

ISLAMIC RELIEF CLIMATE POLICY

OUR POSITION

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Glossary

Adaptation: The process of adjustment to actual or expected climate change and its effects to lessen harm or take advantage of beneficial opportunities; building the capacity of individuals and communities to reduce their vulnerabilities.

Advocate: To influence the decisions of a government or other authority.

Biodiversity: The variety of life on Earth and the natural patterns it forms: the animals, plants, fungi, bacteria and other intertwined lifeforms within any ecosystem.

Campaign: To carry out a set of activities over a period of time in order to achieve something such as social or political change.

Capacity building: The practice of enhancing the strengths and attributes of an individual, community, society, or organisation and the resources available to them to respond to change.

Carbon dioxide (CO₂): A naturally occurring gas and the principal greenhouse gas resulting from human activities, including burning fossil fuels from fossil carbon deposits, such as oil, gas and coal, burning biomass, land use changes and industrial processes such as cement production.

Climate change: Also known as climate breakdown and global warming, this is the consequence of our planet heating up. The Earth has warmed by an average of 1 degree Celsius (1°C) in the last century and global temperature continues to rise. This is caused by people burning fossil fuels, farming and the destruction of forests. It makes weather more extreme and unpredictable.

Climate finance: Local, national or transnational financing that seeks to support mitigation and adaptation actions that will address climate change.

Community: A geographically bound social grouping with a shared fate or challenge, such as climate change, which includes relationships between people and institutions that extend beyond the location and across time.

Disaster risk reduction (DRR): Anticipating risks from future disasters, reducing existing exposure, hazards, or vulnerability and improving resilience.

Ecosystem: An ecosystem includes all of the living things – plants, animals and organisms – in a given area that interact with each other and their physical environment, including the climate, soil and atmosphere.

Food security: Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

Just transition: Moving to a more sustainable economy in a way that is fair to everyone.

Livelihoods: The capabilities, assets – both material and social – and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from current and future stress and shocks, while not undermining the natural resource base.

Loss and Damage: (capitalised throughout as a technical term): The impacts and adverse effects of climate change that can no longer be avoided through adaptation or mitigation. Loss and Damage can result from sudden-onset events, such as cyclones, as well as slow-onset processes, such as rising sea levels. Loss and Damage can occur in both human systems, such as livelihoods, and natural systems, such as biodiversity.

Marginalised: Prevented from full participation in social, economic and political life.

Mitigation (of climate change): Efforts to cut or prevent the emission of greenhouse gases, to limit future warming and to remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere through actions such as planting trees.

Nature-based solutions: Making use of natural ecosystems to improve resilience and adaptation and extract CO₂ from the atmosphere, such as by developing green spaces in rural and urban settings, or protecting and restoring mangroves, dunes, wetlands and upland buffers.

Resilience: The capacity of a system to anticipate, adapt to, and absorb. The capacity of a community to cope with a hazardous event or disturbance, responding or reorganising in ways that maintain its essential function, identity and structure, while also maintaining the capacity for adaptation, learning and transformation.

Risk: A combination of the probability of an event and its negative consequences.

System: A set or arrangement of things so related or connected as to form a unity or organic whole.

Vulnerable: Able to be easily physically, emotionally, or mentally hurt, influenced, or attacked, as well as a lack of capacity to cope and adapt.

Introduction

The breakdown of the world's weather systems is the biggest threat facing humanity today. Greenhouse gases (GHGs) from human activity emitted into the atmosphere are causing the globe to rapidly heat up. The effects of this warming are being felt the world over, but this is particularly true in countries and communities in which Islamic Relief helps people emerge from poverty and suffering. Unless the emissions stop, we all face a catastrophe of food insecurity and social breakdown which will lead to the deaths of billions of people.

Islamic Relief supports all efforts that will stop this happening. The goal is that heating already in the system will be limited to 1.5 degrees. This can be done, but only through dramatic transformations in the way economies are managed.

There is now a scientific consensus that climate change is man-made and increasing.¹ Religious leaders and followers everywhere have mobilised, while humanitarian and development organisations have joined business, governments and institutions to construct a future which seeks to reduce the threat and manage the consequences. People across the planet, often led by youth, are coming together to tackle humanity's biggest challenge.

Since at least 2007, Islamic Relief has been contributing to efforts to address the worst impacts of climate change and to limit global warming to 1.5°C. In 2015, we organised international scholars to construct the Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change,² while the Climate Change Policy of the same year, revised in 2018, outlined our positions on these issues.³

The effects of climate breakdown are being felt the world over, especially in the places where Islamic Relief conducts its work to help people emerge from poverty and suffering. Already, and increasingly as global temperatures rise, it is essential that people and systems adapt and are prepared for the changes we know will be taking place. For this reason, our chief response to climate breakdown is to help people adapt, and to campaign and advocate for climate change adaptation.

This new Islamic Relief Climate Policy responds to the rapidly changing landscape, to present positions on the developing challenges. It presents our vision, beliefs and policy positions to tackle the climate crisis. Often, the countries, communities and individuals bearing the brunt of climate change already face a myriad of intersecting development challenges, so our policy also sets out how to ensure that climate action addresses the root causes of vulnerabilities, including gender discrimination, socio-political and economic disparities.



Image: Islamic Relief Pakistan

Islamic Relief's positions

Recovery from pandemic and war must deal also with the ongoing breakdown of the global climate.

A change in generating and using energy is imperative.

Governments must set ambitious and transformational targets to:

- Eliminate greenhouse gas emissions
 - Phase out fossil fuels
 - Invest in renewable energy
 - Decarbonise industry
 - Incentivise green buildings
 - Achieve zero carbon transport
 - Conserve ecosystems and improve food systems
 - Change carbon-intensive lifestyle and behaviours
- Remove carbon through natural solutions
- Support countries and communities to adapt to changing climate and recover from irreversible Loss and Damage
- Protect and restore natural ecologies
- Enhance protections for land and oceans
- Make human equity and environmental protection the priority in all economic decisions.

It is essential that people and systems adapt.

Research should be undertaken to identify distinctly Islamic approaches to climate action.

In considering humanitarian and development interventions, current and future vulnerabilities and capacities of individuals and communities must be thoroughly assessed in relation to hazards and exposure to climate breakdown.

Climate action needs to address the root causes of vulnerabilities, including gender discrimination, socio-political and economic disparities.

Removing entrenched inequalities must be at the centre of adaptation efforts.

Vulnerable and marginalised people must meaningfully participate in and lead adaptation decisions.

Risk, resilience, sustainability and climate knowledge and actions need to go hand-in-hand.

To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), climate actions need to be supported and funded. This needs to be the top priority for all the sectors.

Climate breakdown must be integrated in the design and implementation of all humanitarian and development projects.

Effective climate action must be aligned with disaster risk reduction and sustainable development.

Climate policies must align with protecting the rights of all people to have a say in and contribute to climate responses.

A people-centred approach is essential to achieving the Paris Agreement objectives (as well as the SDGs).

The full participation of women must be ensured in climate policy and decision-making.

Resources must be redirected to measures, including adequate social protection, that build resilience and uphold the rights of women and marginalised communities.

It is better to transform the systems and behaviours that lead to climate change and its effects than to threaten peace and security and increase inequalities through geoengineering.

Limiting warming to 1.5° is an essential prerequisite to achieving the SDGs.

Governments must urgently set measurable and legally binding renewable energy targets to address rising energy insecurity and to meet climate goals.

Urgent action and investment to limit global heating will enhance health and save lives, through clean air, healthy diets, active lifestyles and more resilient health systems.

Successful adaptation must be locally-led and people-centred.

Women and girls must be protected from the heightened risk of harm due to the effects of climate breakdown.

There needs to be sufficient Loss and Damage finance in line with the 'polluter pays' principle.

Climate-induced migration responses must be included within climate change planning, response and financing.

Climate finance should be public, new and additional to current development and humanitarian funding, non-debt creating and gender responsive.

50 per cent of climate finance should support adaptation.

There needs to be a dedicated finance facility to address Loss and Damage.

Scientific imperative: the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report

It is undeniable that human activity, mainly the burning of fossil fuels, explains the warming of the world's climate since the 19th century.⁴ **A change in the generation and use of energy is imperative** to limit the warming to levels that can be survived by systems and species.

Widespread, rapid and intensifying **changes in the climate system have already led to increasingly serious impacts** affecting ecosystems and people everywhere. These add to and exacerbate other stressors such as disease, poverty and environmental degradation.

Unbalanced patterns of socioeconomic development have led to unequal GHG emissions and are causing development challenges that continue to increase unfairness and vulnerability.

Even at current levels of warming, natural and human **systems are not able to adapt using existing actions**. Limits to adaptation and poor, short-term responses (which lock in vulnerability, exposure and increased risk) are being witnessed. The result is Loss and Damage.

Emissions from human activities will cause the global surface temperature to increase in the next 20 years.⁵ Exposure and vulnerability will greatly increase and heighten the level of climate change risk. **Impacts will be stronger than those experienced today and will continue to fall excessively on people who are most vulnerable.**⁶

A rapid reduction in GHG emissions would bring immediate benefits by improving air quality and limiting the rise in global temperatures by the middle of this century. It would also reduce the rate and magnitude of sea level rise in the longer term. Avoiding the impacts of climate breakdown by increasing spending now on effective and early mitigation will produce long-term economic gains and benefits.

Such reductions require speedy and accelerated transformations in energy, land and ocean, urban and infrastructural, industrial and societal systems.⁷ Every person and institution will enable and determine the success of climate actions. The actions require infrastructure, access to technology with the necessary funding, and political support such as increased finance, and cross-sectoral and all-of-government approaches with a focus on equity.

Otherwise, global heating will further affect all components of the climate system, intensifying climate-related risks with consequences for hundreds and thousands of years to come. As the world heats, the effectiveness of currently available adaptation options reduces, leading to residual risks and impacts.

Whatever the pathways taken to limit further temperature rises, adaptation will be required, as will addressing Loss and Damage where the impacts of climate change are already too great for adaptation to work. There has been progress in the last 30 years, including innovation and increased community awareness, a normalisation of change in policies and technologies and hugely increased knowledge and cooperation between science, policymakers and stakeholders. The Covid-19 pandemic has shown how the world economy and social behaviour can respond urgently when required. A similar scale response to the climate crisis is required now.



Image: Evgeny Nelmin Unsplash IPCC

"The jury has reached a verdict. And it is damning. This report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is a litany of broken climate promises. It is a file of shame, cataloguing the empty pledges that put us firmly on track towards an unliveable world.

"We are on a fast track to climate disaster. Major cities under water. Unprecedented heatwaves. Terrifying storms. Widespread water shortages. The extinction of a million species of plants and animals. This is not fiction or exaggeration. It is what science tells us will result from our current energy policies.

