House of Commons

International Development Committee

Empowering Development: Energy Access for Communities: Government Response

Seventh Special Report of Session 2024–26

HC 1626

International Development Committee

The International Development Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to scrutinise the work of the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office in respect of aid policy, and the expenditure of Official Development Assistance across UK government departments.

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Committee Reports are published on the Committee's website at www.parliament.uk/indcom and in print by Order of the House.

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Seventh Special Report

The International Development Committee published its Eighth Report of Session 2024–26, Empowering Development: Energy Access for Communities (HC 849), on 14 November 2025. The Government's response was received on 6 January 2026 and is appended below.

Appendix: Government Response

1 Introduction

1. The UK Government is grateful to the International Development Committee for its report on *Empowering Development: Energy Access for Communities*, published on 14 November 2025.

2. The UK, alongside Global South leaders, played a leading role in securing global agreement in 2015 to the adoption of Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG7), to "ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all by 2030". We remain committed to SDG7 and will continue to work with partners to support the achievement of 2030 targets.

3. Currently, 666 million people do not have access to electricity, with 85% living in sub-Saharan Africa (SDG7 tracking report 2025). 2.1 billion people, over 25% of the world's population, still rely on polluting fuels such as firewood and charcoal for their daily cooking needs. At the current rate of progress, by 2030 approximately 645 million people will still lack access to electricity, and 1.8 billion people will continue using polluting fuels for cooking, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa. Achieving universal access to electricity by 2030 will require connecting almost 120 million people every year, but the world is not on track to reach this goal.

4. We welcome the Committee's focus on this important topic, and we have carefully considered the Committee's recommendations. This response addresses the Committee's recommendations in the order in which they appear in the report.

2 Energy Access as a Foundation for Development

Global Energy Access

(Conclusion 1, paragraph 12) ***Despite notable global progress in expanding energy access, Sustainable Development Goal 7 on affordable and clean energy will not be met without renewed international commitment and targeted interventions. The UK is well placed to convene and coordinate with other donors, multilateral institutions, and private sector partners to drive progress at scale.***

5. We agree with the Committee on the significant progress over the last 10 years since the universal agreement of SDG7 on ensuring affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all–but also that this commitment remains off track. We also welcome the recognition of the UK's expertise and role in supporting efforts towards achieving SDG7.

Role of ODA

Conclusions and Recommendation 1

(Conclusion 2, paragraph 23) ***We welcome the leadership shown by past governments in elevating underexplored aspects of global energy access, such as clean cooking and low-energy appliances, on the global agenda. This support has delivered tangible impact. As ODA resources tighten, the UK's impact will depend on sustaining effective energy access programmes and using public finance strategically to unlock private investment.***

(Recommendation 1, paragraph 24) ***The FCDO should ensure that resources directed towards championing sustainable energy access are protected amid competing budgetary demands. A steady commitment to blended finance, working with the private sector and locally responsive initiatives, should seek to help overcome financing barriers and ensure progress reaches those furthest behind.***

Government response: Partially Agree

6. We welcome recognition of the UK's tangible impact in this area and the value of our research and innovation support.

7. The UK is on track to deliver £11.6bn in International Climate Finance (ICF) by the end of FY25/26.

8. While we agree on the importance of sustainable energy access policy and programming and intend to continue this work, it is not reasonable to expect that energy access investments can be fully protected in a scenario of ODA budgets moving to 0.3% of Gross National Income (GNI). Now that the Spending Review has determined ODA allocations for each government department, we are working through internal resource allocations, including for climate focussed programming. We will set out our spending plans for future years following completion of this process, keeping the recommendations of the committee in mind as we do.

9. As the UK pivots from a traditional donor to an investor in line with the 0.3% target, we will need to enhance our co-operation with like-minded partners and continue to seek opportunities for collaboration that accelerate progress toward achieving the SDG7 targets by 2030.

10. The UK's ICF commitment for FY 25/26 includes support for clean energy access through multilateral initiatives like Mission 300, led by the World Bank and the African Development Bank (AfDB), which aims to connect 300 million Africans to electricity by 2030. The UK remains a key contributor to International Development Assistance (IDA) and the African Development Fund (ADF) concessional windows at the World Bank which will fund much of Mission 300. The UK has contributed to the development of Mission 300 through our Transforming Energy Access (TEA) platform, and we will continue strong engagement with Mission 300 via TEA, but also directly through country posts, regional desks, BII and PIDG.

11. Blended finance, working with the private sector and locally responsive initiatives will remain central. We expect to continue our focus on blended finance and public-private partnerships via investment vehicles including BII, Private Infrastructure Development Group (PIDG), Financial Sector Deepening Africa, and the Renewable Energy Performance Platform.

Mainstreaming Energy in Development

Conclusion and Recommendation 2

(Conclusion 3, paragraph 27) ***Energy access is a foundational enabler of sustainable development. This should be acknowledged by embedding energy access more centrally in strategic planning and***

resource allocation. Evidence received by the Committee indicates that this is not currently happening, representing a missed opportunity to maximise the impact of limited funds.

