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# Climate Tribune



- **LOSS AND DAMAGE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: IMPACTS, EVIDENCE AND WHAT NEXT**

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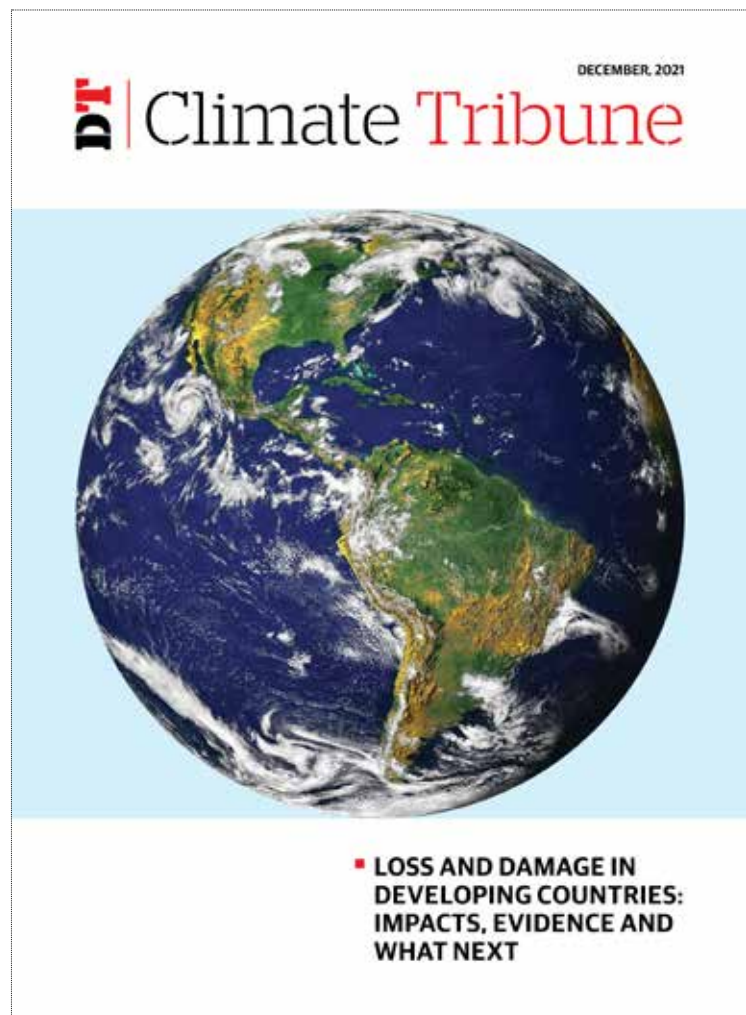
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# CONTENTS

INTERVIEW	3
CAPACITY BUILDING	6
CLIMATE FINANCE	9
LD CASE STUDIES	12
LOSS AND DAMAGE	14
ICCCAD TRAINING	18
YOUTH AT COP26	20





Saleemul Huq

DHAKA TRIBUNE

# 'I am quite disheartened by the outcome of COP26'

INTERVIEW WITH LEADING CLIMATE POLICY EXPERT SALEEMUL HUQ



One of the veterans of the COP summit, Dr Saleemul Huq once again attended the conference last month. Regarded as one of the most influential climate scientists and policy experts in the world, Huq is widely cited in the international media and advocacy literature when it comes to climate change policy issues.

The Bangladeshi academic and advocate is the Director of International

Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD).

In this interview Saleemul Huq breaks down some of the essential concepts in global climate negotiations and policy matters. He also gives his take on COP26.

### Could you contextualize the role of COP in climate change negotiations and policy?

The COP stands for Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and is an annual two-week-long meeting of all the governments who have ratified the Treaty to review progress in implementing the treaty. The COP takes place at the end of each calendar year and moves from one continent to another each year. This year COP26 was in Glasgow, Scotland hosted by the United Kingdom and next year COP27 will be in Africa hosted by Egypt in Sharm Al Shaikh in November 2022.

Each COP is held for two weeks with the first week being technical level discussion under two subsidiary bodies of the UNFCCC and the second week is the political week when ministers and sometimes heads of government come to negotiate and agree on the final outcomes of the COP. Very often it doesn't end on time and is extended for a day or two to try to reach an agreement in the final hours. COP26 in Glasgow was no exception as it went to a day of extra time before it ended.

### How do negotiations take place and how decisions are finally arrived at?

The negotiations take place on many different agenda items that deal with different articles of the UNFCCC as well as the Paris Agreement. Each of these parallel negotiation tracks is co-chaired by a representative from developing countries and another co-chair from a developed country who hold both formal as well as informal meetings during the first week of the COP.

The idea is to agree on language for the final COP decision but when language is not agreed then alternative language is provided in brackets.

To give one typical example, there are often differences of views on the use of three words namely 'shall', 'should', and 'may'. The use of 'shall' is strongest as it requires every country to take actions but 'should' only exhorts every country, whereas 'may' allows everyone a choice to act or not act.

If the language in the different negotiations tracks are full of brackets at the end of the first week it goes to the ministers in the second week who have to talk to other Ministers and try to remove the brackets.

