

Submission to International Development Committee's Inquiry into 'Climate change, development and COP26'

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Islamic Relief UK is a humanitarian aid and development agency. We are one of the world's largest Muslim faith-inspired charities, with over 100 offices in 40 countries worldwide. Islamic Relief works with the people most affected to respond to the climate crisis with over 50 projects in 19 countries in Africa and Asia. Empowering communities, families and individuals to emerge out of poverty and suffering, we help people become better able to adapt to the challenges they face now and in the future.

1. **Poverty reduction focus**

1.1. Recognising government's response: "DFID's approach for a number of years has recognised that tackling climate change and its impact is inherently bound up with development and poverty reduction. So, it is right to pursue our climate change objectives through our work with countries, through our economic development work, through research and development, and through our international engagement and support to multilateral organisations" ([House of Commons International Development Committee \(2019\) UK aid for combating climate change: Government Response to the Committee's Eleventh Report](#))

1.2 Islamic Relief's believes that the alleviation of poverty is crucial to adaptation - enhancing adaptive capacity, building resilience and reducing vulnerability. People in poverty tend to live in areas more susceptible to climate change and in housing that is less resistant; lose relatively more when affected; have fewer resources to mitigate the effects; and get less support from social safety nets or the financial system to prevent or recover from the impact. Their livelihoods and assets are more exposed (FAO 2018), and they are more vulnerable to natural disasters that bring disease, crop failure, spikes in food prices and death or disability (World Bank, 2019)'

(https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WGIIAR5-Chap14_FINAL.pdf)

1.3 Islamic Relief's work is mainly concerned with enabling strategies that will be most effective at helping households adapt to changes in climate. Our extensive experience in poverty reduction over many years, built on reflective engagement with people, generates long-term resilience of families

and communities, encourages strategies that will be most effective at helping households adapt to changes in climate.

1.4 Government should be funding, increasing capacity and facilitating transfer and exchange of knowledge to towards its stated commitment to development and poverty reduction intrinsic to climate adaptation. It is important the people most affected and most marginalised, especially those living in extreme poverty, are at the centre of its efforts such as support for the Risk-informed Early Action Partnership (REAP), LDC Initiative for Effective Adaptation and Resilience (LIFE AR). The [Adaptation Action Coalition's](#) plans should also review the topics selected (health, infrastructure and water) with these people at the centre of scoping, planning and implementation. The UK led Call for Action: Raising Ambition for Climate Adaptation and Resilience says 'we need systemic change ...which puts adaptation at the centre of decision-making ... and ...immediate action now to protect people, economies and the environment'.

2. International Climate Finance strategy, transparency and aid cuts.

2.1 While climate finance overall is at nothing like the levels promised in the Paris Agreement, funding for adaptation lags significantly behind any notion of 'balance' with mitigation finance.

2.2 Loans predominate in contexts where grants are necessary. In the countries where Islamic Relief works, basic services and social safety nets for the poor are becoming weakened by the debt burden at just the time when they are most needed to create the platform for climate resilience. There is climate crisis induced debt, but also debt induced climate crises.

2.3 At their spring meetings the World Bank, IMF and OECD recognised that the vulnerabilities of the debt burden climate change environmental degradation are systemic risks.

2.4 The government should note the findings of the newly established working party of the IMF, World Bank and OECD on forgiving debt in exchange for "green" investments.

2.5 Funding needs to be targeted at the most vulnerable countries, and locally to people facing acute vulnerability while living in extreme poverty.

2.6 Islamic Relief has been exploring the 'triple nexus' of development, humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding in several climate vulnerable countries. Climate funding must be conflict sensitive so it

does not exacerbate the drivers of fragility and contributes to maintaining and restoring harmony between communities.

2.7 The UK government's suspension of the legally binding commitment to 0.7% GNI for ODA without new and additional climate finance under the UNFCCC means that all its climate finance now comes from a shrinking aid budget at the cost of other development and humanitarian priorities.

2.8 In the UK Biennial Finance Communication to the UNFCCC submitted in December 2020, does not constitute new and additional climate finance as meant under the convention.

The extent to which the Government's work to date on climate change and development has taken the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the needs of low-and-middle income countries and vulnerable groups into account;

3. **SDG alignment/coherence**

3.1 The [IPCC Special Report on 1.5°C](#) explores the synergies and trade-offs for climate mitigation and adaptation actions with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under the Agenda 2030. Climate change impacts and responses are closely linked to sustainable development which balances social well-being, economic prosperity and environmental protection.

3.2 The SDGs, the report notes, 'provide an established framework for assessing the links between limiting global warming of 1.5°C or 2°C and development goals that include poverty eradication, reducing inequalities, and climate action' ([D2.1](#))

3.3 The report also shows that national mitigation and adaptation plans, if carefully designed, will benefit sustainable development and poverty reduction as well as contribute to limiting global warming to 1.5°C and create more resilient communities and countries ([D.3 in IPCC summary for policy makers](#))

3.4 Sustainable development supports and enables the fundamental societal and systems transitions and transformations that will help limit global warming to 1.5°C. It can achieve ambitious mitigation and adaptation in conjunction with poverty eradication and efforts to reduce inequalities.

3.4 The IPCC report shows that in the context of sustainable development, international cooperation can create an enabling environment for limiting warming to 1.5°C in all countries and for all people. Such cooperation is critical for developing countries and the most marginalised people.

