Glasgow Climate Dialogues

Voices from the Global South
September 2021

EVENT REPORT:

Loss and Damage

8 September 2021

'Progress on loss and damage and achieving success through the Santiago Network'

This session was promoted to stakeholders with experience engaging in the UNFCCC and an interest in issues relating to loss and damage, with a focus on participation from those based in the Global South. 123 people registered for this event and 42 attended on the day.

This event report was produced by Simon Anderson, one of the two facilitators for the session, and has been approved as an accurate account of the day by panellists, the moderator and Istiakh Ahmed, who was the other facilitator for the session.

Hosted by

Scottish Government
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Stop Climate Chaos Scotland

Session Report

Welcome

Gerard Howe, Deputy Director, Scottish Government

The Scottish Government (SG) is delighted to be hosting the Glasgow Climate Dialogues. SG is committed to the themes of People and A Just Transition at COP26, to inclusivity, as part of a long-standing commitment to climate justice and to the success of COP26. Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Michael Matheson, recently said Scotland's commitment to climate justice does not stop at our borders: "For Scotland to play its full role in supporting the delivery of the Paris Agreement – turning it fully into action - we must be an ally to those nations and people most urgently impacted by climate change."

Tackling climate change and its impacts in ways that are fair and just, and that leave no one behind, requires the perspectives and meaningful decision-making from colleagues in the Global South to be at the very centre of all that we do. The purpose of the Dialogues is to: build understanding, solidarity and collaboration among the Global South and Global North on the key issues; and identify the key priorities for collective action at COP26 that advance United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) aims and objectives. A Dialogue Communiqué will be launched and widely shared in late September before and at COP26.

Our aim is that these messages reach those making negotiations decisions and shape the agreements they reach so as to be more inclusive and to better reflect the lived reality of climate change from our colleagues in the Global South and that this in turn leads to more effective, relevant and inclusive climate action.

Opening remarks

Adv Khodeza Nasreen Akhter Hossain MP, Bangladesh

Unprecedented weather events and hazards occurring across many developing countries affecting lives, livelihoods, communities and ecosystems causing rising loss and damage.

No global mutual agreement to help vulnerable countries deal with loss and damage.

At COP26 the Scottish Government should work with developing countries to establish a solidarity fund to help address loss and damage caused by anthropogenic climate change.

Bangladesh has successfully established early warning systems for climate extremes and is now implementing a public-private-partnership mechanism on loss and

damage that will support those who suffer loss and damage and will support anticipatory adaptation to future impacts.

We should join with the Bangladeshi poet Sukanta Bhattacharya and pledge: "I will make this world livable for this child before I go. That is my surefooted promise to the newborn."

Why is loss and damage important?

Sadie de Coste and Ineza Umuhoza Grace, Loss and Damage Youth Coalition

World political leaders have failed to leave a safe world to future generations. Climate change loss and damage is now locked in. There are examples of loss and damage all around the world.

The most marginalised and vulnerable are most affected by global warming and they are least responsible for it.

Youth have a fear of what the world will look like and anger at the injustice of climate loss and damage - that is an intergenerational injustice.

There's a moral imperative to act on climate loss and damage now for the wellbeing of future generations.

Stop passing the political hot potato around – act on loss and damage now.

Gender, race and age are key to ways that everyone can be heard on solutions to climate loss and damage. Everyone has a voice – how will you use it: to create hope or to reaffirm climate injustice?

Adaptation planning and loss and damage in the Outer Hebrides, Scotland

David MacLennon, Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership

The Outer Hebrides are used to extreme weather, for example the January 2005 storm. The region experienced deep prolonged low pressure; high spring tides (4.6m marine flood (MHWS 2.07m); storm surges; breaches in dune systems; inundation of low lying areas; major damage to infrastructure – roads, houses, schools, causeways, breakwaters; impacts on natural heritage; and loss of life – five fatalities in the January 2005 event.

The EU CoastAdapt Project operated in the Outer Hebrides following the 2005 event, and now the Community Planning Partnership established a Climate Change Working Group in 2019.

Large areas of the South Uist and Benbecula islands lie below the current mean high-water mark. The local community has corroborated what scientists have indicated as likely major impacts. Community perspectives have been overlaid on Dynamic Coast and sea level rise analysis of perceived storm risk and perceived coastal erosion and sea level rise risk.

