

UK Minister for International Environment stresses need to work with Bangladesh to tackle climate change

UK Minister of State Lord Zac Goldsmith saw the impact of climate change in Bangladesh, on agriculture, health and livelihoods, as increased flooding in both rural and urban areas is displacing people from their homes. The Minister discussed ways in which nature-based solutions – working with, rather than against, nature – can help overcome these challenges.

Bangladesh, located on the delta of three major rivers and with a dense population, is one of the world's most vulnerable countries to the impacts of climate change. More than 70 percent of the population is exposed to cyclones, and the resulting economic impact is significant.

The UK has supported Bangladesh in its efforts to adapt to and build resilience against climate shocks, including by giving 27 million people in the country access to early warning systems for floods and cyclones and protecting 40,000 hectares of cultivable land against monsoon flooding.

UK Minister of State Lord Zac Goldsmith said

“Developing countries like Bangladesh are the hardest hit by climate change. The work taking place here to help adapt to its impacts and build resilience is an example for the world to follow. The UK is proud to support it.

“As COP26 Presidents, we are encouraging countries to come forward with ambitious visions to put nature-based solutions at the heart of plans to tackle climate change.”

During his virtual visit, Lord Goldsmith met with Mr Nasrul Hamid, State Minister for the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources and discussed Bangladesh's increasing demand for reliable energy, and the potential to replace coal with renewable energy generation.

He also met with Professor Saleemul Huq, Director, International Centre for Climate Change and Development, which is working with Oxford University to encourage the integration of nature-based solutions in Bangladesh.

The British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Robert Chatterton Dickson said

“The climate emergency is a vital issue for the world. As COP26 and Climate Vulnerable Forum Chairs, the UK and Bangladesh have key roles to play together in leading global efforts to tackle it.

“I am very pleased that Lord Goldsmith has met key Bangladeshi partners in Government, the research community and civil society. They had useful discussions to learn about how we can work together both locally and internationally as a joint force for good in tackling climate change, and

helping the world build back greener from the COVID pandemic.”

More Information

- Next year, the UK will host the UN climate change conference COP26 in Glasgow with its partner Italy.
- Since 2008, UK aid funding has helped over 27 million people in Bangladesh gain access to early warning systems for floods and cyclones; installed 249 solar irrigation pumps serving 6,062 farmers, has protected 40,000 hectares of cultivable land against monsoon flooding; and provided emergency assistance and recovery support after disasters to more than 900,000 people.
- To address this year’s devastating floods in Bangladesh, UK aid has provided £950,000 of rapid release funding to NGOs through the START Fund. This is supporting cash assistance, water, sanitation, hygiene, health, shelter, and search and rescue to over 83,000 people.
- The UK is the third largest bilateral donor overall in Bangladesh, providing more than £350 million in aid since 2018.
- Since 2011, UK aid investment globally has provided 33 million people with improved access to clean energy, including connections to off-grid renewable energy sources, access to solar lanterns and clean cook stoves. It has also helped 66 million people to cope with the effects of climate change, for example by providing training on how to grow climate-resilient crops.

Further information

British High Commission Dhaka
United Nations Road
Baridhara
Dhaka – 1212
Bangladesh

Email: Dhaka.Press@fco.gov.uk

Follow the British High Commissioner to Bangladesh on Twitter: [@RCDicksonUK](https://twitter.com/RCDicksonUK)

Follow the British High Commission Dhaka on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Linkedin](#)

[UK Government to fund international Covid-19 studies in Scotland](#)

The UK Government is investing £7.2 million in twenty research projects

across the UK, including the universities of Edinburgh and Strathclyde, to help provide developing countries with sustainable solutions to respond to Covid-19 and future pandemics.

One of these projects, led by the University of Edinburgh's Dr Thomas Molony, will receive £367,000 to investigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on elections in Africa.

Working in partnership with colleagues in the Central African Republic, Ghana and Tanzania, the study will find ways to protect the electorate from Covid-19 transmission.

The project team – comprising of country specialists, leading public health researchers, and election experts – plan to investigate multiple stages of each election, tracking patterns of turnout and using surveys (with gender-balanced samples) to investigate attitudes towards voting so that any emergent gender inequality is highlighted.

The University of Strathclyde project, led by Dr Pratima Sambajee, will receive £199,579 in funding to look at how Covid-19 has impacted workers' rights in Mauritius and how improvements can be made.

