

# Islamic Relief Climate Policy - Our Position



The breakdown of the world's weather systems is the biggest threat facing humanity today. There is now a scientific consensus that climate change is man-made and increasing. Greenhouse gases 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 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 prevent this happening. The goal is that heating already in the system will be limited to 1.5°C. This can be done, but only through dramatic transformations in the way economies are managed. 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 brought together international scholars to construct the Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change, while the Climate Change Policy of the same year, revised in 2018, outlined our positions on these issues.

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 campaign and advocate for climate change adaptation.

The 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. This paper summarises the policy, our understandings and position, and what we are asking governments to do to respond to the climate crisis.

# Islamic Relief's understanding in brief

The effects of climate breakdown are being felt the world over. Future impacts of climate change will be stronger, more extreme and especially devastating for the most vulnerable. Effective and early mitigation will produce both short and long-term economic benefits by avoiding the impacts of climate breakdown. The key to limiting temperature increases and climate breakdown rests in decreasing the amount of emissions released into the atmosphere. Warming can only be limited to 1.5°C by dramatically transforming the way economies are managed. Rapid reduction of greenhouse gas emissions require vastly accelerated transformations in energy, land and ocean, urban and infrastructural, industrial and societal systems.

Economic prosperity, decent work and environmental sustainability are fully compatible. Achieving universal access to modern energy for the world's poorest would not significantly impact global emissions. Inequalities mean unequal responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions. Sufficient finance is vital to deliver climate justice and develop the necessary spirit of global cooperation.

Adaptation will be required. There is great potential for Muslim organisations and leaders to facilitate climate action. Sustainable development initiatives will fail unless they are risk-informed and sensitive to the changing climate and its consequences. Only resilient development can become sustainable development. Inequalities are causing development challenges that increase unfairness and vulnerability.

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. Women and girls 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. People with disabilities are harder hit by climate disruptions than those without disabilities. Many overlapping factors of discrimination heighten the risks of people with disabilities experiencing negative impacts of climate change. Climate change has adversely affected the physical and mental health of people across the world. Climate change puts children's most basic rights at risk, seriously affecting their access to health, food, water, clean air, education and protection. Children's rights can also enhance climate action.

Systems not able to adapt using existing actions result in Loss and Damage. Loss and Damage is already a lived reality for people around the world. Since 2008, the impact of climate change has uprooted more than 260 million people from their homes. Only a small proportion of climate finance is invested in climate adaptation and next to nothing goes to address Loss and Damage. Fossil fuels fund wars and provoke conflict around the world. Warming will increase the probability of conflict due to reduced food and water security. The environment can form the basis for active peacebuilding and a sustainable natural environment is important for ongoing peace.

## 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's positions



Image: Soheib Megraoui,  
Islamic Relief Pakistan

## Context

- Recovery from pandemic and war must deal also with the ongoing breakdown of the global climate.
- Research should be undertaken to identify distinctly Islamic approaches to climate action.
- Climate breakdown must be integrated in the design and implementation of all humanitarian and development projects.
- Climate policies must align with protecting the rights of all people to have a say in and contribute to climate responses.
- To achieve the Sustainable Developments Goals (SDGs), climate actions need to be supported and funded. This needs to be the top priority for all the sectors.
- 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.

## Mitigation

- Limiting warming to 1.5°C is an essential prerequisite to achieving the SDGs.
- A change in generating and using energy is imperative.
- 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.
- 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.

## Adaptation

- It is essential that people and systems adapt.
- 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.
- Successful adaptation must be driven by, and connect with, local priorities and the knowledge of local people.
- 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.
- Effective climate action must be aligned with disaster risk reduction and sustainable development.
- Resources must be redirected to measures, including adequate social protection, that build resilience and uphold the rights of women and marginalised communities.
- 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.

## Loss and Damage

- 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.

## Finance

- Climate finance should be public, new and additional to current development and humanitarian funding, non-debt creating and gender responsive.
- Fifty per cent of climate finance should support adaptation.
- There needs to be a dedicated finance facility to address Loss and Damage.



## 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 the 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.

**“If we don’t act now, it will be too late.”**

**Sir David Attenborough**



**Islamic Relief's Climate Policy** tries to navigate the complex and interrelated issues surrounding humanity's response to the climate crisis. It invokes the scientific and ethical imperative for action. Our strategy of addressing the global drivers and local outcomes of poverty, vulnerability, inequality and injustice explores solutions and identifies priorities. 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'.