(Recommendation 2, paragraph 28) ***The FCDO must embed energy access across development, climate and humanitarian policies. A departmental working group should be set up by the end of 2026 to coordinate delivery. The FCDO should also create targeted funding and measurable incentives for programmes that integrate energy access with other sectors, including health, water, and food systems.***

Government Response: Partially Agree

12. We agree that energy access is a foundational enabler of sustainable development, essential to delivery of many other SDGs including health, humanitarian, water, food and climate targets. Co-benefits of expanding clean energy access also include protection of nature and forests, as well as green jobs and expanding climate resilience. No economy has grown, or country exited poverty, without expanding its use of energy.

13. Since 2022, the TEA platform has included a portfolio of energy R&D projects in the humanitarian and health sectors. This has resulted in additional linkages being built between energy access and the humanitarian and health sectors. The Ayrton Fund's approach to Ayrton Challenges, linking interventions across multiple departments, programmes and sectors towards a common challenge goal, has also improved coherence and co-ordination.

14. The Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) published a review into UK support for energy transition in November 2025. The review included recommendations that proposed: a comprehensive strategy for energy transition, with improved coordination between departments; stronger mechanisms for allocating funding between multilateral and bilateral channels; a clearer use of partnerships and alliances; alongside stating objectives for leveraging additional finance and investment. Overall, the review found good impacts and many positive achievements due to UK activities, and recommendations sought to enhance these. We will publish HMG's response to the review in January 2026.

15. Officials working on energy access in FCDO regularly collaborate and will continue to find ways to continue and increase collaboration in 2026. Noting the Committee's recommendation to establish a cross-departmental working group, we will always strive to ensure full join-up within FCDO on energy access, including integrating energy access with other sectors systematically.

3 Local Ownership and Inclusive Governance

UK Support for Community-led Energy Projects

Conclusion and Recommendation 3

(Conclusion 4, paragraph 34) ***The emphasis put by the FCDO and British International Investment (BII) on community-led energy is often implicit. The key concern is not the absence of the label, but whether localised energy systems are truly considered as a viable option and whether communities are genuinely placed at the centre of planning and implementation.***

(Recommendation 3, paragraph 35) ***The Government should be more transparent about how it enables local empowerment in energy projects and devise a better system of tracking projects that are community-led. It should allocate dedicated resources to support community-led energy initiatives as key vehicles for inclusive, locally driven development. BII, as a recipient of public funds, should similarly expand its investments to advance these efforts, including through technical support.***

Government Response: Partially Agree

16. Through our TEA and Modern Energy Cooking Services (MECS) programmes we have established a strong approach to fostering local partnerships and inclusion. More broadly, under the Ayrton Fund for clean energy innovation, we recently concluded a study to capture best practices, lessons and recommendations on Locally-Led Action and Equitable Partnerships across the wider Ayrton energy innovation portfolio, to help embed and strengthen localisation and inclusion principles in programming.

17. British International Investment (BII) places a strong emphasis on transparency, demonstrated by its recognition as the world's most transparent bilateral Development Finance Institution by Publish What You Fund (PWYF) in the 2025 DFI Transparency Index. BII investments provide clean energy to over 26 million people across sub-Saharan Africa including 7 million via distributed renewable energy solutions, and transmission and distribution (T&D) projects. BII will continue to invest in expanding energy access in line with its Impact Framework.

18. In applying its Responsible Investing Policy, BII works with its investees to ensure stakeholder and community engagement is considered and appropriate mechanisms are put in place. This can include dedicated consultation processes and the establishment of grievance mechanisms. For example, at BII investee Virunga Energies in eastern DRC, close engagement with local communities was achieved through involving key community stakeholders throughout project execution via representatives in each community. This includes ongoing information sharing, awareness, and training sessions on Virunga Energies' infrastructure and on emergency response as well as grievance registries through phone, WhatsApp, and email.

19. In addition to project level information, Virunga Energies also works closely with communities supporting reforestation activities to mitigate flood risk and awareness raising sessions against gender-based violence and harassment. More information on the impact of BII's investment in Virunga Energies can be found in this recent independent evaluation.[1]

20. While we recognise the value of community-led energy projects, at this stage, HMG is unable to make firm commitments to any policy or programme beyond the confirmed budgets for FY25/26. However, we commit to bearing the Committee's recommendation in mind in allocations.

Meaningful Community Engagement

Conclusion and Recommendation 4

(Conclusion 5, paragraph 43) ***Energy access projects and programmes are more likely to succeed when they are genuinely co-designed with local stakeholders, inclusive of marginalised groups, and supported by long-term capacity strengthening.***

(Recommendation 4, paragraph 45) ***The Government should make inclusive community participation across all stages of design, governance, and implementation a condition of UK funding for energy access. This should involve recognising and resourcing communities, particularly marginalised groups, as decision-makers.***

Government Response: Agree

21. The FCDO recognises that insufficient community engagement can undermine the effectiveness, sustainability, and equity of energy access projects. The FCDO promotes community engagement through inclusive models such as cooperatives, public-private partnerships, and locally governed projects. In our interventions, we place Gender, Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) principles at the centre of our approach, ensuring value for money in delivery, while addressing systemic barriers like financing gaps, regulatory hurdles, and infrastructure limitations.

