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29TH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES: EXPECTATIONS, OUTCOMES AND DEBATES AROUND MAJOR AGENDA ITEMS

Md Shamsuddoha, Sheikh Nur Ataya Rabbi, Tanje-Un-Jenat, Elmee Tabassum, and Shanjia Shams provided a comprehensive analysis of the key outcomes of COP 29 held in Baku in 2024. They emphasized stronger CSOs movements and planned diplomacy for delivering justice and rights-based decisions from the COP process.

SUMMARY

The 29th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UNFCCC held in Baku, Azerbaijan from November 11 to 22 (with an extension on November 23), carried the legacy of the past climate negotiations that were aimed at crafting actionable decisions on the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). With the utmost focus on setting a new climate finance target— New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG), the COP was set to replace the existing commitment of annually mobilizing USD 100 billion with a new, need-based, predictable finance to help the climate vulnerable developing countries to transition away from the fossil fuels and build resilience to the aggravating impacts of climate change.

The COP 29 was also expected to mobilize required finances for adaptation, agree on a timeline for delivering the pledged funds for responding to and addressing loss and damage, and set indicators to track the implementation progress of the targets of Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA). Most importantly, COP 29 was expected to set a political motion for scaled-up emission reduction targets under the NDC-3 cycle 2025-2030.

To keep the 1.5 degrees Celsius global warming goal achievable, Parties at COP 29 were expected to agree on an implementation plan for the “UAE Consensus” that was agreed upon at COP 28 in 2023. The ‘UAE Consensus’ included milestone decisions to scale up efforts of emission reduction from the power and energy sectors. The package decisions include: tripling renewable energy capacity and

doubling the rate of energy efficiency improvements by 2030, and transitioning away from fossil fuels in the energy systems.

Besides negotiations on the critical issues of addressing climate change with enhanced political ambition and targets, COP 29 was also set to resolve the ambiguity surrounding climate finance delivery by establishing a well-agreed definition of climate finance and ensuring transparency in its reporting.

Against these crucial expectations, the Parties at COP 29 did manage to make some commendable progress on several issues. However, these were followed by intense debates, disagreements and unjust compromises on many issues crucial for climate justice.

The New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG), the agreed target of mobilizing mere USD 300 billion annually from diverse sources, with an approach to scale it up to USD 1.3 trillion by 2035, literally failed climate justice. Although the decision someway saved the integrity of this multilateral platform, it widened the trust gap between the developed and developing country Parties. Neither the quantum nor the quality of the decided finance goal was close to what the developing country Parties were demanding, i.e., grant-based, new and additional, predictable finance from public sources, and through the UNFCCC mechanism. Instead, there was a visible promotion of the neo-liberal financing instruments in the name of 'layered financing' and legitimization of profiteering by the multilateral development banks (MDBs).

Instead of providing effective guidance for a scaled-up emission reduction on the NDC-3, Parties at COP 29 shocked the world by not even making any mention of NDC-3 and transitioning away from the fossil fuels. While the COP has been successful in finalizing the rules of carbon trading under Article 6, serious risks persist around transparency of the trading, quality of carbon removals, and safeguarding.

In regards to setting indicators for the targets of Global Goal on Adaptation, the COP has challenged the developing countries' demand for Means of Implementation (MoI) by putting governance issues as the compliance in accessing MoI. Indeed, the lofty political commitments from COP 29 frustrated the global hope for ensuring climate justice, which must be brought back in the forthcoming COPs.

A strong political commitment towards achieving the Paris Agreement goal was due in COP 29. However, we are again in despair with low quality finance pledges far short form the actual need, for the developing countries. We see no dedicated fund for the climate vulnerable countries especially for adaptation actions and addressing loss and damage. UNFCCC windows are ignored and there is no guarantee for grant-based adaptation and loss and damage funding. No advancement is made in implementing conditional NDC targets and addressing adaptation gaps. With tricky and compromised texts, COP 29 has relaxed the responsibilities of the historical polluters, alienating the world further from equity and justice.

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KEY AGENDA ITEM

The 29th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 29) was convened to resolve some pressing and unresolved issues across multiple agenda items, reflecting both long-standing challenges and emerging priorities in the global climate regime.

Dubbed as "Finance COP", Parties at COP 29 were mandated to agree on a need-based and predicable climate finance goal called "New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG)", which would replace the previous commitment of delivering USD 100 billion annually from 2020 through 2025.

Beyond this, the other major points of deliberation included: a) operationalizing the FRLD, with a focus on governance structures, financing sources, and mechanisms to ensure equitable access for climate-vulnerable nations; b) making progress in setting indicators for the targets of the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA), c) mobilizing support for the implementation of national adaptation plans; d) progress the Mitigation Work Programme, with an emphasis on accelerating emission reduction pathways; e) finalizing rules, modalities and procedures (RMP) of carbon trading under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement— covering both carbon markets and non-market approaches, etc.

COP 29 AGENDA

- Matters relating to adaptation: (a) Global goal on adaptation; (b) Report of the Adaptation Committee (AC); (c) Review of the progress, effectiveness and performance of the AC;
- Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts and joint annual report of its Executive Committee and the Santiago network for averting, minimizing and addressing loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change
- Matters relating to finance: (a) Long-term climate finance; (b) Matters relating to the Standing Committee on Finance; (c) Report of the GCF to the Conference of the Parties and guidance to the GCF; (d) Report of the GEF to the Conference of the Parties and guidance to the GEF; (e) Report of the FRLD and guidance to the Fund; (f) Seventh review of the Financial Mechanism.
- Matters relating to capacity-building.
- Gender and climate change.
- Matters relating to the global stocktake: (a) Procedural and logistical elements of the overall global stocktake process; (b) Report on the annual global stocktake dialogue referred to in paragraph 187 of decision 1/CMA.5.
- United Arab Emirates just transition work programme.
- Sharm el-Sheikh mitigation ambition and implementation work programme.
- Further guidance on features of nationally determined contributions, referred to in paragraph 26 of decision 1/CP.21.
- Reporting and review pursuant to Article 13 of the Paris Agreement: provision of financial and technical support to developing country Parties for reporting and capacity building.

Cross-cutting issues, such as, gender equality, indigenous peoples' participation, transparency, and climate-health linkages were also formally included in the agenda to ensure an inclusive and holistic negotiation.

CLIMATE FINANCE

The very dear agenda of setting a New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) was the center of the entire two-weeks of negotiations at COP 29. The negotiations built on the progress made by the two-year NCQG Work Programme that was established at COP 27 in 2022 and aimed at setting a predictable target with a bottom-up calculation of financing needs.

However, the significantly slow and under-delivery of the previously agreed commitment of mobilizing annually USD 100 billion and the consequent trust gap between developed and developing country groups made NCQG negotiations ever complicated and deeply political. With this political complexity and trust gap, Parties at COP 29 engaged in negotiating the following other issues of climate finance:

- Communicating a delivery plan of doubling adaptation fund by 2025 from 2019 levels
- Fulfilling the long-back commitment of the developed countries on mobilizing USD 100 billion annually from 2020 through 2025

While the developing country group was asking to set a quantified NCQG of USD 1.3 trillion annually starting from 2026, the developed country group persistently denied setting a quantitative figure unless a confirmed, yet voluntary, commitment from the developing countries was agreed. They rather were forcing the developing countries to agree on the process, sources and mechanisms of mobilizing and delivering finances.

On the contrary, the developing country group was urging for setting allocation floors from the public sources, and to the regional country groups. For instance, the AOSIS and LDC country group demanded an annual floor of USD 39 billion and USD 220 billion respectively from what the developing countries deserve — 1.3 trillion annually. The LDC group further demanded 25 percent of the pledged finance from the public sources.

All those developing countries' demand were denied by the developed country group which instead was prescribing a financing mechanism called 'layered financing' (what they termed an innovative mechanism) to be mobilized form a variety of sources rather than relying solely on public finance.

As the negotiation went on, the rift between developed and developing countries became austerely obvious on two key issues: layered financing vs. public-source financing, and obligatory vs. voluntary financing. The debate continued until the final day of the two-week negotiation, pushing the talks into overtime and risking the collapse of the multilateral process.

Though figure of mobilizing USD 200-300 billion was rumored informally, it was supposedly a fabricated media propaganda to frame a psychological acceptance of the developing countries on a lower target than what they were negotiating for.

Apart from those disagreements, there were debates around asking the developing countries to contribute to the NCQG and over the wording 'mobilizing' versus 'providing' climate finance. The first one contradicts the UNFCCC's CBDR&RC principle of addressing climate change, and the latter tends to exempt the developed countries from their historical obligations of providing climate finance from their own means and sources.

In the final hours of negotiation, concerted pressure from the most vulnerable developing countries led to the adoption of an NCQG, but with differing interpretations and narratives:

First: It called on all actors to work together to enable scaling up climate finance from all public and private sources to at least USD 1.3 trillion per year by 2035. The decision recognized the challenges of global investment and emphasized extending and exploring a wide variety of sources beyond the governments. With this focus, it launched "Baku to Belém Roadmap" to explore how the USD 1.3 trillion could be reached, albeit with limited further detail.

