Apolitical's 50 Climate Policy Breakthroughs 2023

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Sustainable Development Goals

Introduction

Can we be optimistic about the climate crisis? There is no doubt that the challenge is huge and the timeline is short. But amidst the heat records and dry river beds, there is hope. Governments and communities are stepping up to the challenge. Bright, bold and brilliant policies are breaking the negative trends. This list celebrates them.

As we find new approaches to tackling the climate crisis, we also find new ways to understand the challenge. The methodology for the 2023 list reflects this evolving understanding. This year we're looking beyond carbon emissions to see the bigger picture. We're especially excited by a blossoming of nature-based solutions, transition finance and climate democracy.

Read this list for a dose of optimism. Read this list for inspiration. Read this list to see how you can amplify your own impact. Most importantly, read this list and share the policies you find exciting.

Fixing the climate crisis is possible. Here's how we do it. View the original 100 Climate Policy Breakthrough List 2023 on Apolitical here.

About

Posterity Institute is a think tank based in the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates that focuses on fostering partnerships between the public and private sectors through designing initiatives that drive sustainability, enabling the regional climate-tech ecosystem, and creating a hub for ground-breaking research in economic inclusion, climate change, and leveraging technology for intergenerational wellbeing, the Institute's three core pillars.

Apolitical is a global network and learning platform for government, with a mission to build 21st century governments that work for people and the planet. It is used by 200,000 public servants and policymakers in 160 countries to find and share best practice, and to upskill with short courses on 21st century government priorities. Members range from mayors and ministers to policy pioneers and digital innovators. Apolitical's courses are co-developed with leading universities and research institutions, including Oxford, Cambridge, Georgetown and the Rocky Mountain Institute.

The Global Councils on Sustainable Development Goals are a unique interdisciplinary network of decision-makers which will work together to oversee innovative projects and discuss creative ideas towards the implementation of the 17 SDGs at national and global levels. Focusing on promoting and fostering climate action to address and mitigate the issues of climate change, the Global Council on SDG13 aims to become the resource for net zero and climate resilience, and spread awareness and know-how for public and private sectors as they embark on their climate action and net zero journeys. Additionally, the Council strives to work closely with the UAE Government on the strategic materialisation of the Net-Zero by 2050 National Strategy, lay the foundation for the UAE's climate efforts, and engage with all necessary stakeholder to create opportunities for investment and action in the build-up to, and beyond, COP28.

Welcome

Dr. Yasar Jarrar

Managing Director
Posterity Institute

Governments and business leaders in the MENA region are realizing that climate action is key to ensure the region's sustainable growth. Not only is the region characterized by being the hottest and driest region globally but the economic loss is estimated to reach as high as 14% of the region's GDP by 2050 as per the World Bank.

To that end, and for the first time, Posterity Institute and Apolitical, in collaboration with the Global Council on SDG13, have selected the top 50 of the world's most MENA-relevant and applicable policies that could shape and transform the region's sustainability journey. We are taking advantage of releasing this report on World Environment Day to highlight the importance of bringing awareness and calling for additional action to protect our ecosystem.

The 50 policies included in the following report all serve to mitigate against climate change and vary from initiatives like payments for ecosystem services to co-housing models to green credit cards. Some may be inducted into MENA-policy in the not-too-distant future while others may need some additional finetuning before they are MENA-ready. While this does not necessarily mean that the region is lagging behind nor does it mean it doesn't have similar policies, it is a clear indicator of the necessity of acquiring new tools and solutions that can be implemented in one of the world's most tumultuous climate zones.

All the listed policies highlight key opportunities for countries in the MENA region to take advantage of. By adopting these policies and tailoring them to fit our region's specific needs, we can continue to generate momentum against climate change and develop our capabilities to adapt, mitigate, and create resilience against climate change.

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Welcome

Robyn Scott

Co-Founder & CEO Apolitical

At Apolitical, our mission is to help build 21st century governments that work for the people and the planet. The climate crisis demands that all of us embrace policy innovation with a new urgency. On the road to COP28, policymakers need to share, align, and collaborate more than ever before if we want to achieve our collective climate goals.

But we know from our community of 200,000 public servants in 160 countries that policymaking is often lonely, complex and siloed work. McKinsey has calculated that if governments just did what was working elsewhere it would save $3.5 trillion annually. We created Apolitical to tackle this problem by helping policymakers find and share – and be motivated by – best practice locally, regionally and globally. So we are delighted to be partnering with the Posterity Institute and the Global Council on SDG13 (Climate Action) to bring you our 2023 list of 50 breakthrough climate policies. This report highlights some shining examples of countries, cities and communities making a positive change. Our original 2023 list, from which this MENA-focused list is drawn, features 100 globally significant policies, if you're looking for more inspiration!

2023 is a big year for climate at Apolitical. We recently launched The Government Climate Campus, created to address the 'government green skills' emergency. The goal of the Campus is to upskill 50,000 public servants and policymakers in the highest impact roles, topics, and countries in order to cut emissions by 50% this decade. The Campus provides a one-stop-shop for actionable climate knowledge and skills which are engaging, social, and contextualized for government.

When the UAE became the home of COP28, it took on the role of more than just a host. The country is now positioned to play a leadership role in the regional and global effort to curb emissions. Apolitical is pleased to be supporting public servants and policymakers in the UAE's journey to COP28 and beyond.

I hope this list of 50 breakthrough policies inspires the rapid adoption of what's working, accelerating the MENA region on the path to net zero.

Apolitical's 50 Climate Policy Breakthroughs 2023 Methodology

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13 CLIMATE ACTION

Climate change is the defining problem of our time. It is easy to feel hopeless in the face of climate breakdown. But public servants are stepping up to the challenge. This year, we've seen an inspiring range of bold new climate policies. To decide which 100 policies made our 2023 list, we tweaked our methodology to reflect evolving attitudes on climate action. **Here's what's new:**

Adaptation and mitigation

The harms of climate change are happening right now. That means mitigation is vital in the struggle for a livable world. From decarbonising energy systems to sequestering carbon through reforestation, this list features some of the most impactful mitigation projects currently underway.

However, as much as we should prevent it from getting worse, future climate change is already "baked-in" due to the policies of the past. This means some level of sea-level rise, temperature increases, and climate disruptions are inevitable.

For government employees, this means adapting to these new conditions is as vital as preventing them from getting worse. Some policies do both. Mangrove restoration in Bangladesh not only helps mitigate the damage of increasingly frequent storms and sea level rise, but also sequesters huge amounts of carbon from the atmosphere. But carbon is not the only issue our methodology focuses on.

> "Adapting to new conditions is as vital as preventing them from getting worse."

Moving beyond carbon tunnel vision

Apolitical's 2022 list focused heavily on how much carbon each policy was sequestering. Whilst carbon mitigation, drawdown, and avoidance are all vital aspects of combating climate change, they are not the only factors.

