



GEN

ADAPT

Turning promises into progress:

**How the UK can realise the potential of
gender-just climate action**

Executive summary



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About Gen Adapt

You've heard of Gen X, Gen Y and Gen Z. Now, meet GenAdapt: a new generation of women and girls who are the first to have to adapt to a new tougher climate reality in order to survive and thrive. Through our Gen Adapt campaign, CARE is elevating the voices of women and girls impacted by the climate crisis. Together, we are calling for world leaders to commit to meaningful climate financing to reach women-led organisations, more women at decision-making tables when it comes to the issues that disproportionately affect them, and to take steps to reduce the worse impacts of climate change in future, through a rapid and fair transition away from fossil fuels to clean and renewable energy.

Front cover image: Mable and her daughter Lumuno tending to their farm in the Southern Province of Zambia. © CARE/Peter Caton 2023



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Jerin, a 16-year-old from Bangladesh, is passing on knowledge she has gained from CARE's SUFAL II project, inspiring others in her community to take measures to adapt to the reality of climate change
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The impacts of the human-induced climate crisis have never been more apparent and the needs of those affected have never been more urgent. Unprecedented floods, wildfires and heat waves over the past two years have shown that no part of our planet is protected. Slow onset disasters caused by rising temperatures are also on the increase and are, at times, exacerbating existing fragility. But while climate change touches all of us, it is those who are marginalised and discriminated against who suffer the most.

Women and girls living in low- and middle-income countries, who have contributed least to the climate emergency, are bearing the brunt of its impacts. As droughts, extreme weather and temperature shifts disrupt livelihoods, women and girls face increased vulnerability to displacement and gender-based violence. They are also shouldering more domestic and caregiving responsibilities even while their livelihoods are being destroyed. These are a generation of women and girls who are being forced to adapt to climate devastation.

However, women and girls on the frontlines of the climate crisis also have the power, expertise, resilience and potential to adapt. Engaging women in a full and meaningful way, and supporting their leadership, increases the quality of decision making around climate change and helps to ensure that the needs of women and girls are met.¹ The failure to consider and respond to gender-specific needs and vulnerabilities undermines effectiveness, can deepen gender inequalities and risks doing harm. In turn, this creates a vicious cycle where the impacts of climate change are driving vulnerability, poverty and marginalisation. At the same time, the people who are most impacted are being excluded from decision making, they are not able to access resources and their needs are being ignored.

The climate crisis demands innovative thinking, cross-sector collaboration and locally led solutions. Proven approaches focus on long-term, forward-looking responses to build resilience and adapt to climate change, at the same time as transforming gender relations and women's meaningful participation and leadership. Women's rights and women-led organisations² are key agents of this work. They are often best placed to deliver context-specific and long-term interventions and to build the agency of women and girls. Women's equal participation and leadership in climate negotiations also needs to be realised – only 37% of national delegates at last year's United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) were women, lower than the percentage in 2021, while men took up 74% of speaking time in plenary discussions.⁴

The UK Government has the opportunity to implement effective, gender-just climate action and to be a leader in addressing the double injustices of gender inequality and the climate crisis. However, CARE International UK's report, released on Gender Day at COP28, finds that, despite promising commitments that recognise this, the UK is not yet making the urgent progress needed to ensure that women and girls are able to lead climate solutions in their communities.

Key findings from our research highlight that:

- Less than 1% of UK bilateral climate finance targeted gender equality specifically last year, despite evidence that addressing climate and gender justice together is effective and necessary.
- Less than 0.2% reached the hands of women's rights organisations last year, even though they are recognised as crucial agents of change in gender-just climate action.
- The UK would also have to redouble its efforts to ensure it meets the target of mainstreaming gender equality in 88% of bilateral international climate finance, as demanded by women's rights organisations,⁵ as only 47% of spend between 2015-2022 did so.

Our research also found that gender equality is not being consistently applied to UK Government policies guiding efforts towards a green transition, which presents economic opportunities as new sectors and roles are created in efforts to shift to a low-carbon economy. However, without specifically addressing the barriers that women and girls face, particularly for marginalised groups, there is a risk that they will miss out on these opportunities, further deepening inequalities. Furthermore, the potential transformative role of the care economy in a future green economy is often ignored. Integrating a gender lens into the green transition at the outset can create a virtuous circle that improves women's access to decent work, builds resilience and leads to better environmental outcomes.

