



Islamic Relief climate adaptation:

Locally-led, people centred

A POLICY APPROACH



'ACT LIKE OUR HOUSE IS ON FIRE. BECAUSE IT IS'.

GRETA THUNBERG



The world's poorest and most vulnerable people have contributed least to the climate crisis but are the most affected by it. The Paris Agreement sets as its aim, 'to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty'.

Islamic Relief believes that reducing poverty is crucial for adaptation – enhancing capacity, building resilience and reducing vulnerability – to climate change.

The evidence says that successful adaptation must be locally-led and people centred. It is not enough to just work with, and pay attention to, those who are most often disregarded. Leaving no-one behind means them leading the way.¹

This paper shows how Islamic Relief can support people towards a locally-led, people centred response to the threat of climate change. The first part is about what climate adaptation is and who might lead local efforts. The second addresses the challenges of measuring, defining and financing adaptation work in the context of sustainable development.

Front Cover Photo
Celebrating at the community fish pond
constructed as part of a gravity canal
system developed in Nyamuka village,
Zomba district, Malawi.

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Part One

What is adaptation?

Climate adaptation is what we do to alter our lives to deal with the changing climate. In more technical terms it is, "the process of adjusting to the actual or expected climate and its effects... to moderate or avoid harm or exploit beneficial opportunities."²

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.³

The United Nations' Global Goal for Adaptation says that it involves enhancing adaptive capacity, building resilience and reducing vulnerability. These can be achieved at several scales: globally, nationally, sub-nationally, locally and in between.⁴ Adaptation can utilise infrastructure (known as grey adaptation), the natural environment (green adaptation) and social (soft adaptation) options.⁵

Grey and green adaptation



For many, climate adaptation means engineering and technical solutions that alter infrastructure. Engineering options may include flood defences, seawalls, upgrading buildings, bridges and roads to improve wind and flooding resilience. Technologies for adapting agriculture include more efficient irrigation and fertilisation methods, plant breeding for greater drought tolerance, and adjusting planting based on projected yields to transfers of traditional technologies such as floating gardens.⁶

They might include pollution control, beach nourishment to halt erosion and drought early warning and forecasting.

These grey adaptation options are important, but each needs to consider both the immediate negative effects on people (i.e. losing homes and livelihoods as result of adaptation measures) and the burden of paying for and maintaining these solutions into the future.

Green measures are an ecosystem-based (or nature-based) approach. They make use of the multiple services provided by natural ecosystems to improve resilience and adaptation capacity, for instance by developing green spaces in rural and urban settings, protecting and restoring dunes, wetlands and upland buffers and using locally available natural materials for dykes and barriers against flooding.

People in Afar, Ethiopia, constructing fencing using Zinkila (Berberis holstia) thorns to protect fodder as part of their response to loss of pasture due to climate change.

Soft adaptation

Soft adaptation includes policy, legal, social, management, financial and public health measures that centre on people. It builds their capacity and resilience and reduces their vulnerability to climate breakdown. Soft adaptation may mean people altering their behaviour and increasing their awareness of climate change issues, and also changing their situation in terms of their livelihood, social security and participation in governance.⁷

There are various adaptation options that target the specific vulnerability of disadvantaged groups and social inequities. Community-based adaptation (CBA) refers to planning and carrying out locally driven adaptation strategies of learning-by-doing and empowerment. These cut across sectors and technological, social, and institutional processes. They lead to social protection schemes that include public and private initiatives which transfer income or assets to people in poverty, protect against livelihood risks, and raise the social status and rights of those who are marginalised.⁸

This agreement... aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty

Article 2.1 Paris Agreement on United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Soft adaptation and poverty

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.⁹
¹⁰

Islamic Relief believes that the alleviation of poverty is crucial to enhancing adaptive capacity, building resilience and reducing vulnerability. Our work is mainly concerned with enabling and encouraging social strategies that will be most effective at helping families adapt to changes in climate. Our extensive work in poverty reduction over many years is built on reflective engagement with people of different ages and abilities, which helps bring about the long-term resilience of families and communities. In the context of climate change, this is locally-led, people centred adaptation.

