



Why the UK needs a locally led and feminist approach to the climate crisis

Introduction

The UK Government has made commitments on paper towards supporting gender equality in climate action, including in the International Women and Girls Strategy, and the International Development White Paper which references the importance of women leading climate responses in their communities. Research commissioned by CARE International UK ahead of Gender Day at COP28 involving women's rights organisations and leaders from the global south, took a deep dive into the UK's climate finances and found that despite some promising commitments, the UK Government is [failing to turn those promises into progress](#).

Key findings from the research highlight that:

- Less than 1% of UK bilateral climate finance targeted gender equality specifically in 2022, 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. Moreover, this definition also includes gender institutions such as UN agencies – with UN Women receiving 70% of allocations.
- 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, as only 47% of spend between 2015-2022 did so.
- Gender equality is not being consistently applied to UK Government policies guiding efforts towards a green transition, with women at risk of losing out on the new economic opportunities created in the shift to a low-carbon economy.

COP28 gender-just climate action consultation

On January 30th CARE co-hosted an online consultation with the Centre for Green Growth Ghana and Centre for 21st Century Nigeria, who are led by two prominent women's rights leaders, and two climate justice activists representing Gender CC Southern Africa and the Women and Gender Constituency. Together with more than 30 participants from across the sector, they shared reflections on COP28 outcomes in relation to gender-just climate action.

This briefing summarises the points made, the recommendations put forward for the UK Government to mark a meaningful move towards gender-just climate action, and the specific opportunities that lie ahead in 2024.

Reflections on COP28 from women's rights leaders

A win on loss and damage but a missed opportunity to realise climate justice and ensure gender sensitivity:

- Contributions to the loss and damage fund remain as commitments for now and fall *'far from what is needed to realise climate justice and support the developing countries who are suffering the worst effects'* according to Titi Akosa, Founder and Executive Director at Centre for 21st century.
- They are *'tokenistic'* and just *'a tiny drop in that big ocean'* said Stephanie Akumah, a Ghanaian Climate Activist and Founder of Centre for Green Growth Ghana.
- Looking to the future, Titi Akosa called for *'women, especially those from developing countries, must be at the table as the details of the fund are worked out and the funds start flowing, so they understand what the processes are about and ensure their voices and issues are addressed in the process'*.
- In conclusion, it is evident from the speakers that questions remain around the efficacy of the World Bank hosted Loss and Damage Fund and, as raised by Stephanie Akumah, whether *'based on its history of distributions, it can deliver funds transparently and get it to those who need it most, especially women and girls'*.

A win on fossil fuel phase out could be rendered meaningless without funding to back it, a timeline for divestment or indicators established to uphold human and women's rights:

- *'No decision can be called gender-just without a funded commitment to end the fossil fuel era'* because otherwise we are not really tackling the same system that has been *'destroying lives and damaging livelihoods because of fossil fuel extraction'*, emphasised Gina Valderrama, co-focal point of the Women and Gender Constituency and Titi Akosa.
- *'Many fossil fuel producers are more concerned about strengthening oil and gas assets and protecting their economies from being undermined in uncertain times'* including the UK announcement prior to COP28 to licence further oil production in the North Sea explained Ndivile Mokoena, a Gender Project Coordinator at Gender CC Southern Africa.
- Gender equality was mentioned at the global stocktake decision, but within a wider document with what can be seen as *'loopholes and dangerous distractions to ending fossil fuels, such as geoengineering and carbon markets among many others that are very, very risky'* noted Gina Valderrama.
- Feminist demands mean *'truly putting an end to obstructive, destructive and oppressive systems that have been imposed by those geopolitical powers that are repeatedly blocking the different processes'* said Gina Valderrama.
- Overall, there was a tempered response for achievements on phase out, as *'COP28 outcomes did not respond to the most marginalised communities who are calling for a shift in the course of history towards the end of fossil fuels'*, according to Gina Valderrama.
- There remains a major gap in thinking around how to ensure that those communities who have suffered huge damages because of fossil fuel extraction get justice and are not forgotten about as we move away from fossil fuels. *'Their land must be restored, and their issues addressed as we*

transition to a clean and low emission society’ states Titi Akosa. ‘Access to clean energy and clean cooking is still a challenge for many across Africa, yet there is still a lack of support for gender inclusive just energy transition’, explained Ndivile Mokoena.

