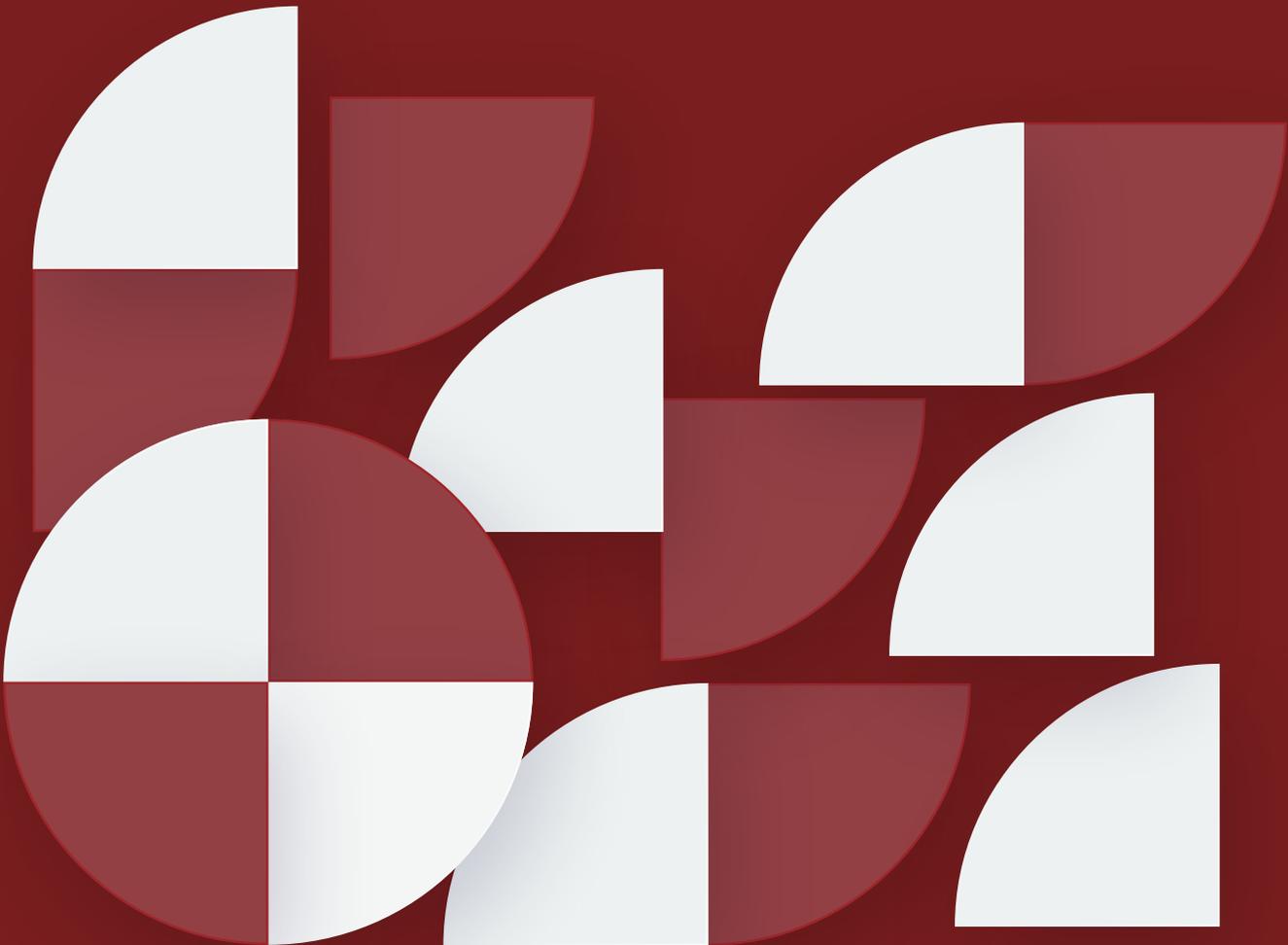




STRENGTH CAPACITY BRIDGING GRANTS

How STRENGTH Grants Empowered Young Researchers
to Bring Local Perspectives on Loss and Damage

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An Analytical Paper by
Adiba Bintey Kamal and **Nusrat Naushin**

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The authors extend their sincere thanks to all the team members. This publication presents a summary of how the STRENGTH grants empowered young researchers to bring local perspectives on Loss and Damage. We are especially grateful to the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD), the Institute for Study and Development Worldwide (IFSD), and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) for their valuable contributions.

Authors:

Adiba Bintey Kamal and Nusrat Naushin

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Araf Al Mehedi

Under the Project:

Strengthening Loss and Damage Response Capacity in the Global South (STRENGTH)

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Executive Summary

Climate change is no longer a distant threat but an unfolding reality, with frontline communities experiencing escalating losses and damages that exceed the limits of adaptation. While economic losses such as damage to infrastructure, livelihoods, and assets are increasingly documented, NELD, including the erosion of culture, identity, social cohesion, health, dignity, and ecosystems, remains under-recognized, difficult to measure, and inadequately reflected in policy and financing mechanisms. Yet these losses carry profound implications for climate justice, resilience, and human well-being.