Adaptation at the local scale

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)



Self help group meet with Islamic Relief staff to discuss climate resilient livelihood opportunities in Bhola District, Bangladesh.

Successful adaptation needs to 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.

Many adaptation activities have been framed as 'community-based'. Islamic Relief understands 'community' as a geographically bound social grouping — in a simple metaphor, a village. It has a shared fate (in this case climate change) and includes relationships between people and institutions that extend beyond the village and across time.

However, successful adaptation cannot be simply based in communities. It must be wholly led by local people and local institutions. This involves placing local agencies (such as people in the area, religious and educational establishments, national governments and regional partners) at the centre. This makes sure that adaptation is driven by local people rather than by self-identified and often external technical experts.

In most cases it would be more honest and more helpful to speak of 'people centred' rather than 'community-based' approaches or, better still, to state exactly with whom and where one works. For Islamic Relief we identify these as the poorest and most vulnerable in a village who will lead the direction and application of climate adaptation efforts.

Most evidently, the local rural economy is based on the use of land and related resources for a set of livelihoods that are relatively well-integrated, in which the main livelihood activities are related to that place. Historically then, people have emerged socially as place-sharing systems, in which there is a locality-based functionality.

Related to this, very strong emotional and symbolic awareness of that place seems to develop in many parts of the world. People have their own sense of meaning — their 'lived experience'— that literally places them in that territory and locality as a way that gives meaning to their lives. This can even apply to the poorest and most vulnerable, who may share their sense of place attachment despite the dangers (natural hazards, etc.) that afflict them there.

(Titz et al 2018:16)

Poverty and vulnerability

Climate change is expected to have a relatively greater impact on the poor as a consequence of their lack of financial resources, poor quality of shelter, reliance on local ecosystem services, exposure to the elements, and limited provision of basic services and their limited resources to recover from an increasing frequency of losses through climate events.

IPCC (2018:14)

Poverty is best understood as measured by monetary income, but also the absence of factors that contribute towards wellbeing. For instance, for Islamic Relief sustainable development means 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).

It remains the case for most people that the last of these and particularly the absence of money is 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.

'Most vulnerable' is less easy to identify. Vulnerability defined as, 'the propensity or predisposition to be adversely affected' by the impacts of hazard. It 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 things such as how sensitive or susceptible to harm people are, and their capacity to deal with and adapt to shocks¹¹ including, "the conditions determined by physical, social, economic and environmental factors or processes which increase the susceptibility of an individual, a community, assets or systems to the impacts of hazard".¹²

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 would also include infants, orphans and people living in households headed by woman 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, but also by situations that exacerbate vulnerabilities, such as poverty, displacement, migration or armed conflict.**¹³

Impact inequality

Vulnerability assessments have repeatedly proven that disasters discriminate on the same lines that societies discriminate against people.

UNISDR (2019) Global Assessment Report on DRR

Some groups of people are more prone to damage, loss and suffering when disasters happen. Vulnerable groups are also those that find it hardest to reconstruct their livelihoods following disaster, and this increases their vulnerability to the effects of subsequent hazardous events.

Islamic Relief have shown that flexibility is at the heart of effective adaptation. During the Covid-19 pandemic we made dramatic changes in priorities and ways of working so adaptation activities could continue. We understand that circumstances change while actions are being taken to adapt, so it is important that projects and programmes monitor, learn and respond to the new conditions.

Owing to limited financial resources and often compromised health and nutritional status, the poor, along with the sick and elderly, are at increased risk from trauma, physical and mental illness, and death from climate impacts such as increased pollution, higher indoor temperatures, exposure to toxins and pathogens from floods, and the emergence of new disease vectors.