This is a highly political process and often involves the COP Presidency calling up heads of government to get their acceptance of the final text as everything has to be agreed unanimously and hence even one country can hold up the agreement.

The final decision text is then adopted by all countries unanimously, which happened in the end in Glasgow where the Glasgow Climate Pact was adopted as the final outcome.

### Talk about your work at the conference.

I go to the COPs not as a negotiator but as an observer but I do have a role in advising the Least Developed Countries (LDC) group which is the group of poorest and most vulnerable developing countries mostly in Africa and Asia. It currently has 47 countries and was chaired by Bhutan until the end of COP26 and will now be chaired by Senegal for COP27 in Egypt in 2022 as well as COP28 in Abu Dhabi in 2023.

Bangladesh is a member of the LDC group and a number of Bangladeshi negotiators represent the LDC Group in different negotiation tracks.

I have been advising the LDC Group ever since it started initially on the issues of Adaptation and adaptation finance but more recently on the emerging and highly politically sensitive topic of loss and damage. I have also been doing capacity building of junior LDC negotiators over the years. That is why

“ If the language in the different negotiations tracks are full of brackets at the end of the first week it goes to the ministers in the second week who have to talk to other Ministers and try to remove the brackets ”

“ Bangladesh played a very prominent role in Glasgow initially with the presence of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina during the first two days’ leaders’ summit part of COP26 ”

I go to the COP a week before it starts in order to help the LDC Group chair and negotiators to be prepared for the COP before it starts.

During the COP I engage in various side events and also provide advice to the LDC negotiators as and when needed, but I don’t actually attend the negotiations myself.

#### **What do non-governmental actors do at the COPs?**

Each COP attracts many thousands of non-governmental actors from business, youth, indigenous communities, academics, parliamentarians, mayors, and many others. The number of such non-governmental actors in Glasgow was around 30,000 from all over the world.

These actors come to the COP to network with each other and plan activities together. They also hold many events outside the UNFCCC COP which is held under very tight security in the conference center called the Blue Zone. The youth also hold a huge march mid-way through the COP.

These networks and events outside the official COP are sometimes more full of energy and enthusiasm which they try to impart to the official negotiators by lobbying.

#### **What did you and your colleagues at ICCCAD do at COP26?**

We had a big team of more than a dozen ICCCAD colleagues who travelled to Glasgow from Dhaka and some of our international colleagues as well. Each of them were involved in running side events both inside as well as outside the Blue Zone.

The Blue Zone includes many different pavilions where different side events were held every day over the two weeks of the COP.

Such side events are excellent networking opportunities.

#### **What was the role of Bangladesh in COP26?**

Bangladesh played a very prominent role in Glasgow initially with the presence of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina during the first two days’ leaders’ summit part of COP26. She spoke at the summit not only on behalf of Bangladesh but also on behalf of the fifty-five countries that are in the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) which she currently chairs. Thus her presentation of the Dhaka Glasgow Declaration was very well received by other world leaders at the Summit.

Then during the two weeks of COP26, a number of extremely experienced Bangladeshi negotiators represented the LDC Group in different negotiations tracks with the Minister and Deputy Minister of Environment participating in the high-level discussions. It is also worth pointing out the role of Saber Hossain Chowdhury MP who represented the LDC Group in several high-level plenary sessions. His role was much appreciated by all the other LDC ministers.

Bangladesh also had a nice pavilion in the Blue Zone where a number of seminars were held from morning to evening every day for two weeks. This was an excellent opportunity for the government as well as non-governmental actors from Bangladesh were able to present and share their work with a wide international audience. This allowed the international participants to see how Bangladesh is tackling climate change in a whole-of-society approach.

Finally, let me also point out the presence and role of TV and print media from Bangladesh who were in Glasgow and were sending dispatches back to Bangladesh from Glasgow every day.

#### **What is your experience of the conference and how do you assess the outcomes of COP26?**

At a personal level, every COP is a wonderful experience as I get to meet many old friends and make new friends as I don’t have to spend hours of the day and night inside the negotiations. However, I am quite disheartened by the outcome of COP26 specifically on the topic of Loss and Damage from human-induced climate change where I had been advising not only the LDC Group but all the developing countries who had proposed the creation of the Glasgow Facility on Financing Loss and Damage which was vetoed by the US and was downgraded to a mere dialogue on the topic.

So, we will have to take this issue up again in COP27 in Egypt where we will get greater support from the COP26 Presidency.

One excellent experience outside the COP was with the people and government of Scotland who initiated the first Loss and Damage fund with a two million pounds contribution announced by Nicola Sturgeon the First Minister of Scotland.

I had the opportunity to meet her at her residence in Edinburgh after the COP was over and discuss how we can build on her initiative going forward. ■



REUTERS

# Outcome on capacity building at COP26

THE GWP-ACE HAS LAID OUT ELABORATE ACTION PROGRAMS AT LOCAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS

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**Mizan R Khan**

**T**he Conference of the Parties (COP26) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) ended a few weeks ago. Its outcomes have received mixed reviews by observers and media. Some have touted it as a success, or partially successful and some others have dubbed it as a failure.

I think the level of success or failure depends on the specific agenda of the COP process. As a negotiator of the capacity building (CB) agenda under the process, I will regard the outcomes of the capacity building agenda as a success on several counts.