Second: It decided, as an extension of the USD 100 billion goal, and with developed countries taking the lead, mobilizing at least USD 300 billion per year by 2035 for developing countries' climate action (both adaptation and mitigation) from a from a wide variety of sources, public and private, bilateral and multilateral, including alternative sources. It was also decided to conduct a review of this newly agreed finance goal by 2030.

The associated text with the above decisions called on Parties to recognize the voluntary intention of the Parties to count all climate-related outflows and climate-related finance mobilized by multilateral development banks toward achievement of the goal.

Critiques

1. Indeed, COP 29 succeeded in setting a quantum of climate finance in two different scale — annually USD 300 billion and USD 1.3 trillion by 2035 — however, with a clear deviance from the justice-based narrative of climate finance that was focusing on grant-based, new and additional (i.e., in addition to the existing ODA commitments), and obligatory contributions from developed countries. COP 29 decisions encouraged voluntary contributions from the developing countries (while all the contributions are already voluntary), recognized all climate-related finance (including loans and grants— public and private) towards fulfilling NCQG targets, and provided legitimacy and enormous business opportunities for the MDBs to profit from the climate crisis.

2. NCQG was just not setting a 'quantitative target', it's more about setting its 'qualitative standard' with a clear definition of climate finance and ensuring that they are grants- based, predominantly from public sources, and are channeled through the UNFCCC funding mechanisms. With no definition of climate finance, there has been a risk of double counting, mixing climate finance with ODA and financing non-climate projects with high cost loans and other financing instruments. There was an extensive debate over the financial instruments and channels used under the climate finance regime. With a poor accounting system and no punitive measures for non compliance, climate finances have always been way apart from their potential outcomes.

3. Introduction of 'layered financing' would ease pressure on the developed countries to provide obligatory finance from the public sources, while creating spaces for the private capital and MDBs loan investment

The NCQG deal signals a loan-heavy climate finance regime. This is a sheer injustice and risks deepening the crisis by intensifying both climate and debt risks of vulnerable countries. While this needs to change, leveraging the innovative mechanisms and exploring their own capacities for financing is now more urgent than ever for these countries

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sidestepping the designated funding mechanisms already established under the UNFCCC. There are also concerns over geopolitical preference/ interest in financing, high costs of capital, diseconomies of scale, credit ratings, etc. that would reinforce "resource colonialism" as remarked by Cuba.

4. Evidently, the developed country group prefers MDBs and other international financing institutions to channel climate funds, which often are loans and illicit financing instruments packaged to accumulate profit and repatriate them to the investing organizations and countries— a deep-rooted colonial system in the entire financing ecosystem. According to Zylinski, S. (2024), the climate financing with the neo-colonial financing model is not benefiting the climate-vulnerable countries, rather has increased their indebtedness by entrapping them in the vicious debt cycle.

5. The COP 29 decision emphasizes a systemic reform of the MDBs with a new vision, appropriate operational model, channels and instruments that are fit for the purpose of adequately addressing the global climate emergency. However, instead of reforming their colonial systems, MDBs are forcing the climate vulnerable countries and the LDCs to reform national financing systems and policies to accommodate private finances by ensuring the so- called de-risking measures.

MITIGATION

COP 29 was expected to deliver an ambitious political commitment on mitigation efforts by requiring the Parties to commit to the implementation of the Global Stocktake (GST) outcome, with a focus on transitioning away from fossil fuels. The COP was also deliver expected to strong commitment to making the third round of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC 3.0) ambitious and aligned with the 1.5 degrees Celcius goal.

However, the outcome at COP 29 on the mitigation agenda is utterly disappointing, marked by minimal discussion, soft language and no engagement with crucial matters like transitioning away from fossil fuels.

While the Mitigation Work Programme (MWP), established at COP 27 in 2022, was supposed to advance discussion on the ways and the timeline of transitioning away from fossil fuels, the COP 29 decision text did not even mention 'transition away'.

The COP 29 also failed to provide any clear directive for the NDCs for reaching net-zero emission by 2050 through a process of gradual phasing-out from the fossil fuel-based power generation. Surprisingly, the decision text completely ignored the issue by making no mention or reference to NDC-3, beyond a preambular acknowledgment of the nationally determined nature of the NDCs.

Critiques

1. The procedural language of COP 29 decision "welcomes" the progress of the implementation of MWP in 2023–2024". It notes that the key findings of the Work Programme report e.g., leveraging opportunities, overcoming barriers and implementing the actionable solutions, etc. will remain voluntary.

2. The decision text on Sharm el-Sheikh mitigation ambition and implementation of the MWP has been, almost entirely, around the procedures of the future works of the Work Programme. Paragraph 186 of the decision 1/CMA.5 "invites … relevant Work Programmes" to integrate "relevant outcomes" of the stocktake into their future work, "in line with their mandates", making the discussion of transitioning away highly relevant under MWP at COP29.

   Against the expectation on implementing transitioning away from fossil fuels, the MWP discussion at COP29 failed to even bring this issue to the negotiation table.

3. While the COP 29 missed a critical opportunity to deliver high-level messages regarding the NDC updating, it also sidestepped the MWP's responsibility to address the urgency of ambitious mitigation actions in this crucial decade.

   The policy response and efforts of emission reduction are highly inconsistent and far short of the requirements to comply with the 1.5 degrees Celsius goal. The UNFCCC's latest Synthesis Report on the NDCs submitted by the 195 Parties with 153 new or updated NDCs submitted as on 9 September 2024 shows an increase of emissions by 10.6 percent by 2030, compared to the 2010 levels. The submitted NDCs covered 95 percent of total global GHGs emissions in 2019, and their full implementation could put the world on the track for around 2.5 degrees Celsius of warming by the end of the century (UNFCCC, 2024f).

4. Limiting global average warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius essentially requires fast and fair phasing-out from fossil fuels, doubling investment in

renewable energy expansion, and not relying on the private sector green-wash propaganda and technology buzz of 'quick fixing' of global warming with some unproven "false solutions" like Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS), carbon-dioxide removal (CDR) from the air, bioenergy with CCS, ocean fertilization, solar radiation modification or solar geoengineering.

ARTICLE 6 OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT

Article 6 of the Paris Agreement establishes a carbon trading mechanism and includes three key sub-articles: 6.2, 6.4 and 6.8, which introduces two modalities namely, market-based mechanism and non-market approaches (NMA).

Article 6.2 provides a framework and guidance for the Parties to voluntarily engage in the 'cooperative approaches' in emission reduction and use Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes (ITMOs) towards NDCs implementation in a transparent and accountable manner, while also ensuring environmental integrity and promoting sustainable development.

Article 6.4 establishes a mechanism of a centralized carbon market, under the authority and guidance of the CMA and administered by the Article 6.4 Supervisory Body. The Article 6.4 mechanism includes four specific aims: a) to promote GHGs emission reduction while fostering sustainable development; (b) to incentivize emission reduction efforts through facilitating public and private interventions to be authorized by the Parties, (c) to contribute to the emission reduction actions in the host Party in a manner that the mitigation actions benefit the host Party and their outcomes can also be used by another Party; and (d) to deliver an overall mitigation in global emissions (OMGE).

Article 6.8 decides to establish non-market approaches (NMAs) to assist implementation of the NDCs in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication. Article 6.9 requires the Parties to develop a Framework for implementing non-market approaches in a coordinated and effective manner.

While the negotiation on the non-market approaches (Article 6.8, Article 6.9) progressed to some extent with the proposal of establishing a Forum and a Work Programme for the implementation of NMAs, however negotiation on 'Cooperative Approaches' and 'Mechanism' respectively under Article 6.2 and Article 6.4 went through an intense debate until COP 28 with many unresolved issues around its operation, including authorization, transparency, social and environmental safeguarding, etc.

Around Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, COP 29 made some commendable progress. Specifically:

1. The COP 29 makes the Paris Agreement Crediting Mechanism (PACM) operational by finalizing the rules of authorization and registration of the ITMOs to ensure transparency of carbon trading under Article 6.4. Now, it is the task of the Supervisory Body and the secretariat to develop or approve methodologies that will be used to register and develop Paris-aligned carbon projects.

2. The PACM establishes a rigorous environmental and human rights safeguarding, requiring projects to gain clear and informed consent from Indigenous Peoples before moving forward. It also establishes formal procedures through which affected stakeholders may lodge complaints or challenge decisions related to the project.

3. Regarding country-to-country trading under Article 6.2, the COP provides clarity on the authorization of the trade of carbon credits, rules

The RMP package for the Article 6 has potential risks of serious leakages. Without sealing them, the carbon trading will drain out the collective mitigation efforts, and may end up with zero sum game. Capacity building support is urgent for the LDCs, SIDS and developing countries to reap benefit from the carbon markets.

