

Climate change, development and COP26 – Written evidence submitted by the UN World Food Programme to the International Development Committee

Introduction and recommendations

1. The UN World Food Programme (WFP) is the world's largest humanitarian organization, saving lives in emergencies and using food assistance to build a pathway to peace, stability and prosperity for people recovering from conflict, disasters, and the impacts of climate change. In recognition of WFP's work at the triple nexus, it was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2020 for its efforts to combat hunger and its contribution towards peace and stability.
2. Saving lives in the wake of climate-related disasters is an essential part of WFP's mandate. Together with partners, WFP encourages the integration of a variety of technologies, services, and tools to better equip countries and communities to adapt to the impacts of climate change. This includes diversifying livelihoods; protecting assets, incomes and crops with insurance and access to financial services; improving access to markets; and rehabilitating land. It also means working with governments to ensure these initiatives can be incorporated into national systems, including early warning, social protection, and financial/insurance mechanisms.
3. As President of the G7 and COP26, the UK is in a unique position to drive global action on climate change, adaptation, and resilience, particularly as it seeks to place climate change at the centre of 'Global Britain'. As such, WFP recommends the following priority actions for the UK Government:
 - Ensure that the process for setting objectives for COP26 is inclusive and incorporates the views of the Least Developed Countries and the countries most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, particularly on adaptation, resilience, finance, and loss and damage.
 - Provide detail on how the UK's GBP 11.6 billion International Climate Finance (ICF) commitment will be allocated, in particular funding that will be allocated to adaptation activities for the Least Developed Countries and the countries most vulnerable to the to the effects of climate change. To this end, we recommend that the Government's international development strategy be published before COP26.
 - Systematically integrate environmental considerations and nature-based solutions within UK Aid-funded programmes for tackling hunger and malnutrition globally as part of the Government's new international development strategy.
 - Integrate food security in a changing climate as a core element of the UK Government's climate adaptation agenda at COP26 and beyond. For example, include the Agriculture & Food Security workstream as a priority of the Adaptation Action Coalition (co-led by the UK) in 2021 and mobilise funds for cross-cutting

climate adaptation programmes accordingly through ICF-funded projects, such as the Climate Investment Funds and the Global Environment Facility (see information on link between climate change and food security below).

- Support countries, through the FCDO and BEIS, to develop and enhance early warning and emergency preparedness systems, such as social protection systems and safety nets which are shock-responsive and adaptive to rapidly changing environmental conditions.
 - Leverage the UK's soft power superpower status and COP26 Presidency to drive action for the international community (particularly the G7) to pre-position contingency finance for agreed priority risks which is triggered by climate forecasts. This will enable resources to be deployed before climate disasters strike and crisis finance can reach vulnerable communities when it can have the most impact.
 - As part of the GBP 11.6 billion ICF commitment, prioritise funding which enables communities and governments to access climate insurance and financial services to protect them from climate shocks.
 - We suggest having a forum at COP26 for the Adaptation Action Coalition (co-led by the UK) to open a dialogue with partners, such as WFP, about accelerating global action on adaptation to achieve a climate resilient world by 2030.
4. WFP welcomes the opportunity to have a dialogue with the UK Government about smarter humanitarian aid that frontloads investments in country systems to forecast, track, and manage risk – and helps them to prevent predictable emergencies. These systems must include priorities to:
- Restore degraded ecosystems as natural buffers against climate hazards – in line with the Integrated Review's prioritisation of nature-based solutions
 - Protect the most vulnerable with safety nets and insurance against climate extremes
 - Anticipate climate hazards before they turn into disasters – using early warning systems to trigger pre-positioned financing for preventative action (see box on anticipatory action in Bangladesh at foot).