At-risk human assets (residences/properties) and natural assets (protected habitats - Machair) have been mapped. The work now is to discuss with communities and develop adaptation plans to reduce loss and damage as much as feasible.

What does recent research tell us?

Anna Carthy, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)

Climate loss and damage is happening everywhere and now – but the capacity to anticipate, endure and recover is limited in many places particularly the Least Developed Countries and the Small Island Developing States.

Loss and damage cause economic and non-economic losses e.g. loss of place and identity, loss of knowledge and culture, and effects on mental health and wellbeing.

Current and past carbon emissions have already locked in risks, including climate impacts that are beyond the limits of adaptation. This means that loss and damage is unavoidable. Mitigation and adaptation are not enough to preclude loss and damage – so addressing loss and damage now and into the future is necessary.

There is no collective agreement on the kinds of action that are required to address loss and damage. Actions must build upon existing efforts to manage disaster risk. However, they need to tackle the specific risks and impacts associated with unprecedented extreme weather events and slow onset processes, and there is a real need for strong capacity and resources in place to do so effectively.

There are significant financing gaps in delivering humanitarian responses to disasters and for climate adaptation. What does this mean for loss and damage finance? There is also a major loss and damage financing gap, as well as a lack of clarity on where it can and should sit. Donors need to acknowledge that loss and damage impacts are happening now, especially in the most climate vulnerable countries. These countries need urgent financial support to address loss and damage impact that should be provided through a solidarity fund that all countries can draw down on according to need.

Assessment of the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM)

Prof. Lisa Vanhala, UCL

The establishment of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts in 2013 came as something of a surprise. Some observers began to refer to loss and damage as the 'third pillar' of climate policy along with mitigation and adaptation.

No officially politically agreed definition: we can see that different communities understand loss and damage differently. As a governance object the concept has been left somewhat ambiguous.

We saw a shift with the inclusion of loss and damage in the Paris Agreement and a shift in focus from addressing loss and damage to averting, minimising and addressing loss and damage which broadens the range of different possible policy responses or potential remedies for the challenges associated with loss and damage.

Three trends in the work of the WIM ExCom: (a) Work on human mobility and disaster risk management approaches has advanced but non-economic losses and finance, action and support beyond risk-related approaches lag behind; (b) shifting of authority from the ExCom itself towards the expert groups; to a large extent the ExCom is reliant on other organisations' and stakeholders to implement many of its activities.

WIM activities have been on enhancing understanding – mapping data, analysing policies, developing new knowledge. Current push for more work on action and support. These can be prioritised in COP26 as conversations about the Santiago Network progress. Effective resourcing of work on loss and damage in the UNFCCC is absent. These have implications for who is able to participate in the expert groups, in the meetings and ultimately shapes the legitimacy of the process and the outputs.

What can we expect from COP26?

Prof. Saleemul Huq, ICCCAD

Loss and damage have broken out of the UNFCCC COP box – they are now a recognised reality in many places: witness the lost lives and damages to infrastructure recently in Germany and the USA. It is noteworthy that in both these cases the national governments found very quickly large financial resources to compensate citizens for their loss and damage without recourse to insurance.

In the expectations of COP26 there is a low bar and a high bar. The low bar (and the one the COP26 presidency is emphasising) is to finish the job that the Chile COP25 in Madrid started on the Santiago Network on Loss and Damage – to agree what it should look like and how it should function. This really is a minimum to be expected after such

a delay between COPs. Meanwhile, the high bar is for the COP26 to step up to the loss and damage reality test and to put in place ways to address that reality that benefit those people at the sharp end of climate impacts.

The IPCC Sixth Assessment Report by Working Group I clearly shows that we have entered the era of climate loss and damage. The science of attributing impacts, losses and damages to anthropogenic climate change is now robust enough to prove that escalating climate impacts are being caused by the industrialised economies' pollution of the atmosphere and disruption of the climate system.

Scotland can play a role at COP26 in increasing the global ambition to address loss and damage. The Scottish Government could help initiate discussion of a solidarity fund on loss and damage whereby those with the largest carbon footprints reach out in solidarity to those most affected.

