HOW TO BE A HERO FOR ALL OUR CHILDREN

EXTENDED VERSION

A little guide to climate science and climate actions we can take.
WAYS WE CAN BE A HERO FOR ALL OUR CHILDREN

Listen
Whether we recognize it or not, we are destroying our children’s ability to thrive on this planet. We need to listen to our heart, our soul and our dreams for this world. Let go of fear.

Slow down
What is the legacy we want to leave our children? Love, support, and a world in which they can live healthily?

Learn continuously
Every year is critical, every one of our efforts is a contribution.

Act
Speak out, build the alternative, tell a new story, make changes to empower ourselves and inspire others. Leave a legacy for all children, that we acted when we knew.

This booklet is written to inform and empower people wanting to build a more sustainable world. It offers:

1. The latest climate science from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The IPCC informs our governments on what is happening, why it is happening, and what we can do to stop climate change. Our governments officially approve IPCC summaries.

2. Personal actions, in response to this science, that we can take in our daily lives. Current environmental crises, including climate change, are driven by humans. It is our responsibility to help, both in our personal lives and through our governments.

3. Questions to guide conversations with our politicians. Healthy and fair government policies can help us act urgently, while also protecting human rights, Indigenous People’s rights, and nature.

4. Images to show how transforming the root causes of climate change can help heal other crises unprecedented in our human history, including rates of species extinction, ocean acidification, land degradation, chemical pollution, and freshwater scarcity.

WHERE WE ARE GOING
WITH URGENT ACTION, WE CAN HEAL

Our climate is changing, and we are already feeling the effects of this around the world. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) tells us that if we do not cut our greenhouse gas emissions that are warming the atmosphere, we will remain on track for a global 4.8°C temperature rise by 2100. This rate of warming is too fast for humans and nature to adapt to safely. It would devastate civilization and the natural world as we know it.

In the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change, our countries agreed to “holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels.” The agreement is legally-binding under international law. In it, developed countries, who have benefited more from industrialization, have the responsibility to lead on core actions.

The IPCC has concluded that it is still possible to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C if urgent action is taken. This would save people, other species and nature from the profound levels of suffering and loss of life under higher global temperature rises.

Global catastrophic climate change does not have to happen.

We are not powerless. We can make a positive difference.

And leave a legacy for all children, that we acted when we knew.
WHAT WE EAT

The population is growing, and people are consuming more meat and dairy. This means we are cutting down more forests and using more water, land and chemicals to grow crops to feed livestock, rather than to grow food for us to eat. This also destroys wildlife.

What scientists tell our governments:

“Livestock are responsible for more greenhouse gas emissions than all other food sources.”4

“Dietary shifts could contribute one-fifth of the mitigation needed to hold warming below 2°C, with one-quarter of low-cost options.”5

“Changes in consumption patterns have contributed to about 2 billion adults now being overweight or obese. An estimated 821 million people are still undernourished.”6

“Decreasing food loss and waste and changing dietary behaviour could result in mitigation and adaptation by reducing both emissions and pressure on land, with significant co-benefits for food security, human health and sustainable development.”7

“Low-demand pathways, which would reduce or completely avoid the reliance on bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS) in 1.5°C pathways, would result in significantly reduced pressure on food security, lower food prices and fewer people at risk of hunger.”8

WHAT WE CAN DO

Eat a mostly plant-based diet.
Reduce, or stop, eating meat and dairy.
Reduce food waste.
Make time to cook fresh food and avoid using highly processed and industrialized foods.
Buy locally grown, seasonal food, organic if possible.
Compost if you can.

WHAT OUR POLITICIANS CAN DO — CLIMATE ACTION QUESTIONS:

- Which government policies ensure nutritious, fresh food is available, affordable and not undercut by producers with lower environmental standards?
- Which education campaigns focus on transforming diets, including the impact of meat consumption on climate change, species extinction, deforestation, chemical pollution and freshwater scarcity?
- Which government policies help reduce food waste and products driving chronic rates of obesity?
- Which government policies help reduce plastic packaging and ban single use plastic?
- Which government policies promote local markets over supermarkets?
- How does the government ensure people have enough food to eat, before allowing the export of crops to other countries?
How we grow food

Rising temperatures and disrupted weather make it harder for farmers to grow food. How we grow and sell food can, however, also make a difference. Industrial farming does more harm to soil, water supplies and insect populations than sustainable and multi-crop farming, particularly that practised by small-scale farmers.

What scientists tell our governments:

“Sustainable land management [...] options include agroecology (including agroforestry), conservation agriculture and forestry practices, crop and forest species diversity, appropriate crop and forest rotations, organic farming, integrated pest management, the conservation of pollinators, rainwater harvesting, range and pasture management, and precision agriculture systems.”

