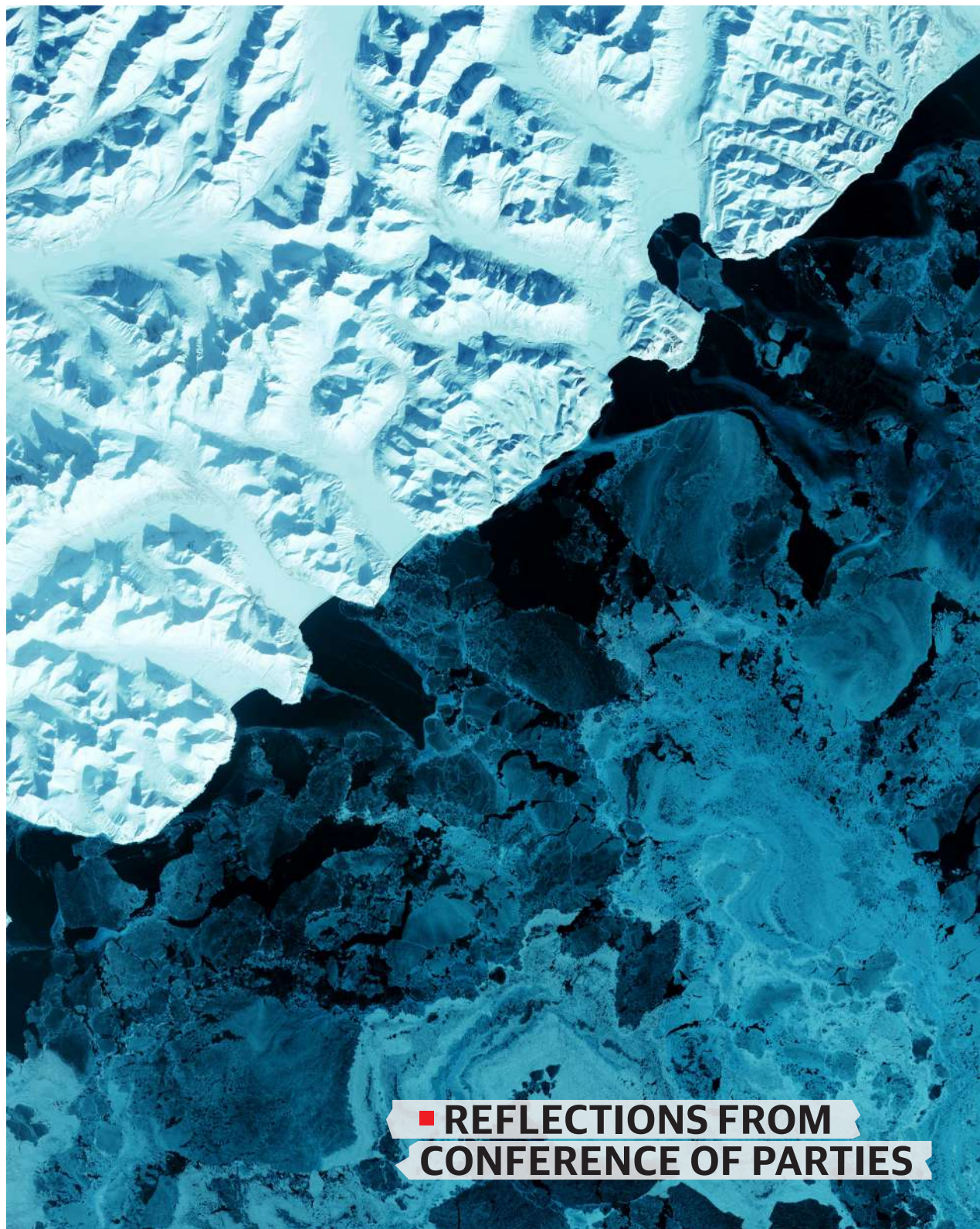


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Climate Tribune



■ REFLECTIONS FROM
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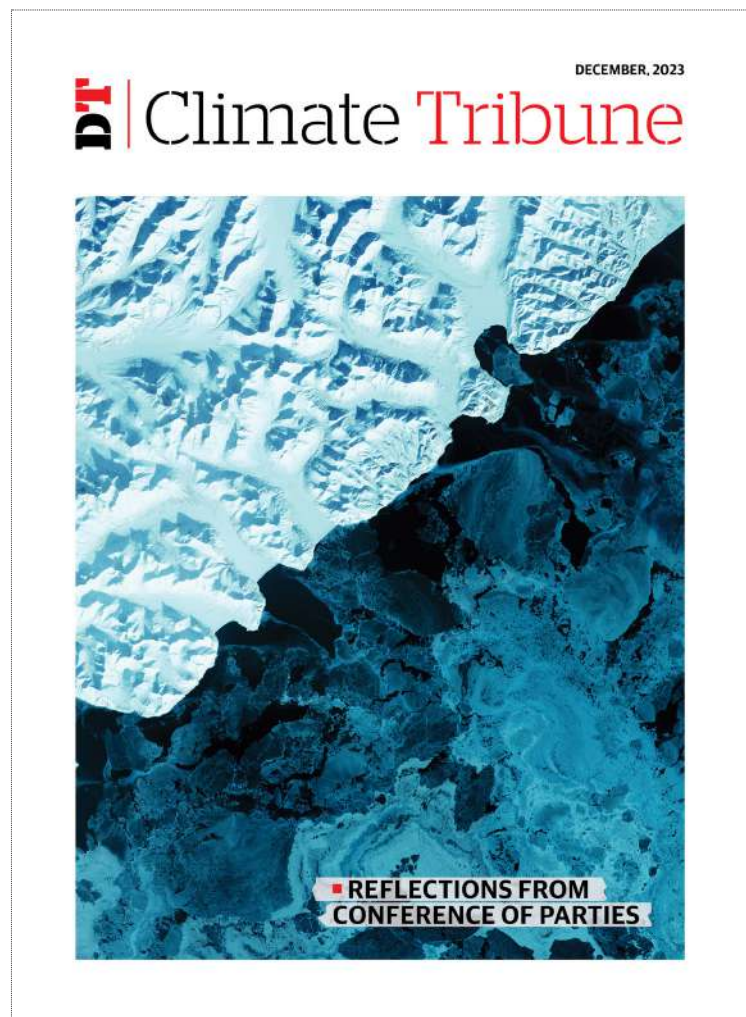
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Loss and damage talk around the halls at COP28

Loss and Damage agenda earns a remarkable spot at COP28

Nusrat Naushin and Chowdhury Abrar Zahin

The 28th Conference of Parties (COP28) President Dr Sultan Al Jaber, on the first day of COP28, announced the successful operationalization of the Loss and Damage Fund, marking a major, and long overdue, milestone in addressing the adverse effects of climate change on vulnerable nations. The swift action, achieved within one year since the fund's agreement at COP27 in Sharm El Sheikh, reflects an unprecedented global effort.

Loss and Damage Fund: The historic milestone in L&D negotiations

The final hours of COP27 witnessed intense negotiations, with loss and damage taking center stage in the final discussions. The decision to establish and operationalize a loss and damage fund became a focal point, sparking debates and disagreements among nations. Ever since COP27, the Transitional Committee has dedicated the entire year up to COP28, and was mandated to make recommendations on the operationalization of the new funding arrangements and the fund, including on establishing institutional arrangements, modalities, structure, governance and terms of reference for the fund; defining the elements of the new funding arrangements; identifying and expanding sources of funding; and ensuring coordination and complementarity with existing funding arrangements. The Fund, conceived during COP27, is now set in motion following consensus reached during five transitional committee meetings, including a crucial 5th meeting in Abu Dhabi. The recommendations emerging from these meetings lay the groundwork for essential grant-based support to countries severely impacted by climate and loss.

Despite this success, challenges loom large. Unlike conventional climate finance mechanisms, developed nations lack a strict obligation to contribute, relying on the goodwill of wealthier countries and other potential funding sources. Worries persist regarding the World Bank's perceived restrictive role, potentially conflicting with UNFCCC rules. Developing countries have secured safeguards, anticipating a review