This report examines the role and impact of capacity-building grants in strengthening understanding, research practice, and advocacy on L&D, with a particular focus on non-economic loss and damage. It documents lessons learned and emerging good practices from the Project titled 'Strengthening Loss and Damage Response Capacity in the Global South (STRENGTH)'. A special capacity-building grant of STRENGTH supported ten MSc- and PhD-level researchers across Bangladesh, Nepal, Senegal, and Vanuatu to undertake in-depth research on L&D. The initiative aimed not only to generate credible, context-specific evidence but also to build the skills, confidence, and networks of early-career researchers from climate-vulnerable regions, enabling them to meaningfully engage in national and global L&D processes.

The grants supported one-year, mixed-methods, participatory research projects that combined qualitative and quantitative approaches, including key informant interviews, focus group discussions, participatory reflection sessions, and narrative documentation, complemented by desk-based policy and literature reviews. Capacity building was embedded throughout the research process through technical guidance, mentoring, structured reflection, and collective learning sessions. The approach prioritized ethical, inclusive, and gender-responsive practices, ensuring the meaningful participation of women, youth, Indigenous peoples, and marginalized groups.

Collectively, the research outputs contributed valuable insights into how economic and non-

economic losses are experienced, perceived, and managed at community and local government levels. Findings highlighted the gendered dimensions of loss, the importance of lived values in assessing L&D, sector-specific impacts in agriculture and freshwater aquaculture, and gaps in how local governments recognize and prioritize climate-induced losses in planning and budgeting. The initiative also strengthened grantees' conceptual and practical understanding of L&D, enabling them to link field-level evidence to broader debates on vulnerability, exposure, coping capacity, and climate justice.

Beyond research outputs, the initiative opened pathways for academic growth, policy engagement, publication, and professional networking. Grantees reported improved research quality, enhanced methodological skills, increased confidence in engaging with policymakers and practitioners, and expanded visibility in national and international climate forums. Several research outputs are being developed into policy briefs and academic publications, with longer-term aspirations among grantees to continue contributing to L&D research and practice.

The report also identifies key limitations encountered during implementation, including financial constraints, data access challenges, and the need for more advanced training and sustained mentorship. Based on grantee feedback, recommendations include strengthening methodological training on L&D, expanding mentorship and peer-to-peer learning opportunities, increasing grant size, improving data access support, and establishing alumni networks to sustain long-term engagement in the L&D space.

Overall, the STRENGTH capacity-building grant initiative demonstrates how strategic grant-making can bridge the gap between community-level experiences and global L&D discourse. By investing in early-career researchers from the Global South, the STRENGTH Capacity Building initiative contributes to more inclusive, evidence-based, and justice-oriented L&D narratives and policies.

List of Abbreviations

L&D	Loss and Damage
NELD	Non-Economic Loss and Damage
FRLD	Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage
STRENGTH	Strengthening Loss and Damage Response Capacity in the Global South
LDPL	Loss and Damage Policy Lab
ICCCAD	International Centre for Climate Change and Development
IFSD	Institute for Study and Development Worldwide
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

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01

Introduction

As the climate crisis intensifies, it has transitioned from a future projection to a lived reality. Frontline communities in vulnerable countries of the Global South, those least responsible for global emissions, such as Bangladesh, Vanuatu, Senegal, and Nepal, now bear the disproportionate weight of impacts that often exceed the limits of existing adaptation practices. These impacts manifest as L&D, categorized into two critical streams: economic losses (infrastructure and livelihoods) and NELD. The latter involves the erosion of culture, identity, health, and ecosystem losses that are often irreversible and poorly captured by traditional metrics, yet fundamental to human dignity and justice.

In response to this urgency, the STRENGTH Project was established. This initiative, jointly developed by the ICCCAD and the IFSD with support from IDRC in Canada, seeks to move beyond the high-level negotiations of UNFCCC and operationalize L&D solutions on the ground.

The project operates through a three-pronged strategy:

- I. Critical review of existing discourse and knowledge gaps*
- II. Country-level diagnostics and pilot policy actions through the LDPL process*
- III. Global dialogues and knowledge exchange to bridge local insights with international policy.*

At the heart of the STRENGTH Project is the belief that addressing L&D requires a robust, country-led capacity-building ecosystem. Rather than top-down interventions, the project strengthens the skills, institutions, and resources necessary for developing nations to implement their own climate priorities. By equipping local actors with the right tools, they are better positioned to influence the evolving architecture of the global FRLD.

To complement the project's broader diagnostic work, a series of STRENGTH Capacity Building Grants were disbursed to early-career researchers to conduct on-the-ground research across STRENGTH Tier-1 countries, i.e., Bangladesh, Nepal, Senegal, and Vanuatu. These grants serve as a vital enabler, providing early career researchers with the flexibility to invest in participatory documentation and capacity strengthening.

Objectives of the STRENGTH Capacity-Building Grants

The STRENGTH Capacity-Building (CB) Grants were designed as a targeted intervention to address structural and knowledge gaps in L&D research and advocacy. The core objectives of the grants were to:

1. Build a new generation of NELD practitioners and researchers in climate-vulnerable regions by supporting early-career MSc and PhD researchers.
2. Generate grounded, context-specific evidence on both economic and non-economic losses that are often overlooked in national assessments and global policy debates.
3. Strengthen local research ecosystems by embedding participatory, ethical, and interdisciplinary methodologies.
4. Bridge community knowledge and global policy processes, ensuring that lived experiences inform national L&D mechanisms and international negotiations.
5. Contribute to long-term institutional and advocacy capacity, rather than short-term project outputs alone.

