

A spectrum of views on Loss and Damage

Insights from interviews with 40 key stakeholders in
science, policy and practice

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with thanks to collaborators at University of Oxford and Reading,
interviewees, and expert groups



2010

Work programme on loss and damage



2013

Warsaw International Mechanism



2015

Paris Agreement



Our entry point: How might climate science be relevant to loss and damage policy?

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opinion & comment

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COMMENTARY:

Characterizing loss and damage from climate change

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Policymakers are creating mechanisms to help developing countries cope with loss and damage from climate change, but the negotiations are largely neglecting scientific questions about what the impacts of climate change actually are.

Mitigation efforts have failed to prevent the continued increase of anthropogenic greenhouse-gas emissions. Adaptation is now unlikely to be sufficient to prevent negative impacts from current and future climate change¹. In this context, vulnerable nations argue that existing frameworks to promote mitigation and adaptation are inadequate, and have called for an international mechanism to deal with residual climate change impacts, or 'loss and damage'².

In 2013, the United Nations Framework

is currently drafting a two-year workplan comprising meetings, reports and expert groups. This aims to enhance knowledge and understanding of loss and damage, strengthen dialogue among stakeholders, and promote enhanced action and support. Issues identified as priorities for the WIM thus far include how to deal with non-economic losses — such as loss of life, livelihood and cultural heritage — and linkages between loss and damage and patterns of migration and displacement². In all this, one fundamental issue still demands

of impacts associated with climate change in developing countries that negatively affect human and natural systems," including impacts from extreme events (for example heatwaves, flooding and drought) and slow-onset events (including sea-level rise and glacial retreat)⁴. This implies that the WIM will deal with current and future changes in the risk of loss and damage, rather than only addressing losses that have actually occurred. In addition, the definition suggests that the WIM will specifically handle changes in risk that can be attributed to climate change.

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In 2013, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) responded to these calls and established the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) to address loss and damage from the impacts of climate change in developing countries³. An interim executive committee of party representatives has been set up and

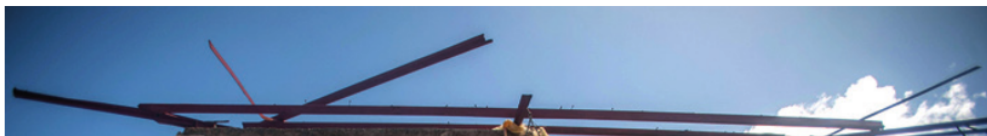
is currently drafting a two-year workplan comprising meetings, reports and expert groups. This aims to enhance knowledge and understanding of loss and damage, strengthen dialogue among stakeholders, and promote enhanced action and support. Issues identified as priorities for the WIM thus far include how to deal with non-economic losses — such as loss of life, livelihood and cultural heritage — and linkages between loss and damage and patterns of migration and displacement². In all this, one fundamental issue still demands our attention: which losses and damages are relevant to the WIM? What counts as loss and damage from climate change?

Defining loss and damage

The UNFCCC defines loss and damage as "the actual and/or potential manifestation

of impacts associated with climate change in developing countries that negatively affect human and natural systems," including impacts from extreme events (for example heatwaves, flooding and drought) and slow-onset events (including sea-level rise and glacial retreat)⁴. This implies that the WIM will deal with current and future changes in the risk of loss and damage, rather than only addressing losses that have actually occurred. In addition, the definition suggests that the WIM will specifically handle changes in risk that can be attributed to climate change. In the language of the UNFCCC, which has a mandate to tackle "anthropogenic interference with the climate system,"⁵ this means human-induced climate change.

From a scientific perspective, therefore, the first challenge in implementing the WIM would be to estimate where and when loss and damage can be attributed to anthropogenic climate change. This would require attributing losses to weather and climate events, and attributing these weather and climate events to anthropogenic



whilst there are working definitions of L&D, "there has been no formal discussion under the UNFCCC on what the term "loss and damage" signifies."