"We are on a pathway to global warming of more than double the 1.5°C limit agreed in Paris.

"Some government and business leaders are saying one thing, but doing another. Simply put, they are lying. And the results will be catastrophic. This is a climate emergency."

**Antonio Guterres,
Secretary General
of the United Nations,
4th April 2022 ⁸**

Islamic Relief's climate policy is unambiguous

- **We support** every ethical action designed to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions. This includes ending coal, oil and gas exploration, production and use and replacing them with renewable sources of energy.
- **We demand** that the necessary transformations to society and economy are just and equitable and respect human rights and dignity.
- **We require** that the means, capacity and technical support to adapt to climate breakdown is made available to all.
- **We expect** proper provision to be made to address Loss and Damage due to climate breakdown.
- **We recognise** the overwhelming ethical and moral responsibility of those who have benefitted from the activities that have led to climate breakdown, to provide for adaptation and, where this is not possible, compensation for Loss and Damage incurred.
- **We hold** that climate action is both compatible and necessary to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.



Image: Safiul Azam, Islamic Relief Bangladesh

Operational imperative: fulfilling Islamic Relief's mission

Ethical and moral imperative

Environmental ethics describe how humans should behave towards nature and its resources, concerning what is viewed as good/permissible or bad/sinful. For many people, these values and ethics will be derived from their particular faith and religion. However, most religions arose at a time when people were much more intimately connected to the natural world, gaining their livelihoods directly from it. As a result of technological progress people today, particularly in mega and big cities, are more detached from nature than ever before. Scholars have called for a revival of the holistic view of Islam founded on the notion of harmony and 'natural state' (fitra) and in respecting balance (mizan) and proportion (mikdar). These notions provide an ethical dimension and a mandate for all humans to respect nature and all forms of life.⁹ The Islamic philosopher Seyyed Hossain Nasr argues that, "reawakening a sacred concern for nature is required to halt global environmental degradation".



Image: NASA

Climate change and Islam

Islamic teachings emphasise respect for creation and a command to maintain the natural balance. Humankind is entrusted with a sacred responsibility to protect and conserve the environment. There are numerous verses in the Qur'an and words and actions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) that praise the natural world, describing the relationship between man and nature, plants and animals and their environment.¹⁰ In fact, Islam considers the creation of the environment to be greater than that of humankind.

*'The creation of the heavens and the earth is greater by far than the creation of mankind; though most people do not know it'. Qur'an (40:57)**

Islamic environmental principles related to climate breakdown

The most important principle in Islam is tawhid, or the unity of God. This affects every component of Islam, including environmental ethics. Tawhid means that God is the owner and creator of everything in the universe and that creation is a unified, complete and interdependent whole.

'It is to God that everything in the heavens and earth belongs: God is fully aware of all things'. Qur'an (4:126)

God's creation obeys His rules, or 'laws of nature', and this maintains perfect balance and measure. The Qur'an states, 'We have created all things in due measure' and humankind, who has been given free will, is instructed not to disrupt this balance.' (54:49) and, 'He has raised up the sky. He has set the balance, so that you may not exceed the balance: weigh with justice and do not fall short in the balance.' Qur'an (55: 7-9).

*Quotations from The Qur'an are from the translation by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem published by Oxford University Press, 2004.



Image: Gloria Kivuva Islamic Relief Kenya

As Khalid (2005) observes, Islam considers the natural world to be held together because it is in a state of dynamic balance, or *mīzān*. In several verses of the Qur'an, creations are described as a sign, or *ayat*, of God. For example, 'There are signs in the heavens and the earth for those who believe' (Qur'an, 45:3) and 'Another of His signs is the creation of the heavens and earth, and the diversity of your languages and colours. There truly are signs in this for those who know' (Qur'an, 30:22). Therefore, over-exploitation, damage to and pollution of the natural world is tantamount not only to upsetting the natural balance but to destroying the signs of God.

Another important principle guiding Islamic teachings on the environment is that humankind has been entrusted with the trusteeship, or *khalifah*, of the Earth. The Qur'an (6:165) says, 'It is He (God) who has made you successors on the earth ...' As such, Islam considers that humankind will be held accountable for its treatment of the Earth and all living species. That requires us to preserve the environment for the benefit of present and future generations.

'The world is beautiful and verdant, and verily God, be He exalted, has made you His stewards in it, and He sees how you acquit yourselves' (Muslim, Book 49, Hadith 12).

At the same time, according to Islamic law, the basic elements of nature – land, water, air, fire, forests and sunlight – belong to all living things, not just human beings.

While Islam encourages humankind to make use of natural resources, this should be in a sustainable manner, without inflicting harm on other creatures and the environment or disrupting the ecological balance. In this regard, it has been argued that the Prophetic declaration 'There should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm' (Ibn Majah, 2340) and the key Islamic legal principle that averting harm takes precedence over the acquisition of benefits are highly significant in the relationship between humankind and nature, particularly in discussions regarding the impact of climate change.¹¹ Islam advocates living in harmony with the environment, moderation, avoiding excess and being wasteful, and respect for life in all its forms (Williams and Khan, 2020).

We remain hopeful

'Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth'¹² presents an Islamic outlook on the environment, in a bid to strengthen local, regional and international actions that combat climate change and other threats to the planet. It is a global endeavour to engage Islamic scholars and Muslim institutions to be presented to the United Nations.

'We find grounds for hope that it is not too late to change our course.

'As Muslims, we approach the Earth as sacred. We seek to identify how, through abusing it, we have desecralised our understanding of it. Hence, we can rediscover what we are losing...

'We strive to articulate the ethical teachings and values of Islam, that they might motivate us to commit ourselves to the behavioural changes needed, in keeping with the prophetic tradition.

'We view the crisis afflicting life on Earth through the prism of political economy and seek to discover what elements in the Islamic heritage of equitably sharing the benefits of the sources of life on Earth – which economists call natural resources – might help us address the inequities and realise a more sustainable approach to living a good life without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. We seek to identify the most essential aspects of our faith tradition with respect to legislation, regulations, conservation practices, policies and activism, so that we might begin to take the actions needed to restore the balance (*mīzān*) that we have violated.'

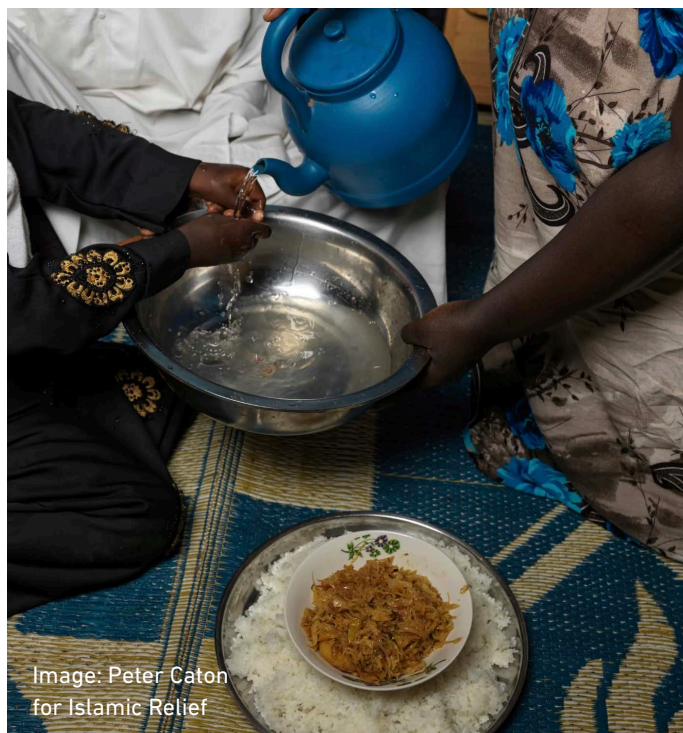


Image: Peter Caton for Islamic Relief

Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change



The Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change¹³ remains a central document considering a Muslim approach to the climate catastrophe. A full text of the declaration can be found at https://www.ifees.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/climate_declarationmmwb.pdf

There is great potential for Muslim organisations and leaders to facilitate climate action. They can campaign and advocate for mitigation measures, encourage investment in renewable sources of energy, disseminate pro-environmental Islamic ethics among their followers and effect carbon reduction schemes within their organisations. Muslim environmentalism can have an eminent role in Muslim-majority countries. Muslim leadership, both nationally and locally, may have an important impact on the presence of environmental and climate awareness among local communities and links with national and local political administrations.¹⁴ For instance, national Muslim organisations in the UK and Ireland produced a strong statement before the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow.¹⁵ Research should be undertaken to identify examples of distinctly Islamic approaches to climate action which can be shared and adapted for use in other contexts.

Islamic Relief's Maqasid Approach

"Our relief, development and advocacy work are guided by five dimensions of the Maqasid al-sharia; faith, life, intellect, posterity and property."

At Islamic Relief, based on faith teachings, we view and pursue these five dimensions as follows:

- The faith dimension infers a necessity to prioritise, protect, preserve and uphold our faith teachings and beliefs following our Creator's guidance, while understanding that there should be no compulsion in religion
- The life dimension emphasises the sanctity of every individual's life and dignity, and particularly their rights to security, health, a sustainable environment, food, shelter and clean water
- The intellect dimension highlights the need to uphold every individual's right to access education, information and knowledge
- The posterity dimension shapes our obligation to uphold every individual's right to a family life, privacy and child protection, as well as the right to protect and provide for future generations
- The property dimension is the individual's right to a fair distribution of wealth and the opportunity to achieve comprehensive community prosperity through a just economy.

Addressing the global drivers and local outcomes of **poverty, vulnerability, inequality and injustice**

Islamic Relief Global Strategy Framework 2023-2033



Image: Majdi Samaan for Islamic Relief Syria

Poverty

The world's poorest and most vulnerable people have contributed the least to the climate crisis but are the most affected by it. The Paris Agreement aims, 'to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty'.¹⁶ Reducing poverty is crucial for adaptation to climate change.

