

# CAFOD GENERAL ELECTION MANIFESTO 2024

We are living in an age of multiple global crises. From growing hunger levels and unprecedented rates of wealth inequality to runaway climate change, protracted conflicts and spiralling global debt levels, whoever wins the election will need to act urgently to tackle these interconnected crises.

As an international development agency, working with hundreds of partner organisations across the world, CAFOD is urging the next government to prioritise addressing the root causes of global poverty, injustice and climate change. We lay out seven essential areas for securing a safer, fairer and more sustainable world for all.

## 1. GLOBAL DEBT CRISIS

The world is facing a new debt crisis. Due to price hikes, environmental disasters and rising interest rates, many low-income countries have been left with unsustainable debt burdens. Money that governments could be spending on health, education and climate measures is instead going on debt servicing, including as profits to big banks who charge unsustainably high interest rates and refuse to take part in debt relief initiatives. A majority of global private debt contracts are governed by English law, providing a unique opportunity for the UK to act.

**The next UK government must:**

- **introduce 'debt justice' legislation to ensure private creditors participate in international debt relief efforts and cannot sue low-income countries unable to pay;**
- **work with other lender countries, private creditors and development banks to ensure the cancellation of unsustainable debts owed by low-income countries;**
- **work within the UN to develop a permanent, transparent and representative global debt mechanism to prevent future debt crises.**

## 2. CLIMATE

The climate crisis is already causing mass displacement of people across the globe and destroying the natural world. The UK is one of the largest historic emitters of greenhouse gases, so it has a particular responsibility to take action to keep temperature rises below 1.5°C.

**The next UK government must:**

- **end all spending on new oil and gas projects at home and abroad, and phase out existing projects;**
- **ensure significant new financial support for low-income climate-vulnerable countries that isn't taken from the existing aid budget, and does not increase their national debt;**
- **work with other countries to raise new taxes from the biggest polluters.**

## 3. BUSINESS & HUMAN RIGHTS

British businesses are some of the biggest and most powerful in the world, often with supply chains that span many countries. Existing legislation is not fit for purpose as it is unable to hold companies to account when they harm workers or damage the environment. The UK is falling behind legal developments elsewhere and needs to act to ensure companies operate responsibly and enable a level playing field so responsible businesses are not penalised.

**The next UK government must:**

- **introduce a 'Business, Human Rights & Environment Act' to hold companies to account when they 'fail to prevent' human and labour rights or environmental harms;**
- **support proposals for a UN Binding Treaty on Business and Human Rights, and for stronger European legislation that includes effective liability provisions.**

## 4. FOOD SYSTEMS

Global hunger levels have been on the rise in recent years with more than 2.4 billion people now without regular access to food. For too long, the global food system has been dominated by a few multinational companies who have pushed for an industrialised approach to agriculture, facilitated by international institutions including the World Bank. This has reduced the diversity of crops available, sidelined small-scale farmers in low-income countries and polluted natural resources.

**The next UK government must:**

- **produce a new agricultural strategy that supports small-scale farmers and food producers who are practising sustainable techniques, including agroecology;**
- **channel aid money to support small-scale farmers practising sustainable techniques;**
- **oppose harmful World Bank conditionalities that benefit industrial agrobusiness at the expense of livelihoods and biodiversity.**

## 5. HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Humanitarian needs have never been greater with a record number of people in need of assistance as conflict, disaster and disease outbreaks continue to cause havoc. Despite the growing need, the UK has slashed its humanitarian aid spending, with the most recent government figures showing a 20% reduction between 2022 and 2023. While emergencies in Gaza, Ukraine and Turkey garner much coverage, there are numerous 'forgotten crises' in places such as Sudan, where people are in need but do not get the attention, or funds, required.

**The next UK government must:**

- **increase humanitarian spending, especially for those most underfunded emergencies;**
- **ensure a greater proportion of humanitarian funds are channelled directly to local organisations, who are best positioned to respond.**

## 6. MIGRATION

Every year, thousands of people die crossing borders as they try to find safety. In recent years it has become even harder for people who need safety to reach the UK. For those who reach the UK, recent changes in the law make it almost impossible for them to apply for asylum and find sanctuary here. Instead, they face the possibility of being indefinitely detained and deported to a third country, such as Rwanda.

**The next UK government must:**

- **champion the right to safe and legal routes for people needing to flee their homes, rather than leave vulnerable people prey to people smugglers;**
- **end the unjust deportation of people who haven't even had their asylum applications heard.**

## 7. AID & INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Despite the legally-binding commitment to spend 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) on overseas aid, the UK has slashed its aid budget, and now spends only 0.5% of GNI on overseas aid. In addition, increasing amounts of that aid are being spent in the UK rather than overseas, meaning that compared to 2020 there has been a huge 40% reduction in aid spending overseas.

**The next UK government must:**

- **restore the UK aid budget to 0.7% of GNI;**
- **ensure UK aid is spent tackling poverty overseas, not redirected to domestic needs.**

**For more information, please email [mpc@cafod.org.uk](mailto:mpc@cafod.org.uk)**