IPCC (2018:14)

Disability

Because Islamic Relief seeks to work with the most vulnerable people first, following the 'leave no one behind' principle, we prioritise people with disabilities. Most people with disabilities live in poverty. 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.^{14 15} Islamic Relief seeks to identify people with disabilities so they can take part in decision-making and contribute to identifying risk reduction and adaptation measures effective for, and carried out by, persons with disabilities. These unique insights and actions will often prove to be of benefit to everybody.



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 policy making, 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 to adaptation activities specific knowledge, skills and agency. Furthermore, because of increased out-migration of males seeking livelihoods elsewhere women will often be at the forefront of adaptation action.¹⁶

In order to lower these risks there is a pressing need for girls and women to take the lead in climate policy and decision-making. This will ensure investment and action tackles the specific issues of protection for women and girls. 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.¹⁷

Islamic Relief is also focused on protecting women and girls from the heightened risk of harm due to climate breakdown. For instance, increasing drought, storm and flooding can 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 help with domestic chores. Climate breakdown disproportionately increases the risk of death and injury for women staying back 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.¹⁸

Part Two

Measuring adaptation

“No universal metric or indicator, or set of metrics or indicators, can adequately and appropriately capture the variety and breadth of adaptation across countries or widely varying contexts within countries”.

COP26 co-chairs 'summary of the presidencies' consultations on adaptation, 23-24 February 2021

The Paris Agreement established the Global Goal on Adaptation which is to increase capacity and resilience and reduce vulnerability. But when it comes to assessing adaptation needs and progress towards their delivery, measuring adaptation proves very complicated. Adaptation requires actions of great variety and breadth at local levels, which are extremely difficult to add together across countries towards a global goal.

There is a danger that attempts to measure adaptation will mean this comes to define adaptation only by what is measurable. It is possible to measure vulnerability and resilience, using poverty and marginalisation as proxies, but measurements are not easily put together or compared because there are many different scales and systems. Similarly, adaptive capacity is not easy to measure.¹⁹



Farmers harvesting fish at Mwandimwi, Malawi.

Government bodies and funding organisations can track the depth and breadth of inclusion in decision making around adaptation actions using frameworks that present criteria for evaluating the degree to which participation or engagement is nominal, instrumental, representative or transformative. Adaptation MEL should understand and respond to structural inequalities by basing theories of change and indicators on subjective definitions of resilience from excluded groups, to reduce any potential for power imbalances.

IIED (2021)

Islamic Relief's approach to adaptation proposes that the objectives, indicators and their assessment should be locally defined by asking those identified as the poorest and most vulnerable in a community:

'How can your resilience and adaptive capacity be increased and your vulnerability reduced?'

Asking a further question turns this into objectives:

'What will success look like and how will you know?'

Answers will provide indicators and forms of assessment.

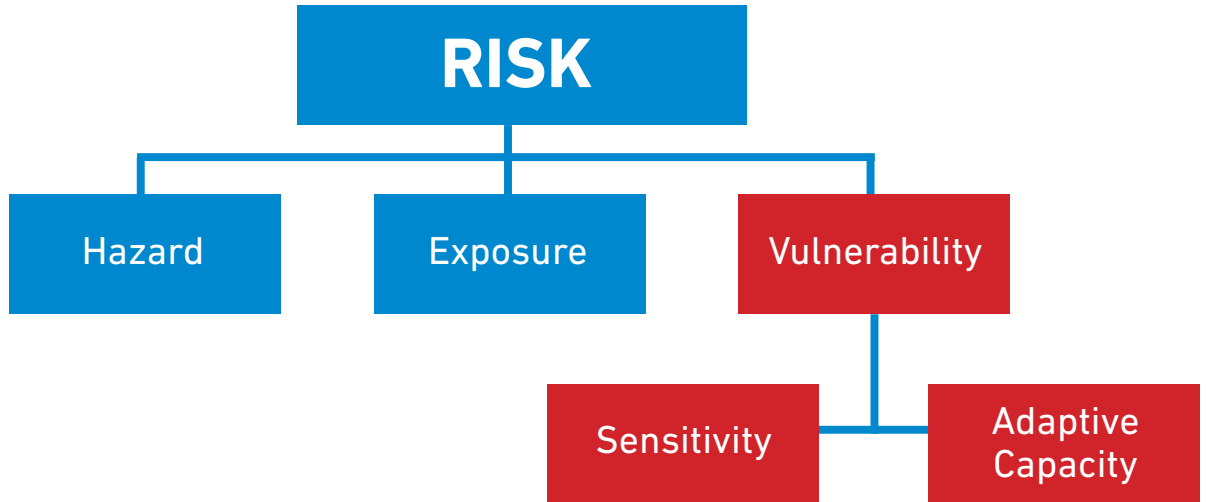
This participatory approach to monitoring and evaluation contributes directly to the effectiveness of interventions. When international comparisons and marks of progress towards the Global Goal on Adaptation's three criteria are made, the degree to which the participatory approach has been adopted in any national context should be an essential indicator.

