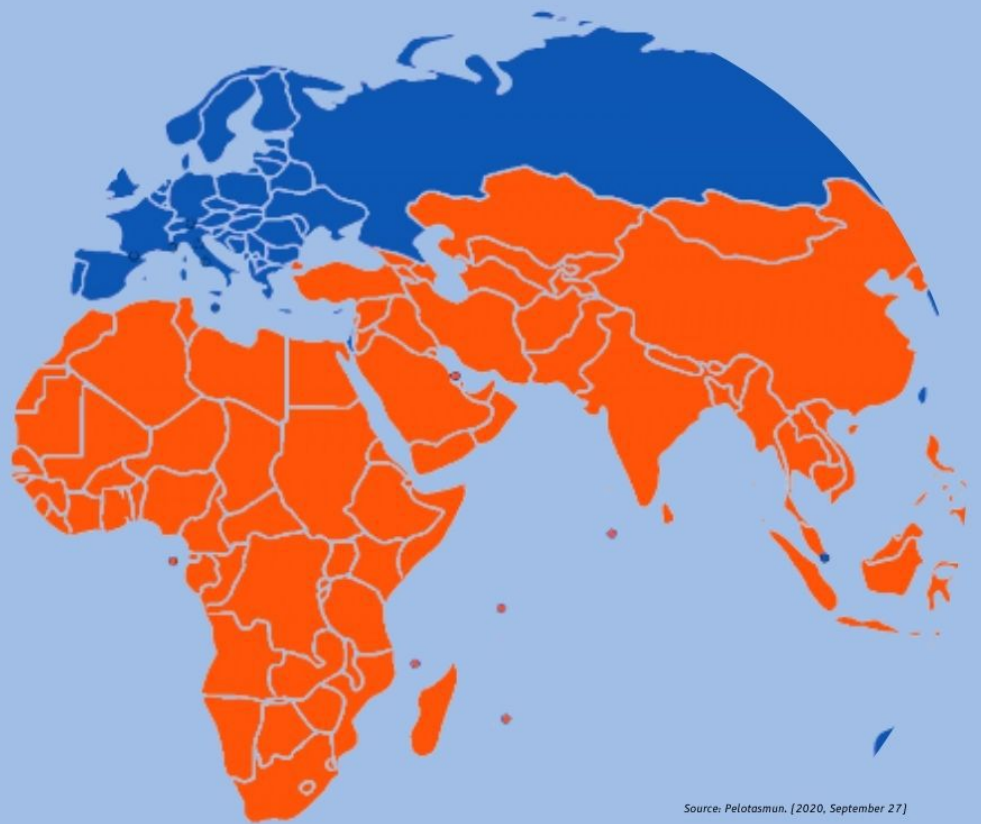


OPERATIONALISING THE LOSS AND DAMAGE FUND: DELIVERING FINANCE TO THE MOST VULNERABLE

STRENGTH Policy Brief December 2023

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Source: Pelotasun. [2020, September 27]



Canada





We deeply mourn the passing of our STRENGTH Project's Principal Investigator Prof. Saleemul Huq. His legacy is a beacon of inspiration, reminding us that passion, dedication, and unwavering commitment can shape a sustainable future for all.

Dr. Huq's efforts in advancing our understanding of climate change-induced loss and damage have had a profound impact on global climate policies in favor of vulnerable countries and communities worldwide. His extensive research, policy advocacy, and community engagement initiatives have not only shaped the discourse on climate resilience but have also inspired countless individuals and organizations to take meaningful actions towards achieving climate justice.

His tireless efforts echo through time, urging us to stand united in the face of challenges and work towards a world where compassion and resilience prevail.