Through these objectives, STRENGTH positions capacity building not as a technical add-on, but as a foundational pillar for effective, equitable L&D governance.

Scope of the Study

This paper evaluates the impact of capacity-building grants in strengthening the understanding and advocacy of NELD. Specifically, it reflects on an initiative that distributed 10 research grants across Bangladesh, Nepal, Senegal, and Vanuatu. These grants empowered MSc and PhD-level researchers to generate in-depth, evidence-based insights into the intangible impacts of climate change in their respective regions.

While numerous funding programs exist, the metrics for their long-term impact remain underdeveloped. This report captures the lessons learned and best practices from these recipients, aiming to guide future grant-making and ensure that non-quantifiable losses are made visible in the global quest for climate justice.

Advancing Equitable NELD Responses

Grant Objectives



01

ENHANCED UNDERSTANDING

Examine capacity-building's impact on awareness & conceptual understanding Non-Economic Loss & Damage (NELD) at Community, Organisational, & Institutional levels



02

SKILLS & COMPETENCIES

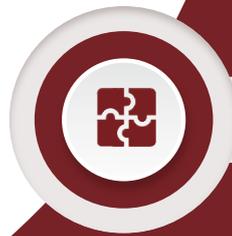
Assess effectiveness of grant activities in building skills for documentation & communicating NELD using Participatory & Rights based approaches



03

COMMUNITY AGENCY & INCLUSION

Analyse capacity-building's role in strengthen agency & inclusion of Women, Youth & Marginalised groups in local, national & global Loss and Damage discourse



04

GOOD PRACTICES & CHALLENGES

Identify lessons learned, successes, asses & challenges in designing & implementing effective NELD capacity-building grants



05

EVIDENCE-BASED RECOMMENDATIONS

Generate insights for future grant-making strategies, programs, policy interventions for equitable & just Loss & Damage Responses

Figure 1: Grant Objectives

02

Methodology

Grant Design and Implementation

Under the STRENGTH CB Grants, 10 competitive research grants were awarded across Bangladesh, Nepal, Senegal, and Vanuatu. The grants supported MSc and PhD-level researchers undertaking empirical studies on diverse dimensions of L&D (Table 1).

The grants were intentionally modest in size but high in flexibility, allowing researchers to tailor methodologies to local realities. Key design features included:

I. Emphasis on participatory and community-embedded research

II. Mentorship and technical support alongside financial assistance

III. Alignment with national and sub-national policy contexts

IV. Encouragement of interdisciplinary and mixed-methods approaches

This design reflects STRENGTH's core philosophy, that locally led research, when adequately resourced and supported, can generate globally relevant insights.

No.	Country	Level	Research Title/Topic	Core Focus Area
01.	Bangladesh	PhD	<i>Paving the Way for Addressing Non-Economic Loss and Damage: An Exploration of Affected Communities' Lived Values and Priorities</i>	NELD, lived values, community-defined loss, policy integration
02.	Senegal	PhD	<i>Modeling Droughts in West Africa using Dynamic Modeling and AI</i>	Climate modeling, drought impacts, agricultural vulnerability, adaptation strategies
03.	Nepal	PhD	<i>Climate Finance in Nepal from a Justice Perspective: Understanding Adaptation Limits and Policy Space for L&D</i>	Adaptation limits, L&D finance, justice-oriented policy
04.	Vanuatu	PhD	<i>Adaptation Limits in Small Islands: A Case Study in Loss & Damage</i>	Small island vulnerability, adaptation thresholds, residual loss
05.	Vanuatu	PhD	<i>Loss and Damage Legal Analysis for Vanuatu</i>	Legal frameworks, governance mechanisms, L&D institutional alignment
06.	Bangladesh	MSc	<i>Adaptation Limits in Aquaculture: Climate-Induced Loss and Damage</i>	Sectoral economic loss, aquaculture productivity, climate stressors
07.	Bangladesh	MSc	<i>Temporal Climate Change Impacts on Ecosystem Function and Urban Population in Sylhet</i>	Urban ecosystem loss, land-use change, NELD, socio-economic vulnerability

No.	Country	Level	Research Title/Topic	Core Focus Area
08.	Vanuatu	MSc	Unpacking Loss and Damage and Adaptation Pathways in Tanna Island	Indigenous knowledge, cultural resilience, community-led adaptation
09.	Nepal	MSc	Local Government Leadership and Policy in Addressing Loss and Damage	Municipal governance, L&D planning, policy implementation
10.	Nepal	MSc	Gender-Specific Vulnerabilities and Resilience Strategies to Climate-Induced L&D	Gender, intersectionality, NELD, community resilience

Table 1: Research titles & focus

Capacity Building Framework

Each research, supported by the Capacity Building (CB) Grant, was designed as a one-year technical initiative to generate evidence on L&D. Recognizing that L&D is deeply contextual, the study employed a mixed-methods, participatory research framework. This dual approach ensured that qualitative depth (lived experience) was balanced with quantitative grounding to address the limitations of conventional climate impact metrics.

i. The Integrated Capacity-Building Model

Unique to this methodology, capacity building was not an adjunct but an embedded component of the research design. Under the STRENGTH Project, the 10 grant recipients underwent a structured development process:

- **Technical Guidance:** Iterative mentoring from L&D experts to align field research with global frameworks.
- **Methodological Refinement:** Collective learning sessions and bilateral engagements to ensure quality assurance and cross-regional consistency.
- **Framework Alignment:** Grantees were trained to link field-level findings to core climate concepts, including vulnerability, exposure, and adaptive capacity.

ii. Data Collection and Analytical Tools

The research utilized a multi-layered approach to capture the nuance of L&D across Bangladesh, Nepal, Senegal, and Vanuatu:

- **Primary Qualitative Tools:** To capture the “human face” of loss, researchers conducted Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and Narrative Documentation. These tools specifically targeted the erosion of cultural identity, social cohesion, and dignity.
- **Participatory Reflection:** Community-led sessions were used to validate findings and ensure that

“marginalized” perspectives were prioritized.

- **Secondary Desk Reviews:** Comprehensive audits of existing literature and national policy documents provided the necessary context to situate local findings within the global L&D discourse.

iii. Ethical and Gender-Responsive Standards

The methodology adhered to a rights-based and inclusive approach. Special emphasis was placed on ‘Intersectionality’, ensuring the meaningful participation of women, youth, Indigenous peoples, and other marginalized groups most affected by NELD. Additionally, all data collection followed strict protocols for informed consent, anonymity, and the psychological safety of participants discussing sensitive cultural losses.

iv. Analysis and Synthesis

Data were analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and cross-cutting issues. This process aimed to transform “intangible” data into actionable insights. By synthesizing local evidence with the STRENGTH Project’s broader objectives, the methodology sought to create a credible bridge between grassroots realities and international policy advocacy.

Overall, the design and methodology aimed not only to generate credible evidence on L&D but also to strengthen local research capacities and contribute to learning, advocacy, and policy engagement on Loss and Damage at multiple levels. The STRENGTH project has helped grantees link field-level findings to broader L&D concepts, including vulnerability, exposure, and coping capacity, and produce actionable insights that inform policy and practice.

03

Findings and Discussion

The STRENGTH Capacity Building Grants have catalyzed a diverse range of research initiatives that move beyond theoretical discourse to provide grounded, field-level evidence on (L&D). The following sections synthesize the key findings from the grant recipients, highlighting their contributions to the L&D literature and the transformative impact of the program on their professional capacities.

Bridging Data Gaps

The research conducted by the grantees addresses critical gaps in the current L&D literature, particularly concerning sector-specific impacts and the “invisible” nature of NELD.

- **Sectoral Insights and Methodological Innovation:** Grantees deployed a variety of rigorous methodologies to quantify and qualify climate impacts. In Senegal, research utilized physical climatological parameters and regression modeling to correlate climate variability with agricultural yield losses, providing factual evidence for national adaptation strategies. In Bangladesh, studies on freshwater aquaculture documented how erratic rainfall and extreme temperatures translate into production losses and financial stress, highlighting the specific vulnerabilities of livelihood groups often overlooked in broader climate assessments.
- **Centering Non-Economic and Gendered Impacts:** A recurring theme across the studies was the focus on NELD. Research in Nepal utilized a “lived values” approach and feminist political ecology to uncover the intolerable impacts of climate change on women. By documenting the erosion of dignity, social cohesion, and cultural identity, these studies argue for a localized taxonomy of NELD that challenges the hegemony of purely economic metrics in global climate policy.
- **Local Governance and Policy Integration:** One significant contribution involved comparative case studies of municipal governance in Nepal (e.g., Pokhara and Mithila). This research highlighted how

L&D is perceived and prioritized by local leaders, revealing a disconnect between international L&D discourse and local-level budgeting and planning. These findings provide a roadmap for operationalizing L&D by tailoring support to the specific needs of local governments.

Research Contributions to Understanding Loss and Damage

Collectively, the funded research deepens conceptual clarity on L&D, expands the empirical base on NELD, and strengthens the link between lived experience, adaptation limits, and emerging national and global L&D governance frameworks.

1. Expanding Conceptual and Empirical Understanding of Non-Economic Loss and Damage

Several CB-supported studies directly address the long-standing gap in how NELD is conceptualized and operationalized. Research led by a PhD researcher from Bangladesh advances a ‘lived values’ approach, foregrounding cultural heritage, place-based identity, and social meaning as central dimensions of loss. By documenting how communities define and prioritize what is lost and how they attempt to protect these values, this work moves NELD beyond abstract categories toward community-defined metrics of loss, offering a practical entry point for policy integration.

Similarly, MSc and PhD research in Vanuatu and Nepal foregrounds Indigenous knowledge, cultural attachment to land, and social cohesion as both assets for adaptation and sources of irreparable loss when adaptation limits are exceeded. These studies demonstrate that NELD is not peripheral but often the most profound dimension of climate harm, persisting even after physical reconstruction.

2. Identifying Adaptation Limits and Residual Losses

A key contribution of the CB grants lies in strengthening empirical evidence on adaptation limits, a core pillar of L&D discourse under the UNFCCC. PhD Research in Nepal and Vanuatu, as well as MSc research from Bangladesh, highlight how biophysical thresholds, institutional constraints, financial barriers, and socio-cultural factors converge to constrain adaptation options.

