

Side Event Report: South-South Collaboration on Addressing Loss and Damage

Date: 18 November 2024

Time: 12:00-13:30 AZT

Venue: Blue Zone, SHARE Hub, Pavilion E6

1. Introduction

As climate change intensifies, countries in the Global South are experiencing disproportionate impacts, particularly in terms of Loss and Damage. These regions, often more vulnerable due to economic and geographical factors, face the growing need for robust mechanisms to address irreversible losses (e.g., to lives, ecosystems) and recoverable damages (e.g., infrastructure, livelihoods).

This side event, organized by International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD), the CGIAR Asian Mega Deltas Initiative (AMD), and Germanwatch, aimed to bring together representatives from countries across the Global South to share insights and best practices for addressing L&D. Recognizing the unique challenges facing the Global South, the event will also explore mechanisms to foster South-South partnerships and discussed policy frameworks at both national and international levels.

2. Objectives of the Side Event

- a) Present South Asia's approaches to managing economic and non-economic Loss and Damage, showcasing ground-level evidence and key interventions from government and civil society.
- b) Discuss pathways for creating a cohesive National Climate L&D Framework, focusing on fund management, improved assessment mechanisms, and integration with international L&D frameworks.
- c) Emphasize the role of national mechanisms in connecting with international frameworks, promoting solidarity and knowledge exchange between the Global South and other regions.

3. Presentation Overview

a. "Understanding Loss and Damage: Insights from the Climate Hotspot – the Sundarbans"

Presented by **S M Saify Iqbal**, Programme Coordinator, ICCCAD

The presentation examines the multifaceted impacts of climate change on the Sundarbans, focusing on institutional preparedness, human experiences of loss, and the socio-economic consequences of migration and resettlement. Conducted under the CGIAR initiative, the study stresses the importance of addressing both economic and non-economic losses resulting from climate-induced disruptions. The Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest, is vital for millions of marginalized people and plays a crucial role in mitigating the effects of cyclones. However, climate change threatens to erode this ecosystem significantly, with projections indicating that up to 80% of the area could be lost by the century's end. Recent advancements like the Climate Loss and Damage Fund provide hope for mitigating these risks through ecosystem restoration and community resilience programs.

Key challenges in the Sundarbans are primarily driven by climate-induced factors such as rising sea levels, salinity intrusion, and increasing frequency of cyclones. As a result, many residents are forced to migrate, experiencing significant socio-economic displacement.

Ghoramara Island, a prime example of climate-induced land loss, symbolizes the struggle of communities facing erasure, with cultural landmarks like temples being washed away by storms.

Despite robust disaster preparedness policies in India and Bangladesh,

institutional frameworks have been slow to adapt to the growing complexity of loss and damage, particularly in addressing non-economic losses like cultural identity and social disruption.



The case studies presents offer a deeper look into the human experience of displacement in the Sundarbans. For instance, stories of individuals like **Gauhar Jan Bibi** highlight the emotional and social toll of resettlement, while the loss of indigenous agricultural practices, such as traditional rice varieties, reflects the broader cultural impact of climate change. Vulnerable groups, including women, children, and the elderly, are disproportionately affected by these changes, facing heightened risks during extreme weather events and coping with the breakdown of traditional livelihoods. The presentation concludes with a call for comprehensive policy frameworks that integrate both socio-economic and cultural dimensions into climate resilience strategies. It emphasizes the need for institutional mechanisms that address the full spectrum of loss and damage, including the non-economic impacts on communities in the Sundarbans.

b. "Nepal's Experience on Loss and Damage"

Presented by: **Sneha Rai**, Research Coordinator, Prakriti Resources Centre

The presentation provides an in-depth examination of the impacts of climate-induced disasters in Nepal, focusing specifically on the Melamchi and Helambu regions. The study highlights the multifaceted nature of loss and damage caused by extreme and slow-onset climate events, such as floods, and underscores both economic and non-economic consequences. These include infrastructure destruction, loss of livelihoods, cultural heritage damage, and significant mental health challenges. A central theme of the presentation is the need to incorporate cultural preservation and mental well-being into national frameworks for addressing climate-related losses.