The hardest hit are workers in tourism and hospitality, textile factories and the informal economy. Examples include reduced compensation, withholding of workers' annual leave and exemption from negotiations with workers' organisations (unions) by employers prior to reduction of the workforce.

UK Government Minister for Scotland, Iain Stewart said:

These remarkable projects will play a critical role in helping to address the issue of Covid-19 transmission at elections in the developing world and help ensure workers' rights are protected.

Adapting to the risks of Covid-19 has been especially hard for the world's most vulnerable communities.

It's great news that Scottish researchers are helping the international community respond to the pandemic and making an impact tackling Covid-19 globally.

UK Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

Defeating coronavirus is a truly global endeavour, which is why we're backing Britain's scientists and researchers to work with their international counterparts to find tech solutions to treat and combat this virus around the world.

By backing these pioneering research projects in Scotland, we are equipping some of the most vulnerable communities with the resources they need to tackle pandemics now and in the future.

Dr Thomas Molony, Director, Centre of African Studies at Edinburgh University said:

Elections give people the opportunity to shape the future of their societies. Such decisions are crucial in the context of Covid-19, which has drastically affected lives around the globe.

A number of elections are still due to take place this year in Africa, and there are a further 18 elections are scheduled for 2021.

By working to reduce the risks of Covid-19 transmission during elections, we're contributing towards one of the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): to ensure healthy lives and promote the wellbeing for all at all ages.

We are also interested in democracy. The Covid-19 pandemic has the potential for democratic back-sliding, where the quality and legitimacy of elections are undermined – either unintentionally because of safety measures, or intentionally where incumbents seek to instrumentalise the virus through authoritarian measures designed to benefit themselves.

Other projects receiving UK Government funding include delivering mass vaccination capacity in Bangladesh, protective equipment for refugees in Jordan and remote healthcare access for patients in Nigeria.

The £7.2 million UK government funding will be managed by UK aid programmes, the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) and the Newton Fund.

The funding follows the launch of the government's ambitious R&D Roadmap in July, which committed to boosting international collaboration in research and development and establishing global scientific partnerships that will create health, social and economic benefits across the world.

UK provides vital support to vulnerable global communities impacted by COVID-19

- UK government invests £7.2 million in 20 new research projects to address the impact of COVID-19 on the world's most vulnerable communities
- projects include delivering mass vaccination capacity in Bangladesh, protective equipment for refugees in Jordan and remote healthcare access

for patients in Nigeria

- funding will help provide developing countries with technological solutions to respond to COVID-19 and future pandemics

Global communities most at risk from the impact of coronavirus due to long-term conflict, food and water shortages, and crowded living conditions will receive vital funding from the UK government.

Bringing together scientists and researchers from across the world, 20 new projects will benefit from a share of £7.2 million of UK government funding to develop new technology and processes to address the challenges faced by some of the world's most vulnerable people, such as refugees and children.

In partnership with some of the UK's leading research institutions, these international projects announced today include:

- the University of Oxford will work with the University of Cape Town to develop a parental advice app for families affected by COVID-19 school closures across Africa
- Birmingham City University will partner with Lusaka and Ndola Colleges of Nursing to help improve the clinical decision making of nurses in Zambia, helping to free up their time and prevent healthcare systems from becoming overwhelmed
- the University of Sheffield will work with the UN Refugee Agency to make personal protective equipment with digital and 3D printing for Jordan's Zaatari refugee camp, home to approximately 80,000 Syrian refugees, helping to protect those living in crowded conditions that are most vulnerable to the virus
- the University of Edinburgh will work with the Open University of Tanzania to identify measures to make voting safer and more secure in African elections to promote social distancing and to slow the spread of coronavirus

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

Defeating coronavirus is a truly global endeavour, which is why we're backing Britain's scientists and researchers to work with their international counterparts to find tech solutions to treat and combat this virus around the world.

The research projects we are backing today will ensure that we equip some of the most vulnerable communities with the resources they need to tackle COVID-19 and build their long-term resilience to respond to future pandemics, making us all safer.

Other projects receiving funding

The University of Birmingham, Brac University and Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology

The University of Birmingham working with Brac University and Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology will lead a project to increase vaccine access in developing economies, such as Bangladesh, by researching more effective ways of storing and transporting vaccines at recommended temperatures from manufacture to the point of use. Weak supply chains with inconsistent temperature control can reduce the effectiveness of vaccines by up to 25%, so this vital project will help fast track COVID-19 vaccine delivery in developing countries once one is found.

