SDG 13: Progress, gaps and recommendations for the UK

Compiled by:
the Bond Development and Environment Group

Climate change is one of the greatest development challenges of our time, and it is now clear that the eradication of poverty and inequality cannot be achieved without also addressing the causes and consequences of climate change. This requires a twin-track approach of both reducing the actions that are causing climate change (mitigation) and adapting to the now unavoidable climatic changes that are unfolding (adaptation).

Countries in the Global South face the devastating consequences of climate change through slowly unfolding changes to average climatic conditions that dramatically alter food production, water availability, economic development, and disease patterns at scale; extreme weather events; and higher costs of development to avoid "lock-in" to a carbon-intensive future.

The responsibility for large scale mitigation lies with industrialised countries, including the UK, which must rapidly decarbonise their economies and reach net zero before 2050. This is required in order to meet commitments made under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process to pursue efforts to limit global warming to 1.5°C so as to prevent the most catastrophic consequences of climate change.[1] The priority focus for those suffering the negative consequences of climate change in the Global South, in particular vulnerable LDCs and low-lying SIDS, must be to protect their citizens from the damaging consequences of climate change, and to adapt to the changed and changing climate in order to prevent losses, suffering, and a rolling back of development gains.

1. The UK is a signatory to the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), a global agreement to "stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system": https://unfccc.int/; and https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/

Climate change is a threat multiplier that exacerbates poverty and inequality. For example, for the third year in a row there has been a rise in world hunger, and the Food and Agriculture Organisation cites climate variability and extremes as a key force behind this rise, as well as being one of the leading causes of severe food crises (see Goal 2).[2] Climate change also exacerbates challenges related to water availability, flooding, and situations of water stress. According to the World Bank, already more than 60% of humanity lives in areas of water stress, where the supply of water cannot or will not continue to meet demand, and climate change is simply exacerbating this situation and makes finding solutions even harder (see **Goal 6**).[3]

Progress achieved to date on development priorities cannot be taken for granted and must now be shored-up against climate change impacts. Where development is still needed, it is now harder (and more expensive) than ever to achieve across all sectors in a changing and more changeable climate. As a result, new resources and capacities are needed to adapt and to invest in low carbon development pathways.[4] Under the UNFCCC process, industrialised countries including the UK committed to provide "new and additional" financial resources to countries in the Global South to address this "new and additional" challenge of climate change, which comes on top of and exacerbates development challenges. This international climate finance is urgently needed by countries in the Global South in order to adapt to the consequences of climate change and to pursue low carbon development pathways.[5]

"New and additional" financial resources were understood to be new and additional to pre-existing commitments to

2. http://www.fao.org/3/I9553EN/i9553en.pdf
3. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/28096/9781464811791.pdf
4. This is defined as development that minimises future greenhouse gas emissions and protects carbon sinks, while bringing about economic growth, social inclusion, and equity.
5. Which can provide new opportunities for decent and green jobs that contribute to low carbon and sustainable societies (see Goal 8).

provide 0.7% of GNI as aid. However, to date the UK's climate finance has come from the aid budget, with the justification that the aid budget has grown. This is not a sustainable approach to meeting the UK's international climate finance commitments, and by 2021 it is likely that the UK's climate finance will exceed that which the aid budget can reasonably provide.[6] Therefore real "new and additional" sources of public finance will be required, and the UK needs to urgently explore and establish innovative sources of finance, such as the proposed Climate Damages Tax.

Whilst specific climate finance is needed to enable the specific transformational changes needed in the Global South to address the causes and consequences of climate change, as a threat multiplier climate change must also be mainstreamed throughout all development, ODA spend, and foreign investment. The UK has not yet achieved this and policy incoherence remains. For example, 22% of UK ODA energy spend between 2010 and 2014 supported fossil fuels in the Global South rather than renewables (see **Goal 7**).[7] A joined-up approach to climate action across government is needed. With limited resources, one part of government or ODA spend should not be undermining another.

Target 13.1:

Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.

The UK is, however, a global leader in its support for climate change adaptation, committing 50% of UK climate finance to this urgent priority. While the global community as a whole is committed to a balance of finance between mitigation and adaptation, the evidence shows that this ambition falls far short in reality, and climate change adaptation remains woefully underfunded globally. This undermines efforts by countries in the Global South to eradicate poverty, avoid harm and thrive in spite of a changing climate. The UK's commitment to at least 50% of ICF is important, demonstrates leadership in supporting the priority needs of countries in the Global South, and must be retained.[8]

UK ICF has reportedly supported 47 million people to "cope with the effects of climate change."[9] One of the programmes funded by DFID and implemented by a number of UK-based International non-governmental organisations (INGOs) contributing to this is Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters (BRACED). BRACED seeks to build resilience and adaptation to climate extremes and disasters in 13 countries across the Sahel, East Africa, and South and Southeast Asia. It has reportedly already helped over 5 million people and aims to assist up to 10 million people to cope with - and become more resilient to - extreme weather events and climate extremes.[10]

However, the failure of the UK to recognise and support "loss and damage" undermines progress to strengthen resilience in the Global South. "Loss and damage" refers to the consequences of climate change impacts that cannot be avoided or adapted to. As a result of slow progress on mitigation, and insufficient spending on adaptation, the Global South is also now facing impacts of climate change that go beyond what is possible to adapt to, such as super-charged storms, extreme droughts in the context of overall drying trends, and loss of land from rising sea levels.