Climate change and food security

5. Climate change is one of the leading causes of hunger. In 2019, 34 million people were acutely food insecure due to climate extremes, representing 25 percent of the total number. In a world which is 2°C warmer, it is estimated that an additional 189 million people will be food insecure, while in a world which is 4°C warmer, 1.8 billion more people are projected to become vulnerable to food insecurity. Today, approximately 108 million people are in need of humanitarian aid every year as a result of climate-related disasters (floods, storms, droughts, and wildfires); this figure is estimated to rise to 200 million by 2050.
6. Climate change impacts on food security in two main ways. Firstly, through extreme events such as droughts, floods and storms which have the potential to destroy crops, critical

infrastructure, and key community assets therefore impacting livelihoods and exacerbating poverty. Secondly, through long-term and gradual climate risks. Such climate stresses include irregular rainfall, advancing soil erosion, rising salinity in soils and groundwater, shifting patterns of pests and diseases, and growing heat stress in crops and livestock.

7. Climate change acts as a risk multiplier for development, making existing problems worse. In contexts that are already prone to social tensions, climatic factors can amplify existing inequalities around access to natural resources, intensify conflicts, and trigger migration and forced displacement. 12 out of 20 of the countries ranked most vulnerable and least ready to adapt to the effects of climate change are also affected by conflict.

How WFP is supporting global climate action and disaster risk reduction

8. WFP works with partners to design and implement a range of tools to enable communities and governments to achieve climate resilience, employing integrated climate risk management, disaster risk reduction, and climate adaptation approaches.
9. With the vast majority of the world's hungry exposed to climate shocks, eradicating hunger requires bold efforts to improve people's ability to restore degraded landscapes as natural buffers against climate shocks anticipate climate extremes and take action before they turn into humanitarian emergencies; and protect the most vulnerable with financial safety net solutions against climate hazards.
10. **Restore – nature-based solutions and communal infrastructure to reduce climate risk:** Through WFP's Food Assistance for Assets (FFA) programmes, vulnerable people in hazard-prone settings engage in large communal works programmes which restore natural buffer zones and infrastructure to reduce the impacts of climate-related hazards. On average, between 2014 and 2019, WFP invested over USD 120 million per year in activities to reduce vulnerability against climate disasters. Over this period, FFA programmes rehabilitated 1.5 million hectares of land, 78,909 km of roads, and established 53,589 ponds, wells, and reservoirs.
11. In Chad, working in partnership with 150,000 beneficiaries, WFP works in the arid Sahel Belt to establish tree nurseries which produce around 1 million tree seedlings a year. These trees help to reclaim degraded land, recharge the groundwater tables, capture thousands of tons of carbon dioxide, and enable the production of nutritious food.
12. **Anticipate – pre-positioned finance and preventative action before disaster strikes:** Through its climate analysis work, WFP helps governments and partners to better understand the impacts of climate change on food security and nutrition in specific countries. This informs the identification of the most appropriate measures that need to be included in climate change adaptation policies and planning and help to identify key activities to strengthen resilience of the most vulnerable. WFP food security analysts translate climate and weather information into early warnings for hazards such as droughts and floods. Coupling this information with detailed analyses of household vulnerability, WFP

and partners can assess how these events will affect people's food security and ensure early action.

13. WFP is using its skills in risk analysis, early warning, and emergency preparedness to trigger forecast-based, anticipatory action at community level before humanitarian crises materialise. WFP is implementing such programmes in 14 countries. WFP and the UK Met Office are enhancing analytical climate forecasting tools to make critical data and analysis (climate maps, country specific climate projections, forecast impact on crops etc.) available to decision makers to formulate appropriate actions to better adapt to climate change in future.
14. In Nepal, WFP is working in 19 flood-prone districts to strengthen the national early warning system for floods and integrate protocols for forecast-based actions at the national and sub-national levels. In 2020, WFP triggered cash transfers to 13,600 families in anticipation of flooding events. These investments reduce the average cost of an emergency response by over two-thirds.
15. **Protect – climate risk insurance as safety nets for the most vulnerable:** WFP is the leading UN agency making climate risk insurance work for food insecure populations. In 2020, 2.3 million people in 13 countries were protected with climate risk insurance solutions that have been developed and supported by WFP.
16. Through the 'R4' Rural Resilience initiative, a WFP-supported microinsurance scheme, WFP has protected 190,000 farming households in 10 countries (Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Senegal, Zambia, Zimbabwe) from the risks of irregular rainfall or floods, safeguarding the food security of 1 million people in times of a global pandemic.
17. Through its 'African Risk Capacity (ARC) Replica' initiative, WFP has protected 1.3 million people in Mali, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Zimbabwe, and the Gambia from catastrophic drought events. This protection was essential to augment national social protection frameworks while countries were grappling with the impacts of compound disasters, including Covid-19.

