IMPATIENCE EARTH

Photo: Sarah Farrell

Invisible women

Why women and marginalised groups should be central to UK funders' climate resilience strategies

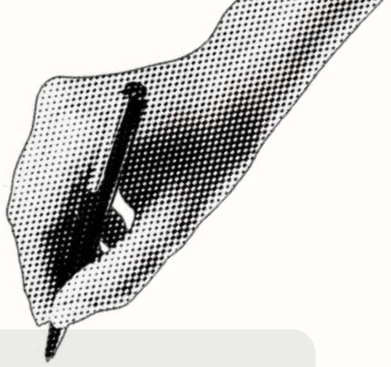
July 2025

Table of contents

Single parent mothers, disabled girls and migrant women simply don't have the microphone when it comes to planning our climate response in the UK.

Time and again, it is invisible women who are leading the grassroots work of building resilience within their communities.

It's now time to fund them.



Foreword

We started this research project with what seemed like a relatively simple question: how are women (including trans and non-binary individuals) being impacted by the climate crisis in the UK? We already had a fairly good idea of the global picture, including how women are more exposed to climate impacts than their male counterparts, so how difficult could it be to hone in on the UK context? More difficult than expected, as it turns out.

Readers will be aware that gender intersects closely with other forms of oppression and vulnerability. Poverty, disability, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation – alongside being a woman or girl – means individuals with multiple marginalised identities are far more likely to suffer the worst impacts when extreme weather hits. But whilst there are numerous reports that illustrate this stark disparity in Global South contexts, there is a dearth of gender-disaggregated information in the UK.

Single parent mothers, disabled girls and migrant women simply don't have the microphone when it comes to planning our UK climate response in the UK. They rarely hold decision-making roles in climate spaces, so their voices and experiences are largely overlooked, despite evidence that demonstrates how powerful women can be when it comes to developing effective climate policies. As a result, few organisations are designing or delivering climate action strategies in the UK *specifically* with women in mind. This leaves them *invisible** when it comes to policy and funding.

As you read this report, you may feel at times that the gender theme is subsumed by the broader socio-economic factors that marginalised communities face in the UK. But this demonstrates the point that social, economic and racial injustice are at the core of climate vulnerability. They are both the causes and consequences of climate change, and until these structural inequalities are addressed, women will continue to be disproportionately impacted by climate change whilst being excluded from the planning process to address it.

If you are a philanthropic funder reading this: we hope that you will look at your UK climate work with a new lens, and recognise, as we often do internationally, that those most affected by climate change in the UK hold the most effective solutions for addressing it. **Time and again, it is invisible women who are leading the grassroots work of building resilience within their communities. It's now time to fund them.**

Yasmin Ahammad, CEO Impatience Earth
Hannah Dillon, report author

**The title pays homage to the book 'Invisible Women' by Caroline Criado Perez.*

Background and approach

Who should read, and share, this report

- Philanthropic funders and grant-making organisations
- Policy-makers and those with influence over climate funding strategies
- Change-makers applying for funding – reference this research in your applications
- Anyone who wants to understand the ways that climate change impacts women and marginalised groups in the UK

How the report was produced

The report was produced in Spring/Summer 2025. It combines desk-based research with qualitative insights from a set of 18 semi-formal interviews.

We interviewed UK-based social and environmental funders, researchers, activists, and grantees who represent and work with some of the key demographics discussed in this report. Unless otherwise attributed, quotes utilised throughout the report have been taken from these interviews.

If you have any questions about this work or how it was developed, please contact info@impatience.earth

Lead author and researcher: Hannah Dillon
Editing and design: Yasmin Ahammad, Areeba Hasan, Sarah Farrell

Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who gave up their time and expertise to contribute to this report, including the following: *Mohammed Afridi, Amber Amoo-Gottfried, Naomi Chapman, Jon Cracknell, Anki Deo, Georgia Elliott-Smith, Cliff Fleming, Sarah Fullick, Tatiana Garavito, Sofie Jenkinson, Marcus MacDonald, Misbah Malik, Jess Mally, Bianca Pitt, Olamide Raheem, Daniel Seifu, Martha Dillon, and Jo Williams.*

Terminology explained

- **'Black and racially minoritised**' or **'racialised communities':** we recognise that this terminology is imperfect, and that it is reductive to refer to any communities considered to be 'non-white' in majority white countries as an homogenous group. Using terms such as 'marginalised,' 'minoritised' and 'racialised' as verbs acknowledges that the marginalisation and categorisation of those we are referring to is an active process - shaped by social and political factors, including the ongoing oppression of many of these communities and individuals.

- **'Climate resilience':** we have used this term broadly, referring to efforts that enable individuals and communities to lessen and adapt to the current and future impacts of climate change. This includes work to address the underlying factors which disproportionately expose individuals or groups to location-based risks (i.e housing, infrastructure, flood and heat risk and access to green spaces) as well as socio-economic factors (i.e race, poverty, gender or disability). Where we refer to 'vulnerabilities', we recognise that these are created rather than inherent.

- **'Community resilience':** we use this therm to refer to "the sustained ability of a community to respond to, withstand, and recover from adverse situations or disruptive challenges, both natural and man-made, sudden or chronic."[1] This definition was developed by and adopted with permission from UK-based NGO HOPE not hate, in the context of the work they do to oppose and expose far-right extremism. We believe it to be equally applicable in the climate context.

- **'Gender-responsive policy development'**: we define this as the process of creating policies that acknowledge and address the varying needs and experiences of all genders, as a means of preventing the perpetuation of gender-based inequalities.

- **'Polycrisis**': we use this term in recognition of the pervasive and interconnected impacts of the climate, health, nature, social and cost-of-living crises that many people are currently facing simultaneously.

- **'Poverty**' and '**low-income':** where these different terms are used we have explained the specifics of the categorisation, with references where possible.

Executive summary

> *All of the people who are usually marginalised because of the systems that we live under should be considered vulnerable to climate change.*

It is widely accepted that women and girls are disproportionately affected by climate change, accounting for **80% of people displaced by climate-related disasters around the world**.[2,3] This is because women are more exposed to climate risks than their male counterparts, acting as 'shock absorbers' during climate-induced disasters. Every part of women's lives is affected; their food security and livelihoods, their education and the levels of violence they experience.

This vulnerability – which is created rather than inherent – is exacerbated by the fact that women around the world are often excluded from decision-making processes, including in disaster response situations. This exists despite evidence that the inclusion of women in environmental decision-making processes has been shown to have a positive impact on their outcomes.[4]

Photo: John F. Scott

Whilst the vulnerability of women and girls has been widely discussed in the context of climate impacts internationally, less attention has been paid to what this looks like from a UK perspective. Suggested explanations for this include:

- That climate change has long been considered an issue for other parts of the world to deal with
- In the UK, environmental policy, advocacy and funding have traditionally been steered by men, and therefore approached through a predominantly male perspective.

However, many of the factors affecting women on the frontlines of the climate crisis internationally are also present in the UK, and will become more prevalent as climate change continues to make extreme weather more likely and more extreme.[5] This includes:

- An increased propensity of women towards poverty, unemployment and food insecurity;
- The amount of time women spend in the home – and therefore exposed to the physical and mental health impacts of climate change;
- A lack of inclusion in decisions relating to climate change, which is actively hampering progress in building resilience towards it.

Recommendation:

Environmental funders can help to build domestic climate resilience in the UK by working to dismantle the structural inequalities that make women and other minoritised groups disproportionately exposed to climate change.

This includes shifting their focus, funding and power towards women-led and women-focused community-based organisations and supporting gender-responsive policy development.

Part 1:

What the data tells us about life in the UK

Photo: Alastair Johnstone / Climate Visuals

Women and poverty in the UK: an overview

People living in poverty are disproportionately exposed to climate-related risks, because they often lack the resources, social protections and agency required to avoid, adapt to or recover from the costs and impacts of climate change.

This includes direct costs. For example, **climate change is responsible for one-third of food price inflation in the UK** – with extreme weather adding £361 to the average household food bill in 2022 and 2023.[6,7] Climate change has also contributed towards a 71% increase in the cost of UK home insurance since 2019.[8]

It also includes indirect costs, such as those associated with the impacts of climate-related policies, including on home decarbonisation (see: *pages 16-17*). This is widening existing wealth, health and social inequalities, and is catching low-income households in a poverty trap – increasing debt, pricing people out of access to finance, and further entrenching the inequalities they face.[9]

Climate change is contributing to the rising cost of living in the UK

£361

added to the average household food bill in 2022 and 2023 due to extreme weather impacts

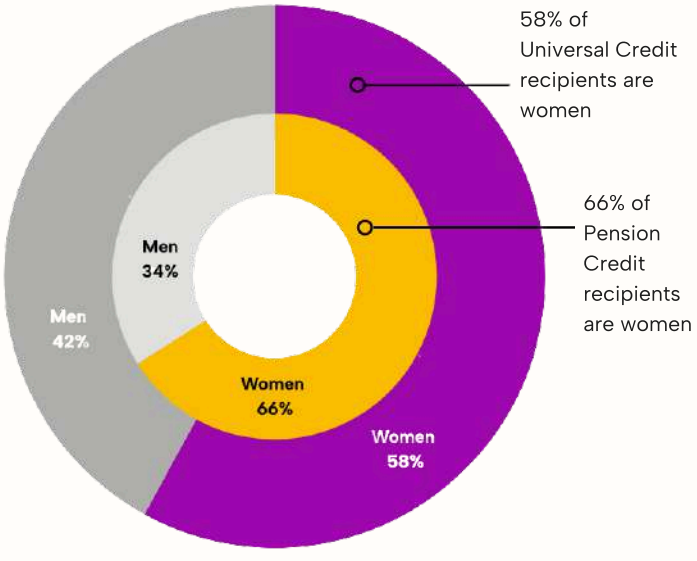
Source: ECIU

71%

Home insurance policies have hit a five-year high in the UK, rising by a staggering 71% since 2019

Source: Moneysupermarket.com

The majority of Universal Credit and Pension Credit recipients are women



Sources: GOV.UK

> *Climate change is a consequence of social, political and economic systems that have been in place for hundreds of years, which have marginalised communities based on race, gender, sexuality, ability etc. It follows that climate change will affect those communities in exactly the same way.*

Women – particularly racialised, marginalised and disabled women – are over-represented amongst those living in poverty in the UK, partly on account of the structural inequalities that continue to exclude them from access to work.