The UK is not alone in making slow progress to ensure climate action is gender-just. Many other donors are also making slow progress on these metrics. Action is needed by all stakeholders involved, including international non-governmental organisations (INGOs). However, following a commitment from the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) to "use the full weight of our diplomatic and development offer to put women and girls, in all their diversity, at the heart of everything we do,"⁶ and as political parties in the UK scope out their agendas ahead of a general election, we are calling for these promises to translate into more rapid progress for the women and girls on the frontline of climate change.

As well as gender-specific policies and programmes, gender-just climate action also requires leadership to ensure that: overall climate finance commitments are ambitious

and that promises are kept; the Global South has the resources it deserves for adaptation and loss and damage; and action is taken to rapidly meet the globally required targets for reducing emissions by 2030.

Recent choices by the UK to change what it counts as climate finance instead of increasing funding to meet commitments, and a rollback on domestic policies to meet net zero show worrying trends that the UK is stepping back from leadership on climate action. If action is not taken urgently, the poorest women and girls around the world stand to suffer the most.

Recommendations

The UK Government must act on its promises, and accelerate support for the women and girls being forced to adapt to climate change through:

Advancing the integration of gender equality into climate finance by:

- Setting a specific target of 88% of marked climate bilateral finance mainstreaming gender equality aims by 2026, as per the recommendations of the Generation Equality Forum Feminist Action for Climate Justice Action Coalition, increasing from the 47% average between 2015-22.⁹
- Integrating rapid, robust gender analysis in all climate finance programming.
- Increasing the amount of climate finance that targets gender equality specifically – for example, investing in programmes that tackle the links between gender-based violence and climate change.
- Working with multilateral and development finance institutions through which the UK channels climate finance to scale up and improve the integration of gender equality into their practices.
- Stepping up systematic collection, analysis and use of gender, age and disability disaggregated (SADD) data to ensure interventions across all sectors are needs based and identify how specific groups are impacted differently by crisis and the coping mechanisms they use.

Increasing the quantity and quality of climate finance reaching women's rights organisations and women-led organisations by:

- Actively designing programmes that would support the leadership of women's rights organisations and women-led organisations, seeking them out as partners and consulting with them to design opportunities.
- Increasing the quality of funding through longer-term, multi-year commitments and flexible grant-based funding. Where funding is managed through a fund manager, the fund should be set up according to feminist funding principles.
- Removing the barriers that women's rights organisations face in accessing climate finance, across bilateral and multilateral mechanisms, including through consultation on identifying these barriers, which include complex procedures, language barriers and annual budget requirements.

- Specifically designing strategies to seek out women's rights organisations and women-led organisations that represent marginalised women and girls.
- Funding existing mechanisms that directly support community-level, women-led climate action, such as women's funds and the *Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA)*.¹⁰
- Operationalising the principles of locally led adaptation and resilience-building – for example, climate adaptation in which local communities, community-based organisations, citizen groups, local government and local private sector entities at the lowest administrative structure are included as decision-makers in the interventions that affect them.¹¹
- Using their influence within multilateral financial institutions to create mechanisms with conditions and reporting requirements tailored to women's rights and women-led organisations.

Amplifying women's voice and leadership in climate policy and negotiations by:

- Increasing support for the implementation of the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan – for example through dedicated funding allocated to its implementation, and demonstrating political support.
- Continuing to advocate for gender parity and women's leadership in international climate spaces, and supporting the inclusion of multiple, diverse perspectives. Using diplomatic influence to highlight and put pressure on processes that are not reaching gender parity.
- Funding the participation of women from low- and middle-income countries in international climate negotiations, including technical and working level meetings.
- Supporting the inclusion of women-led organisations as key stakeholders in climate negotiations.
- Building internal expertise on the intersection of climate and gender across FCDO, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.
- Ensuring gender equality is mainstreamed into negotiations and is a priority for UK negotiators at the UNFCCC including negotiations on adaptation, finance, loss and damage, mitigation and the just transition.

