



Pacific Calling Partnership information sheet Loss and Damage from climate change

WHAT IS MEANT BY LOSS AND DAMAGE?

When the effects of climate change are so great that adaptation is no longer possible some countries and communities experience Loss and Damage. Slow onset events such as sea-level rise and extreme events such as heat waves can be responsible.

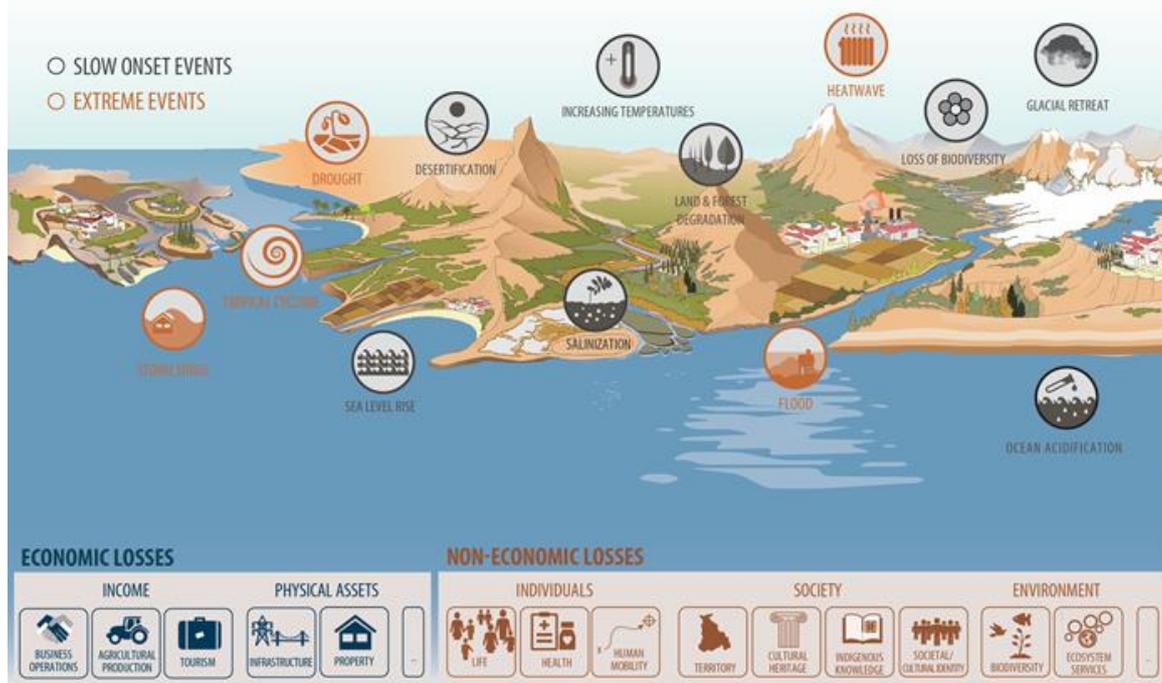
“Loss” is permanent and irreversible. It refers to anything that has been lost forever because of the effects of climate change.

Economic losses include permanent salinization of soils and water, ocean acidification, loss of land, destroyed agricultural land, livelihoods, destroyed coral reefs,

glacial retreat.

Non-economic losses include the loss of lives, language, culture and tradition, homes, ecosystems, habitats and species.

“Damage” refers to anything that can be repaired or restored, such as health, roads, temporary salinization of soil and water, damaged coral reefs and some habitats and ecosystems.



THE SEARCH FOR COMPENSATION

Since the Earth Summit in 1991, Pacific Island Nations and other Small Island States have worked to put climate compensation on the international climate agenda. So far these UN processes have only resulted in funding for emissions reduction (mitigation) and adaptation to climate change. Hence their efforts must continue in order to keep up the momentum. And their efforts need to be supplemented by campaigners from the polluting countries.