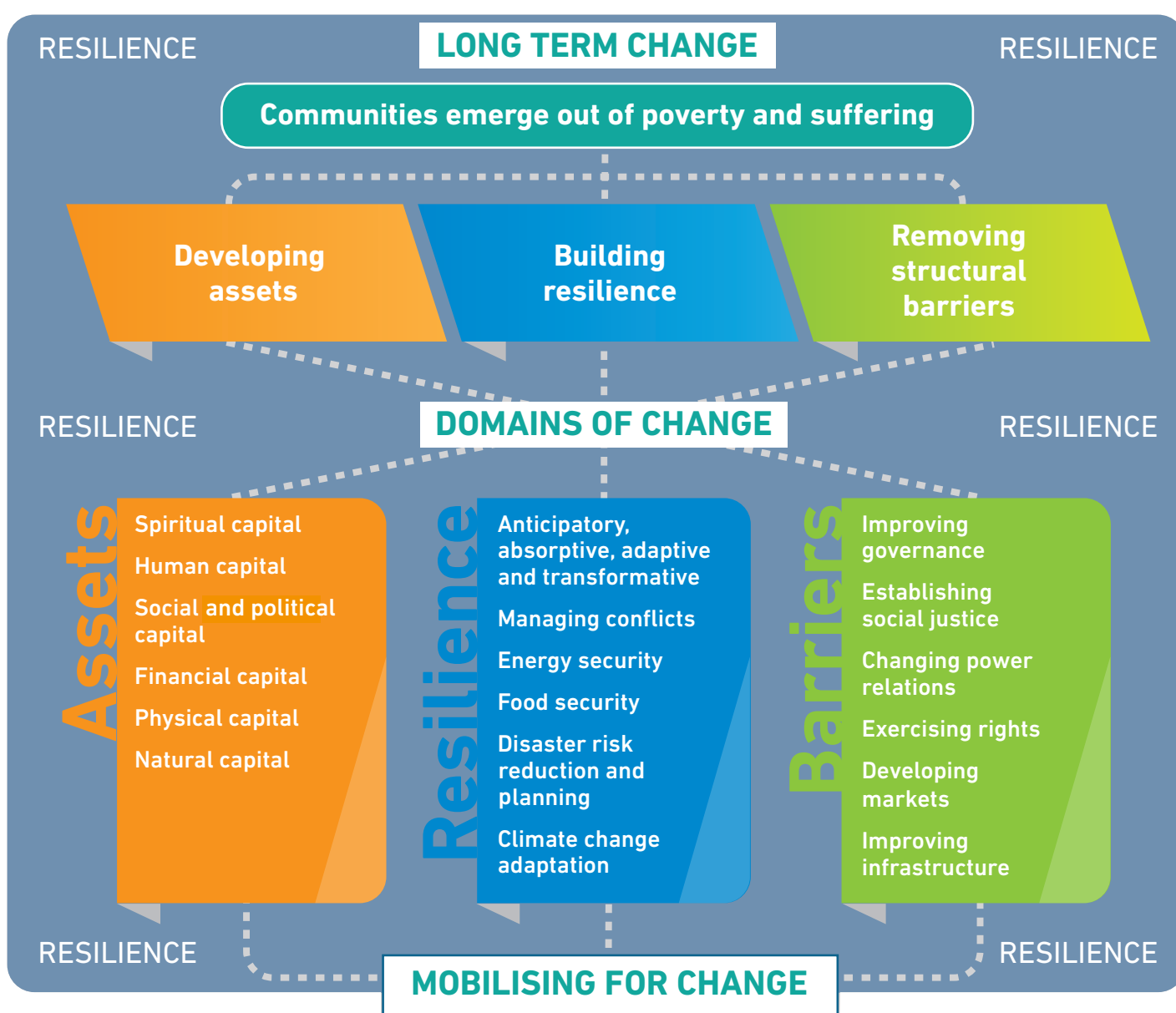
People in poverty tend to live in areas more threatened by climate change and in housing that is less resistant to its effects. They lose more, in relative terms, when affected and have fewer resources to respond to the changing climate. Poverty often means getting less support from social safety nets and the financial system to prevent or recover from the impact. Livelihoods and assets are more exposed and people in poverty are more vulnerable to disease, crop failure, spikes in food prices and death or disability caused by natural disasters.¹⁷

Poverty is best understood as measured by monetary income but also the absence of factors that contribute towards well-being. For instance, Islamic Relief views sustainable development as going beyond the economic realm to encompass other dimensions of life framed by the five essential objectives of Islamic ethics and law (Maqasid al-Shari'ah): faith (din), life (nafs), intellect (aql), posterity (nasl) and wealth (mal).

The last of these, particularly lack of money, is for many people the basic barrier to achieving security. Extreme poverty is defined by the World Bank as living on less than

\$1.90 per day, and this is what we mean when we refer to the poorest people.

For climate action to assist very poor people, it must reduce their poverty as part of the process. Similarly, adaptation to climate breakdown provides the means by which poverty reduction can be robust and long-lasting. Islamic Relief's work in the context of the climate emergency is to fulfil our mission to help communities to emerge from poverty and suffering.



A model theory of change for Islamic Relief's human development activities.

Vulnerability

Vulnerability is the description of a person or group in terms of their capacity to anticipate, cope with and recover from a hazard. Vulnerability includes several elements, such as a person's sensitivity or susceptibility to harm and their capacity to deal with and adapt to shocks.

Vulnerability tends to be a continuous cycle for those left behind (e.g. people living in poverty, unemployed and underemployed, people with disabilities, women and girls, displaced populations and migrants, youth, Indigenous and older people), leaving them particularly vulnerable to extreme weather events. Disenfranchised

minorities, displaced populations and migrants are often victims of discriminatory practices and have diminished access to formal justice systems and health services. For those households, vulnerabilities evolved and persisting over long periods lead to disparities in income, gender, ethnicity, household and social status and job type.¹⁸ In considering humanitarian and development interventions, current and future vulnerabilities and capacities have to be thoroughly assessed in relation to hazards and exposure to climate breakdown.

Crisis in East Africa

September 2022: Parts of Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya, are experiencing the driest conditions and hottest temperatures since records began. As a result **20.5 million** people are suffering acute food and water shortages and this is projected to rise to **26 million** within a few months.

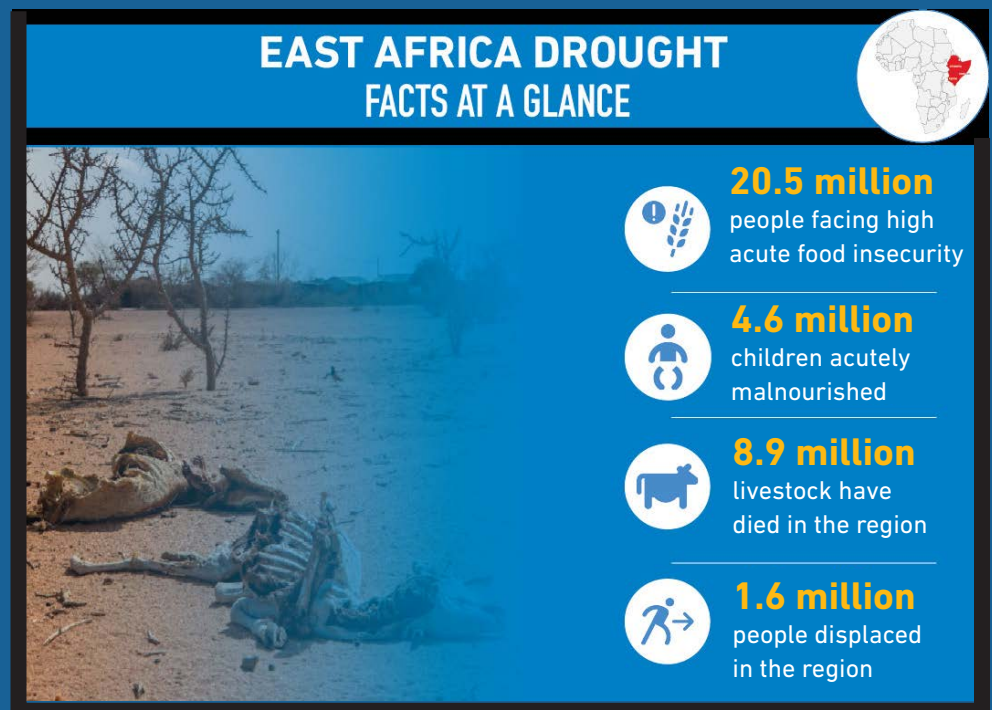


Image: Fekadu Mandefro, Islamic Relief Ethiopia

Catalogue of vulnerability

In districts of Oromia regional state in Ethiopia, most people depend on pastoralism, agro-pastoralism and farming livelihoods. Prior to the increasingly stark impacts of the climate crisis, these populations were characterised in 'normal' times as challenged in three vital services:

- *Food security and livelihoods:* prone to drought; only one rain per year; susceptible to animal diseases; weak animal health services; acute shortage of livestock feed; infested by desert locust and American worm; poor farming practices; limited livelihood opportunities and access to markets; severe water shortage for livestock and farming
- *Nutrition:* poor nutrition services; high level of malnutrition and inadequate training on the new national nutrition guidelines; shortage of nutrition supplies and logistics; limited awareness on dietary diversity; inadequate availability of food variety
- *Water, sanitation and health:* Absence of surface water; underground water only at 150-300 metres depth; lack of clean, safe drinking water; lack of water for institutions such as schools and health facilities; increased vulnerability of women and girls (to rape, abduction, and less time available to care for children) while fetching water from remote places; shortage of spare parts and chemicals; widespread open defecation; severe gaps in critical hand-washing practice (due to shortage of water and limited awareness).

Islamic Relief Ethiopia Promoting Resilient Livelihoods (PRL) project proposal

Prolonged drought is now tipping these people into destitution. Livestock deaths and diseases are increasing and Islamic Relief Ethiopia estimate that pastoralists in the zone have lost 10-15 per cent of their livestock. The shortage of drinking water is 'very critical' for both humans and livestock. The market for livestock is weak due to fear of further prolonged drought and the resulting increased supply of animals is depressing prices. The supply of grain is very limited and the demand is pushing prices beyond the affordability of vulnerable households. In Oromia and neighbouring Somali alone, more than 6.4 million people are estimated to require food assistance in 2022.

Source: Islamic Relief East Africa Drought Emergency Updates

People walk long distances to fetch water in Hargelle District, Afdher Zone of Somali Regional State in Ethiopia, where many rivers have dried up. Image: Islamic Relief Ethiopia



Inclusion

For Islamic Relief, vulnerability has to do with the relationship between people and society. Societies that discriminate against certain people prevent them from accessing the same rights as others in that society. People who are vulnerable in most societies tend to be women, youth, children, people with disabilities, displaced people, Indigenous people and marginalised ethnic groups. We also regard infants, orphans and people living in female-headed households as often being vulnerable.