Operationalising the Loss and Damage Fund: Delivering Finance to the Most Vulnerable

Messages for Action

- 1. Recognise the urgency of addressing losses and damages and expedite the pace of action.** Look no further than the events of 2022 and 2023 to recognise the urgency. For example, the 2022 Pakistan floods displaced 7 million people and caused around USD 30 billion in damages (Liu Coco & Mangi Faseeh, 2023). Similarly, Vanuatu faced three cyclones in eight months, leading to massive economic and non-economic losses such as the loss of traditional livelihoods and culture (Save the Children, 2023).
- 2. Recognise adaptation limits and build L&D actions to complement adaptation efforts through a climate justice approach.** Despite increased adaptation investment in recent years, communities and ecosystems have endured irreversible climate losses and damages (Buchner et al., 2023; IPCC, 2023). Take, for instance, the commendable planning and village-level adaptation initiatives undertaken by communities such as Western Santo, Vanuatu. Despite such adaptation efforts, the catastrophic impact of Category 5 Tropical Cyclone Harold in 2020 resulted in approximately USD 500 million worth of extensive damage nationally (Bharadwaj & Shakya, 2021).
- 3. Ensure meaningful Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) in the design of the L&D Fund.** The persistent underrepresentation of women and the most vulnerable groups in shaping the new L&D Fund raises concerns about its effective and equitable utilisation. While the TC process created certain openings for civil society engagement, opportunities for the voices of vulnerable communities remained constrained. Consequently, the ultimate outcome of the TC failed to adequately address the concerns of the people at the frontline of climate impact (Bomzan, 2023; Schalatek, 2023).
- 4. The L&D Fund must not be seen as yet another humanitarian or philanthropic fund but a climate justice fund.** The responsibility of filling the L&D Fund should align with the spirit of the Paris Climate Agreement, driven by principles of fairness and historical responsibility. However, divisions between developed and developing countries in the TC process raise doubts about the L&D Fund's alignment with principles of climate justice (Richards et al., 2023; Rowling, 2023)
- 5. Consider and address the non-economic losses and damages (NELD).** Many of the losses and damages experienced by vulnerable communities and countries often escape policy attention because they are not easily quantifiable, despite representing significant and tangible impacts. Non-economic losses and damages include loss of culture, mental illness, loss of language, loss of indigenous knowledge and so on (McNamara et al, 2021). The L&D financing should have a clear mandate and necessary procedure to cover non-economic losses and damages.
- 6. Make L&D Fund access procedures simple and flexible.** When procedures are complex, the most vulnerable groups lose. Valuable lessons can be drawn from other climate finance streams, such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF), whose project approval procedures have been found to disadvantage the most vulnerable countries and communities (Argueta et al, 2021; Omkuti, 2022). The L&D Fund must prioritise simplicity, flexibility, and procedural accessibility to ensure that funds reach the most vulnerable in a timely manner when needed.
- 7. Ensure the L&D Fund has enough capital.** Vulnerable countries and communities express legitimate concerns about COP28, fearing that it may not act swiftly enough to fill the Fund (Schalatek, 2023). This apprehension is not unfounded, given the historical pattern of unfulfilled promises in climate finance. With the urgency for financial support already pressing, COP28 must take decisive action to ensure that the Fund does not linger as an empty bucket.