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of corresponding adjustment and registering them to avoid double-counting. It also provides a clear decision on changes in authorization to avoid double- counting and establishes a centralized accounting and reporting platform serving as a public repository. This will allow the stakeholders to access to the participating Party's statements and/or copies of authorization, including any changes or updates made to their authorization. There is now reassurance that environmental integrity will be ensured up front through technical reviews in a transparent process.

4. The decision text also provides a directive on addressing the inconsistencies in accounting and reporting to make the trades transparent and reliable. This also provides that the special circumstances of the LDCs and SIDS will be considered and capacity building measures will be implemented towards enabling the developing countries to benefit from the cooperative approach.

5. On Article 6.8, Parties at COP 29 welcomes the "expedited and simple assessment" on the first phase (2023-2024) outcomes of the NMA Work Programme and provides recommendations on its second phase to be implemented during 2025-2026. The COP emphasizes updating web-based platform to enable the Parties to register individual NMAs on the web-based platform. Until COP 29, no NMAs were recorded though there were 78 national focal points designated for the NMAs.

6. COP 29 invites Parties to demonstrate examples of non-market approaches (NMAs) by documenting/registering them on the NMA Platform. It also requests submissions outlining; a) the obstacles to utilizing the platform and possible ways to overcome them; b) experiences in engaging with the platform and the difficulties faced in operationalizing the platform; c) insights on how NMAs may facilitate the implementation of a Party's NDC.

Critiques

The COP 29 did manage to fully operationalize the Article 6 by resolving the issues with the rules, modalities and procedues (RMP). However, the outcome is accompanied by a number of serious issues threatening the ultimate result of the Article 6 operation.

1. The finalized rules on Article 6.2 seriously lack accountability. The text includes no indication of actions against any "inconsistencies". There is no guidance on what will happen if countries fail to abide by the rules. Rationally, any "inconsistencies", or "non-compliance" with carbon credit deals, need to be addressed. But with neither a deadline to take action nor any clear indication of penalties, countries won't be incentivized towards a fair play. Also, though it seems to be a transparent alternative system, carbon market registry arrangements, comprising a Party registry and a mechanism registry, might make the process lengthy and cumbersome, threatening transparency in reality.

2. The decision provides flexibility to developing countries by not making it mandatory for them to develop their own registries, leaving questions around about how quickly and how effectively the new system will be established.

3. The RMP for Article 6 is also flawed by a number of critical issues. The decision allows afforestation and reforestation projects from the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) to enter the Paris Agreement Crediting Mechanism (PACM), subject to meeting rules on removals.

Box 1: Paris Agreement Crediting Mechanism (PACM)

The Paris Agreement Crediting Mechanism (PACM) is a voluntary market-based tool that enables countries to trade emission reduction and removal credits. Through this mechanism, one country's verified emissions cuts can be transferred and counted towards another country's climate commitments under its NDC. A Supervisory Body is tasked to govern the PACM.

The main procedural elements and key standards on methodologies and removals are in place but detailed standards, procedures, guidelines, and methodologies are still under development and in the process of resolving crunch issues, creating a challenge for new project development.

Full implementation of the PACM will require establishment of clear rules, robust transparency and accountability in emissions reductions tracking, capacity building of the developing countries, and prioritization of equity and environmental integrity under direct guidance of the Supervisory Body.

Therefore, CDM projects will find an easy path towards issuing credits under the Article 6.4 mechanism, for emission reductions achieved between 2021 and 2025. Without any additionality checks, other than a somewhat symbolic approval by their host country, the low-quality carbon credit from the lofty CDM projects might not be useful in emission reduction in real terms.

4. The decision text provides no durability standard on the emission removals. A recent study published at the Nature Communications reveals that a CO_2 storage period of less than 1,000 years is insufficient for neutralizing emissions (Brunner, C. et al., 2024). The absence of any strict science-based rule on eligibility standards for emissions removal projects risks generating low-quality credits, ultimately leading to worsening of the global warming.

5. The decision text requests the Supervisory Body to consider the Sustainable Development Tool to make sure that the carbon offsetting projects under PACM ensure environmental and social safeguards. However, the tool also includes loopholes. For instance, it requires an assessment to identify risks and impacts to avoid potential harm where possible. And, in the case of unavoidable risks, the tool instructs participants to minimize environmental and social impacts as much as possible. However, it gives no instruction on what to do if the negative impact is significant, leaving space for the violation of human rights by the PACM projects.

Therefore, while the finalization of Article 6 rules, modalities, and procedures (RMP) is being labelled as a 'breakthrough' and celebrated as a success of the COP 29 presidency, the civil society organizations termed this as "dangerous rules on carbon markets". Carbon markets are markets for permits to pollute – solely conceived and set up to benefit polluters by allowing them to avoid or delay real action. In a world that needs to reduce emissions to zero as fast as possible everywhere, there is no justification for pollution trading and relying on the risky geoengineering technologies.

Many developing countries have prepared their respective National Adaptation Plan (NAP) however, a dedicated fund is yet to be available for their implementation. Unfortunately, the UNFCCC negotiation process has downgraded the urgency of NAP implementation.

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ADAPTATION

The post-Paris negotiation on adaptation primarily centered around conceptualizing the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) and developing a set of indicators to measure adaptation outcomes to be matched with the objectives of GGA. To better understand, conceptualize and ultimately achieve this goal, COP 26 in Glasgow in 2021 launched the two-year Glasgow–Sharm el-Sheikh work programme (GlaSS).

The GlaSS was tasked with developing an implementable framework, along with the targets for the GGA. The submission of framework at COP 28 in Dubai in 2023 led to establishment of another two-year UAE–Belém work programme, which was mandated to develop indicators for measuring progress towards achieving the targets outlined in the framework.

Leaving aside the technicalities of GGA indicator development, COP 29 was expected to deliver a strong political commitment on minimizing adaptation gap as underscored by the GST-1 outcome. This includes mobilizing means of implementation, especially finance for the implementation of NAPs. Contrary to the expectations, the COP concludes with progress of several matters of adaptation agenda, such as:

1. The COP 29 confirms finalizing a list with no more than 100 indicators at COP 30 in Belem in 2025. It also directs the UAE-Belem Work

Programme to include qualitative, quantitative, input, output, outcome, impact and process indicators. In regards to inclusivity and equity, the process of indicators development is instructed to capture information on a diverse issues, such as, social inclusion, Indigenous Peoples, participatory processes, human rights, gender equality, migrants, children and young people, and persons with disabilities. The decision emphasizes inclusion of traditional knowledge, knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local knowledge systems in the work under the UAE– Belém Work Programme.

2. COP 29 specifies that the adaptation indicators should enable aggregation of the data to inform the Global Stocktake (GST) framework. It further notes that the application of these indicators in tracking adaptation progress shall be universal in scope, encompassing all Parties, including Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

3. It further decides to launch the Baku Adaptation Roadmap to facilitate implementation of the elements considered under the UAE framework and requests the subsidiary bodies to develop modalities for work under the Roadmap.

4. COP 29 also establishes the Baku high- level dialogue on adaptation, mandated to identifying ways of enhancing the implementation of the UAE framework.

5. Additionally, it decides to undertake the review of the UAE framework after the second global stocktake, which is due in 2030.

6. Parties at COP 29 adopts the Baku Workplan and decides to renew the mandate of the Facilitative Working Group (FWG) under the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP). The decision recognizes the FWG's contributions to enhancing cooperation between Parties, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities, which is a significant stride toward strengthening participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in climate governance

Critiques

1. Though the COP 29 outcomes reflect procedural progress towards operationalizing the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) with a robust set of indicators, they contain tricky loopholes having negative implications for the future of adaptation efforts.

2. The COP29 directs the UAE–Belém Work Programme to include, where applicable, inter alia, "quantitative and qualitative indicators for enabling factors for the implementation of adaptation action, including means of implementation". While the demand was setting indicators on 'means of implementation', especially finance, the decision texts also include "enabling factors", such as, governance, transparency, anti-corruption, etc. Functionally, it's a mix of developing countries' MOI demand and developed countries' enabling factors demand. The "tricky text mix" may subject developing countries' to a new set of compliances for accessing the adaptation finance.

3. Additionally, stress has been given on transformational adaptation. With a definition of transformational adaptation still under progress, the decision may create potential barrier for developing countries to access adaptation finance.

4. With regard to NAP implementation, the COP29 fails to deliver any decision other than a final draft negotiating text deferring the discussion to SB 62 in June 2025 in Bonn, for recommending a draft decision for consideration and adoption at COP30 in November 2025.

In aggregate, instead of making advancement with respect to placing adaptation planning on implementation track, the COP29 outcome on adaptation has rather undermined the need for means of implementation by incorporating tricky texts.

LOSS AND DAMAGE

The Loss and Damage did not get much light at COP 29 as the debates around the agenda had been 'solved' with the establishment of an L&D-dedicated Fund at COP 27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt and its operationalization at COP 28 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

That said, Parties at COP 29 were expected to commit new and additional funding to the FRLD (Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage) and ensure its quickest operationalization, encompassing both economic and non-economic loss and damage. For the sake of steady and predictable financing for addressing Loss and Damages, a separate "window" within the NCQG also was expected to be agreed upon at COP 29.