“ The Glasgow Climate Pact (GCP) acknowledged the progress made on capacity building, particularly on enhancing the coherence and coordination of its activities in the implementation of the Convention and the Paris Agreement ”

We may mention that under the broad framework of capacity building, there are a number of agenda items under the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol, including the Doha Work Program (DWP) on Article 6 of the Convention. This relates to six elements: education, training, public awareness, public participation, public access to information and international cooperation. Later, the DWP was rechristened with the addition of action for climate empowerment (ACE). So, this piece will elaborate a little on the 10-year GWP-ACE (Glasgow Work Program-action for climate empowerment).

The Glasgow Climate Pact (GCP) acknowledged the progress made on capacity building, particularly on enhancing the coherence and coordination of its activities in the implementation of the Convention and the Paris Agreement. Also it recognized the need to support developing countries in identifying and addressing both current and emerging capacity building gaps and needs, and to catalyze climate actions.

To this end, it invited multilateral and bilateral institutions and organizations to provide financial support for activities related to implementing the ACE. Also the decision emphasized the important role of ‘indigenous peoples’ and ‘local communities’ culture and knowledge in effective action on climate change, and to engage with the second three-year work plan for implementing the functions of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform for 2022-2024.

Further, the COP decisions have some concrete actions for implementation in next year and beyond:

The COP invited future COP Presidencies, with the support of the secretariat, to facilitate the organization of an annual youth-led climate forum to contribute to the implementation of the GCP-ACE.

To hold an in-session annual ACE dialogue at its first regular session of each year with the participation of Parties, representatives of relevant constituted bodies and relevant experts, practitioners and stakeholders that focuses on the four priority areas: (1) policy coherence; (2) coordinated action; (3) tools and support; and (4) monitoring, evaluation and reporting, and the progress of implementation of the Glasgow work program.

The focus of the first in-session annual dialogue, to be held at SBI 56 (June 2022), is on the engagement of children and youth in implementation of the priority areas as listed in the annex of the ACE program.

To undertake the development of an action plan at its fifty-sixth session (June 2022) focusing on immediate action through short-term, clear and time-bound activities, guided by the priorities set out in the GWP, to be considered by SBI 56 (June 2022).

To convene an in-session technical workshop to be held at SBI 56 (June 2022) with Parties on how priority areas of the six ACE elements, through a short-term action plan can be effectively implemented, which can inform the ACE dialogue process.

To undertake a midterm review of progress at its sixty-fourth session (June 2026) and a final review of progress at its seventy-fourth session (June 2031) of the GWP to evaluate its effectiveness, identify any emerging gaps and needs, and inform any consideration on improving the work program, as appropriate.

It may be mentioned that the GWP recognized some important guiding principles, such as a) A country-driven

approach; b) Cost-effectiveness; c) Flexibility; d) gender and intergenerational approach; e) A phased approach that integrates activities under Article 6 of the Convention and Article 12 of the Paris Agreement into climate change programs and strategies; f) Promotion of partnerships, networks and synergies, in particular synergies between conventions; g) An interdisciplinary and h) multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder and participatory approach; h) A holistic systematic approach; and i) The principles of sustainable development.

Actually, the GWP-ACE has laid out elaborate action programs at local, national and international levels, with mid-term review provisions. This is important to see how the work program performs over time. As mentioned before, the program focuses on education and training giving priorities to children, women and youth.

The 10-year GWP encourages the use of local and national expertise to deliver sustainable capacity. This is extremely important, as the past CB initiatives undertaken by bilateral and multilateral agencies did not bring in the desired results. The reason was that they were led by foreign consultants under donor-supported short-term project-based initiatives, which rarely left any sustainable capacity systems behind. So the developing country negotiators, including this writer, have strongly argued for recognition of the importance of local and national expertise. Finally, it was inserted in the agreed text, which is extremely important for ensuring national ownership of the CB program.

Further, there is also an understanding among the funding agencies that CB initiatives must be taken under a fairly long term programmatic approach, as CB is not a one-off discreet act, but more of a process, which requires time for resulting in any effective outcome and impact. Therefore, the challenge now is to build an effective network of south-south-north partnerships for mutual support and mutual learning.

To this end, the LDC Universities Consortium on Climate Change (LUCCC), which is now an official program of the LDCs under the UNFCCC process, can greatly contribute to capacitating the LDC governments and other stakeholders including the local communities. This latter group actually must be leading the adaptation actions on the ground. So capacity building programs now should be geared more to building capabilities of the local stakeholders. To this end, the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) at Independent University, Bangladesh, which serves as secretariat of LUCCC, is actively involved in CB activities at local, national, regional, LDC-wide and international levels. ■

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**Mizan R Khan is Deputy Director at ICCCAD.**

“ The 10-year GWP encourages the use of local and national expertise to deliver sustainable capacity ”





PIXABAY

# If finance is not agreed, nothing is agreed

## WHERE DO WE STAND AFTER COP26 AND WHERE TO GO?

**W**orld leaders, delegates from the nation countries recently gathered in the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) hosted in partnership between the UK and Italy in November 2021 in Glasgow to agree on a path forward for tackling global warming. Parties debated over the issues on net zero-emission, Loss and Damage, Mitigation and Adaptation, Finance, Transparency to develop a common understanding.