1 https://www.bii.co.uk/en/news-insight/insight/articles/how-does-access-to-green-energy-transform-rural-communities-insights-from-virunga-energies/

Our Centre of Expertise in Green Cities, Infrastructure and Energy has developed a GEDSI toolkit that has attracted extensive interest from partners and is being piloted in the energy sector in Zambia.

22. Programmes like TEA and MECS include a focus on local partnerships and inclusive design, for example supporting local researchers and innovators to participate in wider regional calls for proposals and build partnerships with UK and other international researchers and innovators.

23. The FCDO is also investing in locally led action and equitable partnerships, with a dedicated study commissioned in 2025 across the Ayrton Fund portfolio to identify best practices and gaps in community engagement. This work will inform future clean energy innovation programming and help ensure that community voices are central to project design and delivery.

24. We recognise the importance of inclusive community participation across all stages of design, governance, and implementation, and we actively promote these principles in our energy access programmes. Current FCDO guidance and delivery models encourage participatory approaches, including gender and social inclusion, and require partners to demonstrate engagement with local stakeholders.

Conclusion and Recommendation 5

(Conclusion 6, paragraph 44) ***Energy projects are often technology-driven, which heightens the risks associated with limited local ownership and maintenance capacity. Emphasis should not be placed on rapid deployment or narrow output targets, but rather on meaningful community involvement. When engagement is top-down or superficial, legitimacy, sustainability, and long-term impact are compromised.***

Government Response

25. We recognise that technology-driven energy projects can face challenges around local ownership and maintenance. To address this, our approach prioritises meaningful community engagement, capacity-building, and co-design with local stakeholders. This ensures that solutions are not only deployed effectively but remain sustainable and locally managed over the long term. Looking ahead, we see emerging technologies such as AI as having the capacity to streamline processes and improve efficiency. As we adapt to these capabilities, we will ensure that community-based approaches remain central to project design and delivery, balancing innovation with legitimacy, resilience, and lasting impact.

(Recommendation 5, paragraph 46) ***We recognise that there is sometimes a gap between the accountability expectations of donors and the capacity of local implementers. We recommend that in the next***

six months the FCDO reviews its accountability frameworks ensuring they are fit for purpose and makes sure resources are available to support local implementers to meet the appropriate and realistic requirements and develop their ability to handle international funding.

Government Response: Partially Agree

26. The FCDO's Programme Operating Framework (PrOF)[2] sets out requirements for projects delivering UK ODA to ensure strong protections and safeguards across all funded activities. These requirements include comprehensive measures to prevent and address fraud, corruption, sexual exploitation, abuse, harassment, and other forms of misconduct. They also establish standards for financial management, ethical behaviour, and the protection of vulnerable groups, with the overarching aim of maintaining the highest levels of integrity, accountability, and safety throughout the delivery chain. These requirements apply to all projects and downstream agreements; not only to energy access-related projects. We recognise that it can be very difficult for some local, and especially small and early-stage, implementers to meet these requirements and that this can be a barrier to inclusion of local partners. Recognising the importance of an increasing shift to local leadership in the coming period, it may be that these requirements will be reviewed, there will rightly continue to be a strong degree of priority on managing fiduciary risks, safeguarding etc, and due diligence and reporting expectations are unlikely to significantly reduce.

27. In this context, the most pragmatic response may be to leverage our downstream delivery chain. This means continuing to use larger and more experienced entities to channel our funds, but with strong and explicit guidance and mechanisms to enable funds to be passed on to local partners for project delivery on the ground. With large programmes such as TEA involving more than 750 downstream energy access innovators, it is essential that our Tier 1 and 2 partners play an important role in managing requirements and risks and enabling local participation and leadership. Many Tier 1 and 2 partners have fully locally staffed local offices, even if they also have northern headquarters. In many cases, it is the companies themselves—such as the mini-grid developers, or the household solar providers—who need to be leading the engagement with communities and customer groups directly.

(Recommendation 6, paragraph 47) ***The FCDO should systematically document and analyse successes and failures of community-led energy projects, including technical, social, and financial aspects, through annual learning reviews and case studies. Findings should be shared internally and with external partners to inform the design, governance, and scaling of future programmes.***

2 FCDO Programme Operating Framework - GOV.UK

Government Response: Agree

28. A review and report have been concluded looking across the 34 programmes which constitute the Ayrton Fund for clean energy innovation (RD&D support) between 2021–2026, and drawing together the successes, failures and lessons of the approaches taken to localisation. A webinar[3] was held on 27 November to share these findings with participating departments (FCDO, Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) and Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT)), Ayrton delivery partners, and other interested stakeholders. The webinar featured a range of HMG and southern voices from Africa, Latin America and Asia, and highlighted good practices as well as continued need for effort and focus on this. The report was published in November 2025 and has been shared via Ayrton Fund and other LinkedIn Channels. The report provides recommendations in 4 key areas, which programmes can adopt in the innovation area, but also TA and investment programming.