However, the pledges made to the Fund at COP 28 and afterwards— USD 788.68 million in total, were in the scale way short compared to the estimated needs of USD 395 billion (with a range of USD 128-937 billion) in 2025 for addressing economic damages only in the developing countries.

What's more, replicating the business-as-usual UNFCCC practice of arbitrary pledging and mobilizing fund from the so called 'variety of sources', bypassing the Convention's CBDR&RC principle has become another major concern of L&D financing debate.

Apart from the L&D financing, there were several other issues for discussion at COP 29, such as: 1) providing guidance on the implementation progress of the second five-year rolling work plan of the WIM's Executive Committee (ExCom), which was established at COP 22 and set to be reviewed at COP 29 (SB 61); 2) providing guidance on the joint annual report of the WIM ExCom and the Santiago Network.

They both were supposed to report their work annually to the respective authorities. However, at CMA 4 (COP 27) they both were asked to prepare a joint annual report to COP and CMA, in conjunction with the discussions on the 2024 review of the WIM. Additionally, it was decided that the annual reports of the ExCom and Santiago Network would be considered jointly.

With the above agenda framing, the L&D negotiations at COP 29 were confined to several procedural discussions and decisions. Most importantly, COP 29:

1. Urges the Parties to deliver their pledges as soon as possible, and requests the FRLD Board to engage with the relevant Parties to ensure delivery of the pledges, and thereby increase the predictability of resources for the Fund.
2. Welcomes the progress in implementation of the WIM ExCom's five-year rolling work plan and requests the SBs to review the implementation of the work plan at SB 62.
3. Also welcomes the Advisory Board established at COP 27 in 2022 and interim Secretariat of the Santiago Network at the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), and adopts rules of procedure to continue their work.
4. Requests the SBs to consider the joint annual report of the WIM ExCom and Santiago Network at SB 62, with a view to producing draft decision text and recommendation for consideration at COP 30 in November 2025.

Critiques

1. On the progress of the WIM ExCom's five-year rolling work plan, Parties expressed disappointment with the WIM's performance and termed it a "low-ambition and insufficient" mechanism. Developing countries lamented the WIM's outputs being merely an expert-driven academic exercise and suggested to follow a bottom-up approach by involving practitioners, local communities, and Indigenous Peoples in the expert group's discussions. They also wanted the WIM to produce annual reports on loss and damage needs and gaps.
2. Parties raised concerns about the coordination gap among the WIM, the Santiago Network, and the FRLD and suggested to establish a mechanism for increased collaboration to potentially engage them to produce "global state report of loss and damage".
3. On the common annual reporting of WIM ExCom and Santiago Network, the developing countries questioned about the governance of the WIM and the Network, as these two are established under two different governance mechanisms.

The operationalization of Loss and Damage finance remains delayed, and current pledges are far below to meet urgent needs. The FRLD must have substantial, predictable, and grant-based resources, separate from adaptation finance, and ensure timely disbursement through simplified, direct access for vulnerable countries. Furthermore, the NCQG should include a specific sub-target for loss and damage financing to ensure predictability and adequacy of support.

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Developed country group preferred WIM to be governed by the CMA alone, while G-77+China urged for WIM's governance under both the COP and CMA. Keeping the debate unresolved, Parties agreed to continue the practice of inserting a footnote specifying that decisions of joint reporting and its submission to both the governing bodies do not prejudge the outcome of discussions on governance.

FURTHER GUIDANCE ON NDC FEATURES

COP 24 (CMA 1) in 2018 decided to discuss further guidance on the features of NDCs at COP 29 in 2024 to provide recommendations for the development of next round of NDCs due in 2025. However, Parties in the co-chair's contact group meeting at COP 29 were indecisive about what would be the additional NDC features required for the next NDCs, therefore, couldn't agree on the guidance.

Though some parties/groups, for instance AOSIS, the Environmental Integrity Group-EIG, asked for additional features with the argument of aligning them with the 1.5-degrees Celsius goal, the others e.g. LMDCs (Like Minded Developing Countries) and Arab Group denied specifying additional features, as NDCs are nationally determined.

With those dilemmas, Parties could not agree whether they should conclude discussions on this agenda item, or defer the discussion to the next SBI to inform the 2025 NDCs.

PERIODIC REVIEW OF THE LONG TERM GLOBAL GOAL UNDER THE CONVENTION

The Cancun Agreement, established at COP 16 in 2010, decided to agree on a long-term global goal (LTGG) to reduce GHG emissions so as to limit global average warming below 2 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels. The Agreement also recognized the need to consider "strengthening the long-term global goal on the basis of the best available scientific knowledge … pursuant to limit global average temperature rise to 1.5°C" (UNFCCC, 2011).

The Agreement also established a process to periodically review (at least every 7 years) the LTGG to inform the COP, which comprised:

1. The adequacy of the long-term global goal in the light of the ultimate objective of the Convention; and,
2. Overall progress toward achieving the long-term global goal, including a consideration of the implementation of the commitments under the Convention. (Decision 1/CP.16, paragraphs 138-140):

Within this purview, the COP 16 established a structured expert dialogue (SED) to support the review and to ensure scientific integrity through a focused exchange of views, information and ideas.

The outcome of the first review during 2013-2015 was the key to make the Parties agree to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, while also pursuing efforts to limit the increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The second periodic review of LTGG concluded in 2022.

Several developed country Parties at COP 29 termed the LTGG redundant to the GST, while the LDCs and other country groups supported continuation of LTGG and the periodic reviews. With no decision on LTGG and its review, COP 29 decides to continue this discussion at COP 30.

GENDER

The gender discussions at COP 29 revolves around four key issues: a) reviewing the implementation of enhanced Lima Work Programme on gender, b) an intermediate review of the Gender Action Plan (GAP) as decided at COP 27 in 2022, c) reviewing the 2024 Secretariat Report on gender composition in the UNFCCC process (constitutional bodies) and delegations, and d) synthesis report on gender composition and approach in the implementation of climate-specific policies, plans, strategies, and actions.

Earlier, on gender composition, COP 26 in particular, requested the Secretariat to explore ways of automating the analysis of data disaggregated by sex, particularly on speaking times at the UNFCCC meetings. The COP also requested the secretariat to strengthen the annual report with the data-set on gender composition, and report this in the SBs.

On gender responsiveness in the climate-specific planning, COP 27 in 2022 adopted amendments to the (GAP) and agreed an intermediate review of its implementation.

With the above agenda framing, Parties at COP 29 negotiated: a) a timeframe and scope of the consecutive Work Programme b) a reframed linguistic narrative on gender diversity, human rights-based approach and, c) providing means of implementation (MoI). Some Parties urged the Work Programme to address women in all their diversity, intersectionality, while framing gender rights under the national and international obligation of human rights and violence against women. However there were several others who opposed these. They specifically mentioned that the issues such as "women in all their diversity" and "intersectionality' are not related to climate.

Leaving the controversies around gender diversity, some Parties took a softer approach, for instance, inclusion of Indigenous Peoples, local communities and MoI. Several parties expressed dissatisfaction for imbalanced gender composition and representation in the negotiations, while also debating on whether this should be referenced in the Work Programme or not. Specifically:

1. The COP 29 decides extension of Lima Work Programme on Gender for another 10 years, and a review of its implementation during SBI 70 (June 2029) to SBI 71 (November 2029) and providing recommendations for consideration at COP 34 (November 2029).

2. On translating the Lima Work Programme into national actions, COP 29 emphasizes the urgency of scaled-up support for developing countries to implement and, where applicable, develop Gender Action Plans GAPs consistent with relevant provisions of the Convention. Given the context, the COP requests the SBI 62 to initiate the process of developing a new GAP and provide guidance and recommendation for consideration by COP 30 in 2025.

3. On gender mainstreaming, the COP encourages the Parties and relevant public and private entities to support capacity building of the grassroots women's organizations, Indigenous Peoples and local communities with a view to facilitating their simplified access to climate finance.

4. On balanced gender representation in the UNFCCC constituencies, meetings and conferences, the COP requested the Secretariat to maintain the position of senior gender focal point to:

    - Support and monitor the implementation of the Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender and any subsequent GAP;
    - Prepare an annual gender composition report and a biennial synthesis report on the progress in integrating a gender perspective into constituted body processes;
    - Provide capacity-building support to the constituted bodies and Secretariat staff in integrating a gender perspective into their respective areas of work in collaboration with relevant organizations;
    - Facilitate support for building and strengthening the skills and capacities of national gender and climate change focal points; and,
    - Support the attendance of national gender and climate change focal points at the UNFCCC mandated meetings, upon request and subject to available resources.

5. On gender segregated data collection, COP encourages the UN entities to support Parties in applying the best available science to collect and analyse data sets, including on the impacts of extreme weather and slow onset events. It also encourages mainstreaming gender- and age-disaggregated data in their existing policies, enabling mechanisms and programmes across all levels of governance.

