

Loss and Damage in Vulnerable Countries Initiative

- Building an understanding of the scope and significance of loss and damage associated with the adverse impacts of climate change
- Developing and co-creating an approach and vision for loss and damage among decision makers and relevant stakeholders
- Assisting least developed countries (LDCs) and other vulnerable countries to develop a coherent approach to the loss and damage debate
- Identifying and beginning to take the steps needed to support a paradigm shift on loss and damage in the coming years





Abandoned house as a result of Hurricane, Jamaica / Photo: Sönke Krefz

Climate impacts take increasingly toll among vulnerable people.

Background

There is a significant gap between existing and projected emissions and the level of emissions that would confine global warming to a 2°C – let alone a 1.5°C – increase. Countries and societies are increasingly preparing adaptation strategies and implementing a range of activities to facilitate adaptation. However, at the existing pace it is unlikely that current levels of adaptation will allow societies to transition smoothly to a changing world. The frequency and intensity of weather-related hazards is expected to grow, along with the long-term adverse impacts of weather-related risks. In many cases this could exceed adaptation thresholds of individuals, communities and countries.

Existing mitigation commitments and actions are not enough to prevent dangerous climate change related impacts. Therefore, residual loss and damage, the climate change impacts that we are unable to prevent through mitigation and adaptation efforts, will be a defining part of the future response to climate change. Like adaptation 15 years ago, loss and damage is an emerging field and an increasingly relevant topic for the international community given current levels of mitigation and adaptation coupled with future climate change projections. Thus any approach to loss and damage – particularly at the international level – must seek to increase international commitment to mitigation and adaptation, the parameters that influence the extent of residual loss and damage.

Loss and Damage in Vulnerable Countries Initiative

The Loss and Damage in Vulnerable Countries Initiative was initiated by the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and motivated by the need to understand more about this emerging issue. In order to move forward the debate on loss and damage for the benefit of the least developed countries (LDCs) and other vulnerable countries, the GoB requested assistance from the Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) to help building a common understanding around loss and damage and provide insight into what it entails for vulnerable countries. CDKN has appointed a consortium of organizations, which includes Germanwatch, United Nations University-Institute for Environmental and Human Security (UNU-EHS), International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) and Munich Climate Insurance Initiative (MCII) to carry out this work.

The overall strategic vision of the Initiative is to frame the debate of loss and damage to alter the way in which decision makers and stakeholders perceive problems and solutions related to climate change. This paradigm shift will help build momentum for the international mitigation and adaptation response towards 2015 when it is hoped that a legally binding agreement will be reached. The activities of the UNFCCC Work Programme on Loss and Damage will also be a significant guiding element for the work of the consortium.

The Loss and Damage in Vulnerable Countries Initiative is comprised of four activity areas, the activities of which are based on a three stage approach.



Tropical storm impacts – Mangrove forest, Jamaica / Photo: Sonke Krieff

Sea level rise and weather extremes have disastrous consequences for nature and people: SIDS and LDC call for a response of the international community.

Three stage approach

1. *Building a common understanding of loss and damage*

To build a common understanding of what is and what is not currently known about loss and damage, the consortium is working with a wide range of stakeholders to identify the drivers of loss and damage as well as gaps in the research. Through attendance at UNFCCC expert meetings and negotiations, the consortium is gathering questions from Parties and observers and engaging in research to provide answers.

2. *Building momentum and commitment to act on loss and damage*

With a foundation of common understanding, the consortium will support LDCs and other Parties in a process of co-creating ideas to address loss and damage. A series of activities will be undertaken to help LDCs generate and test approaches to address loss and damage. The consortium will also foster LDC expertise by supporting attendance at regional workshops organized by the UNFCCC under the Work Programme on Loss and Damage.

3. *Assisting LDCs and other Parties articulate views on the next steps for loss and damage*

The consortium will help LDCs and other Parties prepare for effective negotiations on loss and damage at COP-18 and beyond. A comprehensive analysis of the discourse on loss and damage and the range of activities undertaken throughout the year will be provided to LDCs and other Parties to help clarify the scope of the debate and possible ways forward. The consortium will also help LDCs and other Parties develop submissions on loss and damage to the UNFCCC. These submissions may explore what implementation options would look like in a decision on loss and damage at COP-18.

The Activities of the Loss and Damage in Vulnerable Countries Initiative

The Loss and Damage in Vulnerable Countries Initiative has four main activity areas designed to both interact with and complement each other. The activities will support LDCs and other vulnerable countries articulate their needs vis-à-vis loss and damage and help create momentum in the loss and damage debate. These activity areas include:



Example of non-economic losses: Sacrificing culture and heritage to the rising seas.