The COP26 adopted the Glasgow Climate Pact which reflects a subtle balance between the interests and

aspirations of parties around some urgent issues. COP26 saw success where the Parties could agree on increasing the pace of implementing the Paris Agreement. However, there are disappointments over the issues regarding loss and damage or not securing the \$100 billion pledge or failure to meet the 1.5°C targets.

As we all know, if finance is not agreed upon, nothing is agreed upon. The discussion on finance falls under Article 9 of the Paris Agreement. Finance was extensively discussed throughout UNFCCC Glasgow COP26 as the scale and speed of changes that are required to limit the global

goal on temperature rise would require finance in all forms - be it climate finance, adaptation finance, public or private finance. Hence, the major issues around climate finance focus on closing the gap of annually providing \$100 billion and setting up the post-2025 climate finance target.

Discussion around long-term finance, technology and capacity building for mitigation and adaptation

There have been a lot of discussions around long-term finance. This COP26 was critical about the failure to mobilize \$100 billion per year. However, the Glasgow Climate Pact emphasizes the need to mobilize climate finance from all sources to reach the level needed to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement, including significantly increasing support for developing country Parties, beyond \$100 billion per year. OECD 2020 Report claims \$78.9 billion delivered as CF in 2018 of which 21% is adaptation finance and the remaining is for mitigation.

“ Finance was extensively discussed throughout UNFCCC Glasgow COP26 as the scale and speed of changes that are required to limit the global goal on temperature rise would require finance in all forms - be it climate finance, adaptation finance, public or private finance ”

The final pact notes with “deep regret” the failure to meet the target on time (by 2020) and commits nations to deliver on their promises in the context of mitigation actions and transparency on implementation every year through to 2025. Thus, the duty to fulfil the pledge of providing \$100 billion annually from developed countries to developing countries was reaffirmed. Consensus was reached on the need to continue increasing support to the developing countries. In addition, the process to define the new global goal on finance was launched. There is also a discussion around the importance of transparency in the implementation of finance pledges through the Biennial Report.

#### Highlights around Adaptation Finance

The overarching decision concerns on the insufficient flow of adaptation finances towards the developing countries to urgently and significantly scale up their provision of climate finance, technology transfer and capacity-building for adaptation so as to respond to the needs of developing country parties as part of a global effort, including for the formulation and implementation of national adaptation plans and adaptation communications. Therefore, the Pact recognizes the importance of the adequacy and predictability of adaptation finance, including the value of the Adaptation Fund in delivering dedicated support for adaptation - a pledge from developed countries to “at least double” adaptation finance between 2019 and 2025 in the context of achieving a balance between adaptation and mitigation actions. Announcement has been made on the financial pledges amounting \$356 million to Adaptation Fund, where \$116 million will be from EU and multi-year commitments from Norway and Ireland. In addition, 12 donor countries including Germany, US, Belgium etc have pledged \$413 million new funding for the least developed country fund (LDCF) outside the UNFCCC and \$450 million mobilized for initiatives and programs enhancing Locally Led Adaptation.

#### Side deals having finance notions

COP26 was about many new initiatives, breakthroughs and pledges as about 90% of the world’s economy is now committed to net-zero targets. While the climate activists are not happy with the text “phase down of coal power”, 23 nations have agreed to phase out coal power in the 2030s. There was also discussion around the financial allocation for net-zero emission and methane pledge.

The Leaders’ declaration representing 110 nations talked about the “Halt and reverse” deforestation and land degradation by 2030. 141 countries have so far pledged to increase finance for sustainable agriculture, forest management and forest conservation and restoration.

Multilateral Development Banks’ joint statement regarding Nature, People, Planet highlighted the need for

aligning their portfolios with the Paris Agreement goals and as well as nature. There was no agreement towards providing dedicated finance towards loss and damage, and thus, no agreement on the establishment of a finance facility for L&D for which the LDCs and SIDS were not happy. However, outside the UNFCCC, Scotland offered 1.5m for L&D which was encouraged by many.

### **My viewpoints on finance at COP26 and takeaways**

However, many were disappointed that this COP once again failed to provide vulnerable nations with the money to rebuild and respond to the unavoidable impacts of climate change. A recent assessment by the UNFCCC's Standing Committee on Finance concluded that developing countries would require nearly \$6tn up to 2030, including domestic funds, to support just half of the actions in their NDCs.

There are countries who have shared their concerns that the developed countries may fail to deliver the \$100 billion from 2025 as the Green Climate Fund (GCF). The inclusion of private sectors also raises the question around the fact that will become an interest-free modality. Because it was necessary for the least developed countries (LDC) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to get it in the form of grants, thus the predictability gets reduced as the discussions did not happen at an extensive level on balance between loans and grants. There is also a concern around the imbalanced fund allocation between the mitigation and adaptation activities. As the commitment from the developed country parties to urgently provide the resources to the climate-vulnerable has failed, there is less hope on the fact that it will be delivered from the next committed time frame.

In addition, another discomfort was around the no specific guideline on the eligibility and accessibility of the highly indebted poor countries to the concessional forms of climate finance. Developing nations, LDCs and SIDS have pushed a lot for finance beyond adaptation terming as the L&D, but less significant progress has been made around that.

