

# Roundtable on Climate Change in the Build Up to the Conference of Parties (COP28) with the United Arab Emirates



13th September, 2023  
Six Seasons Hotel, Dhaka

This publication briefly includes the discussion from the Roundtable on Climate Change in the Build Up to the Conference of Parties (COP28) with the United Arab Emirates. This publication has been compiled from the notes taken by the respective rapporteurs. The publication is a summary from the organizer's point of view and does not necessarily express the views of each participant.

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## Summary

Capacity building and addressing gaps in existing knowledge are critical to tackling climate change. In the face of the climate crisis, there is an urgent need to develop more expertise at local, regional and national levels. Article 6 of the UNFCCC on “Education, Training and Public Awareness” identifies six elements to expand capacity building. However, there was debate about whether the capacity building investments following Article 6 succeeded. These investments focused on short-term, consultant-driven workshops that largely failed to develop capacity and in some cases, actively harmed local communities’ adaptive capacities. In response to this controversy, Article 11 of the Paris Agreement on Capacity Building launched the Paris Committee on Capacity Building (PCCB) and sought to drive more country-driven capacity building.

The International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) was intimately involved in these negotiations and their subsequent implementation. ICCCAD has particularly emphasised the role of universities in building capacity. ICCCAD is a member of the PCCB Network and serves as the interim secretariat of the LDC Universities Consortium on Climate Change (LUCCC) which aims to build in-country capacity in the LDCs. Additionally, ICCCAD launched Gobeshona, a knowledge-sharing and evidence-based research platform on climate change in Bangladesh, and has university partnerships and research collaborations with universities in developed countries.

The Roundtable on Climate Change in the Build Up to the 28th Conference of Parties (COP28) with the United Arab Emirates, jointly hosted by the Independent University, Bangladesh and the United Arab Emirates Embassy, brought together distinguished guests from international embassies, civil society organisations, and universities. The discussion focused on the significance of capacity building, what countries should do to collaborate and practice localized capacity building, and how universities and their networks are integral to this work.

## Roundtable Meeting Objectives

1. Discuss the history and role of capacity building in international climate negotiations
2. Highlight how universities and university partnerships can effectively build capacity and develop expertise in tackling climate change
3. Launch an ongoing discussion to connect international universities, institutions, and actors in capacity building that centres and invests in local knowledge and capacities

## Opening Discussions

Prof. Saleemul Huq, the Director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) welcomed the guests before Prof. Niaz Ahmed Khan, the Pro-Vice Chancellor of the Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), opened the roundtable. Professor Khan emphasised the urgency of climate change and the need for the development of capacity building at COPs. H.E. Abdulla Ali Abdulla Khaseif ALHmoudi, the Emirati Ambassador to Bangladesh, followed Professor Khan in greeting the guests and expressed that COP28 in the United Arab Emirates is an opportunity to create a more sustainable planet for the future.



“We often have the problem of getting criticized that we have not done our homework well, hence capacity building has been a long-standing unfulfilled and unrealized agenda when it comes to COP.” - Prof. Niaz Ahmed Khan

Following these introductions, Professor Huq reiterated that the focus of this discussion is the role of universities in building capacity at both the national and international levels. He asked guests to consider what they could do to continue the conversation after the roundtable event to encourage universities to act as enablers in fulfilling this role.



“Developing countries wanted a paradigm shift at COP21 in how to deliver capacity building, demanding for a greater emphasis on building national systems of capacity building rather than fly-in fly-out expert delivery. In this negotiation we succeeded to get a new Article on CB in Article 11 of Paris Agreement – which focuses on the need that every country needs to build capacity to tackle climate change at a national level. This was an achievement.” - Prof. Saleemul Huq

Professor Huq then invited Prof. Mizan R Khan, the Deputy Director of ICCCAD, to present on capacity building in the context of the UNFCCC. Professor Khan discussed the history of Article 11 on Capacity Building in the Paris Agreement as well as ICCCAD’s efforts to facilitate and develop capacity building through the LUCCC programme, Gobeshona, international university partnerships, the Visiting Researcher programme, and the internationalisation process at IUB. Professor Khan invited the roundtable to discuss how they can better contribute to capacity building.



## Key Messages from Distinguished Guests

Throughout the roundtable, guests reflected on the actions they had taken to build capacity and discussed the importance of integrating universities into capacity building networks. Much of the conversation centred on the need to transition away from short-term, consultant-driven projects that fail to invest in capacity building at the local level. Instead, projects should employ longer-term collaborations that connect local innovators of rural areas with academia to sustain their knowledge and tackle the climate crisis.