“Around one-third of the food produced on the planet is not consumed, affecting food security and livelihoods.”

“If emissions associated with pre- and post-production activities in the global food system are included, the emissions are estimated to be 21-37% of total net anthropogenic (human created) GHG emissions.”

“What percentage of our food is grown in our country?”

“About a quarter of the Earth’s ice-free land area is subject to human-induced degradation. Soil erosion from agricultural fields is estimated to be currently 10 to 20 times (no tillage) to more than 100 times (conventional tillage) higher than the soil formation rate.”

WHAT WE CAN DO

- Grow some of our own food and bee-friendly flowers.
- Join a community garden.
- Avoid pesticides and chemical fertilizers.
- Where possible, buy from local and community farms.
- Choose food labelled as sustainably sourced/fairly traded.

WHAT OUR POLITICIANS CAN DO — CLIMATE ACTION QUESTIONS:

- What percentage of our food is grown in our country?
- How can we reduce the concentration of food power in a small number of multinational companies?
- Which government policies protect farmers from unfair supermarket buying practices?
- Which government policies help farmers switch from intensive animal production to plant-based crops?
- Which government policies financially support local and community farms?
- Which government policies help protect the rights of poorer citizens to secure land tenure?
- What percentage of our country’s land is owned by citizens or companies based in another country?
- Which government policies promote community gardens?
HOW WE CHERISH AND PROTECT NATURE

Our health, wellbeing and existence are dependent on the health of plants, animals and eco-systems; we are already dying from air pollution and zoonotic diseases like COVID 19.

What scientists tell our governments:

“Risks of local species losses and, consequently, risks of extinction are much less in a 1.5°C versus a 2°C warmer world ... Constraining warming to 1.5°C would prevent the thawing of an estimated permafrost area of 1.5 to 2.5 million km² over centuries compared to thawing under 2°C.”13

“Marine ice sheet instability in Antarctica and/or irreversible loss of the Greenland ice sheet could result in multi-metre rise in sea level over hundreds to thousands of years. These instabilities could be triggered at around 1.5°C to 2°C of global warming.”14

“The ocean has absorbed about 30% of the anthropogenic carbon dioxide, resulting in ocean acidification and changes to carbonate chemistry that are unprecedented for at least the last 65 million years.”15

“The risks of declining ocean productivity, shifts of species to higher latitudes, damage to ecosystems, loss of fisheries productivity, and changes to ocean chemistry are projected to be substantially lower when global warming is limited to 1.5°C.”16

“Carbon Dioxide Removal (CDR) deployed at scale is unproven, and reliance on such technology is a major risk in the ability to limit warming to 1.5°C.”17

WHERE WE ARE HEADED

WHAT WE CAN DO

✓ Reduce or stop eating fish and animals.
✓ Avoid pesticides and toxic cleaning materials.
✓ Support organizations that protect nature.
✓ Reconnect with nature, cherish and protect wildlife.

WHAT OUR POLITICIANS CAN DO — CLIMATE ACTION QUESTIONS:

• Which government policies protect marine life from overfishing and ban dredging of the seabed which destroy marine life?
• Which government policies support fishermen to shift from unsustainable to sustainable fishing?
• Which government policies set aside land for protection and facilitate access to nature for people in urban areas?
• Which government policies protect environmental defenders and Indigenous People’s rights?
• Which government policies ban dangerous pesticides, and which prioritize the restoration of our degraded forests?
• If we use bioenergy, which policies ensure its production doesn’t destroy forests or replace vital food crops?
• Which policies support land reform for fairer tenant rights, and which policies limit excessive land ownership?
How we source and use energy

Extracting and burning fossil fuels is the main driver of rising global temperatures. Renewable energies can be cleaner, healthier, locally owned, and less likely to lead to conflict.

What scientists tell our governments:

“...the share of primary energy from renewables increases while coal usage decreases across pathways limiting warming to 1.5°C with no or limited overshoot. By 2050, renewables (including bioenergy, hydro, wind, and solar, with direct equivalence method) supply a share of 52–67% (interquartile range) of primary energy in 1.5°C pathways with no or limited overshoot...”18

“The political, economic, social and technical feasibility of solar energy, wind energy and electricity storage technologies has improved dramatically over the past few years, while that of nuclear energy and carbon dioxide capture and storage (CCS) in the electricity sector have not shown similar improvements.”19

“Changes in energy demand are associated with improvements in energy efficiency and behaviour change.”20

“1.5°C pathways with no or limited overshoot include a rapid decline in the carbon intensity of electricity and an increase in electrification of energy end use.”21

“Policies reflecting a high price on emissions are necessary in models to achieve cost-effective 1.5°C pathways.”22

What we can do

✓ Reduce our energy use and insulate our homes.
✓ Invest in low-carbon heating and/or cooling systems.
✓ Buy 100% clean and renewable energy where possible.
✓ Support community-owned renewable energy efforts.
✓ Reduce use of refrigerators and air conditioning.
✓ Avoid investments in fossil fuel companies.