However, without phasing out the coal and limiting the global temperature rise, all of the efforts, discussion and on the ground actions would not make any impact. Hence, more investment and transparency issues are required when it comes to mitigation and adapting using nature-based, community-based or low-carbon strategies and approaches. To achieve our climate goals, every company, every financial firm, every bank, insurer and investor will need to change. Hence, there is a need to keep up the momentum so that bigger and greater can be achieved from the COP27. ■

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**Tasfia Tasnim coordinates the Nature-based Solutions Program at the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD). Her area of work involves the interlinkages among nature, adaptation, resilience and finance issues.**

““ The final pact notes with “deep regret” the failure to meet the target on time (by 2020) and commits nations to deliver on their promises in the context of mitigation actions and transparency on implementation every year through to 2025 ””

# Loss and damage in developing countries: Impacts, evidence and what next

THREE KEY CHALLENGES IN ADDRESSING LOSS AND DAMAGE IN THE VULNERABLE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES EMERGED DURING CASE STUDIES PRESENTATIONS BY SIX LDC COUNTRIES



COURTESY

**Md Fahad Hossain**

As manifested through recent climatic events in different countries across the world, loss and damage from climate change is a real and increasing threat to the most vulnerable communities, particularly in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). However, due to its highly political nature, the topic, despite being a question of survival for the vulnerable countries, has not made much progress in the climate negotiations, particularly on the issue of finance.

As known, adaptation finance is inadequate by orders of magnitude; the rationale for having a dedicated financing mechanism on loss and damage needs to be strengthened. Review of the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM), the key body under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that deals with loss and damage took place at the 25th Conference of the Parties (COP25) to the UNFCCC held in Madrid, Spain. However, parties failed to adopt a decision on how to make the case for financing loss and damage.

Against this backdrop, with an aim to strengthen the LDC position on loss and damage, as a part of the Open



Society Foundation (OSF) supported project titled ‘Support to Least Developed Countries on Loss and Damage’, the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) commissioned six country case studies on loss and damage from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Malawi, and Uganda. The case studies were done by researchers from Least Developed Countries (LDCs) Universities Consortium on Climate Change (LUCCC), an official capacity building of the LDC governments, of which ICCCAD is the secretariat.

Moderated by Prof Mizan R Khan, deputy director of ICCCAD and program director of LUCCC, researchers shared insights into how their countries are facing losses and damages due to the impacts of climate change, the challenges in addressing them, and their expectations at COP26. Losses and damages, both economic and non-economic are strongly evident in these vulnerable LDCs.

A lecturer at the Royal University of Bhutan, Ugyen Yangchen’s presentation on loss and damage in Bhutan illustrated the best case of how LDCs face injustice due to climate change. Despite sequestering three times more Carbon dioxide than its emissions, the agriculture, forestry, and hydropower-dependent economy of the mountainous country face losses and damages.

Very recently they saw an excessive amount of rainfall that led to the destruction of crops, mainly paddy. All other LDC economies also predominantly rely on climate-sensitive sectors. For example, in Ethiopia, the agriculture sector contributes 34.8% to the country’s GDP and employs about 72.7% of its population.

Three key challenges in addressing loss and damage in the vulnerable developing countries emerged during the case study presentations.

Firstly, limited understanding and capacity to generate and report data on loss and damage. “While losses and damages are happening largely, there is limited documented evidence”, said Dr David Mftumukiza, senior lecturer at Makerere University, Uganda. “First investments are required building capacity to understand and document loss and damage,” he added.

Secondly, the absence of proper policy and institutional frameworks is related to loss and damage. The lack of understanding of the issue and systematic documentation of losses and damages occurring leads to uninformed decision-making resulting in the total non-existence of loss and damage in the policy and institutional frameworks of the countries.

Among the policies and legislations of five countries, Uganda’s newly enacted National Climate Change Bill 2020 is the only exception that is explicit on loss and damage in the context of climate change, which provides the legal setting to guide addressing loss and damage in the country. “This is vital to building institutional capacity to address

“ As a part of the Open Society Foundation (OSF) supported project titled ‘Support to Least Developed Countries on Loss and Damage’, the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) commissioned six country case studies on loss and damage ”

both economic and non-economic loss and damage”, emphasized Dr Hanna Habtemariam Robele, assistant professor at Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia.

Thirdly, the dearth of finance to address loss and damage. None of the case studies found any ongoing projects focusing on addressing loss and damage. This is due to the lack of available funding for addressing loss and damage. “Limited funding from the national budget is far from what is needed to deal with loss and damage”, noted Dr Junice Madalo Dzonzi, a senior lecturer at Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) in Malawi.

“The Government of Bangladesh is planning on developing a National Mechanism on Loss and Damage utilizing resources from its domestic climate fund. However, funding from international sources is also required as this is going to be insufficient”, echoes Dr Nurul Quadir, former additional secretary of the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change of Bangladesh, and former member of the Executive Committee of WIM.

