This is **seven times** the cost of all previous rebuilds combined ([Oxfam](#)).
- More Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli military and settlers across the occupied West Bank in the last **three years** than in the previous 17 years combined.
- The UN reports an average of **6.7 violent settler attacks per day** between January-August 2026, the highest on record.
- Nearly **46,000** Palestinians in the West Bank have been forcibly displaced over the last three years.

In a statement to the Scottish Parliament on 3 September 2025 the First Minister rightly said that "[in the face of genocide, there can be no 'business as usual'](#)". As part of a package of measures to act in solidarity with Palestine, he committed to pausing new awards of public money to arms companies whose products or services are provided to countries where there is plausible evidence of genocide, including Israel. The announcement also instructed bodies including Scottish Enterprise, where possible, not to support trade between Scotland and Israel.

Since the First Minister's statement, 10,000 people have been killed in Israel's ongoing genocide in Gaza and **1 in 8 children** are experiencing chronic malnutrition or **stunting**. Much of Gaza lies in ruin and the [UN-EU-World Bank Rapid Damage and Needs](#)

[Assessment](#) of April 2026 estimates that \$71.4 billion will be needed to rebuild Gaza over the next decade, a process that must be led by Palestinians themselves. Oxfam's [analysis](#) shows that this amount will cost seven times all previous rebuilds combined.

Violence has increased significantly in the West Bank and more Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli military and settlers in the last [three years](#) than in the previous 17 years combined. The UN reports an average of [6.7 violent settler attacks per day](#) between January-August 2026, the highest on record, and nearly [46,000](#) Palestinians in the West Bank have been forcibly displaced over the last three years.

In this time, the Scottish Government has not provided a formal update to the Scottish Parliament on the status and delivery of all of its 3 September 2025 commitments, including on relocating Human Rights Defenders and exploring practical measures to contribute to gathering and preserving evidence that may be used in international criminal cases. Nor has Scottish Enterprise published its revised human rights due diligence policy or provided sufficient information about how the safeguards are being applied in practice. Alongside [Amnesty International Scotland](#) and [Quakers Scotland](#), we have been calling for greater transparency, including information about which companies are affected and how decisions are being made.

On [8 September 2026](#), the Foreign Secretary announced a ban on UK trade with illegal Israeli settlements, including goods services, investments and advertising. This is a significant and welcome step towards respecting international law and supporting Palestinian rights. The ban remains one of the key actions the UK must take to fulfil its legal obligation to uphold international law and implement the International Court of Justice Advisory opinion. UK-settlement trade is driving human rights violations and entrenching Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian land. The UK must now extend this ban further to include all services and investment in illegal Israeli settlements and immediately halt all arms sales to Israel when they might be used to commit international law violations.

We ask MSPs to join us in calling on the Scottish Government to:

- Provide an update to Parliament on the status and delivery of all the 3 September 2025 commitments.
- Make information about how Scottish Enterprise is applying its human rights safeguards to arms companies public.
- Call on the UK Government to:
 - Ensure the ban is comprehensive in its implementation, including all services and investment in illegal Israeli settlements;
 - Invoke the fundamental human rights provision of the UK-Israel Trade and Partnership Agreement and lawfully suspend trade concessions with Israel until all relevant widespread violations of international law are brought to an end; and
 - Use every diplomatic and economic tool at its disposal to push for an end to the unlawful occupation and support Palestinian self-determination.

Oxfam's Women's Rights Fund

Oxfam launched the [Women's Rights Fund \(WRF\)](#) in 2020. It provides £60,000 over three years to community-based women's rights organisations (WROs) to flexibly invest. Through the WRF we are partnering with [8 grassroots WROs](#) in the occupied Palestinian territory, all of which have been severely impacted by the ongoing violence and lack of supplies. Our partners plan to support affected families with food, clothing, hygiene kits, cash, counselling and more.

"From among the rubble, we planted life. Every seedling we planted was hope for our family and a message that, despite everything we have lived through, we are rebuilding our lives."

After women in northern Gaza experienced severe hunger and food insecurity, they did not simply wait for assistance to arrive. They began clearing rubble from their land and home gardens themselves, reclaiming whatever spaces could be cultivated again. With support from the project, the women were able to turn these damaged spaces into sources of food and income, growing crops that helped their families meet basic needs and improve their livelihoods. For them, farming was not simply a way to earn a living. It became an act of resilience: a way of restoring life, remaining connected to their land and community, and continuing despite everything they had endured.

You can learn more about how you can help build A Fairer Future for Scotland and Oxfam Scotland's priorities for the first year of the Scottish Parliament [here](#) and how Scotland can take A More Feminist, Decolonial Approach to Humanitarian Aid [here](#).

For further information

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About Us

Oxfam GB is a partner to communities around the world, working in around 80 countries to tackle the inequalities that lead to poverty. Our work is built on the priorities of working for humanitarian justice, climate justice and gender justice.