if the bank fails to meet defined fund management criteria. COP28 saw increased pledges, yet overall funding remains vastly insufficient. Some nations merely reiterated previous commitments, underscoring the urgent need for additional funding sources.

Voices of the civil society

Civil Society and youth have been voicing their varied opinions about the decision, which is monumental, but has serious contentions. Despite the unfortunate passing of one of the strongest Loss & Damage warriors, Prof. Saleemul Huq, the ICCCAD family along with its partners have tried their best in engaging heavily at COP28 to bring the voices from the ground to the forefront and carry his legacy forward.

ICCCAD in collaboration with IFAW has convened an event on Ecological Loss & Damage highlighting the increasing importance of ecological losses and damages for Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing

“Civil Society and youth have been voicing their varied opinions about the decision, which is monumental, but has serious contentions”



High-level panel on Strengthening Loss and Damage Response Capacity Event at COP28

States (SIDS). A number of case studies were presented and the session ended with a brainstorming of how the existing mechanisms available can help address ecological losses and damages, identifying gaps and opportunities. The growing importance of accounting for Non Economic Loss & Damage was prevalent throughout COP28, with another innovative session co-hosted by ICCAD and Climate Heritage Network on Preserving our legacy: Cultural L&D. This session highlighted how culture can be a catalyst in helping reduce mental stress and what are the different kinds of indigenous and cultural locally led practices that help address losses and damages, with examples from the Middle East, South Asia and Latin America.

Apart from this, ICCAD has co-hosted a couple of important National Level Research with partners in Nepal and Sri Lanka, with an effective peer-to-peer learning process. An important National Level Dialogue was conducted at the Bangladesh Pavilion, with key personnel from the Govt of Bangladesh to initiate the process of developing a National Mechanism on L&D, through a Multi Actor Partnership Platform. Furthermore, this kind of work will be supported by the ALL ACT initiative, which co-hosted another session on Practical Solutions for L&D, highlighting the different methodologies that are being undertaken at National Levels that can support developing the framework of the Santiago Network on L&D.