Speaking of the urgency to establish an international financial mechanism on loss and damage, former chair of LDC Group on climate change, Gebru Jember stated, “Significant progress is yet to be seen, while the impact on the ground is becoming irreversible and more expensive. The reality is that all over the world no one is immune to loss and damage. Unless funding is made available for loss and damage, whatever other investments are made will not see the desired impact.”

Director of ICCCAD, Prof Saleemul Huq concluded the event with the remark, “The aim of the project is that we are hoping to plant a seed, to say that loss and damage is important. It needs to be addressed and worked on. There will be pushback, but it cannot be stopped. Scotland has declared £1m (Later was scaled up to £2m) in loss and damage fund, and the ball has started rolling.”

This indeed happened at COP26. Although the outcome on loss and damage finance fell short of the developing country Parties’ expectations as no concrete decision on finance was made, they were able to bring the issue of loss and damage to the front in an unprecedented way.

Apart from Scotland, five philanthropies including the Open Society Foundation (OSF) and the Belgian province of Wallonia came forward to provide funding for loss and damage. Germany pledged 10 million euros for the work of Santiago Network on Loss and Damage which was established at COP25 to provide technical support to developing countries. Now, significant work needs to be done to further the agenda between COP26 and COP27 scheduled to take place in Egypt in 2022. ■

“ The lack of understanding of the issue and systematic documentation of losses and damages occurring leads to uninformed decision-making resulting in the total non-existence of loss and damage in the policy and institutional frameworks of the countries ”

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**Md Fahad Hossain is a research officer at the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD).**

# The plight of loss and damage finance at COP 26

KEY CONSENSUSES AND DISAGREEMENTS



REUTERS

**S M Saify Iqbal**

**L**oss and Damage' (L&D) is a term used in climate negotiations to describe the unavoidable effects of climate change which has become increasingly evident in recent years, such as severe storms, major wildfires, frequent floods, heatwaves, droughts and so on. This year, at the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 26), L&D emerged as a significant point of contention, delaying negotiations as developing countries, including the small island states, refused to budge on their urgent need for finance to assist vulnerable communities.

“ Rich countries, such as the United States and countries of the European Union, are hesitant to comply, fearing endless financial liabilities. On the other hand, they have persistently opposed this proposal, believing that they will be obliged to pay compensation for their previous role in climate change ”

At COP 26, vulnerable countries demand funds and assistance for those who are being harmed by the adverse effects of climate change. It has become the most contentious subject of all, with low-income countries claiming that they have a moral right to this fund, which is referred to as compensation or reparations by some. Rich countries, such as the United States and countries of the European Union, are hesitant to comply, fearing endless financial liabilities. On the other hand, they have persistently opposed this proposal, believing that they will be obliged to pay compensation for their previous role in climate change.

This year in Glasgow, the debate took place on several issues on L&D, on which the previous COPs failed to achieve an agreement. L&D finance, the governance system of the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM), and the operationalization of the Santiago Network for L&D are among the most crucial issues on which light will be shed in this article.

Prior to the Paris Agreement’s implementation in 2015, rich countries promised in 2009 to channel \$100 billion in annual climate funds to developing countries by 2020. However, they fell short of their target, with cash flows in 2019 totalling only roughly \$80 million. The deadline for 2020 has been postponed until 2022. Although Article 9 of the Paris Agreement does not set a new climate finance target, developing-country negotiators are urging developed-country negotiators at COP 26 not just to keep their earlier promise but to create a new, greater climate finance target for 2025.

The G77 and China suggested the development of a “Glasgow Loss and Damage facility” in the L&D discussions, through which developed-country parties would channelize funds allocated for L&D. The suggestion, however, was not included in any version of the “Glasgow Climate Pact”. Despite widespread support, Alok Sharma, the COP26 president, did not include the facility in the draft document, blaming developed-country parties. The United States, Australia, and countries in the European Union were adamant in opposing the establishment of the aforementioned “Glasgow Loss and Damage Facility,” which they saw as opening the door to massive compensation claims.

A new text surfaced on Friday morning, 12 November 2021, mentioning a “technical assistance facility to provide cash support for technical assistance”. Developing countries quickly expressed their dismay, claiming that this was not the facility they had envisioned. Rather than money being sent directly to disaster-stricken countries, analysts believe “technical assistance” refers to funds being used to pay consultants in the global north to help poorer nations to create capacity. The current concept is to establish a centre to give technical support, which will then



aid countries in obtaining funding for technical assistance. Besides, the agreement calls for having a “Glasgow Dialogue between Parties, relevant organizations, and stakeholders to discuss the arrangements for the funding of activities to avert, minimize, and address Loss and Damage associated with the adverse impacts of climate change,” as stated in paragraph 73.

In addition, a deal on the governance provisions for the WIM was not reached at COP25 in 2019. Developing country Parties have argued that the WIM should be operated under both the Convention and the Paris Agreement Developed country parties. But on the other hand, have opposed that the WIM should be administered solely by the Conference of the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement. At COP26, consensus on governance was also elusive, as the two sides remained obstinate in their respective positions. As a result, it was resolved that at the next COP, negotiations on the governance of the WIM would be restarted.