We pay attention to people's specific capacities and susceptibilities and how these are influenced by individual characteristics such as gender, age, disability or social status and by situations that exacerbate vulnerabilities, such as poverty, displacement, migration or armed conflict.¹⁹



Justice

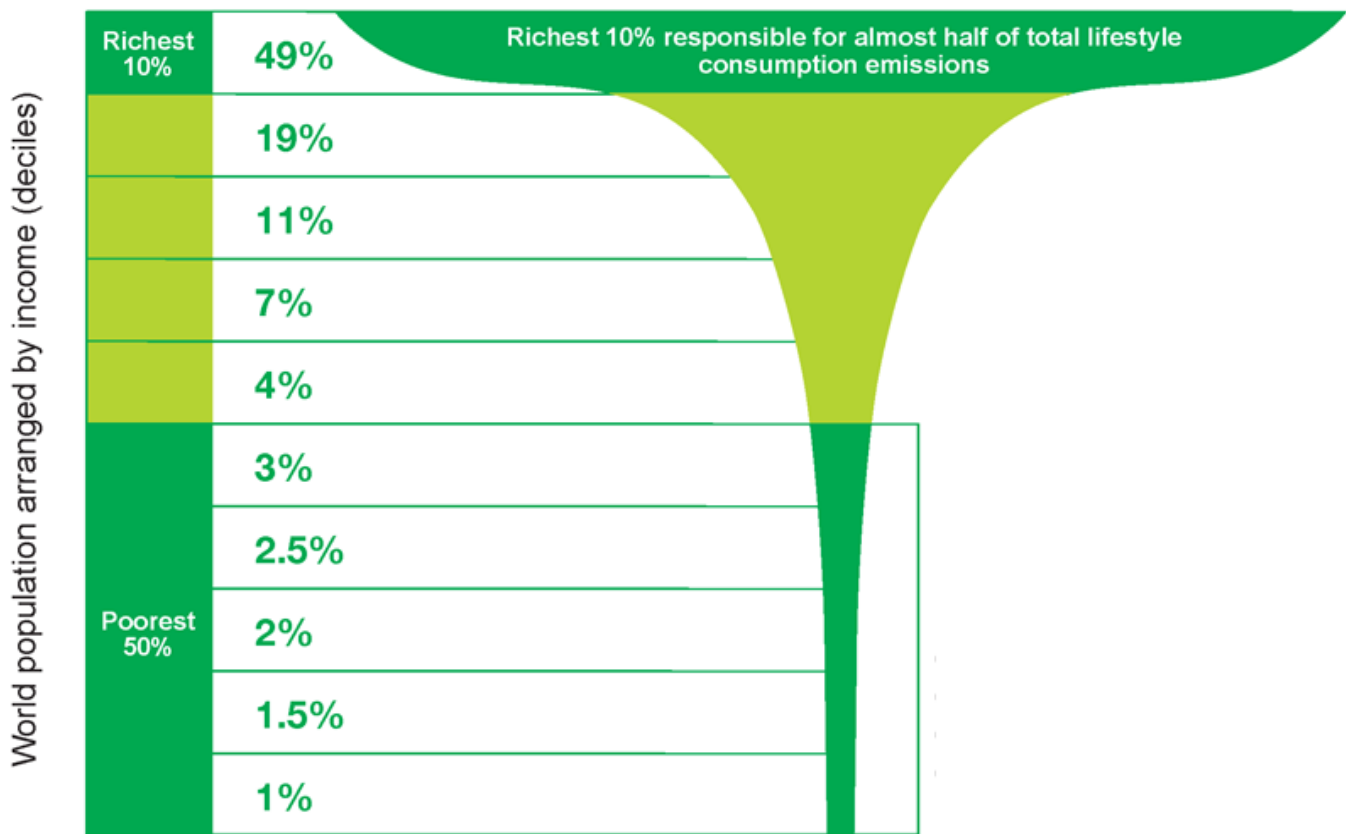
Countries who have historically profited and continue to profit most from industrial and agricultural processes that lead to global heating must make the biggest contribution to eliminating GHG emissions. Unless direct and immediate action is taken to ensure climate justice in the context of the universal emergency of climate breakdown, the unfairness of those least responsible being those who suffer most will continue.

For justice to be done, richer countries must also provide for adaptation and repairing Loss and Damage in countries least able to cope with the impacts of climate change. In delivering these actions, the most vulnerable and poorest people must be protected so that no-one is left behind or pushed back further.

Achieving climate justice is an enormous challenge. Islamic Relief sees it as essential to leverage our strong relations with governments as well as many local, national and international organisations. We will also continue to participate in influential networks which advocate for justice and rights to minimise the impact of climate breakdown.

The specific contribution that Islamic Relief makes to climate justice is at the community level, where we have a proven record in engaging with people that other agencies often find hard-to-reach. Here, by a process of social and economic empowerment and learning, the people’s voice and leadership becomes central to their efforts to adapt to the challenges they face.

Percentage of CO₂ emissions by world population



12 per cent of the global population residing in the 23 richest countries are responsible for half of historic global CO₂ emissions
Source: Oxfam

Inequality

We can identify inequality in terms of carbon emissions on the one hand and climate impacts on the other. Wealthy countries have benefited disproportionately from the activities that have caused global warming, while poor countries suffer most from the effects. Many rich countries have become wealthier and poor countries poorer as global warming increases growth in cool countries and decreases growth in warm countries.²⁰

Spanning 10 countries, Islamic Relief's Humanitarian Academy for Development's 'Action on Climate and Consumption' project examined the relationship between consumption and climate change.²¹ Adopting this consumption-based approach reveals the clear gap between poorer and wealthier countries and also between the world's wealthiest people and everybody else.

Inequalities in consumption can promote carbon-intensive habits. Where people aspire to the lives of the richest, the result is escalating carbon emissions. Tourism, an activity available only to an elite with financial means, is recovering after the Covid-19 pandemic towards its previous contribution of almost eight per cent of global CO2 emissions. Similarly, this aspiration encourages dietary changes away from whole and plant-based foods to processed food and meat,²² further increasing the 11.6 per cent of all anthropogenic GHG emissions that are produced by cattle, sheep and goats.

'Highly unequal societies, where economic, cultural and political power is disproportionately held by the rich, tend to incubate conditions that foreshadow a dangerously carbon-intensive future'.

David et al. (2019)

'Climate action needs to address the root causes of vulnerabilities i.e. gender discrimination, socio-political and economic disparities. The entrenched inequalities need to be taken at the centre of adaptation efforts while enabling vulnerable and marginalised people to meaningfully participate in and lead adaptation decisions'.

Islamic Relief Pakistan

Individual and societal exposure to the hazards of a warming climate varies widely, not only between wealthy and poorer countries but also between different groups within a country. Economically or socially marginalised communities are the most likely to be exposed to pollution and the impacts of climate change, with the fewest resources with which to manage those impacts.

People-centred, climate sensitive, risk-informed development

Climate change, human development and humanitarian emergency

Current approaches to global threats and risk management within humanitarian response and development tend to look at one threat at a time, rather than acknowledging multiple, concurrent threats or emerging global threats. The recognition of both development and humanitarian interventions as climate sensitive, risk-informed development allows action to be a vehicle to reduce risk and build resilience. Only resilient development can become sustainable development. Sustainable development initiatives will fail unless they are risk-informed and sensitive to the changing climate and its consequences. Risk, resilience, sustainability and climate knowledge and actions need to go hand-in-hand.²³

'For the SDGs to be achieved, climate actions need to be supported and funded. This needs to be made top priority for all the sectors'.

Islamic Relief Somalia

'Climate breakdown must be integrated in all designed and implemented projects'.

Islamic Relief Palestine

Effective climate action must be aligned with disaster risk reduction and sustainable development. In international terms, this will unite the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) with the Sendai Framework, the Sustainable Development Goals under Agenda 2030 and various other frameworks addressing vulnerability, exposure and capacity to deliver sustainable development, such as the New York Declaration for Refugees and migrants and the Grand Bargain on humanitarian interventions.²⁴

Image: Gloria Kivuva, Islamic Relief Kenya



Climate change and human rights

'Climate change is a common concern of humankind, Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity'.

UNFCCC Decision 1/CP.21 Adoption of the Paris Agreement²⁵

Climate policies must align with protecting the rights of all people to have a say in and contribute to climate responses. The preamble of the Paris Agreement stresses the importance of respecting, promoting and considering countries' human rights obligations when taking action to address climate change. However, there have been many examples of technocratic climate policies that placed corporate profits and economic growth above the interests of people.

A people-centred approach is essential to achieving the Paris Agreement objectives (as well as the SDGs). People-centred policies require an inclusive policymaking process with effective and meaningful participation of the public, increasing people's ownership and building the resilience of communities to drive the transformations so urgently needed.

Climate and the Commission on the Status of Women

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis due to gender inequalities that restrict access to education, resources, decision-making spaces and other opportunities. At the same time, women and girls possess critical knowledge. They are developing more innovative, sustainable, cost-effective and gender-just solutions to mitigate climate change impacts, adapt to climate changes and build resilience in communities.

Islamic Relief's Statement to the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66)

As faith actors committed to gender, racial and climate justice, we call on Member States, United Nations agencies and civil society to include the following in all responses to the climate emergency:

1. Address structural inequalities and women's needs, ensure women and girls in all their diversity are at the forefront of decision-making, support collective actions and address social norms, policies and laws that constrain women's access to and control over resources.
2. Challenge negative social norms, systems, structures and processes, which consider Earth as a place of endless resources to exploit and dominate.
3. Increase international climate financing to address Loss and Damage and adaptation, provided as grants not loans.
4. Ensure that women at the centre of climate change mitigation and adaptation participate fully in climate change policy and decision-making.
5. Demonstrate solidarity between major, industrialised economies and climate vulnerable countries, through climate finance and additional measures, including debt relief, to ensure climate vulnerable countries have sufficient resources to implement an equitable and gender-just climate response.
6. Work with faith actors as critical partners in ensuring a gender-just response to the climate emergency.
7. End unsustainable fossil fuel subsidies by governments.
8. Redirect resources to measures, including adequate social protection, that build resilience and uphold the rights of women and marginalised communities on the front line of the climate emergency.
9. Promote the protection of women who are environmental and human rights defenders.
10. Adopt the Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender, adopted at the 25th meeting of the Conference of Parties and fund implementation of the 5-year Gender Action Plan (2020-2025).

Biodiversity, desertification, oceans and land

The climate crisis, biodiversity loss, land degradation and the health of the oceans must be tackled together. Land degradation is a major source of carbon emissions. Its effects further aggravate the impacts of climate breakdown on food, water and biodiversity, worsening drought, reducing economic activity and access to clean water and affecting people's health. Climate impacts have seriously affected ecosystems and species, some irreversibly. Some climate policies, such as the expansion of afforestation or bioenergy, can have negative impacts on biodiversity. Marine biodiversity is threatened by oceans' critical role in climate change mitigation, absorbing some 23 per cent of CO₂ emissions and 90 per cent of the excess heat caused by human activity.²⁶

Islamic Relief Worldwide calls upon governments to honour agreements concerning climate change, biodiversity and environmental protection. They must set ambitious and transformational targets to:

- eliminate greenhouse gas emissions
- support countries and communities to adapt to changing climate and recover from irreversible Loss and Damage
- protect and restore natural ecologies
- enhance protections for land and oceans
- make human equity and environmental protection the priority in all economic and policy decisions.