COP26 needs to be a beginning of a new dialogue on the realities of loss and damage and the ways that we can build knowledge and capacity where it is needed, and the political will necessary, to address this reality.

Additional Input

Following the session, participants were invited to submit answers to two further questions:

1. What are the key messages for COP26 on loss and damage – what do we want to see achieved?
2. How should we take action on loss and damage forward after COP26 toward global responsibility expressed through solidarity?

Interpreting Conclusions

The following process was followed to draw out the key messages and themes from the session, and for verification of conclusions:

- Read through Google form entries
- Watched full video of session noting new themes and flagging repeated themes
- Drew out key quotes, key messages and key demands into one document
- Sent to speakers to flag anything missing or incorrect
- Received verification from speakers
- Produced this report and submitted it to Glasgow Climate Dialogue Taskforce for validation.

Key messages for COP26 and beyond

- Loss and damage due to anthropogenic climate change is an intergenerational injustice.
- Listen better to those who are experiencing loss and damage – particularly the young, women, the marginalised – to be able to find ways to address this climate reality. Ways to document and record these experiences should be reported and assessed as part of the Global Stocktake.
- Shared global responsibility for loss and damage should be expressed through a solidarity fund that channels support (financial, moral, technical) to those who need it most. Scotland should convene discussions and lead by example in recognising the need to address loss and damage as a climate justice reality.
- Loss and damage should be formalised under the UNFCCC as a third pillar area of negotiation and decisions.
- We need to move from understanding the complexity of climate loss and damage to the necessity of addressing it. National mechanisms to address loss and damage need to be built and supported. Build knowledge and capacity where it is needed, and the political will necessary, to address this reality.

Appendix 1: Pre-Event Provocation

The following was shared in advance with those people who registered for the event.

Some of the negative impacts due to anthropogenic climate change are now unavoidable. These inevitable consequences have collectively come to be known as "loss and damage"[1]. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Paris Agreement[2] states that loss and damage should be averted, minimised and addressed.

As has been seen in 2021 losses and damages due to climate change can occur in all parts of the world[3]. In Climate Ready Scotland[4] (the climate adaptation plan for 2019-2024 of the geographic host of COP26), losses and damages due to climate change across different sectors are identified as a first step toward averting, minimising and addressing.

[1] https://unfccc.int/topics/adaptation-and-resilience/the-big-picture/introduction-to-loss-and-damage
[2] https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf
[3] See The Economist leader of 24th July 2021: https://www.economist.com/weeklyedition/2021-07-24
[4] www.gov.scot/publications/climate-ready-scotland-second-scottish-climate-change-adaptation-programme-2019-2024/pages/9/

Findings from research

Loss and damage is happening now and will only intensify. In some cases loss and damage that has already happened has had an existential impact on communities and countries (e.g. Barbuda) and action is needed urgently. Loss and damage occurs not only as a result of single unprecedented events (such as a tropical cyclone or flooding event) but also as a result of consecutive ad compounding risks – creating cascading loss and damage (and increasing vulnerability to subsequent hazards).

Loss and damage risks are dynamic over time as the locations and types of hazards/disasters change – for example in Nepal the locations and types of hazards are changing. Traditionally the southern plains were disaster-prone (flooding) but now landslides have become a major issue in the hilly regions. Actions addressing loss and damage have to deal with this dynamic changing nature of hazards, as well as the parallel dynamic nature of vulnerability. The Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States are the most vulnerable to loss and damage risks, but loss and damage can happen in all parts of the world. Affected countries and donors have not yet taken action to assess their loss and damage risks, to integrate loss and damage into their development, adaptation and risk management plans. There is an urgent need for action to be taken to do this.

Loss and damage is not absolute, it sits in a dynamic relationship to development, adaptation, humanitarian action and mitigation. Loss and damage is occurring and will intensify while countries and communities implement adaptation and mitigation action. Some countries, communities and groups are more vulnerable to loss and damage than others, and approaches to tackling loss and damage need to be attentive to those differences. Climate impacts are evolving so risks need to be assessed and regularly updated, as do plans to address, avert and minimise – assessment of climate risk must balance risks that can be estimated with some confidence as well as fat tail risks (low probability, high impact) taking uncertainty into account. Action to address loss and damage must consider the full range of loss and damage risks over time, space and society. We need to find practical ways of layering and integrating action to address, e.g. loss and damage that has happened already (recovery); loss and damage that is likely to happen in near future (DRR, anticipatory action, humanitarian response and recovery); slow onset loss and damage that may happen in the longer term future (planned relocation, transformative adaptation).

