



# POLICY BRIEF:

## Addressing Loss and Damage from Climate Change

### SUMMARY

#### Executive Summary

Loss and damage refers to the adverse impacts of climate change that cannot be effectively addressed through adaptation measures or preventive actions. It encompasses irreversible and non-compensable harm suffered by communities, ecosystems, and countries due to climate change. This policy brief highlights key aspects related to loss and damage, focusing on vulnerable countries in Africa. It emphasizes the need for urgent action to address loss and damage, including both adaptation and mitigation measures. The brief also outlines specific measures that African governments and grassroots organizations can take to prepare and support communities facing loss and damage.

### INTRODUCTION

Loss and damage from climate change pose significant challenges globally, particularly in vulnerable regions. Efforts to address this issue are ongoing, and international climate negotiations aim to provide support to affected communities and countries. This brief presents an overview of loss and damage, including its definition, attribution challenges, examples of impacts, and the role of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage (WIM).

## Key aspects of Loss and Damage

Loss refers to the disappearance of assets or characteristics of a system, while damage refers to the negative effects caused by climate change. Determining the specific causes of loss and damage is complex due to multiple factors involved. Examples of loss and damage include coastal inundation, agricultural productivity loss, infrastructure destruction, community displacement, and biodiversity loss. Developing countries, especially those with limited resources, are particularly vulnerable.

## The Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage

The WIM, established under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), serves as a platform for addressing loss and damage. It facilitates financial support, technical assistance, and capacity building. However, establishing liability and compensation frameworks remains challenging due to the complex nature of climate change impacts.

## Outcome of COP27 on Loss and Damage

COP27 resulted in the establishment of a new fund to provide financial assistance to countries most vulnerable to climate change effects. The fund, expected to be operational by 2024, will be financed by contributions from developed countries. While this is a significant step, it is crucial to recognize that it represents only a fraction of the solution. More actions are required to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support adaptation measures.

## Loss and Damage in African Countries

African countries are particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts and are already experiencing severe consequences. Factors such as poverty, agricultural dependency, weak infrastructure, and limited access to finance and technology exacerbate their vulnerability. Loss and damage in Africa manifest as extreme weather events, droughts, floods, food insecurity, displacement, and economic costs.

## Urgent Action needed in Africa

To address loss and damage in Africa, urgent action is required in both adaptation and mitigation. African governments should focus on developing early warning systems, investing in resilient infrastructure, supporting research, providing financial assistance, and promoting sustainable development. Specific measures include raising awareness, community-based adaptation planning, strengthening social safety nets, promoting sustainable livelihoods, and empowering women and girls.

## Grassroots Organizations' Role

Grassroots organizations play a vital role in addressing loss and damage by advocating for policies, monitoring government action, engaging the public, building partnerships, conducting research, building relationships with government officials, organizing protests, lobbying, and, if necessary, taking legal action. These efforts can help ensure government accountability and drive action on loss and damage.

## The role of the Civil Society

Civil society organizations play a vital role in addressing loss and damage by amplifying the voices of affected communities, advocating for policies and funding, holding governments and corporations accountable, providing direct assistance and support, promoting knowledge sharing, and fostering collaboration. Through these actions, civil society contributes to raising awareness, driving policy changes, supporting affected communities, and facilitating collective action to effectively address the adverse impacts of loss and damage from climate change.

## The role of the academia and research organizations

The academia and research organizations have a responsibility to contribute significantly to addressing loss and damage from climate change. Through their research, expertise, and knowledge sharing, they enhance understanding, inform policy decisions, develop adaptation strategies, facilitate knowledge exchange, and contribute to capacity building and education. Their contributions are crucial in mitigating the adverse impacts of loss and damage and fostering effective responses to the challenges posed by climate change.

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### CONCLUSION

Loss and damage from climate change are serious threats globally, particularly in vulnerable regions like Africa. Urgent action is needed to address this issue, including implementing adaptation and mitigation measures and providing financial support. African governments, academia, research organizations, INGOs and grassroots organizations have crucial roles to play in preparing and supporting communities facing loss and damage. By taking immediate and effective action, we can build a more resilient future and mitigate the devastating impacts of climate change.

*Prepared by Kusi Communications for Oxfam Africa*