Vulnerable communities

Conclusion and Recommendation 7

(Conclusion 7, paragraph 52) ***Inclusion is central to the effectiveness, sustainability, and legitimacy of community energy initiatives. Projects designed and governed with the active participation of women, people with disabilities, and other under-represented groups are more likely to deliver meaningful, lasting benefits and to reflect the priorities of the communities they serve. The Government's publication of International Climate Finance (ICF) Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) guidance in May 2025[4] is a welcome initial step towards these goals.***

(Recommendation 7, paragraph 53) ***The FCDO should ensure women are central to community energy projects by supporting their leadership, and designing interventions around their needs, so they act as agents of change rather than just beneficiaries. It should report on the extent to which the recommendations of the GEDSI guidance note are implemented by June 2026.***

Government Response: Partially agree

3 https://tea.carbontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Ayrton-Fund-Locally-led-action-and-equitable-partnerships.pdf

4 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-international-climate-finance-icf-gender-equality-disability-and-social-inclusion-guidance

29. The FCDO recognises that women's participation and leadership is crucial to the success of community energy projects and achieving SDG7. In line with the International Development Act (Gender Equality Act) 2014, we promote gender equality in all our ODA interventions.

30. The FCDO's policies on GEDSI apply to all programming and are included in programme guidelines to ensure compatibility with the International Development Act 2014 Gender Amendment. These principles are integrated into programme design and monitored through the Annual Review process, which evaluates programmes on their ability to incorporate GEDSI considerations. This ensures that gender equality and inclusion are not treated as standalone objectives but as core components of FCDO's energy interventions.

31. Specifically for Energy Access programmes, flagship initiatives such as TEA and MECS already incorporate gender-focused approaches to promote women's leadership and participation. This is appropriate given the very strong connection between the impacts of dirty cooking and the lives of women struggling with the burden of firewood and charcoal cooking. TEA was highlighted as a case study in the GEDSI Guidance Note for effectively integrating GEDSI strategies to empower women in the clean energy sector through training, master's programmes and work placements. MECS is classified as a principal Gender programme under the OECD DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker, reflecting its strong focus on advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in the energy access sector. The Climate Compatible Growth (CCG) programme also works to ensure the inclusion of the specific needs of women and vulnerable groups in energy planning, at both national and community scales, engaging with planning authorities in support of inclusive policy and process.

32. As a result of the ICF GEDSI guidance note, all new UK climate programmes are required to be empowering for women and girls, and the ambition is for more programmes to be transformative. This means they actively address the unequal power relations that hold women back as agents of change, seeking institutional and societal change to enable their agency.

33. At this stage, we are unable to commit to reporting on the extent to which the recommendations of the GEDSI guidance note are implemented by June 2026. There is currently no established reporting mechanism; we will consider future reporting depending on future resourcing beyond FY25/26 commitments.

(Recommendation 8, paragraph 54) ***The FCDO should require community energy projects to actively involve people with disabilities in project design and governance, provide accessible technical and capacity-building support, and report on disability-disaggregated outcomes.***

Government Response: Agree

34. The FCDO recognises the importance of actively involving people with disabilities in project design and implementation. In 2023, the FCDO TEA platform commissioned a landmark study through 60 Decibels (Disability Insights Report)[5] to better understand the experiences of people with disabilities in accessing clean energy.

35. Building on this evidence, last year the TEA platform launched a new Disability Inclusion Support Service managed by the Global Disability Innovation Hub, aimed at mainstreaming inclusive practices within the TEA platform and the clean energy sector more broadly. It supports local and international delivery partners to do this through research, technical assistance, training, and capacity building. This Support Service is also building a disability-focused talent pool for the clean energy sector and working with clean energy employers to promote inclusive hiring practices. These findings are now informing FCDO's approach to inclusive energy programming helping to identify where additional support, innovation, or adaptation is needed to ensure that no one is left behind in the energy transition–and we will look to enhance communications around these tools and resources beyond FY25/26 to other FCDO energy access programming and more broadly.

36. As a result of the ICF GEDSI guidance note, all new UK climate programmes are required to be GEDSI 'empowering', including ensuring the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in all their diversity, and ensuring the promotion and mainstreaming of their rights. All new ICF programmes should consider the inclusion and empowerment of people with disabilities in their design, delivery and evaluation to ensure a more transformative approach.

Inclusivity and value for money

Conclusion and Recommendation 9

(Conclusion 8, paragraph 57) **Conventional value-for-money frameworks overlook long-term social benefits, which undervalues inclusive, community-led approaches. The Government's efforts to advance inclusivity are further constrained by the limited availability of disaggregated data on how energy systems affect women, people with disabilities, or other marginalised groups.**

(Recommendation 9, paragraph 58) ***The FCDO should adopt a multi-dimensional evaluation framework for community-led energy projects, that accounts for long-term equity, accessibility, and system legitimacy,***

5 https://60decibels.com/insights/disability-insights-report/

by June 2026. To do so, it should support the collection of broader impact metrics through appropriate incentives. This should be the case irrespective of who is delivering the project funded by UK ODA, including development finance institutions.

