



An open letter to all leaders of political parties in Scotland: **make Global Citizenship Education central to Scotland's future.**

March 2026

This year's elections to the Scottish Parliament are at risk of being overshadowed like never before by global forces upending democratic norms and driving division and fear in our communities.

We are facing a convergence of urgent crises. The climate emergency and deepening inequality are driving instability, fuelling conflicts in Gaza, Sudan, Ukraine, and elsewhere, contributing to forced migration and intensifying local challenges here in Scotland. Yet there is a growing sense that political leaders are not responding with the urgency and courage that these challenges demand.

With disinformation rapidly eroding trust in our institutions and even our notions of truth, it is difficult to know how to respond. Whilst politicians chase our votes, it is clearer than ever that education has a pivotal role to play, not only in equipping us all to overcome these unprecedented challenges but also building common ground to shape a better, fairer world.

That is why we urge all political parties to place Global Citizenship Education at the heart of their manifestos and their efforts to achieve a fairer, better informed, and globally responsible Scotland.

What is Global Citizenship Education?

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) is a framework that helps learners connect their lives to people and communities around the world and guides them toward building a more just, peaceful, and sustainable future for all.

It encourages learners of all ages to:

- Take part in democracy and speak up for justice.
- Understand global issues like climate change, migration, and conflict.
- Recognise and challenge racism, inequality and colonial legacies.
- Promote peace in their own communities and beyond.
- Think critically and ask big questions.
- Act with empathy and make ethical choices.

When young people learn this way, they don't just absorb knowledge, they learn to question, to connect, and to lead.

Global Citizenship Education is not optional, it is essential.

For years, our political leaders have affirmed that Scotland should be a 'good global citizen' a world leader in fairness, equality, and global solidarity. But without Global Citizenship Education, those values remain just words.

Following the UK's exit from the European Union, and growing pressure on public finances, Global Citizenship Education has been quietly pushed to the margins, losing visibility and vital funding when global realities require the exact opposite.

- Schools need more resources and better training opportunities for teachers to bring global issues into the classroom. They also need clear policies in place to feel supported and safe doing this.
- With community tension on immigration bringing fear and violence, we need better anti-racist and inclusive education which help explain the reasons for migration, create space for intercultural connection, and give a deeper understanding of the root causes of the struggles in our communities.
- Whilst disinformation goes unchecked on social media, there is little time for young people to build the skills they need to spot and challenge AI fakes and the wider distortion of their sources of news and knowledge. Young people who want to make a positive difference feel isolated and demoralised and need better institutional support and safe spaces to discuss contentious issues.
- This must be accompanied by efforts to strengthen public understanding of Scotland's place and responsibilities in the wider world and a continued commitment to international solidarity and support for people affected by conflict, poverty, and disaster.

A call to action for the 2026 elections.

These vital changes can only be delivered if political parties commit to the following steps in their 2026 manifestos:

- 1. Recognise Global Citizenship Education across government.** Make GCE a priority across education, equalities, international development, youth, and community policies, and commit to the principles of the European Declaration on Global Education
- 2. Embed Global Citizenship and anti-racist education throughout the curriculum.** Ensure every learner has the opportunity to explore global issues, challenge injustice, and see education as a tool for change. Apply this across the curriculum. Teachers are already under too much pressure and often cannot make time for what might be seen as an added extra and when they do, often feel unsupported.
- 3. Invest in Scotland's Development Education Centres.** Development Education Centres have long established networks as well as tried and tested tools and techniques to deliver this vital classroom learning. They need predictable long-term funding to help not only teachers but youth workers, and community educators to support and encourage learning and demonstrable global citizenship action in all our communities.
- 4. Support better joined-up thinking across government.** Use global citizenship principles to guide action across the public and private sector policies by building a common understanding of just and sustainable choices, on climate, trade, migration, and their impacts on the wider world.

Scotland must take the lead.

Scotland has long championed values of social justice, democracy, equality, and global solidarity. But these values must be taught, practised, and defended, especially in a world where democratic norms and human rights are increasingly under threat.

Through our work, we have seen firsthand how transformative this approach to education can be. From classrooms to communities, it empowers individuals to not only understand the world, but to change it.

Let's not lose this momentum. Let's commit to a Scotland that learns from the world, contributes to it, and stands up for justice and peace within and beyond our borders.

This is not just about young people. It is about all of us.

We call on all parties to include a strong commitment to Global Citizenship Education in their manifestos and to work together to make it a reality for every learner, in every part of Scotland.

Sincerely,

Scotland's International Development Alliance

Scotdec

Highland One World

African Caribbean, Asian, Mixed Heritage Association

SCIAF

Link Education International

Christian Aid

CBM UK (Global Disability Inclusion)

Oxfam Scotland

Quakers in Scotland

Water Witness International

One World Centre

Stop Climate Chaos Scotland

Fairtrade Scotland

WOSDEC

True North Education

People's Health Movement Scotland

Signpost International

Inverness Fairtrade Group

Max Schmidt, Independent Researcher

Corra Foundation

Ocean Youth Trust Scotland

The Challenges Group

Kairos Women+

Scotland Malawi Partnership

Ian Mitchell, Educator

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West Lothian Community Race Forum

Linda's Fund



Eilidh Thompson, School Teacher
Carlie Wilson, WOSDEC
Jane Cowan, Primary School Teacher
Katie d'Souza, School Teacher
Chantelle Millan, School Teacher
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West of Scotland Regional Equalities Council
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Lewis Ryder Jones
Sarah Jane Anderson, Professional Development Lead, ScotDec
Chrissie Cvetkovic-Hirst, Independent Global Development Professional
Sam Ross, JGHS Parent Council Co-Chair
Jennifer Buchan, Global Education Advisor
Homeless World Cup Foundation
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Kate Sykes, International Development Manager
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Chantelle Millan, School Teacher
Dr Eileen Duke, Retired GP