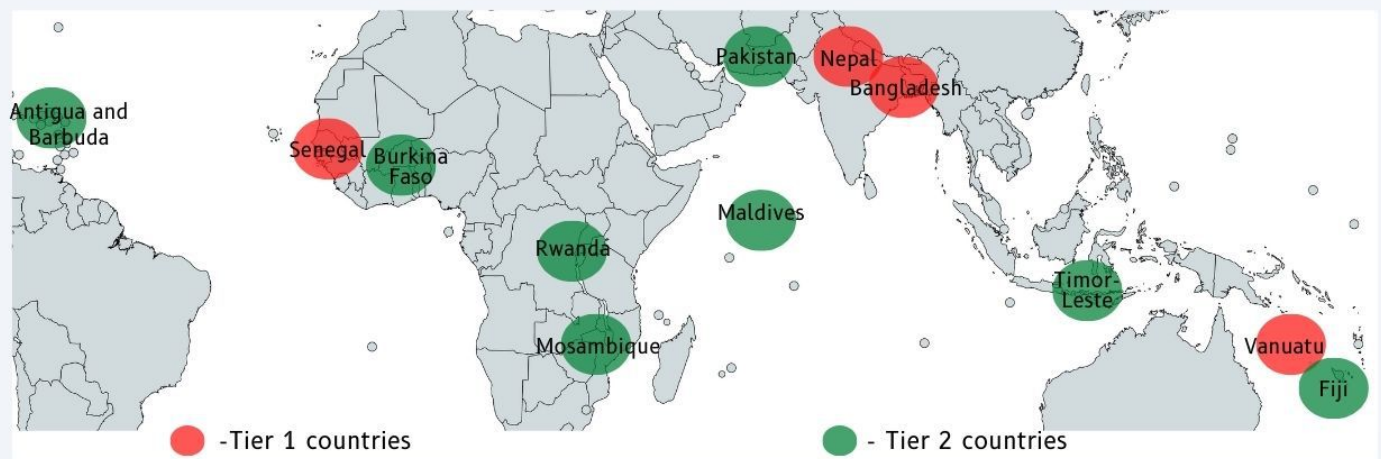
About this Policy Brief

As human-induced climate crisis worsens, losses and damages are escalating, with each new event shattering records from the past. There is unequivocal scientific evidence to support that climate-induced disasters and slow-onset risks will continue to increase (IPCC, 2021; NASA, 2023). The ongoing mitigation and adaptation efforts are insufficient, and vulnerable communities and natural ecosystems are fast reaching their adaptation limits (OECD, 2021; IPCC, 2022). The agreement to establish a new Loss and Damage (L&D) Fund in 2022 offered a new ray of hope. However, progress is slow, and disagreements continue, as seen in the Transitional Committee (TC) processes on operationalising the L&D Fund.

We are in the middle of an unparalleled moment of climate injustice, where delayed actions are resulting in an intolerable loss of human lives and critical ecosystems at the forefront of the climate crisis. This Policy Brief offers some insights as to how the new L&D Fund can be operationalised to restore climate justice. Our messages and evidence originates from direct engagement with some of the most vulnerable communities in Vanuatu, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Senegal, as part of the Strengthening Loss and Damage Response Capacity in the Global South (STRENGTH) project (details below). Primary data collected from the field is complemented by a thorough review of reports and scientific papers.

STRENGTH Project

This policy brief draws from the Strengthening Loss and Damage Response Capacity in the Global South (STRENGTH) project which was developed recognising the need to gather evidence and research insights to strengthen the representation of the Global South in the rapidly evolving global L&D discussions in UNFCCC processes. STRENGTH was also inspired by the longstanding researcher and climate justice advocate the Late Prof Saleemul Huq, who was the Principal Investigator of the project. Jointly developed by the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) and the Institute for Study and Development Worldwide (IFSD) with funding from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), STRENGTH focuses its work on four vulnerable countries from the Global South: Vanuatu, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Senegal. Country based STRENGTH partners are actively gathering contextually grounded insights through engagement with stakeholders. STRENGTH also includes eight Tier 2 Global South countries which will be engaged in knowledge exchange and capacity building (see map below).



Why Loss and Damage (L&D) Fund?

Amidst a growing body of science connecting rising losses and damage to climate change, global climate policy action emphasises on restoring justice as well as adaptive capacity of social and ecological systems in the most vulnerable communities and countries. There are at least three underlying premises to rationalise the L&D Fund that are outlined below:

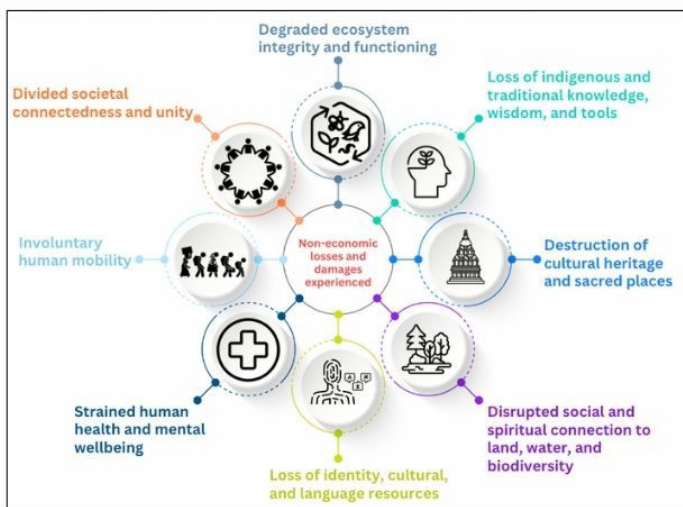
A. Unavoidable losses and damages to vulnerable communities who are the least contributors of climate change