Aside from CO2, other greenhouse gases such as nitrous oxide and methane play a huge part in global warming. Likewise, other aspects of climate breakdown are not included when we focus solely on carbon mitigation, such as disruptions in the oceans moderating influence on the greenhouse effect.

Beyond this, we have also updated the methodology to recognise that beneficial climate policies cannot always be quantified by how much carbon they sequester. Citizens assemblies and ecosystem restoration are powerful tools for climate policy but wouldn't be considered if we focused solely on carbon.

Likewise, we also included co-benefits in our methodology. How much climate policies can enhance justice, biodiversity, or economic opportunity are vital to successful climate action.

> "We recognise that climate policies cannot always be quantified by how much carbon they sequester."

New types of policy

To show this broader focus, our new methodology is split into four main policy types

Nature-Based Solutions

Whilst humanity can alter its inputs to the climate, ultimately, it is natural systems that moderate the earth's climate. That is why our new methodology has focused on nature-based solutions to climate change. From ambitious targets to stop deforestation to giving legal rights to natural entities, our 2023 list provides a host of nature-based climate policies for public servants to draw from.

Climate Democracy

Climate change is a collective problem, and possibly the biggest one humanity has ever faced. That's why our new methodology has looked into the ways in which democratic governance is adapting to these challenges. Whether through citizen's conventions or the declarations of climate emergencies, democratic structures all over the world are finding new ways to include climate considerations in their deliberations.

Transition Finance

The UN Environmental Program estimates that we will need $140-300 billion per year to combat climate change. Where that money comes from, how we spend it, and where, was a major focus of our methodology in this year's list. But climate finance is not just about where to spend money, but where not to; which is why we also focused on a variety of fossil fuel divestment campaigns.

Green Technology

We focus on policies that promote the latest technology to combat climate change through mitigation, decarbonisation, and adaptation. Most of the technologies needed to combat climate breakdown already exist, and so we have focused on innovative ways to apply and scale them, ranging from floating solar panels to district heating systems that derive their heat from municipal waste.

Apolitical's 50 Climate Policy Breakthroughs 2023 Nature-Based Solutions

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Nature-Based Solutions

Costa Rica's payment for ecosystem services

National
COSTA RICA

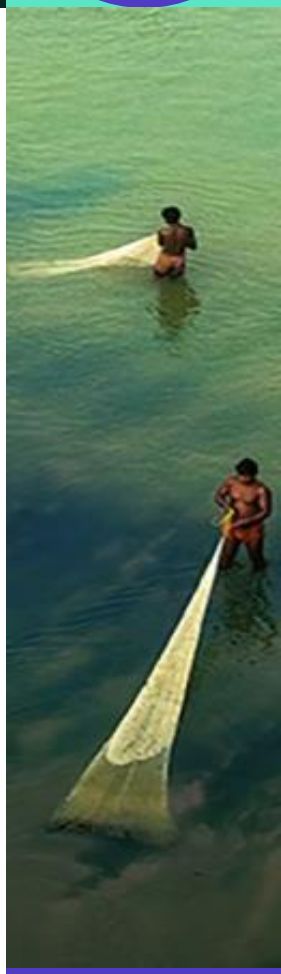
Costa Rica's Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) programme provides payment for the services of ecological systems, and to those who maintain them.

Over the last two decades, Costa Rica has become the first tropical country to slow and then reverse its deforestation. One of its most impactful policies has been a successful Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) programme, an innovative public financing scheme that encourages reforestation. The PES scheme covers over a million hectares of land and works by assigning a monetary value to environmental and ecological services. In Costa Rica, a forest manager who agrees to use climate-friendly practices such as water filtration or sustainable logging over the contractual period can receive a payment for doing so, measured by how much that action will benefit the environment. Costa Rica's National Forest Fund, FONAFIFO, is the main implementing agency and both selects and monitors the beneficiaries. The payments are mostly financed through the country's fuel tax, funnelling funds from polluters to those protecting the environment. The system has led to a dramatic increase in the country's forest cover, as well as strong economic growth from tourism.

Nature-Based Solutions

Kolkata sewage-fed fish farms

Municipal
INDIA



The city of Kolkata in India processes almost all of its sewage and water waste using low-tech, urban fish farms.

Kolkata has the world's largest sewage-fed aquaculture system. This sanitation mechanism is composed of a managed wetland, host to thousands of aquaculture ponds, fed by the city's waste. By filtering waste through these farms, Kolkata is able to process 80% of its sewage and wastewater, while producing 40% of the region's consumed fish. This system uses very little energy and only requires light technological infrastructure. Traditional, high-tech wastewater treatment plants cause significant greenhouse gas emissions and have high energy requirements. By using primarily an aquacultural system, Kolkata's wastewater management is far more climate-friendly. Alongside this, it provides employment, food, and ecosystems in the surrounding areas, making it far more effective than its high-tech alternative.

Nature-Based Solutions

Guyana's annual natural capital accounting

National
GUYANA

The Guyanese Environmental Protection Agency is required to create a public report on the value of their natural capital every year.

Guyana's natural capital accounting considers the value of the nation's natural systems in ways unrelated to monetary profit. These include the value of the systems to climate, animal species, hydrological health and the residents reliant on their immediate environments. Guyana is famed for its verdant rainforest and thriving river ecosystems, being one of the few carbon sink nations in the world. But the nation also suffers from environmental pressures such as oil exploration and unsustainable farming. To ensure development is sustainable, and that economic growth does not come at the expense of nature, natural capital calculations can always be consulted. As an example, they are currently being used in a legal case against oil exploration in the nation. By mandating these natural capital accountings to be regular and open source, the government has created a powerful tool to hold itself accountable. This allows it to effectively govern the health of the nation's environment and its contributions to climate.

Nature-Based Solutions

Low-carbon coffee production in Costa Rica

National
COSTA RICA

Costa Rica's new low-carbon coffee project has saved 59,480 tonnes of carbon; the goal is 350,000 tonnes.

In Costa Rica, Coffee farmers are already feeling the effects of climate change on their outputs, from the inability to predict seasonal temperatures to spreads of new fungi. The Low-Carbon Coffee project offers technical workshops to farmers, covering tips to increase yield while using less water and land. More than 7,000 coffee farmers have been trained in "Good Agricultural Practices", and are expected to continue implementing the mitigation improvements. 40 mills have also reported reductions in operating costs. The project also stimulates green business in the private sector, offering loans and grants for coffee mills to buy climate-friendly fertilisers and milling technology. Increasing demand for these products sends strong signals to sector suppliers. The project has largely calibrated the coffee sector towards one goal, instigating friendly competition amongst mills to drive down emissions and appeal to coffee drinkers. After four years, 22% of the coffee production system uses low-carbon methods. Over 20 years, Costa Rica estimates that the project could reduce 1.85 million tonnes if scaled effectively.