As it stands, women make up 58% of people receiving Universal Credit.[10,11] Women also represent 66% of people receiving Pension Credit,[12] a provision for people of low income who have reached State pension qualifying age. This is especially concerning when you consider that almost half (48%) of people receiving Universal Credit in the UK ran out of food in October 2024 and did not have enough money to buy more.[13]

As well as being paid less than men for conducting similar work,[14] women in the UK are:

- **More likely to be in part-time employment than men** (36% vs 14%);
- **Likely to have lower salaries;**[15]
- **Spending almost twice as much time doing unpaid domestic and care work compared to men** (12.65% of their time compared to 6.97% of mens' time);[16]
- **More likely to be heads of single-partner households,** with 85% of lone-parent families being headed by a single mother in 2023, compared to 15% by a single father.[17]

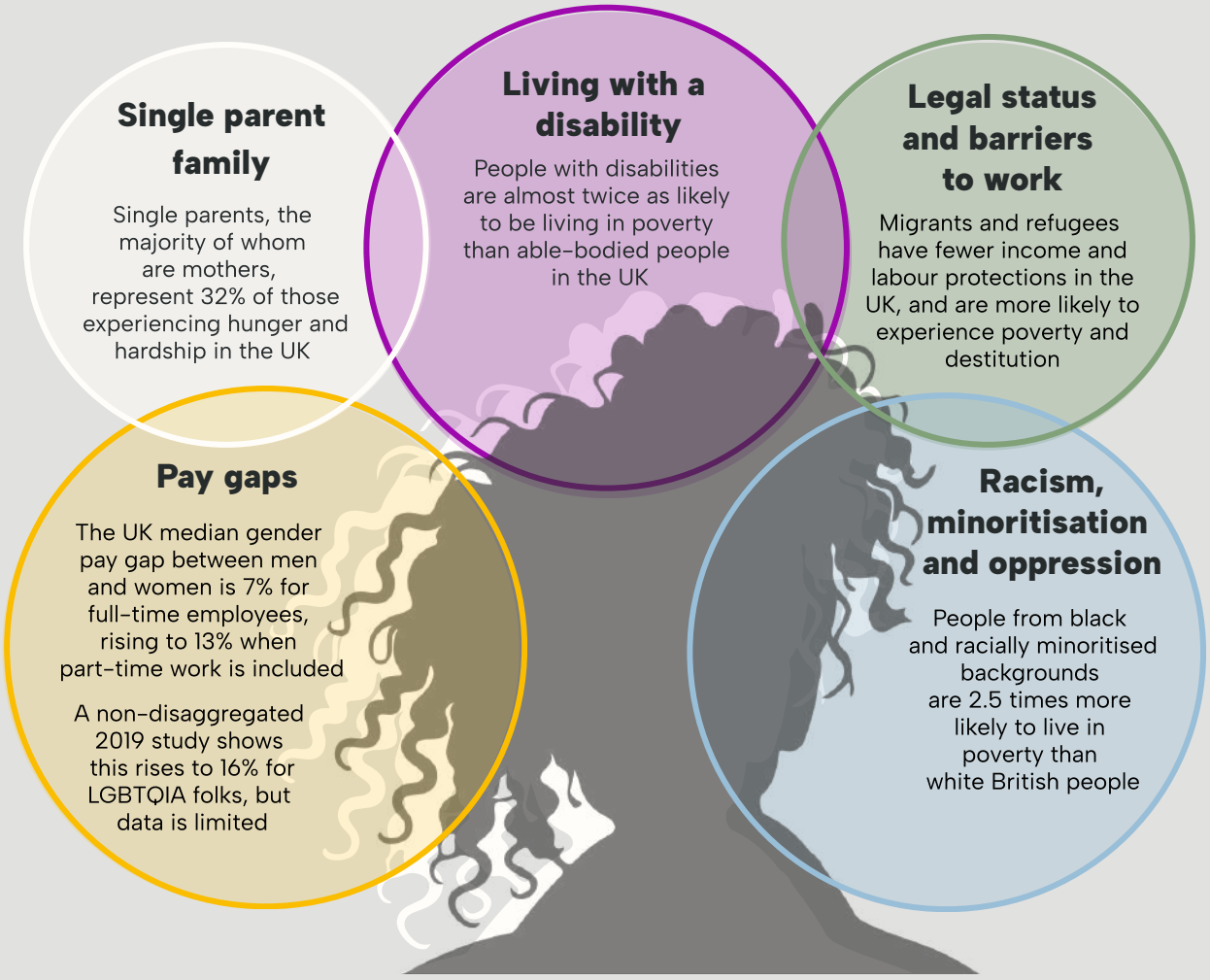
According to the Trussell Trust, single parent households – the majority of whom are women – represented 32% of those experiencing hunger and hardship in the UK in 2024,[18] and one fifth of those referred to food banks in the Trussell Trust network in 2023.[19] People with disabilities (52%) and Black, African, Caribbean, and Black British families (28%) are also over-represented amongst this group.[20]

This is due, in part, to the costs associated with disability and ill health, as well as the barriers to work that many racially marginalised and disabled people face.[21] This includes fewer income and labour protections – which particularly affect racially minoritised migrants,[22] as well as members of the LGBTQIA+ community.[23,24]

As a result, people with disabilities are almost twice as likely to be living in poverty than able-bodied people in the UK,[25] whilst people from black and racially minoritised backgrounds are 2.5 times more likely to live in poverty than white British people.[26]

The weight on her shoulders

Across the UK, women are dealing with the impacts of multiple, intersecting structural inequalities. This also means they are more exposed to poverty and hardship – even before accounting for the impacts of increasing climate change.



Data sources: The Trussell Trust (2024), ONS, Pink News, APPG on Migration,

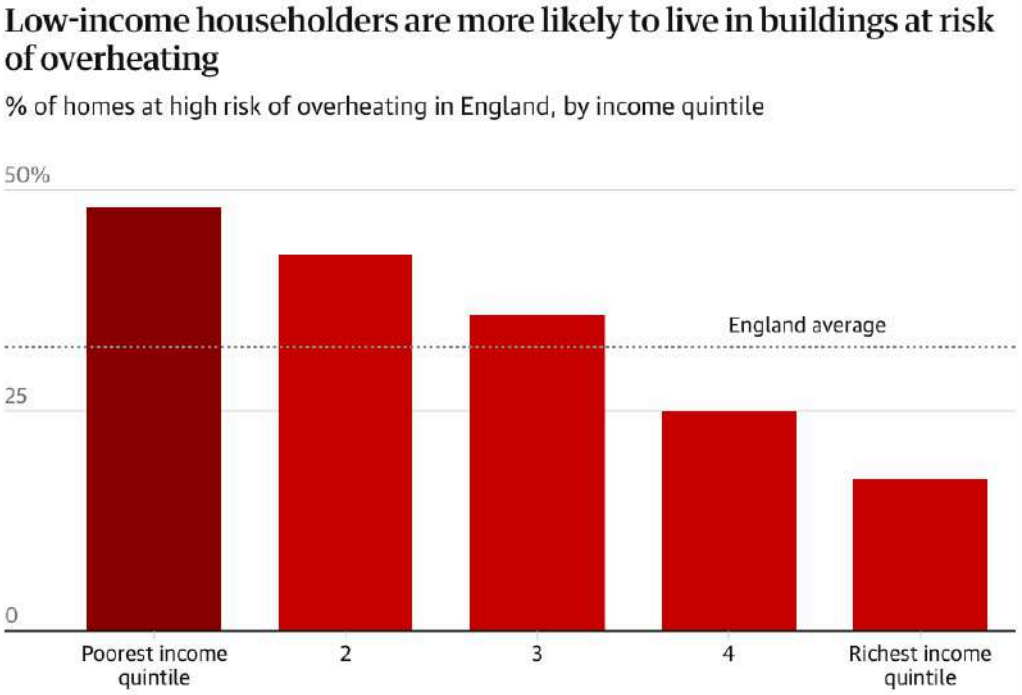
Visual: Impatience Earth

How poverty and discrimination impact climate risk

> *We have seen in the last couple of years that the country is not prepared for the impacts of climate change…The threat is greatest for the most vulnerable: we do not have resilient hospitals, schools, or care homes. Public and private institutions alike are unprepared.*
>
> *We can see our country changing before our eyes. People are having to cope with more regular extreme weather impacts. People are experiencing increasing food prices. People are worried about vulnerable family members during heatwaves…Failing to act will impact every family and every person in the country.*[27]
>
> **– Baroness Brown, Climate Change Committee**

The risks that climate change pose in the UK are not insignificant. **92% of low-income households are currently facing climate-related risks**, and **98% of Local Authorities reported at least one climate-related hazard in their area in 2023** - with extreme heat, flooding and heavy rainfall being the most common incidents recorded.[28] 2022 and 2023 were the two hottest summers on record, with the highest ever UK temperatures being recorded across England, Wales and Scotland in July 2022, peaking at 40.3 degrees.[29] The UK's independent advisors on climate change - The Climate Change Committee (CCC) - have described these temperatures as ***'the clearest indication that climate change has arrived in this country'.***[30]

Climate change is already causing extensive damage to land, buildings, infrastructure and the natural environment in the UK, disrupting transport and businesses and impacting health and access to health services.[31] Given that climate change acts as a 'threat multiplier' - and is impacting the UK in a moment of polycrisis - these impacts are only set to get worse, especially considering that the UK is not adequately prepared to respond to climate-related risks, including threats such as future global pandemics.



Guardian graphic (link) Source: Resolution Foundation analysis of English Housing Survey 2023 to 2024, Energy Follow Up Survey

These climate-related risks are likely to impact almost every region of the UK and every sector of society. This will erode community resilience and exacerbate pre-existing vulnerabilities such as poverty, food insecurity, mental and physical ill health, access to work and exclusion and marginalisation.

These climate-related risks are especially acute for people with disabilities,[32] homeless people, and those living in 'transition' accommodation, which includes prison populations,[33] people awaiting the results of asylum decisions and those escaping domestic abuse. **Women particularly are over-represented amongst these groups, accounting for 60% of homeless adults living in temporary accommodation in England**, on account of factors such as discrimination, domestic abuse, and an inability to afford spiralling housing costs.[34]

Low-income and black and racialised households are also over-exposed to the impacts of climate change, because they tend to live in more deprived areas of the UK, facing higher levels of climate risk as a result.[35] For example, **black and racially minoritised people living in the UK are four times more likely to live in climate-vulnerable communities than white people,**[36] and to be exposed to the associated climate and health-related risks. This includes **higher levels of flood risk**[37] and **risks of extreme heat – which is currently facing 15,662 neighbourhoods in England and threatening the lives of over 6 million people**.[38] It also includes risks posed by **increased exposure to air pollution**[3940] and **proximity to waste incinerators,** and the chemicals and pollutants they produce.[41]

These risks are exacerbated where people have a lack of access to green spaces, where there is:

- Limited protection from the cooling impact of trees;
- Maximal exposure to pollution-heavy infrastructure and heat-absorbing materials such as concrete;
- An inability to cool homes through installing cooling measures or opening doors or windows as a result of safety concerns.

These risks disproportionately affect minoritised groups, especially women who experience the intersecting impacts of gender, race, poverty, disability and other forms of structural inequality. For example, Muslim women and first-generation migrants do not always have safe access to green spaces, because they are often the site of racist attacks and therefore deliberately avoided.[42]

Data shows that black people in the UK:

- **Are nearly four times more likely than white people to have no outdoor spaces, including gardens and patios, in their home;**[43]
- **Have limited access to land ownership;**[44]
- **Are less likely to live within a five-minute walk of green spaces (39%) than white people (58%).**[45]

Photo: Sarah Farrell

...we have to be honest about the fact that, fundamentally, many funders and policymakers think communities are not smart enough to make decisions about their own lives.

The impacts of UK climate policy design on women and marginalised communities

> *The social impacts of initiatives that are supposed to be climate positive are being overlooked...disabled communities are struggling to access the same shops they would have done before because of low emissions zones, and traffic is being redirected away from privileged clean air zones into predominantly ethnically diverse and working class community areas...the whole point of consultation processes is to engage communities, but they're being designed to do the exact opposite.*

The social and economic impacts of climate-related policymaking are not being effectively factored into policy design, in part due to underrepresentation in decision-making spaces. This is not only placing cost burdens on those who are least able to afford them, but it is also creating space in which divisive, anti-climate rhetorics are able to take hold (See: *page 40*).

For example, social and private renters – amongst which single-parent households (and therefore women) are over-represented[46] – are less able to protect themselves from the costs associated with climate-related policies compared with owner-occupiers. This includes those policies which can lead to increases in the costs of high-polluting heat sources.[47]

This is partly because social and private renters are less likely to have access to savings – with women especially saving less and less regularly than men[48] – but also on account of a lack of control over the environments they live in.

For example, renters rely on landlords and Local Authorities to make infrastructure-based investments that can help improve living standards and lower bills on their behalf, such as better home insulation and the installation of heat pumps.[49]

The UK has some of the least energy-efficient housing stock in Europe, with an estimated £250bn of investment required to decarbonise UK homes between 2020 and 2050 – the equivalent of £8bn per year.[50] Where these investments are not made, poorer households are left suffering the consequences, including unaffordable housing and heating costs.

It is therefore unsurprising that **poorer households renting in areas of high flooding risk – which currently includes 6.3 million properties in England alone**[51] **– are less likely to take up insurance than owner-occupiers**,[52] and that **single-parent households made up the largest proportion (29%) of the 3.17 million households that experienced Fuel Poverty in England in 2023.**[53,54] These numbers are only set to increase, given that **an estimated 6 million households in England experienced Fuel Poverty in the Winter of 2024-2025.**[55]

The fact that the experiences of women and other marginalised groups have not been sufficiently accounted for in climate-related policy development is in part a result of their exclusion from this historically male-dominated workforce, which has also lacked the representation and experience of people from low-income households and those living with disabilities (see: *pages 22-23*).