Activity Area I:

Supporting LDCs in the Loss and Damage Negotiations

The overall objective of this activity area is to help shape the long-term strategic agenda on loss and damage and strengthen the position of LDCs within that agenda, with the aim of amplifying the “voices” of vulnerable countries. The consortium will help build a bridge between the insights gained from the project activities and the broader policy discussions related to loss and damage, particularly within the UNFCCC process. Further policy discussions on loss and damage will be supported through ongoing consultations to identify and address the questions of LDCs and other Parties. The consortium will assist LDCs to effectively articulate their views through a submission to provide input into the UNFCCC Work Programme on Loss and Damage. Through regular engagement with negotiators and other stakeholders from vulnerable countries, the consortium is ensuring meaningful input of the perspectives of vulnerable countries into the UNFCCC process.

Activity Area II:

Conceptual Framing

Probing approaches for “beyond adaptation” is unknown territory for humanity. The consortium aims to provide insights into the policy debate that will transform discussions under the UNFCCC and inspire international action. The central priority of this activity area is to foster conceptual understanding and framing for the loss and damage debate. This activity area will develop conceptual understanding of loss and damage and give relevant policy guidance. The Munich Climate Insurance Initiative – an initiative that brings together academics, private insurers, civil society and development practitioners – will explore how to use insurance approaches as part of a comprehensive approach to address loss and damage for vulnerable people in developing countries. This activity area also features research on the legal aspects of loss and damage.



Flooded houses in Viet Nam / Photo: Kees van der Geest

Loss and Damage: Adaptation to climate change brought to the extremes?

Activity Area III:

Case studies on the realities of loss and damage vulnerable countries

One of the ways the consortium is supporting the LDCs in the negotiating process is by providing scientific insights of the on the ground realities of loss and damage in vulnerable countries. Case studies in Africa, Asia and Oceania will illustrate the effects of climate change – droughts, floods, desertification, climate change impacts on mountain eco-systems, sea-level rise and coastal erosion – in order to reduce current knowledge gaps on the impacts of climate extremes and slow-onset processes that communities in LDCs are not (yet) able to cope with or adapt to. The case studies are being conducted by UNU-EHS in cooperation with local research institutions in Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Gambia, Kenya and Micronesia. Three additional case studies – in Ethiopia, Burkina Faso and Mozambique – are being funded by the African Climate Policy Centre of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

Activity Area IV:

Driving national policy responses to Loss and Damage in Bangladesh

Under the leadership of ICCCAD, the consortium is providing the Government of Bangladesh and relevant stakeholders in Bangladesh – as well as LDC negotiators and experts – with insights from the international process. The foundation of the work in Bangladesh is research to determine how the thematic areas of the Work Programme on Loss and Damage – assessing the risk of loss and damage, approaches to address loss and damage and the role of the Convention – can be understood in the national context of Bangladesh. Research on a variety of topics related to loss and damage combined with a series of workshops involving a wide range of stakeholders, will help identify concrete mechanisms for addressing loss and damage in Bangladesh. The work in Bangladesh will also help demonstrate the relevance of international insight and decisions for national policy-making while helping other LDCs and vulnerable countries looking to understand loss and damage in their own national contexts.



Proactively preparing for the worst: The project explores implication of loss and damage on national decision making in Bangladesh.

Context: Loss and Damage – an emerging third paradigm in international climate policy?

The establishment of the Cancun Adaptation Framework, at the climate conference in 2010, represents a breakthrough for international adaptation policy. At the same time vulnerable countries – especially the Small Island States and Least Developed Countries – have fought hard for increased attention to the loss and damage from climate change impacts that occur despite mitigation and adaptation. In response to this call the UNFCCC launched a work programme on loss and damage that will develop policy options until the end of 2012.

This Work Programme on Loss and Damage is organised around three thematic areas:

- Approaches to assess the risk of loss and damage.
- Approaches to address loss and damage (implementation options – approaches that include risk reduction, risk retention and risk transfer and approaches to fight slow onset impacts such as sea level rise).
- The role of the international community in enhancing the response to loss and damage.