What our politicians can do – climate action questions:

• Does your party accept donations from fossil fuel companies? If so, do you seek to reduce this influence?
• Is our government actively reducing our coal, oil, and gas extraction, to ensure a safer climate for our children?
• Does our government work to end subsidies for fossil fuels and shift subsidies to increasing renewable energy supply and usage?
• Does our government fund solar, wind, water, tidal and geothermal renewable energy to the best of its ability?
• Does our government support poorer communities to afford clean cooking stoves and low carbon heating/cooling systems?
• Do we pursue “efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels”, as we committed to in the Paris Agreement?
• Do we use large scale bioenergy that destroys forests?
HOW WE RUN OUR ECONOMIES

The earth is our spaceship; its natural resources are limited. Unsustainable and unjust economic approaches are driving environmental crises, including climate change. The “global economy is almost five times the size it was half a century ago and has already been accompanied by the degradation of an estimated 60% of the world’s ecosystems.”

What scientists tell our governments:

“Sustainable development means ‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’.”

“Globally, economic and population growth continued to be the most important drivers of increases in carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions from fossil fuel combustion. The contribution of population growth between 2000 and 2010 remained roughly identical to the previous three decades, while the contribution of economic growth has risen sharply.”

“Social justice and equity are core aspects of climate-resilient development pathways for transformational social change.”

“Limiting warming to 1.5°C requires a marked shift in investment patterns.”

“Carbon prices, regulation and standards, improved information and appropriate financial instruments can work synergistically to meet the challenge of making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development…”

WHAT WE CAN DO

✓ Consider our lifestyle and recycle, reuse, share out.
✓ Explore our role as a consumer and learn about ‘circular’, ‘doughnut’ and ecological economics.
✓ Support businesses with good environmental standards and conditions for workers.
✓ Change to an environmentally minded, socially responsible Bank.

WHAT OUR POLITICIANS CAN DO — CLIMATE ACTION QUESTIONS:

- Do we put equality, peace and the health of people and the planet before financial profit? Is inequality rising?
- How can our tax system make us a more equal society, and prioritize people and the planet?
- Do we have a carbon tax and a financial transaction tax to support climate action?
- To best protect our children, how are we shifting defence budgets away from weapons and toward transformative, just and healthy climate actions?
- What level of climate finance do we provide to poorer countries? Is this in the form of grants, not loans which further disadvantage them?
- Does our government support a just transition for people working in polluting sectors to retrain for green jobs?
- Does the selling price of what we buy include the full environmental and social cost it took to make it? If not, who pays for the environmental and social destruction?
HOW WE TRANSFORM THE INDUSTRIAL AND BUILDING SECTORS

Transformations in both the industrial and building sectors are needed for a safer climate. When you add in energy use, the industrial sector contributes about one third of greenhouse gas emissions, and the building sector about one fifth.  

What scientists tell our governments:

“Pathways limiting global warming to 1.5°C with no or limited overshoot would require rapid and far-reaching transitions in energy, land, urban and infrastructure (including transport and buildings), and industrial systems.”

“In the industry sector, improvements in GHG emission efficiency and in the efficiency of material use, recycling and reuse of materials and products, and overall reductions in product demand (e.g., through a more intensive use of products) and service demand could, in addition to energy efficiency, help reduce GHG emissions below the baseline level. Important options for mitigation in waste management are waste reduction, followed by re-use, recycling and energy recovery.”

“Reductions of black carbon and methane would have substantial co-benefits, including improved health due to reduced air pollution.”

“Feasible adaptation options include green infrastructure, resilient water and urban ecosystem services, urban and peri-urban agriculture, and adapting buildings and land use through regulation and planning.”

WHERE WE ARE HEADED

WHAT WE CAN DO

✓ Use low carbon, sustainable materials in our home or any building work.
✓ Learn which industries in our region produce high levels of pollution/emissions and who pays for their cleanup.
✓ Insulate our home effectively.

WHAT OUR POLITICIANS CAN DO — CLIMATE ACTION QUESTIONS:

• Are industries held responsible for cleaning up their pollution? Do they pay a carbon tax, for example?
• How do government policies help support industries which are trying to rapidly reduce their GHG emissions?
• Are you concerned that carbon capture storage (CCS) is energy intensive, risks leakage from storage facilities, and fails to capture upstream methane emissions?
• How do government policies require new buildings and industry to have low carbon electricity supplies, sufficient insulation, and use low carbon building materials?
• Do we prioritize new building on disused ‘brown’ sites, rather than destroying more nature for new buildings?
• How do we ensure new housing projects include sufficient low-income housing for the poorest?
• How do we support people with grants and loans to make their homes and buildings more energy efficient?
**HOW WE CONSUME AND TRAVEL (INCLUDING TRANSPORT)**

The richest 1% of the world’s population is responsible for more than twice as much carbon emissions as the poorest half of humanity (3.1 billion people).  