The Nexus between gender equality, with its intersectionality, and climate change remained unaddressed at the Baku conference. It is crucial for the countries to address this in the new Gender Action Plan to be adopted at Belem conference. The new GAP must mark an era of gender-responsive climate actions with adequate MOI in support of this.

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JUST TRANSITION

The concept of just transition cuts across several issues/agenda items, such as, implementation of response measures and development of NDCs and Long-Tern Low Emission Development Strategies LT-LEDS. The concept is broadly defined as ensuring that no one is left behind or pushed behind in the transition to low-carbon and environmentally sustainable economies and societies. Taking into account the imperatives of a just transition, many of the Parties incorporated just transition aspects into their NDCs and NAPs.

A UNFCCC-KCI [Katowice Committee of Experts on the Impacts of the Implementation of Response Measures] report in 2025 (UNFCCC, 2025) identified 44 NDCs explicitly referencing to just transition, which represent 26 percent of all NDCs submitted by the Parties by 2023. It jumped from 17 percent (33 NDCs covering 59 countries) in 2022 to 23 percent (45 NDCs covering 71 countries) in 2023 (Adow et al., 2023). On the other hand, 56 percent of long-term strategies (LT-LEDS) also included references to just transition. These numbers must grow further to ensure progress toward an equitable green transition across all nations and sectors (ibid).

Transition to green energy is no longer optional; it is an imperative. Attaining the goal of transitioning to green energy requires substantial financial and technical support, and the need for support is felt differently across regions, especially in developing and least developed countries. Pro-people global political commitment, backed by adequate technical and financial support, can help the developing and least-developed countries formulate and implement strategies to harness the net benefits of green transition while addressing the negative impacts of climate change. We must steer a transition to a just and equitable outcome

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To facilitate further integration of just transition into national climate actions, and to support their implementation, CMA 4 (i.e., COP 27) in 2022 established a Work Programme on the pathways of just transition (JTWP). It was decided that the JTWP would be guided by the SBIs and through a joint contact group to be convened at the SBI 60 in June 2024 and thenceforth. CMA 4 also decided to convene an annual high-level ministerial round table on just transition at the beginning of CMA 5 in 2023. The JTWP is guided to focus on: a) energy, socio-economic, workforce, and other dimensions, b) nationally defined development priorities as the basis of discussion, c) social protection measures to mitigate potential impacts associated with the transition (UNFCCC, 2023).

Until May, 2025, the Work Programme organized three stakeholder dialogues as well as two high-level ministerial round tables with very little progress in deciding the ambition, scope, issues of MoI. The Contact Group discussion under the SBs and later under the CMA Presidency at COP 29/ CMA 6 also struggled dealing with the conflicting issues, which include: a) reflecting on mitigation ambition and establishing a link between just transition and the 1.5 degrees Celsius goal, b) recognizing socio-economic opportunities for transitioning away from fossil fuels, c) integrating the importance of education and skills development for decent jobs and wages, d) ensuring labor rights and human rights, e) ensuring MoI for equitable just transition and, f) integrating unilateral trade measures to foster the scope of just transition.

Developing country group, in general, raised the need for skills development, provide finances and MoI for just transition. Several developed countries proposed integration of labor rights, human rights and unilateral trade measures, which were rejected by the LDCs and the LMDCs. They also opposed recognizing socio-economic opportunities for transitioning away from fossil fuels.

With those disagreements, several country groups, namely AOSIS, the EIG, the EU and African Group supported forwarding the Co-Chairs' draft text to the CMA for further deliberations, and others. Contrary to this, the developing countries, LMDCs in particular, blocked this attempt stating that the decision text did not incorporate their views on many issues. The SBI forwarded the unagreed draft to the CMA decision.

Box 2: Unilateral Trade Measures

Unilateral Trade Measures are actions taken by a single country (or a bloc like the EU) to regulate trade in ways that support its domestic climate or environmental goals. In the context of just transition, these measures often aim to prevent carbon leakage (relocating industries to countries with lax environmental laws), protect domestic industries and jobs during decarbonization, enforce environmental or labor standards on imported goods. These measures work by measuring emissions or sustainability standards of imported products, comparing them with domestic benchmarks, applying a tax, tariff, or restriction if the imports don't meet the standards, offering exemptions to minimize inequity.

Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) of the EU, which applies a carbon price on imports of carbon-intensive goods (e.g., RMG, steel, cement) from countries with less stringent climate regulations; deforestation-free import regulations of the EU which bans imports of products linked to deforestation unless producers can prove compliance are examples of such measures.

These measures have the potential to promote global climate ambition by incentivizing cleaner production, however, these also risk turning into disguised forms of economic protectionism, becoming unfair to developing countries that lack the resources to decarbonize quickly.

In the closing plenary, the Presidency reported no consensus on JTWP, and proposed to continue the discussion at SB 62 with a view to forwarding a draft decision for adoption by COP 30/CMA 7 in 2025

HUMAN RIGHTS

The first formal acknowledgment of human rights in the COP proceedings came with the Cancun Agreement (adopted at COP 16 in 2010). The Agreement recognized the need for climate actions that "fully respect human rights," marking a key moment for communities in the Global South facing the worst impacts of climate change.

Building on the UNFCCC's COP decisions as well as the state obligations of defending human rights, the UN Human Rights Council, by its Resolution 48/14, established a Special Rapporteur to "study and identify how the adverse effects of climate change, including sudden and slow-onset disasters, affect the full and effective enjoyment of human rights. The Special Rapporteur was also tasked with making recommendations to the Council on how to address and prevent these adverse effects" (UN, 2021).

However, human rights considerations have largely remained rhetorical, with minimal progress in creating enforceable mechanisms to hold the Parties accountable. Perceived as a cross-cutting issue of mitigation and adaptation actions, the negotiation on human rights protection never gained a primacy in the COP process. With this policy alienation;

The lack of political attention and under-delivery has made human rights concerns against climate risks ever more critical. Parties must act on immediately to define a formal human rights purpose of their climate deals.

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1. COP29 asks the Supervisory Body to consider international environmental agreements when working on the Article 6.4 mechanisms, including methodologies, activities involving removals, and the sustainable development tool as proposed by the 14th meeting of the Article 6.4 Supervisory Body (SBM 014) (UNFCCC, 2024h). This includes methodology and activities of carbon removal under Article 6.4, also implies avoidance of the negative environmental and social impacts and respecting human rights and the rights of the Indigenous Peoples (UNFCCC, 2024i).
2. COP 29 decides that the final outcome of the UAE–Belém Work

Programme should include indicators that capture information pertaining to, inter alia, social inclusion, Indigenous Peoples, participatory processes, human rights, gender equality, migrants, children and young people, and persons with disabilities (UNFCCC, 2024e).

Critiques

1. Though decisions regarding the new climate finance goal mention the inclusion of vulnerable communities and groups in climate finance efforts, they lack any explicit mention of human rights.

MATTERS RELATING TO ACTION FOR CLIMATE EMPOWERMENT (ACE)

Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) seeks to operationalize Article 6 of the UNFCCC (education, training and public awareness) and Article 12 of the Paris Agreement. ACE focuses on six priority areas aimed at promoting sustainable, low-emissions lifestyles, attitudes, and behavior. The priority areas are: climate change education, public awareness, training, public participation, public access to information, and international cooperation on these issues.

The first-ever ACE-dedicated decision was adopted at COP 26 in 2021 wherein the Parties established the 10-year Glasgow Work Programme to further accelerate the implementation of ACE based- on its four priority areas. The Work Programme was further refined in a four-year action plan, which was endorsed at COP 27 in 2022 (UNFCCC, 2023). However, the action plan was not underpinned by any decision on mobilizing the financial and technological means for implementing it. Later, SBI 60 requested the secretariat to address the financial needs and gaps associated with implementing ACE at COP 29 (UNFCCC, 2024b).

After rounds of negotiations, without an agreed text, an ACE decision was published to approve the 2023 and 2024 summary reports on ACE Action Plan, with very light language on financial support for ACE implementation (UNFCCC, 2024c).

Parties discussed the text on past and future events, submissions, and reports, as well as ways to empower everyone to take part in climate action and include ACE elements in policy-making.

A key disagreement was about which elements should be included in the submissions for the midterm review of the ACE Work Programme. Given the context, the SBI61/COP29:

1. Requests the Secretariat to support the Presidency of COP 30 for organizing an ACE in-session event at SB 63 in November 2025;
2. Calls and invites submissions on ACE implementation relevant to the upcoming mid-term review at SB 64 in June 2026 (UNFCCC, 2024d).

BIODIVERSITY

The UAE dialogue, agreed at COP 28 in 2023, underscores the importance of conserving, protecting, and restoring ecosystems, including forests and marine environments, as a means to achieve the Paris Agreement's temperature goals.

