

Climate change and development

Summary

Climate change is the greatest crisis facing humanity and it will hit the poorest people of the world the hardest. Rich countries like the UK are historically responsible for 80 per cent of the carbon dioxide (CO₂) built up in the atmosphere, while the world's poorest countries account for just 0.5 per cent of CO₂ emissions. But it is the poor people in these poor countries, who contribute little or nothing to this problem, who will suffer the most severe consequences.

The UK must take the lead in cutting its emissions, and do its fair share to prevent global temperatures from rising above 2°C. The climate bill presents the ideal opportunity to put the right frameworks in place to make this happen, but it is critical that we get its content right.

“Climate change... threatens to undo decades of development efforts.”
Hilary Benn and the heads of nine other donor agencies.

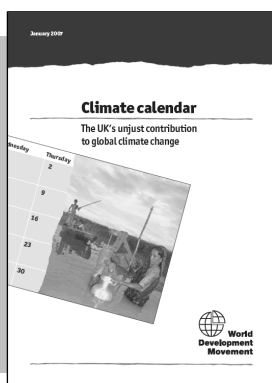
Climate change: the impacts

Although the effects of climate change will be felt globally, the most severe impact will be on the poorest countries in the world where many people are already on the edge of survival:

- ✦ **Death.** The World Health Organisation estimates that climate change is already causing over 160,000 deaths per year from illnesses.
- ✦ **Disease.** Malaria and diarrhoea are on the increase. 185 million people in Africa alone will die of diseases directly attributable to climate change by 2100.
- ✦ **Drought.** The increased frequency and duration of drought will leave hundreds of millions without sufficient food. Crop yields in sub-Saharan Africa are predicted to fall by 20 percent.
- ✦ **Flooding.** Sea-level rise will threaten 300 million people by the end of the century.
- ✦ **Water scarcity.** 99 per cent of glaciers are retreating as a result of climate change. If they disappear this will threaten those that rely on glaciers for their fresh water supply - one sixth of the world's population.

While some adaptation is already necessary we still need to reduce UK carbon emissions to limit the worst impacts of climate change. Rich countries are responsible for 80 per cent of the manmade increase of CO₂ in the atmosphere and must take immediate action to reduce their own emissions, leading the way towards a global low-carbon economy. In just eight days, the average UK citizen produces as much CO₂ as the average person in one of the poorest countries will produce in a year. Over 84 per cent of the world's population lives in countries which emit less CO₂ per person than the UK.

MPs are critical in ensuring the UK takes strong action on climate change to mitigate these impacts on the world's poor.



WDM's report, *'Climate Calendar. The UK's unjust contribution to climate change'* shows the injustice of the UK's carbon emissions. It highlights dates when the average UK citizen will have emitted as much as a citizen from another country will have during the whole of 2007. **For more information on WDM's climate campaign** or for a copy of the report, contact Tamsyn East, WDM parliamentary officer, on 020 7820 4900 or tamsyn@wdm.org.uk
 NB: UK regional breakdowns of carbon emissions and how these relate to other countries emissions are also available.

The climate change bill

To prevent catastrophic climate change we must keep the increase in average global temperature to less than 2°C. That means global CO₂ emissions need to be drastically reduced and the UK must do its fair share. The climate change bill provides the ideal opportunity to put the mechanism and frameworks in place to set the UK on track to significantly reducing its emissions. A strong bill would mean that our government could truly be a world leader on climate change, and future governments would follow suit. The pre-legislative scrutiny and the passage of the bill through parliament provides MPs with a number of opportunities to influence and improve the bill.

WDM believes that the bill must include:

Targets to reflect the latest scientific thinking.

The UK government has committed to keeping global average temperatures below 2°C to prevent catastrophic climate change. The 60 per cent emission reduction target in the bill will not deliver this, as the government's own Stern report highlighted. It is likely that cuts of 85-90 per cent will be needed by 2050.

Aviation and shipping emissions.

These must be included if we are to account for the true cost of climate change. Aviation is our fastest growing source of emissions. By 2050, if we achieved the planned 60 per cent emissions cut while allowing aviation to grow at current rates, the real world drop in emissions will only be 40 per cent. See 'Head in the clouds' box.

Legally binding annual targets.

Alongside a carbon budget, these are needed to keep emission reduction on track. In years when the budget is exceeded (for example due to a cold winter), a corrective response would be triggered in the following year, as in any good budget management system. Binding carbon budgets should be set over three year intervals in line with the government's spending review cycle, so that within each term of office, governments have a duty to take concrete action, unlike in the currently proposed five year carbon budgets.

An international development expert on the independent committee.

The cost of not meeting our targets will be devastating for many of the poorest countries in the world. The role of this expert would be to ensure that these impacts are fully taken account of in the decision making process.

Head in the clouds

Aviation is the UK's fastest growing source of emissions, currently accounting for 10-15 per cent of the UK's contribution to climate change. However:

- * International aviation is not included in the UK government's emission targets.
- * The government is planning to double air passenger travel between 2002 and 2020.
- * The government is planning for massive airport expansion.
- * Air passenger duty and the European Emission Trading Scheme will only prevent aviation emissions rising by 84 per cent by 2020, down from a 92 per cent increase if nothing was done.

What MPs can do

1. Write to the prime minister and ask that the climate change bill includes the above elements.
2. Raise these issues and the impacts of climate change on the poorest countries in the world in parliament.

For more information contact Tamsyn East, parliamentary officer, World Development Movement on 020 7820 4900 or tamsyn@wdm.org.uk

WDM is a member of the **Stop Climate Chaos** coalition and a supporter of the 'I Count' campaign.