Learning and adaptation improvements go hand in hand. When learning progress and outcomes are visible, local actors demonstrate high awareness of how project design elements are interlinked. This can help build knowledge, facilitate resourcefulness and engender a sense of agency that will help actors pursue future options.

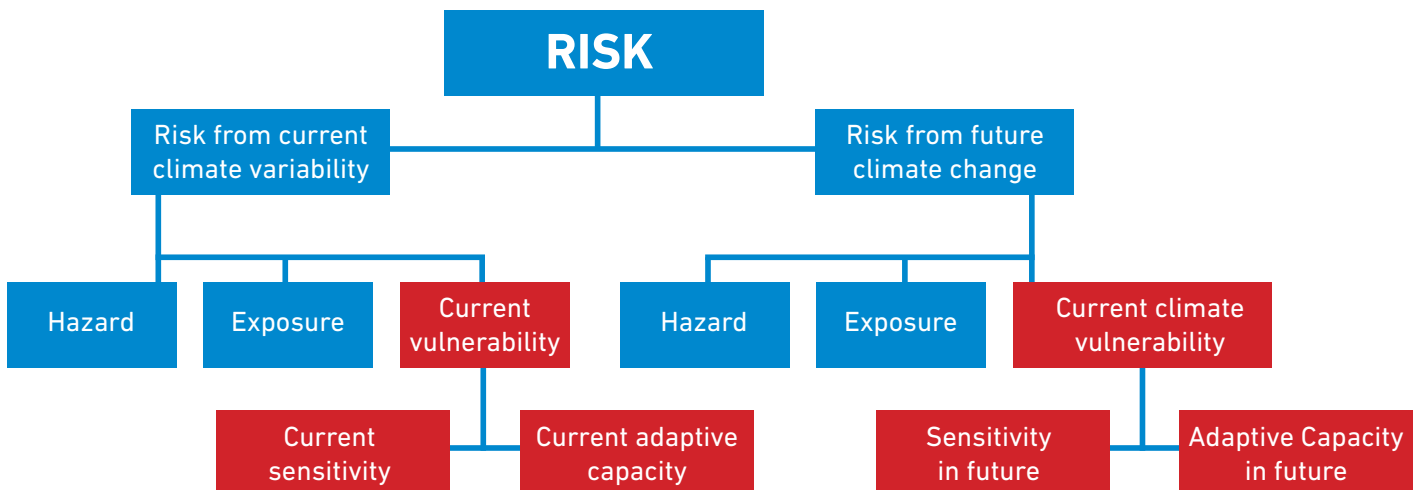
IIED (2020)

Towards Zero Vulnerability

Vulnerability to an event which has unwanted consequences or losses (a risk) is determined by sensitivity to climate change risks and capacity to adapt to them.



Climate vulnerability is the inability of people to withstand harm and lack of ability to cope and adapt to the changing climate. Climate vulnerability is assessed under the current and future climate conditions.



Hazard, exposure and vulnerability interact and result in risk within the overall climate and physical social, economic and political environments.