Government Response: Partially Agree

37. The FCDO increasingly utilises disaggregated data, including gender, disability, and geographic information, to inform inclusive planning for clean energy access, though availability and consistency vary across programmes.

38. Geographic data is routinely collected for infrastructure projects, while detailed end-user data is often challenging for large-scale or indirect beneficiary interventions. However, market studies, surveys, and consultations help ensure responsiveness to diverse needs.

39. We acknowledge that disaggregated data on people with improved clean energy access is low and more could be done to improve this. The upcoming Portfolio Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) contract will make targeted improvements to climate finance KPIs and reporting systems to strengthen disaggregated data reporting on gender and disability. We will also work with value-for-money assessments for future climate finance, which would provide an opportunity to better integrate considerations of long-term social impacts and inclusivity into decision-making processes. In addition, we recognise the need to make better use of existing evidence on the social impacts and benefits of climate finance interventions to inform future approaches.

40. We are also exploring potential approaches to evaluating community-led projects via the Portfolio MEL contract which could include evaluation on long-term equity, accessibility and system legitimacy, aligned with our ICF GEDSI statement.

41. Participatory approaches to MEL are also important to understand community perceptions on whether the energy system is fair, inclusive and trustworthy.

42. At this stage, we are unable to commit to adopting a multi-dimensional evaluation framework for community-led energy projects by June 2026. Any decision on adopting a framework will depend on future resourcing beyond FY25/26 commitments.

4 Clean Energy for Climate

Climate Mitigation

(Conclusion 9, paragraph 65) ***The Government should not hide behind the complexities of the global clean energy transition. Aid must advance poverty alleviation while also contributing to climate mitigation and adaptation. While these objectives can sometimes pull in different directions, trade-offs should be openly acknowledged, publicly debated, and addressed through deliberate and transparent policy choices. This is not happening at present.***

Government Response

43. We acknowledge the complexity of balancing poverty alleviation with climate mitigation and adaptation and agree that these trade-offs should be addressed transparently. We are committed to ensuring that UK aid delivers on both objectives in a deliberate and evidence-based way. While these priorities can diverge, we are working to improve openness in decision-making and strengthen policy coherence. This includes publishing of clearer strategies, engaging stakeholders in dialogue, and embedding trade-off analysis into programme design to ensure choices are transparent and accountable. We are confident that our clean energy access programming is very much at the intersection of interventions targeting strong human development, economic, gender/inclusion, and climate and nature benefits.

(Recommendation 10, paragraph 66) ***In its response to this report, the Government should provide a clear definition of "clean energy" for ODA purposes, explicitly stating the energy sources supported, and their climate and other environmental impacts. This should also be published on the FCDO's website.***

Government Response: Agree

44. We account for all our ICF using the internationally agreed OECD-DAC guidelines for climate finance. These serve as a standardised reporting framework for climate-related development finance.

45. We report on ICF results on an annual basis. In our ICF indicator for reporting on clean energy capacity installed, 'clean energy' is defined as: "Low and zero carbon energy generation sources, including but not limited to the following technologies: wind power, solar photovoltaic (PV), concentrating solar power (CSP), marine energy (including wave energy and tidal energy), hydropower, 'clean coal' using carbon capture and storage (CCS), second generation biofuels, clean cookstoves, and biomass boilers and kilns for process heating/drying. It does not include nuclear energy." This guidance is published in the UK International Climate Finance Results: methodologies and reports–GOV.UK.[6]

(Recommendation 11, paragraph 67) ***The Government should require all energy access projects to include a clear assessment of trade-offs in funding bids, alongside a plan for monitoring impacts and communicating risks to stakeholders.***

Government Response: Partially Agree

46. We agree in principle that energy access projects should consider and communicate the key trade-offs inherent in their design—such as technology choice, affordability versus financial sustainability, speed versus inclusion, and mitigation-adaptation co-benefits—alongside proportionate plans for monitoring impacts and communicating risks to stakeholders.

47. FCDO business cases already assess options, counterfactuals, value for money, and risk, and require arrangements for monitoring and learning. To avoid creating undue burdens—particularly for smaller, locally-led partners—we will make these trade-offs more explicit within existing guidance, rather than introduce a separate, standalone requirement.

48. Our approach will include:

- Embedding a concise "trade-offs and choices" section in energy access bids, covering technology, targeting, affordability/tariffs, lifecycle operation and maintenance, and stakeholder inclusion.
- Requiring a proportionate risk-communication plan (e.g., community meetings, accessible summaries, feedback mechanisms) tailored to context and delivery model.
- Aligning these steps with the Programme Operating Framework (PrOF) and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) standards to ensure consistency and avoid duplication.

49. This approach strengthens transparency and accountability while maintaining flexibility and proportionality, ensuring that requirements do not disadvantage smaller or locally led implementers.