ICCAD co-hosted a High Level Ministerial Dialogue between Ministers of Senegal and Vanuatu, Climate Envoy of Bangladesh and Nepal of strengthening Loss & Damage response capacity of the Global South, with strong action re-

“ This session highlighted how culture can be a catalyst in helping reduce mental stress and what are the different kinds of indigenous and cultural locally led practices that help address losses and damages ”



COP28 Presidency Unites the world on Loss and Damage

search evidence from the STRENGTH Project of ICCCAD.

Two new initiatives, which are outcomes of Prof. Huq’s visions, were launched at COP28. The Loss & Damage Forum is a collaborative platform and virtual workspace where resources and tools are shared among a group of practitioners, researchers and decision makers across the world, with a prime focus of connecting local to global, to support and address climate change induced loss and damage. Through this event, lived experiences were shared to proactively frame the discussions taking place over the course of the conference and generate both evidence and solutions. Furthermore, the Youth and Children’s Platform on L&D was launched which will act as a dedicated platform for empowering the future generations and enabling them to hold the mantle. Through such a platform, they can voice their concerns but also share innovative solutions. This will further help to build the capacity of youth through two distinct tracks with specialized learning processes: (i) Negotiator Track through which formal training on climate negotiations as well as networking opportunities to help them become youth negotiators for their respective regions (ii) Practitioner Track: A separate cohort of youth will be engaged with country-specific scoping and research. This working group will work on the ground to gather and strengthen L&D evidence of their respective countries.

Way forward for Loss & Damage

The Loss and Damage Fund represents a vital step in holding nations accountable for climate-induced damages. ICCCAD aims to support ongoing dialogues and negotiations aiming to bolster the fund’s structure and contributions, ensuring it ad-

equately supports climate-affected nations in mitigating incurred losses and damages. The Fund’s activation addresses the “locked-in” level of warming, providing vital assistance to communities facing extreme weather events, agricultural challenges, and rising sea levels. Several nations showcased their commitment to this cause, with the UAE leading by example with a substantial commitment of \$100 million to the Fund. Germany pledged \$100 million, the UK committed £40 million for the Fund and £20 million for other arrangements, Japan contributed \$10 million, and the U.S. committed \$17.5 million. These financial commitments highlight a shared determination to support climate change mitigation and recovery efforts, marking a significant stride towards a more resilient and sustainable future. And ICCCAD will be working with its partners to deliver all kinds of support to make sure such efforts are realized within due time. ■

“ This will further help to build the capacity of youth through two distinct tracks with specialized learning processes ”

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ADAPTATION GOALS



Reflections on GGA from COP28

Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA): A Reality Check

Savio Rousseau Rozario

The 28th Conference of Parties (COP), held in Dubai, UAE, started with a great momentum by adopting the Loss and Damage Fund on the very first day. However, many scholars and practitioners opined that such a declaration, affected and overshadowed the negotiation process on adopting the GGA (Global on Adaptation) framework, commitments, and discussion on enhancing adaptation financing. As a result, GGA remained as the yearning “guiding star” without a clear roadmap.

A Unified Goal on Climate Change Adaptation

The Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) dates back to 2013, when the African Group of Negotiators (AGN) introduced the concept of establishing a unified framework globally to scale up political actions and commitments on climate change adaptation financing for developing countries. This process in-

involved setting specific and assessable targets. Later, in 2015, during the 21st COP in Paris, France, the GGA was established under Article 7 of the Paris Agreement with the aim to “enhance adaptive capacity, strengthen resilience, and reduce vulnerability to climate change” based on the mitigation goal of keeping and restricting the temperature rise to a maximum of 2°C or 1.5°C.

In 2021, during the 26th COP at Glasgow, Scotland, the signatory countries of the Paris Agreement (also referred to as the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement) under decision 7/CMA3 introduced the GlaSS (Glasgow Sharm el-Sheikh) Work Program on GGA to gain a comprehensive understanding on GGA. The Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) were in charge of carrying out the activities throughout a series of workshops from 2022–2023. Later, in 2022, at CMA4 (27th COP, Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt), GGA framework development

was initiated, emphasizing target setting for the global goals.

Source: Author, 2023

GGA Negotiation at COP 28, Dubai, UAE

The legacy of GGA was extended at COP 28 in Dubai, UAE. As a part of the UAE consensus, the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience was adopted under CMA5. Parties agreed on the four targets (Impact, vulnerability and risk assessment; Planning; Implementation; Monitoring, evaluation and learning) under the themes of water, food, health, ecosystems, infrastructure, poverty eradication, and cultural heritage, and for the first time, the transboundary climatic impacts were highlighted. The framework initiative was followed by another two-year-long work program titled “UAE-Belem Work Program,” with the aim of developing indicators for measuring progress achieved towards the targets delineated in the framework. Overall, it is anticipated that the UAE framework will bring adaptation actions into focus along with mitigation initiatives involving both government and non-government actors.

Nevertheless, there persisted many inconsistencies and criticism on the newly adopted framework, and the following text briefly highlights the major three concerns: initiating the targets, fulfilling the prior commitments, and adaptation financing.

