

CLIMATE CRISIS



OXFAM

WHAT IS THE CLIMATE CRISIS, **WHY** IS IT
HAPPENING, **HOW** DOES IT AFFECT US ALL,
AND WHAT CAN **YOU** DO?



CONTENTS

1 **WHAT IS THE CLIMATE CRISIS?**
What is the climate crisis and what has caused it?

04

2 **HOW DOES THE CLIMATE CRISIS AFFECT US?**
Is the impact the same for everyone?
What is the link between the climate crisis and inequality?

07

10

Pictured on the cover: Magdalene, leader and founder of the Female Pastoralist Network (FEMINET), an Oxfam partner organisation in Sierra Leone.





3 WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT THE CLIMATE CRISIS?

How are governments addressing the climate crisis?

16

What more could governments do?

22

What can I do to help people and the planet?

24

4 SO, WHAT NOW?

29

1

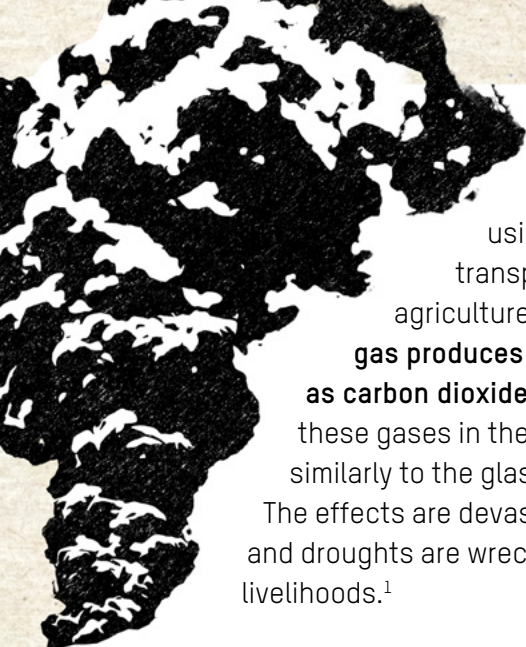
WHAT IS THE CLIMATE CRISIS?

WHAT IS THE CLIMATE CRISIS AND WHAT HAS CAUSED IT?

We can all see that weather patterns are changing, which we refer to as 'climate change'.

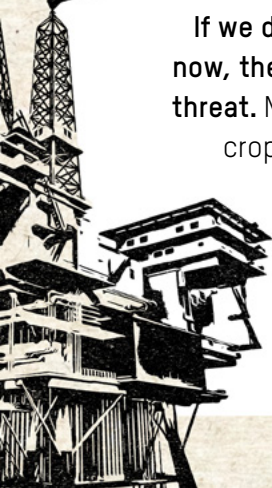
Climate change has caused a worldwide climate crisis. Heatwaves, unpredictable and intense rain, and more powerful hurricanes are devastating lives.

We know that it's mainly human activity that causes climate change and that the resulting crisis poses a real threat to the planet and human life.



Wealthy countries grew rich on fossil fuels, using them to power homes, transport, industries and agriculture. **But burning coal, oil and gas produces greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide.** The increasing level of these gases in the atmosphere trap heat similarly to the glass roof of a greenhouse. The effects are devastating. Heatwaves, floods and droughts are wrecking lives, homes and livelihoods.¹

If we don't do something about the climate crisis now, the future of humanity and our planet is under threat. More glaciers will melt, sea levels will rise, and crops and wildlife will be endangered. Many parts of our world will be uninhabitable, with less land to grow food.² The climate crisis is threatening humankind – it will push people deeper into poverty, and they'll struggle to find ways to survive.





**THE WORLD'S RICHEST 10%
ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR**

50%

OF ALL CO₂ EMISSIONS

**3.5
BILLION**

people living in poverty – who only contribute 10% of carbon dioxide emissions – are most affected by the climate crisis.³

Extreme weather events are forcing people to **leave their homes, lose their source of income, and go hungry.** This is a grave injustice.

🖱️ **FIND OUT MORE:** [Extreme Carbon Inequality report](#)


2

HOW DOES THE CLIMATE CRISIS AFFECT US?

IS THE IMPACT THE SAME FOR EVERYONE?

Though the climate crisis is a reality that affects the entire planet, we are not all affected equally.

A prolonged drought is less likely to create widespread hunger in richer areas of the world. This is because wealthy countries can import food, and people have higher incomes and state benefits. But rural communities in poorer parts of the world rely on local harvests for both their food and income. A severe drought can cause widespread hunger.