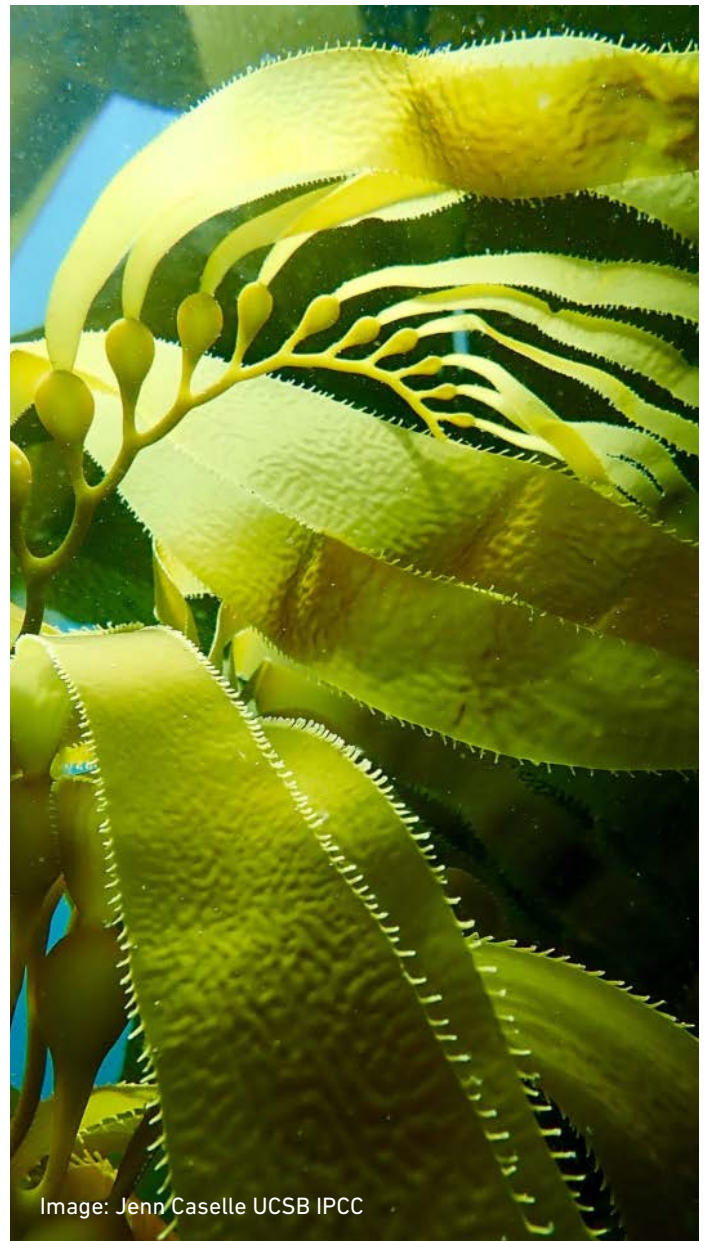


Image: Jenn Caselle UCSB IPCC



Image: Mahaman Maza, Islamic Relief Niger

Mitigation

“

**“If we don’t act now,
it will be too late. We
have to do it now.
Every day that goes
by in which we don’t
do something about
it is a day wasted.”**

Sir David Attenborough
(Interview with the BBC, 26 October 2021)

There is a direct relation between global average temperatures and the concentration of GHGs in the atmosphere. The key to limiting temperature increases and climate breakdown therefore rests in decreasing the amount of emissions released into the atmosphere and reducing the current concentration of CO₂ by enhancing sinks (i.e. increasing the size of forests). Efforts to reduce emissions and enhance sinks are referred to as ‘mitigation’.

If nations stick to their climate pledges, made ahead of COP26, to reduce GHG emissions then warming can be limited to just below 2°C by 2100. However, limiting warming not only to ‘just below’ but to ‘well below’ 2°C or the safer 1.5°C urgently requires policies and actions to bring about steep emission reductions this decade, aligned with mid-century global net zero CO₂ emissions.²⁸

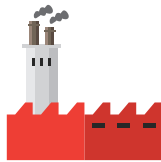
Image: Islamic Relief Mali

Rapid transformations across all systems to avoid the worst climate impacts

The IPCC (2022) found that decision makers in government, civil society and the private sector will need to prioritise the following actions, many of which pay for themselves:



Scale up low-carbon electricity with renewable and other clean sources



Double down on innovation and commercialisation to decarbonise industry



Design cities for zero and low carbon transport, shift to electric vehicles and clean fuels



Green buildings with climate-smart materials, technology and energy codes



Protect and restore forests and other landscapes, improve agricultural practices, shift to sustainable diets, and reduce food loss and waste



FOSSIL FUEL NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY

Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty

Many secular and religious organisations, including Islamic Relief, are supporting this model taken from the largely successful international action to stop the spread of nuclear weapons. It commits governments to urgently begin negotiations to develop and implement a legally binding Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty,²⁹ laying out a global plan to:

1. **End the expansion of any new coal, oil or gas production** in line with the best available science as outlined by the IPCC and the United Nations Environment Programme
2. **Phase out existing production of fossil fuels in a fair and equitable manner**, taking into account the respective dependency of countries on fossil fuels and their capacity to transition
3. **Ensure a global just transition to 100 per cent access to renewable energy globally**, support dependent economies to diversify away from fossil fuels and enable all people and communities, not least poorer countries, to flourish.

Mitigation and the Sustainable Development Goals

SDGs and 1.5°C

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: limiting warming to 1.5°C is an essential prerequisite to achieving the SDGs.³⁴

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

Links between existing NDCs (national government climate plans) and the SDGs are often found in the areas of water, food and energy. The social goals, in particular health, education and gender equality (SDGs 3, 4 and 5 respectively) tend to be highly under-represented in NDC commitments, compared to the environmental and economic goals.

Policy and decision makers need to harness the natural synergy between climate action and sustainable development. NDCs need to make a clear link to the SDGs, while the implementation of all SDGs must be aligned with 1.5°C compatible pathways.

An SDG lens and an integrated approach can support a just transition, which ensures the poorest, marginalised and most climate vulnerable are included in national targets for emissions reduction. Specifically, decent and quality job creation (SDG 8), education and vocational training (SDG 4) and social protection (SDG 1) need to be included in NDCs and long-term planning.

Change carbon intensive lifestyle and behaviours

Households with incomes in the top 10 per cent globally, which is most households in developed countries, are responsible for 36-45 per cent of total GHG emissions, while families with incomes in the bottom 50 per cent account for just 13-15 per cent.

Shifting consumption patterns, particularly among the world's wealthiest, can slash GHG emissions by 40-70 per cent by 2050 when compared with current climate policies. Walking or cycling, avoiding long-haul flights, shifting to plant-based diets, cutting food waste and using energy more efficiently in buildings are among the most effective demand side mitigation options.

'Climate activism isn't solely on the backs of individuals, but also on larger organizations/corporations'.

Islamic Relief Canada

'Climate action requires comprehensive efforts from institutions and government authorities to achieve the desired milestones'.

Islamic Relief Somalia

Policy measures that make these lifestyle and behaviour changes less disruptive, such as subsidising low-emissions technologies, taxing high-emissions technologies like fossil-fuelled cars and setting standards that mandate greater energy efficiency, can help to ease these shifts. Infrastructure design, such as reallocating street space for pavements or bike lanes, can help people transition to lower emission lifestyles.

Choosing zero and low carbon mobility options – like walking, biking, public transit and hybrid and electric vehicles – decreases emissions while building demand for and lowering costs of these solutions.

Drowned in plastic

From communities harmed by plastic production and incineration, to people facing plastics on their shorelines and croplands, in their food and water supplies, and in their bodies, the impacts of plastic are diverse. Plastics are fossil fuels in another form. Plastics production is already a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions, and the planned expansion of production runs counter to efforts to address the climate crisis through a transition to clean energy.³⁵

Remove carbon through natural solutions

All pathways that limit warming to 1.5°C depend on removing carbon from the atmosphere. These approaches can include both natural solutions, such as sequestering and storing carbon in trees and soil, and possibly, technologies that could pull CO₂ directly out of the atmosphere. Efforts to develop such technologies should be supported, but the priority should remain investing in existing nature-based solutions which can provide co-benefits for sustainable development.

Ecocide

Legal experts from across the globe have drawn up a "historic" definition of ecocide, intended to be adopted by the International Criminal Court to prosecute the worst offences against the environment.



The draft law defines ecocide as, 'unlawful or wanton acts committed with knowledge that there is a substantial likelihood of severe and widespread or long-term damage to the environment being caused by those acts.'

Implementing ecocide as an international crime would mean challenging long-standing, particularly western and secular, attitudes of human separateness from and superiority to nature and nonhuman species, which continue to be seen as objects and resources. The concept of ecocide instead means considering nature and nonhuman species as entities with inherent value and rights that should be respected.

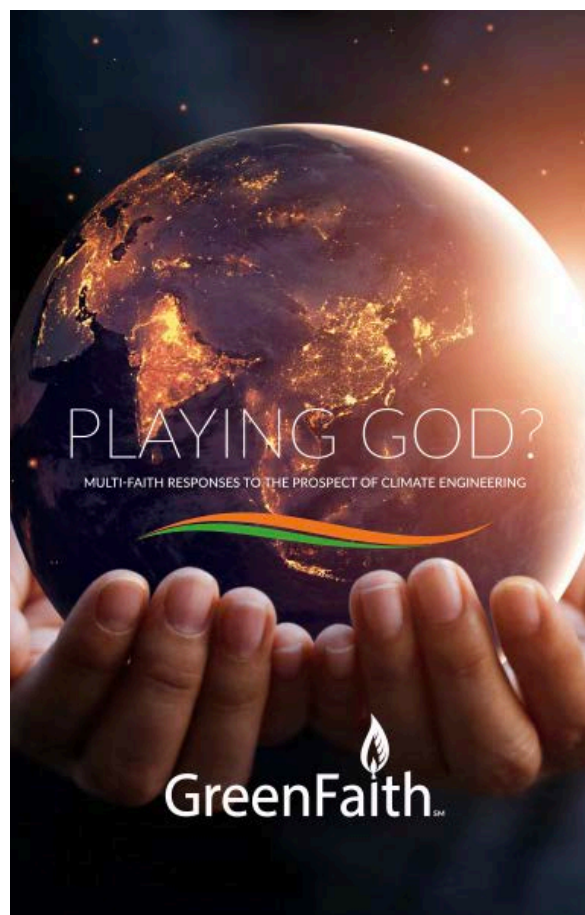
Geoengineering

Islamic Relief joins with organisations across the world in urging caution regarding geoengineering. This large scale intentional manipulation of the Earth's natural systems, such as solar radiation management using chemicals and barriers, is increasingly being presented as a strategy to counteract climate change and its effects. The central premise is that the balance that has been lost because of human greed and disregard for creation can be restored by technological fixes. Islamic Relief will argue that it is better to transform the systems and behaviours that led to that imbalance, rather than risking peace and security, increasing inequalities and meddling further in vital global and local ecosystems with unknown consequences. The false promise of geoengineering is already being used by the fossil fuel industry, the main culprits of climate change, to delay and divert energy transition.