The Missing Target

The UAE Framework included four targets, starting with risk assessment, planning and implementation, and initiating MEL (Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning). But there has been no target introduced on the “means of implementation” of these four targets, which largely involves ‘financing’. Without financing, none of the above-mentioned targets will be sustained or effective. Therefore, the G77 countries sought out adaptation financing to be an integral part, while the developed countries wanted to see progress understating the issue of ‘financial inclusion’ within the GGA framework. Similarly, the other means of implementation, such as technology transfer and capacity enhancement, were weakly defined in the framework with no incentive opportunities for the countries to track, report, and receive support for their adaptation interventions.

Yet Another Work Program!

While the climate-vulnerable countries need support right away, the GGA initiation activities have proven to be a lengthy and severely bureaucratic process. At COP 26, the two-year-long GlaSS Work Program was introduced for a wider understanding of GGA, with a focus on discussing approaches and methodologies for evaluating GGA progress. With some significant progress made through the GlaSS on achieving the eight objectives, the indicators and metrics to measure adaptation actions were to be detailed. Similarly, in the new

“While the climate-vulnerable countries need support right away, the GGA initiation activities have proven to be a lengthy and severely bureaucratic process”

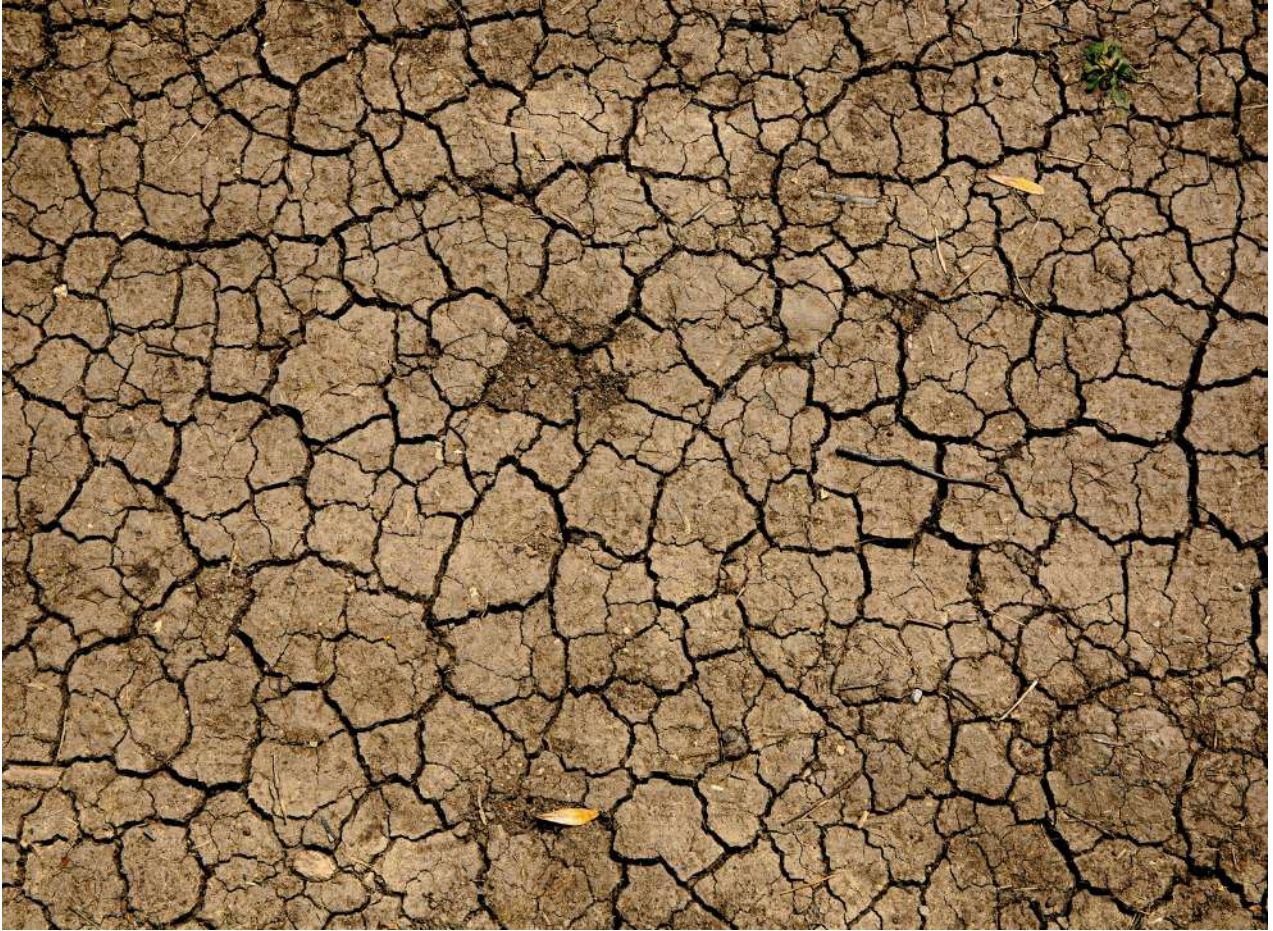
framework, the language was absent. However, there was a provision to establish another two-year-long work program most likely to decide on the metrics and indicators.

