

The Future We Choose ISBN 978-1-83877-082-2

Continuing our summary of actions required to bring about a good future for our planet, this month we look at **9: Build Gender Equality**. *Previous summaries are available on the church website.*

This chapter makes a compelling case that gender equality is not just about social justice - it will also help us to tackle climate change. In many societies women are closer to the land, are first to notice problems, and the first to be affected by it. There are many analyses given to show the impact of women in leadership on tackling carbon emissions and other issues that harm our planet's eco-systems. The chapter finishes with two examples, the first of which I will give details.

In the desert of Gujarat, in western India, it is women who work the salt pans producing 76% of India's salt. The area is largely disconnected from the National Grid, so the 40,000 salt pan workers have relied on diesel-powered pumps, often using up 40% of their income. With visionary leadership support from Reemaben Nanavatay, a native of Gujarat, and director of the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) with 2 million members, these workers are shifting to solar power. The first 1000 people doubled their income. When rolled out to all 15000 members of SEWA, it will save 115,000 tons of CO₂, the equivalent of taking 25,000 cars off the road! It will also enable the women to send their children to middle and high school.

Climate Change Analysis New Scientist 24 April pages 34-45

The good news is that the world has made some progress in cutting the carbon emissions that are driving climate change. The bad news is that it is nowhere near enough. (A recent UN report concluded that emission levels in 2030 will be only 5% below 2010 levels, nowhere near enough to keep temperature rising to only 1.5°C. There is also evidence that various feedback loops are making things worse than we had previously realised. To have a chance of averting catastrophe we have to get to net zero by 2050. We have already warmed the world by over 1°C from pre-industrial levels. If countries met all their existing commitments then the world would warm by 2.6°C. This is why the COP26 in Glasgow is so important.

What does COP26 need to achieve?

The UK government, which is co-hosting the summit with Italy, has laid out four objectives for the summit. It wants every country to:

- 1.) Commit to hit net zero by 2050, as the UK did in 2019
- 2.) Ensure protection for the people most vulnerable to a warming world
- 3.) Deliver a total of \$100 billion a year climate finance pledge from richer nations
- 4.) Increase collaboration across business, civil society, and nations.

Finance is critical; in 2009 \$100 billion was pledged by 2020 to enable the poorer countries to reduce their emissions; only \$80 billion is currently on the table. In one year over \$12 trillion has been spent fighting COVID, so this really ought to be possible. After all, Climate Change is clearly an issue where "No one is safe until we are all safe."

What can we do?

1. **Pray** for all those planning and preparing for the conference, particularly for Patricia Espinosa and her team at the United Nations.

2. Recognise that we are all going to need to make significant lifestyle changes. In 2020 the average emissions in the UK were 5 tonnes of CO2 per person. To achieve net zero we are going to have to change; in particular:
 - a) If we must drive, go electric (or car share)
 - b) Switch to a heat pump
 - c) Reduce our consumption of meat and animal products
 - d) Don't go back to flying as often as we used to

If COP26 succeeds and governments put their promises into action, then there is hope for our planet. If not, the suffering caused by COVID-19 will seem trivial in comparison to the future suffering that will be caused. **It's now or never.**