



## Scottish Parliament Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

### Written evidence on Climate Justice

#### About Corra Foundation

Corra Foundation welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Committee's call for evidence on climate justice. Climate justice approaches, that prioritise work with communities most affected and support them to have greater voice and agency, are aligned with our values. Our funding approach is based on a belief in the power of partnership and collective action to effect change, and we see work on climate as a shared responsibility to address a serious and urgent need that affects us all.

Corra Foundation exists to make a difference to the lives of people and communities. It works with others to encourage positive change, opportunity, fairness and growth of aspirations which improve quality of life. Corra wants to see a society in which people create positive change and enjoy fulfilling lives.

In 2020 Corra launched a ten-year strategy. It is long term because making a difference on the big challenges will take time. At its heart is the strong belief that when people find their voice, they unlock the power to make change happen.

Corra has taken strategic and operational action to contribute to tackling the climate crisis. This includes signing the *Funder Commitment on Climate Change*<sup>1</sup>, committing resources, recognising the role our investments play in making the transition to a post-carbon economy, and taking action to reduce the carbon footprint of our own operations.

- **The part Scotland can play in promoting global climate governance**

#### We must all play our part

Recognising the responsibility we share, as well as the advantages Scotland has gained from industrialisation and past emissions, is essential. There must be a clear focus on the fact that all levels of government, all sectors of society, need to make important changes and take meaningful steps if we are to tackle the climate crisis.

Scottish institutions, businesses and civil society have important voices with power to influence the UK's national engagement in inter-governmental efforts and global climate governance. Beyond this, Scotland can model progressive commitments, policies and implementation that recognise the severity of the situation. Stepping up, accepting our moral responsibility and shared obligations should be part of who we are.

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<sup>1</sup> [Funder Commitment on Climate Change \(fundercommitmentclimatechange.org\)](https://www.fundercommitmentclimatechange.org)

There is an important opportunity to connect climate justice with other progressive priorities in Scotland. For example, community empowerment, place-based approaches and the diversity, equity and inclusion agenda. Corra's strategy is about voice, power and change and we advocate a focus on listening to communities most impacted by environmental issues, with action that gets alongside them and supports their rights and agency.

The Scottish Government has a crucial leadership role to play but should also support and encourage awareness and efforts across our society, facilitating independent and collective action.

As the *Funder Commitment to Climate Change* highlights, we must all contribute to this collective action: "The scale of the climate threat, and the scale of the solutions needed, means that this is an issue for all parts of civil society... Climate change is a health issue, an equality issue, and educational issue, and economic issue, a cultural issue, a scientific issues, a security issue and a local community issue, as well as an environmental issue".

- **Where climate justice fits in the context of our international development commitments**

### **Mainstreaming climate, supporting innovation and learning**

Corra has managed the Scottish Government's Climate Justice Innovation Fund (CJIF) since its launch in 2017. A component of the Climate Justice Fund, the three annual cycles of the CJIF in 2017, 2018 and 2019 have seen 15 grants with a total value of just over £1.5 million.

As highlighted in the title, the CJIF has a focus on innovation and is progressive in the opportunity it provides for organisations to try new things. Unlike many other international grants programmes, it does not require proof that an approach works before offering funding. This support for innovation has significant value in allowing the exploration of creative new approaches. With the experience gained and results recorded through CJIF grants, organisations are then well-placed to apply for longer-term funding and to share their learning. The feedback Corra received from grantholders was that this approach was valuable and very welcome. Our recommendation is that future funding instruments continue to provide space and support for organisations to trial innovation in this fast-changing field.

Of the 15 CJIF grants made in the 2017-2020 period, just over half have involved the introduction and trialling of new technology, most related to renewables, while the others have explored new community approaches or innovative farming techniques. The grants led to substantive positive change for over 31,000 people and the development of a number of knowledge products to share learning, including guides, documentaries and training manuals.

These included, for example, work by SOLDEV and Tearfund to promote conservation agriculture methods to combat crop pests in Malawi, which saw 360 farmers lead trials that improved their yields by 90% without pesticides and generated research findings which changed government practices.

Community Energy Scotland and Community Energy Malawi supported two co-operatives to establish solar bakeries and helped over 200 rural community members build the skills needed

to manage new solar electricity supply. This resulted in trained technicians and the launch of new small businesses, as well as the publication of a guide to solar mini-grid development.

