

STORIES OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Introduction

Climate change isn't a looming crisis - it's a destructive force affecting millions of lives right now. And the people who have contributed the least to the climate emergency are suffering most.

Life is already a struggle for poor communities. But the climate crisis is making things so much harder. Droughts and floods are becoming increasingly frequent, while growing seasons for crops are more and more unpredictable. It means millions of people are going hungry.

People living in poverty are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change for many reasons. They're often forced to live in makeshift homes, on land prone to flooding, storms and landslides. Making a living is hard - so few will have home or business insurance, or savings to fall back on in an emergency. And when disasters strike, poor diet, sanitation and health care mean that diseases spread rapidly.

These activity ideas¹ and real-life stories from Malawi support learners aged 9 to 14 to learn and think about the human impact of climate change.

- Use an agreement line to consider and discuss ideas and opinions about climate change (p.2)
- Use stories and role play to find out how some communities in Malawi are being affected by climate change (p.3)
- Play a vulnerability game to understand that climate change doesn't affect everyone equally and poor communities are impacted the most (p.4)
- Make a wristband to show solidarity with those most impacted by the climate crisis (p.5)

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Image info: Crossing flooded land in southern Malawi in the aftermath of Cyclone Idai. Widespread flooding caused by many people's homes to collapse and destroyed fields of crops.
Credit: Philip Hatcher-Moore/Oxfam

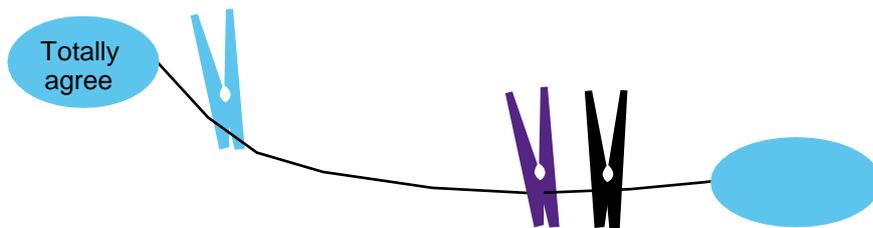
¹ These activities are adapted from Oxfam's Climate Challenge resources for ages 7-11 and 11-14. See Find out more for further details of these very topical and widely-used resources.

Activity ideas

1. Where do you stand? (15 min)

Aim: To encourage learners to consider and discuss their views about climate change - who is being impacted, who is responsible and who should take action.

- This activity is best carried out in a large open space. You might like to use the playground or a sports hall. An agreement line is an imaginary line from one side of a learning space to the other along which learners are asked to stand based on how much they agree or disagree with a particular statement.
- Ask learners to imagine a line from one side of the space to the other. Explain that standing at one end of this line means strongly agreeing with a statement, standing at the other end means strongly disagreeing with the statement. The space in between is graduated between these views. Explain that everyone's view will fall somewhere along the line, and that there are not necessarily any 'right' or 'wrong' answers. You might like to label one side of the space 'strongly agree' and the other 'strongly disagree'.
- You may want to introduce a practice statement such as 'Football is brilliant' to warm learners up and familiarise them with the concept of using an agreement line.



- Read out each of the statements below, each time allowing learners to move into place along the agreement line:
 - Climate change is affecting people right now.
 - Everyone is equally responsible for the climate crisis.
 - Everyone will be impacted by climate change in the same way.
 - Only people in other countries will be affected by the climate crisis.
 - Everyone can take action against climate change.
 - We should do more at school to learn about and take action against climate change.
- Encourage individual learners in different positions to say a few words about why they have taken that position. Try to draw out what learners think about the following principles:
 - Fairness – the impacts of climate change are being felt more by those who are poorest and ironically the least responsible.
 - Understanding of the issue – climate change is having an impact on the lives of millions of people right now.
 - Power - everyone can take action in their own lives to reduce their carbon footprint, but governments and business in particular need to do more to change the systems that perpetuate high carbon emissions.