These inequalities are only set to widen as the impacts of climate change worsen, and as more policies are put in place to address them – often placing prohibitive costs on women and others living in poverty, and preventing them from participating in and benefiting from the UK's low-carbon transition.

Photo: SolStock

“

Some work is being done to address the unintended consequences of policy design, especially when it comes to exploring ways to reduce energy bills for those living in Fuel Poverty.

However, more often than not these can be ‘sticking plaster’ solutions which only account for the impacts of climate and energy-related policies that are known to policy makers...

How climate change impacts women's health

> *Gender issues are present everywhere. They may have different ways of showing up, but the repression and marginalisation of women is not specific to a particular part of the world. It's time that we recognised this in the UK too.*

As well as living in homes and areas that are disproportionately affected by climate-related issues such as damp and extreme heat, **women and children – as well as other vulnerable groups such as the elderly and people with disabilities – are also more likely to spend time in the home.**[56] This means that as well as being disproportionately affected by the economic costs of climate change, **women are more likely to suffer the mental and physical implications of climate-related hazards.** Amongst other factors, their propensity towards caregiving roles makes it harder to evacuate or recover during climate-related emergencies.

Health impacts include heat-related illnesses, mental health stress, and respiratory problems related to air-pollution,[57] which black and racialised people living in poverty are disproportionately exposed to.[58,59] Exposure to these hazards can have a range of mental health implications, including increased anxiety, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and depression, rates of which are six times higher in people whose homes are flooded than those who are unaffected, with symptoms persisting over the long-term.[60]

Women's health is also disproportionately affected by extreme weather events. For example, **women going through perimenopause and menopause are less able to regulate their body temperatures during heatwaves, effects which are exacerbated in those with Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD) whose symptoms are worsened by heat, in part due to impacts of heat on the efficacy of PMDD medication**.[61] Heat also has a disproportionate impact on those taking gender-affirming medication, who are likely to experience heightened impacts of temperature spikes on account of their already heightened exposure to heat stress and thermal discomfort.[62]

Photo: 2021 Lancet Countdown UK Policy Brief

These risks are exacerbated where women and marginalised people can't afford to address problems within their immediate environment – for example through running a dehumidifier to combat damp, or being able to afford (or having the relevant permissions to install) solutions to combat heat.

This may explain in part why **there were almost two times as many excess deaths among females (2,159) than males (1,115) during the UK's 2022 heatwaves**[63] – a number that is expected to rise as climate change continues to affect a growing aging population that is particularly vulnerable to extreme heat.[64]

Women are also disproportionately exposed and susceptible to the impacts of climate-related hazards. For example, exposure to Endocrine Disruptor Chemicals (EDCs) and 'forever chemicals' – which are found in industrial chemicals, pollutants and plastics – can be increased by climate-related events such as floods, which can cause chemicals in sewerage systems to spread throughout communities. These chemicals can build up in fatty tissue, disrupt the hormonal and reproductive systems, cause cancers and cause harm to babies in the womb.[65] Unfortunately, **women are also exposed to these hazards through the use of everyday menstrual, cosmetic and cleaning products, as well through the workplace** – where social gender roles lead many women to work in cleaning, cosmetics or textiles industries.

Furthermore, women in the UK – particularly women with disabilities and carers – are likely to experience **increased or more severe domestic abuse as the impacts of climate change worsen.** This is because climate shocks drive social isolation and create the conditions under which domestic abuse can take place, including through exacerbating economic pressures and forcing people to spend more time in their homes.

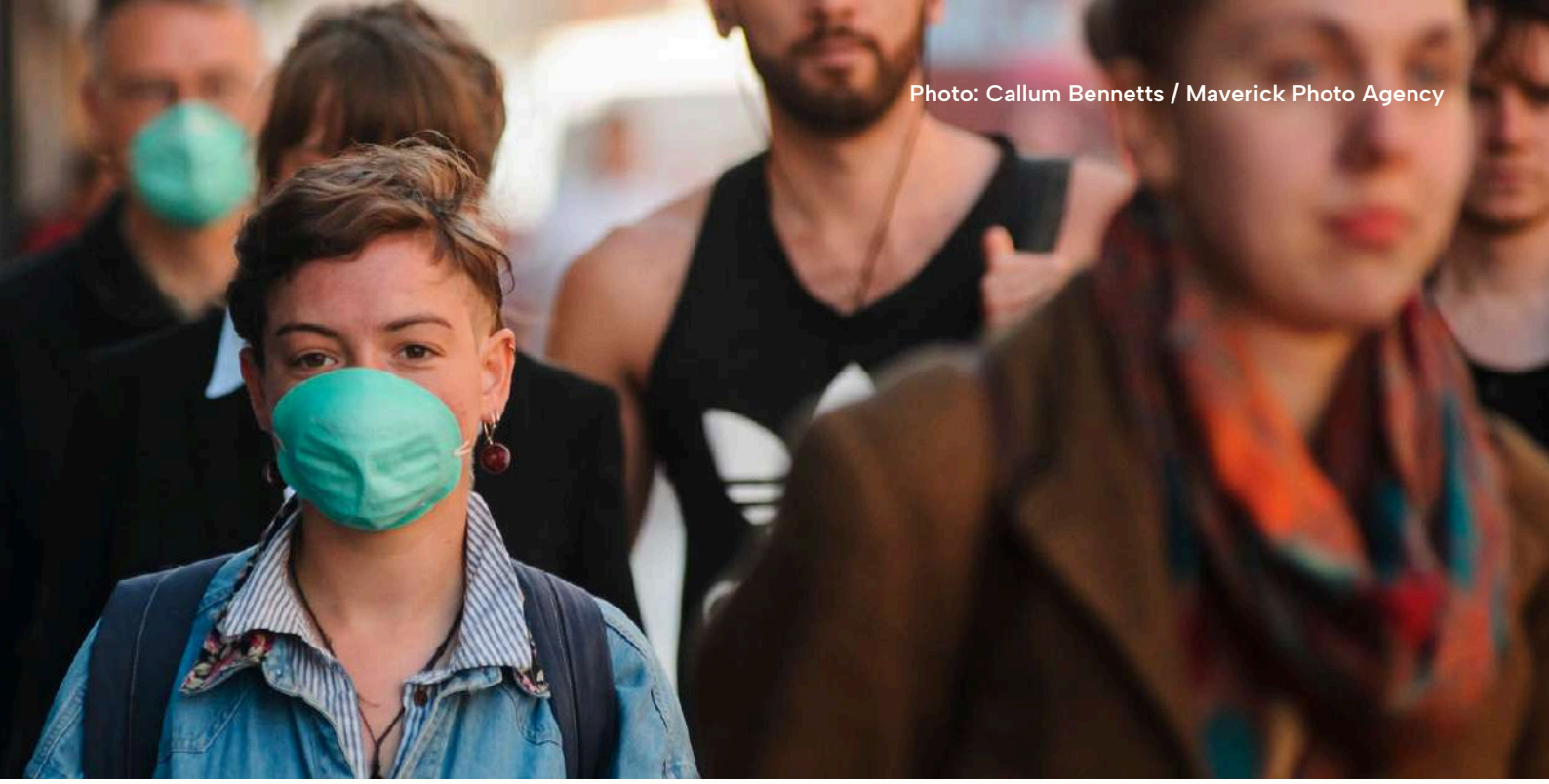


Photo: Callum Bennetts / Maverick Photo Agency

This was the case during the COVID-19 pandemic,[66] and is likely to be the case in the wake of certain climate shocks such as storms, floods and temperature increases, which have all been linked to increases in intimate partner violence in other countries,[67,68] in part as a result of heightened stress levels and a lack of food availability. The fact that climate change is driving food cost inflation across the UK is also likely to have a significant impact, given that **one in five women referred to food banks in the Trussell Trust network (19%) have experienced domestic violence in the past 12 months.**[69]

As climate change worsens and healthcare systems and related medical supply chains are disrupted, women are once again likely to be disproportionately affected. As with the COVID-19 pandemic, this will mostly impact those with disabilities, older and pregnant women, and those who already face barriers towards accessing healthcare and recovery resources, including black and racially minoritised women. For example, **black women were more than eight times more likely to be admitted to hospital with COVID-19 than white women.**[70]

Recommendation:

We must learn the lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, by accounting for gender, wealth and racial disparities when designing climate resilience and climate funding strategies for the UK.

The costs of exclusion

> *In the west and the UK, the environmental sector is still very professionalised, which means that you end up with able white men at the helm, in negotiations, leading policy development and conversations on climate more generally.*

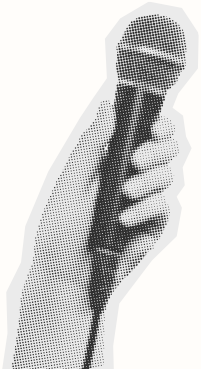
Women in the UK continue to be systematically excluded from decision-making processes, including those relating to environmental policy development. **Only 26.8% of government ministers responsible for climate change policies globally are women**[71] – an issue which came to the fore at the COP26 Climate Conference in Glasgow in 2021, **where men occupied 10 out of the 12 leadership positions in the UK team**, and where women were more likely to be employed as event organisers and advisors than as leaders.

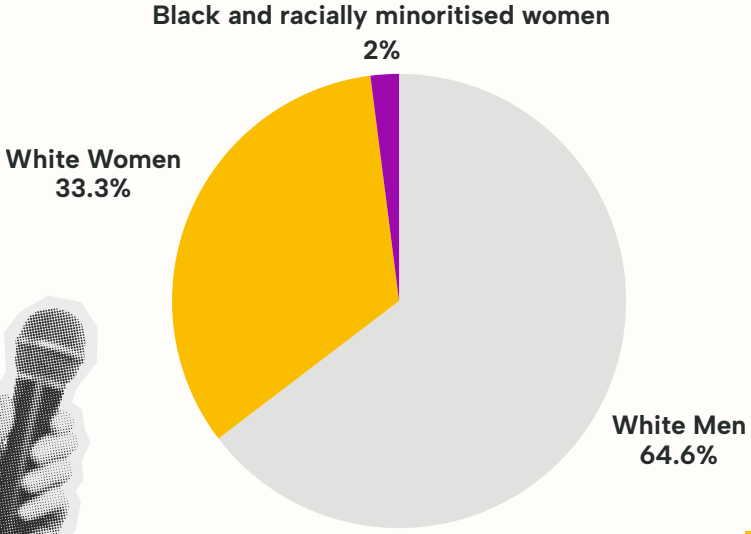
This disparity is not only evident at international events and in formal policy spaces. For example, there may be more parity in representation between white men and women at climate-related events in the UK than there is between other groups, but this does not mean that women get an equal share of voice. In a year-long study of climate policy and action events in Bristol, researchers found that **white men spoke for 64% of the time during climate-related events**, and white women spoke for 33%. Meanwhile **black and racially minoritised women spoke for just 2% of the time**.[72]

Whose voices are heard when it comes to action on climate change?