Repetition of Commitments

Commemorating a decade of GGA, the experience so far in reaching the global goal has not been much, but only reiteration of commitments and pledges. Till date, there has been no strong language on means of implementation, reducing adaptation finance gaps, or the inclusion of the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC). For instance, doubling adaptation financing was a decision from COP26, which has been repeated during COP28 with no clear roadmap on how to deliver the fund.

Countries to Deliver and Execute National Adaptation Plan (NAP) by 2030

Recognizing the fact that adaptation interventions are local and context-specific and often difficult to quantify (in contrast to GHG emission reduction), it is essential to generate an adaptation plan from the lowest appropriate level. The new framework thus invites all the parties to develop and deliver



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“ Even though current scientific data indicates there remains a massive gap between the need and commitment for adaptation financing ”

the National Adaptation Plan by 2025 and execute the activities by 2030. But there was no clear direction on how it would be achieved, as the combined financial contribution of the bilateral, multilateral, and private sectors is falling short of supporting developing countries to implement their existing national climate plans and adaptation efforts.

Requirements Hit Billion While Pledges Remain in Millions

Even though current scientific data indicates there remains a massive gap between the need and commitment for adaptation financing, in COP 28, only USD 169 million was raised, which is half of the fund that was anticipated for this year. Currently, the adaptation financing gap is estimated to be between USD 194 and USD 366 billion per year. Hence, the commitments clearly fall short of the requirements, and the developing countries remain greatly underfunded. Moreover, there remains no clear mechanism to disburse the funding to the most vulnerable communities, which should have been an essential and important part of the new GGA framework. ■

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The unaccomplished agenda of climate finance at COP28 in Dubai

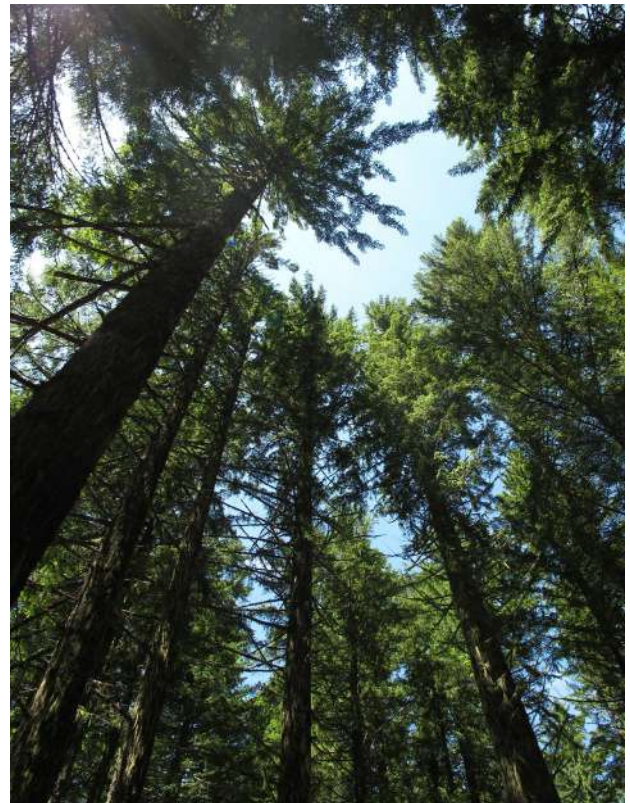
The Climate Finance Outcomes at COP28

Afsara Binte Mirza and Towrin Zaman Raya

At the 28th Conference of Parties (COP28), the early adoption of the loss and damage fund was a major breakthrough related to climate finance. The High-Level Expert Group on Climate Finance launched a report at the beginning of COP28, where the leading authors and economists Vera Songwe and Nicholas Stern, stressed- “The world is badly off track on the Paris goals, as the first global stocktake shows, the primary reason for which is insufficient investment in key areas, particularly in emerging markets and developing countries.”

Changing the global finance ‘architecture’

COP28 witnessed ample discussions on altering the global finance ‘architecture’, mainly reforming multilateral development banks (MDBs) to free up more finance. One possible approach for this could be MDBs carefully reevaluating their risk assessment tool and increasing access to grants. The role of financing policies also came up in COP 28 discussions with the importance of these policies in tackling poverty and its nexus with climate change being emphasized at a side event by Ruth Hill, the Lead Economist at the Global Unit of the Poverty and Equity Global Practice, World Bank. MDBs can focus on the climate victims’ vulnerabilities, such as supporting extension of mobile money, cash transfers at household levels, and focus on systems change.



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Adaptation Finance Gap Widening

The Global Goal on Adaptation framework makes only a perfunctory reference to the fact that the adaptation finance gap is widening. However, the Global Stocktake outcome recognized that financial support needs to substantially scale up beyond the current commitment to double adaptation finance, as adaptation needs will evolve in the coming decades. The global goal on adaptation framework presents an upcoming opportunity to bridge the gaps for adaptation in future Global Stocktakes. However, the absence of a clear roadmap on increasing finance for adaptation, especially the goal of doubling adaptation finance by 2025 creates a lack of accountability and transparency in strategically addressing the adaptation finance gap.