King's College London

King's College London will lead a training programme for healthcare workers across Nigeria and Tanzania enabling them to deliver trusted and safe care to patients over the phone where internet availability is limited. Trials will involve 20 health clinics in each country to test the effectiveness of remote health appointments, recommended by the World Health Organization during the pandemic, to help minimise physical contact that could spread the virus. King's College London will work with St Francis University College of Health and Allied Sciences, Tanzania; Makerere University, Uganda; and University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

The University of Bath and the University of Lagos

The University of Bath and the University of Lagos aim to address the issue of limited COVID-19 testing capacity in Africa by leading a project to measure the disease in domestic wastewater, which can help reveal the health status of a population. By studying wastewater, real time information about infection prevalence across South Africa and Nigeria can be accessed, enabling rapid identification of COVID-19 hot spots, and helping to shape decisions around entry and exit from 'lockdown' periods.

Professor Andrew Thompson, International Champion, UK Research and Innovation said:

COVID-19 is demonstrating how the world's biggest problems transcend rich and poor countries. To find lasting, sustainable solutions to help us all during this current pandemic as well as to make us all more resilient for the future, we require global thinking, the mobilisation of global expertise and a global response. That is exactly what these new projects provide.

Working together, researchers in the UK and across the Global South will combine their knowledge and experience to develop innovative solutions to help empower local communities to overcome the wide-ranging challenges created by COVID-19.

The £7.2 million UK government funding will be managed by UK aid programmes,

the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) and the Newton Fund, through UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

The funding follows the launch of the government's ambitious [R&D Roadmap](#) in July, which committed to boosting international collaboration in research and development and establishing global scientific partnerships that will create health, social and economic benefits across the world.

Notes to editors

Further details about the projects receiving funding as part of the Agile COVID-19 GCRF and Newton Fund call can be found on the [UKRI website](#).

UKRI launched its [Agile COVID-19 GCRF and Newton Fund](#) in May 2020 to urgently understand the specific challenges faced by some of the world's poorest people in the face of this pandemic. The call was closed on 31 July and projects will be carried out over the next 18 months. A second tranche of awards will be announced later this year.

The Global Challenges Research Fund is a £1.5 billion fund supporting cutting-edge research and innovation that addresses the global issues faced by developing countries, and forms part of the UK government's Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitment. It harnesses the strengths of the UK's world-leading researchers, enabling them to collaborate with experts in developing countries through equitable partnerships. The fund is managed by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

The Newton Fund builds research and innovation partnerships with 17 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America to support economic development and social welfare, tackle global challenges and develop talent and careers. It has a total UK government investment of £735 million up until 2021. The fund is managed by BEIS and delivered by UK and international partners.

[Government delivers 250,000 clear face masks to support people with hearing loss](#)

NHS and care workers will be given clear face masks to help them communicate with people with certain conditions like hearing loss, autism and dementia, the government has announced.

The masks are see-through and have an anti-fogging barrier to ensure the face and mouth are always visible to help doctors, nurses and carers communicate better with their patients.

With around 12 million people in the UK thought to have hearing loss, the masks will be invaluable for people who need to lip-read to communicate during the ongoing response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and beyond.

The masks will also help those who rely on facial expressions to support communication. For example, people with learning disabilities, autism or dementia, or foreign language speakers and their interpreters.

The new deal with US-based company ClearMask will see 250,000 masks delivered to NHS trusts and social care providers across the UK over the next few weeks.

Minister for Care Helen Whately said:

Everyone using our remarkable health and care system deserves the best care possible and communication is a vital part of that.

This pandemic has posed numerous challenges to the sector, so we are always on the hunt for simple solutions to support those giving and receiving care.

The introduction of clear face masks will help overcome some of the difficulties carers wearing PPE are facing communicating with people who rely on lip-reading. If this proves a success I look forward to increasing the supply to make sure whenever a clear mask is needed, there is one available.

This applies across the whole of the UK and the government is working with the devolved administrations on allocations of the masks. The first delivery has already been distributed to NHS trusts, with further deliveries over the next couple of weeks.

Social care providers will also have access to the masks through a new pilot system with Local Resilience Forums.

The Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England and Improvement will continue to work closely with suppliers on future orders based on demand.

The clear masks have met the government's strict safety standards and will be rolled out to frontline workers over the next few weeks.

The government has delivered over 3 billion pieces of personal protective equipment (PPE) to the frontline and are working with around 130 new companies, including Royal Mint, Honeywell, Amazon and Royal Mail, to rapidly manufacture, source or distribute PPE at scale and pace.

This follows a national and international call to arms in April asking industry to channel their manufacturing power into making PPE for the health and care sector.

Roger Wicks, Director of Policy and Campaigns at Action on Hearing Loss, said:

We welcome the procurement of clear face masks, which has the potential to improve the accessibility of health and social care services for those who rely on seeing facial expressions and lip-reading to communicate, including people who are deaf or have hearing loss.

Since the outbreak of coronavirus, people have told us continually that they are worried about communicating in health and social care settings where face masks are now in constant use. We know that clear masks have the ability to reduce barriers for both patients and staff across the NHS and social care services.

People need to understand the information and instructions that they are given by health and care professionals: ineffective communication and misunderstandings have the potential to harm the health and wellbeing of people with hearing loss.

We hope that different services across the NHS and social care are able to access clear masks and effectively match them to patient need. It will also be important that these masks are complemented by effective communication tips and deaf awareness among staff to ensure that people with hearing loss get the support they need.

Professor Andrew Goddard, Royal College of Physicians President, said:

The necessary use of face masks to protect staff and patients has made communication difficult. It's particularly true for clinicians and patients who are deaf or have a hearing loss and rely on being able to read lips.

Clear communication is always important, but particularly in healthcare. So we're pleased these masks are going to be available very soon.

Of course, lip-reading doesn't work for everyone, nor is it everyone's first choice. It's important that all NHS employers and services find out what someone's communication needs are and meet them, in line with the Accessible Information Standard.

Sarah White, Head of Policy and Campaigns at national disability charity Sense, said:

The last few months have been particularly hard on disabled people and a part of this are the barriers that PPE brings to many of them in terms of their communication. While PPE is of course vital in

keeping everyone safe during this pandemic, many disabled people rely on lip-reading and facial expression to communicate, which means masks present themselves as a big challenge.

We've therefore been delighted to work with the Department of Health and Social Care and other organisations to raise awareness of this issue and we welcome the introduction of clear masks for use in frontline health and social care services, which will benefit millions of disabled people in this country.

While clear masks won't work for everyone and they can still present a challenge to some people, it certainly is a great first step which should be part of a clear and cohesive strategy for how we ensure that health and care services remain clinically safe at the same time as enabling disabled people to communicate and feel safe.

Allysa Dittmar, President of ClearMask, said:

As a company that was started in 2017 in a response to the need for improved, visual communication for the deaf and hard of hearing community, we immediately understood the critical need for such see-through, transparent masks during this pandemic for many different groups of people.

We were proud to help answer the call for critical PPE for the NHS, and this partnership is a reflection of the hard work and dedication of many individuals involved in the push for better accessibility and care during this time.

[Essex woman has her sentence increased for dangerous driving conviction](#)

News story

Yaashmi Ravikumar has had her sentence increased following intervention by the Solicitor General, Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP.



A woman whose dangerous driving caused the death of one person and life-changing injuries to four others has had her sentence increased following intervention by the Solicitor General, Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP.

Yaashmi Ravikumar, 20, was visiting the Isle of Wight with friends in April 2019. On 14 April, she drove herself and her friends to the coast.

After failing to see signs indicating that there was a junction ahead, Ravikumar drove into the junction. She did not brake in time and collided with a bus, which in turn veered into an oncoming car. One person in the car was killed and three others sustained life-changing injuries. The bus driver was also seriously injured.

Ravikumar was sentenced to 18 months' detention in a young offender's institution on 13 July 2020 at Newport Crown Court. Following a referral to the Court of Appeal by the Solicitor General, on 4 September the sentence was found to be unduly lenient and has been increased to 2 years and 4 months' detention in a young offender's institution.

After the hearing the Solicitor General, Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP, said:

Ravikumar's driving and lack of attention to road signs caused the death of one person and serious injuries to several others. I am pleased the Court of Appeal has increased her sentence today to reflect the severity of the impact of her actions.

Published 4 September 2020