2. Climate change stories (30 min)

Aim: Learners will use case studies to investigate how some communities around the world are being affected by climate change. They will then use role play to empathise with some people whose livelihoods are being threatened by the climate emergency.

- Give each learner a copy of one of the Climate change stories (Resource sheets 2–3). Explain that these case studies describe real people in Malawi who are being affected by climate change. Ask learners to read their story and think about how they would introduce this person to others in the class. You might also like to distribute copies of the Malawi fact file (Resource sheet 1).
- As a whole class, discuss possible questions that you could ask the people featured in the stories (such as questions beginning with Why, What, Where, Why, When and How).
- Possible questions include:
 - Where do you live? What can you tell me about your country?
 - What do you do?
 - How is climate change affecting your life, family and community? How does this make you feel?
 - What do you think needs to be done to tackle the climate emergency?
 - Who do you think should take action?
- In pairs with someone who has a different story, ask learners to take turns at either being an interviewer or hot-seating as the person in their story.
- Where answers to the interviewer’s questions are not provided in the Climate change stories, learners can act in role, using their own ideas based on other aspects of what they know or have read. Emphasise that this is an activity in empathising and imagining rather than scientific fact finding.
- If time allows, pairs of learners could introduce each other in role to another pair. Alternatively, pairs of learners could act out their interviews to others in the class.
- Finish by discussing what learners learned from the activity.

Further ideas

- Learners could create a short story, newspaper article, diary entry, cartoon strip or poem to describe the feelings and opinions of a person affected by climate change. Learners could make a display board of their creative writing and/or give an assembly to share their work with others.
- Ask learners to list further questions they would like to ask the people featured in the Climate change stories. Although they will not be able to find out the answers, the questioning process itself develops empathy. Ask learners to think about what makes a good question. Encourage them to experiment with different types of questions, for example open or closed and easy or difficult to answer. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of different questions types.
- Learners could research how communities in the UK are being impacted by climate change. Discuss similarities and differences between these impacts and those described in the Climate change stories.
- Patouma’s story is an example of how people are adapting to climate change - changing the way they do things to prevent or reduce the damage being caused. Many people around the world are doing everything in their power to stop climate change destroying their lives. Support



learners to investigate examples of climate change adaptation in the UK, for example by altering farming methods or managing climate-change related flood risks.

3. Climate change vulnerability game (40 min)

Aim: To understand that not everyone is affected by climate change in the same way, and that it is often the poorest communities who are most negatively impacted by the climate crisis, despite contributing the least to it.

- Explain that learners are going to play a game to explore what factors make some people more vulnerable than others. Discuss with learners what being vulnerable means:
 - Something (usually negative) might happen to you.
 - You are missing something.
 - You are at risk or in danger.
- Organise learners into pairs or groups of three and ask them to line up at one end of the room in their groups. Give each pair or group one of the Climate change vulnerability game - Role cards (Activity sheet 1).
- Explain that the role cards represent fictional people living in Malawi (with one person working in neighbouring Tanzania). Ask learners to spend a few minutes imagining the daily life of the person whose role they are playing and to think of a name for their character.
- Read out the list of statements below and ask those learners whose character can agree with the statement to take a step forward (give them time in their groups to first discuss the statement and decide if they would agree with it). Encourage those groups who are unsure how to answer to ask you and/or others for advice.
- Eventually the learners will be spaced out across the room according to how many steps they have taken forward.

Vulnerability statements

1. You receive or received a primary school education.
2. You receive or received a secondary school education.
3. You can afford to meet your basic needs.
4. You are never short of food.
5. You do not rely on good local weather for growing crops to make a living or to have food to eat.
6. You can afford to see a doctor and buy medicine when you have health problems.
7. You have the power to influence people in your community.
8. If there is an emergency, the emergency services will come and help you and your community.
9. You have people who care about you and protect you.
10. You have money saved for difficult times.
11. You don't have to do dangerous things to survive.
12. You can afford a place to live.
13. You live in a sturdy house safe from bad weather.
14. If you have a place to live, it is insured.
15. You have good enough reading and writing skills to get a job that provides a regular salary.