The UAE dialogue emphasized the role of biodiversity conservation in achieving climate objectives through natural carbon sinks and reservoirs. These provisions are aligned with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and aiming to halt and reverse biodiversity loss (UNFCCC, 2024j).

With regards to biodiversity conservation, COP 29 highlights the need for more support and investment, including funding, technology, and capacity-building, to stop deforestation and forest degradation by 2030. This support would focus on sustainable development and poverty reduction, in line with the Paris Agreement. Given the context COP 29;

1. Calls for results-based payments for actions that reduce emissions from deforestation and recognizes the role of forest conservation and management in developing countries.
2. Encourages alternative approaches, like joint efforts for mitigation and adaptation, and stresses the importance of rewarding non-carbon benefits (UNFCCC, 2024k).

Critiques

Despite being one of the key issues in climate negotiations, biodiversity conservation still lacks necessary attention from the policymakers, negotiators, relevant stakeholders.

DISPLACEMENT AND MIGRATION

It was first in 2007 at COP 13 that the Parties acknowledged climate change-induced displacement and migration as a consequence of increased disaster events and associated loss and damage.

This discussion led to the inclusion of a standalone paragraph (Para 14/f) on displacement and migration in the Cancun Adaptation Framework, adopted at COP 16 in 2010.

The Cancun COP also provided the policy space for further discussion on the measures for addressing climate-induced displacement and migration. However, a few developing countries considered 'displacement and migration' as one of the key consequences of loss and damage and, hence, preferred merging these issues under the SBI Work Programme on Loss and Damage. Eventually, at COP 18 in 2012, the two different agenda items were merged under a 'Work Programme on Loss and Damage' that made this critical issue overshadowed by the politics of L&Ds negotiation with no specific outcome of COP decision with regards to addressing climate change induced displacement and migration. Being a sidelined issue of adaptation and Loss and Damage negotiation;

1. The decisions regarding the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) of climate finance mention inclusion of and extension of climate finance benefits to the vulnerable communities and groups, including to the climate migrants and refugees (UNFCCC, 2024g).
2. The Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD), agreed at COP28 in 2023, continues to consider inclusion of "displacement, relocation and migration". It also recognizes displaced persons and migrants as beneficiaries of climate funding and encourages their participation in the design and implementation of supported activities (UNFCCC, 2024a).
3. The adaptation and just transition pathways also continue considering issues around displacement, relocation and migration. Developments of the GGA indicators are under the UAE-Belem Work Programme also guided to include displacement and migration.

Critiques

While the GGA text in Paragraph 21(d) mentions "migrants," and the NCQG text in paragraph 26 refers to "migrants and refugees," these inclusions are positive but partial. The failure to explicitly recognize climate change induced displacement and migration— the most immediate and severe consequence of climate risks— reflects a critical policy omission. Without this recognition, forcibly migrants populations risk being excluded from protection frameworks and equitable resource allocation, both within national systems and across borders.

While we are yet to frame a definition for the climate migrants, we are going to witness an additional exodus of millions in the coming years. We must respond immediately with global efforts under WIM, FRLD and other financing mechanisms. National efforts under NAPs must also be urgently supported to protect the rights of the climate migrants

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CONCLUSION

The COP 29 took place amid a situation when the world needed a firm political commitment on ambitious climate actions and means for implementing them. On the background of a massive shortfall of climate actions from what the world requires to stay on track towards achieving the climate goals, the COP results compromised decision on many issues crucial for climate justice.

Specifically, against the logical expectations with regard to finance, the Baku COP delivered very insignificant 'real' increase in the finance target. The NCQG decision not only compromised with its quality, also promoted the North-championed neo-classical financing instruments while easing the MDBs profiteering, disregarding the principles of justice.

Likewise, no real progress was achieved: a) in mobilizing supports for NAP implementation in the GGA discussion; b) in setting a political motion for ambitious mitigation efforts consistent with 1.5 degrees Celsius goal; c) in advancing discussion on the implementation of global stocktake outcomes and just transition. Also, there was no real progress with respect to the cross-cutting and other areas such as gender, human rights, biodiversity, etc.

The only successful outcome e.g., finalization of the rules, modalities and procedures (RMP) for the Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, is also marred with serious concerns of inconsistencies in carbon credit registration and risk of poor quality carbon removals.

Taken together, the COP29 outcomes reflect a 'political backsliding' in fulfilling commitments for climate actions, technically favoring the interests and strategies of the North at the cost of the miseries of the climate vulnerable countries and communities in the South.

The COP 29 is another failed attempt and missed opportunity to restore the world on track to achieve the climate goals. The renewed hope and aspiration have been shifted to the 30th session of the COP to fill in the void in commitments and actions and restore the momentum required to keep the 1.5 degrees Celsius goal alive.

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MIGRATION TO THE URBAN SLUMS: A TRADE-OFF BETWEEN CLIMATE RISK AVOIDANCE AND WELL-BEING

Tanje-Un-Jenat presents gender-focused evidences of how migration to the urban informal settlements in response to climate change-induced hazards results in additional and complex vulnerabilities to the migrants in an urban slum of Barisal.

BACKGROUND

Migration has been recognized and conceptualized as a potential adaptation strategy to the changing climate, especially following the influential Foresight report on the topic in 2011 (Foresight, U. K., 2011; Gemenne & Blocher, 2017) and an in-depth assessment of evidence by the IPCC (IPCC, 2014; IPCC, 2022). The conditions under which migration is used as adaptation to climate change risk are socially differentiated and contextually contingent (Szaboova, 2023).

Literally, climate-induced hazards propel migration when their accumulated effects reach a tipping point, seizing people's capacity to withstand and deal with the impacts with their limited resources. However, as evidenced in Bangladesh, it's just not the climate-induced hazards, the collective socio-economic implications and political-economy, poor governance and institutional infrastructure, inadequate DRR measures etc. force people to migrate form the climate-stress areas (place of origin) (Adnan, 2024).

Slums of the big cities are the most preferred destination of the climate-migrants in Bangladesh, for cheap accommodation and easy access to informal employment opportunities (Parvin & Shaw, 2011). While these slums are already operating beyond their carrying capacity and grappling with the lack of basic services, incidence of unplanned migration worsens system failure, rendering the impoverished climate migrants bound to fight with multiple crises.

Migrant women tend to be more vulnerable to the crises compared to men due to their disadvantaged position in societal structure, poor economic condition, distinct gender role, prevailing gender discrimination and limited access to and control over resources (Shams, 2019).

While research on migration-as-adaptation often focuses on who migrates and why (Szaboova, 2023), however, lacks sufficient evidence on the outcomes and long-term impacts of such migrations.This article portrays the outcome of migration to the urban informal settlements, i.e., slums, in Barisal district.

Based on the widely communicated narrative that tends to champion "migration" as "adaptation", the study explored both the adaptive and maladaptive elements and consequences that the migrants experienced while living in an urban slum of Barisal. The study provided a special focus on gender-based comparison.

STUDY AREA AND METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in an urban slum, named 'Bangabandhu Bastuhara Colony (BC)', in Barisal city— a south-central coastal area of Bangladesh. Located at the heart of Barisal city corporation and contiguous to the Kirtankhola river, the BC is an ideal representation of urban slums across the country, beset with all the challenges a typical informal settlement faces. BC encompasses an area of 270 decimals (10926.5 sq.km), accommodating a total of 1,722 households (Source: Household Survey by Christian Aid, 2023), a significant chunk of which are climate migrants.

The study utilized a mixed-method approach comprising a random questionnaire survey of 200 climate migrant families, 8 Focus Group Discussions, and 5 Key Informant Interviews. Only the families migrating to the Colony between 2000-2019 were considered for the study. Migration outcomes have been explained in the light of benefits enjoyed and challenges faced in the Colony.

STUDY FINDINGS

Profile of the Climate Migrant Families

The survey participants are principally from nine disaster-prone southern coastal districts of the country, with the highest chunks from Patuakhali, Barisal and Barguna. The families were forced to tidal inundation, and sea level rise.

Most of the climate migrant families in the Colony have 4 members and 2 earners. They rely heavily on livelihoods that are informal in nature. Females are most likely to be engaged in household services and daily waging, while males are mostly engaged with day labor, and driving auto rickshaw or van, etc.

A typical family has an average per capita monthly income amounting around BDT 3085, whereas the average per capita monthly expenditure is BDT 3021. Majority of the families live in rented houses, while a small portion has own house in the Colony.

Migration Outcomes: Benefits enjoyed and challenges suffered after migration

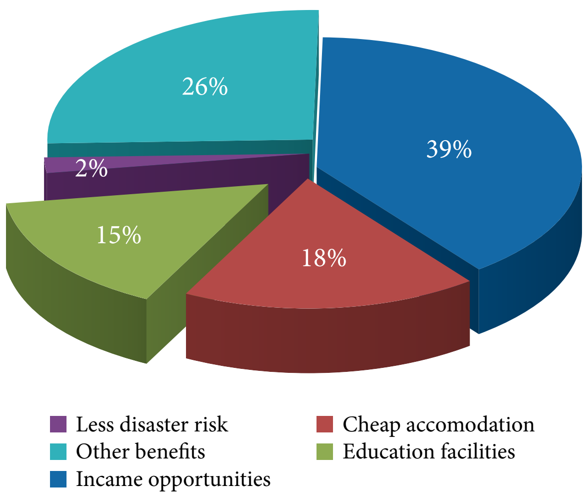
Migration to BC resulted in some crucial benefits to the families which eased their lives in this urban informal setting. The most crucial benefits are availability of livelihood opportunities and low cost of living, with respectively 96.5%, and 43% families enjoying the benefits (Figure 1).