Climate Vulnerability & Capacity Analysis

A Climate Vulnerability & Capacity Analysis (CVCA) is part of the Opportunity and Needs Assessment analysis that is required in designing any intervention by Islamic Relief.

The purpose of Islamic Relief's CVCA is for country teams to better understand the situation of primary stakeholders in relation to the climate related threats to their wellbeing.

Our vulnerability assessment analysis considers sensitivity and adaptive capacity as the two factors determining vulnerability. To understand vulnerability we must consider the direct impacts of a hazard and the wider environmental and social conditions that limit and support people and communities in coping with the impact of hazard (their capacity).

CVCA must be a participatory process. It must involve and preferably be led by its primary stakeholders —people that benefit from or are directly affected by the operations and activities of an adaptation intervention — in order to understand capacities and vulnerabilities between and within different social and socio-economic groups. This will help identify ways to build resilience that meets diverse needs. The participatory approach supports people to build capacity to self-assess their vulnerabilities and choose adaptation options that best suit their circumstances. To do this they must be able to access and understand the probability of future changes and increasing climate uncertainty.

Islamic Relief Indonesia: When we plan climate change adaptation projects, we will ask: What is the climate change projection in that village? Are conditions likely to worsen due to temperature increases in the next 30 years or so? Will the villages be hit by the extreme weather events?

We will score for selecting villages based on current and future impact of climate change through CVCA, plus climate projection.

Islamic Relief Nepal: We are now prioritising a climate change perspective in our development programming with a focus on anticipatory actions — forecast based financing and shock absorptive social protection, early warning systems and coordination with the scientific community.



For many contexts, information on the hazards from climate change are available on a regional, sub-regional and national basis. Country offices can research what these are and draw up a framework of threats like the one on the following page.

An assessment being conducted in Abdaal district, Somaliland, Somalia.

Framework for assessing threats to assets against climate hazards

HAZARD	HEAT			COLD		WET			DRY			WIND & STORMS				SNOW & ICE				COAST			OTHER					
	Warming trend	Permafrost thawing	Heat wave	Cold spell	Frost	Wet trend	River flood	Pluvial flood	Landslide	Dry trend	Drought	Wildfire	Mean wind decrease	Severe storms	Hail	Dust/sandstorm	Snow reduction	Lake & sea ice reduction	Heavy snow	Ice storm	Snow avalanche	Sea level rise	Coastal flood	Coastal erosion	Air pollution	Atmospheric CO2 decrease	Ocean & lake acidification	Surface radiation decrease
ASSET																												
Farmland																												
Housing stock																												
Food security																												
Crops - one season																												
Pasture/rangeland																												
Livestock																												
Life & bodily health																												
Income																												

'The 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.²⁰ Over 50 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, prioritized, designed, implemented; how progress is monitored; and how success is evaluated.
2. **Addressing structural inequalities faced by women, youth, disabled, 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 marginalized 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 programs 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.

Survey on principles for locally-led adaptation

To find out how our staff related ideas of local leadership to their current work, Islamic Relief used the 'Principles for locally-led adaptation' to survey 40 of our projects in 14 countries. We found that projects try to follow the principles, but each context presents different challenges and opportunities. This is what one would expect when trying to lend agency to local people. What we learn from the survey is the uniqueness of each context and the relevance and appropriacy of solutions. From these we hope to identify the barriers to local leadership and ways in which help can be provided through a community of practice.

QUESTIONS FOR LOCALLY LED ADAPTATION

Are decisions about projects made by people and communities at the most local possible level?

Are local government and institutions supported with ready access to predictable funding to ensure that communities can effectively implement adaptation actions?

Does flexible programming and continuous learning allow projects to address the ever changing circumstances faced in adaptation?

Is finance, design, and delivery of programmes clear and accountable to local stakeholders?

Do vulnerable and marginalised people including women, youth, disabled, and members of excluded ethnic groups meaningfully participate in and lead adaptation decisions?

Is local and scientific knowledge combined to inform adaptation decisions?