The study outlines key events such as the Melamchi flood of June 2021 and the September 2024 floods, which caused extensive damage across Nepal. The Melamchi flood resulted in widespread destruction of infrastructure, homes, and agricultural lands, especially affecting

fishing communities. In addition to the economic losses, the flood triggered severe mental health issues among the population, with 85% of residents reporting stress and trauma. The destruction of cultural and religious sites, including the 300-year-old Indreshwor Temple, disrupted spiritual practices and community traditions. Similarly, the September 2024 floods led to an estimated economic loss of USD 346 million and affected over 46,000 households, with significant casualties and widespread psychological distress due to the fear of future flooding.



The presentation also highlights the broader social impacts of these climate events, particularly the disruption of community bonding and cultural practices. Displacement and loss of resources have led to social and emotional disconnection, with fishing communities like the Majhi and Danuwar suffering from disrupted livelihoods and increased mental health concerns. The Loss and Damage Policy Lab (LDPL) is introduced as a platform for addressing these issues, focusing on participatory research, evidence generation, and policy dialogues to develop effective solutions. By sharing lessons from different contexts and engaging local actors, the LDPL aims to support community-level actions to mitigate the impacts of climate-induced loss and damage in Nepal and beyond.

c. "Addressing Loss and Damage in Bangladesh"

Presented by: **Asiq Mahmud**, Deputy Executive Director, ADAMS Foundation

The presentation sheds light on the severe impacts of climate change on Bangladesh's most vulnerable communities, particularly in the Sundarbans and coastal regions. Despite contributing a minimal share of global emissions, Bangladesh ranks as one of the most climate-vulnerable countries. Rising sea levels, salinity intrusion, and frequent extreme weather events like cyclones and floods are threatening the livelihoods of millions. The presentation focuses on how these climate-induced changes are displacing families, destabilizing agricultural production, and exacerbating poverty, particularly in areas like Khulna, where the human cost of migration and loss of land is utterly visible.

The presentation highlights the complex environmental and socioeconomic challenges facing these communities. Sea level rise, which could submerge up to 18% of coastal areas by the century's end, and salinity intrusion, which threatens up to 20% of agricultural land, are among the most immediate threats. These environmental changes severely affect food security and livelihoods, forcing many families to migrate to urban slums in cities like Khulna. One case study featured in the presentation is that of Selina Khatun, a woman from Paikgacha, Khulna, who lost her home and agricultural land to Cyclones SIDR (2009) and Amphan (2020). Her displacement and struggle to rebuild in a city marked by poverty underline the broader human cost of climate change in Bangladesh.

In response, the ADAMS Foundation has implemented a range of initiatives aimed at addressing these impacts and building resilience. These include educational programs, climate change adaptation strategies, renewable energy projects, and efforts to improve water and sanitation conditions. However, significant challenges remain, such as limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, and policies that fail to adequately address the needs of vulnerable communities. The presentation calls for stronger community-led adaptation efforts, greater collaboration between government, NGOs, and local populations, and more robust disaster preparedness measures to prevent further loss and damage in Bangladesh's most climate-affected regions.



4. Panel Discussion

The panel discussion was organized as part of a side event on loss and damage, focusing on enhancing global and national frameworks, equity, justice, and the role of youth in addressing climate challenges. The event featured a diverse panel of experts and practitioners, moderated by **Lina Adil** from Germanwatch. The discussion aimed to explore innovative solutions, share experiences, and discuss mechanisms for effective climate action.

Lina introduced the panelists and set the tone for the discussion by highlighting the urgency of addressing loss and damage in the context of climate change. She began by introducing M Hafijul Islam Khan, an environmental lawyer from Bangladesh, emphasizing his extensive contributions to climate justice and his pivotal role within the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM ExCom) and the establishment of the Loss and Damage Fund.