A year long study of climate decision-making meetings in Bristol (2021) showed that white men spoke 64% of the time

Source: University of Bristol





This lack of representation of women – especially from marginalised backgrounds – is still prevalent across the UK professional climate movement. The systemic structures of racism and oppression are excluding engagement, notably at senior levels, and ensuring that those most likely to experience climate-related risk are not being included in spaces dedicated to addressing it.[73]

For example, **only 4.5% of the UK's environment and climate professionals identify as 'people of colour'** – compared with 16% across other professions,[74] with Policy Exchange ranking 'environmental professionals' as the second least diverse sector in Britain.[75] It is therefore unsurprising that Union of Justice found that **62% of racialised people** who contributed to their 'What's race got to do with it' report **felt that non-white residents do not have as much opportunity to influence UK climate policy** as white residents, with **56% citing racial discrimination as a key barrier towards engagement.**[76]

These various forms of exclusion are hampering environmental progress, not only because it is widely understood that **those most affected by climate-related issues must play a role in addressing them**, but also because **the inclusion of women has proven to lead to better, more effective and more inclusive environmental policies.** For example, studies have found that **increased representation of women in parliament correlates with a reduction in carbon emissions on account of more stringent climate change policies,**[77] and **countries with higher female representation in parliament are more likely to ratify treaties and adopt policies that address climate change impacts.**[78]

This is not only because **women are more likely to be concerned about and willing to act upon climate change than men,**[79] but also because **as policy makers in general, women tend to prioritise issues that benefit the most vulnerable in society, through healthcare, welfare and education.**[80,81]

Photo: COP26 Glasgow

Supporting and enabling a more inclusive and gender-responsive approach towards policy development is therefore critical when it comes to accounting for (and responding to) the impacts and experiences of climate change and climate-related policies on the UK's most vulnerable and marginalised communities, including through disaster response planning. For example, the **daily briefings and emergency planning literature during COVID-19 have been widely criticised as ableist and racist**,[82] and the UK's current approach towards issuing Emergency Alerts regarding extreme weather events – including floods and fires – is also not sufficiently inclusive. Alerts are issued in English and Welsh languages only, and only to those who have access to compatible devices and internet and TV services.

As research shows, women have a tendency towards more inclusive policy development – and a propensity towards volunteering,[83] which means they are more likely than men to act as informal emergency responders during climate disasters, especially where responses involve informal roles such as caregiving, handing out food and managing shelters. In light of this, it follows that they should be included in the planning and preparation pertaining to that response, and the policies that are developed to support it.

Photo: Sarah Farrell

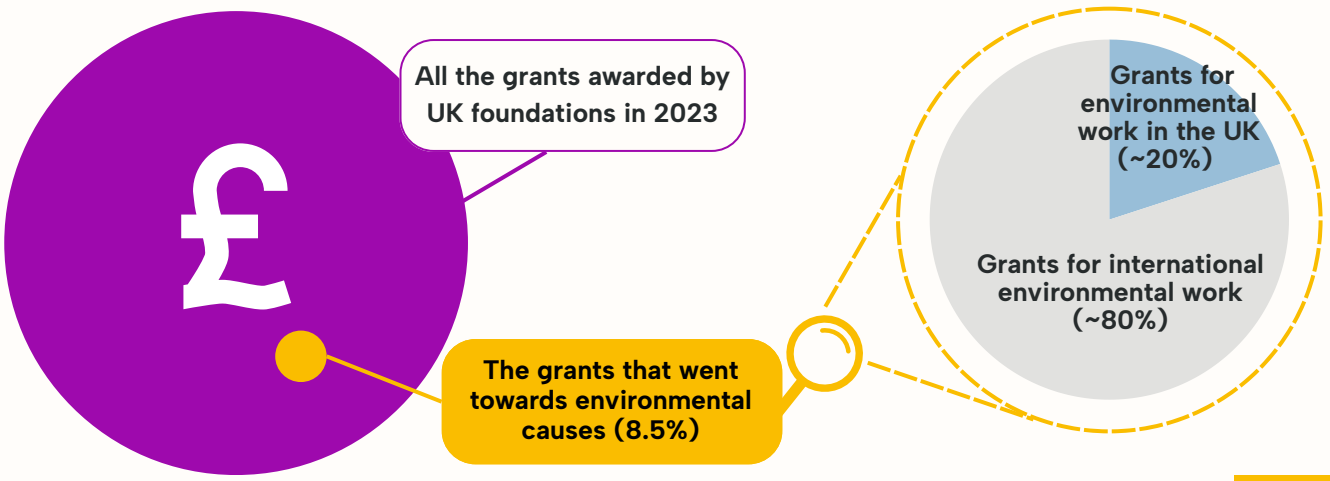
The domestic funding landscape

> *The fact we don't know about it [the state of adaptation funding in the UK] is linked with the fact that we haven't focused on it.*

Environmental grantmaking in the UK has almost tripled in recent years,[84] but has not necessarily focused on supporting movements and organisations that are working to adapt to or build resilience towards the impacts of climate change. As it stands, only **8.5% of UK Foundation grants go towards environmental causes**, whilst **less than 20% of environmental grants provided by UK-based foundations in 2023 were focused on work inside the UK**.[85] This may reflect the perception that the most "urgent" climate change impacts are occurring elsewhere, so that is where limited environmental funding has rightly been provided to date.

Where funding is being provided within the UK, it is dominated by larger environmental NGOs, with all but one of the 21 of organisations that received environmental grants from ten or more foundations in 2021/2022 being described as UK-based (but not necessarily UK-focused) 'household names'.[86] This is in part due to the fact that **individuals with multiple marginalised identities are often being locked out of grant application processes**, on account of their requiring a minimum income or registered organisation / charity status to be considered eligible (see: pages 51-52).

As such, **many grassroots organisations legitimately feel that they cannot compete for funding on a level playing field with larger, national charities**, even though smaller local charities and community-based groups are often best placed to support the most vulnerable in society and to shape national and local policy, on account of their in-depth knowledge of local communities.[87]



Data source: Environmental Funders Network (2024)

Meanwhile, where environmental work is being funded at a community level in the UK, it is primarily focused on building sustainability and reducing emissions – for example green and shared transport initiatives, the circular economy and land-based carbon sequestration[88] – as opposed to building community resilience towards the impacts of climate change. Indeed, the fact that we don't currently know what proportion of UK environmental grants focus on climate adaptation reflects how little it has been focused on to date.

Initiatives that focus on tackling the underlying injustices that increase vulnerability towards climate change in the UK are significantly under-funded. Civic Power Fund have estimated that:

- Social justice grants represent less than 5% of grants provided by the UK's leading grant makers
- Grants supporting UK community organising account for around 0.2%.[89]

Of those grants that were directed towards social justice issues in 2022/23, almost half (46.9%) were focused on service delivery, and less than 9% went towards 'outside game' activities i.e work that enables excluded communities to be heard and to contribute towards work that affects them.

This lack of support for those most affected by climate change is also reflected in the limited resources that UK funders direct towards women's rights organisations. Care International found that **just 0.2% of funding provided by UK funders to climate-impacted communities reaches women's rights organisations**, despite these organisations being critical agents of change when it comes to addressing core vulnerabilities to climate change, and addressing climate impacts more directly.[90]

A similar picture emerges with domestic giving, where Rosa have found that **women and girls charities received just 1.8% of the total funding that was awarded to UK-based charities in 2021 (£4.1 billion)**, accounting for just 3.2% of the total number of grants recorded.[91] Perhaps more concerningly, one third of all grants for activities that were focused on 'women and girls' – worth £24.7 million – went to organisations that had no specific focus on women and girls.

This reflects a pattern of exclusion and male-dominated decision-making that is also seen in environmental spaces, where work led by female, LGBTQIA+, black and racially minoritised people is under-valued, under-resourced, and not necessarily designed by those with experience of the issues.

Part 2:

Recommendations for funders

Photo: Eyoel Kahssay | Unsplash

UK funders: what you can do

> *There is a risk of philanthropy trying to reinvent the wheel. To avoid this, we need to connect with the groups on the ground who are working in this space and find out what they are doing and what they actually need, instead of trying to make them fit within systems that they don't trust in the first place.*

As the domestic impacts of climate change worsen, environmental funders must support those most affected by climate change to prepare and respond, not least because the **involvement of women and other vulnerable groups in climate-related decision making has proven to lead to better, more equitable and more effective outcomes**.

UK Funders – especially those who are already supporting environmental action – should therefore acknowledge and work to **dismantle the structural inequalities that make women and other minoritised groups disproportionately exposed to the impacts of climate change,** through several interconnected approaches which have been outlined below.

These recommendations have been developed off the back of desk research, as well as a series of semi-formal interviews with UK-based researchers, activists, grantees and social and environmental funders, who represent and work with some of the key demographics discussed in this report (See: pages 34 onwards).

1. Focus on tackling injustice

2. Shift your funding practices

3. Champion (fund) new voices

4. Help build the inclusive evidence base

1. Focus on tackling injustice

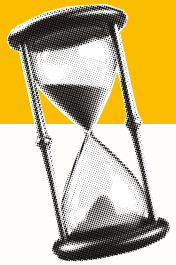
Shift your **focus funding and power towards anti-patriarchal, inclusive, women-led and women-focused organisations.** Prioritise those that work with and centre marginalised communities, including through **supporting racial justice and women's rights intermediaries** to develop funding streams that focus on building community resilience towards the impacts of climate change.

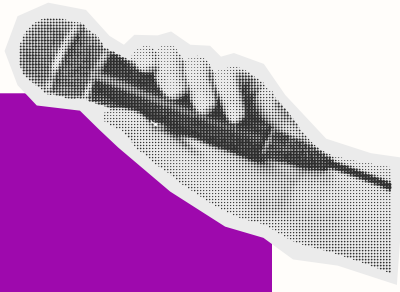
For example: recognising the importance of relationship-building by funding and supporting access to community land and community spaces, which can support community-based organising and convening, whilst enabling low-cost, low impact food growing.

2. Shift your funding practices

Prioritise **providing flexible, unrestricted, multi-year grants**, whose application, review and monitoring and evaluation processes are **co-created with those they are intended to support**, and whose **timelines reflect the length of time needed to deliver community-based change**.

Please note that contributors to these processes should be paid for their time, to ensure that recommendations are not skewed by input from larger organisations who have more capacity and resources to contribute.





3. Champion (fund) new voices

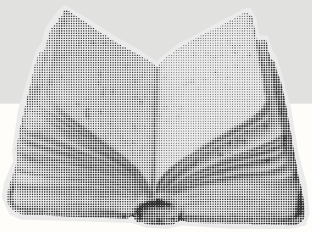
Prioritise work that enables those most impacted by climate change in the UK to play a role in addressing it, including through cultivating new leadership.

For example: supporting work that nurtures new female, non-binary, queer, disabled and racialised leaders, and work that enables the UK's most affected communities to engage with and contribute towards policy development, including disaster response planning (for example, through supporting community engagement with Local Authorities who have a legal responsibility to carry out this work).

4. Help build the inclusive evidence base

Support research, advocacy and policy-development that seeks to understand and amplify the experiences of women and other minoritised groups, and ensures that understanding is translated into inclusive and gender-responsive policies, including in relation to fuel poverty and food accessibility.

For example: funding knowledge exchanges between community-based / voluntary sector organisations and the professional environmental movement, and supporting community research projects, run by local organisers, which centre the concerns and experiences of local people and connect them with policy makers and consultations.



Recommendations in action

The following organisations are examples we have come across that align with the recommendations presented in this report, though Impatience Earth is not directly affiliated with any of them.

1) AWETHU School of Organising

What: A transformative educational initiative dedicated to empowering individuals and communities through political education and tools for grassroots organising.

How: Through developing a robust framework for political education and organising, which seeks to address the lack of representation and resources in climate justice and organising spaces for the Black community. The curriculum covers the basics of climate justice, colonial history, anti-racism and anti-capitalism, as well as organising principles to build successful campaigns and wellbeing in activism.

Who: This is a free 8-week course for Black (of African or Black Caribbean Descent) 18-24 year olds.

2) Land in Our Names (LION)

What? A grassroots collective of Black and People of Colour (BPOC) working to reconnect BPOC to land, and to address inequalities in access to land and food across the UK.

How: LION conduct research, advocacy and funding that enables BPOC to connect with and secure ownership over land, including through highlighting the inequalities that BPOC face in accessing land in Britain. This includes a Land Fund which supports BPOC land ownership – for which they are currently seeking funding – and 'growers grants', which support social enterprises within the growing system. LION also run workshops and events that support community organising and engagement in land-related crafts, such as bee hotel building and garden development.

Who? LION support BPOC, queer, women and non-binary folks to lead and participate in their programmes and events.

3) Women's Environment Network

What? A UK-based environmental charity working on issues that connect women, health, equity and environmental justice. Their vision is a world where women, communities and the planet thrive in an equitable, collective and caring society.

