

The Resilience Academy 2016: Enhancing resilience to minimize Loss and Damage – providing knowledge for the UNFCCC

The 2016 Resilience Academy (RA) was held in a monastery on the island Frauenchiemsee, located in Lake Chiemsee in southern Bavaria, Germany. The focus of RA2016 was to provide evidence-based material for COP22 and the UNFCCC WIM ExCom by producing scientific papers and a policy brief on Loss and Damage.

Organized by the Munich Re-Foundation (MRF), United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS), and the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) the annual academy, first established in 2013, is made up of two distinct events. The first, held in Bangladesh, brings participants together to brainstorm and table ideas. For the second event, held in Germany, the focus is on finalizing these ideas and creating tangible outputs.



The aim of the first RA2013 was to gain a deeper understanding of livelihood resilience, while the following academy analyzed abrupt changes of livelihoods, transformations and transitions in people's lives. The most recent academies, RA2015 and RA2016, linked the earlier concepts to Loss and Damage, and aimed to provide evidence based scientific outputs to the UNFCCC. The organizers were pleased with the volume of papers and the efforts made at RA2016 to move them towards submission in different journals. In addition to the papers, a policy brief on Loss and Damage was produced to support the WIM ExCom, and released at COP22 in Marrakesh.





‘At Risk’ expert’s insights into research and policy negotiations: From academia to the UNFCCC

‘At Risk’ expert Terry Cannon, from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), opened RA2016 with a keynote speech entitled ‘Three Myths of Disaster Risk Reduction: Problems of Priorities, Community, and Policy’. First of all, the perception of risk differs between development practitioners and those on the ground, he explained, outlining scenarios where local people’s attitudes towards risk differed from the general DRR narratives. People may choose to live in



dangerous locations if it benefits their livelihood in the short-run, for example (‘Where an NGO sees risks, locals may see opportunity’). Secondly, the idea of ‘community’ is commonly referred to as a single unit without hierarchical divisions and power relations. But so-called ‘communities’ have internal diversions, they are not so warm and cuddly as so often described. And thirdly, there is a lack of willingness to prioritize

disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation by national governments and large scale companies.



This year’s Resilience Academy also welcomed Koko Warner, previously based at UNU-EHS, who recently moved from UNU-EHS to join the UNFCCC. At UNFCCC, Warner manages the sub programme on climate “Impacts, Vulnerability, and Risks”.





She is responsible for supervising the implementation of the work programme on Loss and Damage and the Nairobi Work Programme. Her attendance provided the participants with valuable insights into how best to transfer knowledge to the WIM ExCom and the UNFCCC. The presentation deepened the understanding of what kind of expertise, needs and research may be valuable for the UNFCCC and how to communicate them.

Writing workshops: Conveying research findings to wider audiences in an effective way

The Resilience Academy identified the importance of questioning how to effectively and clearly convey research findings to the public as well as to policymakers. Often, for example, policymakers and



other key stakeholders struggle to follow the academic writing style and thus, a technical or conceptual jargon. A journal article focused writing workshop

was included the agenda, facilitated by Terry Cannon who has extensive experience in publishing peer-reviewed papers.



A second policy brief writing workshop was conducted by Saleemul Huq and Thomas Loster. Here, they described a few key take-away points on how to make a short and crisp policy brief. It was pointed out that there are different types of policy briefs, which makes it important to know before starting out who is your audience and what kind of approach would suit them best. The workshop also addressed language, and how one can communicate urgency with a clear message in an attractive manner. Policy briefs are all about raising an important issue in a short amount of time and space. The workshop resulted in a policy brief on Loss and Damage and livelihood resilience. Based on the rich research experience of the participants at the academy, five key insights and recommendations for action were identified for the next five years of the WIM ExCom.



Policy brief on Loss and Damage

The policy brief suggested 5 key insights on Loss and Damage that have strong policy implications. These are as follows:

- Enhance livelihood resilience to minimize Loss and Damage;
- Stop ignoring the role of Loss and Damage to ecosystem service
- Enhance understanding of social and cultural constraints to adaptation disaster preparedness
- Identify ways to avoid erosive coping
- Engage with island states or other vulnerable constituents as champions of action

In addition to these insights, the policy brief also provided five major recommendations for WIM ExCom:

1. Engage the Science Community – Natural and social scientists have much to offer but need to be mobilized to inform policy
2. Provide orientation through the structure of the work plan
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of national and sub-national mechanisms to address Loss and Damage,
4. Ensure that policies and recommendations are 'fit for purpose' when it comes to serving the poor and those most vulnerable to Loss and Damage
5. Provide reflection and impulse to other UN agencies and international organizations

Meet the RA2015/2016 participants

Nandan Mukharjee is affiliated as a PhD student at the School of Social Science and also with the Centre for Environmental Change and Human Resilience (CECHR) at the University of Dundee. He is currently on study leave from BRAC



University where he was involved as Director and Assistant Professor in the Centre for Climate Change and Environmental Research (C3ER).