Nature-Based Solutions

DEFRA funding for natural flood management techniques

National
UK

The UK's Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has been using nature-based solutions to enhance its flood resilience programs.

One of the major climate threats to the UK is the increased frequency and severity of flooding. In response, DEFRA has been exploring new methods for combating this climate threat. In 2017, £15 million was used to fund 60-Nature based flood management programmes across the UK, and the results were a major success. These projects include a variety of methods, such as tree planting, retention ponds, remeandering of straightened rivers and blocking of draining channels. These solutions significantly minimise the flood risk to surrounding areas. But by also restoring self-sustaining environments, these solutions create the conditions for hydrological systems to become less prone to flooding over time.
UK Funding

Nature-Based Solutions

Nature-based cooling in Medellín

Municipal
COLOMBIA

Medellín uses natural cooling methods that have dropped streetside temperatures by around three degrees.

Medellin's 'Green Corridor' project targets air pollution, the urban heat island effect, and increases public transport with one solution; nature. The government planted planting over 8,300 trees and 350,000 shrubs along 18 roads and 12 waterways, with each corridor aiming to mirror a natural forest environment. These botanical gardens also benefit the local economy, by training citizens from disadvantaged backgrounds to become city gardeners and technicians. The increase of green space also has public health outcomes from reduced air pollution and improved mental health. The city has seen temperatures fall by two or three degrees Celsius, ensuring significant energy reductions from reduced artificial cooling. As of January 2020, the city plans to plant 1,000 more trees around Medellin to continue its journey as an Ecocity.

Nature-Based Solutions

EU 25% organic farming by 2030 target

International
EU

The EU altered its Common Agricultural Policy to help 25% of EU farmland become fully organic by 2030.

The new target for 25% organic farming by 2030 is supported by a raft of incentives and investments. These have already contributed to 15.2% of EU agriculture falling under organic farming regimes. Not only does the target and its incentive focus on increases in production and consumption of organic farm goods, but also making organic production even more sustainable. Organic farming is important to the climate because of the significant impact artificial fertilisers and pesticides have on greenhouse emissions and biodiversity loss, which are not used in organic systems. But organic farming is also more resilient to the shocks of climate change. Organic methods, such as using landrace cultivars or soil restoration, help farmlands adapt to the more extreme swings in weather that Europe is experiencing. This policy also has inbuilt mechanisms for expansion after the 2030 deadline. The wide range of European climates, ecotypes, and farming practices included in the policy mean it provides a host of globally relevant case studies for replicability.

Nature-Based Solutions

Fishing regulations protect right whales

National
USA

A new series of maritime regulations have been instituted to protect Right Whales, an integral part of the ocean's carbon pump.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has instituted a new series of rules designed to protect the endangered North Atlantic Right Whales. These new regulations involve reducing the speed at which vessels can travel, restricting fishing gear dangerous to whales, and increasing NOAA monitoring and enforcement activities. Whales are important components of the ocean's carbon cycle, and so their protection is a powerful climate solution. Not only do whales absorb and sequester carbon in their bodies throughout their lives, but they help to fertilize oceanic phytoplankton which fix roughly 40bn metric tonnes of carbon annually. This policy demonstrates the connection between climate and biodiversity solutions, and provides a model for protecting other species of whale and their place in the oceanic carbon cycle.

Nature-Based Solutions

Bangladesh mangrove restoration

Regional
BANGLADESH

Bangladesh has replanted almost 1,200km² of the Sundarbans Mangrove Forest, helping restore its environment and secure coastal communities from rising sea levels and increasingly frequent storms.

Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable nations on earth to sea level rise, with almost 3.5 million people at risk of inundation every year. Increasing storm frequency is battering its coast, displacing many and destroying livelihoods. To combat this, Bangladesh has been replanting vast areas of mangrove forest. Mangroves form a vital natural barrier that protects the coastline against typhoons and storm surges. They absorb energy from storms and help prevent coastal erosion. Mangroves also help to combat climate change by sequestering huge quantities of CO2 from the atmosphere. This policy also enhances coastal biodiversity and creates fish breeding grounds, which support the livelihood of coastal fishermen. The policy of restoring mangroves is both an important mitigation and adaptation tool for the low-lying nation.

Nature-Based Solutions

20% of the EU targeted for nature restoration by 2030

International
EU

The EU's new Nature Restoration law has introduced legally-binding targets for ecosystem restoration that cover at least 20% of the EU land and sea areas by 2030.

Traditionally, the EU has focused on nature conservation rather than restoration, which means designating areas of high ecological abundance with legal protections against many types of degradation. However, this new policy framework seeks to regenerate nature, expanding the continent's biological integrity rather than just protecting what is left. Thriving ecologies are integral to the struggle against climate change, with new research showing that European forests may sequester 100% more carbon than previously thought. Likewise, this legislation is designed to restore nature mainly outside of existing protected areas, integrating economic activity with a thriving planet. This new approach will be vital to the future of nature-based solutions, as it will help to demonstrate how society overall, rather than just protected pockets, can grow its biological diversity and climate resilience.

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Climate Democracy

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Climate Democracy

Denmark's co-housing model

Local
DENMARK

Co-housing is a model championed by the Danish government. It has a 75% smaller carbon footprint than typical housing developments.

The Danish co-housing model clusters private homes around collective facilities and open spaces. These facilities can include washing and cooking centres, sports pitches, and communal lounges. This encourages community engagement and lowers the carbon footprints of the residents. Co-housing residents can have a 75% smaller carbon footprint than the residents of regular housing blocks.
The Danish government has supported the creation of co-housing sites. They've tweaked planning laws, updated legislation, and provided guaranteed loans for co-housing developments. This led to an increase in the number of developments being constructed in recent years. Housebuilding is a significant source of emissions. For example, in the UK, it accounted for 19.9% of emissions in the UK in 2021. The Danish model is a useful template for governments to cut housing emissions.

Climate Democracy

Collaborative policymaking: Leuven 2030

Municipal
BELGIUM

In 2013, Leuven set up Leuven 2030. It's a group of NGOs, businesses and other participants tasked with delivering carbon neutrality by 2030.

Bold climate action needs buy-in from businesses and the community. By including these groups in climate decision-making, Leuven has been able to take big steps on climate. The group periodically creates roadmaps for change. The most recent plan covers 80 different areas of action, from public transport to creating climate-neutral business supply chains. A roadmap also includes indirect emissions like buying products from abroad. This is a dimension that most cities have yet to consider.

While anyone is welcome, they must be committed to tackling the problem. To join the group, potential members must present a binding green plan of action. Leuven 2030's citizen engagement also creates a sense of ownership from the local community. This increases the likelihood of compliance. In 2016, the city passed a circulation plan for the city centre that reduced vehicle traffic and increased pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure. The plan was controversial, with concerns that businesses would be affected, but the badge of Leuven 2030 created a coalition of backers. In just three years, cycling in the city increased by 44%.