Panelist I: M Hafijul Islam Khan, Director, Centre for Climate Justice, Bangladesh (CCJB)

Lina directed the first question to Mr. Hafijul, asking about the role of global mechanisms such as the WIM ExCom and Santiago Network in enhancing national frameworks.

Question: Regarding enhancing the effectiveness and scalability of national mechanisms for loss and damage, what role do you envision for the WIM ExCom and the Santiago Network?

Response:

Mr. Hafijul responded by emphasizing that the global institutional architecture for addressing loss and damage is now well-established, comprising the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM), its Executive Committee, the Santiago Network, and the Loss and Damage Fund. He highlighted the need for national-level preparedness to access policy guidelines, technical assistance through the Santiago Network, and financing from the Loss and Damage Fund.

He pointed out the challenges in accessing funding under mechanisms like the Green Climate Fund (GCF), where project submission and approval can take 5–7 years. However, he noted that the Loss and Damage Fund operates differently. At COP28, two approaches were proposed for accessing the fund: a "trigger-based approach" and a "programmatic approach," designed to streamline and expedite support for affected countries.

Mr. Hafijul explained that the trigger-based approach is essential for addressing sudden disasters requiring immediate cash flow and technical assistance, such as healthcare for vulnerable groups during emergencies. The programmatic approach, on the other hand, targets slow-onset events through short-, mid-, and long-term programs, enabling countries to access the Loss and Damage Fund via direct budget support. National entities like Ministries of Finance or accredited organizations can integrate these funds into national budgets for disbursement through relevant ministries. He noted that the Loss and Damage Fund Board will finalize disbursement modalities in December, with fund access expected by mid-next year, while the Santiago Network will become fully operational early next year, emphasizing local NGOs for technical support. He stressed the need for coherence among global mechanisms like the WIM ExCom, Santiago Network, and Loss and Damage Fund to streamline national-level implementation, supported by technical guides for planning processes. Additionally, the Warsaw International Mechanism is under review to address gaps and ensure complementarity among various funding sources inside and outside the UNFCCC. Finally, a high-level dialogue on funding arrangements, led by the UN Secretary-General, will begin next year to explore innovative mechanisms and enhance global-local synergies.

Panelist 2: Prakriti Koirala, Senior Researcher, Clim Adapt

Next, Lina introduced Prakriti Koirala, a Senior Researcher at Climate Adapt, and asked how youth in the Global South can shape inclusive policies on loss and damage.

Question 1: How youth from the Global South can actively contribute to shaping inclusive policies on loss and damage

Response:

Prakriti highlighted the essential role of youth, starting with advocacy through storytelling to illustrate the immediate and personal impacts of climate change, such as glacial lake outburst floods or erratic rainfall. Prakriti underscored the critical role of youth in driving change, particularly through advocacy. She explained that youth in the Global South are deeply connected to their communities, making them uniquely positioned to share powerful and authentic stories about how climate change impacts lives, livelihoods, and cultures. These narratives go beyond technical metrics or economic statistics, shedding light on the human and non-economic dimensions of loss and damage. By presenting such stories on platforms like COP, youth can influence global and local policies.

She emphasized incorporating non-economic aspects like cultural and social losses into discussions. Youth can act as bridges between communities and governments, ensuring marginalized voices are included in policy development. Prakriti also stressed showcasing grassroots solutions, advocating for community-driven policies, and ensuring youth participation in decision-making processes at all levels of governance. Finally, she encouraged using digital platforms to amplify voices and conducting research to address data gaps, enabling evidence-based advocacy for loss and damage policies.



Question 2: What role does South-South collaboration play in equipping young leaders with the skills, knowledge, and resources needed to effectively advocate for loss and damage solutions at both national and international levels?