So although the climate crisis is affecting us all, it's hitting some communities harder than others. And it's the people who've done the least to cause it who are suffering the most.

People facing poverty rarely have access to the money and support needed to survive and recover. This includes things like clean water on tap during a drought or house insurance to help rebuild homes destroyed by floods.


Since 2000, extreme weather-related disasters have affected about 3.94 billion people in low- and middle-income countries.⁴

In 2019, Oxfam released information that revealed a concerning trend over the last ten years. There have been more weather-related disasters, and this has become the number one reason for internal displacement — the forced movement of people within the country they live in. This has resulted in more than 20 million people being forced to leave their homes every year. **That's one person every two seconds.**



It's not fair
that our ability to cope with the
climate crisis
is based on where we live,
the resources we have available,
and the value society places on
our lives.

 **FIND OUT MORE:** [Uprooted by Climate Change report](#)




We need to join together to stop this injustice. We must collectively change course and prevent global warming from becoming a global catastrophe. Let's act now to protect people and our planet.

Leaders of wealthier countries have a big part to play. Countries in the Global South, supported by civil society, achieved a monumental win at COP27. Governments agreed to set up a 'loss and damage fund' to help the people worst hit by the climate crisis to recover from its impacts. It's now up to richer nations and companies that are contributing to pollution to provide this funding.

WHAT IS THE LINK BETWEEN THE CLIMATE CRISIS AND INEQUALITY?

The climate crisis is not just an environmental crisis. It's an inequality crisis. We live in an unequal world, and people living in low-income countries are suffering the most.



The crisis is making inequality worse by putting people in lower-income countries in an even more vulnerable position. It also risks undoing the progress made in recent decades to fight poverty.

Natural hazards like droughts, hurricanes and floods are getting worse too. And some are happening more often.⁵

These disasters seriously threaten many people around the world, such as those in rural and indigenous communities, who rely heavily on natural resources. Crops aren't growing and rain isn't falling. These communities lose income and are then more vulnerable to poverty and disease.

Systems of race and gender oppression and discrimination can also force people further into poverty. This makes them even more vulnerable to the climate crisis.⁶




For example, women commonly face unfair expectations that mean they're often suffering disproportionately.

Women are more likely to go hungry when food is short, and to fall back on unsafe work when harvests fail.

They're likely to be the ones walking further to collect water when it's scarce because of more frequent and harsher droughts, often putting their own safety at risk.

Sifiso reads a text message detailing weather conditions in central Zimbabwe. An Oxfam-supported weather station was installed at a school nearby to provide community members with important weather reports to help them make decisions about their crops and lives.


FIND OUT MORE: [Gender Inequalities and Food Insecurity report](#)



And many of the people negatively affected by disasters are children. Climate-related disasters can damage systems that are designed to protect children. They can also make existing tensions and conflicts worse. This leaves children susceptible to violence, abuse, child labour, trafficking and other forms of exploitation.⁷

People living in poverty are often the first and worst affected when crises strike. They're also the last to be protected. In other words, the climate crisis is making poverty and inequality worse.

On top of this, inequality is making the climate crisis worse. It's a bit of a vicious cycle. The richest 10% of people in the world produce half the world's emissions. Even more shocking is that the richest 1% produce twice as many emissions as the other half of the globe living in poverty. This is largely because of their luxurious lifestyles and activities like using private jets.⁸



And if we look at the emissions released historically, wealthy countries that became rich from burning fossil fuels are responsible for around 92% of all the extra emissions. This is much more than their fair share.⁹ In comparison, the whole of Africa produces less than 4% of global emissions.¹⁰

Wealthy countries have contributed most to the climate crisis and have the most resources to address it. So they need to lead the way in tackling this crisis.

OXFAM IS CALLING ON WEALTHY COUNTRIES TO:

- ➔ **Reduce their greenhouse emissions the fastest and furthest**, as they are historically responsible for the crisis and have the resources to do so.

- ➔ **Provide financial and technical support to low-emitting, low-income countries** that have contributed the least to the crisis and lack resources. This support should:
 - Help the most affected people adapt to the impacts of the climate crisis.
 - Help them benefit from new renewable energy technologies.
 - Pay for losses and damages caused by the climate crisis.

3

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT THE CLIMATE CRISIS?

The climate crisis is a global problem and we all need to be part of the solution. We must take action as individuals, and collaborate at local, national and international levels.

If we take urgent action now, we can stop the devastating effects of the climate crisis. We can prevent a global catastrophe from going beyond repair.