Moreover, the agreement achieved the functions of the newly created Santiago Network on L&D which was ice on wounds for developing countries. The Santiago Network will organize technical support to developing countries, including access to funds to aid in disaster preparedness. On the final day of COP 26, the German government pledged 10 million euros to assist the Network’s efforts. Party and non-party stakeholders have been invited to submit their views on issues such as the Network’s operational modalities and structure, the role of the WIM’s Executive Committee, and the “terms of reference of a potential convening or coordinating body” as part of the process to fully operationalize the Network. These perspectives, along with the outcomes of a technical workshop, will serve as the foundation for discussions during the UNFCCC intersessional conference in Bonn, Germany, in mid-2022. At COP 27, in 2022, a final decision on the Santiago Network’s operationalization is expected.

It is worth mentioning that the Scottish government has pledged £2 million to help vulnerable poor countries deal with L&D. These funds will be used to support the Climate Justice Resilience Fund, which will help women, youth, and indigenous peoples as they are the front-liners of climate change impact. In terms of the fund, the number is small, but it is noteworthy in two ways: first, it breaks the richer countries’ refusal to openly promise money to help poorer countries deal with L&D; and second, its operationalization appears to sidestep the UN system entirely.

However, the Glasgow Climate Pact failed to gain the establishment of a dedicated new L&D fund that vulnerable countries had pressed for earlier in the summit, owing to opposition from the United States, the European Union, and some other rich nations. Guinea, speaking on behalf of the developing-country group, voiced “great displeasure” with the decision to start simply a “conversation” to

“ Party and non-party stakeholders have been invited to submit their views on issues such as the Network’s operational modalities and structure, the role of the WIM’s Executive Committee, and the “terms of reference of a potential convening or coordinating body” as part of the process to fully operationalize the Networ ”

discuss “arrangements for the finance of activities to avert, minimize, and address loss and damage.” Low-lying small island nations such as the Marshall Islands, Fiji, and Antigua & Barbuda, which fear losing most of their land to increasing sea levels, expressed disappointment that the fund they had requested had not been established. The Glasgow agreement does include funding for the Santiago Network, which attempts to develop technical competence in dealing with L&D, such as assisting governments in determining how to relocate settlements away from vulnerable shorelines.

So, we need to hopefully establish the process now, and then hammer out the details during the next subsidiary body sessions and the next COP. It is needed to ensure that the Santiago Network includes a varied range of opinions and perspectives by concentrating on the most vulnerable people who are underserved by traditional financial mechanisms and obtaining new finance for L&D from the countries that are accountable for the adverse impact of climate change. ■

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# To be an influencer in the COP process

WHEN DHAKA, GLASGOW AND BOSTON  
WERE ON ONE PLATFORM

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**Nazneen Khan**

To follow individual issues/agendas of the COP26 negotiations in-depth, this year International Centre for Climate Change and Development, (ICCCAD) offered an online high-level short course for the advanced-level participants. It was a unique short course on the Conference of Parties (COP) which provided a great way to follow the COP26 negotiations.

The purpose of the short course was not just to learn and comprehend the outcomes of COP26 negotiations but rather to illustrate how non- negotiators, like many of us who could not attend the venue of COP26 in Glasgow, UK physically can potentially give inputs to and get outputs from the COP process.

Prof Saleemul Huq, Director, (ICCCAD) and Professor, Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), and one of the top climate scientists in the world, designed this course for the participants. The course was designed in a way to help interested high-level participants who could not physically attend the events at Glasgow, get a clear idea of the process and ongoing events at the COP this year. The short course consisted of a series of webinars before, during and after COP26, which started on November 1 and ended on the 12th.

“As a part of this short course, there was a collaboration between Northeastern University (NEU), Boston, USA and ICCCAD, Dhaka, Bangladesh”

As a part of this short course, there was a collaboration between Northeastern University (NEU), Boston, USA and ICCCAD, Dhaka, Bangladesh through CANVAS - an online learning platform that gave participants a new dimension of online learning by sharing regular blogs, vlogs, critical discussion, and several sessions on different negotiation tracks on climate change both by NEU, Boston faculty members and ICCCAD personnel. Prof Laura Kuhl, PhD, Assistant Professor, School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs and International Affairs Program, Northeastern University, Boston, USA, was very supportive with the short course participants.

To follow a single issue/agenda of the COP26 negotiations in-depth, selected participants of this course got the opportunity to remain updated with daily information and advice straight from Glasgow from high profile experts that included Prof Saleemul Huq and Prof Mizan R Khan, Deputy Director, ICCCAD, who are experienced mentors and negotiators when it comes to COP. Prof Huq is the only Bangladeshi climate scientist who has been speaking for Bangladesh in all COPs for the last 26 years. On the other hand, Prof Mizan Khan has been one of the negotiators from the Government of Bangladesh for the last 20 COPs.

The participants from ICCCAD and the students from the Northeastern University (NEU), Boston, USA, who were taking this course as a part of their Graduate-level Negotiation course, shared their interests and knowledge in a world class virtual global classroom. The CANVAS classroom was a gathering of international students from all over the world including students attending from USA, China, Spain, Chile, Venezuela, Mexico, Italy, UK, India, Russia, and Taiwan. It was the first time ever ICCCAD participants used CANVAS as a learning platform, offered by NEU, Boston and ICCCAD. The learning tool SLACK was also very useful to all the participants.