Besides, moving into the slum has also benefitted the migrants with favorable environment for children's education (reported by 35.5 percent of families), low risk of natural hazard (mentioned by 6.0 percent), and other benefits (e.g., good connectivity, easy access to healthcare facilities, etc.) (reported by 64.0 percent). All these benefits together have contributed to the wellbeing of the migrants, which justifies the argument that promotes migration as an adaptation option to the impacts of climate change.

Challenges Encountered by Climate migrants in BC

While migration to the Colony has blessed the migrants with a number of benefits, it has also

Figure 1: Benefits Enjoyed By Climate Migrants in BC



exposed them to multifarious challenges, e.g., WASH issues, poor housing, health issues, weak governance, gender-based violence (GBV), insecurity, etc., significantly undermining their well-being.

Water insecurity has consistently been a major threat in the BC. Families mostly rely on communal water supply facilities and some privately-owned tube wells for drinking water, with communal sources often being contaminated and odorous, and the majority of tube wells remaining untested for arsenic. For other water-demanding activities— bathing, washing clothes, cooking, etc., they depend on Kirtankhola river where all sorts of wastes, including fecal and hospital wastes, are disposed.

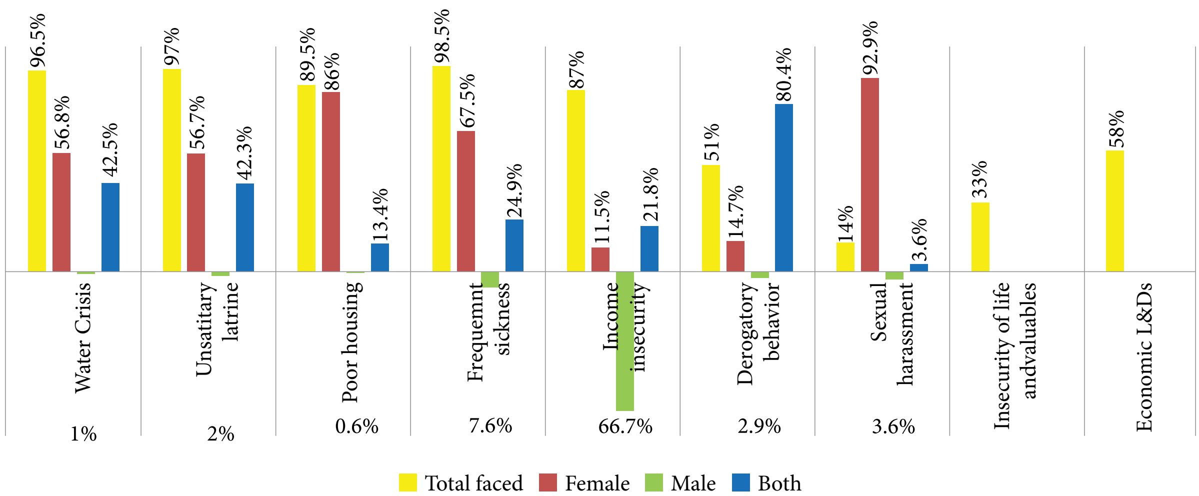
Therefore, water from all of these sources is unsafe for use without further treatment. On top of these, supply water is accessible only twice a day, requiring the water collectors, who are generally the females, to wait in the queue for a long time and often leading to conflicts. While collecting water, women often suffer from sexual harassment. Overall, 96.5 percent of the families have suffered water crisis in the Colony and females have suffered the most in majority (56.8 percent) of the families (Figure 2).

Sanitation, characterized by the use of insanitary latrine and shared latrines, is another notable challenge faced by the migrants. There is a predominance of ring-slab latrines without water seal (in the commode) and water supply facility. These are poorly maintained and shared by a large number of residents, significantly breaching hygiene maintenance. Submergence of these latrines during the tidal inundation and other disasters make the situation extremely difficult, especially for women and children. Alarmingly, 97 percent of the families suffered sanitation crises in the Colony and females have suffered the most in 56.7 percent of the families (Figure2).

Migrants have also been grappling with appalling housing condition in the Colony. BC is a congested area with closely packed houses of poor architectural configuration—compact living space with no or insufficient air passages, earthen floor, and metal roof. Room size varies from 45-70 sq.ft. and, in most cases, one room accommodates an entire family of 2-5 members. As a result, on sunny or humid days, houses become unlivable. Overall, 89.5 percent of families have suffered from poor housing condition in the Colony and, having to stay in the houses for longer period, females have borne the heaviest burden in the majority (86 percent) of the of the families (Figure 2**)**.

Lack of adequate and safe water, unwholesome environment, high

Figure 2: Families by challenges faced in the Colony



demographic density, substandard accommodation, etc. trigger various health impairments in the BC such as cold, cough, fever, diarrhoea, typhoid, jaundice, etc. Sufferings are intensified during the period of heatwaves. Since arrival at the BC, 98.5 percent of the families have suffered from these health issues very frequently and in most (67.5 percent) of the families, female have suffered the most (Figure 2).

Lack of WASH facilities coupled with poor social environment and privacy have made menstrual hygiene management a troublesome task for the women in BC. The majority of the families cannot afford sanitary napkins and face difficulties to hygienically process their menstrual kits due to lack of safe water and unhealthy, moist and dark environment with poor privacy. Overall, females of 99.3 percent families have experienced challenges with menstrual hygiene management.

Although the slum has offered diverse earning opportunities, being informal in nature, these livelihoods are associated with income instability and job insecurity which the migrants have been constantly dealing with. Coming from an unskilled group with bare-minimum education, a great many climate migrants in the BC work as 'Jugali'— a local term meaning day laborer— without any formal agreement or a certain income. Therefore, they easily become prone to exploitation and lay-off. Already saturated, this informal job market often forces these surplus workers to commit for a lower wage. Overall, 87 percent of families have faced economic insecurity in BC and the males have suffered this crisis most in majority (66.7 percent) of these families (Figure 2).

The Colony being a densely populated area with rare presence of the law enforcers, crimes such as snatching, robbing, stealing, and physical violence are frequent phenomena, significantly breaching security of life and assets in the BC. While some families have faced stealing or snatching of valuables, families in general have been undergoing constant fear of losing their belongings. In the face of economic hardship, losing valuables and necessary goods or lack of security of life exert an additional burden on the climate migrants. Overall, 33.0 percent of families have reported to have faced lack of security of life or assets in the Colony (Figure 2).

The climate victims could not escape the lashing of natural hazards even after migrating to the BC; rather they have additionally been burdened with some anthropogenic hazards. Adjacency to the river has rendered the BC highly prone to recurrent tidal flooding in the monsoon. During high tide and recent cyclones, e.g., Sidr in 2007, Aila in 2009, Mahasen in 2013, Fani in 2019, Bulbul in 2019, Sitrang in 2022 etc., houses were submerged with heightened tidal surge resulting in enormous damage to household belongings such as wooden furniture, refrigerators, closets, etc. Water-logging caused by clogged and poor drainage system also worsens sufferings, as drains are very narrow and rarely cleaned. Alongside, congested housing coupled with faulty power supply lines has made the Colony prone to fire break-out. Overall, 58% of families have suffered some economic L&Ds caused by these hazards (Figure 2).

Migration to urban slums is accompanied by several gender-based crises faced mostly by women. Females' vulnerability to GBVs in BC stem from poor privacy, unsafe working place, absence of adult member in the family, unsafe social environment of the Colony, limited presence of law enforcers, and the like.

Due to water crises and space constraints, women and adolescent girls in majority of the families have to shower openly in the Kirtankhola river, which exposes them to unpleasant incidents. Sexual harassment like eve-teasing, sexually suggestive comments, bad touch, etc. are commonly faced by the females. Though the families are unwilling to disclose any incident of sexual harassment in fear of losing dignity, all of them expressed their concern over risk of sexual harassment in the Colony. Overall, at least one female member in 14 percent of families has experienced sexual harassment or violence in the Colony (Figure 2).

Being permanently disconnected from their Place of Origin, climate migrants undergo mental trauma and face identity crisis throughout their lifetime.

Their feeling of rootlessness at the new home time and again compounded by the discriminatory and derogatory behavior from the 'old and permanent' settlers in the Colony.

Women of some newly arrived families have reported experiencing verbal abuse from the neighbors during water collection. Overall, 51 percent of the families have experienced discriminatory behavior from others in the Colony and in 80.4 percent of these families, both females and males have equally suffered (Figure 2).