Climate Democracy

The Oslo Climate Budget

Municipal
NORWAY

Oslo uses a carbon budget to estimate how much carbon it can emit and still reach the Paris targets.

The City of Oslo introduced the budget in 2016, and now treats emissions like it does money—creating yearly budgets for each department to bring the climate into every decision. In fact, the city council is only able to approve plans if they will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Using the Paris Agreement's most ambitious targets, the city calculated how much carbon dioxide would need to be reduced each year, and then mapped out concrete measures that would help them achieve those goals. The strategy—renewed yearly to account for changing statistics—is developed in collaboration with 40 industry and business stakeholders to ensure universal buy-in. The city also developed a barometer with 14 measures to monitor if the budget is working properly. This helps the city to keep track of weak spots and strengths in its strategy. Oslo's 2020 budget specifically targets the transport of goods, construction sites, and public transport. The climate budget method is highly replicable, and Oslo believes that its main strength is holding every sector of government accountable for reducing emissions

Climate Democracy

The CDP becomes mandatory

National
USA

Major federal suppliers of the US government will now be required to use the CDP procurement framework.

Sustainable procurement policies are ways for companies and governments to lower their carbon footprints. The CDP (formerly known as the Carbon Disclosure Project) is a leading non-profit in this sector, having pioneered stringent procurement standards. CDP standards are mainly used by the private sector. However, a new US government decision has changed this. The decision means all major US federal suppliers will now use the CDP disclosure model, ensuring that suppliers of federal institutions must disclose the environmental footprints of their products. This allows the government to make procurement decisions based on the best environmental standards. In 2020 alone, companies reporting through the CDP framework reduced their emissions by 619 million metric tonnes, demonstrating the effectiveness of the model and its potential for decarbonising federal procurement.

Climate Democracy

Colombian court upholds the rights of nature

National
COLOMBIA

The Colombian Constitutional Court upheld the inherent rights of nature in multiple court rulings.

Unlike other nations that recognizes the rights of nature, Colombia has no legislation recognizing the rights of nature. However, the nation's supreme court upholds the rights of nature as self-evident. This superseded the need to refer to existing legislation. This policy builds upon the nation's indigenous history and the global importance of its biodiversity. The court's recognition goes beyond rhetoric. The rights of natural bodies such as the Coello, Combeima, and Cocora Rivers have been used as legal justification to end mining projects and compel polluting companies to pay for clean-ups. The struggle against climate change means natural systems need legal protection from unsustainable development. This policy by the supreme court fulfils that need.

Climate Democracy

The Special Representative for International Climate Policy

International
GERMANY

The German Federal Foreign Office has established the Office of the Special Representative for International Climate Policy. They appointed former Greenpeace Executive Director, Jennifer Morgan, to the post.

Climate change has created new challenges for a political system that developed before it was thought possible for human action to damage the climate. Likewise, most traditional government institutions are inward-facing, but the inherently global character of climate change means an outward-looking approach is needed. This is why Germany has created a new post focusing specifically on the international character of climate policy. They recruited the veteran climate activist Jennifer Morgan to be the post's first incumbent. Innovations like these are vital not only in adapting institutions to climate change, but in adapting climate policy to the global nature of the challenge.

Climate Democracy

Danish co-op wind farms

National
DENMARK

The Danish government has promoted the communal ownership of windfarms, which has helped accelerate the nation's renewable energy growth.

The Danish windfarm co-operative model involves communities helping to fund, plan, build, and then own significant stakes in new windfarm developments. Windfarms in other nations often struggle to win public support. This is rarely an issue in the co-op model due to the direct stake local communities hold in the projects. The communities receive many benefits from co-op models compared to allowing purely private businesses to build in their neighbourhoods. The Danish government has a long history of supporting co-op models in other sectors and windfarms are no exception. In 2011 for example, the government decreed that all windfarms must be at least 20% owned by the local community. Initiatives such as these help ease the installation of wind power. They also spread the benefits equitably, providing a powerful model for other nations to follow.

Climate Democracy

Climate resilient livestock strategy

International
HORN OF AFRICA

This strategy is designed to help pastoral herders in the Horn of Africa adapt to the effects of climate change. Herders in the Horn of Africa undertake seasonal migrations. They travel to new grazing grounds or watering sites. This often takes them across borders. These routes are usually well established, following pre-existing weather patterns. However, climate change is seriously affecting this way of life. With prolonged droughts and greater uncertainty of weather patterns, the traditional pathways of herders are being disrupted. Watering holes are being found empty, and pasture lands remain barren all year round. This project by The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Eastern Africa is designed to increase the herders resilience to climate change. It mainly does this by facilitating cross-border communication about when pasturelands are overgrazed or underwatered, and when they need to be left to regenerate. The project also aims to provide infrastructure and funding to combat weather uncertainty. Alongside its capacity for increasing resilience, the project also aims to sequester over 70 million tonnes of carbon through its improved rangeland management.

Climate Democracy

Citizens Convention on climate

FRANCE

In 2019, the French government created a convention of citizens to advise the government on its climate policy direction.

The Citizens Convention on Climate was an assembly of 150 randomly-selected French citizens. They convened between 2019-2020 to discuss how France could reduce its carbon emission by 40% before 2030. During this time, they suggested legislation for the government to translate into law. The convention proposed 149 measures to the French government. These included making ecocide a crime and banning short-haul flights with a rail alternative. This policy of using direct democracy as a way to address climate change was an innovative step, demonstrating how public deliberations can be used to strengthen climate legislation.

Climate Democracy

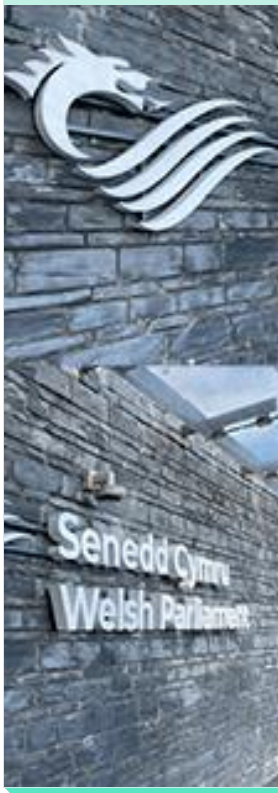
The Welsh Senedd creates the post of "Commissioner for Future Generations"

National

WALES, UK

The Commissioner for Future Generations has a duty to be the guardian of the interests of the people who don't yet have a say in Welsh society.

Wales is the first country in the world to have a commissioner dedicated to securing the interests and rights of future generations. The commissioner works to ensure all policy coming out of the Senedd has long-term benefits. Likewise, her role involves scrutinising policy to ensure it does not sacrifice future well-being for short-term gain. Actions which contribute to climate change are often justified by a process known as "discounting the future". In discounting, the needs and concerns of future generations are considered to be of less worth than the present. However, as we are now living through climate breakdown caused by past actions, discounting the future clearly has disastrous consequences.