UK leadership on climate action and COP26

18. Climate change is a cross-cutting strategic priority and should be integrated across all development assistance strategies. The UK is positioned as a world leader in the response to climate change, having led the way in the G7 as the first country to legislate for net zero, and recently having committed GBP 11.6 billion in ICF over the next five years and placed climate action at the heart of the new 'Global Britain' project.
19. WFP welcomes the articulation in the Integrated Review that tackling climate change and biodiversity loss will be the UK's international priority through COP26 and beyond. In particular, we welcome priority actions to strengthen adaptation to the effects of climate

change, supporting the most vulnerable worldwide, and to invest in a 'nature positive' economy by increasing finance for nature-based solutions to climate change.

20. However, the unprecedented challenges of climate change have fundamentally shifted the crisis landscape. The current siloed way that risks are managed does not take into account how increasing climate-related, health, and conflict risks interact and compound each other. Understanding a range of risks in a holistic and coordinated way is vital if we are to be prepared for the future threats.
21. WFP supports the close alignment of ICF with the UK's strategic framework for ODA, including in areas such as conflict resolution. Evidence from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) demonstrates that cross-cutting WFP FFA programmes in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to rehabilitate irrigation canals and water pipelines in cross-border villages not only enhanced access to irrigation water and increased agricultural productivity, but also prevented inter-community conflict. By helping to build resilience, WFP contributes across all the fields of humanitarian, development, peace, and climate action.
22. As the UK takes over the presidency of the G7 and COP 26, WFP supports the Centre for Disaster Protection's 'Crisis Lookout' campaign and calls on the UK and G7 leaders to:
 - Predict to improve risk information and the prioritisation of crises globally, regionally, and nationally.
 - Prepare responses better by agreeing to make pre-arranged finance the primary way that crises are paid for, so that funding gets where it is needed faster and with greater impact. As crisis needs increase, it is vital that we make the best use of crisis funding so that more people can be supported more effectively. When Covid-19 hit, just 2% of global funding was planned and arranged in advance.
23. Zero hunger cannot be achieved by humanitarian aid alone. We need investments in systems to change lives and protect people from climate extremes before they turn into humanitarian disasters. Climate hazards are predictable and should be treated as such. In a world of rising risks, the best strategy is to invest in protecting lives before they need saving.

Anticipatory action in Bangladesh

On 4 July 2020 a high probability of severe flooding was forecast for mid-July along the Jamuna River in Bangladesh, with one-third of the area's total population likely to be affected. That warning was the trigger for the UN to immediately release USD 5.2 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to help communities urgently prepare and protect themselves.

The money went to three participating agencies – WFP, FAO and UNFPA to enable them to prepare to distribute cash, livestock feed, storage drums, and hygiene, dignity, and health kits. On 11 July, the activation trigger was reached when forecasting predicted the floods would reach critical levels in five days. At this point, aid workers began distributing the aid.

WFP delivered cash assistance of USD 53 to almost 20,000 households (around 100,000

people) via mobile banking. This allowed families to spend the money as they chose – to protect themselves from the flooding and build their resilience. They were able to allocate the money for food, medicines, clothes, or transportation away from the flood sites while the waters were at their highest.

This is the latest example of anticipatory humanitarian action. Developments in data and predictive analytics make it possible to anticipate when disaster is about to strike and take action in advance. This approach offers a more dignified, swifter, cheaper and more efficient solution to humanitarian needs.