How? WEN supports women and communities to take action, whilst amplifying racialised and marginalised women's voices and advocating for change. This includes initiatives such as Food Justice – which is reimagining food systems and expanding access to fresh, healthy and culturally appropriate foods in Tower Hamlets – and Soil Sisters, a programme working with female refugees in East London to build and maintain green spaces. They are also funding a series of free, participatory 'Feminist Green New Deal' workshops, to ensure that more marginalised voices are included in environmental policy-development and decision-making.

Who: WEN's network is powered by feminists from a range of backgrounds and all genders. They work to amplify the voices of women, with a focus on racialised and marginalised people.

4) Civic Power Fund

What? A pooled fund (intermediary) that supports grassroots community organising across the UK.

How? Civic Power Fund use participatory grantmaking to provide targeted, long-term funding within key communities across the UK, including building the infrastructure and leadership required to allow citizens to become agents (rather than recipients) of change. They also conduct research and advocacy that sheds a light on the state of social justice funding in the UK.

Who? They support grassroots organisers working with and representing excluded communities, and organisations led by women and people of colour.

5) The Brixton Project (Community Research Exchange)

What? A pilot research initiative which explores different approaches towards bottom-up decision-making, centering the concerns of local people and connecting them into policy development.

How? The project is enabled through the Community Research Exchange, which brings together members of the community with community leaders, professionals and creative practitioners, connecting community concerns and perspectives into policy development, including via Local Authorities.

Who? Potential to be piloted in communities across the UK.

6) The Baobab Foundation

What? A black and member-led foundation working to achieve long-lasting systems change through resourcing, mobilising and organising community action, with a focus on racial and disability justice.

How? Baobab Foundation's £3 million Community Fund aims to dismantle systems of oppression which prevent marginalised communities from accessing funding and support. They provide grants of £5 - £30,000 per year for up to 5 years, with funding made available to unregistered groups and individuals, in a bid to drive accessibility.

Who? The fund focuses on supporting people and communities harmed by racism and intersectional injustice in the UK, including Black African / Caribbean and Global Majority people of colour.

Part 3:

Extracts from interviews with funders, activists & NGOs

Photo: Sarah Farrell

Perspectives from the field

> *Not many funders have made or understood the inherent connection between structural inequalities in society and the climate crisis.*

In the process of developing this report, we consulted with researchers, activists, organisers, grantees and progressive funders to gain their perspectives on how environmental funders can better support women and marginalised groups to address the impacts of climate change in the UK.

Whilst these semi-formal interviews focused on these groups initially, they inevitably expanded to discuss what actions environmental funders can take to support UK-based community resilience more broadly – in part due to a shifting political context which has seen an organised backlash against environmental progress and policymaking in recent months.

Many interviewees considered this to be a significant threat towards UK-based environmental progress, which they believe environmental funders can play an urgent role in addressing.

We have broken these conversations into core observations below, in the hope that it will encourage practitioners to think differently about how they approach climate resilience-focused work moving forwards, focusing on the three core principles of collaboration, flexibility and access.

Quotes have been anonymised, with the names of all those who contributed being listed at the beginning of this report.

Photo: Tom Nockolds / Glasgow Community Energy

1. Environmental funders cannot make meaningful progress without acknowledging and addressing the structural inequalities that underpin and exacerbate climate change.

As the popular placard slogan goes: '*systems change, not climate change'.*

Many interviewees we spoke to described how environmental funders have historically developed siloed funding streams which have failed to take an intersectional, justice-focused approach towards climate change, or to acknowledge how its impacts cannot be isolated from the structural oppressions that are so prevalent across British society. Many believe that this is one of the reasons women have been so neglected as a focus of environmental funding and policymaking to date, because their disproportionate vulnerability towards climate change has not been visible to or acknowledged by the men who have traditionally led this work.

As one interviewee said:

"Climate action doesn't necessarily look like what many climate funders expect it to. It varies, and even within communities it looks different in different spaces."

In the context of increasingly necessary and underfunded climate adaptation work in the UK, interviewees advocated for a different approach which moves away from 'ivory tower' thinking and instead recognises how climate change will exacerbate the existing inequalities that already affect the most vulnerable members of our society, and therefore shifts focus and funding towards those groups.

As explained by one interviewee:

"It's not about saying 'climate change equals X, Y and Z'. It's about following existing structures and inequalities, thinking about how climate change is going to make them worse...and then working out what we can do about it."

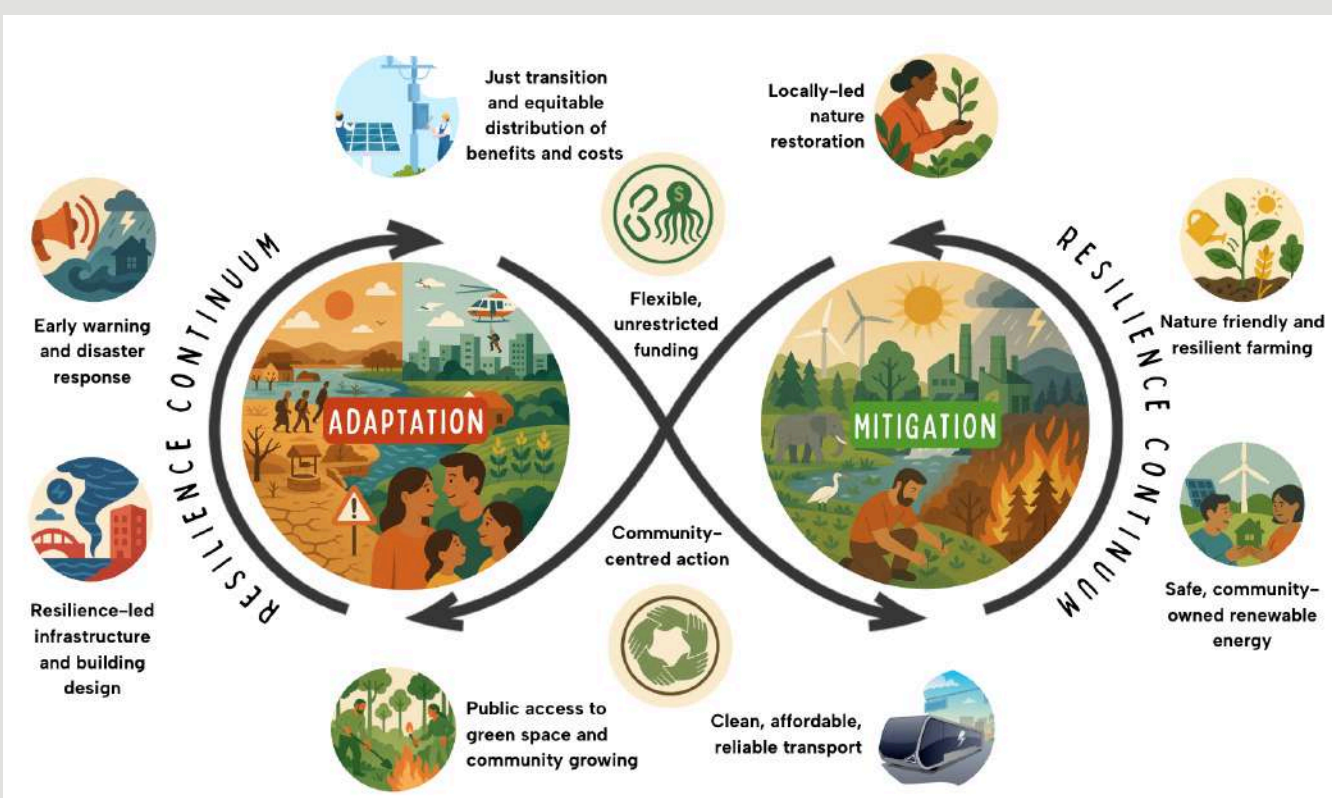
For example, whilst anti-poverty and women-led work are critically important elements of building community resilience towards climate change, often the only elements of environmental funding that are accessible to these groups are those which help them reduce the (already low) environmental footprints of their own organisations. This has created a perception that climate-related work is specialised and can only exist within the exclusionary and privileged space that many view the professional UK climate movement to be.

In the words of one interviewee:

"Funders are just not prioritising this [community resilience] work or joining the dots between different issues and recognising how it all comes together. That doesn't mean they have to pivot towards funding anti-poverty work, but they should at least be working with and learning from the people who are."

In the words of another interviewee:

"Not one philanthropic funder that I know of has a stream of work focusing on community resilience... but you can't build a resilient community without tackling long-term systemic issues because they are so closely linked with the kind of risks that we are facing in the future."



Visual: the 'Resilience Continuum' developed by Impatience Earth to support funders to break out of the mitigation-adaptation binary that often exists in climate funding decision-making.

In spite of this, there are organisations doing the critical work of building community resilience and developing solutions that support climate adaptation – including women-run, anti-patriarchal, queer-affirming and queer-inclusive groups.

As one interviewee expressed:

"Approaching funding through systems change thinking opens you up to so many solutions you might not otherwise have known about..it enables you to listen and be led by those you're working with, which is ultimately the most important part."

Many interviewees also emphasised the importance of being aware of how structural inequalities are affecting funder decision-making, saying:

"If we don't grapple with the fact that the stories and isms around racism and colonialism are impacting how we engage with this [community-based] work, we won't move forwards...this is about working against assimilation politics which requires people to speak a certain language to be heard...and instead using communications and education to make connections between the climate crisis and structural oppression, so we can actually hear and resource the solutions that communities hold, and enable them to articulate them in their own terms."

Credit: Neil Palmer (CIAT), 2010 | Flickr

2. Long-term exclusion of communities is actively hampering progress on environmental policymaking and climate resilience.

> *Even politicians don't think the environment sector is on the side of working people…that's a major, major problem… but instead of panicking, we need to take a step back and ask who has been ignored by us and felt disenfranchised by our communications for far too long, and then we need to find ways to reach and engage them.*

Many interviewees emphasised the role that environmental funders can play in enabling community engagement with climate-related policy work, to ensure that that work does not inadvertently make life worse for the most vulnerable in society, nor turn marginalised communities against environmental policymaking. As one interviewee said:

"So much of politics and policy development is just relationships and communications and engagement, and they [environmental policymakers] just keep messing it up and it really annoys me because it's creating mechanisms for agitators to turn working class people away from environmental policies, even though they do actually care about climate change."

Some interviewees talked about deliberate obstruction to community engagement, citing consultation processes on critical local planning or environmental issues that are not fit for purpose. Often they are entirely inaccessible to those who do not have the time, resources or ability to speak the language of other specialists who are trying to influence (and benefit from) the outcomes of that consultation. Some interviewees believe there is a culture of deliberate disengagement, perpetuated by those who are 'gatekeeping' environmental policy development, and gaining their understanding of communities from polling, rather than deep engagement. As one interviewee stated:

"The whole point of consultation is to engage communities. So the barriers that are put in place - even in terms of language and linguistics - to prevent community engagement with urban planning projects and consultations almost feel tactical…they are often just a deliberately inaccessible box-ticking exercise."

Some highlighted how this disengagement is visibly emphasised and reinforced through the way that councils have learned to treat green spaces in the UK:

"Council estates are so upsetting…I used to live in one…I remember as a kid I would have loved to have a community garden…but I was just stuck there just looking out at all that grass…Instead of using council funding to cut hedges and strip lawns we should use be investing in those spaces to make edible hedgerows, to protect the bees, to grow wildflowers and garden fruits…it's like there is so much money floating around, but we're using it for the least important things."

This disconnect between what communities want and what they are getting is being systematically weaponised by political parties such as Reform UK to drive community disengagement with environmental policy. As one interviewee explained:

"Working class people don't see themselves in the climate movement, and they feel patronised and alienated by people working in the climate sector…The reason many are turning against environmental policymaking is not because they don't care, but because parties like Reform UK have made the effort to understand how they feel and to reflect that in the promises they make…the irony is that the work of the climate movement will become totally redundant if this is successful, because climate will become something that politicians are too scared to touch or do anything about".

This disconnect has also prevented the development of meaningful climate adaptation solutions, because those who hold the knowledge and experience are being excluded from the spaces in which they are being discussed. As one interviewee said:

"Black people have been reusing plastic since the conception of plastic… but our communities don't necessarily have the language to call that recycling. Imagine what other solutions exist within our communities that funders have no idea about because they haven't allowed us to speak or created the mechanisms by which to ask…. imagine what would happen if we gave communities the language and the structures to engage."