Climate Democracy

Ghent en Garde

Municipal
BELGIUM

Ghent is tackling food sector emissions with a food policy council made up of stakeholders from all sectors.

The local government created a participative governance model, to find and scale initiatives that would encourage a circular economy and reduce waste. The city created a distribution programme named "Foodsavers", which has redistributed surplus food to over 57,000 people in need. In schools, children learn how to create community gardens in order to grow food locally and reduce imports. A platform was also designed to connect food sellers with local growers, shortening the supply chain supporting local producers, and saving over 400 tonnes of emissions per year.

Climate Democracy

Japan's "Top Runner" programme

National
JAPAN

Japan's annual "top runner" industry competition is used to reward energy efficiency frontrunners and uses the competition winners to set new efficiency standards.

Japan's "Top Runner" programme for improving energy efficiency is a standout example of how market-based instruments can drive down energy use. The policy is relatively simple: every few years, Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI) reviews different categories of products. The most energy-efficient product in each category is then named the "Top Runner". The standard set by this product must then be met. This means that the programme continuously encourages improvement and innovation. The policy also inspires competitive innovation as companies compete to be named the Top Runner. The METI also has the ability to publicly name and shame companies that do not meet targets, as well as order fines. The policy covers 24 categories of appliances and products, leading to energy savings across sectors: an OECD report estimated that the Top Runner programme reduced energy consumption by 5% in the transport sector and 8% in the residential sector. From 2008-2012, the Top Runner programme encouraged energy efficiency improvements that resulted in an estimated yearly reduction of 25,000 million tonnes of CO_2.

Climate Democracy

Florida's hurricane-proof community land trust

Regional
USA

A community land trust is building hurricane-proof neighbourhoods in areas of Florida recovering from the physical and financial impacts of climate change.

Much of Florida's coastline is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The biggest threat is the increasing frequency and strength of hurricanes. For example, the recent hurricane Ian caused an estimated $67bn in property damage. To combat this, the Florida Keys Community Land Trust (FKCLT) has been developed to create hurricane-resistant, low-cost housing for local residents. This not only mitigates the physical impact of hurricanes, but also the market disruptions which follow. These market disruptions appear in the form of rent spikes, property speculation and subsequent resident displacement. The policy of FKCLT is to buy up damaged property, develop it, and then sell it at semi-fixed, subsidized prices. This policy tackles not only the natural, but also the social impact of climate change, and represents an important lesson to policymakers crafting holistic climate policy approaches.

Climate Democracy

Bogota's car-free Sundays

Municipal
COLOMBIA

Every Sunday between 7am and 2pm, Bogota enacts the Ciclovía, removing cars from over 76km of its roads and allowing their use by cyclists, skateboarders, and pedestrians.

The Ciclovía was first instituted in 1976 and has grown considerably since then. About 1.7 million people attend each week, about a quarter of the city's population. The event not only reduces the city's carbon footprint but also provides an opportunity for citizens to exercise, commute, and socialise on Bogota's car-free streets. This policy is also a living example of replicability. Following its success, other cities from Philadelphia to Ottawa have instituted similar policies, often directly citing the Ciclovía as inspiration.

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Transition Finance

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13 CLIMATE ACTION

Transition Finance

Mia Mottley's climate finance coalition: The Bridgetown Initiative

International
BARBADOS

The Prime Minister of Barbados, Mia Mottley, is assembling a global coalition of developing nations to demand appropriate climate finance from high income nations and international banks.

Many of the nations that will be worst affected by climate change contributed the least to it. This is especially true for islands and developing countries. The Prime Minister of Barbados has led efforts to amplify the voice of these countries through the Bridgetown Initiative. This calls on the IMF and high-income nations to reorient global monetary policy to help combat the climate crisis. Countries that back the Bridgetown Initiative are historically nations that have not been the main beneficiaries of the fossil fuel economy, but will suffer the worst effects of climate change. The initiative seeks to address this inequality through financial mechanisms. By cancelling onerous debts and releasing up to $1 trillion in lending funds for climate adaptation, Mia Mottley's plans are an important step towards international climate justice.

Transition Finance

South Korea's Green Credit Card

National

THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Korea's Ministry of Environment has created a green credit card, which rewards users for climate-friendly purchasing decisions.

In 2011, Korea's Ministry of Environment collaborated with the Institute of Environment, Technology and Industry to create the Green Credit Card. The card can be used just like a normal credit card, except that it rewards users for making environmentally friendly choices, such as using public transport or purchasing sustainable products. Points are also awarded to lower utility bills. Users of the card can save up their points and convert them to "EcoMoney", using it like cash at participating hotels and restaurants, buying energy-saving appliances such as light bulbs, or donating it to environmental funds. By December 2016, Korea had issued 15 million cards, incentivising sustainable consumption in 55% of the economically active population. Through informing consumer choices, the Green Credit card is estimated to have avoided 2.5 million tonnes of GHGs between July 2011 and December 2016. In addition to the emissions saved from sustainable purchasing, it is estimated that a further 1.46 million tonnes of GHG emissions were reduced through promoting public transport and saving residential energy.

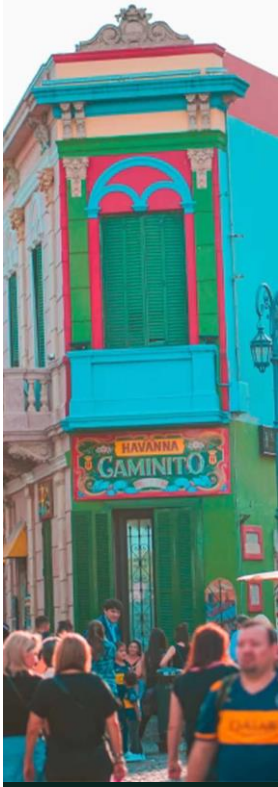
Transition Finance

Stimulating Santa Fe's local green economy

Municipal
ARGENTINA

Santa Fe's Secretariat of State for Energy has partnered with the province's public bank to provide financing for companies' sustainability transitions.

To stimulate the local green economy, Santa Fe's Secretary of State for Energy and the Municipality of Rosario partnered with the province's public bank to give SMEs more access to finance. The region's industry depends mostly on natural gas, with companies shying away from starting renewable projects due to high upfront costs. The Green Credit Lines initiative was designed to combat this. The government provided support for technical evaluations. From 2014-2018, over ARS$75million (£320,000) in investment was approved, 60% of which went to renewable energy projects and a third to energy efficiency. In 2018, the government expanded the line of green credit, allowing households and SMEs to install renewable energy equipment and connect to the local grid. The use of finance has encouraged renewable energy in both SMEs and households. This has stimulated local production, saving locals money and providing over 1000 jobs to young people.