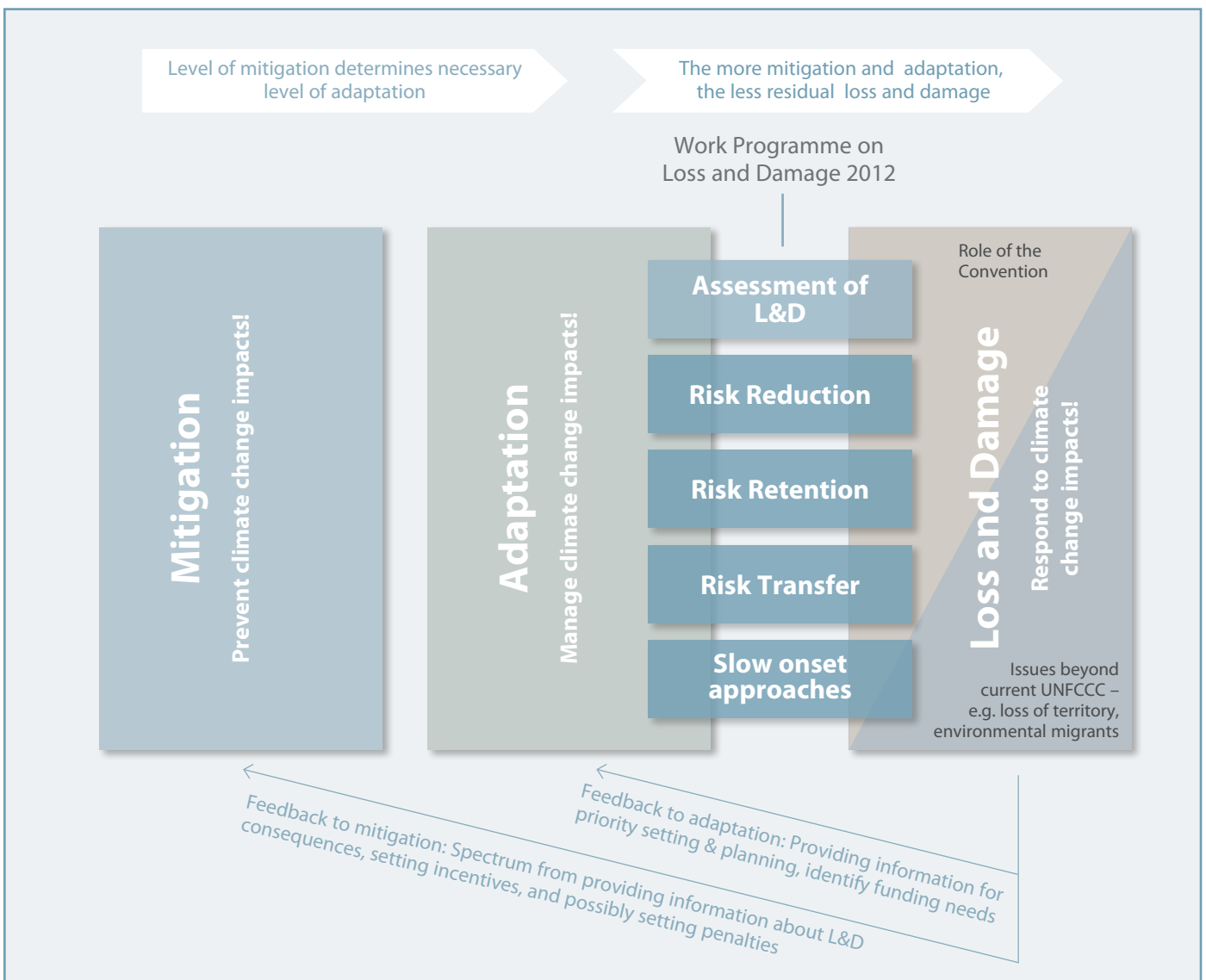
To enhance understanding and facilitate an exchange of ideas on the first two thematic areas, the UNFCCC will host a series of expert meetings to promote engagement between Parties and regional and international organisations. A decision on how to move loss and damage forward is an expected outcome of the climate summit in Doha, Qatar at the end of 2012. Parties will need to have a candid discussion about the possible mechanisms for structuring the response to loss and damage internationally, both in the short term and as part of the post-2020 climate regime that is to be negotiated between now and 2015. The diagram (page 7) illustrates the potential needs, functions and thematic areas that are part of this emerging new area of climate policy.



Beach erosion in Micronesia / Photo: Iris Monneret

Evidence from the front-lines of climate change: Sea level rise threatens livelihoods.

Potential conceptual frame of loss and damage



The Project Consortium

Germanwatch

Germanwatch is a Germany-based environment and development organization. Following the motto, "Observing, Analysing, Acting", Germanwatch has been actively promoting global equity and the preservation of livelihoods since 1991. Germanwatch has worked for more than 15 years on issues related to climate and development and is also heavily engaged in the UNFCCC negotiations.

www.germanwatch.org

ICCCAD

The International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) provides a window to local experience, knowledge and research for countries most affected by climate change. ICCCAD supports a growing capacity of Bangladesh stakeholders while enabling individuals and organizations from around the world to benefit from training in Bangladesh, where they can be exposed to innovative initiatives and increasing knowledge on adaptation.

www.icccad.org

MCII

The Munich Climate Insurance Initiative (MCII) is hosted at UNU-EHS. MCII is a non-profit organization that brings together insurers, experts on climate change and adaptation, NGOs and policy researchers. MCII intends to find solutions to the risks posted by climate change. MCII provides a forum and gathering point for insurance-related expertise on climate impact issues.

www.climate-insurance.org

UNU-EHS

The United Nations University (UNU) is the academic and research arm of the UN. The United Nations Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS) is located in Bonn, Germany. The Institute supports policymakers and decision makers with evidence-based research and information on risk and vulnerability aspects of human security.

www.ehs.unu.edu

The Climate Development Knowledge Network

The Climate and Development Knowledge Network supports decision makers in designing and delivering climate compatible development. We do this by combining research, advisory services and knowledge sharing in support of locally owned and managed policy processes. We work in partnership with decision makers in the public, private and non-governmental sectors nationally, regionally and globally.

<http://cdkn.org>

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Please visit www.loss-and-damage.net