HOW ARE GOVERNMENTS ADDRESSING THE CLIMATE CRISIS?

For a while now, governments have been aware of the challenges caused by the impact of the climate crisis. By the 1970s, we began noticing changes in our planet's environment.

CLIMATE MILESTONES



1970s

Began noticing changes in our planet's environment

1980s

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) created

1992

United Nations created the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

1997

Several countries signed The Kyoto Protocol

2000

European Climate Change Programme launched

2005


Kyoto protocol came into force, marking the beginning of a joint commitment to stop global climate change

2015

The Paris Agreement was adopted during the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21)

2050


We're still waiting for all EU member states to commit to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050



But it was not until the 1980s that we adopted the first real measures, like creating the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

In 1992, the United Nations created the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It was designed to try to stop climate change. It's been adopted by nearly all countries, and encourages governments to track and control their greenhouse gas emissions.

In 1997, many countries signed the Kyoto Protocol, which was an extension of the UNFCCC. The Protocol was an international agreement that aimed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 5% compared to 1990 through climate protection measures. The Protocol came into force in 2005, marking the beginning of a joint commitment to stop global climate change. But at that point, the world was still far from taking any concrete action.



The European Union (EU) was once at the forefront of tackling the challenges of climate change. It asked all member states to agree to the Kyoto Protocol and launched the European Climate Change Programme in 2000 to cut greenhouse gas emissions. But progress has stalled. We're still waiting for all EU member states to commit to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. (Net-zero emissions means limiting the greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere from human activity so they're equal to the levels that can be absorbed naturally.)

THE PARIS AGREEMENT, ADOPTED DURING THE 21ST CONFERENCE OF PARTIES (COP21) IN 2015, HAS THREE KEY OBJECTIVES:

- 1. Limit global warming to 1.5°C** to prevent the global crisis from going beyond repair.
- 2. Help communities** vulnerable to the effects of the climate crisis to adapt.
- 3. Make sure wealthy countries give funding** to lower-income nations to support sustainable development.

Unfortunately, the targets set by many countries that signed the Paris Agreement are not enough to stop temperatures from getting too high. As it stands, with the carbon reduction pledges from governments, we're looking at the global temperature rising by up to 2.7°C before the end of the century.¹¹

We saw some progress at COP26 in 2021 from the Scottish Government. Scotland was the first wealthy country to commit to loss and damage finance for countries most affected by the climate crisis.

But there's still no system in place to provide enough reliable financial support for these countries on a global level. While the agreement at COP27 to create a dedicated loss and damage fund was a significant development, the work doesn't stop there.



WHAT MORE COULD GOVERNMENTS DO?

Wealthy countries, individuals and polluting industries must cut emissions further and faster.

Together with front-line communities and activists worldwide, we must keep up the pressure on the richest countries and biggest polluters. They need to speed up their efforts in reducing emissions and pay for the climate devastation they are causing.

Governments must ensure that the big polluters reduce greenhouses the fastest and furthest.

We need to stop using fossil fuels, and reduce the amount of energy used for luxury goods by wealthy people. Governments should promote clean and renewable energy while improving energy efficiency.

In December 2022, the UK Government approved plans to open a new coal mine. **This is a complete betrayal of the country's commitment to limit global warming to 1.5°C.**¹² The UK also plans to award licences to companies to extract oil and gas from the North Sea, which will fuel the climate crisis further.

Governments need to make sure they're doing their part to reduce greenhouse emissions in a way that's fair for everyone. This means sharing the responsibilities, costs, and benefits of action.

To make sure governments get this right, they need to have meaningful consultations and an understanding of existing and past injustices and inequalities to make things better for everyone.





WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP PEOPLE AND THE PLANET?

Governments and companies need to change their systems to manage the impact of the climate crisis.

They need to make sustainable lifestyles cheaper and easier for us all. But we can all play our part to stop the climate crisis in its tracks and help build a fairer, greener and kinder world. Every fraction of a degree of warming that we can prevent is vital.

There are lots of ways to take action at work, at home, in the community, and with organisations that are striving for change.



**ADVOCATE AND
CAMPAIGN FOR CHANGE**



**CONNECT AND
COLLABORATE
WITH YOUR LOCAL
COMMUNITY**



**MAKE GREENER
CHOICES**




ADVOCATE AND CAMPAIGN FOR CHANGE

One of the most important things we can do is press governments, investors and companies to take urgent action on the climate crisis and provide finance to communities on the front line of the climate crisis. We must publicly hold them to account to see real change.