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The study reveals that with impaired economic and adaptive capacity due to the havoc wrought by disasters in the Place of Origin, unplanned relocation made by the victims has entrapped them with socio-environmental, infrastructural and economic hurdles in the fragile settings of urban slum. While migration to Bangabandhu Colony offered diverse benefits to the migrants, they have been undergoing through a wide range of challenges, continuing their lives in the Colony. They got a shelter to stay in and a wider scope of earning, however, at the cost of many additional burdens they would perhaps never have to face at their ancestral home. In most families, females have borne the heavier burden of challenges. Overall, the challenges together have rather undermined their wellbeing, making the net outcome of adaptation measures negative for many. The evident outcome indicates that migration to urban informal settlements under the existing conditions as a response to climate change shocks cannot guarantee it is an effective adaptation strategy, rather it is often counterproductive.

Hence, government policies must focus on supporting in-situ adaptation by equipping the potential climate emigrants with proper skill development on climate-adaptive livelihoods and start-up supports. In cases in-situ migration is not possible, there must be anticipatory measures, such as skill development, finance, information support, at the Place of Origin to make migration planned and an effective strategy to adapt to climate shocks.

Reformations are also required in urban planning and design for addressing the socio-environmental and infrastructural issues. Boosting the empowerment of the climate migrant women with development of alternative livelihood skills and small-scale finances could be instrumental in reducing their vulnerabilities after migration. Additionally, a centralized system must be in place under a government body for tracking and monitoring the mobility of the climate victims and facilitating their unavoidable migration to the destinations most favorable to them.

Acknowledgement: This study was conducted under the project "Research and Advocacy for Addressing Climate-induced Loss and Damages with Practical and Scalable Solutions", funded by Christian Aid.

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EVENTS COMPLETED IN 2025

CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP

Training for the Youth, Media, and CSOs on Climate Science, Policy, and Politics

September 27-28, 2025, Dhaka

CPRD, in partnership with Concern Worldwide, CARE Bangladesh, Climate Justice Alliance, Bangladesh (CJA-B), The Climate Watch, YOUCAN, organized a two-day training program on 27-28 September 2025 in Dhaka. The training aimed at empowering relevant CSOs and NGOs (including women-and indigenous people-led ones), media representatives and youth with the knowledge on climate science, policy and negotiations to facilitate their effective engagement for advocating for climate justice.

https://cprdbd.org/training-for-youth-media-and-csos-on-climate-science-policy-and-politics/

STRATEGY WORKSHOP

Climate Change Policy Narrative: A Deep Dive into Climate Science and Politics to Shape CSO Positions towards COP30

July 22, 2025, Rajendrapur, Gazipur

Hosted by CPRD, in collaboration with CJA-B and CANSA-Bangladesh, this three-day Strategy

Workshop brought together representatives from over 40 CSOs who deliberately noted their positions across major agenda for COP 30, e.g., Finance, Loss & Damage, Adaptation, Mitigation & Just Transition, etc., to inform national and global advocacy aimed at COP 30.

https://cprdbd.org/strategy-workshop-climate-change-policy-narrative-a-deep-dive-into-climate-science-and-politics-to-shape-cso-positions-towards-cop30/

EXPERT CONSULTATION

Assessing the Impact of Climate Change on the Reproductive Health of Women and Adolescent Girls in Coastal Bangladesh

June 3, 2025, Dhaka

This consultation meeting organized by CPRD, in partnership with HEKS/EPER in Dhaka was held to take inputs of experts, including researchers, policymakers, and health experts, for designing a scientific study aiming to assess the impact of climate change on women's reproductive health in coastal Bangladesh and reforming the women's health aspects of climate related policies.

https://cprdbd.org/consultation-on-climate-change-and-reproductive-health-held-in-dhaka/

NATIONAL STUDY SHARING SEMINAR

Addressing Climate-Induced Loss and Damage (L&D) with Scalable and Sustainable Solutions: Learning from a Blended Microfinance Model

April 30, 2025, Dhaka

CPRD, in association with Christian Aid and Gana Unnayan Kendra (GUK), hosted this seminar to share the findings from piloting "Women-focused Blended Microfinance Approach: addressing climate-induced Loss & Damage" as a potential solution to recovering from the economic loss and damages resulting from sudden onset events.

https://cprdbd.org/study-sharing-seminar-on-addressing-climate-induced-lds-with-scalable-and-sustainable-solutions-learnings-from-a-blended-microfinance-model/

NATIONAL STUDY SHARING SEMINAR

Effectiveness of Climate Change Adaptation in Bangladesh: Challenges and Way Forward

February 27, 2025, Dhaka

CPRD in collaboration with ICCCAD, Independent University Bangladesh, Brighters, Youth4NDCs, and Greenpeace hosted this seminar to share the findings from two complementary ground studies on climate change adaptation separately implemented by CPRD and ICCCAD. The CPRD-implemented study focused on how the intersection of climate and development factors define the effectiveness and sustainability of adaptation efforts, in the light of LLA principles. Emphasis was placed on utilizing indigenous knowledge, participatory planning, and science-driven risk assessments in public adaptation interventions toward a sustainable, locally-rooted system of resilience to climate change.

https://cprdbd.org/study-sharing-seminar-on-effectiveness-of-climate-change-adaptation-in-bangladesh-challenges-and-way-forward/

CPRD PUBLICATIONS IN 2024

29TH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES—ARTICULATING CSOS POSITION TOGETHER

November, 2024

The Climate Justice Alliance – Bangladesh (CJA-B) released this CSO Position Paper in the lead-up to COP 29. The paper outlines arguments and demands on different key agenda at COP 29.

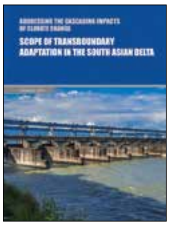
https://cprdbd.org/articulating-csos-position-towards-cop-29/

WOMEN'S AGENCY IN CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION: UNVEILING ASSETS-BASED REQUIREMENTS FOR POLICY RECOMMENDATION

September, 2024

Building on an asset-based approach, this paper explores the pressing reality in Bangladesh's southwest coastal region, where women struggle with the disproportionate burden of climate change impacts. The study argues for a gender-responsive adaptation, while ensuring their equitable access to resources, and increased participation in households, community and national level decision-making and adaptation planning.

https://cprdbd.org/climate-change-impacts-and-adaptation-requirements/

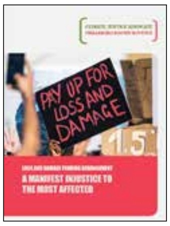


ADDRESSING THE CASCADING IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE: SCOPE OF TRANSBOUNDARY ADAPTATION IN THE SOUTH ASIAN DELTA

September, 2024

This policy brief highlights how current nation-centric adaptation plans fall short and stresses the urgency of regional cooperation. The paper calls for integrating transboundary priorities into adaptation frameworks to protect shared resources and ensure a fair share of benefits for all riparian nations.

https://cprdbd.org/scope-of-transboundary-adaptation/



LOSS AND DAMAGE FUNDING ARRANGEMENT A MANIFEST INJUSTICE TO THE MOST AFFECTED

Date: September, 2024

The paper highlights how political reluctance and a lack of accountability have stalled meaningful progress in Loss & Damage negotiation undermining principles of climate justice. It calls for urgent reform of funding structures to make them more inclusive, transparent, and responsive to those who need it most.

https://cprdbd.org/loss-and-damage-funding-arrangement/

DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE IN BANGLADESH'S CLIMATE FINANCE CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY TAKEAWAYS

September, 2024

This policy paper narrates findings from a study in north-west Bangladesh, which revealed a clearly unjust distribution of the BCCTF and National Climate Budget, with a significantly lower finance flow to the drought-prone and Barind areas compared to other climate stress areas, with the indigenous communities most deprived.

https://cprdbd.org/distributive-justice-inbangladeshs-climate-finance-challenges-and-recommendations/

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Let's act ambitious together!
We won't fail again!

EDITOR'S PICK

The multilateral climate negotiation has succeeded to produce legally binding agreements only twice in its three-decade history. During this course, the political commitment to withstanding climate change has been alarmingly low, with delivery even lower. Science points to a looming future with the fast-growing temperature. On the contrary, the global community has been witnessing the historical polluters persistently leveraging delay-tactics, pushing the 2°C goal further apart. The carbon budget is dwindling away and communities are running low of capacity to face the projected fallouts.

Unfortunately, like many of the previous COPs, the COP 29 also has been another failed attempt and a missed opportunity to get back on track towards achieving the Paris goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The hope and aspiration have now been shifted to the 30th Conference of the Parties (COP 30) to fill in the void in commitments and actions. Let's act ambitious together! We won't fail again!

Climate & Development Dialogue

Mitigation Adaptation Loss & Damage

A knowledge product of the cooperation partnership between:

Center for Participatory Research & Development CPRD

Brot für die Welt

Diakonia