He taught different courses on climate change and environment, including the climate change adaptation course in the Post-Graduate Programme for Disaster Management (PPDM), climate change and health module in the James P. Grant School of Public Health (JPGSPH) and the undergraduate course on environmental science. Before joining the BRACU, he worked for BUET and CEGIS. His expertise is on climate change Loss and Damage, water resources management, economics of adaptation, environmental impact assessment.



Meet the RA2015/2016 participants

Roger-Mark De Souza is the Director of Population, Environmental Security and Resilience for the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington D.C. He leads programmes on climate change resilience, reproductive and maternal health, environmental security, and livelihoods.



Previously, De Souza served as Vice President of Research and Director of the Climate Program at Population Action International. From 2007 to 2010 he was the Director of Foundation and Corporate Relations at the Sierra Club.

For ten years previously, he designed and implemented research, communications, and capacity-building projects in the USA, Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean at the Population Reference Bureau.

Previously he worked at the World Resources Institute. He serves on the U.S. National Science Foundation Advisory Committee for Environmental Research and Education. He has graduate degrees from George Washington University and the University of the West Indies.

Published journal articles

Over the year, several peer-reviewed journal articles from the Resilience Academy have been published, listed here:

[Ayeb-Karlsson S., van der Geest K., Ahmed I., Huq S. and Warner K. \(2016\). A people-centred perspective on climate change, environmental stress, and livelihood resilience in Bangladesh. Sustainable Science 11\(4\):1-16.](#)

[Baudoin M.A., Henly-Shepard S., Fernando N., Sitati A. and Zommers Z. \(2016\). From top-down to “community-centric” approaches to early warning systems: exploring pathways to improve disaster risk reduction through community participation. International Journal of Disaster Risk Science 7\(2\):163-174.](#)

[Contreras D., Blaschke T. and Hodgson M.E. \(2016\). Lack of spatial resilience in a recovery process: Case L'Aquila, Italy. Technological Forecasting and Social Change. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2016.12.010>.](#)



Thinking beyond research: Climate Action



The Resilience Academy has always brought together a good combination of researchers, policymakers and practitioners with the hope of minimizing the gap between the groups. Not only has the academy produced strong scientific papers but it also inspired innovative climate action ideas. One good example is Ava Mulla's project 'Sand Cement Blocks' (SCB). Mulla is a social entrepreneur working in Bangladesh to produce eco-friendly earth blocks for building safe housing. Her project aims to replace burnt clay-bricks with more environmentally friendly earth blocks, which will reduce carbon emissions. Mulla was among the winners of the Google Impact Challenge in Germany, winning her the prize money of 10,000 €. The Resilience Academy appreciated her work and decided to financially support her project.

Meet the RA2015/2016 participants

Christopher J. Carter is a FEMA-Certified Flood plain Manager Based in Bozeman Montana USA now. Christopher holds an honors B.Sc. in interdisciplinary studies from Montana State University, Bozeman, where he focused on applied anthropology,



geography and visual communications. Working with indigenous and remote communities globally he has completed community-based participatory research, action planning, and 20 films on six continents, ranging from sexual health to responsible mining and climate adaptation. His professional work as a planner focuses on strategic planning, natural resource management, indigenous planning, decision analysis and value-focused approaches to impact assessment. As a graduate researcher at UBC he has focused on Disaster Resiliency of Place approaches to Integrated Flood Hazard Management Planning in coastal British Columbia under the supervision of Dr. Stephanie Chang, a Professor in regional and indigenous planning at Montana State University and lead planner. He is also a filmmaker for Altus Planning and Communications, a global consulting firm specializing in flood risk and storytelling.



Meet the RA organizers

Sonja Ayeb-Karlsson joined UNU-EHS in 2013 where she currently manages the Gibika research-to-action project.



She has spent the last couple of years conducting research in the seven Gibika study sites in Bangladesh. Her main focus here has been the development of personal Livelihood History interviews and other story-telling methodologies used to create individual and collective narratives around what it means to live on the frontlines to climate change or face environmental stress. In 2015 her PhD proposal was accepted by the University of Sussex (US) and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS). The PhD aims to enhance a deeper psychological understanding of why people sometimes do not evacuate, migrate away from or manage to escape environmental shocks and disasters. Collective storytelling sessions, Q methodology and critical discourse analysis have been used to deepen such insights. Non-economic Loss and Damage and its relation to human health and well-being has played a central role in her work, already published annually through *The Lancet* and the *Lancet Countdown* expert group. Here she is a part of the important research collaboration tracking progress on climate and health up until 2030.

Meet the RA organizers

Christian Barthelt was awarded a degree in economic geography by Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich, in 2008. His studies focused on regional economic networks and tourism in developing countries.