Response:

Prakriti began by emphasizing the critical role of South-South collaboration in empowering youth through knowledge-sharing, capacity building, and fostering networks. She illustrated the urgency of loss and damage solutions by sharing Nepal's experience with climate impacts, such as recent extreme precipitation events that cost the country 3% of its annual budget in just two days. She also highlighted the unpredictable threat of glacier lake outburst floods, mentioning that a recent disaster occurred in a lake not even identified as high-risk. These examples underscored the importance of both addressing immediate impacts and building resilience at the local level. Prakriti pointed out how initiatives like Nepal's climate-smart agriculture could inspire and benefit young leaders in other vulnerable countries, such as Malawi, by creating platforms for the cross-pollination of ideas.

Prakriti further elaborated on the potential of youth networks, such as the Loss and Damage Youth Coalition, to advocate beyond borders for a shared and sustainable future. She called for South-South collaboration to support such initiatives, which could enhance youth participation through capacity-building workshops, negotiation training, mentorship programs, and fellowships. These efforts, she argued, would empower young leaders to engage more effectively in loss and damage advocacy. Additionally, she suggested pooling resources for local action, including technical expertise, funding, and human resources, to

ensure that community-based initiatives are supported and scaled. Prakriti concluded by reiterating the value of South-South collaboration in fostering a more inclusive and impactful approach to addressing loss and damage.

Panelist 3: Vera Kunzel, Senior Advisor Climate Change Adaptation and Human Rights, Germanwatch

Lina introduced Vera Kunzel, Senior Policy Advisor at Germanwatch, and asked about aligning national mechanisms with international frameworks.

Question 1: How can national mechanisms on loss and damage be effectively aligned with international frameworks to ensure coherent policies and access to global support?

Response:

Vera Kunzel emphasized the importance of aligning national mechanisms for loss and damage with international frameworks, such as the UNFCCC and the newly operationalized loss and damage fund. She noted that the fund aims to strengthen national responses by supporting country-led approaches and engaging relevant national institutions and stakeholders, ensuring that national priorities are at the forefront. This alignment helps create a coherent institutional landscape, facilitating programmatic approaches that allow countries to prepare in advance, define priorities, and respond effectively when climate events occur.

Furthermore, Vera highlighted the critical role that national mechanisms play in addressing loss and damage by focusing on the most vulnerable groups and regions within a country. She explained that these mechanisms, designed with local knowledge, can effectively identify the communities, stakeholders, and sectors that are most at risk, ensuring that funding and resources are directed where they are needed most. This localized focus is essential for promoting equity and ensuring that those who are disproportionately affected by climate impacts receive the necessary support.

She also emphasized the importance of identifying funding gaps, particularly in contexts where national resources are insufficient to address the scale of loss and damage. By analyzing these gaps in advance, countries can better determine where international funding is most urgently required.

Vera acknowledged the significant injustice that many of the countries most affected by climate change are also the least responsible for its causes, yet they bear the highest costs. A well-structured national mechanism, aligned with international frameworks like the UNFCCC and supported by the Loss and Damage Fund, can help bridge these funding gaps, enabling countries to respond with coherence, efficiency, and fairness when disasters occur.

Question 2: What role does global cooperation play in strengthening national loss and damage mechanisms, and how can international support be leveraged to address the challenges faced by vulnerable countries?

Response:

Acknowledging the complexity of the question, Vera began by emphasizing the importance of financial support through global cooperation, particularly via the emerging Loss and Damage Fund. She also highlighted alternative funding avenues such as bilateral and multilateral initiatives. Linking the discussion to ongoing negotiations, Vera expressed hope for progress on the New Climate Finance Goal, specifically its inclusion of loss and damage financing. However, she noted that current pledges, such as the \$19 million announced by Sweden at COP, fall far short of the necessary scale, underscoring the urgent need for a reliable and structured funding strategy.