The global mean temperature surpassing one degree Celsius above pre-industrial levels marks the onset of a new era of loss and damage from human-induced climate change (Huq, 2021). Almost every single day, we see record-breaking extreme events, every year being worse than the previous one. The perpetuating vulnerability to losses and damages can be attributed to four dimensions of climate injustice: First, most vulnerable groups have contributed the least to climate change. Second, yet they bear the brunt of its highest impacts. Third, they have the least capacity to prevent, minimise, or address climate-related risks. Fourth, they

are the least consulted and included in global policy debates. Urgent new and additional funding is required to address these escalating losses and damages faced by these vulnerable countries and communities (Addison et al., 2022).

B. Non-Economic losses and damages are huge and are the hotspots of injustice

Non-economic losses and damages (NELD) includes material and non-material dimensions that are difficult to monetise, including impacts such as loss of agency, biodiversity, cultural heritage, ecosystem services, health, human life, and identity (Serdeczny et al., 2016; Boyd et al., 2021). These impacts often go unnoticed but are equally devastating, if not more, to vulnerable communities and their livelihoods systems. Examples include sea-level rise displacing communities in the Pacific, prolonged droughts in Iran affecting mental well-being, and coastal flooding in Nigeria hindering women's mobility and economic access (Boyd et al., 2021; Tschakert, 2019). Failure to consider NELD prevents a comprehensive approach to addressing the full spectrum of losses and damages faced by frontline communities, impacting their identity and social connectivity in the face of migration due to climate disasters (Naushin et al., 2023).



Source: Developed through a synthesis of review (Tschakert et al., 2019; Clissold et al., 2021; IPCCAD, 2023).

C. Climate losses and damages exacerbate gender inequality as women and girls are disproportionately impacted

The climate crisis does not affect everyone equally and the impact is not “gender neutral” (UN Women, 2022). Women globally continue to face persistent barriers in social, economic, cultural, and political spheres, particularly pronounced in the developing world. Additionally, they are also often the first observers and among the first victims of the adverse impacts of climate change (Yadav and Lal, 2018). Further, the existing gender-based power imbalances and social discrimination deprive many women and girls of

equal rights, limiting their access to land ownership and climate finance, further reinforcing their vulnerability to climate change (UNFCCC, 2022).

Local Realities and Voices from the Frontline of Climate Impact

A. Vanuatu

Pacific island countries are a hotspot for climate injustice (Morgan and Petrou 2023). Vanuatu, a Small Island Developing State (SID) faces intensifying climate-induced disasters, leading to significant economic and non-economic losses as human and natural systems have now reached limits of both soft and hard adaptations. Specifically, women and other marginalised groups are disproportionately affected. The life sustaining coral reefs are rapidly being destroyed by climate-induced events which is undermining the rights and survival of people who rely on these biodiversity hotspots (Waiwai et al., 2023). For decades Vanuatu has been a strong advocate for climate justice and a leading voice for L&D agenda (McNamara et al 2023). However, the magnitude of the challenges faced highlights the urgent need for multi-level action and significant financing. Urgent financing is needed to scale up practical, effective, and locally led solutions, with a particular focus on empowering women in the process.



Artwork: Raju Lamichhane

B. Nepal

Nepal, a mountainous country at the centre of the Himalayan region, faces disproportionate impact from various climate risks, including mountain floods, landslides, and droughts leading to multiple forms of unavoidable climate-induced economic and non-economic losses and damages (MoFE, 2021). Melamchi, a municipality located in the central mountain, illustrates Nepal's situation. The municipality is facing recurring floods annually, with the floods in 2021 being the most devastating, causing unprecedented and extensive losses and damages. Nepal has made progress by developing the National Framework on Climate Change Induced Loss and Damage (L&D) in 2021, linking L&D with adaptation

and disaster risk management, but faces challenges in its implementation due to limited financial and technological capacity. To enhance national L&D preparedness, Nepal requires urgent financial and technological assistance to initiate crucial local-level actions, essential for developing context-specific L&D solutions.