The University of Glasgow worked in a coalition which successfully developed and trialled with communities a new bioenergy prototype that continues to benefit 275 school pupils and is now being produced by its Malawian partners, Leadership for Environment and Development Southern and Eastern Africa, Abundance and FABEngineering.

The Malawian organisation BASEflow's collaborations with the University of Strathclyde on artesian well capture and with the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency on water accountability have led to direct daily benefits for over 600 families and the production of a series of videos to share knowledge on water management.

The positive impacts of these CJIF grants continue in the concrete benefits experienced in the lives of people who now have access to clean water, electricity to recharge phones and access the internet, more food and income security from their farms and more information to advocate for and take action for their environment.

The learning which has come from the grants is an important aspect of this fund and both the formal publications and informal exchanges continue to influence practice. During our management of the CJIF Corra has provided introductions among a number of grantholders on an informal basis. We have seen that there is a clear appetite and interest in exchange, both across Scottish partners and overseas partners keen for 'South-South' conversations. The people working on these grants, both in and outside of Scotland, value hearing others' experiences and they would welcome more formal and consistent opportunities to share learning and connect with others. In future climate justice funding, we would recommend Scottish Government consider providing accompanying support for platforms for grantholders to exchange experience and for spaces to help promote and disseminate their learning more widely.

Corra has also managed the Scottish Government's International Development Small Grants programme since 2014, supporting 90 grants to Scotland-based organisations and their partners based in the country where the work is implemented. Over one fifth of these grants were for initiatives supporting those affected by climate change, many of them smallholder farmers, to mitigate its effects or contribute to prevention through improved farming or livelihoods approaches or the introduction of renewable technology.

Similarly, the International Development Main Grants programme (for which Corra has provided assessment support) has in the past also included renewable energy and sustainable development strands, and we see this as important to continue. We would also recommend that Scottish Government consider including a 'climate impact' or 'footprint' assessment point in future international development grant-making, encouraging the sector to consider how projects on education or health for example could be designed in more climate responsive and effective ways.

- **How we measure up against the *Principles of Climate Justice***

## Equity, participation and partnership

The *Principles of Climate Justice* have a clear focus on human rights and the urgent need to address inequity, with those bearing most responsibility and capacity to act supporting those who bear the greatest consequences. In this respect, the Scottish Government's recognition of the moral responsibility we have to act and its commitment to increasing funding for climate justice projects are very welcome. Also welcome is the proposed new human rights framework for Scotland, and the potential for this to include the right to a healthy environment. Corra has been working alongside human rights organisations and other independent funders to build on the significant interest that exists in taking a human rights-based approach to funding.<sup>2</sup>

Funding which is structured to encourage the participation of the communities involved in shaping the work undertaken, which sees organisations working alongside communities, also reflects key points made in the *Principles* about voice and partnership. The Climate Challenge Programme Malawi is structured to provide for such participation, and the CJIF was also structured on partnership principles which valued participatory approaches.

Application criteria to the CJIF ask organisations to tell the story of how their proposals have been designed on the basis of consultation with the communities affected by climate change and to demonstrate how they will ensure their work includes those affected by particular challenges. The sustainability of the proposal, consideration of gender equity within its design, its complementarity with national policy frameworks, and the opportunity presented for sector-wide learning are also key factors considered in selection. We recommend that future climate justice funding continues to ensure projects supported have a strong focus on participation, inclusion and sustainability.

CJIF awards were made to partnerships of Scottish organisations working with organisations based in the countries where the work is undertaken. A greater focus on recognising and valuing joint leadership within these partnerships was introduced in the 2019 round which ensured that overseas partner organisations were locally-led (and not just an organisation based in the project country). Going forward, we would recommend that future grants programmes retain this requirement for a partnership approach and also consider other adaptations in the funding process that could support a stronger role for the overseas partner and a more equitable approach between partners.

While the Small Grants programme has now ended, the opportunity it provided for smaller-scale climate action initiatives was valuable. Corra would encourage the Scottish Government to consider options for including smaller third sector organisations in funding efforts with specific climate action goals. While the work of universities and larger, specialist organisations is essential in the development of the new approaches we need, smaller organisations can also make important contributions, not least as they are often more closely linked to the communities involved on both sides of the partnership. These closer links have important implications – not only for sustainability but also for the relationships, vibrancy of civil society and climate awareness which will be important factors in helping to achieve societal change.

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<sup>2</sup> For more information please see <https://www.corra.scot/news/rightsreal/>.