Here are some other things we can do to raise our voices:

- Form and/or join groups that raise awareness of the climate crisis at events like conferences, screenings and festivals.
- Write to and/or meet our local MPs to tell them our concerns and what we would like to see happen.
- Sign petitions and take other campaigning actions with organisations like Oxfam, Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace.

- 
- Take part in demonstrations and other large events like climate marches and G7 protests.
 - Listen to and speak with people who are creating or suggesting alternative solutions and help spread them.
 - Volunteer in an Oxfam shop to support the charity's work.
 - Share our belief that a more equal, sustainable and united world is possible.
 - This can help inspire hope in others.

At COP27 in 2022, an amazing 141,500 people signed climate activist Elizabeth Wathuti's letter asking world leaders to create a loss and damage fund. This was part of an incredible effort from climate activists and civil society to make sure the commitment to the fund was secured. It's amazing what we can achieve when we act together.

 **FIND OUT MORE:** [Influencing for Impact Guide](#)

 **ONLINE COURSE:** [Make Change Happen](#)



CONNECT AND COLLABORATE WITH YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY

As well as pressuring politicians, governments and companies to act on their promises and push them to do better, we can join together with others in our community to reduce local carbon emissions.

For example, we can:

- Learn from each other how to save energy and reduce carbon emissions in our homes and personal lives.
- Help run and use swap shops to reduce waste.
- Plant trees and protect green spaces.
- Ask our local council to reduce the emissions they produce, take their pension funds out of fossil fuel investments, change local buses to run on electricity, and make it easier for people to walk and cycle.
- Ask local businesses to reduce their carbon emissions, install solar panels, stock sustainable products and provide cycle racks.



MAKE GREENER CHOICES

We can also all take steps in our everyday lives to limit our personal carbon footprints. It doesn't let governments or big polluting companies off the hook, but it sends a powerful message about the kinds of changes we want to see from them.

For example, we can:

- Choose local produce.
- Reuse items or buy second-hand.
- Reduce our waste.
- Use transport that produces fewer carbon emissions.
- Insulate our homes and use more renewable energy.



[Donate to Oxfam](#) to continue supporting the charity's work

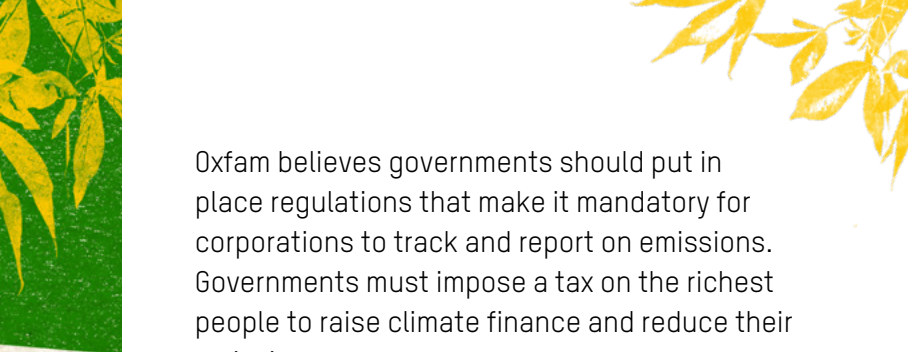
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SO, WHAT NOW?

The climate crisis affects the entire planet, and we are in this together. So we must act in solidarity with people worldwide to have an impact.

It's not fair that the world's richest people produce so much carbon, while communities in low-income countries that are hit the hardest by tropical storms, pollution and rising sea levels suffer the consequences.


We need to protect these communities on the front line of the climate crisis. Those who have benefited from fossil fuel development, including governments, corporations and individuals, should be the ones to foot the bill for the climate devastation they are causing. And we must make sure that the way we reduce greenhouse gases contributes to a fairer and greener world.



Oxfam believes governments should put in place regulations that make it mandatory for corporations to track and report on emissions. Governments must impose a tax on the richest people to raise climate finance and reduce their emissions.

We need to demand action now. Together, we must continue to act in solidarity with the global community and speak out for worldwide climate justice.

We can support communities with resources and innovative solutions needed to adapt to the ever-changing climate that protect both people and the planet (such as solar-powered water pumps to make sure everyone has a sustainable supply of clean water). We can reduce the effects of the climate crisis by stopping using fossil fuels, reducing emissions and planting trees. And we can support the worst-hit communities around the world to build resilience to the impacts of the crisis.



We have the opportunity
to create a better and
fairer way to live.

Let's work together to
make it a reality.

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