6 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-climate-finance-results

Climate Adaptation

Conclusion and Recommendation 12

(Conclusion 10, paragraph 69) ***The Government has not always fully recognised the synergies between energy access and climate adaptation, leading to siloed programming, despite the central role of resilient energy systems in supporting adaptation efforts.***

(Recommendation 12, paragraph 70) ***The Government must explore the synergies between global energy access and climate adaptation more fully. This could be done by facilitating collaborative research networks internationally to strengthen the knowledge base. Relevant Government programmes should also collaborate to identify options for deeper integration and progress should be tracked through a joint monitoring framework.***

Government Response: Partially Agree

50. The FCDO understands the interconnectedness between energy access and climate adaptation, including, critically, water security. If well designed, access to energy can help communities reduce their vulnerability to climate change. Social and economic benefits of energy access can contribute to building resilience to climate change, such as health, education, and economic opportunities. Conversely, energy systems and infrastructure need to be adapted and made more resilient to the impact of climate change.

51. We support collaborative research networks and capacity-building initiatives to strengthen the global knowledge base, while our coordination groups seek to align policy and delivery across departments. Progress is tracked through joint monitoring frameworks to maintain coherence and impact.

52. We agree that energy access and climate adaptation objectives could be better integrated across relevant programmes. This coordination is driven by cross-departmental groups and mainstreamed through the UK's ICF portfolio. We will explore upgrading the governance and coordination across the climate finance portfolio, building on the recommendations of the ICAI review into our Energy Transitions portfolio – and building on the Ayrton Fund experience.

53. There are further opportunities to increase integration and cross-team collaboration on energy access, including areas such as sustainable cooling and solar water pumping as they link with adaptation, as well as reducing pressure on forests and nature through transitions from firewood/charcoal to electricity. However, at this stage, decisions on resourcing prioritisation beyond FY25/26 have not yet been taken, but we commit to bearing the recommendation of the Committee in mind in allocations.

5 Research and Innovation for Scale

Conclusion and Recommendation 13

(Conclusion 11, paragraph 75) ***The Government's aid strategy rightly emphasises research and innovation, leveraging FCDO's distinctive ability to connect global expertise with local knowledge and fostering strong partnerships with the UK research community. However, overreliance on innovation carries risks that need to be acknowledged and mitigated.***

(Recommendation 13, paragraph 76) ***The Government should maintain its commitment to research and innovation while increasing investment in the operationalisation of existing, effective energy solutions. Funding mechanisms must bridge the gap between early-stage R&D and market-ready technologies, providing opportunities for commercialisation and ensuring sustained support for community-based systems.***

Government Response: Partially Agree

54. The FCDO's Research and Development ODA portfolio leverages UK scientific, engineering, business, and financing strengths to deliver practical, scalable innovations that address global development challenges. These include low-cost technologies and business models that help some of the poorest and most remote communities in the world to access clean energy. We have seen good success with some of the innovations supported under the Ayrton Fund in the last period, particularly the TEA and MECS programmes, which are moving to scale-up investment from FCDO-backed instruments and private investors. This includes Sheffield-based MOPO, which recently raised more than $7m from BII, raised additional investment from Octopus, and more recently partnered with International Finance Corporation (IFC) to extend its battery-as-a-service model in Africa, which has already delivered more than 30 million battery swaps across 7 African countries. Clean cooking innovators such as BURN and ATEC have also started to scale, raising significant investments from other funders, although not yet UK-backed instruments.

55. We agree on the importance of making transitions from R&D, to Demonstration, to at-scale investment more systematic, as well as accelerating and multiplying those transitions–including increasingly with locally-led solutions and UK-southern partnerships. We are developing a number of tools to help join up assessments and decisions between programmes and instruments, including a form of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system giving our programmes and partners better visibility of interactions and ongoing due diligences for example with individual innovators and businesses – which we would hope in due course to also extend to other development partners and investment funds. The TEA programme has also convened a Venture Facility Steering Group consisting of representatives of many of the investment instruments as well as the Tier 1 innovation partners, with a view to improving the co-ordination and flow of information, identifying gaps and disconnects in the continuum of capital, and filling these gaps as necessary.

56. However, we acknowledge the concerns around overreliance on innovation and share the view that risks must be managed effectively. To mitigate these, we will balance innovation with proven approaches, embed local ownership and co-design to ensure relevance and inclusivity, strengthen risk management and adaptive programming to respond quickly to underperformance, and invest in enabling environments and capacity-building so innovations complement strong systems rather than replace them.

57. While we recognise the benefit of increasing investment in the operationalisation of existing, effective energy solutions, at this stage, we are unable to make firm commitments to any programme or policy beyond FY25/26. However, we commit to bearing the recommendation of the Committee in mind in allocations.

(Recommendation 14, paragraph 78) ***The Government should, where appropriate, work with ODA-recipient governments to develop policy, regulatory frameworks and viable, scalable models that enable community energy projects, drawing on UK expertise.***

Government Response: Agree

58. The FCDO agrees with this, and it is an area of work we already offer through our ICF Technical Assistance work. FCDO works closely with DESNZ and UK industry to incorporate lessons learnt from the UK's own transition story. For example, our Green Cities, Infrastructure and Energy Programme (GCIEP) works with UK energy regulator Ofgem to deploy Technical Assistance in developing countries. FCDO also have significant support across our investment programmes and the grant programmes, and we have comprehensive activity to catalyse private sector investment, where there is a strong focus on technical assistance and policy, creating the right regulatory environment.