Are investments made in local capabilities to understand climate risks and manage adaptation initiatives without being dependent on project based donor funding?

Is there collaboration across sectors so that different initiatives and different sources of funding support each other and avoid duplication and enhance efficiency?

Our survey shows that the first two principles are seen, at our most local organisational level, to be the most accessible and most challenging:

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 and implemented as well as how progress is monitored and success evaluated.

2. Addressing structural inequalities faced by women, youth, children, people with disabilities, and excluded ethnic groups and Indigenous People: 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.

The principle of 'addressing structural inequalities' addresses the root causes of vulnerability. We can start adaptation action with the context and concerns of the most marginalised people.

The survey shows that the principles are readily accepted by country offices. Resources, capacity and knowledge at each level is needed to put them into practice.

The principle of flexible programming and continuous learning is particularly important because it is required for interventions to be sensitive to their context. It implies a radical shift in current practice in Islamic Relief and across the sector. This will move us away from rigid log-frames and evaluating performance based on activities completed and funds dispersed, towards an assessment by the primary stakeholders of the relevance and appropriateness of a project.²¹

The principles link to the commitment of the humanitarian sector to localisation. A recent review suggests that the current trend is away from localisation due to the Covid-19 pandemic and 'practical issues' that limit local funding and the increased burden of risk for local actors.²²

The principles for locally-led adaptation can provide constructive dialogue on the role of intermediaries such as Islamic Relief – to clarify what is optimal from donor and local partners' perspectives.

With resources and planning decisions in the hands of actors at different local scales, adaptation actions that are well thought out and equipped with general principles can fully use local culture, local context, local dynamics, local resources, local knowledge and aspirations.

Adaptation finance

In Islamic Relief's contexts, climate adaptation is always linked with development. To make sure that adaptation finance is additional to broader development funding, we must be able to distinguish between them. We can do this in three steps:

1. For a project to be considered as contributing to adaptation, the context of climate change vulnerability must first be set out.
2. The project must have a clear intention to reduce these vulnerabilities.
3. Where projects have additional objectives, only funding that addresses risks and vulnerabilities under current and future climate change should be considered adaptation finance.

Finance issues permeate all aspects of climate adaptation action. There is a shortfall in climate finance for adaptation and in adaptation action around the world. With the immediate demands for recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, governments and donors need to integrate and protect finance as a critical enabler of adaptation efforts and use economic stimuli to accelerate adaptation.²³

A big challenge is access to finance. Governments have set up institutions to manage international finance, but experience shows that they need to greatly improve direct access to funds for adaptation action for national and local government, civil society and communities. Accreditation to these multilateral bodies like the Green Climate Fund and development banks is currently a huge burden. Submissions should instead become an empowerment process for the lowest income countries and local actors where the knowledge and experience of the institutions help applicants towards efficient and effective action.