'We have a moral and social responsibility to improve the environment and not to destroy it'.

Islamic Relief Sudan

'A Muslim might support climate technologies, but Islamic climate ethics urge them to act with *adl* (justice) and *l'tidal* (moderation),' points out Dedeoğlu (2018) ³⁷ There will always be a need for a comprehensive understanding of reality in climate engineering proposals which balances both considerations. Islamic scholars have concluded that the great uncertainties surrounding the consequences of geoengineering would render its 'unnatural and detrimental technologies' impermissible under the Shariah.³⁸



A comprehensive view of ethical and religious considerations from GreenFaith is tellingly entitled 'Playing God?'³⁶

Fossil fuels and conflict

Fossil fuels fund wars and provoke conflict around the world. War in Ukraine, hunger in Yemen and Afghanistan, the worldwide devastation wrought by Covid-19 and soaring prices that place essential goods out of the reach of billions are intimately connected: they are a product of the same fossil fuel economy. Coal, oil and gas are driving global heating and in turn fuelling war, disease, hunger and destruction.

Countries opposed to such wars and committed to addressing the climate emergency will urgently end the expansion of new coal, oil and gas production and equitably phase out fossil fuels with a just transition to 100 per cent access to renewable energy globally.

Military expenditure worldwide reached its highest ever level in 2021: about \$2.1 trillion (2.2 per cent of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP)).³⁹

This expenditure is:

- 21 times higher than the (not yet achieved) commitment by rich nations to provide \$100 billion to developing countries for mitigation and adaptation
- More than three times the global investment in renewables and energy efficiency combined
- Fifty times more than the total amount required to fully overcome energy poverty and deadly indoor air pollution in poorer countries.

Greenhouse gas emissions from the military (about six per cent of all emissions globally) are not accounted for in national inventories and international agreements⁴⁰. The carbon cost of war is yet to be calculated.

Energy insecurity

Governments must urgently set measurable and legally binding renewable energy targets to address rising energy insecurity and to meet climate goals, monitored by domestic and international mechanisms.

Economic prosperity, decent work and environmental sustainability are fully compatible. It is possible to rely on wind, water and solar energy for all new energy projects by 2030 and transition the entire energy system to renewable energy by 2050 with current technology and at a similar cost to fossil fuels. Fiscal policy and carbon pricing can incentivise low carbon investment and emissions mitigation, generate revenue to bolster social protection and support people in poverty and incentivise the creation of good green jobs.⁴¹

'Our policy needs to support the decolonisation of current climate change policies and practices that do not cater to the development needs and just energy transition of developing communities and which are laced with instruments of domination, power and social control of the poor developing world. Blanket arguments and pursuit of achieving 'net-zero emissions' means that the developing world who cannot afford to pay for their emissions or transition to low carbon markets fast enough, will have to go through emissions trading schemes where the wealthier countries will continue to carry our business as usual. Nature based solutions needs to also be discussed and implemented in its truest sense and not masked as carbon credits – meaning focus on CO2 emissions being offsets somewhere else in the world while the wealthier countries continue to carry on the same practices for their gain. Therefore, our policy should support people from the Global South and Indigenous communities who need a centre stage in dialogues and decision-making platforms'.

Islamic Relief Pakistan

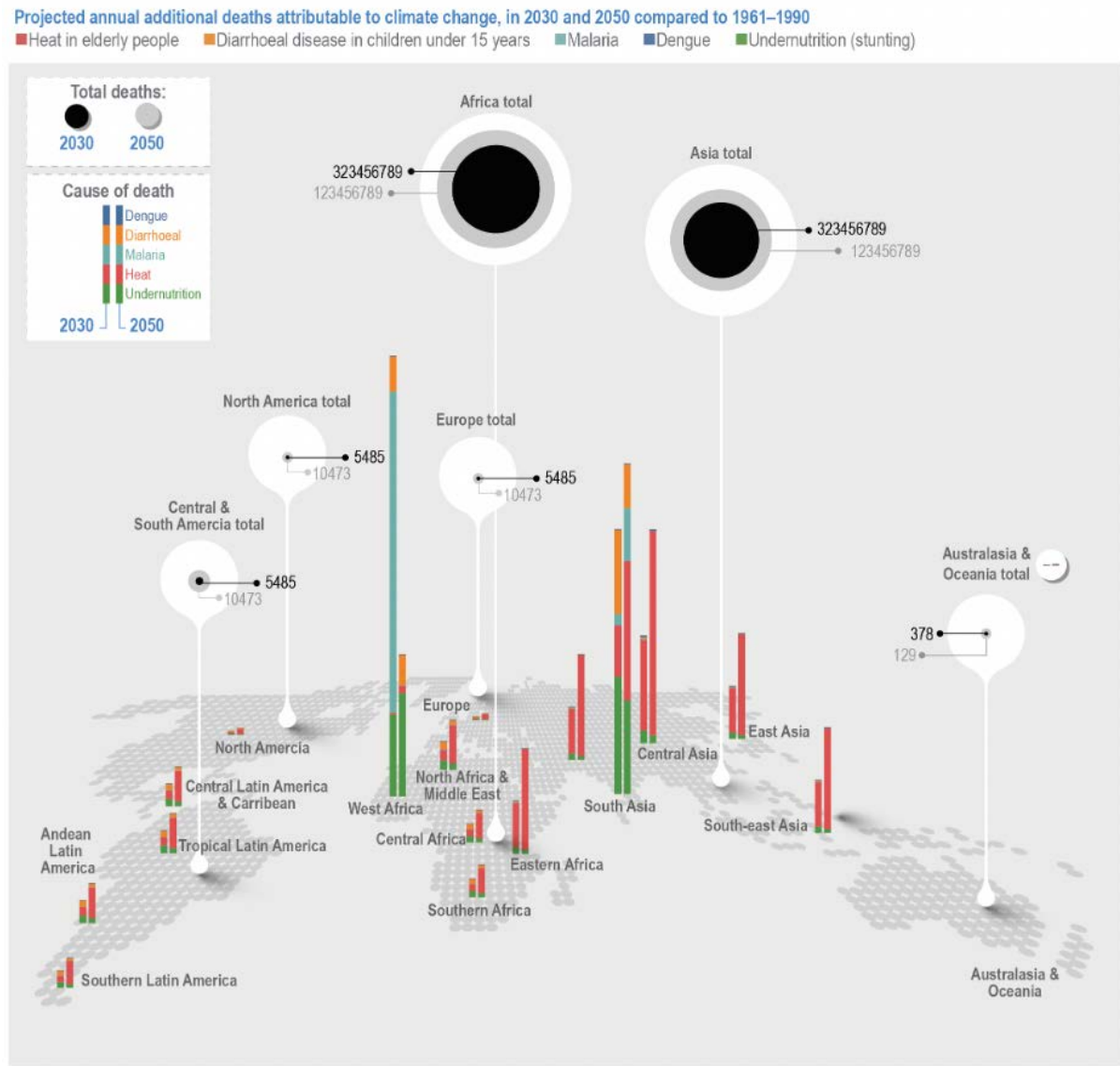
Health

As the Covid-19 pandemic continues and its impacts become clearer, the IPCC report (2022a) states that climate change has adversely affected the physical and mental health of people across the world. Threats from other diseases, such as malaria and dengue fever, alongside widespread deaths from heat and undernutrition attributable to climate change, are projected to increase over the coming years.

Actions to transition from fossil fuels to clean, safe and renewable energy will have an immediate impact on reducing the health threat. Zero carbon transportation systems, with an emphasis on active transportation (walking and cycling), along with building local, healthy and sustainable food and agricultural systems, will directly improve public health.

A policy of ‘just transition’ will protect the health and well-being of workers and communities adversely affected by the move to a low carbon economy. Climate solutions incorporated into all healthcare and public health systems and building climate resilient communities will leverage what the IPCC identified as “the interconnected and compound nature of risks, vulnerabilities and responses to emergencies” highlighted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Urgent action and investment to halt the direct impacts of heat, drought, flood and fire on human health and the transition to zero emissions will enhance health and save lives through clean air, healthy diets, active lifestyles and resilient health systems.



Projected additional annual deaths attributable to climate change in 2030 and 2050 compared to 1961–1990 (IPCC 2022 a 7.3, WHO 2014)

Adaptation

Islamic Relief's main response to climate breakdown is helping people to adapt. In August 2020, Islamic Relief was funding over 50 adaptation projects in 19 countries with a value of £27.5 million.⁴²

These numbers continue to increase.

Climate adaptation is what people do to alter their lives to deal with the changing climate. In more technical terms, adaptation is "the process of adjusting to the actual or expected climate and its effects... to moderate or avoid harm or exploit beneficial opportunities."⁴³

Adaptation is not only about ways in which to deal with longer-term changes, such as increased temperatures and sea level rise, but also disaster risk reduction in the face of weather and climate-related events, such as hurricanes and droughts.⁴⁴

The United Nations Global Goal for Adaptation is to enhance adaptive capacity, build resilience and reduce vulnerability. This can be achieved at several scales: globally, nationally, sub-nationally, locally and in-between.⁴⁵ Adaptation can use infrastructure (known as grey adaptation), the natural environment (green adaptation) and social (soft adaptation) options.⁴⁶



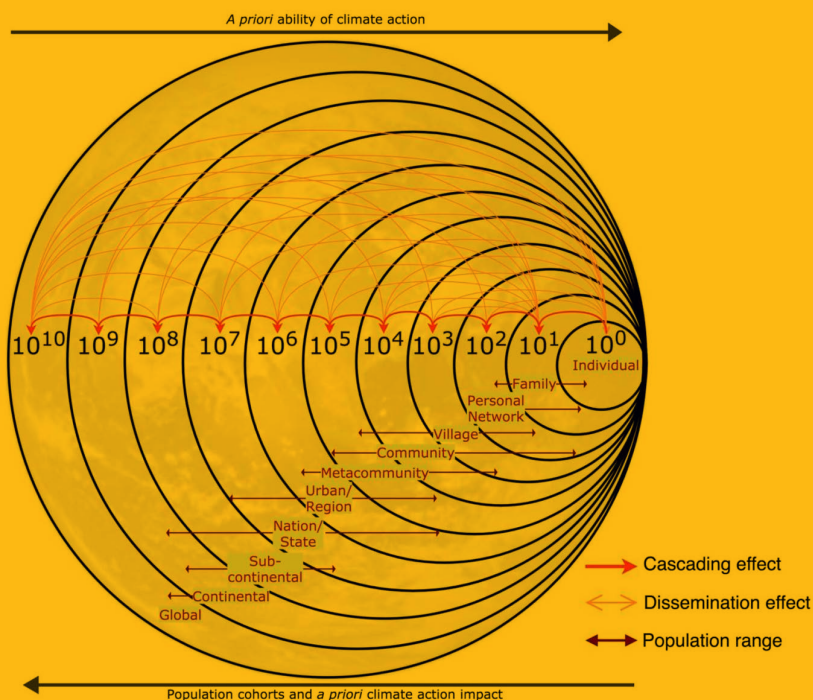
Image: Mahaman Maza,
Islamic Relief Niger

'Adaptation action should follow a country driven, gender-responsive, participatory and fully transparent approach, taking into consideration vulnerable groups, communities and ecosystems, and should be based on and guided by the best available science and, as appropriate, traditional knowledge, knowledge of indigenous peoples and local knowledge systems, with a view to integrating adaptation into relevant socioeconomic and environmental policies and actions, where appropriate.'