Transition Finance

Uruguay's carbon tax

National
URUGUAY

Uruguay has instituted one of the world's most robust carbon taxes to further encourage its energy sector to transition to renewables.

Policy goals often require multiple instruments. This is why—alongside their investment and support for renewable energy—Uruguay has instituted one of the world's most significant carbon taxes to further its decarbonisation journey. Only one-fifth of the world's carbon emissions are covered by carbon taxes, and the average tax is only $3 USD per tonne. The global price necessary for keeping us below 2C warming is $75, which is why Uruguay's carbon tax of $137 is such a pioneering policy, far higher than the EU's $82. At almost double the necessary level to prevent catastrophic global warming, it is likely that Uruguay's carbon tax will allow the nation to meet its climate commitments.

Transition Finance

Green Islamic bonds: Sukuk

Municipal
INDONESIA

Indonesia's government has been issuing and promoting a form of Sharia-compliant finance to fund its sustainability transition.

Green Sukuk, as the bonds are known, are a form of Sharia-compliant loan where 100% of the proceeds go to financing green projects. They can be used for a variety of purposes, such as mitigation, adaptation, renewable energy generation or biodiversity enhancement. The bonds come with a set of requirements to ensure the projects they fund are green, ranging from a rigorous project evaluation stage to ongoing emissions reporting. Such bonds are vital in Indonesia, a country particularly vulnerable to climate change where even the capital city is being moved to avoid sea-level rise. However, Indonesia also has significant potential for the utilisation of green finance—with high potential for renewable energy generation and rainforest restoration.

Transition Finance

Climate financing through the Inflation Reduction Act

National
USA

The recently passed Inflation Reduction Act provides $369bn in climate finance for climate justice, adaptation, and could lead to a 40% reduction in emissions by 2030.

The Inflation Reduction Act is designed to provide a green recovery to the US economy. This comes in the wake of the double shocks of COVID-19 and soaring inflation rates. The legislation includes funding for the expansion of EV infrastructure, renewable energy, research funding, and many other low-carbon projects. Its goal is not only to lessen the carbon intensity of the US economy, but also to provide high-quality jobs. This policy could transition the economy away from its dependency on fossil fuel energy. The measures outlined in this legislation could reduce the US carbon footprint by 2.4bn tonnes. This will go a long way towards getting the country closer to its 50% reduction by 2030 target.

Transition Finance

Including agricultural emissions carbon pricing system

National
NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand is instituting a new policy to include agricultural emissions from cattle and fertilizer into its existing carbon pricing mechanisms.

The new policy, which is set to become law no later than 2025, is an important step for a nation where almost half its greenhouse gas emissions come from agricultural sources. When it comes into force, this new law will see farmers pay for the emissions created by their farming operations. The major sources of greenhouse gas emissions in New Zealand's agricultural sector are methane from cattle farming and nitrous oxides from fertilisers. Whilst both are relatively short-lived greenhouse gases in comparison to carbon dioxide, they are far more potent. Nitrous oxide, for example, causes 300 times more warming than an equivalent amount of CO_2. This policy has been more successful than similar policies to reduce emissions from agriculture in places like the Netherlands because of its He Waka Eke Noa–"We are in this together"—approach. This method has engaged key stakeholders throughout the process and evolved through farmer-led consultations, which allowed it to enjoy wider support than more top-down, technocratic policies.

Transition Finance

Better Energy Communities in Ireland

National
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

The Better Energy Communities (BEC) project is a national retrofitting initiative specifically aimed at supporting innovative approaches to community energy.

The programme looks for ideas that have a mix of solutions, contain co-benefits, and most importantly, are community focused. For example, Arranmore Island used retrofit funding from BEC as part of its five-year energy strategy, creating jobs and local pride to tackle problems such as depopulation and emigration. Some communities have retrofitted churches and local buildings to reduce emissions from local activity. Retrofits include technologies such as heat pumps, water filters, solar panels, leak proofing and insulation building. By grouping buildings together, community-wide benefits are offered at a lower cost and are more efficient. The initiative also brings everyone into the conversation about climate change. Cumulatively the programme has now supported upgrades in 18,200 homes and 2,570 non-domestic buildings. The 2019 round of grants supported 57 projects, which will upgrade 698 homes and 570 non-domestic buildings, eliminating 34,676 tonnes of CO_2 a year.

Transition Finance

Chinese Central Bank low carbon loans

National
CHINA

To fund decarbonisation, China's Central Bank is providing low-interest loans for companies to help fund their sustainability transitions.

China plans for its carbon emissions to peak by 2030. They also plan to cut their economy's carbon intensity by 65% by 2060. To achieve these goals, the central bank has released a new set of favourable loans specifically for decarbonising institutions. These loans can be used directly by companies, or to back the subsequent low-carbon lending funds of other financial institutions. This significantly increases the scope of finance available. These loans benefit from low-interest rates, favourable renewal systems and strengthening regulations around greenwashing. The loans require the public reporting of carbon reductionby the borrowing institutions.

Transition Finance

Climate risk insurance

International
INTERNATIONAL

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Insurance & Risk Finance Facility helps to provide insurance and finance for climate-vulnerable regions.

If you're at risk from climate change-related harms, it can be hard to get insurance. One of the main impacts climate change has on weather, aside from making it more extreme, is to make it more unpredictable. This renders vulnerable areas unlikely to receive sufficient support from insurers. That's where the UNDP Insurance and Risk Finance comes in. The Programme creates networks and partnerships to provide financial assistance and tailored insurance products to climate-vulnerable regions. Alongside this, the mechanism helps lead long-term, structural changes in the insurance market through policy guidance. These structural changes help develop the insurance industry for a climate-changed world and make them fit for the future challenges of vulnerable nations.

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Green Technology

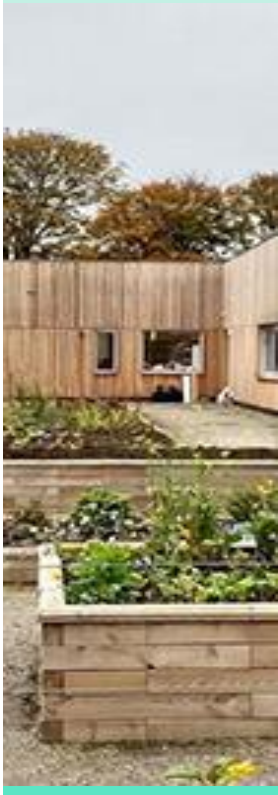
Edinburgh's green power park

Local

SCOTLAND, UK

Saughton Park, Edinburgh is now powered and heated by a combined ground-source heat pump and micro-hydroelectric generation.