UAE Leaders' Declaration on a Global Climate Finance Framework

The UAE-led Leaders' Declaration on a Global Climate Finance Framework, was endorsed by 13 national governments on the third day of COP28 to make climate finance available, accessible and affordable. The framework encapsulates delivering on commitments and achieving ambitious outcomes; freeing up fiscal space for climate action; widening the sources of concessional finance; doubling down on country platforms;

“ The Global Goal on Adaptation framework makes only a perfunctory reference to the fact that the adaptation finance gap is widening ”

“ This session also had representatives from USAID and Adaptation Fund (AF) who mentioned the shift in their visions to incorporate local knowledge ”

building better, bigger, and more effective MDBs; enhancing domestic resource mobilization; unlocking a highway of private finance; and delivering high-integrity carbon markets.

New Collective Qualitative Goal (NCQG) on climate finance

The COP28 negotiations continued over the development of a post-2025 climate finance goal to replace the \$100bn pledge—called the New Collective Qualitative Goal (NCQG) – being the big agenda for next year’s COP29 scheduled to happen in Baku, Azerbaijan. This new goal aims to replace developed countries’ current commitment of providing \$100 billion annually in climate finance to developing nations, first agreed to in 2009. A small group of developed countries were given the responsibility of providing at least \$100bn of climate finance annually to developing countries from 2020 to 2025. So far, they have been unsuccessful to do so and have lost faith with in this critical part of the UN climate system.

The new goal will need to incorporate developing countries’ needs and priorities, estimated at \$5.8 trillion - \$5.9 trillion up until 2030. Negotiators in Dubai further clarified the process for setting a new goal, rather than sketching out options for aspects such as its time frame, transparency arrangements, sources and structure. Some parties pushed for establishing sub-goals for underfunded areas, such as adaptation, but faced opposition due to claims of it being ‘too politically contentious’.

Green Climate Fund (GCF) at COP28

Six new pledges were made to GCF by Australia, Estonia, Italy, Portugal, Switzerland, and the United States of America. With these pledges, GCF’s second replenishment grew to a record USD 12.8 billion and 31 contributor countries for its 2024-2027 programming cycle with plans announced to develop new projects focusing on the blue economy, education, health, mangroves, and food systems, among others. GCF is also working towards improving its financial architecture to ease access to funds and work with diverse sub-national financial institutions for better local action on climate crisis.

Increasing Accountability in the Finance Delivery Chain for Locally Led Adaptation

One of the side events at COP 28 titled as- ‘Empowering the Vulnerable: Evaluating Locally Led Adaptation for Climate Finance Accountability in the Least Developed Countries and the Global South’ highlighted experiences, successes and lessons learned to hold climate finance delivery chain actors (such as donors, intermediaries, and local community) accountable to deliver effective adaptation and keep local communities at the heart of decision-making. A new method - 360 Accountability Scorecard was discussed as being a key assessment tool to build a clear picture of how climate finance is flowing to local communities and involving them in decision-making.

This session also had representatives from USAID and Adaptation Fund (AF) who mentioned the shift in their visions to incorporate local knowledge while designing the funds. Recently, the focus of AF has been more on creating direct access through strengthening the enhanced direct access provision by providing grants and sub-grants at the local level. Locally led funding windows are in the pipeline too. Mutual accountability through learning visits; reporting back and taking action; provisions of adaptive management; establishing trust and adapting to language and culture were some key enablers mentioned for better transparency in the climate finance delivery chain.

Development and Climate (D&C) Days Outside COP venue

The D&C days, which was created by the late Prof Saleemul Huq, were centered on the theme of decolonising climate finance this year.. The discussions revolved around how vital it is to work collaboratively to scale up not only the quantity of climate finance but also the quality of it by strengthening governance systems nationally and sub-nationally. Moreover, the sessions consistently emphasized on the role of forming effective partnerships- particularly with local communities and focusing on capacitating the local actors scaling up locally-driven climate action. ■

Beyond Borders: An Indigenous Youth's Reflection on COP28

Shimi Chak

Embarking on my first Conference of Parties (COP), COP28, I found myself immersed in a world of possibilities, discovering the depth of my knowledge about climate change and its global implications. Representing the ICCCAD youth fellowship from Bangladesh, I took on the responsibility of voicing the concerns of Bangladeshi youths at the international stage. This article aims to share my observations as an indigenous youth at COP28.

Receiving a 5-day observer badge at COP, I delved into understanding the fundamentals of how the conference operates. I familiarized myself with the intricacies of COP, such as comprehending the purpose of side events and pavilions, learning the significance of a party badge, identifying who had access to specific meetings or negotiations, and learning the protocols for attending Ringo or CANSA events. However, as I was absorbing this information, my 5-day participation went by fast. Nevertheless, this experience proved to be a valuable journey, one that I will cherish and draw motivation from for future endeavors.