There is a significant capacity gap in affected countries and communities – both in terms of understanding of what loss and damage is and how risk can be assessed and acted upon, and in terms of capacity to take the right kinds of action in a coordinated manner across government and society.

Loss and damage needs to be accorded concrete priority as an issue area in national and international policy – it needs concrete plans and budgets attached and clear policy guidance on how to tackle loss and damage risks.

Loss and damage risks cannot be tackled effectively by existing frameworks for delivering adaptation, humanitarian action and DRR, and needs a holistic approach that can bridge the gap (conceptual, technical, financial) between these domains. Loss and damage would benefit from a specific policy instrument, similar to NDC or NAP – this could guide countries in planning action and in soliciting support – could guide investments by donors in a way that is currently not possible.

Affected countries urgently need technical and financial support to do this. The Santiago Network of Loss and Damage (SNLD) needs to be operationalised, with clear administrative structures to support Parties to access advice and support, and to facilitate allocation of finance to assessment and action – best way to do this is via Decision at COP, to ensure that the SNLD becomes operational under the auspices of the UNFCCC.

Addressing non-economic loss and damage must remain high on the agenda – intangible losses (such as to ecosystem services, cultural heritage, human mobility, sense of place, Indigenous knowledge and identity, and social cohesion) are equally, if not more important than quantifiable economic loss and damage.

Loss and Damage under the UNFCCC

The Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage (WIM) was established under the UNFCCC to assist developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change by: enhancing knowledge and understanding of comprehensive risk management approaches to address loss and damage; strengthening dialogue, coordination, coherence and synergies among relevant stakeholders; and, enhancing action and support, including finance, technology and capacity-building. Through these functions, the mechanism supports the implementation of Article 8 of the Paris Agreement.

The topic of loss and damage from human-induced climate change has struggled to gain traction in the UNFCCC negotiations. The vulnerable developing countries – the Small Island Developing States (AOSIS) and the Least Developed Countries (LDC) – struggled to convince Developed Countries to accept loss and damage as a stream in the official negotiations.

A breakthrough came at the 19th COP[5] with the establishment of the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) for Loss and Damage. An Executive Committee was set up with a rolling Work Plan. With the Paris Agreement at COP21, loss and damage was finally enshrined as a separate article under the Paris Agreement.

However, loss and damage is not a standing agenda item at every COP (although the vulnerable developing countries have been asking for this) it was an agenda item at COP25 where the WIM was to be reviewed and further guidance provided.

[5] Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC

Going into COP25, the vulnerable developing countries together with the G77 and China demanded two additional entities under the WIM (modelled on the entities for the Technology Mechanism) one for knowledge sharing and the other for funding.

After much debate – this was one of the negotiation topics which took COP25 into overtime – the COP25 decided to establish the Santiago Network on Loss and Damage. However, the decision did not include the structure of the network, nor financing. The decision did not provide new and additional finance for loss and damage. COP25 only invited the Board of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) to provide some financial resources for addressing loss and damage within its existing mitigation and adaptation funding windows.

A report from the WIM Executive was presented to the Subsidiary Bodies under the UNFCCC in June 2021.

Expectations of COP26

As there is no specific agenda item on loss and damage, there is no specific decision to be made at COP26. However, loss and damage remains an extremely important topic for the vulnerable developing countries who look to elevate this issue as an agenda item, due to the continuing costly and escalating climate change impacts. COP25 failed to sign off on the review of the WIM. Parties did agree to establish a Santiago Network, and an expert group on action and support, but failed to agree anything on functionality.

Furthermore, loss and damage will be a significant barrier to a successful outcome in Glasgow. The COP presidency should be well aware that continued inaction on loss and damage, and no support to move the issue forward, will significantly contribute to a failed COP26 – as happened to COP25, that lost credibility due to its failure to reach decisions on some key issues.