For example, findings from Helambu and Melamchi municipalities reveal that even where structural adaptation measures exist, limited fiscal space, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and cultural attachments to ancestral land inhibit scalability and effectiveness. These dynamics underscore the presence of residual and unavoidable losses, strengthening the case for L&D finance that goes beyond adaptation.

In small island contexts such as Vanuatu, ongoing and planned research shows that sea-level rise, extreme weather, and ecosystem degradation are pushing communities beyond feasible adaptation pathways, underscoring the urgency of L&D mechanisms to address relocation, cultural loss, and long-term recovery.

3. Linking Climate Hazards to Socio-Economic and Livelihood Losses

PhD research in Senegal and MSc research work in Bangladesh strengthen the evidence base linking climate hazards to livelihood disruption and economic loss, while also illuminating the pathways through which these impacts evolve into broader L&D outcomes.

Advanced modeling of drought patterns in Senegal reveals stark regional disparities in rainfall and temperature trends, with northern regions experiencing intensifying heat extremes and declining precipitation. These findings connect climatic trends to agricultural stress, income instability, and heightened vulnerability, laying the groundwork for integrated assessments of economic loss, livelihood erosion, and longer-term socio-economic damage.

In Bangladesh's aquaculture sector, MSc-level research demonstrates how erratic rainfall and rising temperatures reduce productivity, increase financial losses, and expose farmers to cascading risks. By combining field surveys with laboratory analysis, this work highlights both direct economic losses and systemic vulnerabilities, reinforcing the need for L&D frameworks that account for sector-specific impacts.

4. Illuminating Ecosystem Loss and Urban Dimensions of L&D

The MSc research from Bangladesh focuses on

urban forestry and ecosystem services in Sylhet Metropolitan City, L&D analysis into rapidly urbanizing contexts, an area often overlooked in L&D discourse. The documented decline in vegetation and water bodies represents irreversible ecosystem loss, contributing to urban heat stress, flooding, and diminished well-being.

By linking land-use change, ecosystem degradation, and socio-economic vulnerability, this research demonstrates how urban planning failures and climate change together generate non-economic losses, including loss of environmental quality, health, and social equity. These findings emphasize that L&D is not confined to rural or coastal zones but is increasingly relevant in urban governance and development planning.

5. Advancing Justice-Oriented and Policy-Relevant L&D Analysis

Across the portfolio, all of the research consistently integrates justice, equity, and governance perspectives. Studies in Nepal explicitly interrogate the adequacy of existing climate finance mechanisms, highlighting gaps between funding availability and community access. The identification of procedural, cultural, and institutional barriers strengthens the argument for justice-oriented L&D financing frameworks that prioritize accessibility, inclusivity, and local decision-making.

Legal and policy-focused research in Vanuatu further complements this work by examining national legal frameworks and the policy space for L&D, and by creating pathways to align local evidence with national and international legal and institutional processes.

6. Contribution to the STRENGTH Objectives and Global L&D Discourse

Taken together, the STRENGTH CB grants have contributed to:

- Making non-economic losses visible, legitimate, and policy-relevant
- Strengthening evidence on adaptation limits and residual loss
- Linking local lived experiences with national policy debates and global L&D mechanisms
- Building a cohort of Global South researchers equipped to engage in L&D scholarship and advocacy

By embedding capacity building within real-world research and policy processes, STRENGTH demonstrates how targeted CB grants can generate knowledge that is not only academically robust but also actionable for national L&D mechanisms, the FRLD, and broader UNFCCC deliberations.

Capacity Building and Skill Development

The grants provided more than just financial support; they served as a catalyst for a profound shift in how early-career researchers engage with the climate crisis.

- i. Bridging Theory and Practice:** Multiple recipients noted that the grant enabled them to move “from theory to practice.” Before the STRENGTH initiative, L&D was often viewed as a complex concept found in UN reports. Through field research, it became a “lived reality.” Grantees reported gaining practical skills in fieldwork design, survey implementation (using tools like KoBoToolbox), and stakeholder engagement, particularly with mayors and ward chairpersons.
- ii. Enhancing Academic Rigor and Progress:** The mentorship and technical guidance provided alongside the grants significantly improved the quality of MSc and PhD theses. This support helped researchers refine their questions, structure their analysis more clearly, and link their findings to global concepts of vulnerability and adaptive capacity. For many, this resulted in the timely completion of their studies and the development of co-authored publications.
- iii. Expanding Networks and Visibility:** The program has successfully enhanced the presence of Global South researchers in international policy spaces. Grantees highlighted opportunities for networking, collaboration with senior practitioners, and presenting their findings at international forums, such as conferences at the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) in Thailand.
- iv. Shifting Career Trajectories:** The experience has solidified the roles of these researchers as “bridges” between local communities and global policy. Many envision their future roles not just in academia, but as evidence-based policy advocates who can translate field data into actionable recommendations for national and international organizations.

“Through STRENGTH, Loss and Damage stopped being just a concept in UN reports and became a lived reality I could see and listen to... This journey has convinced me that careful, ward-level research can and should speak directly to national policy and global L&D debates.”

— Research Grantee, Nepal

Collectively, the CB grants strengthened a cohort of Global South researchers equipped to engage with L&D as both a research and governance challenge. By embedding capacity building within real-world research and policy processes, STRENGTH ensured that skills development extended beyond individual projects, contributing to long-term national and regional capacity on L&D.