An interdisciplinary research project: Typologies of L&D

Aim:

- Not to promote defining/definitions
- To facilitate understanding of perspectives which are out there
- As analysed by impartial outsiders
- Fast-track progress, building on experience in adaptation

Distance from adaptation/existing mechanisms

Adaptation and Mitigation

Risk Management

Limits to Adaptation

Existential

Distance from adaptation/existing mechanisms

L&D is a debate about how to address harm done to vulnerable countries

L&D refers to climate-related impacts beyond the limits of adaptation

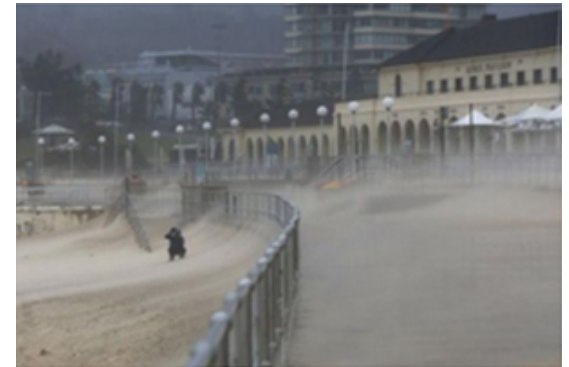
L&D is an additional mechanism to address risk from climate change, alongside adaptation, disaster risk reduction and humanitarian work

All climate change impacts are potential L&D, and these can be dealt with through mitigation and adaptation

Points of Agreement

“Parties recognize the importance of averting, minimizing and addressing loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, including extreme weather events and slow onset events”

Paris Agreement, Article 8



Points of Distinction

Distinction between L&D and adaptation

L&D can be addressed through adaptation



L&D occurs beyond adaptation

Ex-ante or Ex-post

Aim to address L&D which has already occurred



Aim to prevent L&D which could occur in future



Aim to address L&D which will occur in future

Relevance of climate change

L&D refers to impacts from anthropogenic climate change



L&D refers to impacts any climate-related event

Emphasis on finance

Role of justice

Associated actions

Implications for policy



Feedback from ExCom

- Political imperative for convergence
- Clarity it not always helpful!
- Do WIM and Paris Agreement reflect convergence across the typologies?

Summary

- There are a spectrum of views on L&D
- Perspectives vary in terms of:
 - Distinction from adaptation
 - Relevance of climate change
 - Focus on ex-ante or ex-post
 - Role of finance & justice
 - Relevant actions to address L&D
- Consensus has been achieved in the WIM and Paris Agreement
- Still remaining questions for implementation
- Typologies can facilitate informed discussion about options available

Thank you for your attention

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A spectrum of views on Loss and Damage

Loss and Damage has emerged as a key area in international climate change policy. But what does “Loss and Damage” actually mean? We asked 40 experts in policy, research and practice. They offered a spectrum of views about Loss and Damage (L&D). Here we summarise the results of our study, identifying four key perspectives, or “typologies” of L&D. Characterising these stakeholder perspectives is important to increase awareness of the different views influencing the debate. Understanding the typologies could help avoid endless debates over meaning and fast track progress towards real action to help manage L&D.



Figure 1: Typologies of L&D

Key messages

- **There is a spectrum of views on L&D.** Some suggest that L&D refers to all potential climate impacts, which can be dealt with through mitigation and adaptation. Others emphasise the need for new approaches to address unavoidable harm to vulnerable countries.
- **Perspectives on L&D vary**, in terms of the distinction between L&D mechanisms and adaptation, the emphasis on climate change, the relative focus on preventing L&D versus actions to address L&D once it has occurred, and the emphasis on justice.
- **Different perspectives imply different priorities.** The most appropriate actions to address L&D are different for each typology.
- **Finance is only one component of L&D.** L&D has often been associated with a debate about financial transfers. Our interviews suggest that there's a lot more to it than that.
- **Policy-makers have built consensus on L&D**, in the form of the Warsaw International Mechanism and Paris Agreement.
- **Greater clarity might be needed for implementation.** For researchers and practitioners, implementation is difficult given remaining questions about L&D. The typologies can facilitate transparent discussion of the options available.