16. If you lose your way of making an income, you can probably find another.

- Once you have read out all the statements, ask learners to stay where they are and introduce their character to the other groups. Encourage learners to give reasons for their decisions about how many steps they took.
- Ask learners if they think that each character is correctly placed in relation to others, for example: Do you think the married man should be further forward than the 12-year-old girl? Encourage discussions where there is disagreement.
- Ask learners to identify what factors make some people more vulnerable than others. How vulnerable do they think their character would be to the effects of climate change? Share the following facts to help learners identify ways in which their character might be affected.
 - Climate change is causing unpredictable rainfall which affects crops, food production and water sources.
 - Climate change is linked to an increased likelihood of extreme weather events.
 - Extreme weather events such as flooding may destroy or damage houses, crops and roads.
- Ask learners to try and organise themselves across the room according to how vulnerable they think their character would be to the effects of climate change (one side of the room - high vulnerability, other side of the room – low vulnerability). Then ask learners to organise themselves across the room according to what they think the size of their character’s carbon footprint would be (one side of the room – small carbon footprint, other side of the room – large carbon footprint).
- Explain that climate change affects everyone, but many people in poorer countries will be hit harder than many people in wealthier ones, and people living in the most food-insecure regions of the world will be hit the hardest. Ironically (and unfairly), it is the people who contribute the least to climate change who suffer the most.

4. Make your own climate crisis wristband (30 min)

- We can all play a vital role in saving our planet and its people – but only if we take urgent action now. We have the power to fix this together if we take action in our own lives, and push governments and corporations for solutions that enable us to urgently tackle the climate emergency once and for all.
- Jessy, one of the people featured in the Climate change stories, visited the UK in September 2019 to help raise awareness of how climate change is impacting on people’s lives now and why urgent action is needed. Isaac, the Head Boy at Jessy’s school, and Mervyn, their headteacher also took part in the visit.
- Jessy and Isaac met other young people in the UK to share experiences and ideas about the impact of climate change. They also took part in a climate rally in London. A short video clip about their visit is available here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJH054VFIQ4
- Show learners the video clip. Possible discussion questions include:
 - How is climate change affecting the lives of Jessy and Isaac?
 - What do they think needs to be done?
 - How are they raising awareness of this issue?
 - How could you raise awareness of how climate change is impacting on people’s lives now?



- Learners could make wristbands to show solidarity with those most impacted by the climate crisis. Wristbands are a great conversation starter, especially if they are colourful and unique and displaying a message you feel passionate about. And using old material to make your own wristband is quick and easy.
- Instructions are provided in Make your own climate crisis wristband (Resource sheet 4) and are also available online: <https://oxfamapps.org/blog/make-your-own-climate-crisis-wristband/>

Further idea

- Discuss other ways in which learners could raise awareness of this issue. Examples include: delivering an assembly, teaching other classes, designing and displaying posters around the school, writing a blog post or creating a video. Learners could work in groups to choose, plan and carry out an awareness-raising activity.

Find out more

- Oxfam's Climate Challenge resources for ages 7-11 and 11-14 use engaging tools and activities to explore the causes and human impact of climate change and consider what action can be taken in response. Activities link to several curriculum areas including English, geography and science.
www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/climate-challenge-7-11
www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/climate-challenge-11-14
- Test learners' knowledge and understanding of climate change and its impacts:
www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/climate-change-quiz
- Further information about Oxfam's work on climate change:
www.oxfam.org.uk/what-we-do/issues-we-work-on/climate-change
- Some useful websites for finding out more about climate change and the science behind it:
www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate-guide
<https://climate.nasa.gov/>
www.carbonbrief.org/
- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) - The latest IPCC report is the global go-to source for the latest research on climate change: www.ipcc.ch/report
- Find out more about action being taken in the UK to campaign against climate change and how individuals and communities can get involved:
The Climate Coalition: www.theclimatecoalition.org
Stop Climate Chaos Scotland: www.stopclimatechaos.scot
Stop Climate Chaos Cymru: <http://stopclimatechaos.cymru/>