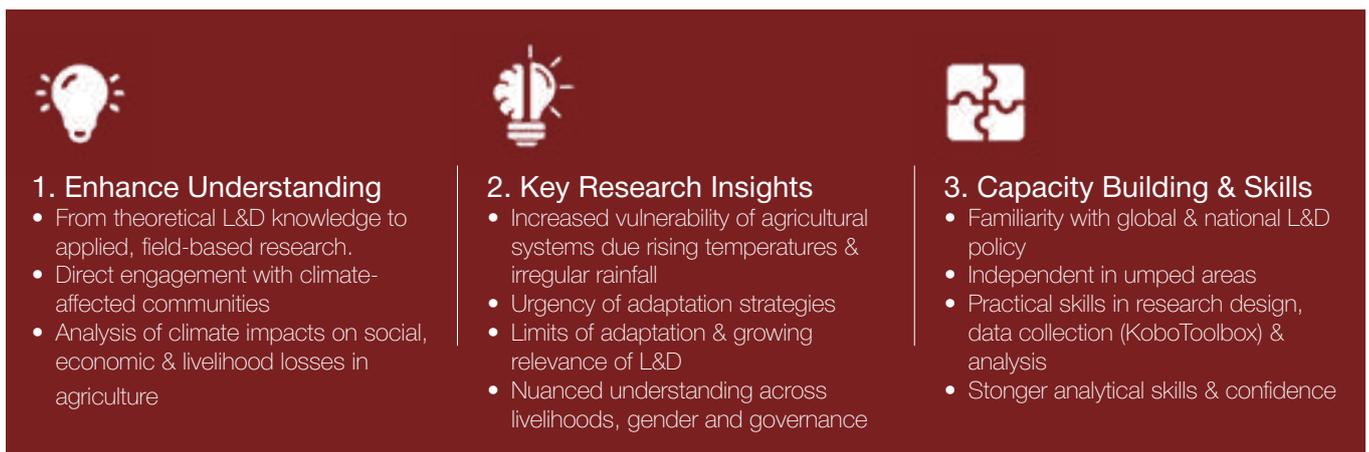


Figure 2: Capacity Building Design

04

Limitations Experienced During the Grant Implementation Period

While the STRENGTH Capacity-Building (CB) grants successfully generated valuable evidence and strengthened researcher capacity on L&D, several implementation-level limitations were encountered across countries. These challenges reflect the complex, politically sensitive, and data-constrained nature of L&D research, particularly in fragile and climate-vulnerable contexts. Importantly, most limitations were addressed through adaptive approaches, yielding useful lessons for future programming.

Conceptual Translation of Loss and Damage

One of the most consistent challenges across all CB grants was translating complex L&D concepts into locally meaningful and actionable research frameworks. The concept of Loss and Damage, particularly NELD, remains conceptually dense, even for experienced researchers.

Grantees faced difficulties in:

- Adapting global L&D terminology to community-level discussions without oversimplifying or misrepresenting concepts
- Customizing research tools and questions to reflect local realities, values, and lived experiences
- Translating abstract L&D frameworks into practical municipal or sectoral policy language for local officials

This challenge was particularly evident in contexts where local governance actors were unfamiliar with L&D as a distinct policy domain. As a result, additional time and iterative engagement were required to ensure conceptual clarity and relevance.

Data and Information Access Constraints

Data availability and access posed a significant limitation, particularly for research requiring historical, institutional, or climate datasets. In several locations, researchers encountered:

- Limited availability of localized climate, socio-economic, and loss-related data
- Time constraints during fieldwork restricted data depth
- Participant reluctance to share information due to research fatigue, mistrust, or sensitivities around loss and displacement
- Restricted access to institutional or administrative data needed to triangulate findings

These constraints affected both qualitative and quantitative research components and necessitated the use of mixed-methods, proxy indicators, and participatory approaches to address data gaps.

Logistical and Operational Challenges

The geographically dispersed nature of the study sites introduced logistical challenges, particularly for field-based research in remote, rural, or island contexts. Common constraints included:

- Coordinating field visits across difficult terrain and limited transport infrastructure
- Aligning research schedules with the availability of local officials, community leaders, and participants
- Managing travel delays, cost escalations, and compressed fieldwork windows

These challenges required careful planning and, in some cases, revisions to fieldwork timelines and methods to ensure data quality without overburdening communities.

Political Instability and Contextual Disruptions

Periods of political instability in Bangladesh and Nepal posed additional challenges during the implementation period. These included:

- Temporary disruptions to field activities due to protests, strikes, or administrative closures
- Delays in securing approvals or coordinating with

government counterparts

- The need to revise research plans and introduce contingency measures to maintain progress

Despite these disruptions, researchers adapted by adjusting timelines, shifting to remote engagement where feasible, and re-sequencing activities to minimize delays.

Learning and Adaptive Management

While these limitations affected the pace and modality

of implementation, they also reinforced key lessons for future L&D capacity-building initiatives:

- The importance of extended inception and conceptual alignment phases for L&D research
- The need for flexible timelines and budgets to accommodate contextual volatility
- The value of mentorship and technical backstopping in navigating conceptual and political complexity

Overall, grantees' ability to adapt to these challenges demonstrates the resilience of the CB grant design and underscores the need for flexible, locally grounded approaches to support L&D research in vulnerable contexts.