3.5 The 1.5-°C Threshold should be a guiding principle of the 2030 Agenda. The [IPCC Special Report on 1.5°C](#) suggests that ‘limiting global warming to 1.5°C rather than 2°C will make it markedly easier to achieve many aspects of sustainable development, with greater potential to eradicate poverty and reduce inequalities’. However, “warming of 1.5°C is not considered ‘safe’ for most nations, communities, ecosystems and sectors and poses significant risks to natural and human systems as compared to current warming of 1°C”

3.6 While there are significant synergies with the Sustainable Development Goals and pathways compatible with the Paris Agreement, exceeding 1.5°C risks reversing development achievements and excluding millions of people from sustainable development. Rapid and massive reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in the next decade are critical to avoiding such impacts, promoting sustainable development and protecting ecosystems.

3.7 Limiting warming to 1.5°C is, therefore, an essential prerequisite to achieving the SDGs. Development pathways compatible with limiting global warming to 1.5°C should therefore be a guiding principle of the planning and implementation of all Sustainable Development Goals.

3.8 The Climate and SDG agendas should be linked. In such initiatives as Adaptation Action Agenda 2030 and Decade of Action, links and synergies between Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement have been made apparent, but there is also an opportunity to use climate action to reinforce the integrated, indivisible and interlinked nature of the SDGs.

3.9 Several SDG themes (i.e. socio-economic sectoral categories) are addressed by numerous climate actions, indicating that there are multiple opportunities for policy coherence. This can be a major contribution of climate action to the delivery of coherent cross-goal delivery of Agenda 2030.

3.10 The IPCC report found in particular that there were ‘robust’ synergies with SDG3 (health), 7 (clean energy), 11 (cities and communities), 12 responsible consumption and production, 14 (oceans) and 15 (life on land). (<https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/spm/> D.4.2.1) It further found that 1.5°C pathways that include low energy demand, low material consumption and low GHG-intensive

food consumption have ‘the most pronounced synergies and the lowest number of trade-offs with respect to sustainable development and the SDGs’. (<https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/spm/> D.4.2) Analysis has shown that links between existing NDCs and the SDGs are found in the areas of water, food and energy. SEI (2017) Exploring connections between the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Stockholm: SEI
<https://mediamanager.sei.org/documents/Publications/SEI-PB-2017-NDC-SDG-Connections.pdf>

3.11 The social SDGs are highly under-represented in NDC commitments compared to the environmental and economic goals; in particular health, education and gender equality (SDGs 3, 4 and 5, respectively). Reflecting the findings of the IPCC on climate-resilient development pathways and “the importance of addressing structural, intersecting inequalities, marginalisation, and multidimensional poverty” to “transform the development pathways themselves toward greater social and environmental sustainability, equity, resilience, and justice” (SEI (2017) Exploring connections between the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Stockholm: SEI <https://mediamanager.sei.org/documents/Publications/SEI-PB-2017-NDC-SDG-Connections.pdf>), along with the multiple connections between climate vulnerability and poverty, more ambitious NDCs should account for social as well as the environmental goals of Agenda 2030.

3.12 The new IPCC Assessment Report AR6 (due in 2022) will be taking as a starting point ‘the significance of sectoral and regional climate risks to natural and human systems and their interactions in the context of culture, values, ethics, identity, behaviour, historical experience, and knowledge systems (e.g., indigenous and local)’ (https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/03/AR6_WGII_outlines_P46.pdf). It is important that these metaphysical and ethical considerations are factored in to both climate action and the implementation of the SDGs. This is a field where Islamic Relief as a faith inspired organisation is well rehearsed. We have found repeatedly that our humanitarian and develop efforts have been enriched because of people’s implicit trust in our explicit core values of sincerity, excellence, compassion, social justice and stewardship.

3.13 Despite environmental goals being overall more represented in the NDCs than social ones, many countries do not make explicit plans to realize potential for nature-based solutions, that could help deliver SDG 14 (life below water) and 15 (life on land) as well as contribute to climate mitigation and resilience, depending on the location and planned activities.

3.14 Meeting the climate targets will overall contribute to meeting the SDG 2030 goals. However, it is imperative that we move beyond the discussions and agreements, to elaborating the specific trade-offs and benefits/co-benefits that come with pursuing SDG 13 and the other SDGs on a national level. Furthermore, there is a clear need for much more disaggregated data to assess climate action impacts on the most vulnerable, and monitoring adaptation efforts.

3.15 Links between the climate and SDG agenda should be exploited at every opportunity during 2021 and beyond. As the 'build back better' and build forward' narratives develop in the post-COVID recovery period countries must be encouraged to reaffirm their commitment to enhanced institutional coordination between the SDG and Paris Agreement. This needs to be taken into account when designing post-COVID national planning cycles allowing joined-up implementation and adjusting implementation efforts based on both agendas.

3.16 Considering committed climate actions and SDG targets together will help avoid duplication of effort and take full advantage of opportunities for more efficient budget allocation and raising of financial resources for implementation. Taking into account SDG commitments can help countries to ensure that recovery programmes align with climate actions that promote wider social, economic and environmental ambitions.

3.17 Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement through the enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) need to be planned and implemented holistically and addressed with coherent policies that help to realize co-benefits. Policymakers need to take full advantage of the 2021 SDG review and related key events, namely the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in July, the UNSG and High Level Dialogue on Energy, and the Food Systems Summit in September.

3.18 The COP26 in November and the preceding intersessional work provide opportunity to reinforce to mutual benefits of taking the Paris Agreement and Agenda 2030 as a holistic package to be embraced by national and sub-national planning.

3.19 it is critical to acknowledge that climate action is nowhere near the level necessary to reach the 1.5 C threshold of the Paris Agreement and, given the gap in attention to the issues throughout 2020

it is therefore necessary to focus again on the third goal of the UNSG Climate Summit at the end of 2019 to “leverage progress in key areas to kick-start an acceleration process.”