- **The impact of the pandemic and post-COVID recovery on our approach**

### **Building forward better, support and flexibility**

With the grants through the CJIF running until spring of 2021, the pandemic has not impacted directly on the potential flow of Scottish Government funds managed by Corra to grantees, though of course it has affected the work of organisations implementing the grants in a number of ways. All CJIF projects were affected in some respect, with almost all requiring time extensions or budget or activity amendments. Ensuring good communication with grantees as they face unexpected and often stressful situations and supporting flexible approaches as organisations adjust to changed conditions, are key approaches which we recommend Scottish Government apply to future international funding.

More broadly, our learning from distribution of significant Scottish Government pandemic response funds to the third sector in Scotland across the last 18 months has highlighted the value of flexible, and in particular unrestricted, funding. We would also recommend that the Scottish Government consider the valuable role that unrestricted funding can play in emergent and fast changing situations in the future. In April 2020 Corra made a number of immediate and unrestricted international micro-grants from its own funds to organisations it was already working with to cover unexpected costs resulting from the pandemic, such as additional data top-ups, staff salaries or supplies of soap and face masks.<sup>3</sup> Organisations reported back to us how valuable these fast and flexible grants had been for them.

The pandemic-related closures and economic disruption have also exacerbated inequalities not only within Scotland but also in lower income countries, with those most vulnerable most negatively affected, among them many women and girls. Corra has heard from many grantees that while needs in the communities they work with overseas are greater, organisations are finding that both funding and fundraising opportunities are reduced. Given the value which active third sector organisations with expertise in international development and climate action have for our collective efforts both at home and abroad, Corra recommends that in reviewing options for structuring its climate justice funding going forward, the Scottish Government consider increasing the options available to Scottish third sector organisations whose work contributes to climate justice.

- **What – given the emphasis of Scotland’s Climate Assembly on fairness – climate justice looks like locally and globally**

### **Voice, relationships, and collective action**

Globally, climate justice needs to include the wealthier nations, who have benefitted economically from higher emissions rates in the past, providing more funding and resourcing to support communities in lower income countries mitigate and adapt to the climate change they

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<sup>3</sup> For more information on the Corra Coronavirus Response Micro Grants and the nearly 50,000 people reached, please see [International Development - Corra](#), and the report available here: [Corra International Coronavirus Response Micro-grants - Corra](#). Three case studies are available here: [Malawi Solar Power Schools: A Corra micro-grant project story - Corra](#); [On Call Africa: A Corra micro-grant project story - Corra](#); [From Scotland to Pakistan: A Corra micro-grant project story - Corra](#).

are experiencing now. This funding should be transparent, accountable and respectful: it should not look like ‘paying a bill’. Rather, this is resourcing for joint work which acknowledges our past, and continuing, responsibilities, and which is built on an approach of partnership.

Partnerships are built on relationships and mutual understanding, and this is a thread which needs to run through our global-level efforts to our local approaches to tackling climate change. Understanding how lives in different parts of the world are affected will be a key element in our society and institutions making and supporting the significant change that is required. Connecting across the distances between those whose lives have not been affected and those whose lives have already been profoundly changed will be crucial.

Work in the international development, education, arts and media sectors all has a role to play in helping to build these connections with our peers internationally and informing a change in societal attitudes to climate change and action. Opportunities to learn from others and exchange experience, whether on innovative technology or youth-led community initiatives, will be equally vital in building genuine partnerships for action at both global and local levels, in and outside Scotland.

As part of our own commitment to what ‘local’ climate justice looks like, Corra is a partner supporting Scotland’s Young People’s Forest. A young people’s panel is leading the design of the forest, from planting to practical use and stewardship of the land. By supporting young people to lead, the work aims to achieve a wider vision where young people champion community engagement and support the creation of more forest and woodland.

We also launched a learning process in July this year aimed at continuing to improve our approach to international development grantmaking. The process is focused on exploring how funders can better support powerful and equitable partnerships that: generate lasting positive change; help ensure the voices of all those involved are heard; and which facilitate learning and connections of value to all those involved. Based on a co-design approach, the process has included pilot grants to five partnerships and will run until early next year. The process has already seen learning on a number of areas which have informed this evidence, including on voice and partnerships, on climate impact and on sustainability and community ownership.<sup>4</sup>

With this in mind, Corra welcomes the fact that the Climate Justice Fund included an emphasis on community voice, action and partnership, employing similar principles to the Scottish Climate Assembly’s consultative and inclusive approach, and recommends this focus continues for future funding.

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<sup>4</sup> More information on this learning process is available here: [International Development - Corra](#).