Hailing from one of the smallest indigenous communities in Bangladesh, I proudly stand as the first woman from my community to attend COP28. As I explored the event, I could not help but notice the underrepresentation of indigenous voices from South Asian countries compared to their counterparts from regions like Brazil, Uganda, Africa, and other countries. The attire of indigenous communities became a focal point of my observations, with many individuals proudly showcasing their traditional dresses. However, I also noted the challenge of maintaining cultural identity, as not everyone adhered to traditional dress. Emphasizing the importance of cultural visibility, it pointed out how inclusivity in combating climate change matters at the advocacy platforms.

Despite the growing presence of Bangladeshi youth at COP, questions linger about the inclusivity of participants. How many indigenous, climate-affected, and disabled youths represented Bangladesh? While strolling through the venue, I observed individuals from indigenous communities proudly donning their traditional attire, making them easily distinguishable..

Privileged to attend an event in the indigenous pavilion, I immediately sensed the rich diversity of indigenous com-

munities from around the world, with their traditions and culture on full display. The inclusivity of the event struck me when headphones were offered for translation. Observing others with headphones, I learned that English speeches were being translated into participants' native languages, fostering a truly inclusive environment. This approach not only allowed everyone to participate but also underscored the importance of each individual's role in shaping the agenda for the global indigenous forum. During the event, youth actively engaged in reporting back to authorities and negotiating indigenous rights, impressively overcoming language barriers. One notable discussion centered around the operationalization of loss and damage funds for grassroots communities. The conversation highlighted concerns about the representation and vulnerability of indigenous communities, acknowledging that not all have direct access to representatives or local organizations..

“ I proudly stand as the first woman from my community to attend COP28 ”



ICECAD Youth fellows listening to Dr. Huq's Concluding Remarks

PHOTO: COURTESY

Climate change affects everyone, but the impact on marginalized individuals in disaster-prone areas with limited financial resources is disproportionately severe. To truly address these issues, it is imperative to include and amplify the voices of those suffering at the grassroots level. English is a predominant UN language and the primary medium of international communication. While it's conventionally expected for speakers at international platforms to be proficient in English, the 21st century offers technological or various solutions for non-English speakers. Reflecting on my journey as a member of the Chak indigenous community, I initially spoke Chak, then learned Bangla for education and communication beyond my community, and eventually acquired English proficiency due to opportunities and resources. However, many in my community are limited to their native language, creating a communication barrier. Consequently, those actively engaged in locally-led adaptation efforts, including indigenous climate warriors, are often sidelined because of language limitations. It is crucial to bridge this gap to ensure that their valuable contributions to preserving culture and tradition are not overlooked.

In another Resilience Hub event, a panel discussion featuring indigenous youth took place, with two panelists speaking in Spanish and their words translated by an interpreter. This initiative demonstrated a simple yet impactful approach to ensure inclusivity and allow every voice to be heard. However, such initiatives are infrequent, both nationally and internationally. It is still a reality that climate change victims from marginalized indigenous communities face barriers to voice their concerns due to language boundaries. .

My COP28 journey as an indigenous youth has been a revelation, exposing both the triumphs and challenges faced by climate-vulnerable communities. This article sheds light on the imperative need for inclusivity, cultural preservation, and proactive measures to address the multifaceted impacts of climate change on indigenous traditions and livelihoods. ■

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GENDER CONSIDERATION



The evolution of gender consideration at Conference of Parties

Sumaiya Binte Selim

As the climate crisis is becoming acute, it will be crucial to put the future generations of children and youth, in particular, girls and young women at the heart of climate change governance and decision-making. Gender is undoubtedly one of the most important cross cutting issues when it comes to the negotiations of Conference of Parties (COPs). Though COP

started in 1995, gender and its nexus with climate change was first witnessed at the 7th COP in 2001. The relevance was seen through women representing different delegations at COP7.

After almost 4 years, the Nairobi work programme (NWP) was initiated at COP11 in 2005. NWP aims to help least-developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing states (SIDs) to improve their understanding and assessment of impacts, vulnerability and adaptation, for making informed decisions on practical adaptation actions. This COP decision (17/CP.19) explicitly states that adaptation must be gender-sensitive.

At COP12, the final decision included an excerpt which mentioned the need for greater gender balance in uptaking COP negotiations. In 2014, the enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender (LWPG), was set up by the UNFCCC secretariat to integrate gender considerations into climate change policies and implementation for all party countries.

Picture description: 5 main sectors of gender Action Plan Aligning with Lima Work Programme on Gender

At COP25, the Gender Action Plan was initiated following the Lima Work Programme on Gender, and outlined five priority areas to enhance knowledge and understanding of gender-responsive climate action. The priority areas include capacity building, knowledge management and communication; gender balance, participation and women's leadership; coherence; gender responsive implementation; and monitor-

ing and reporting. While, at COP 27 parties concluded an intermediate review, introducing amendments and new activities in some priority areas among those five.

Last year, COP28 in Dubai, the Global Conference on Gender and Environmental Data took place and highlighted the urgency of collecting and using gender-disaggregated and environmental data. The conference outcomes stressed the importance of ethical production of data, accelerated use of data extracting tools, and enhanced finance for decision-making related to gendered data.