3. Environmental funders can't (and shouldn't) know everything, but they can work with those who do.

> *Fund people who know and care more about these issues than you do, and who will keep doing the work, even once you've lost interest.*

Many interviewees praised those environmental funders who are trying to expand their knowledge base and step into new funding spaces – especially those who acknowledge the intersectional nature of the climate and nature crisis.

However, some expressed that rather than feeling pressure to upskill on everything, it would be more effective for environmental funders to acknowledge the limitations of their own expertise, and – much like approaches towards international philanthropy – trust those most familiar with and affected by these issues to come up with the most effective solutions for addressing them.

This doesn't mean that funders shouldn't develop specific areas of focus – indeed one interviewee expressed how having a core focus or 'north star' can be much more effective as a funding approach than trying to 'fix everything'.

It merely acknowledges that many environmental funders do not currently have expertise in relation to UK-based climate adaptation and resilience issues, or lived experience of climate impacts, so they are not necessarily equipped to lead on community-based work.

As such, interviewees emphasised the role of seeking out and funding community-based and community-focused women's, social and racial justice organisations to deliver against climate resilience objectives, rather than expecting environmental funders to become experts on the multitude of specialised issues that these organisations are working to address.

As one interviewee stated:

"Climate has an identity in a way that no other area of social justice does. It's incredibly exclusionary, and it is still not a safe or comfortable space for a lot of racial justice activists to exist within. That's why you should go to, support and fund their space, rather than trying to encourage them into yours."

For example, rather than funding *new* campaigns or building and resourcing *new* climate-focused housing, women's rights or racial justice streams within their existing portfolios, environmental funders should acknowledge and utilise the depth of expertise which already exists in these spaces. Funders will likely find it more impactful to empower, fund and support existing initiatives, supporting them with climate upskilling where necessary. As one interviewee explained:

"We should ask what this very vibrant and connected network of housing activists thinks about climate, and work out how we can collaboratively plug into that, rather than trying to build our own initiatives or crowbar our way into these very carefully designed and developed networks."

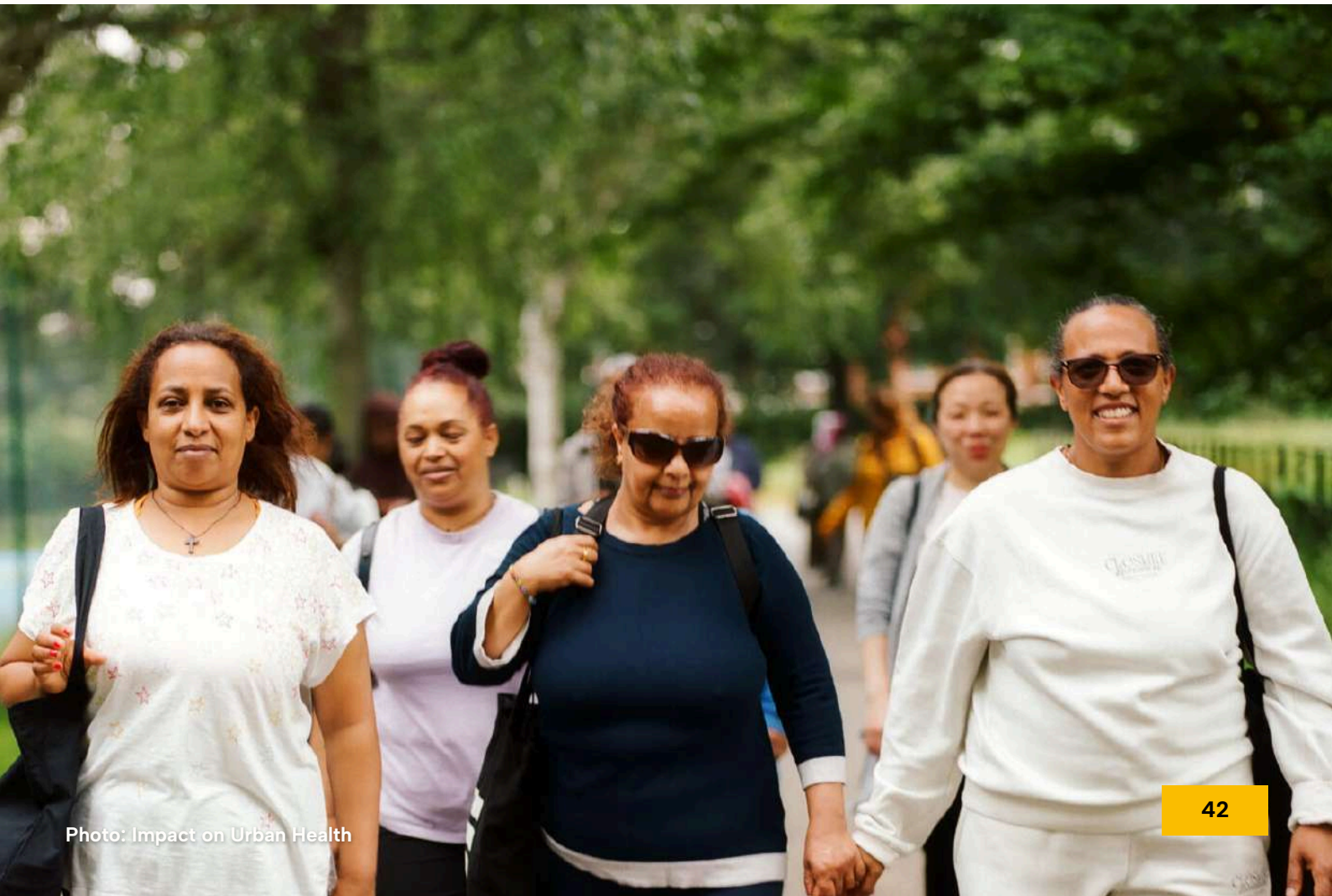


Photo: Impact on Urban Health

4. Relationships matter; they need to be valued and funded, and given spaces where they can thrive.

> *They [funders] find it easy to fund reports, but they struggle to fund and understand relationships.*

Many interviewees emphasised the importance of community convening, organising and relationship-building work, acknowledging that although holding and cultivating relationships takes time and is often 'invisible' to funders, it is critical in building community resilience both during and outside of crisis moments – including in relation to land use and the implementation of nature-based solutions. As one interviewee expressed:

"It's not about providing service, it's about building movements through which we can enable others to make change happen, to connect outside of capitalist systems, to overcome isolation and loneliness, and to share knowledge and understanding about what needs to happen to challenge systems of oppression and tackle the climate crisis."

However, some interviewees expressed caution with regards to deciding who receives community convening funding. As one interviewee said:

"Funders are starting to put money into it [community organising] but that money is not necessarily going in the right places...they end up over-resourcing complicated work that is led by London-based Think Tanks...and funding is not being directed to the people in communities who are actually doing the work...Funders just need to find and fund the organisers...it's hard to do, but you could start by paying someone to go there during floods, find out who is responding, and work out what they need. It's what Reform are doing...and it's what makes them likely to win."

Many interviewees also emphasised the role that funders can play in providing access to community spaces in which those relationships can thrive – for example through funding Community Development Trusts, which place buildings and land in community ownership, and enable them to be used for community-led purposes, including during disaster response.

Unfortunately, many accessible community spaces have disappeared as a result of decades of budget cuts:

"We have to be realistic about the fact that spaces have been removed and taken from our communities under how many decades of austerity which in turn has increased all the things funders don't see as consequences of climate change, but they are….everything is."

This topic of community ownership was also approached in relation to land and community growing spaces. For example, funders can play a role in supporting women, black and racialised people to gain much-needed access to land, and to develop community-based food networks:

"If you want to fund climate justice work then food growing should definitely be something you should be investing in…food is the biggest climate risk so why not help marginalised people get access to it?…" Just imagine if funders could help BIPOC buy land in peri-urban areas where it can remain in the community forever and we could grow low-cost, culturally-appropriate food in perpetuity."

This work is currently severely under-resourced – representing an opportunity for funders to fill a critical gap. As one interviewee expressed:

"Even just to get knowledge or education in this field [horticulture] is expensive. It also relies on having time to volunteer which BIPOC and working-class people don't necessarily have. Allotment culture is very intense, very boundaried and very white-dominated. There are so many black and queer communities who want to grow, but unfortunately there isn't currently much space for people like us".

Photo: Alastair Johnstone / Climate Visuals

5. If you want to prepare for the impacts of climate change, you have to involve communities in the development of that response.

The need for collaboration was also highlighted in relation to disaster preparation and response. Specifically, interviewees expressed the need to develop frameworks and funding streams which can support sustained community-based relationship building and planning outside of crisis moments, in light of the critical role that social connectedness plays in building community resilience. Some emphasised how this work is already being done within communities, but is not yet integrated with more formal disaster response frameworks:

"If you are a black disabled queer person you will have an emergency plan....You will have an exit strategy, and a list of people you need to call...these plans exist because they have to...so what would it look like to go into these spaces and resource and empower these people to apply that inherent understanding and knowledge to the climate emergency?...We should explore how Local Authorities responsible for emergency planning can tap into that knowledge...and not in a way that is extractive but in a way that leads to the co-creation of resources."

Recommendation:

Community-based planning work is currently undervalued and under-resourced, which is driving a 'cycle of disengagement' and a lack of preparedness for community shocks. This is a time-sensitive opportunity for funders and policy makers; both to avoid losing the valuable lessons learned during previous crises – including the COVID-19 pandemic – and to prepare ahead of projected worsening climate impact. Look to the example of Neighbourhood Networks[92] – widely recognised as having strong connections to the people within communities who are most exposed to the impacts of climate change, and an understanding of their needs.

We heard in our interviews that Neighbourhood Networks are not currently being involved in community-based disaster response planning, and that it often takes place in Local Authority 'back offices', with limited input from those most likely to be affected, or those most likely to respond during a crisis. This lack of preparedness is largely due to a lack of resources rather than intent, but it is concerning for many reasons.

For example, not enough time is being spent on ensuring that suitable safeguarding measures are in place to protect vulnerable community members during climate disasters – particularly women, LGBTQIA+ people, migrants and refugees. As one interviewee said:

"We need to understand how community organisations, the voluntary sector, faith and equality groups and others are connecting in with this [climate resilience work], because at the moment we're definitely not as prepared as we could be."

Indeed, the notion of larger NGOs having disproportionate access to funding on account of the resources they have was brought up several times:

"The biggest barrier for grassroots organisations is getting unrestricted, long-term core funding. Fundraising in its current format takes up so much capacity that smaller NGOs don't have…it requires us to speak a certain language and it takes us away from the meaningful work that we're trying to do..the bigger NGOs have the time and people to take on this work…and to practice the art of applications…so they end up getting the funding…and the cycle starts all over again."

