

## Climate Justice in 2020

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### Why 2020?

- We have known for a long time that we are facing a climate crisis. We have watched natural disasters intensify in recent years, including the devastating Cyclone Idai in southern Africa, floods in South Asia and fires raging across the Amazon and then Australia. The UK has also been hit by substantial and costly flooding.
- The respected Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has warned that we only have a decade left for actions to reduce global emissions by half, if we are to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5°C (beyond which climate change risks becoming increasingly catastrophic), the goal agreed in the 2015 COP Paris Accords.
- In November 2020 global leaders will meet for the next major UN climate talks (otherwise known as COP 26) which will be hosted in Glasgow. 2020 is a critical year because this is the year when governments pledged to step up their commitments under the UN Paris Agreement, which are currently short of what is needed to prevent a devastating acceleration of this crisis.
- The UK government has an important role as host, and has already made some welcome steps in the right direction. However, credibility as a climate leader rests on recognising the extent of the UK's responsibility and delivering responses that bring about climate justice for the world's poorest people.

### What does Christian Aid mean by Climate Justice?

Climate justice is about more than stopping climate breakdown through any means, and it considers actions beyond the UK. We cannot tackle the climate crisis in a way that is sustainable if we do not recognise the global injustices behind how we got here. Our faith calls us to see all people as having been created equal by God – so we cannot remain silent in the face of climate injustice.

- ***The poorest people in the poorest countries have least responsibility for the climate crisis.*** The poorest 50% of the world are responsible for just 10% of carbon dioxide emissions, while the richest 10% are responsible for 50%.<sup>1</sup> The amount of CO<sub>2</sub> generated by one Brit on average is equivalent to that generated by 212 Burundians.<sup>2</sup>
- ***The UK built its wealth on fossil fuels.*** The UK is the 5<sup>th</sup> richest economy in the world, and is the 6<sup>th</sup> largest historic emitter of greenhouse gases since the industrial revolution.<sup>3</sup> Our wealth has been built on fossil fuels, the current impacts of which deepen the poverty of those now on the front line of the climate crisis.
- ***Yet it is the poorest and least responsible, who are hit the hardest by climate change.*** Christian Aid works alongside farming communities in Malawi, Burundi and Kenya, the indigenous people of the Amazon, families living in extremely flood-prone areas in Bangladesh and many others who have faced the devastating impacts of climate change for years. From flooding and hurricanes to droughts, the climate crisis is driving families from their homes, creating food crises, fuelling conflict and further entrenching poverty.
- ***An extractive global economy creates a double whammy.*** The same economic status quo that is driven by consumerism and extraction and is contributing to climate breakdown, has also contributed to the impoverishment of the Global South. The UK has built wealth through extracting resources and cheap labour from poorer countries. The UK must recognise its historical and ongoing role in an economic system that entrenches poverty and weakens nations already struggling on the front lines of climate change. For example, to this day UK companies operating in developing countries still too often escape from paying the taxes they owe, thus robbing those countries of resources that could be invested in tackling poverty and dealing with the climate crisis.
- ***The poorest countries are least able to respond.*** Due to these global inequalities the world's poorest countries on the frontline of climate breakdown lack the funds or capacity of countries like Australia or the UK, to deal with devastating climate impacts. By 2030 developing countries will need up to \$300bn p.a. from richer countries

<sup>1</sup> <http://civilsocietyreview.org/report2018/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://ourworldindata.org/share-co2-emissions>

<sup>3</sup> <https://ourworldindata.org/contributed-most-global-co2>

just to adapt to already felt climate impacts and much more than this to develop their own economies sustainably and cleanly.<sup>4</sup>

## The destructive impact of climate change

Crab farming projects in Bangladesh are helping women like Kokoli to provide for their families and withstand the effects of the climate crisis. But with the cyclones that hit the region becoming fiercer and more frequent, millions of people like Kokoli are vulnerable, facing a loss of livelihood, local economy and life.



## What can the UK do for climate justice?

**Delivering our fair share.** These imbalances mean that the UK needs to do much more to deliver our true fair share of global responsibility. Our historic emissions far out-weigh our current emissions, so our responsibility for and contribution to reducing carbon emissions needs to be greater. For example, to contribute our fair share to reducing global carbon emissions, we would have to cut more than double our current carbon emissions.<sup>5</sup> This means that however fast we cut our domestic emissions, the UK's historic and moral responsibility extends beyond its borders.

Leadership from countries that have greatest historic as well as ongoing responsibility is also essential for bringing all countries on board at the COP this year, including countries with less responsibility. Pointing to the world's currently largest emitters as an excuse for inadequate UK action is not good enough, given the scale of our historical responsibility and the need for us to demonstrate leadership as hosts of this year's climate talks. Specifically the UK government needs to:

- **Get to Net Zero faster.** We need to get to net zero *globally* by 2050 (not just in the UK), so there is a need for the UK to go ahead faster, which means that countries historically responsible must go much faster, with the majority of action needed in the 2020s. This is necessary for the UK to have any credibility as President of COP26.
- **Step up our international action.** However fast we move to get to net zero domestically, we need to take much more ambitious action overseas in tandem, if we are to meet our fair share of the global effort, deliver justice for the world's poorest people and keep the climate talks on track. Actions need to include:
  - o **Stopping support for fossil fuels overseas.** The UK currently supports fossil fuels overseas through public finance as well as via our banks and the City of London, when we should be doing everything in our power to end fossil fuels and invest in renewables, including for energy access.
  - o **Spearheading a massive transfer of new and additional finance and technology** to poor and climate-vulnerable countries to match our level of responsibility and the real need, so that these countries can adapt to climate impacts and develop their economies sustainably.
  - o **Protecting human rights.** We must ensure that companies (including UK companies) involved in extracting the minerals required for wind turbines and solar panels do not abuse human rights or displace communities.
- **COP Leadership.** As hosts of the UN climate talks in 2020 we want to see the UK ensure the voices of poor communities are heard and prioritised in the process. The UK must use COP do all in its power to drive levels of ambition in this crucial year. **But this can only be done credibly if the UK is walking the walk with its own actions.**

## Christian Aid's Prayer Chain

In 2020 we are unleashing a year of non-stop 24/7 prayer for climate justice. Churches will join together with people around the world to bow our heads and lift our voices to build a better world.

Visit [caid.org.uk/prayerchain](https://caid.org.uk/prayerchain) for more information.

<sup>4</sup> The amount pledged by the international community at the moment is just £100bn.

<sup>5</sup> Climate Equity Reference Project <https://climateequityreference.org/>