Human rights and gender equality remain neglected in UNFCCC agreements:

- It is time for gender-just funding that meets the humanitarian crisis caused by the climate crisis, puts gender equality central to its aims, is set up for this purpose and ensures money filters down to the grassroots, those that need it most, explained all speakers.
- *‘References to human rights and gender equality are still often missing from UNFCCC agreements on mitigation, adaptation, and climate finance’, said Ndivile Mokoena.*
- *‘Gender is currently an afterthought and often discussed after climate funds have been put together rather than as a central objective’ said Stephanie Akromah.*
- *‘There needs to be dialogue space open for traditional knowledge, indigenous and other diverse voices’, explained Ndivile Mokoena.*
- In conclusion, *‘work still needs to be done on raising support for and defining how the Global Goal on Adaptation will be implemented and how it will address issues of human and women’s rights’ ensuring that locally led adaptation is taken seriously, ‘so that local people standing on the frontlines of climate impacts receive funds so they can adapt’, said Titi Akosa.*

What does this mean for the UK Government and moving towards gender-just climate action?

The evidence and the discussions at the webinar, suggest there is still some way to go to ensure increased finance, access and opportunities for the women and girls fighting the climate crisis.

These dialogues gave way to the following recommendations:

Finance - Increase the amount of climate finance that targets gender equality.

- Set 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. Aiming for all climate finance to eventually include gender equality goals.
- Integrate rapid, robust gender analysis in all climate finance programming, and ensure that gender equality is a focus of finance from the start.
- Increase the amount of climate finance that includes gender equality as a central goal – for example, investing in programmes that tackle the links between gender-based violence and climate change. Also support greater finance for gender machineries at the national and local levels.
- Work with multilateral and development finance institutions through which the UK channels climate finance for example the Green Climate Fund, World Bank and British International Investment (BII) to scale up and improve the integration of gender equality into their practices.
- FCDO ensures that climate programmes have budget to include the 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.

Access – women's rights organisations must have access to that finance and decision-making fora, through the reduction of administrative hurdles, increased allocations in programme design and support for women’s voice and leadership at all climate negotiations.

- Actively design programmes that would support the leadership of women’s rights organisations and women-led organisations at scale, including those that represent marginalised groups, seeking them out as partners and consulting with them to design opportunities.
- Fund 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).

- Increase the quality of funding through longer-term, multi-year commitments and flexible grant-based funding. Seeking where possible to remove intermediaries and increasing the direct accessing of funding for women's rights organisations. Where funding is managed through a fund manager, the fund should be set up according to feminist funding principles.
- Remove the barriers that women's rights organisations face in accessing climate finance such as complex procedures, language barriers and annual budget requirements, across bilateral and multilateral mechanisms, including through consultation on identifying these barriers with women's rights organisations.
- When reporting funding that has reached local organisations, seek to only include locally and nationally based organisations in these definitions. Currently international organisations can be included in reporting definitions of locally led organisations and women's rights organisations.
- Continue to advocate and champion gender parity and women's leadership in international climate spaces, and support the inclusion of multiple, diverse perspectives. Use diplomatic influence to highlight and put pressure on processes that are not reaching gender parity.
- Increase financial support and staff capacity to progress implementation of the UNFCCC Enhanced Lima Work Programme and its Gender Action Plan and ensure civil society, including youth and women-led organisations have a role to play in the review process so their inputs relating to progress, gaps and priorities in implementing the GAP and on future work are considered.
- Finance and provide essential services to women-led enterprises and initiatives that are focused on addressing climate related issues, even if small businesses, to support their growth and environmental outcomes.
- Ensure gender equality is mainstreamed into negotiations and is a priority for all UK negotiators at the UNFCCC including those involved in the negotiation tracks on adaptation, finance, loss and damage, mitigation and the just transition.
- Support attendance and representation of women's rights organisations at COP and provide a convening space for them to engage with other states.

Opportunities - All UK strategies for accelerating the green transition should include gender equality aims and specific measures to ensure that marginalised women and girls can benefit from new economic opportunities.

- Ensure 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 National and global plans for:
 - 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
- Ensure that care work is counted and understood as part of the green economy, and finance for the just-transition includes finance for care work.
- Convene a dialogue at COP29 and agree concrete actions towards the COP28 Gender-Responsive Just Transitions and Climate Action Partnership, to set concrete actions to accelerate progress in addressing gender inequalities in the care economy.
- Collect, analyse and use sex-, age- and disability-disaggregated data to assess the green transition's impact on gender equality and create the foundation for recommendations going forward. 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.
- Increase 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.
- Ensure recommendations from the FCDO hosted Wilton Park Conference on women's economic empowerment and climate change set a clear roadmap and timeline for implementation.