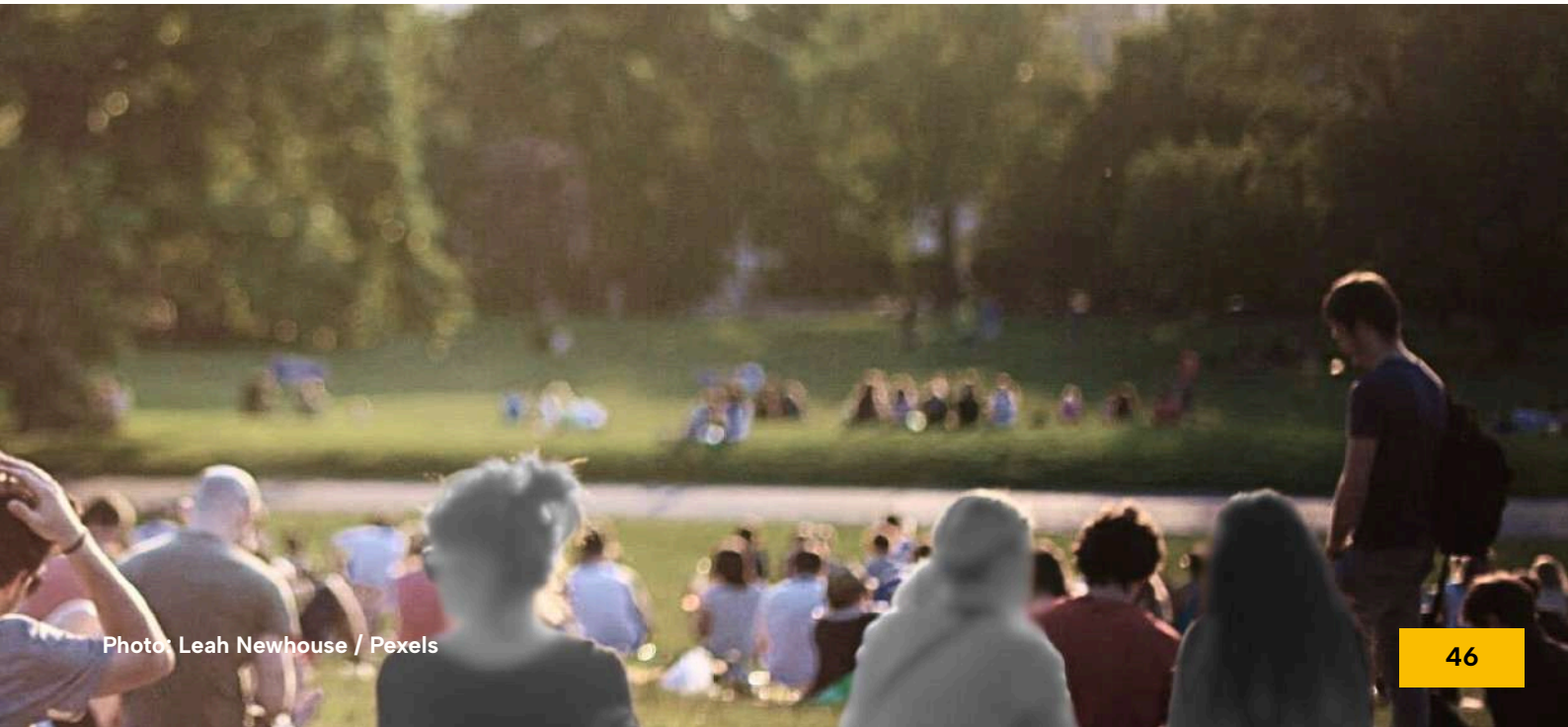


Photo: Leah Newhouse / Pexels

6. Funders should foster collaboration, without dictating what it should look like.

> *We want to work with lots of people and share the resources and generate wealth within our communities, but we also want agency over what that collaboration looks like. Funders assume we want to work and think in the same way that they do, but we don't.*

Interviewees emphasised how the current funder model often encourages unhealthy competition between grantees, which is the antithesis of what good community-based work looks like. Whilst some funders are trying to address this, we heard they are not necessarily going about it in the right way:

"Rather than just trusting us and funding movements and letting us collaborate and build the partnerships we want, some funders are now dictating who we work with and what the outcome of that work should be. We have to do it because we need the money, but it takes capacity away from the work we want to do and the partnerships we want to form."

Many interviewees expressed how placing a greater value on relationship-building within the grant application process – what one interviewee described as 'the under-resourced connective tissue' – would help to overcome a number of challenges.

However, some also expressed caution when it comes to this work – especially in regards to over romanticising the community space.

Indeed, many emphasised the need to ensure that collaboration in regards to funding design doesn't further entrench inequalities between larger and small NGOs.

"Smaller organisations often feel guilty when it comes to this [funding co-design], because they don't have enough time or capacity to put in the labour, which means they don't get to make the decisions…so collaborative funding pots often end up being co-designed by larger organisations who have the capacity to contribute, and it ends up suiting their needs rather than ours…funders need to be mindful of these dynamics and to make the expectations and structures of these collaborative processes clear from the start so that everyone can contribute equally."

Indeed, the notion of larger NGOs having disproportionate access to funding on account of the resources they have was brought up several times:

"The biggest barrier for grassroots organisations is getting unrestricted, long-term core funding. Fundraising in its current format takes up so much capacity that smaller NGOs don't have…it requires us to speak a certain language and it takes us away from the meaningful work that we're trying to do..the bigger NGOs have the time and people to take on this work…and to practice the art of applications…so they end up getting the funding…and the cycle starts all over again."

Photo: Sarah Farrell

7. Funders need to move beyond DE&I, and change their structures and processes too.

> *The professional climate movement has managed to create an environment that has actively excluded some of the most vulnerable people in the country.*

Whilst many interviewees acknowledged the progress that has been made towards Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) within the professional environment sector, many view this work as tokenistic rather than meaningful – giving the appearance of being anti-racist and anti-patriarchal, whilst failing to address where decision-making power is held, and therefore where funding goes and how it is delivered.

As several interviewees expressed, if Diversity, Equity and Inclusion had actually changed things at a systems-level, it wouldn't be so easy for it to be being dismantled in the way that it currently is. As one interviewee expressed:

"You can change the colour or gender mix of your board, but that doesn't mean anything unless you are willing to change your approach towards the work that you do, and the structures and processes that influence the way that you fund."

The majority of interviewees emphasised the importance of learning from past mistakes in international adaptation funding when shaping domestic approaches, with one saying:

"We need to bring people with lived experience into programme and funding design...especially when we're talking about community resilience...We've learned to do that internationally, so we should ask ourselves why we're not doing it in the UK too."

Indeed, many interviewees felt that some UK-funders are too comfortable speaking on behalf of the most affected, rather than speaking to and working with them, or supporting organisations who work with the most vulnerable and marginalised members of society, including women's justice groups. This has resulted in decision-making power in the UK still being by-and-large held by those with little lived experience or understanding of the issues that are being addressed, with funders – rather than communities – largely determining the terms of the work.

"It's easier for Global North funders to recognise solutions in the Global South… the movement has figureheads who have learned the language of the Global North, which is why we listen to certain organisers and indigenous leaders more than others…they act as community translators so we believe they are smart enough to hold solutions. It's not the same in the UK…we have to be honest about the fact that, fundamentally, many funders and policymakers think communities are not smart enough to make decisions about their own lives."

There was also a widespread acknowledgement of the fact that the majority of 'minority' representatives in the environmental sector – whether youth climate justice activists or racialised people – still come from economically privileged backgrounds. For example, migrants are significantly underrepresented within the NGO sector because the majority of NGOs can't afford to take on the costs of paying for their visas. As one interviewee stated:

"There's that sense of diversity being based on quite a homogenised idea of racialised groups…the granularity of that representation is hardly ever talked about but if we look at cultural heritage there's still quite a lack of diversity [within the professional climate movement] which I think definitely gets overlooked."

This has contributed towards a very homogenised understanding of 'vulnerable' or 'marginalised' communities - who are often treated as a singular entity, which is directly affecting their access to funding. For example, there have been instances of funders placing blanket bans on the use of AI in funding applications, even though AI has proven to be a critical tool in enabling access to funding for those with language constraints, including migrant communities.

Inclusion of representatives from these groups in funding design and peer-review processes would help identify and circumvent many of these issues. It would also lead to a more thorough understanding of how minoritised communities are experiencing climate justice and related issues in the UK, which could also influence which issues get prioritised for funding.

For example, one interviewee shared that:

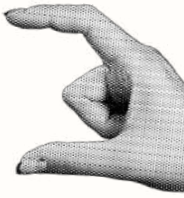
"There is actually no Government data or research in Britain about how many black and people of colour own or farm land… we know it's very small, but we just don't have access to the numbers…the problem is invisible…which makes it hard to make the case for funding."

8. Just because it can't be measured, doesn't mean it isn't meaningful.

> *Often change happens on a smaller scale than they [funders] are looking at or are able to pick up.*

There was a perception amongst many interviewees that environmental funders in the UK only want to support work that matches the requirements of their pre-existing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks, with many interviewees expressing a belief that this is why climate mitigation work has traditionally received more funding than adaptation work: it shows up in funder M&E spreadsheets, and the theory of change is much easier to explain.

For example, many interviewees expressed how funders don't place value or emphasis on relationship and network building, even though it is absolutely fundamental to – and critically important within - community organising, community resilience and climate adaptation work. Further to this, one interviewee highlighted how an over-emphasis on funder-designed M&E has led to 'carbon tunnel vision' in funding applications, with applicants feeling a need to emphasise the expected (and often exaggerated) numerical impacts of their work, rather than the broader social implications. As one interviewee said:



"The problem is that we are talking about the redistribution of wealth, and the mindset behind that is wealth accumulation. But climate justice requires a different mindset...It is not just about financial returns or carbon returns, it is about societal returns."

This misplaced emphasis on the numerical impacts - whether in relation to emissions or poverty - is directly impacting community-based engagement programmes. As one interviewee said:

"I'm not against talking about the poverty premium..things do cost more when you're poorer and we have to think about that...but some funders won't fund us unless we can actually quantify it. I can say "if you're poorer, your kids are more likely to go to a school that is leaky and has less good insulation so they will be too hot and too cold and they probably won't concentrate which means they won't learn..."

"But they [funders] still reject our proposals because the impacts aren't quantifiable…which means we can't do anything with working class communities in cities…Just imagine if far-right agitators heard that we were getting good programmes rejected because we can't 'quantify the poverty premium'…we're actively working against our own progress and it's so frustrating."

We heard that a lack of understanding as to what community-based impact looks like has led to a breakdown of trust between funders and grantees, with one interviewee describing:

"Competition and constraints on funding pots means there is little space for genuine and open dialogue between funders and fundees around what fundees need to spend money on, what impact it will have and how they can emphasise and define that impact in a way that doesn't require numerical reporting."

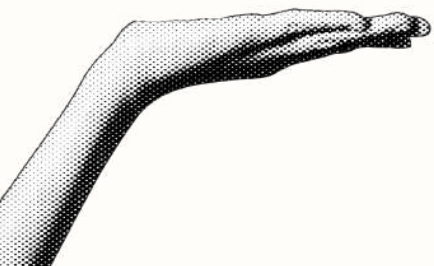
As such, many interviewees emphasised that the categorisation of what is 'meaningful' and effective from a community resilience perspective should not be being done by those with limited understanding of the contexts in which the work is being delivered, nor the issues it is trying to address. For example, some interviewees expressed that a tendency towards the provision of short-term grants is completely removed from the reality of how long decision-making can take in communities where time and resource constraints often prevent decisions from being made quickly. As one interviewee expressed:

"Funder-designed processes just don't hold in the messy craft that movements are involved in…so foundations are not able to redistribute resources in a way that actually makes sense for those who need them most."

"You can't expect to see the outcomes in 1, 3, or 5 years time. Some of the impacts that we want to see will take a generation to be realised. Funding timelines and evaluation frameworks have to reflect that."

As another interviewee put it:

"If you want to be transformational you need the time and space to do it. Everyone is rushing, and you never come up with good ideas if you are rushing."



9. There is no point in redistributing wealth if you don't redistribute power at the same time.

> *We need to distribute money that has been wrongly captured by the elites whilst making sure that the way that money is redistributed leads to building power on the ground.*

As many interviewees expressed, philanthropy is ultimately a form of wealth redistribution, but it has the potential to be so much more. If environmental funders continue to hold the reins in regards to how the money that they redistribute is spent, the changes that need to happen to build community resilience towards climate change cannot happen.

However, if the redistribution of wealth is accompanied by the redistribution of power – including in relation to decision-making as to where that wealth goes and how it is spent – environmental funders can support the development of long-term, community-led and community-tailored solutions that have the potential to deliver meaningful change.

In the words of one interviewee:

"If funders do this properly, we [funders] shouldn't have to exist. And if funders decide that they do want to exist in perpetuity, they need to have a long hard think about why, what they're trying to achieve and how it aligns with their so-called values."

Whilst many interviewees expressed a desire for this vision, they also noted that all too often, Trustees retain decision-making power over who gets access to funding, and how they should spend it. As one interviewee expressed:

"Funders are quite scared of investing in community assets…there is something about the power dynamics there that they find risky and uncomfortable…in the UK it feels like black and working-class people just aren't allowed to own land or make decisions about what to do with it."