Vera stressed that addressing loss and damage effectively would require more than just the current mechanisms. She advocated for additional instruments that could hold major polluters, including corporations responsible for significant carbon emissions, accountable for their contributions to the climate crisis. Turning to national mechanisms, she highlighted the role of the Santiago Network, which offers technical assistance and capacity-building support to countries, reinforcing their loss and damage frameworks. She also praised South-South cooperation, emphasizing that successful approaches from countries like Bangladesh and Nepal could serve as pilot models for others facing similar challenges. Lastly, Vera underscored the importance of addressing shared issues such as data collection and bridging data gaps, advocating for collective learning and adaptation of best practices as key strategies in strengthening national mechanisms through global collaboration.

Panelist 4: Soha Benchekroun, Climate and Development Policy Analyst and Researcher

The host introduced Soha Benchekroun, a climate policy analyst and negotiator for the African Group, and asked about the principles of equity and justice in loss and damage.

Question: *How do the principles of equity and justice apply to the critical sector of loss and damage?*

Response:

Soha Benchekroun emphasized the stark inequities embedded within the current global climate governance system. She noted that while international mechanisms, including the newly operationalized Loss and Damage Fund, have been established to support affected countries, there remains limited commitment from developed nations to provide adequate funding. She linked this to the broader issues of compensatory and corrective justice, underscoring that many developed countries bear historical responsibility for the climate crisis but fail to contribute equitably to addressing its impacts. Soha stressed the ecological debt owed by these nations to the Global South, which, despite contributing the least to climate change, suffers the most from its consequences. This dynamic perpetuates injustice, particularly when discussions arise about contributors versus recipients in the Loss and Damage Fund—an approach that, she noted, is unacceptable to the Global South.

Soha also drew parallels between the lack of funding for loss and damage and similar trends in adaptation financing. For example, the Adaptation Fund recently fell drastically short of its \$300 million goal, with only \$61 million pledged—highlighting the persistent gap between commitments and actual funding. Although the Loss and Damage Fund represents a positive step, Soha pointed out that its scope and scale remain insufficient to meet the urgent needs

of vulnerable communities. She called for a fair and functioning climate finance system, emphasizing the urgency of quick assessments and disbursements of funds to frontline communities, such as smallholder farmers and pastoralists, who face immediate impacts after disasters like floods and hurricanes. Soha concluded by questioning whether existing mechanisms are flexible and responsive enough to address these urgent needs, stressing the necessity of equitable and just systems to ensure timely support for those most affected.

Question 2: Why do you think national frameworks are important for addressing loss and damage?

Response:

In her response, Soha expressed gratitude for the opportunity to close the panel and emphasized the importance of national frameworks in addressing the gaps left by international mechanisms. She acknowledged the presence of international systems but pointed out their limitations, particularly the lack of reliable financing for loss and damage. Highlighting the challenges, Soha noted that commitments from developed countries are often insufficient and fail to meet the scale of financial support required. She stressed the need for new and additional funding, separate from adaptation or development aid, and rooted in the polluter-pays principle. Importantly, she emphasized that such financing must not impose further debt burdens on developing nations.

Soha also underscored the importance of direct access to funding for frontline communities and pointed out that international mechanisms often overlook critical aspects like non-economic loss and damage. National frameworks, she argued, can complement international efforts by providing more tailored and immediate responses to local needs. Finally, she advocated for stronger South-South cooperation, recognizing the shared challenges faced by countries in the Global South and the importance of solidarity and collaboration in tackling loss and damage.

Conclusion by Lina Adil

Lina closed the discussion by emphasizing the interconnectedness of mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage. She reiterated the need for integrated approaches and robust frameworks at global and national levels, highlighting the importance of partnerships and inclusive governance in tackling climate challenges. This panel discussion offered valuable insights into the complexities of addressing loss and damage, underscoring the need for equitable and effective solutions grounded in global cooperation and local action.

Acknowledgement

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