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Malawi fact file

Resource sheet 1

Capital: Lilongwe
 Population: 18 million
 Geography: Landlocked country bordered by Zambia, Tanzania and Mozambique. A third of Malawi's area is covered by Lake Malawi.
 Climate: Generally tropical. There is a rainy season from November to April but little to no rainfall throughout much of the country from May to October.
 Average life expectancy: 63 years
 Average income per person: US\$360
 CO₂ emissions per person: 0.1tCO₂ (UK is 8.5 tCO₂)



Data sources:

World Bank Open Data: data.worldbank.org

The Global Carbon Atlas: globalcarbonatlas.org

Image source: Alvaro198418, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Location_Malawi_AU_Africa.svg

Malawi is a landlocked country in southeast Africa, bordered by Zambia, Tanzania and Mozambique. A third of Malawi's area is taken up by Lake Malawi, one of the largest lakes in the world. The country is known as 'The warm heart of Africa', because of the friendliness of its people. Malawi is home to animals such as elephants, hippos, leopards and monkeys as well as many different birds. Many tourists visit the country each year.

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world. Most people live in rural areas and depend on farming to grow food to both feed their families and sell to make a living. Maize is the main staple crop and for many people makes up a large part of their diet. This dependence on farming and the high levels of poverty in Malawi makes many people very vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Erratic rainfall patterns and increases in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as droughts and flooding are affecting how much food people can grow and eat.



Clockwise from top left:

Image info: With water scarce in Mulanje, a girl carries containers to bore holes to fetch water for her family.

Credit: Eldson Chagara/Oxfam

Image info: Lilongwe, the capital of Malawi.

Credit: Samymag, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lilongwe_city_from_the_sky.jpg

Image info: Hippos in Liwonde National Park.

Credit: Liz Newbon
 Mountains and tea plantations in Mulanje District.
 Credit: Liz Newbon



Climate change stories

Resource sheet 2

Lazaro

Lazaro and his family are among the millions of people in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe whose lives were devastated by Cyclone Idai in March 2019. Strong winds, a storm surge, heavy rains and widespread flooding have had devastating impacts on the lives of millions of people. Homes, roads, bridges, schools and health facilities were destroyed, with agricultural land completely wiped out in some areas.

In this picture, Lazaro builds a temporary shelter following the floods which destroyed his house. His family's goats and food were washed away. Lazaro says "These were a source of livelihood and prestige for me. All the food we had was destroyed by the water that came from the river down there. All we are left with are those poles and tattered plastic."



Credit: Daud Kayisi/Oxfam

It is not possible to say that any one storm is caused by climate change. However, the best available climate science indicates that climate change is increasing the intensity and frequency of weather-related disasters such as typhoons and droughts.

Vanessa

Cyclone Idai made landfall on the night of 14-15 March 2019 - this weather system caused extensive damage in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe. Strong winds, a storm surge, heavy rains and widespread flooding have had devastating impacts on the lives of millions of people. Homes, roads, bridges, schools and health facilities were destroyed, with agricultural land completely wiped out in some areas.

Vanessa works for Oxfam in Malawi. In this picture she is registering people for a distribution in the Bangula camp in the south of the country where flooding has forced many people to leave their homes.

Oxfam has distributed buckets, soap, and other sanitary items to help.

It is not possible to say that any one storm is caused by climate change. However, the best available climate science indicates that climate change is increasing the intensity and frequency of weather-related disasters such as typhoons and droughts.



Credit: Philip Hatcher-Moore/Oxfam

Climate change stories

Resource sheet 3

Jessy

Jessy is proud to be Head Girl at a secondary school in Kasungu, Malawi. Her parents are farmers and are seeing the effects of climate change now. Jessy helps them on the farm. They grow maize, ground nuts and soya beans.

“My parents depend on farming,” says Jessy.