Many interviewees emphasised the negative consequences of these power dynamics, for example where funders support land purchase for carbon-offsetting projects, rather than for communities who need those spaces to connect and grow.

Some interviewees – in exploring these power dynamics – linked them to a perception that communities cannot hold viable solutions to the challenges they are facing, because if they did they would already have addressed them. As many interviewees expressed:

"We need to shift funder mentality and we need to use education to do so…there is a big belief whether subconscious or otherwise that poor, working class, racialised and disabled people are not smart enough to come up with solutions…but that's only because they haven't learned the language that we [Global North funders] require them to speak in order for us to listen…solutions are inherent to our ways of being…but by pretending their ideas are new inventions…the climate movement is being massively alienating."

Ultimately, many interviewees expressed how these issues could be addressed through collaboration, through letting go of power, and ultimately, through trust:

"We have to trust people to lead the work and do the right thing with the money. When you're in destitution you're not going to spend extra cash on TVs like many funders assume, you're going to spend it on the things you need that keep you out of trouble, like food and keeping yourself safe and warm."

As such, interviewees urged funders to shift decision-making power to communities – specifically women and marginalised groups – not only in regards to how funding is applied for, but also how it is spent:

"We're talking about the people who are most affected by climate change because that is where the solutions are…and it is where they should be…those should be the voices telling us what solutions we should prioritise. Why should I tell my community what they should consider important and how they should use resources when I'm not disproportionately impacted by it?"

Photo: rawpixel.com

References

1. Hope Not Hate (2024). Fear and Hope: The case for community resilience. Available here.
2. UNICEF South Asia (2023). Climate change's greatest victims are women and girls. Available here.
3. Women's Environment Network. Briefing: Why Women and Climate Change? Available here.
4. Oliver Wyman and the 30% Club. The Climate Action Gender Gap. Available here.
5. Committee on Climate Change (2025): Progress report to Parliament. Available here.
6. Smeeton (2023). Climate, Fossil Fuels and UK Food Prices. Energy Climate Intelligence Unit. Available here.
7. *50% of the UK's total wheat production alone can be affected in a drought year due to impacts on water scarcity and soil health* (Source: UK Food Security Index). *Meanwhile, UK wheat yields dropped by 40% due to heavy rainfall and droughts in 2020, whilst fruit and vegetable production plummeted in 2024 after the UK experienced the wettest 18 months since records began* (Source: IPPR).
8. MoneySupermarket Data. Available here.
9. Sheng et al (2023). Climate shocks and wealth inequality in the UK: evidence from monthly data (June 2023). Available here.
10. Universal Credit is a means-tested benefit for people of working age who are on a low-income.
11. DWP (2025). Universal Credit statistics. Available here.
12. DWP (February 2025). Benefits Statistics. Available here.
13. Trussell Trust (2024). Almost half of the people receiving Universal Credit in the UK ran out of food last month. Available here.
14. World Economic Forum (2023). Global Gender Gap Report. Available here.
15. Francis-Devine and Hutton (2024). Research briefing: Women and the UK Economy. Available here.
16. World Economic Forum (2023). Global Gender Gap Report. Available here.
17. Office for National Statistics (2023). Families and households in the UK. Available here.
18. Trussell Trust (2024). The cost of hunger and hardship. Available here.
19. Helen Barnard (2023). The disproportionate impact of hunger on women. Available here.
20. Trussell Trust (2024). The cost of hunger and hardship. Available here.
21. Schmuecker et al (2022). Going without: deepening poverty in the UK. Available here.
22. Hu, Y. (2020). Intersecting ethnic and native-migrant inequalities in the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK. Available here.
23. Mann et al (2024). Climate change-related disasters and the health of LGBTQ+ populations. Available here.
24. Impatience Earth. Easy Digest: How does climate change impact the LGBTQIA+ Community? Available here.
25. Schmuecker et al (2022). Going without: deepening poverty in the UK. Available here.
26. *The report refers to 'Black, Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds', classifying 'low income' as those who have an income less than 60% of the average household income.* Source: Runnymede Trust (2022). Falling faster amidst a cost-of-living crisis. Available here.
27. Climate Change Committee (2025). 'The Country is not prepared for climate Impacts'. Available here.
28. CDP (2023). Building Local Resilience: Climate Adaptation in the UK Local Authorities. Available here.
29. Met Office. UK Climate Extremes. Available here.

30. Climate Change Committee (2023). "Climate Change has arrived, yet the country is still strikingly unprepared". Available here.
31. 77% of local authorities report that climate change is impacting health amongst their residents (Source: CDP).
32. Everyone's Environment initiative has cited numerous examples of how extreme weather events can make life harder for people living with disabilities, through worsening pre-existing physical and mental ill health conditions – including through the spread of weather-related diseases - increasing social isolation, and disrupting health appointment schedules (Source: Everyone's Environment).
33. According to Carbon Brief, 79% of prisons and young offender institutions in England and Wales are at high or very high risk of overheating, and one third (41%) are at high or very high risk of flooding. Source.
34. Shelter (2021). Women are some of the biggest losers in England's broken housing system. Available here.
35. Source: Friends of the Earth (2022): Who suffers most from heatwaves in the UK? Available here.
36. Source: Friends of the Earth (2022): Who suffers most from heatwaves in the UK? Available here.
37. England and Knox (2015). Targeting flood investment and policy to minimise flood disadvantages. Available here.
38. Friends of the Earth (2024). Extreme Heat: Lack of climate protections leaving at least 6 million lives at risk in England. Available here.
39. Royal college of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists. Policy position: Climate change and women's health. Available here.
40. *For example, a report commissioned by the Mayor of London identified stark differences in air quality between the most and least deprived areas of London, as well as between different ethnic groups and immigrant communities.* (Source: GLA). *Meanwhile, schools with the highest percentage of non-white pupils in London have average nitrous oxide (NOx) levels that are 28% higher than schools with the lowest proportion of black and racially minoritised students, potentially stunting lung growth in children by up to 12.5%.* (Source: Environmental Defense Fund)
41. England and Knox (2015). Targeting flood investment and policy to minimise flood disadvantages. Available here.
42. Union of Justice. What's race got to do with it? Climate injustice in Europe uncovered. Available here.
43. ONS (2020). One in eight British Households has no garden. Available here.
44. Land in our names (2023). Jumping Fences. Available here.
45. *Report refers to 'BAME' people.* Source: Ramblers (2020). Why access to green space matters. Available here.
46. *Single-parent households with dependent children make up a large proportion of social (14%) and rented (33%) households.* Source.
47. *Unless adequate protections are put in place, low-income households will be disproportionally affected by the costs associated with decarbonisation policies in the UK.* Source.
48. Women's Budget Group Briefing (2019). Available here.
49. *Greenpeace have estimated that 70,463 people have died in cold homes in the UK since 2013 as a result of poor insulation* (Source: Greenpeace)
50. Climate Change Committee (2020). "The Sixth Carbon Budget". Available here.
51. Committee on Climate Change (2025): Progress report to Parliament. Available here.
52. Amanda Blanc (2020). Independent review of flood insurance in Doncaster. Available here.
53. Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. Annual fuel poverty statistics in England: 2024. Available here.

54. It is worth noting that many more households would consider themselves to be in Fuel Poverty than this figure suggests, owing to the large proportion of their income that they have to spend on domestic energy to maintain a warm and health home. Source.
55. Witness statement (Maya Fitchett). Energy Security and Net Zero Committee Inquiry: 'Retrofitting Homes for Net Zero'. Available here.
56. Women's Budget Group (2024). Climate and Gender: Briefing for a new government. Available here.
57. Royal college of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists. Policy position: Climate change and women's health. Available here.
58. Aether (2023). Greater London Authority air quality exposure and inequalities study. Available here.
59. The average NO2 concentration in the most deprived areas on London was 4.4 µg/m3 higher than in the least deprived areas in 2019. In Outer London, the lowest NO2 concentration decile comprises a 71% white population, whereas in Inner London, the lowest NO2 concentration decile is 56% white, in 2019. Source.
60. Public Health Wales briefing. Available here.
61. Medical News Today. How can storage temperature affect birth control? Available here.
62. Mazzone (2024). Thermal comfort and gender affirmation: A virtual ethnography of extreme heat among trans women in Rio de Janeiro. Available here.
63. Office for National Statistics (2022). Excess mortality during heat-periods: 1 June to 31 August 2022. Available here.
64. Committee on Climate Change (2025): Progress report to Parliament. Available here.
65. WECF (2021): Gender Just Chemicals Policy. Available here.
66. Office for National Statistics (2020). Domestic abuse during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, England and Wales: November 2020. Available here.
67. Mannell et al (2024): The impact of environmental shocks due to climate change on intimate partner violence. Available here.
68. Zhu et al (2023). Association of ambient temperature with the prevalence of intimate partner violence among partnered women in low-and middle-income south Asian countries. Available here.
69. Helen Barnard (2023). The disproportionate impact of hunger on women. Available here.
70. NHS News Update (June 2020). Available here.
71. European Institute for Gender Equality (2021). Decision-making in environment and climate change: women woefully under-represented in the EU Member States. Available here.
72. University of Bristol (2021). Securing a just transition to a climate resilient Bristol: obstacles and opportunities. Available here.
73. The RACE report cites that 4.5% of staff across 159 organisations identified as people of colour, whilst 4.8% of those in senior positions across 131 organisations did. Source.
74. The RACE report (2024). Available here.
75. Policy Exchange (2017). The two sides of diversity: which are the most ethnically diverse occupations. Available here.
76. Union of Justice: What's race got to do with it. Available here.
77. Mavisakalyan and Tarverdi (2018). Gender and climate change: Do female parliamentarians make a difference? Available here.
78. Mavisakalyan and Tarverdi (2018). Gender and climate change: Do female parliamentarians make a difference? Available here.
79. Oliver Wyman and the 30% Club. The Climate Action Gender Gap. Available here.
80. WPL (2023). Representation Matters: Women Political Leaders. Available here.
81. *As it stands, only 46 of the 192 countries that have ratified the Paris Agreement mention or refer to disability in their National Adaptation Plans* (Source: IDA). *Meanwhile, only six countries in 2021 included LGBTQIA+ people in their official policies related to disaster preparedness, response or recovery* (Source: Impatience Earth).

82. Voluntary Organisations Disability Group: A spotlight on injustice – the Commission on COVID-19, Ableism and Racism report. Available here.
83. Women are more active in the community than men in general, and they also are more likely to 'informally' volunteer than men – 49% compared with 42%. NCVO (2023). UK Civil Society Almanac. Available here.
84. Environmental Funders Network. Where the Green Grants Went 9. Available here.
85. Environmental Funders Network. Where the Green Grants Went 9. Available here.
86. Environmental Funders Network. Where the Green Grants Went 9. Available here.
87. The Centre for Social Justice Foundation (2024). Underfunded and Overlooked: The perilous state of Britain's grassroots charities. Available here.
88. Environmental Funders Network. Where the Green Grants Went 9. Available here.
89. Civic Power Fund (2025). Funding Justice 3. Available here.
90. Care International (2023). Turning promises into progress: How the UK can realise the potential of gender-just climate action. Available here.
91. Damm et al (2023). Mapping the UK Women and Girls Sector and its Funding. Available here.
92. Neighbourhood networks have been described as 'Small hyperlocal groups that do activities to support their communities and to build community resilience' (Source). This includes community-based WhatsApp groups, Mutual Aid groups, the Neighbourhood Watch or Residents' Association, amongst others. Neighbourly Lab emphasise the role that Neighbourhood Networks currently play in disaster response, and the role that they could play in community resilience and disaster response planning if time and resources allowed.

Photo: Joe Brusky | Flickr

Supporting your journey to transformational climate philanthropy

Contact

Website: impatience.earth

Yasmin Ahammad
Chief Executive Officer
Yasmin@Impatience.Earth

Sarah Farrell
Director
Sarah@Impatience.Earth

Rosine Uwineza
Director
Rosine@Impatience.Earth