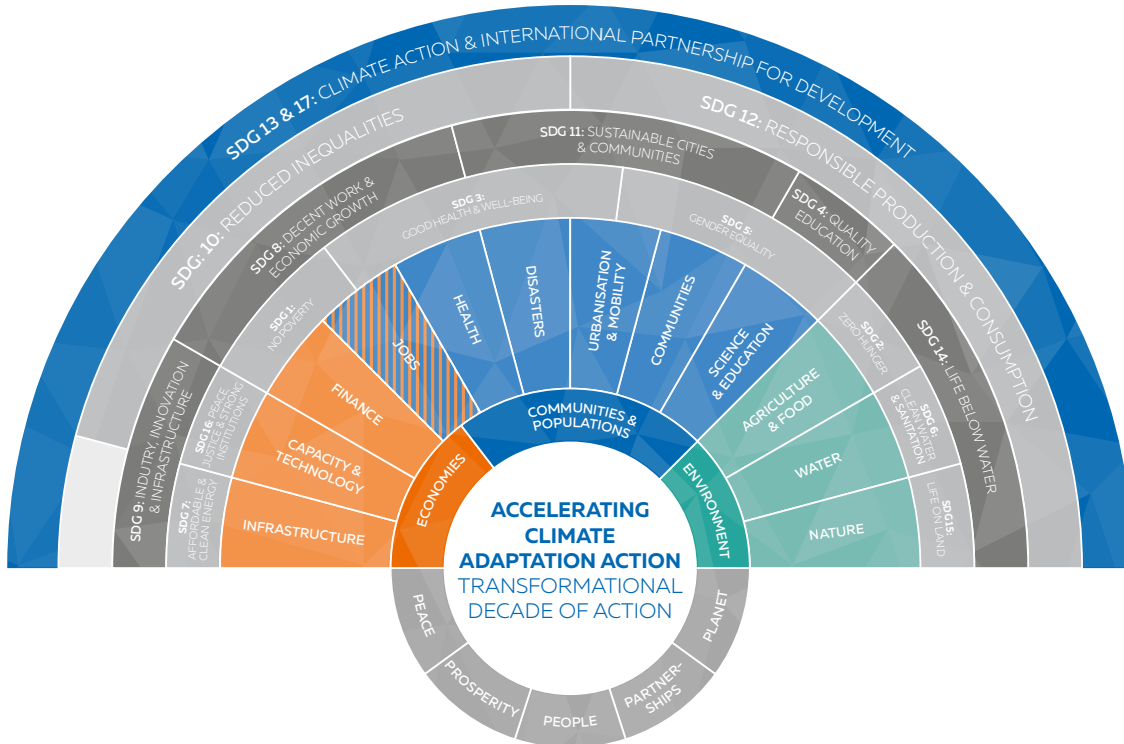
Governments have committed to \$100 billion a year to finance climate action. Islamic Relief should join with others to make sure these promises are met. This multilateral and bilateral climate funding, along with commercial investments, should be set through quotas (e.g. 50 per cent for adaptation with 70 per cent of that reaching the most local level). To make sure that adaptation efforts are properly embedded and themselves sustainable, donors must establish longer project cycles. Financial commitment of five to seven years should be the norm, with longer terms being available where needed.

Mechanisms must be identified for giving local institutions and communities more direct access to finance and decision-making power over how adaptation actions are defined, prioritised, designed, and implemented. Locally-led adaptation provides an opportunity for adaptation initiatives to be driven by and connect with local priorities and culturally grounded knowledge, and for impacts and vulnerability more broadly to be addressed at the scale at which they are experienced by the people they affect most. Participatory approaches should be rewarded. The fund-holder, rather than the donor, should communicate what qualifies as adaptation or loss and damage. Tracking progress and measuring success should be managed by those closest to an intervention, in a participatory monitoring and evaluation process.

Finance providers must work with all to ensure gender equality objectives and increase the integration of poverty reduction and rights-based approaches in adaptation projects to address the unequal vulnerabilities of different communities to the climate emergency.²⁴

Adaptation will realise the Sustainable Development Goals

*Delivering the Adaptation Action Agenda for a transformation decade of action – generating more action, integration, partnership, innovation, finance and equity. CAS (2021)*²⁵



Stepping up climate action demands addressing the social dimensions of climate change.

Efforts to achieve all the sustainable development goals are dependant on efforts to respond to global heating, not just the one specifically targeted at tackling climate change. Similarly, responding to the climate crisis depends on advances made towards the development goals.

The international scientist’s IPCC 1.5 special report²⁶ said that sustainable development can achieve ambitious mitigation and adaptation in conjunction with poverty eradication and reducing inequality. It encourages the sort of social transformation needed to keep global heating to 1.5°C.

Social and economic themes in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are addressed by numerous climate actions so there are multiple opportunities to join up policies across government. This can be a major contribution of climate action to achieving the SDGs.