The phrase ‘Loss and Damage’ was first coined in 2011 at the UN climate negotiations in Durban South Africa (COP 17). The first big breakthrough in the campaign was the establishment of the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage (WIM) IN 2013. Though the 2015 Paris Agreement established a legal framework for loss and damage, the industrialised nations at COP 23 in Bonn in 2017 ensured that there is still no mechanism to implement

it. They continue to meet any talk of finance for compensation with strong resistance. Without assured sources of finance, compensation will not happen.

WHO NEEDS COMPENSATION?

Poor and vulnerable communities suffer most from the effects of climate change, have emitted fewer greenhouse gases and have little access to the resources needed to remedy or prevent damage and loss. Women and children, the aged and disabled suffer more from poverty and so they in turn are the most vulnerable to climate change. Low-lying nations such as many island nations and Bangladesh face the risk of huge losses of land. Extreme drought in places like Sub-Saharan Africa means they face the possibility that huge amounts of cropland will become desert.

In general, it is the poorer countries, the least developed countries who have contributed least to climate change that need compensation.

THE POLITICS OF LOSS AND DAMAGE and WHO SHOULD PAY THE COMPENSATION?

‘Loss and Damage’ needs to be properly funded. Morally, it is clearly a matter of justice that those who caused the climate to change (eg the industrialised nations, fossil fuel industries, other high emission industries, international aviation and maritime transport) should pay recompense to those who are suffering the impacts.

According to Julie-Anne Richards, a Loss and Damage analyst with the Climate Justice Program, "What Loss and Damage really means is that the countries whose history of industrialization is responsible for climate change should help compensate poorer countries suffering financial losses due to rising sea levels, expanding deserts, contaminated water supplies, severe weather, and other impacts."ⁱⁱⁱ

Richer countries can show solidarity with poorer ones by helping them develop knowledge and resources. E.G. countries like Germany that have developed renewable energy technology can not only make it affordable for poorer countries, but also train local people in the sector.ⁱⁱⁱ

Richer countries need also to recognise that displacement is an inevitable result of failing to adequately tackle climate change. People whether internally or externally displaced need legal protection and somewhere to go. A report by ActionAid, CARE, WWF and German Watch, ‘Into Unknown Territory’, says that “The loss and

damage agenda needs to take into account population movements resulting from climate impacts.” and it predicts that “The choice for policy makers is not between migration and mass migration but between organised, safe migration and chaos.”^{iv}

PREVENTING LOSS AND DAMAGE

The report further recommended that “**Developed countries** continue to urgently pursue mitigation strategies: the drivers of loss and damage must be tackled head on by shifting to low-carbon development pathways globally. Developed countries must increase their ambition level to more than 40% emission reduction below 1990 levels by 2020 and over 80% by 2050. Developed countries must provide finance, technology and capacity building to assist developing countries to invest in adaptation and disaster risk reduction and to transition their development onto low-carbon and climate resilient pathways.”^v

THE FUTURE FOR LOSS AND DAMAGE

[The Suva Expert Dialogue](#) in Bonn in May 2018 aimed to begin to set up agreement on processes to provide financial support from rich countries to help the Least Developed Countries cope with loss and damage. This is essential.

It is essential also, that international NGOs campaign in solidarity with vulnerable nations so they can develop comprehensive risk management strategies that align with the Sustainable Development Goals and build resilience by addressing root vulnerabilities.

References

ⁱ <https://unfccc.int/topics/adaptation-and-resilience/workstreams/loss-and-damage-ld/workshops-meetings/suva-expert-dialogue#eq-4>

ⁱⁱ <https://psmag.com/environment/why-its-vital-for-the-u-n-to-agree-on-a-plan-for-loss-and-damage>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.dw.com/en/climate-talks-the-power-of-the-worlds-least-powerful-countries/a-43616168>

^{iv} <http://www.actionaid.org/publications/unknown-territory-limits-adaptation-and-reality-loss-and-damage-climate-impacts>

^v <http://www.actionaid.org/publications/unknown-territory-limits-adaptation-and-reality-loss-and-damage-climate-impacts>