59. The Climate Compatible Growth (CCG) research programme works to ensure that community energy needs are factored into national energy planning and policy, by empowering local stakeholders with the tools and evidence needed, and through contribution to policy processes, for example the Decentralised Energy Planning Guidelines recently presented to Zambia's Ministry of Energy.

60. UK PACT (Partnering for Accelerated Climate Transitions)'s energy programming has helped institutionalise county energy planning, influenced national clean cooking policy implementation, and built foundational tools for better Green House Gas accounting in the power sector. Government counterparts like the Ministry of Energy and Petroleum and county governments have increased capacity to plan, model, and finance low-carbon energy systems.

61. We have also supported community-scale mini-grid policy and regulation work with the Governments of Sierra Leone and Mozambique. For instance, the Rural Electrification in Sierra Leone programme delivered solar and battery-based village mini-grid systems to remote rural communities in Sierra Leone alongside The Powering Sierra Leone's Hospital's programme, where FCDO has installed stand-alone solar systems in seven off-grid hospitals and 25 community health centres, replacing diesel generators, improving maternal and child health services, and supporting a maintenance regime with the Ministry of Health. BRILHO Mozambique has enabled clean energy access for over 3.1 million people, supported the distribution of over 375,200 Solar Household Systems, 252,200 improved cookstoves, and mobilised £41.7m in private investment, avoided 790,100 tonnes of CO2 emissions and created more than 2,400 jobs and provided technical support to the Government of Mozambique in drafting regulatory framework for off-grid areas.

62. The UK Government is exploring ways to enhance its climate, nature and energy expertise and advice to countries to develop policy, regulatory frameworks and viable, scalable models to improve energy access. This will build on the experience of successful programming to-date and improve the offer to countries, leveraging relevant UK expertise.

Conclusion and Recommendation 15

(Conclusion 12, paragraph 81) ***Sustained progress in community energy depends on fostering local innovation and building robust capacity at multiple levels, from grassroots technical skills to manufacturing ecosystems.***

(Recommendation 15, paragraph 82) ***The Government should use its convening power to foster grassroots innovation by creating platforms for young people and local communities to co-design energy solutions. This could involve facilitating partnerships, research exchanges, and mentorship programmes between UK institutions and counterparts in lower-income countries.***

Government Response: Agree

63. The FCDO agrees with this and remains committed to using its convening power to bring together communities, innovators, and institutions to co-design solutions that deliver improved energy access. As part of the UK's four development shifts, we will focus on moving from 'International Intervention to Local Leadership', working increasingly with local partners including civil society. The TEA programme supports African (and wider southern) energy access innovation, capacity and leadership including through master's courses, job placements, and in-work leadership training (including the Future Females course for female leaders). 2,000 Africans have already benefitted from leadership training in energy access businesses and 1,000 young Africans from job placements.

64. The FCDO also co-funds 30 TEA Chevening Scholarships to study at clean energy master's courses in the UK (20 have so far completed their studies). The scholars are from sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and the Indo-Pacific region, and gain access to world class UK University education, as well as a TEA mentor and opportunities to connect with other TEA researchers, and tailored career support. The TEA platform finishes its second phase in March 2027, but a business case extension is being prepared for consideration in the first half of 2026, with a view to extending the programme to at least 2030 (the SDG7 target date).

65. The Climate Compatible Growth (CCG) programme hosts a regular series of 'summer schools', inviting young academics, policymakers and stakeholders to attend intensive training courses in the use of open-source energy systems planning tools, with mentoring opportunities. To date more than 800 participants from developing countries have been trained in these tools, with more than a third of participants being women.

66. The UK has also been contributing to community-led energy access through our evaluation and learning. FCDO ODA Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL) evidence suggests that longer-term and more effective energy access intervention outcomes requires support to locally-led action and equitable partnerships between north and south. An example this demonstrated via the outcomes of the Rural Renewable Energy Project (RREP)[7] which highlighted how locally owned systems improved access to electricity in health clinics and villages and assessed the socioeconomic benefits over time. Moving forward, in our policy and programme delivery, we will continue to embed lessons learnt, including on how to better work with local partnerships.

7 https://iati.fcdo.gov.uk/iati_documents/D0006802.pdf

6 Enabling Conditions for Success

Predictability

Conclusion and Recommendation 16

(Conclusion 13, paragraph 86) ***Without predictable support, both the quality and effectiveness of UK-funded energy access initiatives, as well as the expertise built up through years of engagement, are at risk. We recognise the importance of the new arrangements for ODA allocations in improving predictability at the departmental level. However, we would like to see this directly translated into greater programming predictability, to allow for stable planning, sustained partnerships, and long-term impact. Projects should be supported over their full life cycle to ensure the long-term success of UK support.***

(Recommendation 16, paragraph 87) ***The Government should commit to multi-year funding structures that support projects across their full life cycle. This should include not only initial deployment but also ongoing maintenance, technical assistance, and governance support. The aim is to ensure that local communities can benefit from energy systems over the long term and are able to become self-sustaining as soon as possible.***

Government Response: Partially Agree

67. In our ODA allocations and interventions, the UK prioritises predictability and stability in departmental budgets. Current arrangements provide clear annual allocations and include break clauses in contracts to manage risk while protecting live agreements. These measures aim to balance fiscal constraints with programming certainty, enabling teams to plan effectively and sustain partnerships, while retaining flexibility to adapt to changing priorities.