Saughton Park is a public park, greenhouse and sporting facility in Edinburgh. It recently installed a new combined heat pump and micro-hydro system. These are able to completely power the park and its facilities with low-carbon, sustainable energy. All sporting facilities, the local café, and the Victorian-era greenhouse are powered by the new system, which saves £18,000 in heating costs per year, as well as up to 90 tonnes of CO2 each year. The heat pump is particularly effective as it can be easily installed in the park's wide open spaces. Heating one park may seem like a small change, but the power of this system to save money and cut emissions makes it highly replicable the world over.



Green Technology

Gas-free Zurich

Municipal
SWITZERLAND

The city of Zurich is converting its gas-based heating system into distance-heating networks and renewable energy.

The city of Zurich has been replacing its gas heating systems since 2011. The city has replaced gas systems with a variety of low-carbon alternatives, such as solar power and waste-to-heat systems. These are used to provide heat to distance heating systems, that have been progressively extended across the city. With the recent volatility of gas prices, Zurich has taken the opportunity to accelerate its transition to a gas-free heating system. The most recent phase of distance heating is expected to conclude in 2024, and the entire city could be fully connected to district heating by 2040. The alternative system not only has lower carbon emissions, but is also cheaper. This saves both the consumers and the city authorities money over traditional gas heating systems.

Green Technology

Green and solar-panelled roofs in France

National
FRANCE

All new commercial buildings in France are now required to cover their roofs with solar panels or plants.

The new requirement for commercial buildings to have either green or solar roofs has a number of benefits. It will help further decarbonise France's energy grid and provide resilience and flexibility. Green roofs are important for biodiversity and help reduce the urban heat island effect, as well helping to mitigate air pollution by absorbing particulate matter. This law is particularly important as it is often impossible to add solar panels or green roofs to traditional buildings due to structural constraints. Greater structural integrity (especially when covered in greenery) makes buildings more resilient to damage. As construction is the main source of carbon emissions over a building's lifetime, extending a building's lifetime is an important carbon-reduction measure. This policy is easily replicable, and its success has provided a model for other national governments.

Green Technology

Solar power streetlights for off-grid areas

Local
INDIA

India has installed 700,000 off-grid solar-powered streetlamps.

The Indian government has overcome the challenges of connecting remote rural areas by using solar panels. In many remote rural districts of India, there is no grid connection and little funding to create one. Low-cost distributed solar addresses the need for electricity in these areas. Alongside streetlighting, these solar systems have also been used to provide public solar water pumps and public charging stations for electric lanterns. This is an important climate solution, as it prevents the need for carbon-intensive infrastructure. Likewise, this policy is easily replicable and can be scaled up for any suitable region in need of electrification without a grid connection.

Green Technology

Vancouver heats neighbourhoods with wastewater

Municipal
CANADA

Vancouver is using the heat generated by the city's sewage system to provide 10MW of energy for its district heating system.

A waste-to-energy facility captures heat from the city's sewage system and transforms it into energy. Through heat pumps, the system reduces carbon emissions by 90%, and currently provides heat and hot water for 18,000 people. It also heats over 45,000m² of commercial space. When it reaches its full size, it is predicted to save 45,000 tonnes of carbon emissions each year. This policy has a wide range of applicability and replicability, as almost every large urban area will create sufficient sewage to produce the necessary heating energy.

Green Technology

A solar mega-project in India

National
INDIA

India is consolidating its solar power projects in order to lower the overall cost of construction and infrastructure.

A significant portion of the cost to construct solar power plants goes into their grid connection and local substations. To minimise these costs, the Indian government is creating "Ultra-Mega Solar Power Projects". These are significantly larger than standard projects and consolidate solar power generation. Through this consolidation, the construction cost per MWh is significantly lowered. India is planning to create 40,000MW of new capacity between 2023-2024, potentially saving over 36 million tonnes of CO_2.

Green Technology

Zurich votes to enshrine the circular economy

Municipal
SWITZERLAND

A recent citizens' referendum in the canton of Zurich voted for the circular economy to be enshrined in their constitution.

Zurich canton voted to enshrine the circular economy in its constitution and calls on local authorities to implement it in their districts. Councils must enable "considerate treatment of resources, materials, and goods, as well as the closing of materials loops". This will mean authorities have to find ways to make their areas more resource efficient. Including increasing recycled goods use, reducing waste, and minimising the number of new resources entering their economic cycles.

A circular economy is a vital tool against the climate crisis. One of the major drivers of increased emissions is the exploitation of new resources. Likewise, the waste created from a linear economy can have disastrous effects. For example, new research demonstrates microplastics (primarily from single-use plastics) could cause massive climate disruptions through their effect on ocean evaporation.

Green Technology

Portland institutes a circular economy

Municipal
USA

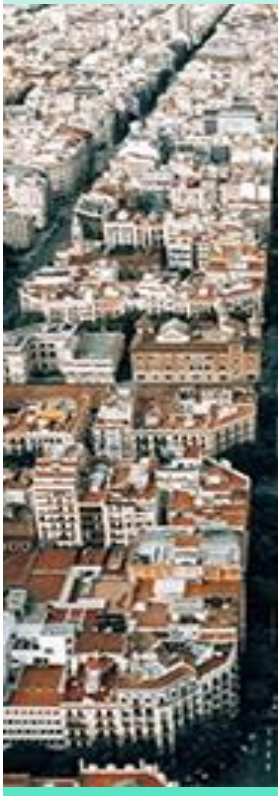
A coalition of Portland's government, businesses, non-profits, and citizens is creating a city-wide circular economy.

Across Portland, a coalition between local government agencies, businesses, and citizens are allowing the city to reduce its dependency on the linear economy. A collection of repair cafes and workshops has spread across the city to encourage reuse instead of waste. The city's Bureau of Planning and Sustainability has been an active partner in scaling up the circular economy, providing grants, funding, and staffing support. Alongside this direct support, the local government has helped by connecting similar initiatives in the wider Portland metro area. This encompasses twenty-four cities. By connecting a wider area, aspects of the circular economy, such as a "library of things" can be more effective. This policy framework is not only highly replicable but grows in effectiveness the more widely it is used.

Green Technology

Barcelona's superblocks

Municipal
SPAIN



Barcelona has instituted pedestrian-centric, resident-oriented urban planning known as superblocks.

Barcelona's urban planners envision a post-car world. As of 2018, 85% of the city's area was dedicated to private vehicles. To combat this, the city has created mini car-free neighbourhoods called superblocks. The blocks are specifically designed as multi-use public spaces that will increase foot traffic and public green spaces. They include interventions like levelled pavements. All cars are banned in these areas, save for residents' vehicles and deliveries. The superblocks are proving to have both environmental and social benefits. In the Sant Antoni neighbourhood, car traffic fell by 82%, pedestrian trips rose by 28%, and streetside businesses saw greater revenues. Expanding the system to the whole city would significantly reduce emissions, mitigate the urban heat island effect, and improve public health. Beyond superblocks, Barcelona is cracking down on car pollution. In February 2022, it imposed a 30km/h speed limit on 68% of the city's roads.