"Loss and damage is recognised in the Paris Climate Agreement, to which the UK is a signatory, but remains an issue that the UK is yet to support or finance. Countries in the Global South suffering the worst consequences of climate change deserve the UK's urgent support and solidarity on this issue. Innovative sources of finance will be needed in order for the UK to provide this much needed additional resource.[11]

Target 13.1:

Implement the commitment undertaken by developed-country parties to the UNFCCC to a goal of mobilizing jointly $100bn annually by 2020 from all sources to address the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation and fully operationalise the Green Climate Fund (GCF) through its capitalisation as soon as possible

From 2011-12 to 2017-18, UK ICF reportedly mobilised £3.3bn public and £910m private finance for climate change purposes in the Global South, including through the GCF.[12] From 2020, the UK will increase its ICF as part of global efforts to mobilise $100bn a year. For the year 2020-21, the UK has committed to provide at least £1.76bn for climate finance, and this report calls on the UK to commit to this as a minimum annual amount for all subsequent years to maintain its commitment to this global goal.

The UK has also been active on the GCF Board in the establishment and operationalisation of the GCF, and steps up into the GCF co-chair role for 2019.[13] The UK's commitment to the GCF is valuable, and this report supports continued leadership and an ambitious UK contribution to the first replenishment process underway in 2019.

6. UK INGOs call for no more than 10% of the aid budget to be used for climate finance.
7. https://cafod.org.uk/About-us/Policy-and-research/Climate-change-and-energy/Sustainable-energy/Analysis-UK-support-for-energy
8. The UK's International Climate Fund.
9. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-publishes-latest-results-in-tackling-global-climate-change
10. Ibid.
11. Such as the proposed Climate Damages Tax, or other sources to generate public finance.
12. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721993/2018-UK-Climate-Finance-Results.pdf
13. https://www.greenclimate.fund/home

Target 13.b:

Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in LDCs and SIDS, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalised communities

Whilst the GCF is now progressing, many countries, particularly LDCs, still struggle to access finance from the GCF as well as other sources of international climate finance. Only an estimated $9bn of annual public climate finance went to the 48 LDCs in 2015-16, representing just 18% of the total.[14] Existing processes leave many countries reliant on consultancy firms to develop proposals and policies. This does not support the kind of long-term capacity-building and institutional change that is required to implement those projects and policies, effectively manage and monitor large scale climate finance, and deliver transformational change. Given the challenges faced by countries in the Global South, and in particular LDCs, to access climate finance (and the UK's commitment to "Leave No One Behind"), UK ICF should prioritise capacity-building support for LDCs and for sub-national institutions, which would enable international climate finance to be channelled to where it is most needed and enhance country ownership and institutional support.

This requires more of a focus on longer-term, bottom-up commitments, rather than quick wins. Climate change adaptation to meet the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalised is location-specific and requires location-specific actions and investments. Inclusive investments are needed that specifically understand and address the needs of those who are most vulnerable and/or who otherwise would not benefit, such as a result of disability, gender, or other forms of social marginalisation.[15] Effective climate change adaptation requires an explicit focus on "Leave No One Behind" (see chapter on "Leave No One Behind"). However, such approaches are poorly supported by international climate finance mechanisms, and the UK should do more to promote mechanisms that really do reach those most affected by climate change. Finance is needed by both local and national entities, and local structures are vital to reach those people and communities most impacted by climate change. The duration of support is also important, as capacity-building and innovative approaches take time to take hold, as well as to generate the evidence and learning needed to influence system-wide changes and go to scale.

Finally, when it comes to the private sector, the UK focuses too much of its attention on large scale foreign investment, rather than the in-country small- and medium-size enterprises which provide 80% of employment in low income countries.[16] The vast majority of the private sector in LDCs is informal and there needs to be more focus and recognition of this for supporting low-carbon climate resilient development, particularly in the energy sector and for smallholder farmers, who produce the majority of food for domestic markets (see also **Goal 2** and **Goal 7**).

However, recent changes to the UK's ICF form and function threatens to move support away from climate change specific actions and from these much-needed capacity-building and institutional support priorities. DFID has transitioned its portion of ICF spend from a central fund approach to a decentralised mainstreaming approach, which attributes a percentage of a project's costs to the ICF based on relevance to climate change. There has been a lack of consultation and transparency by government regarding how and why this decision was taken, and how it is implemented. Concerns remain that by diluting climate finance throughout projects that would have happened anyway, UK ICF is not contributing to the kind of transformational change needed for developing countries to address the challenges of climate change.

To achieve Goal 13, the UK government should:

- Commit to long-term, predictable and reliable UK ICF of at least £1.76bn a year for transformational support to the Global South to adopt low carbon development pathways and adapt to climate change.
- Establish new and additional sources of public finance to meet the need for the UK to increase climate finance commitments from 2021 in line with the global finance goal, as well as to finance "loss and damage" in climate change vulnerable countries.
- Reaffirm the UK's commitment to 50% of ICF for adaptation to climate change.
- Ensure that the UK ICF is a mechanism which catalyses transformational change to address climate change in countries in the Global South.
- Ensure all UK policy and financing commitments, not just for ODA but across government, support efforts to limit global warming to 1.5˚C, are consistent with the Paris Climate Agreement, and enable countries to pursue low carbon climate resilient development pathways.

This chapter is part of Bond's report, **The UK's global contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals**.
Access the rest of the report at
bond.org.uk/UK-global-contribution-SDGs
Bond is the UK network for organisations working in international development. Bond.org.uk

14. https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/climate-finance-shadow-report-2018
15. See for example on disability: https://www.cbm.org/article/downloads/82788/E-discussion_on_climate_change_and_disability.pdf
16. http://www.edinburgh-group.org/media/2776/edinburgh_group_research_-_growing_the_global_economy_through_smes.pdf