68. We recognise that projects cannot always be supported through their full life cycle for a range of reasons. Recent ICAI reviews highlight that past volatility in ODA budgets disrupted delivery, weakened partnerships, and risked losing technical expertise built over years. ICAI's 2025 energy transition review found UK aid had strong impact but its portfolio was broad and diverse and risked a lack of coherence. It also identified the need for patient investment to support developing countries to adopt or transition to clean energy, and the tension against the shorter timeframes within which private investors tended to operate (the required finance exceeds public funds alone).

69. Moving forward, we aim to prioritise multi-year planning and greater programming predictability, subject to future years' budget allocations, to allow for stable delivery, sustained partnerships, and long-term impact. This includes supporting projects through their full life cycle, reducing fragmentation, and embedding resilience into programme design. By doing so, we will safeguard the quality and effectiveness of UK-funded energy access initiatives and maintain the expertise built through years of engagement.

Partnerships

(Recommendation 17, paragraph 91) ***The Government should ensure that funding through multilaterals offers opportunities to scale community energy projects. It should take a global leadership role to guarantee that communities benefit from energy access projects in ways that empower them. This could include facilitating the development of best practice guidelines, encouraging knowledge sharing on successful models and supporting co-designed pilot initiatives that demonstrate replicable approaches.***

Government Response: Agree

70. The FCDO agrees with this, and we are leading by example with our domestic commitments, mobilising public and private capital, forging partnerships, working with partners and utilising the expertise of UK PLC including from industry, private sector and our universities to accelerate and scale support for the global transition to a low-carbon future.

71. The FCDO seeks to ensure that all its programmes have a robust monitoring and evaluation approach to ensure that learnings on best practices and pilot initiatives are disseminated, to maximise the potential demonstration effect. This enables our bilateral programming to inform the multilateral system.

72. The UK's long-running engagement with key Multilateral Development Bank (MDB) energy access instruments and dedicated funds, including the World Bank Group's Energy Sector Management Assistance Programme (ESMAP) and African Development Bank's Sustainable Energy Fund for Africa (SEFA), has provided foundational support for Mission 300 and the associated initiatives that the MDBs are developing to scale energy access in support of countries delivering on their Mission 300 compacts. UK contributions to these MDB funds have provided a conduit for cross learning with our bilateral programmes, for mutual benefit and impact. We intend to continue this engagement in the coming period, further to the UK decision to emphasise multilateralism as a 0.3% donor, and actively influence, inform and drive innovations and community benefits from the significant multilateral investments in energy access under Mission 300.

Public Benefits

Conclusion and Recommendation 18

(Conclusion 14, paragraph 95) ***The Government should embrace the financial and strategic value of its development work, both in generating viable market opportunities and in providing insights that can strengthen domestic energy policy and practice***

(Recommendation 18, paragraph 96) ***The Government should formalise a mechanism for systematic two-way learning between domestic and international energy initiatives and formally identify ways UK businesses could grow their international footprint through community energy investments. It should be in place by June 2026***

Government Response: Partially Agree

73. The FCDO works closely with DESNZ as well as UK industry to incorporate and share lessons learnt from the UK's transition story. For example, our Green Cities, Infrastructure and Energy Programme (GCIEP) works with UK energy regulator Ofgem to deploy Technical Assistance in developing countries.

74. The FCDO has also been contributing to DESNZ-led energy access through our evaluation and learning. FCDO ODA MEL evidence suggests that longer term and more effective energy access outcomes require support to locally-led action and equitable north-south partnerships. We will continue to embed lessons learnt in policy and programme delivery, including on how to better work with local partnerships.

75. We recognise, however, that there is scope to strengthen two-way learning and collaboration within our clean energy interventions. The FCDO will deepen its collaboration with DESNZ on energy through enhanced governance, joint-delivery arrangements, tracking and co-ordination– building on the success of the Ayrton Fund approach on RD&D in the last ICF period. While at this stage we are unable to commit to implementing a formalised mechanism, we commit to bearing the recommendation of the Committee in mind in allocations.

76. Through the Ayrton Fund for clean energy innovation, the FCDO has also commissioned a study on UK secondary benefits, to be completed by March 2026. The study will gather best practice on reporting and communicating the wider economic, social, and environmental benefits of UK-supported clean energy programmes, including opportunities for UK businesses to expand internationally through community energy investments. Findings will inform future programme design and strengthen mechanisms for systematic two-way learning between domestic and international energy initiatives.