ICCCAD's online short course was designed to deliver maximum learning outcomes through carefully chosen high-quality learning materials. These highly facilitated online courses combine self-paced study modules with applied learning components, interactive exercises, and collaborative group work, specially tailored to the needs of the professional interest in deepening one's knowledge on UNFCCC's nine specific negotiation tracks. Nine topics of the UNFCCC negotiation can be classified into: Action on Climate and SDGs, Adaptation and resilience, Capacity-building, Climate Finance, Climate Technology, Education and Youth, Gender, Mitigation, Global Stock take.

This was an opportunity to join climate and environmental discussions, and also get insight from experts of the field. One of the participants spoke highly of the experience, saying, "As the course was based entirely on an online platform, it was a unique way to learn about and follow the events at COP, all while we attended to our

**“The CANVAS classroom was a gathering of international students from all over the world including students attending from USA, China, Spain, Chile, Venezuela, Mexico, Italy, UK, India, Russia, and Taiwan”**

regular official duties. It was a bit challenging but highly engaging and rewarding. All the pre and post COP26 webinars, shared blogs from the COP26 Glasgow venue and reading materials were extremely helpful to follow the negotiation track.”

However, the course participants faced some minor difficulties, mostly for the three completely different time zones that Dhaka, Boston and Glasgow fall in. Due to this difference in time zones, some participants could only learn by listening to the class recordings, and could not avail the chance to attend the question answer sessions in person.

ICCCAD is planning to organize this course every year with a more advanced-level of learning. To emphasize collective responsibility to tackle climate change issues, Bangladesh as a part of LDC has a significant role to become a prominent influencer in the upcoming COP. A course such as this will make a significant learning and knowledge sharing platform for the future. ■

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# LDC youth at COP26

THERE IS STILL HOPE FOR PROGRESS IN LOSS AND DAMAGE



REUTERS

Shohail Bin Saifullah

Tensions were high going into the Conference of Parties (COP) 26 at the Scottish Events Campus (SEC), Glasgow, Scotland, this year. COP this year was held from the November 1 to 12. From the looks of this year's COP, the goal of keeping the rising global temperature to 1.5 Celsius was still the major point of the discussion, keeping the idea metaphorically alive, albeit it did seem like the idea was on life support.

COP 26 talked about fulfillment and accomplishing promises made in the previous COPs. At the same time, the Least Developed Countries (LDC) can't help but feel a little swindled, as the major point of contention brought to the table by the LDC was the topic of Loss and Damage was not addressed to the necessary degree. A similar thing can be seen when it comes to the idea of youth inclusion in climate action.



While at the conference, you can hear the restless protests of youth outside the venue demanding accountability and their seat at the table. Throughout the conference, you could come across statements along the lines of “Young people are the future”, “We need to hand over a better world to the youth”, “We need better youth inclusion”, but there was an overbearing sense of tokenism in their actions. Even though a growing number of youth climate initiatives were taken up and support was brought around, there seems to be hardly any representation of youth from the LDCs.

There still seems to persist a disparity of badges and opportunity allocation between the Global North and the Global South. One example of such is the disparity of badge allocation for the youth. The COP badge allows a participant to attend the conference in the Blue Zone, where the actual negotiations happen. Although the badge allocation issue is already a major problem endemic to the youth population, the LDC youth suffer more due to the lack of opportunities. The LDC youth face critical political, economic, and socio-cultural contexts; they lack the resource bandwidth and means to avail the Global North youth’s opportunities. That being said, just having knowledge capacity building and an “enabling environment” is not enough, as more barriers are at play.

The youth also emanated the same feeling, echoing how LDCs felt heavy-hearted due to their issues not being addressed to the necessary degree. Bouncing from the “blah blah blah” speech by Greta Thunberg, there is no denying that the time for dialogue is long past and now is the time for action. We need to start taking better steps into including youth in climate action. The LDC group is currently reeling from the disheartening COP 26 and looking towards COP 27. It

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“While the ultimate outcome of COP 26 was seen as lackluster, there still seemed to persist a sense of hope as the dialog of finalizing the Santiago Network on Loss and Damage (SNLD), which was pitched at COP 25, was picked up this year”

has been announced that the next COP, COP27, will be held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, which will be seen as a “LDC COP”.

While the ultimate outcome of COP 26 was seen as lackluster, there still seemed to persist a sense of hope as the dialog of finalizing the Santiago Network on Loss and Damage (SNLD), which was pitched at COP 25, was picked up this year.

The SNLD tries to provide research and technical assistance on the issue of Loss and Damage from human-induced climate change. The dialog, however, did not set up the totality of how the network will act, but it opened up the platform to be picked up again and finalize the setup at COP 27.

Other than that, there have been significant strides outside the conference venue, which led to the creation of the Loss and Damage fund, the fund was initiated with a balance of one million pounds, offered by Nicola Sturgeon, the First Minister of Scotland.

The act of initiating the fund was to challenge the other global leaders to start taking the issue of Loss and Damage seriously. With that, over the following two weeks at COP 26, philanthropic foundations and the Province of Wallonia, Belgium, raised funds significantly. All hope does not seem to be lost; taking our learnings from COP 26 and renewed determination, the world, especially the LDC group, now looks towards COP 27. ■

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