Figure 3: Limitations Experienced

05

Recommendations: Strengthening the L&D Research Ecosystem

To build upon the success of this pilot and ensure the sustainability of L&D action, the following measures are recommended for future grant-making and capacity-building programs:

Advanced Technical & Methodological Training

Future iterations should move beyond foundational concepts to provide advanced training in quantitative impact assessment and econometric modeling. Access to high-resolution climate and socio-economic datasets is essential for researchers to produce the robust evidence needed to influence national treasuries and international funding bodies.

Sustained Mentorship and Field-Level Troubleshooting

The research process, particularly concerning NELD, is fraught with methodological challenges. Programs should incorporate:

- Real-time Mentorship: Ongoing access to experts in climate risk and sector-specific fields (e.g., aquaculture, gender, and migration).
- Troubleshooting sessions: Small, iterative sessions during the fieldwork phase to help researchers navigate data gaps and ethical complexities on the ground.

Financial Realism and Institutional Support

Grant amounts must reflect the rising costs of field research, including logistical expenses in remote areas and the high cost of accessing proprietary data. Furthermore, implementing agencies should provide institutional letters of support to help researchers navigate bureaucratic hurdles when requesting data from government departments.

Fostering a “L&D Alumni Network.”

To prevent momentum loss after the grant period, establishing a formal Alumni Network is vital. This platform would facilitate:

- Peer-to-Peer Learning: Continued knowledge exchange between different cohorts and countries.
- Collaborative Publications: Opportunities for multi-country comparative studies led by former grantees.
- Internships and Placements: Connecting alumni with policy-making bodies to ensure their expertise is integrated into national climate plans.

Bridging the “Research-to-Policy” Pipeline

Future grants should include a mandatory Policy Engagement Phase. Rather than ending at thesis submission, researchers should be supported to develop policy briefs and present their findings directly to local government officials (mayors and ward chairs), ensuring that the evidence generated drives direct institutional change.

06

Conclusion



The STRENGTH research grant initiative has demonstrated that the gap between global climate policy and local reality can only be bridged through intentional, sustained capacity building. For the grant recipients, this initiative transformed L&D from an abstract term found in UNFCCC documents into a tangible, observable reality. By documenting cracked homes in Nepal, production losses in Bangladeshi aquaculture, and the erosion of agricultural yields in Senegal, these researchers have provided the “human face” to data that is often missing from international negotiations.

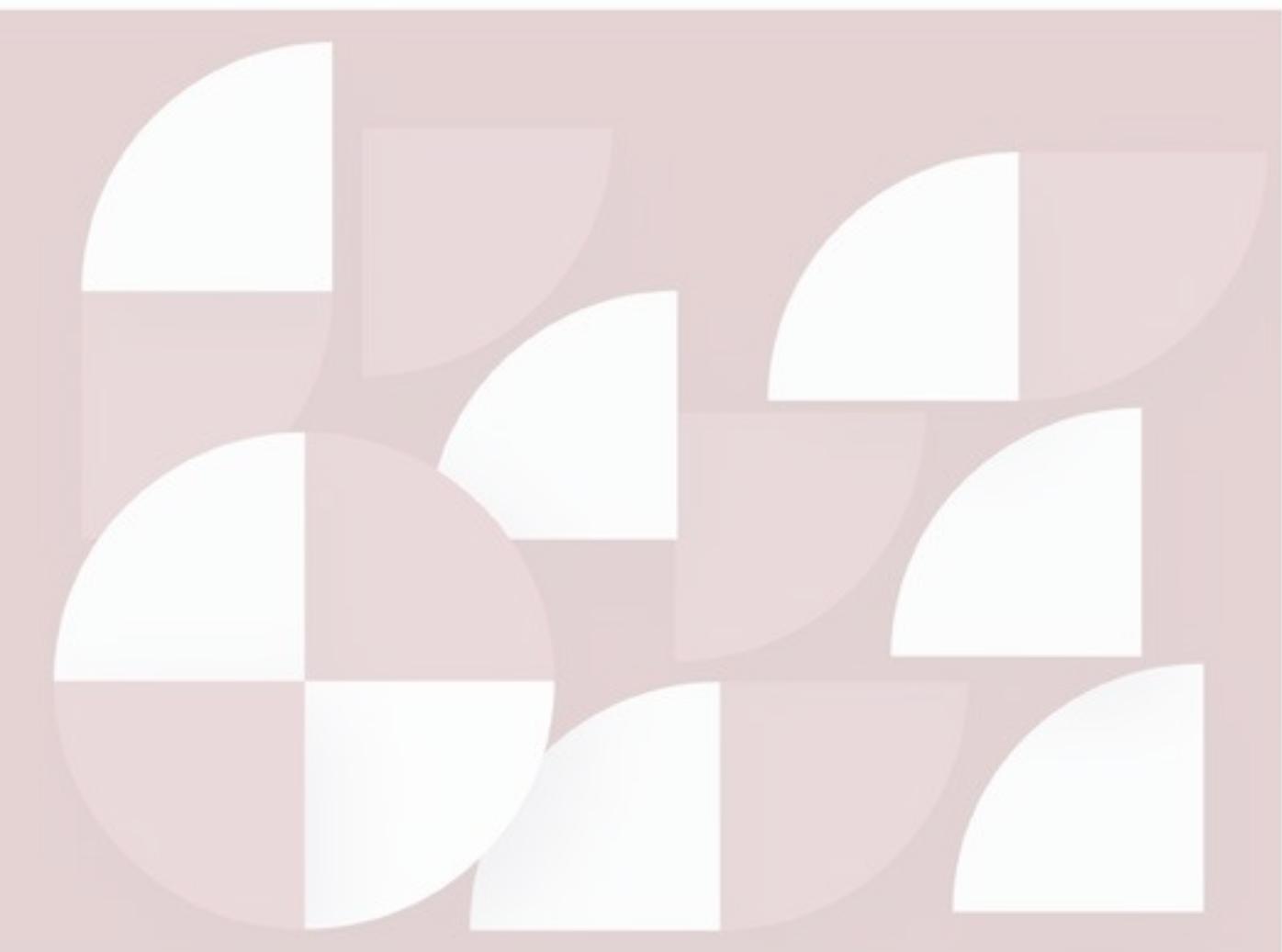
The initiative’s impact is three-fold:

