

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GENDERED DIMENSIONS OF LOSS AND DAMAGE IN ASIA



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Setting up a fund for loss and damage is one of the achievements of the COP28, the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference. However, ambiguity remains regarding its functions and set-up. This summary offers an overview of the briefing paper and emphasizes the importance of understanding the gendered dimensions of both economic and non-economic losses and damages in Asia, highlighting that women play pivotal roles in responding to the climate crisis, but their contributions are often overlooked in loss and damage assessments. It advocates for an intersectional feminist approach to be embedded in the establishment of the Loss and Damage Fund.

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For further information on the issues raised in this paper please email advocacy@oxfaminternational.org

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The impacts of climate change are increasing and accelerating at an alarming rate. According to the World Meteorological Organization, in 2022, Asia bore witness to 81 climate-induced natural hazards, predominantly floods and storms. The consequences were severe: over 5,000 deaths, more than 50 million people directly affected, and damages exceeding US\$36bn in terms of loss of infrastructure and livelihoods.

The gravity of these modern climate-related effects is intrinsically tied to processes of historical colonization, where those with the least historical responsibility for the climate crisis find themselves bearing the greatest burden. This inequity is underscored by the disproportionate responsibility for historical carbon emissions: the Global North is estimated to be accountable for a staggering 92%. Extractive neocolonial relationships entrenched in neoliberal capitalism perpetuate a global dynamic of wealth and power concentration, marginalizing and exploiting communities, particularly those in the Global South. While wealthier nations in the Global North continue to leverage accumulated capital and infrastructure for greater resilience, many countries in the Global South face the compounding challenge of servicing historical debts at the same time as confronting the most severe impacts of the climate crisis. The debt cycle reduces their capacity to invest in the social and physical infrastructure necessary to adapt and respond to climate disaster.

Geographical inequalities intersect with gender, race, class and (dis)ability, intensifying the plight of already marginalized communities in the Global South. Despite contributing the least to historical carbon emissions, economically vulnerable women living in rural areas in the Global South are hit hardest by climate-induced disasters. Their reliance on natural resources, compounded by care responsibilities and societal inequalities that limit access to resources and decision-making processes, exacerbates their vulnerability to the impacts of climate crisis. The crisis in turn reinforces gender norms; widens existing inequities; intensifies women's care responsibilities; reduces their access to secure livelihoods; increases food insecurity; and leads to alarming spikes in gender-based violence.

In spite of these challenges, women play pivotal roles in responding to the climate crisis, but their contributions are often overshadowed and excluded from loss and damage assessments, adding to the perpetuation of gender inequalities. Beyond economic loss and material damage, the paper sheds light on the myriad of non-economic losses and damages experienced by women. These encompass the loss of family members and vital community support systems, compromised safety and security, worsening health and well-being, and an elevated risk of gender-based violence.

Setting up a fund for loss and damage is one of the achievements of COP28, the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference. However, ambiguity relating to the fund's functions and set-up remain. In this context, there is an urgent need to recognize and address the unique challenges faced by

marginalized communities, particularly women, in the face of climate-induced adversities.

This paper positions itself as an advocacy tool, emphasizing the necessity of embedding an intersectional feminist approach in the establishment of the fund by highlighting the gendered dimensions of loss and damage in Asia. The paper draws insights from case studies in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, the Philippines, and Timor-Leste. These case studies serve as stark illustrations of the multidimensional lived realities and experiences of populations vulnerable to extreme climate crises. They highlight how gendered impacts place people, particularly those already marginalized, at heightened risk. The paper contends that current adaptation, mitigation, development, and humanitarian measures fall short of adequately addressing the needs and fulfilling the basic rights of women on the frontlines of the climate crisis.

These findings underline the imperative for countries and governments in the Global South to continually strengthen the social and economic position of women through gender-transformative public policy measures, programming and financing. This involves assessing national policies related to paid and unpaid care work, addressing the stark lack of women's representation in governance mechanisms at municipal and national levels, and evaluating National Adaptation Plans through a gender lens.

This paper's call to action is directed not only at the affected regions but also at governments and policymakers in the Global North. It urges them to do more to support and finance responses to losses and damages with an embedded intersectional feminist lens.

Our research highlights that the complexity of the problem necessitates solutions that ensure the most marginalized communities can meaningfully engage in decision-making processes around loss and damages.

The urgency of the issue is palpable: it demands short- and long-term actions to address immediate needs and help communities to rebuild stronger and restore sustainably. The paper sets out a range of recommendations aimed at key actors from governments and institutions involved in the establishment of the fund to movements and civil society organizations (CSOs) who are carrying out vital work on the front lines of the crisis around these themes. All potential solutions around loss and damage must be assessed through an intersectional gender lens. Loss and damage investments must actively dismantle rather than perpetuate the gendered barriers faced by the communities most affected by the climate crisis.

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