Green Technology

Paris, a 15-minute city

Municipal
FRANCE

Paris' new transport system means residents can navigate the city quickly, easily, and without a car.

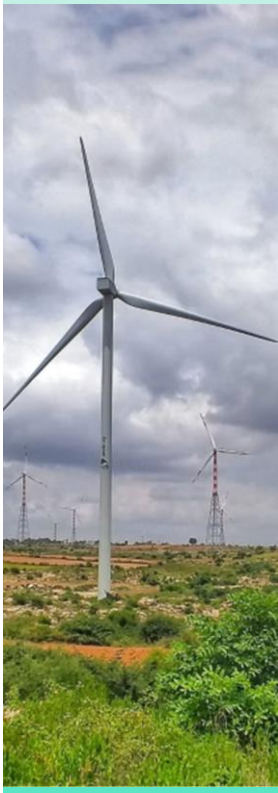
Cities looking to reduce emissions from their transport sectors need to encourage their citizens to do three things: drive less, walk and cycle more, and embrace public transit. To make those activities as easy as possible, Paris's mayor Anne Hidalgo is embracing a new concept of urban organisation: the 15-minute city. Conceived by urban planner Carlos Moreno, the idea is that residents can access basic amenities and social activities without having to get into a car. During France's coronavirus lockdown, the "Paris Respire " programme turned 45 kilometres of traffic lanes into cyclist corridors. Since the mayor's re-election, she has committed to creating an additional 10km of separated bike lanes. Other initiatives to encourage public transit include allowing people under the age of 18 to travel on public transit for free.

Green Technology

Emerging wind power in Senegal

National
SENEGAL

Senegal expanded its renewable energy network with a new 159MW capacity wind farm. This will prevent 300,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions per year.



In February 2020, Senegal celebrated the opening of the biggest wind farm in West Africa. Senegal's national electricity company connected the farm's 159MW of capacity to the national power grid, representing a 15% increase in Senegal's generation capacity. The farm, Parc Eolien Taiba N'Diaye (PETN), was an investment in line with Plan Senegal Emergent. The government's economic development strategy aims to expand electricity access while reducing emissions. Senegal has also signed up for the Green Secondary Cities Development Program and started sustainability initiatives in 25 cities. The projects cover urban mobility, land use, water and solid waste, and energy efficiency. With the opening of PETN, Senegal will now get 30% of its energy from renewable sources.

Green Technology

Chicago's energy retrofit

Municipal
USA

This city-wide retrofit policy has already reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 70,000 tonnes per year. By 2018, participants had cut their energy use by 17%.

Energy use in buildings is responsible for around 71% of Chicago's emissions. To bring these down, the city's sustainability office partnered with private institutions to launch the Energy Retrofit Challenge. The challenge asked Chicago's big buildings to agree to one goal: reduce energy consumption by at least 20% within five years.
While the programme is voluntary, it has cultivated a level of prestige and goodwill that has drawn over 100 participants, spanning 5,200,000m² of the city. Annual awards ceremonies encourage continuous improvements in energy efficiency, and each participant tracks and shares their efficiency gains through a portal. The competition aspect proved highly successful — within the first 18 months of the launch, participating buildings reduced (weather-averaged) energy use by 7%. Building on this success, Chicago's government has announced plans to power all 900 of its city buildings with renewable energy by 2025.

Green Technology

Carbon-injected concrete in Honolulu

Regional
USA

Using mineralized CO2 to make cement, Hawaii's construction industry aims to save 12,200 tonnes of CO2 emissions.

Hawaiian policymakers are looking to carbon-reinforced concrete to reduce emissions from the construction industry. Hawaii's Department of Transport saved 680kg of CO2 in a demonstration project. If scaled to all of Hawaii's construction, mineralized concrete has the potential to save 12,200 tonnes of CO2. The production of concrete produces about 6% of the world's emissions per year, and companies such as CarbonCure are trying to find a solution. In a process known as CO2 mineralization, carbon dioxide is permanently captured and can be used as a construction material in making cement. This helps store carbon that would otherwise be released into the atmosphere. The City of Honolulu has already passed a resolution recommending that all government bodies procure carbon-injected concrete in their construction work.

Green Technology

Zurich's concrete regulations

Municipal
SWITZERLAND

The City of Zurich's regulations on concrete show the effectiveness of using public procurement to send economic signals.

The city has addressed construction emissions in two ways: requiring the use of recycled concrete, and requiring that concrete used in public buildings meets high environmental standards. They use a standard labelled CEM III/B. This type of cement replaces a material named "clinker" with a lower-carbon alternative, reducing emissions by 25-30% compared to conventional concrete.

Using recycled concrete creates a more circular economy. It reduces concrete's environmental impact by stretching materials further. For example, the city collected old kerbstones and re-used them to make new ones, which reduced 1.4kg of CO2 per unit compared to imported ones. The city's newest building, the Zurich Kunsthaus Art Museum, will be made almost entirely of reduced-carbon and recycled concrete. Zurich's position as a sustainable concrete pioneer has encouraged research into how to reduce emissions from the difficult-to-decarbonise construction industry. Using concrete remains a CO2-intense activity, and procuring alternatives such as fly-ash concrete is less impactful.

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Up and Coming

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Up and Coming

Loss and damages at COP27

Transition Finance
INTERNATIONAL

COP27 closed with a breakthrough agreement for wealthier nations to provide loss and damage funding for vulnerable nations hit hardest by climate disasters.

This fund represents a major breakthrough in acknowledging the differentiated impacts of global climate breakdown. However, serious contention remains over the specific methods by which the fund is administered and distributed. For the Loss and Damages fund to fulfil its potential, it needs to overcome certain challenges:

- **Lack of clarity:** Given the broad definitions used in the agreement, specifics of the arrangement still need to be defined. For example, the 'donor base' of this new fund remains a point of contention. The overall strategic framework of the loss and damage agreement needs greater clarity. Apolitical's course on Reaching Net Zero provides the skills to help government employees implement ambitious policies.

Up and Coming

Cardiff "Tidal Lagoon"

Green Technology
WALES, UK

Cardiff Tidal Lagoon is a proposed tidal energy power plant. It would use the natural variation of the tide to produce enough zero-carbon electricity to power every home in Wales.

Despite the huge potential for producing renewable energy, the project remains in the planning and consultation stage. For it to fulfil its potential, the biggest barrier it is facing is:

- **Stakeholder engagement:** The scale of the project means it has to enjoy widespread support in order to have a chance of approval. To engage stakeholders effectively requires the use of soft skills, such as strong presentations, effective problem framing, and compelling usage of feedback. Apolitical's Introduction to Public Engagement outlines evidence-backed steps for working closer with the public.

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