After completing his degree, he joined a Munich-based IT services agency as an e-learning author. Christian has been working as a project manager for the Munich Re Foundation since February 2009. He manages projects on disaster prevention, social vulnerability and resilience, as well as projects in the areas of climate change and education.

He is also involved with other tasks such as online communications (website and newsletter), supervising interns and preparing the Munich Re Foundation's environmental review.



Meet the RA organizers

Kees van der Geest (PhD)

is a human geographer who studies the impacts of climate change, adaptation, human mobility, environmental change, livelihood resilience and rural development with a people-centred perspective. He has extensive fieldwork experience, mostly in Ghana (five years), but also in Burkina Faso, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Nepal, the Marshall Islands and Bolivia. Presently he works as a senior researcher at UNU-EHS in Bonn where he coordinates the work on "Loss and Damage from climate change in vulnerable countries" and on a five-year research-to-action project about livelihood resilience in Bangladesh (the 'Gibika' project). He also works part-time for the University of Hawaii on a two-year research project about migration-environment linkages in the Marshall Islands. Dr. van der Geest studied at the University of Amsterdam and, for three months, at the University of Sussex. From 2006 to 2009 he was a lecturer at the geography department of the University of Amsterdam where he taught courses on environment and international development. Kees has also made two award-winning short documentaries about rural life in the savannahs of Northern Ghana.



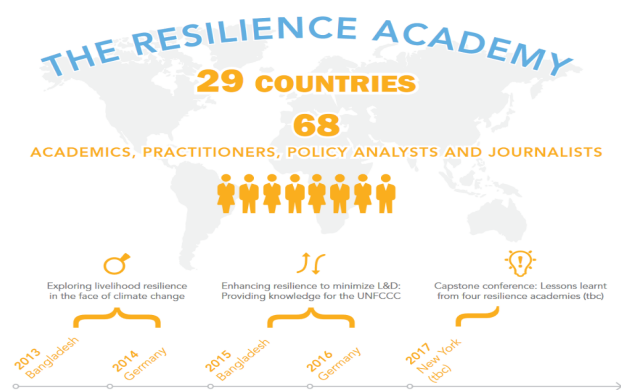
Meet the RA organizers

Istiakh Ahmed is the

Coordinator for the Resilient Livelihood programme at the ICCAD under which currently he is coordinating the research and action phase from ICCAD side. He has completed both a BSc



and MSc in Anthropology at Jahangirnagar University and has significant experience of social research and its different methodologies. Working with Gibika at ICCAD has given him a closer understanding of environmental aspects of the social issues. He was a USAid Gobeshona 'Young Researcher' fellow in 2015-2016 and won the best poster presentation at CBA10. While completing his university studies, Istiakh was involved with a number of social research projects with Plan International and an individual consultant, Dr. Zahir Ahmed. Before joining ICCAD, Istiakh worked with BRAC Development Institute (BDI), BRAC University on projects focused on primary education and internal migration in Bangladesh. His research interest areas are livelihood resilience, adaptation to environmental stressors, environmentally-induced migration, social vulnerabilities due to environmental stressors and social understandings and belief systems.



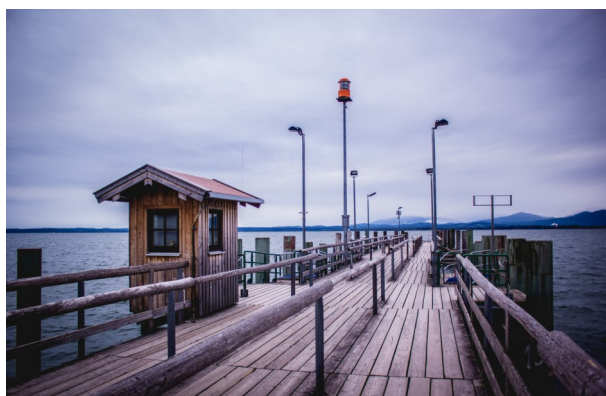
What's next?

Since 2013, the Resilience Academy has brought together academics, practitioners, policy analysts and journalists to discuss livelihood resilience and Loss and Damage in the face of extreme weather events and



slow-onset climatic changes. Resilience Academy participants come from 29 countries, from both the global north and south. The group has a wide range of

institutional affiliations including universities, international organizations, NGOs, think tanks, donors and government institutions. The last four academies have resulted in policy briefs, several working papers, and journal articles being developed, and there are currently more publications in the pipeline.



The Resilience Academy has by now completed its two sets of academies (RA2013-2016) and will wrap up with a final 2017 Capstone Conference in Washington DC between the 16th and 19th October. The idea of the 2017 Capstone Conference is to bring back a number of participants from both batches to discuss the emerging issues of climate change. Unlike the other academies, the Capstone Conference will have some open sessions where experts from external organizations, policy negotiators and the media will be invited. Hence, the RA participants will get a chance to share the results of the past academies and their work with a wider audience.