**What scientists tell our governments:**

“The spread of fossil-fuel based material consumption and changing lifestyles is a major driver of global resource use, and the main contributor to rising greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.”

“Behaviour and lifestyle related measures and demand-side management have already led to emission reductions around the world and can enable significant future reductions.”

“Other rapid changes needed in urban environments include de-motorization and decarbonization of transport, including the expansion of electric vehicles, and greater use of energy-efficient appliances.”

“Means of raising resources … include the reduction of fossil fuel subsidies, increasing revenues from carbon taxes, levies on international aviation and maritime transport, and sharing of the proceeds of financial arrangements supporting mitigation activities.”

“Reductions in population growth can reduce overall carbon demand and mitigate climate change, particularly when population growth is accompanied by increases in affluence and carbon-intensive consumption.”

**WHERE WE ARE HEADED**

**WHAT WE CAN DO**

- Buy what we need, not what we want.
- Invest in energy efficient appliances.
- Replace aluminum products with low-GHG alternatives.
- Walk or cycle rather than drive short distances.
- Where possible, use public transport and avoid flying.

**WHAT OUR POLITICIANS CAN DO — CLIMATE ACTION QUESTIONS:**

- How are we investing in electric buses and the electrification of railways, powered by renewable energy?
- How much waste are we burning rather than recycling? How can we burn less and recycle more?
- What more can we do to build bike lanes and reduce cars in city centres, and car dependency overall?
- Are we limiting airport expansion, taxing frequent flying, and other measures to reduce emissions from aviation?
- What government policies do we have to reduce emissions and pollution from shipping?
- Is our public transport publicly owned? As a public service, can we make it free for all, and reduce traffic and air pollution?
- How do we regulate the advertising industry, especially advertising of highly polluting, unsustainable and/or unhealthy products?
**HOW TO BE A HERO FOR ALL OUR CHILDREN**

To act wisely, we must understand what destroys nature and what helps its healing. And we must transform the activities that are most responsible for climate change driven by human activities, including:

- **Fossil fuel extraction and burning** (coal, oil and gas);
- **black carbon** (i.e. soot from burning fossil fuels, biofuels and biomass);
- **deforestation and forest degradation; intensive and animal agriculture**;
- **fossil fuel intensive industry, transport, buildings**;
- and **hydrofluorocarbons** (i.e. cooling agents for air conditioning)
- the above are driven by **unsustainable economic approaches** that rely on ‘more’ when our planet has only ‘some’.

If we act urgently to pursue a **1.5°C temperature limit**, global catastrophic climate change does not have to happen.

We can build a healthier world for all children.

We can build a fairer world for our children, respecting and protecting human rights, Indigenous People’s rights, and create rights for nature.

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**WHERE WE ARE HEADED**

We have enough knowledge. Our human influence on the climate system is clear.

We can transform fear, anger, and confusion into compassion, clarity, and hope to inspire environmental action.

How is your country pursuing a 1.5°C temperature limit, as committed to in the Paris Agreement?

**TRANSFORMATIVE CLIMATE ACTIONS INCLUDE**:

- Sustainable economic and development models - Rapid reduction of fossil fuel extraction and combustion - Deep reductions in emissions of methane and black carbon - Energy efficiency - Refrigerant management - Onshore wind turbines - Rooftop solar - Solar farms - Educating girls - Family planning - Clean cooking stoves - Offshore wind turbines - Protection of peatland areas - Sustainable transport - Tropical staple tree regeneration - Reduced food waste - A plant-rich diet - Planting new forests - Restoring degraded forests - Sustainable agriculture practices - Sufficient climate finance - Reduce individual consumption
In this space, write what you hope to transform in your life.

What inspired you in this booklet? Can you share it with a family member, a neighbour, a stranger? Can you write to, or meet with, decision makers to help build conversations? We all have gifts; what do you feel called to do?

1Britain Yearly Meeting. 2020. Climate Justice, a Quaker View; https://quaker-prod.s3-west-1.amazonaws.com/store/0ebc88a37690aa047ed13af367c2145e51a2166c031397342866c76905c4
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The Quaker UN Office is an expert observer of the IPCC and UNFCCC. QUNO has been supporting work on climate change at the international level through diplomacy, advocacy and education initiatives since 2012. Please consider making a donation to help us continue with this work https://quno.org/donate/geneva