1. **Academic excellence:** It has elevated the quality of Southern-led research, ensuring that MSc and PhD theses are not only academically rigorous but also policy-relevant.
2. **Empowerment of the Global South:** By focusing on early-career researchers in climate-vulnerable nations, the project has begun to correct the underrepresentation of Southern voices in the global L&D discourse.
3. **Climate Justice:** By making non-economic losses, such as the loss of dignity, culture, and social cohesion, visible and documented, the initiative reframes L&D not just as a technical or environmental hurdle, but as a fundamental issue of justice and human rights.

Ultimately, the STRENGTH project has proven that localized, ward-level research is a powerful tool for advocacy. When researchers are equipped with the right technical and financial support, they become “bridge-builders” capable of translating community suffering into actionable policy recommendations.

Appendix 1:

Study / Country	Type of Evidence Generated	What Is New / Distinct	Key L&D Knowledge Contribution	Policy & Practice Relevance	Research Paper
Recipient 1 – Bangladesh	Qualitative, values-based, participatory evidence	Introduces a “lived values” framework for NELD grounded in community priorities	Expands understanding of NELD beyond abstract categories to culturally defined losses (identity, heritage, belonging)	Enables context-sensitive NELD integration in national L&D frameworks and global negotiations	<i>Paving the Way for Addressing Non-Economic Loss and Damage: An Exploration of Affected Communities’ Lived Values and Priorities</i>
Recipient 2– Senegal	Quantitative climate modeling + AI + socio-economic analysis	Combines AI-driven drought modeling with livelihood impact analysis	Strengthens evidence of climate hazards driving economic loss and adaptation stress	Supports risk-informed L&D planning and targeting of agricultural resilience and recovery finance	<i>Modeling Droughts in West Africa using Dynamic Modeling and AI</i>
Recipient 3 – Nepal	Mixed-methods policy and finance analysis	Explicitly links adaptation limits to justice-oriented L&D finance gaps	Clarifies where adaptation fails and why L&D finance is necessary	Informs national L&D finance windows, relocation support, and recovery investments	<i>Climate Finance in Nepal from a Justice Perspective: Understanding Adaptation Limits and Policy Space for L&D</i>
Recipient 4 – Vanuatu	Legal and institutional analysis	Dedicated L&D legal mapping for Vanuatu	Identifies legal mandates, gaps, and entry points for L&D governance	Supports alignment of national law with UNFCCC L&D architecture	<i>Loss and Damage Legal Analysis for Vanuatu</i>
Recipient 5 – Bangladesh	Quantitative sectoral loss analysis + lab-based GHG assessment	Integrates economic loss, adaptation effectiveness, and environmental footprint	Demonstrates climate-induced livelihood loss in aquaculture	Supports sector-specific L&D claims and finance justification	<i>Adaptation Limits in Aquaculture: Climate-Induced Loss and Damage</i>
Recipient 6 – Bangladesh	Geospatial, ecological, and socio-economic evidence	Frames urban ecosystem loss as a form of NELD	Expands L&D discourse into urban contexts and ecosystem services	Informs climate-resilient urban planning and green infrastructure investment	<i>Temporal Climate Change Impacts on Ecosystem Function and Urban Population in Sylhet</i>
Recipient 7 – Vanuatu	Indigenous knowledge documentation	Centers Indigenous adaptation pathways and cultural continuity	Shows how cultural loss and resilience are intertwined	Supports culturally grounded L&D responses and safeguards	<i>Unpacking Loss and Damage and Adaptation Pathways in Tanna Island</i>
Recipient 8– Nepal	Comparative governance and policy analysis	Compares municipal leadership and policy capacity	Identifies institutional bottlenecks in operationalizing L&D locally	Guides sub-national L&D integration into planning and budgeting	<i>Local Government Leadership and Policy in Addressing Loss and Damage</i>
Recipient 9 – Nepal	Gender-focused qualitative vulnerability assessment	Highlights gender-specific NELD and coping strategies	Strengthens intersectional understanding of L&D impacts	Informs gender-responsive L&D finance and programming	<i>Gender-Specific Vulnerabilities and Resilience Strategies to Climate-Induced L&D</i>



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