On the 5th of December, 2023 at COP28, for the first time at COP, a day was dedicated for Gender Equality. The COP 28 presidency also launched the Gender Responsive Just Transitions and Climate Action Partnership which was endorsed by 68 party countries. This partnership will follow the progress made through the Lima Work Programme.

The draft decision of COP28 emphasises the importance of the enhanced Lima work programme on gender action plan. The decision acknowledges contributions from Parties and observers, urging the full, meaningful, and equal participation of women in the UNFCCC process. It calls for a final review in the next COP (COP29) inviting inputs on progress, challenges, and priorities by

March 31, 2024, and encourages discussions on these submissions during subsequent sessions.

In summary, COP 28 successfully included a comprehensive overview of the intersections between gender and climate change through side events, negotiations and high-level events. The call for increased gender and environmental data, the establishment of the Gender-Responsive Just Transitions, and Climate Action Partnership during COP28 were some important decisions taken to accelerate gender equality. The next COP29 should focus on earmarking funding for grassroots level women-led organisations who are leading climate change interventions in LDCs and SIDs. Additionally at COP29, it will be crucial to support LDCs and SIDs through capacity building efforts in conducting robust monitoring and reporting for collecting gendered disaggregated data for enhancing transparency. ■

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Vulnerable manta community women from Barisal who are affected by the climate crisis



From Mehendiganj to COP 28: A Bangladeshi Youth's Journey to Advocate for Climate Action at the Global Stage

Md Al-Mamun Rakib

The 28th annual Conference of Parties (COP28) was held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from November 30 to December 13, 2023. I joined this summit as an International Centre for Climate Change and Development's (ICCCAD) youth fellow.

Growing up in one of the most climate-vulnerable areas of Bangladesh, known as Mehendiganj, I have witnessed first-hand the impacts of climate change on my people struggling with riverbank erosion, floods, cyclones, and other disasters. This also led to loss of their homes, lands, crops, and everything they belonged. The harsh reality is that the climate victims in my area are not aware of the word 'climate

change.' They are still busy blaming Allah (God) and their fate for their losses.

Back in 2014, after completing my secondary education, I had no opportunity to continue my studies in my village. The nearest college, with poor educational facilities, was almost 8 kilometers away from my home, and poor road connectivity made it more difficult to travel. At that stage, two-thirds of my school friends left their studies. However, I was one of the luckiest ones who survived and forcefully migrated alone, leaving everything behind in the village, to move to Barisal city and continue my higher studies.

Soon after continuing my studies in Barisal, I found a youth-based organization named Lal Sabuj Society that

aimed to work on several social issues. After working there, I was introduced to the concept of climate change and I gradually started understanding the relationship between climate change and its impact on Mehendiganj. The organization has initiated several initiatives to inspire children and youths to join the climate action movement. Since 2015, we have reached 28 districts, and more than 2000 youths have joined us to ensure climate education, share adaptation techniques, and inspire local mitigation strategies.

In 2023, I joined the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) as a youth fellow and received a year-long hands-on training, took part in field visits, and attended several virtual capacity-building sessions on climate change. After rigorous training, out of 20 youth fellows from different backgrounds, two of us got elected to join COP 28 this year.

I joined as an observer and had the privilege to participate in a few negotiations and several discussions in different side events organized by different organizations and countries' pavilions

On December 1st, 2023, I spoke at the Resilience Hub and shared the sufferings of our people due to climate change worsening their livelihoods and health.

I also had an opportunity to share my voice with Nordic and Baltic countries' youths at the Nordic Pavilion. During my talk, I shared the importance of collaborating with youth and co-producing solutions for reducing the impacts of climate change. I realized how climate change is a global issue and needs a global solution driven by holistic efforts involving the voices of youth.g..

At COP28, I represented Bangladeshi youth voices, and talked about the rising vulnerability of marginalized communities living in the Southern part of Bangladesh. One thing that makes me sad is that, compared to other countries, we Bangladeshi youth had less participation in this COP. Though gradually our youth participation is increasing, the numbers are not satisfactory. As a climate victim and champion country, Bangladeshi youth need to be more proactive in participating in COPs and bring a justice lens. As I received the observer badge to attend COP28, it limited access to many high-level negotiation rooms. In that case, the COP Presidency could rethink this matter and increase party badges for youth participants.

After coming back to Bangladesh, my reflections on COP28 is that it inspired me to keep continuing my advocacy in climate action. COP28 was a useful place for meeting like-minded people from different backgrounds, countries and cultures. Additionally, I discovered the massive knowledge gap of our youth on climate change terminologies and concepts which I will try to improve collaboratively. The best part of COP28 was to visit all countries' specific pavilions and understand their current and past initiatives to reduce the impact of climate change.

“ I was introduced to the concept of climate change and I gradually started understanding the relationship between climate change and its impact on Mehendiganj ”

As I have returned from COP 28, the flame of hope burns brighter within me. The lessons learned, the connections forged, and the shared dedication to combat climate change have left an indelible mark on my journey. This experience was not just about attending a conference; it was a profound reminder of the power that lies within collective action. ■

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