“What we are talking about is a very significant paradigm shift in how capacity building can be delivered and as a two-way street. It’s not just developed countries building capacity for developing countries. But also, us building capacity for developed countries.” - Prof. Saleemul Huq



The best way to learn about the climate crisis, its impacts, and how to adapt to and address them is to learn from people on the frontlines. As Tanvir Shakil Joy, a Member of Bangladesh’s Parliament, underscored, capacity building needs to be connected with the people most affected by climate change because their knowledge is the most valuable. Locally-led solutions have so much to teach us in building capacity and many participants highlighted Bangladesh as a country that policymakers, researchers, and climate advocates can learn from. Many guests spoke about their successful partnerships in Bangladesh and with ICCCAD and pointed to Gobeshona as an impressive platform.

When it comes to building connections with local communities, universities are integral. By creating networks of academics and local populations, the information and lessons learned from frontline lived experiences can inform gaps in academic theory and practice. Universities then have the platform to disseminate these findings to other actors. Conversely, researchers can translate and share data from other sources with local communities, creating a network of universities and communities that work together to build capacity.

“One of the things that we have been focusing our work on in capacity building is the role of universities: universities in developing countries, universities in developed countries, how they can build capacity at the national level which is their job, but then how can they collaborate with each other across borders.” - Prof. Saleemul Huq

These networks should extend beyond national borders so that universities are in dialogue with each other all over the world. Many participants spoke of their interest in developing platforms for academic and research-based exchanges that will develop universities' capacity at the international level. The LUCCC programme is an impactful example that can inspire global partnerships and collaborations.





As part of these networks, universities and other actors need to focus on creating capacity while also enhancing capacity that already exists, a point made by Saber Hossain Chowdhury, a Member of Bangladesh's Parliament, and the Special Envoy to the Honorable Prime Minister for Climate Change. He emphasised the importance of using data to generate knowledge so that policies are based on an understanding of peoples' needs and prioritize the most immediate risks to communities. Participants echoed this point throughout the roundtable in stating that decisions need to be based on data; having access to scientific information and research is essential to capacity building in negotiations and policymaking.

In addition to producing knowledge, capacity building also requires measuring the impacts of the actions we take. Special Envoy Chowdhury spoke about the importance of implementing policies that are measurable, reportable, and verifiable (MRV). This explanation details a holistic picture of what capacity building at the local and university levels must look like.

“Technology has an important role in enhancing capacity building and to take this process further, it is vital to assess our needs and understand and identify needs for building capacities.” - Special Envoy Saber Hossain Chowdhury

“The basic indicator of capacity building is when any kind of initiative has led to the creation of a capacity building system.” - Prof. Mizan R Khan





To grow the capability of universities, professors from Bangladeshi universities advocated that climate education be integrated into all programmes at universities or offered as minors that are complementary to other studies. Climate science and policy should not be taught in silos. Many participants responded to discussions of building capacity at universities by urging that climate education be accessible to students from a young age. This education should be built into primary curriculums to increase awareness of climate change and develop youth capacity building.

To conclude, Professor Huq responded to earlier questions regarding whose capacity we need to build. The answer is everyone's; everyone will live with climate change. So it is important to build an individual's capacity to understand the crisis. Professor Huq identified three tiers of understanding. The first describes a general awareness of the problem. The second tier is a knowledge of solutions. This tier does not look the same for everyone and disaggregates by location and who a person is. Each community has context-specific knowledge they need to tackle the problem.



The third and final tier describes a higher, expert-level knowledge of solutions. University students, (undergraduates, Master's students, and PhD Candidates,) fall in this tier. In Bangladesh and internationally, there is an opportunity to develop degrees and university research so that these students become experts in tackling climate change and can export their knowledge to the rest of the world. Universities, Dr. Huq stated, are critical to capacity building.

## Recommendations

ICCCAD invites distinguished guests to seek out opportunities to transition away from short-term, consultant-driven capacity building projects and, instead, leverage universities as capacity building institutions to invest in research that prioritizes locally-led solutions to climate change. The potential of Article 11 of the Paris Agreement on Capacity Building has yet to be fulfilled. Following this roundtable, ICCCAD hopes distinguished guests will develop international partnerships and exchanges between universities to achieve this goal.

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### For more information please find the following articles:

*'Collaboration a must to address climate change challenges'*  
at Daily Sun

*Speakers stress collaboration among national, global institutions to effectively address climate change challenges*  
at UNB

*COP 28 president: 'It's time to transform climate finance—and bridge its \$2.4 trillion gap'* at Fortune