The weather has changed on the farm since Jessy was little. “It has mostly changed in terms of rain patterns and in terms of seasons. Last time we expected rains at the end of December but nowadays we expect rains in January... This has affected the production of crops. My parents produce very low crops compared to the rest of the years.”



Credit: Watipaso Kailwo/Oxfam

Jessy’s family rely on the farm for their own food. Jessy’s favourite is rice with chicken, nsima and chips. Nsima (pronounced ‘seema’) is a sort of stiff porridge made from maize.

Jessy wants to be a nurse or a doctor. “In Malawi... some people go to hospital but don’t get treatment just because of lack of doctors. So, I decided I wanted to be a doctor so that maybe I can reduce that problem.”

Patouma

Patouma is a farmer in southern Malawi. Until recently, Patouma has relied on growing maize on a one-acre plot of land to feed her family. However, climate change is now making it very difficult for Patouma and many other people in Malawi to provide for their families.

“In a good year, when the rains are good, I can sometimes harvest up to 15 bags of maize. Last year, I planted my crops as usual but due to the drastic change of climate and very little rain, I only managed to harvest one bag. That only lasted one month. My family and I had never before been as hungry as we were then.”

Oxfam has been working with partner organisations in Malawi to support Patouma and other farmers like her to grow vegetables in small kitchen gardens. They can use some of the vegetables to feed their families and earn an income by selling the rest.

Patouma explains: “Now, with this vegetable farming, I am able to sell vegetables and with the proceeds I can buy some food to feed my children. I am able to eat every day, which I wasn’t able to do before. I am also able to buy soap and my children can wear clean clothes. I can even buy school text-books and pencils. This kind of farming has really helped my family.”



Credit: Eldson Chagara/Oxfam

Climate change vulnerability game - Role cards

Activity sheet 1

<p>You are a 12-year-old girl from a farmer's family who has been taken out of school because your mother needs help collecting water and wood. The walk to collect these is becoming longer every month.</p>	<p>You are a female subsistence farmer growing maize. You only grow enough food for you and your family to eat.</p>
<p>You are a married man with four children running a supermarket in a small town. You lost an arm to an infection but have a good income.</p>	<p>You are a woman displaced from your village and hiding in a forest. You forage for food and water but often go hungry and are very scared.</p>
<p>You are a local government officer living in Lilongwe, the capital of Malawi. You have influence and can afford everything you need.</p>	<p>You are a 16-year-old boy working in a diamond mine in the neighbouring country of Tanzania. You are given some food for your work but no money.</p>
<p>You are the teenage son of the chief executive of a large manufacturing company. You go to a private school and you are currently applying to go to university.</p>	<p>You are an employee of a national human rights organisation. You do a dangerous job and work very long hours for a small salary.</p>
<p>You are a farmer whose crops have failed for two years in a row. You are now using your bicycle to collect charcoal 30km away from your house to support yourself and your family.</p>	<p>You are a manager of a rubber plantation. You make a lot of money from the rubber and have influential connections.</p>

Make your own climate crisis wristband

Resource sheet 4

What you need

- An old ripped t-shirt or bed sheet that's no longer usable/wearable
- A pair of scissors
- Some colourful pens
- Your climate crisis message

What to do

Step 1: Cut out your band

With a pair of scissors, carefully cut across the hem on the bottom of the t-shirt or sheet and then cut along the side of the hem, creating a strip around 1.5cm wide. Keep cutting along the hem until you have a strip around 40cm long.



Step 2: Decide on your message

You will only be able to fit a few key words or a short phrase on your wristband, so you will need to choose something brief that demonstrates that you're standing in solidarity with those most impacted by the climate crisis.

You could refer to 'climate chaos', 'climate justice' or Oxfam's hashtag '#WhoTakesTheHeat'

Step 3: Get writing

You might want to write out your message on a piece of paper first to check it will fit onto the wristband.

Pulling the wristband tight with one hand, write on your new slogan with the other in whatever style you fancy.

Step 4: Tie on your wristband and start a conversation!