But the social SDGs — in particular health, education and gender equality (SDGs 3, 4 and 5) — are currently absent in countries commitments in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

The IPCC describes “climate-resilient development pathways” and, “the importance of addressing structural, intersecting inequalities, marginalisation, and multidimensional poverty” to “transform the development pathways themselves toward greater social and environmental sustainability, equity, resilience, and justice”. These present an opportunity for new NDCs to use development as a way of reducing global heating and strengthening adaptation while ensuring that no-one is left behind.

Along with the multiple connections between climate vulnerability and poverty, more ambitious NDCs should account for social as well as the environmental goals of the SDGs.

The cost, success and sustainability of climate adaptation depends on the degree that the world is allowed to heat up. Local adaptation can be effective, but any notion of adaptation at the global scale makes no sense. It is necessary to go beyond adaptation. Existing systems must be transformed and new ways of thinking and doing things must be invented. This is the only way to eliminate the causes of global heating and limit climate change to a level to which it still possible for people to adapt.

Islamic Relief's call to decision makers

We must organise. We must design control structures designed to cope with an unprecedented task of adaptation. In general the method which people adopt appears to be this. They look at existing trends and extrapolate them, hoping thereby to create for themselves a scenario which expresses what the future will be like. They then ask themselves whether they can create policies and undertake decisions which will enable the system for which they are responsible to survive these circumstances. But this will not do.

...

Forecasting must be done: but it is not a question any longer of how to adapt to the predicted change. Quite clearly the predicted change itself must be deliberately modified. We must invent the future.

...

We no longer have time to tinker with the internal mechanisms of established institutions.

Stafford Beer (1972)

The UN Climate Change's Conference of Parties, COP26, is due to start on 31 October 2021. Here decisions will be made about how the Paris Agreement will be put into practice. Crucial choices will be made about mitigating climate change by reducing and eliminating its causes, and how to respond to permanent losses and repairable damage triggered by climate events. But Islamic Relief has been working to make sure the challenge of adaptation is also tackled. Along with other organisations,²⁷ we call on COP26 to:

- fully involve non-Party actors in establishing a clear process to define the Global Goal on Adaptation and report on progress at the Global Stocktake required in the Paris Agreement.
- commit to allocating 50 per cent of funds for climate action to adaptation with regular review, and ensuring that 70 per cent of that reaches the poorest and most vulnerable people.
- allocate proceeds from market mechanism activities under Paris Agreement Article 6 to the Adaptation Fund.
- scale up and funding of locally-led adaptation and support that is accessible and responsive to the needs and rights of women, children, Indigenous Peoples, people with disabilities, and other marginalised groups.

Endnotes

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Islamic Relief climate adaptation: Locally-led, people centred

Islamic Relief continues to respond to the consequences of the global climate emergency. In most of the places in which we work, climate breakdown accelerates biodiversity loss, causes extreme weather, intensifies conflict, and increases pestilence. Changes wrought by its effects have been attributed to the emergence of diseases such as Covid-19. We have actively supported international efforts to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions and reduce the severity of these threats.

For our stakeholders, adapting to the changing climate is added to the challenges of poverty, exclusion and insecurity. In 2020 alone we have:

1. allocated £27.5 million for projects concerning adaptation to climate change in 19 countries.
2. adopted 'ideal community-based adaptation' building on reflective engagement with communities to represent vulnerable populations and generate long-term social resilience.
3. sought the participation of women as stakeholders and leaders recognising intersectional approaches where marginalisation through poverty, displacement, and disability is exacerbated by gender discrimination.
4. understood how climate is contributing to disputes, and that adaptation or disaster preparedness components can contribute towards conflict transformation.
5. worked with local and national governments to develop and implement disaster risk strategies.
6. conducted research into national and sub-national environmental policy and legislation, and contributed to UN and IPCC technical consideration of adaptation.
7. joined 119 countries and 86 organisations in endorsing the Call for Action on Adaptation and Resilience to urgently deliver for those who are vulnerable and rapidly scale up available finance.
8. taken an influential role with the UK Presidency in determining the agenda for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change COP26, postponed to 2021.

Islamic Relief Worldwide Annual Report 2020 Briefing



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