Paragraph 5 of Article 7 of the Paris Agreement (United Nations 2015: 9)

Locally-led, people-centred adaptation

Scales for climate action



This 'Power of 10' framework shows ten orders of magnitude between a single individual and the 10 billion population projected on Earth by 2050. The authors identified a 'sweet spot' where climate and sustainability actions are most suitably scaled to between community and urban scales (100 – 10,000 people). This can help catalyse and enhance individual, household and local practices and support national and international policies and finances for rapid transformations. (Bhowmik et al. 2020)

Successful adaptation must be locally-led and people-centred. It is not enough to just consult and 'work with' those who are most often disregarded. Leaving no-one behind means them leading the way.⁴⁷

'Communities may lack awareness and technical skill on how to deal with the climate related adaptation strategies. They also lack the required resources to invest in this endeavour, so Islamic Relief needs to guide the community to adopt feasible strategies and support with the required resources.

'The community should be involved in the entire project cycle (planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation). We should explore their existing capacities and remove barriers to resilience'.

Islamic Relief Ethiopia

Successful adaptation must be driven by, and connect with, local priorities and the knowledge of local people. Impacts of climate breakdown need to be dealt with where they occur. Vulnerability must be understood and acted upon at the level and scale it is experienced by the people most affected. The principle is that, as far as possible, processes should be developed locally. Local experts, informed by facts about the likelihood and effects of climate breakdown, must be enabled to lead their community in planning for effective adaptation.

'Local assessments provide a means to identify existing vulnerabilities; the policies, plans, and natural hazards contributing to these vulnerabilities; as well as identifying adaptation actions... More specifically, at this level, social needs can be evaluated in terms of availability of natural, physical, human, political, and financial assets; stability of livelihood; and livelihood strategies'.

IPCC (2018)

Principles for locally-led adaptation

The Global Commission on Adaptation developed a set of principles, based on over a year of consultations, to strengthen locally led adaptation.⁴⁸ Over 80 organisations, including Islamic Relief, have endorsed them. They are increasingly becoming the reference point for governments and agencies to improve existing efforts and meet the urgent need for effective adaptation.



1. Devolving decision-making to the lowest appropriate level: Giving local institutions and communities more direct access to finance and decision-making power over how adaptation actions are defined, prioritised, designed, implemented; how progress is monitored; and how success is evaluated.



2. Addressing structural inequalities faced by women, youth, disabled people, and excluded ethnic groups: Integrating gender-based, economic, and political inequalities that are root causes of vulnerability into the core of adaptation action and encouraging vulnerable and marginalised individuals to meaningfully participate in and lead adaptation decisions.



3. Providing patient and predictable funding that can be accessed more easily: Supporting long-term development of local governance processes, capacity, and institutions through simpler access modalities and longer term and more predictable funding horizons, to ensure that communities can effectively implement adaptation actions.



4. Investing in local capabilities to leave an institutional legacy: Improving the capabilities of local institutions to ensure they can understand climate risks and uncertainties, generate solutions, and facilitate and manage adaptation initiatives over the long term without being dependent on project based donor funding.



5. Building a robust understanding of climate risk and uncertainty: Informing adaptation decisions through a combination of local and scientific knowledge that can enable resilience under a range of future climate scenarios.



6. Flexible programming and learning: Enabling adaptive management to address the inherent uncertainty in adaptation, especially through robust monitoring and learning systems, flexible finance, and flexible programming.



7. Ensuring transparency and accountability: Making processes of financing, designing, and delivering programmes more transparent and accountable downward to local stakeholders.



8. Collaborative action and investment: Collaboration across sectors, initiatives and levels to ensure that different initiatives and different sources of funding (humanitarian assistance, development, disaster risk reduction, green recovery funds, etc.) support each other, and their activities avoid duplication, to enhance efficiencies and good practice.



Women and girls take part in a community meeting in Bhola district, Bangladesh

Gender

Women should be at the centre of adaptation programmes because they are often particularly vulnerable due to limited access to and control and ownership of resources. They often face barriers to participating in decision and policymaking, have lower incomes and levels of formal education and have extraordinarily high workloads. In addition, women's significant roles in agriculture and pastoralism, food security, household livelihoods, labour productivity and managing natural resources will bring specific knowledge, skills and agency to adaptation activities. Furthermore, because of increased outmigration of males seeking livelihoods elsewhere, women will often be at the forefront of adaptation action.⁵²

Islamic Relief is also focused on protecting women and girls from the heightened risk of harm due to the effects of climate breakdown. Increasing drought, storm and flooding can, for instance, push them into temporary living arrangements which may increase their exposure to violence from strangers. When a disaster strikes, girls can be more vulnerable to child marriage, which is seen as a way to diminish the effects of crippling poverty and, ironically, as a way of protecting girls from violence. Women and girls' access to sexual and reproductive health services is disrupted. In times of need, girls often miss or drop out of schooling to take care of family members or to help with domestic chores. Climate breakdown disproportionately increases the risk of death and injury for women staying put in a disaster to protect their children or adults in their care and even having to wait for men's permission to leave their houses.⁵³

There is a pressing need for women and girls to take the lead in climate policy and decision-making to lower these risks and ensure that investment and action tackles the specific issues of protection which they face. Islamic Relief will support women and girls to acquire the skills they need to respond safely and adapt to the impacts of the climate crisis. Women taking a leading role in climate adaptation action will be able to hold leaders to account and ensure that interventions respond to the particular pressures, challenges and risks faced by women and girls.⁵⁴

Resilience is not enough

'The concept of resilience has been challenged as being insufficiently transformative, for promoting 'bouncing back' rather than 'bouncing forward',⁴⁹ and for not recognising that often the current state of many institutional systems is the cause of problems... adaptation presents an opportunity to move from the status quo of resilience towards transformation.'

Keys, Thomsen and Smith⁵⁰

Disability

People with disabilities are harder hit by climate disruptions than those without disabilities. Islamic Relief prioritises people with disabilities because we seek to work with the most vulnerable people first, following the 'leave no one behind' principle. Most people with disabilities live in poverty⁵¹. The poorest people continue to experience the worst effects of climate change through lost income and livelihood opportunities, displacement, hunger and adverse impacts on their health. Many overlapping factors of discrimination related to gender, age, displacement, indigenous origin or minority status, can further heighten the risks of people with disabilities experiencing negative impacts of climate change. Islamic Relief seeks to identify people with disabilities so that they can take part in decision-making and contribute to identifying risk reduction and adaptation measures effective for and carried out by people with disabilities. These unique insights and actions will often prove to be of benefit to everybody.

Children

Climate change puts children's most basic rights at risk, seriously affecting their access to healthcare, food, water, clean air, education and protection. In a landmark ruling in October 2022, the United Nations Child Rights Committee found that a country can be held responsible for the negative impact of its carbon emissions on the rights of children both within and outside its territory.

'Children are victims of extreme weather, cyclones, floods, river erosion, sea level rise and other climate change-driven environmental shocks. Many ends up in city slums, their lives and prospects shattered. Millions are trapped in child labour, child marriage and trafficking'.

Islamic Relief Bangladesh

Children's rights can also enhance climate action. Children are much more than passive victims of climate change. They are powerful agents of change who are active at all levels. Under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, all children, without discrimination, should be prepared for and included in climate decision-making to ensure that their best interests are protected. Children can make a strong contribution to risk reduction, adaptation and building the resilience of their communities by undertaking climate risk assessments, planning and implementing adaptation and raising awareness of climate risks and solutions.

'Mainstreaming adaptation in policy, plans, and social safeguards at all scales involves 'ensuring child-centred adaptation measures are in place to protect children from their unique vulnerability to climate change'.

USAID Climate Strategy⁵⁵

Image: Hassan Elbanna Islamic for Relief Malawi



Loss and Damage

Poor and vulnerable countries and communities are least responsible for the climate breakdown but are already facing most of its negative impacts in the form of both extreme weather events like hurricanes and floods, and slow-onset processes such as sea-level rise. Scaling down emissions and building resilience against the impacts of climate change can only take us so far some negative impacts and damages are already unavoidable. The inevitable consequences of human-caused climate change have collectively come to be known as 'Loss and Damage'.

Loss and Damage describes the impacts of climate change that have not been averted or minimised through adaptation and mitigation activities, and are already a lived reality for people around the world. Loss and damage includes permanent and irreversible losses, such as to lives and livelihoods, homes and territory, for which an economic value can be calculated; and to non-economic impacts, such as the loss of culture, identity, ecosystem services and biodiversity, which cannot be quantified in monetary terms.



Image: Hiba Siddiqui, Islamic Relief Pakistan

In September 2017, Hurricane Irma hit the Caribbean. Classified as a Category 5 hurricane, Irma was then the most powerful hurricane ever recorded in the Atlantic, with wind speeds of more than 185 miles per hour (298 km/hour) and torrential rainfall. Irma destroyed or severely damaged 81 per cent of buildings in Barbuda, and the island was deemed uninhabitable. Its inhabitants were evacuated to the neighbouring island of Antigua, where most were placed in government-run collective centres or hosted by relatives. A government report estimated Loss and Damage at \$155 million and recovery needs at \$222 million.

'Because industrialised countries have been responsible for the majority of emissions into the atmosphere since the beginning of the industrial revolution, they must adopt and compensate less developed countries for the Loss and Damage they have caused'.