Artwork: Raju Lamichhane

C. Bangladesh

As a low-lying coastal country and situated at the delta of the large Himalayan rivers, Bangladesh faces intensifying threats from climate variability, rising sea levels, and extreme weather events. While the country has scaled up adaptation and disaster risk management efforts, losses and damages are unavoidable due to the cascading effects of climate change. Barisal, a city in the southern coastal region, bears the brunt of escalating climate impacts such as erratic rainfall, riverbank erosion, and water scarcity resulting in diverse economic and non-economic losses, disproportionately affecting women and girls. There is an urgent need to implement locally led and transformative L&D solutions for which new and additional financial support is crucial. This includes supporting livelihood diversification and capacity building initiatives, particularly for groups that are disproportionately impacted and yet have limited resources to cope and manage on their own.



Artwork: Raju Lamichhane

D. Senegal

Senegal, a predominantly arid and semi-arid country in West Africa, faces diverse climate-induced hazards like coastal erosion, floods, and droughts, severely impacting its predominantly rural population that is heavily dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods (Casado-Asensio et al, 2021; Schäfer et al, 2021; Cluzel, 2023). Shifting rainfall patterns and prolonged droughts is increasing food insecurity, especially impacting women who constitute 80% of the agricultural workforce (Nébié, 2021). Despite national policies to build climate resilience, limited financial capacity hinders the integration of measures to address the escalating losses and damages. Senegal needs urgent financial and technical assistance to drive L&D actions at both the national and local levels. Technical support is required to build tools such as database systems to have a holistic understanding of the extent of losses and damages to adequately address it.

From Transitional Committee to COP28: What can We Achieve?

After a year-long deliberation, the Transitional Committee (TC) has submitted recommendations to the COP28, an outcome of compromises by all the parties involved. The recommendation text still lacks some crucial aspects, specifically from the perspective of climate justice, which is the core of the Loss and Damage agenda. Notably, concerns arise due to a lack of explicit reference to the UNFCCC's Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capacities (CBDR-RC) principles along with the lack of obligation to contribute to the Fund. Discussions within the TC have highlighted the scale of funding needed and the need for diverse sources of funding, but TC recommendations fall short of outlining how the needed funding can be secured. Similarly, non-party observers who have played an important role in shaping the L&D financing are not in the list of recommended members in the Fund's board, which will further undermine the only channel to represent the voices of the most vulnerable communities.

Despite the shortcomings, the submission of the proposal shows global commitment towards establishing a new Loss and Damage Fund, sourcing and mobilising new and additional financing on top of prior climate finance commitments. At COP28, it is important that Parties to UNFCCC and Paris Agreement recognise these gaps and focus on ways to create and fill the Fund to urgently address climate-induced losses and damages.

Transitional Committee Recommendations to COP28	
Key ingredients of the TC Package	Contested issues
Fund Host	
The World Bank to serve as the interim host of the Fund for 4 years	No exit strategy for the World Bank. Possibility to continue as the Fund host after 4 years, if they meet the set criteria and perform well.
Fund Operating Entity	
Fund designated as an entity entrusted to operate in the financial mechanism of both the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention and the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA).	No explicit clarity regarding the Fund's status as a stand alone operating entity of the UNFCCC Financial Mechanism.
Fund Board Composition	
The Board comprising of 26 members: 14 (developed) and 12 (developing) countries.	No representation of non-party stakeholders: civil society organisations, indigenous peoples, and local communities in the Fund Board.
Financial Contributions to the Fund	
The Fund to receive contributions from diverse funding sources on an ongoing basis, further supported by a long-term fundraising and resource mobilisation strategy developed by the Board.	No obligations for developed countries to fill and replenish the Fund
Governing Instrument of the Fund	
The Fund aims to maximise its funding impact by responding to climate change-related losses and damages to promote environmental, social, economic, and development co-benefits, while taking a culturally sensitive and gender responsive approach.	No mention of considering human rights approach.
Fund Eligibility	
Fund available to developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.	No support to be provided to many developing countries that are also vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.
Scale of the Fund	
	No scale of the Fund indicated.

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