Accelerating a gender-just green transition

- Ensuring that all UK strategies for accelerating the green transition include gender equality aims and specific measures to ensure that marginalised women and girls can benefit from new economic opportunities – for example, through:
 - upskilling women and girls for green and higher-skilled jobs.
 - tackling the structural barriers that women face in the world of work, e.g. through building caring economies in line with the “5 Rs” (of recognition, reduction, redistribution, representation and reward).
 - using quotas, specialised recruitment and engaging with women’s rights organisations.
 - promoting decent work in line with the International Labour Organization (ILO) definition.¹²
- Collecting, analysing and using sex-, age- and disability- disaggregated data to assess the green transition’s impact on gender equality.
- Broadening the definition of green work to encompass mostly low-carbon to carbon-neutral sectors that are dominated by women, such as care and social work.
- Increasing women’s participation and leadership in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of green transition measures, including by consulting women’s rights organisations on strategies and priorities.

References

- ¹ Craig Leisher et al, “Does the gender composition of forest and fishery management groups affect resource governance and conservation outcomes? A systematic map”, *Environmental Evidence*, vol. 5, No. 6 (2016). <https://environmentalevidencejournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13750-016-0057-8>
- ² CARE defines women’s rights organisations as those with an explicit purpose of advancing women’s rights or gender equality and labels women-led organisations as any non-governmental, not-for profit and non-political organisation where two-thirds of its board (including the Chair) and management staff/volunteers (including the Executive Director) are female, and it focuses on women and girls as a primary target of programming. CARE further recognises that not all actors will be formal organisations and that supporting movements, grassroots groups, activists and individual leaders should also be part of the approach to achieve localised, women-led climate, development and humanitarian action.
- ³ UNFCCC (2023) Gender Composition: Report by Secretariat Advanced Version https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cp2023_04_adv.pdf
- ⁴ WEDO (2022) *Women’s Participation in the UNFCCC: 2022 Report* <https://wedo.org/womens-participation-in-the-unfccc-2022-report/>
- ⁵ The OECD Gender Equality marker tracks programmes which target gender equality specifically (principal objective) and those that mainstream gender equality objectives (significant objectives).
- ⁶ FCDO (2022) *International Women and Girls’ Strategy*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-women-and-girls-strategy-2023-to-2030>
- ⁷ Mitchell, Andrew Rt. Hon. Minister of State for International Development (2023) *International Climate Finance. Statement*. 17 October 2023. <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2023-10-17/hcws1071>
- ⁸ Carbon Brief (2023) *What do Rishi Sunak’s U-turns mean for UK climate policy* In-depth Q&A. 22 September 2023. <https://www.carbonbrief.org/in-depth-qa-what-do-rishi-sunaks-u-turns-mean-for-uk-climate-policy/#:~:text=Echoing%20a%20favoured%20climate%2Dsceptic,than%20any%20other%20major%20economy>
- ⁹ The Generation Equality Forum Action Coalitions were convened by UN Women to ensure that the bold ambitions of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action on women’s rights are finally implemented, and that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are achieved. The Action Coalitions brought together Member States (from the Global South and North), women’s movements, youth and civil society actors (from the Global South and North), and private sector entities. The Feminist Action for Climate Justice Action Coalition made a targeted set of concrete, ambitious and immediate actions within the period of 2021-2026 to deliver tangible impact.
- ¹⁰ GAGGA is a consortium led by Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres in collaboration with Mama Cash and Both ENDS. It has created a network of 16 women’s funds, 8 environmental justice funds, 28 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and 390 grassroots groups in 39 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. Since 2016, GAGGA has provided €12 million in 1,742 grants, mainly to women-led community-based organisations. See more at <https://gaggaalliance.org/who-we-are/>
- ¹¹ World Resources Institute (2021) *Locally Led Climate Adaptation: What is Needed to Accelerate Action and Support?* https://files.wri.org/d8/s3fs-public/locally-led-adaptation-accelerating-action-and-support_0.pdf
- ¹² The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines decent work as “productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity”. In general, work is considered as decent when: it pays a fair income; it guarantees a secure form of employment and safe working conditions; it ensures equal opportunities and treatment for all; it includes social protection for the workers and their families; it offers prospects for personal development and encourages social integration; workers are free to express their concerns and to organise. See [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/sustainable-growth-and-jobs/employment-and-decent-work_en#:~:text=The%20International%20Labour%20Organization%20\(ILO,employment%20and%20safe%20working%20conditions](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/sustainable-growth-and-jobs/employment-and-decent-work_en#:~:text=The%20International%20Labour%20Organization%20(ILO,employment%20and%20safe%20working%20conditions)



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