Islamic Relief Somalia

The cost of Loss and Damage in developing countries is projected to be \$290-\$580 billion by 2030. Substantially scaled-up finance is therefore essential for vulnerable countries and communities to recover from the climate impacts they are already facing and to rebuild their livelihoods and economies. While finance for averting and minimising Loss and Damage has been mobilised in the form of funding for mitigation and adaptation, finance for addressing Loss and Damage remains lacking, apart from insufficient and unreliable humanitarian aid. Support must be provided in the form of grants so that addressing Loss and Damage does not increase the debt and poverty levels of people, communities and countries already coping with multiple crises.

There needs to be sufficient Loss and Damage finance on the basis of equity, historical responsibility and global solidarity, applying the 'polluter pays' principle. The United Nations must establish a process to identify the scale of funding needed to address Loss and Damage, as well as suitable mechanisms to deliver the finance to developing countries. National level systems to distribute Loss and Damage finance will ensure country ownership, gender responsiveness and self-determination over how finance is used. The UN's Santiago Network on Loss and Damage must provide reliable support for the most vulnerable countries and communities, including local, subnational and national level initiatives, to address Loss and Damage and give voice and agency to communities affected. This must include technical assistance and capacity building, developing and creating access to knowledge and information on Loss and Damage at scale of impact and fostering coordination and collaboration among key stakeholders.

Migration and conflict

The IPCC (2022a) reports high confidence that “climate hazards are a growing driver of involuntary migration and displacement and are a contributing factor to violent conflict.”

'Climate breakdown is a catalyst for conflict and a major threat to international peace and security. The effects of climate change heighten competition for resources such as land, food and water, fuelling socioeconomic tensions and increasingly often, leading to mass displacement'.

Islamic Relief Myanmar

Migration and displacement

Climate-induced migration includes both movements across borders and internal and localised migration within a country, which mostly takes place in poorer, vulnerable and desert regions and landlocked and small island countries.

Since 2008, over 260 million people have been forced to move because of climate change. In the next few years, hundreds of millions more people will be at risk of displacement due to hazards including rising sea levels, floods, tropical cyclones, droughts, extreme heat and wildfire.

The actual numbers of future migration and displacement will depend on how well people are able to adapt and, in particular, on their social and economic situation. Patterns will rest, “not only on the physical impacts of climate change, but also on future policies and planning at all scales of governance.” (IPCC 2022a) One study shows how a billion people will either be displaced or forced to endure insufferable heat for every additional 1°C rise in the global temperature.⁵⁶



Image: Safiul Azam, Islamic Relief Bangladesh

Displaced families in Baidoa town, Somalia.
Image: Abdulkadir Mohamed NRC



Following three failed rainy seasons, 745,000 people have been displaced by drought in Somalia since the start of 2021, including 500,000 people in the first quarter of 2022 alone.⁵⁷

Of those people displaced in Somalia this year, almost two-thirds fled to urban districts, including Mogadishu, adding pressure on already limited services and overpopulated displacement camps.

The Qur'an calls on humankind to fulfil the role of protectors and helpers to "those oppressed men, women and children, who cry out, 'Lord, rescue us from this town where people are oppressors!'" (Qur'an 4:75), and promises that those escaping persecution will find "many a refuge and a great plenty in the earth" (Qur'an 4:99).

Islamic teachings emphasise that refuge is the God-given right of the persecuted and that humankind has the responsibility to provide shelter and protection to those in need, wherever they seek it.⁵⁸

Climate-induced migration responses must be included within climate change action and financing. A legal definition of 'climate migration', including internal displacement, should be formulated in addition to the existing concept of refugees. There needs to be protection measures to ensure assistance is provided to climate migrants as a guiding principle, alongside equal economic opportunities and access to basic services, while maintaining their dignity and agency.⁵⁹

Conflict and peacebuilding

'Climate change feeds armed conflict in Somalia by sharpening disputes over already-scarce resources between warlords. Armed groups have been successful in attracting young people affected by famine and food insecurity with no job prospects who end up joining such groups in a bid to survive. Others are leave the country and fall into the hands of traffickers using torture and threats to extort money from relatives, and then face hazardous journeys too often ending in death when their boat overturns'.

Islamic Relief Somalia

'Climate change causes water scarcity, declining crop yields and rising prices to become catalysts for conflict. It aggravates pre-existing problems to 'threat multipliers', causing escalating cycles of humanitarian crises, political instability, forced migration and conflict'.

Islamic Relief Climate Change Policy: Understanding and Responding⁶⁰



Image: Majdi Samaan Islamic Relief Syria

Climate change is a contributing factor to disruptions in resource availability in north and central Mali, exacerbating the risk of intercommunal conflict between farmers and pastoralists over access to and control of natural resources. The triple effect of conflict, climate change and poverty is worsening living conditions for the most vulnerable, with increased attacks on civilians, food insecurity, displacement and limited access to protection and basic services.⁶¹

Understanding the links between conflict and natural disasters – climate change, destructive natural events, economic instability, energy depletion and scarcity of water and food – is vital to effective preparation and resilience building. Islamic Relief has been working with the 'triple-nexus' approach of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding in several countries, allowing for locally important components, such as climate adaptation, to be included.⁶² Conflict can be prevented by understanding the impact of climate change in a conflict environment: how it contributes to disputes and how conflict situations may prevent effective responses to environmental changes, or worsen their impact.

The IPCC warns that 2°C warming will increase the probability of conflict due to reduced food and water security and disruption to lives and livelihoods. The resulting instability, it points out, may lead to civil unrest, which is often linked to an increase in violence against women, girls and vulnerable groups.

Increasing the resilience of key development sectors and services involves 'utilizing principles of environmental peacebuilding to advance equitable resource sharing and management ... both mitigate conflict risk and increase climate resilience,' points out the USAID Climate Strategy⁶³

Image: Moussa Goita Islamic Relief Mali



Conflict transformation

'Think about a pastoralist who, due to effects from climate change, has been forced to find new grazing grounds for the family's cattle. The cattle graze on a farmer's land which leads to an argument. If the pastoralist apologises and the farmer accepts the apology, then the conflict might be resolved. But it is not transformed, because the pastoralist is still in need of food for the cattle. To transform the conflict and build lasting peace, the pastoralist needs sustainable access to grazing grounds. This would change the conditions that caused the conflict'.

Islamic Relief Introduction to Peacebuilding
(Payne and Islamic Relief 2020)

The environment can form the basis for active peacebuilding and a sustainable natural environment is important for ongoing peace. Environmental peacebuilding is a framework that can help to understand the diverse ways in which the natural environment supports peace and can be used in peacebuilding: preserving the natural environment, such that degradation does not contribute to violence, protecting natural resources during conflict and using natural resources in post-conflict economic recovery.⁶⁴ (IPCC 2022a 7-106)

Image: Pratap Maharjan, Islamic Relief Malawi



Finance

Climate action depends on funding

Climate finance refers to international funding that provides resources to developing countries to address climate change and, specifically, to support mitigation and adaptation actions and address loss and damage.

Without sufficient finance, in particular for countries suffering the worst impacts of the climate crisis, it is impossible to bring justice and develop the necessary spirit of global cooperation required to tackle climate change. The Paris Agreement committed to mobilising \$100bn a year for climate finance. This has not been achieved. It is vital to deliver, at a minimum, \$600bn before 2025.

The IPCC (2022b) found that, by 2030, mitigation investments need to increase by at least five-fold in Southeast Asia and developing countries in the Pacific, seven-fold in Africa and 12-fold in the Middle East to limit warming below 2°C. This shortfall is most pronounced for agriculture, forestry and other land use, where recent financial flows are between 10 and 29 times below what is required to achieve the Paris Agreement's objectives.

The agreement demands a balance between finance for adaptation and finance for mitigation. However, currently only a small proportion goes to climate adaptation and next to nothing to address Loss and Damage, despite these being the most pressing issues for many developing countries. There is an urgent need to scale up support to ensure 50 per cent of public resources support adaptation, with an additional dedicated finance facility to address Loss and Damage.

Climate finance should be public and disbursed for public and publicly accountable programmes and projects, rather than private, for-profit initiatives or public-private partnerships. Access to finance for communities should be assured to fund locally-led initiatives. Climate finance needs to be new and additional to existing international financial commitments, such as overseas development aid. A gender-responsive approach to finance should be adopted to fund transformative and positive change within societies.

Finance must be grants, not loans

Climate finance should be provided without conditions, and it should not create debt. The impacts of the climate emergency in poorer countries exacerbate the existing debt problems in climate vulnerable countries. The countries that struggle the most with debt tend to be the most vulnerable to the impact of climate breakdown, while the climate crisis worsens existing debt vulnerabilities.

Excessive reliance on loans means that climate finance makes climate vulnerable countries more vulnerable to debt, which in turn reduces the ability of these countries to adapt and to address Loss and Damage, or to invest in public services and social protection.

Investments in climate adaptation and in Loss and Damage are unlikely to generate substantive financial returns from which loans could be repaid. This means that finance should be primarily delivered in the form of grants, with extremely soft loans used only under clear and specific conditions.

There needs to be a permanent and independent mechanism, under the auspices of the United Nations, that provides fair, transparent, comprehensive and timely debt resolution, taking into consideration individual countries' climate vulnerabilities, as well as human rights and gender inequality.

Endnotes

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Islamic Relief's climate policy is unambiguous

We support every ethical action designed to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions. This includes ending coal, oil and gas exploration, production and use and replacing them with renewable sources of energy.

We demand that the necessary transformations to society and economy are just and equitable and respect human rights and dignity.

We require that the means, capacity and technical support to adapt to climate breakdown is made available to all.

We expect proper provision to be made to address Loss and Damage due to climate breakdown.

We recognise the overwhelming ethical and moral responsibility of those who have benefitted from the activities that have led to climate breakdown to provide for adaptation and, where this is not possible, compensation for Loss and Damage incurred.

We hold that climate action is both compatible and necessary to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.



Islamic Relief Climate Policy - our position

This policy navigates the complex and interrelated issues surrounding humanity's response to the climate crisis. It invokes the scientific and ethical imperative for action. It explores solutions and identifies priorities through Islamic Relief's strategy of addressing the global drivers and local outcomes of poverty, vulnerability, inequality and injustice. While patient and deliberate progress is necessary, there is no time for further delay. As Greta Thunberg says, we must "act like our house is on fire. Because it is".

Islamic Relief Worldwide

19 Rea Street South
Birmingham
B5 6LB
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 121 605 5555
Fax: +44 121 622 5003

irw@irworldwide.org
www.islamic-relief.org

Registered Charity No. 328158
Registered Company No. 02365572