Stockholm Environment Institute

Climate Justice Resilience Fund

How small and locally led grants can address loss and damage

Early lessons from the Scottish government's 2021 funding commitment

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DISCLOSURE OF ROLES AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS

This report is published as the main deliverable of a project funded by the Climate Justice Resilience Fund (CJRF). The lead authors conducted the research (design, data collection, data analysis, interpretation) and writing of this report following SEI ethical and publication guidelines. All the interviewees were given the opportunity to review the content of this report before its publication to flag inaccurate or detrimental content regarding their contribution. The lead authors had the final say on the content of the report.

All the interviewees working for grant partners and sub-grant partners of CJRF were also offered the option to be listed as contributing authors, as a recognition of their contribution to the co-creation process of writing this report. Ayesha Dinshaw (CJRF staff member) is listed as a contributing author in recognition of her support to the logistics of the project, in particular accessing documents and arranging interviews.

The content of this report, particularly the summary, lessons, recommendations and conclusions, are a result of the analysis and interpretation conducted by its lead authors. Where appropriate, we have explicitly flagged any text that expresses the views of interviewees.

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Summary

Vulnerable countries and communities are already facing losses and damages as a result of climate change, and they urgently need financial support to enable recovery from trauma and lost homes, lives and livelihoods. At the 26th UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow (COP26), Scotland made history as the first Global North country to pledge bilateral finance specifically for addressing climate-related loss and damage (L&D).

This report assesses and evaluates how the first GBP 1 million of Scottish government funding was disseminated and used, and how this can inform the operationalization of both the UNFCCC L&D fund and L&D finance more broadly. We gather 16 lessons from five grants made with this L&D funding by the Climate Justice Resilience Fund (CJRF) and offer six overarching recommendations for L&D funders, including climate negotiators responsible for finalizing a mandate for the new L&D Fund at the upcoming COP28 in Dubai. The 16 lessons are organized under the six main recommendations as follows:

1. Prioritize self-determination, human rights and dignity when addressing L&D

Lesson 1.1: Affected communities should have the autonomy and agency to define what L&D means to them and how to address it according to their own needs and priorities. Finance for L&D should aim to ensure human and environmental well-being, dignity and the agency of individuals and communities that are suffering from climate impacts through processes of self-determination.

Lesson 1.2: Conventional categorizations of economic and non-economic L&D are not sufficient to understand lived experiences of L&D. The lens of human rights and human dignity is particularly relevant to address L&D at the local level, and this lens is highly compatible with a locally led and self-determined approach to defining, identifying and addressing L&D.

Lesson 1.3: Grant partners identified L&D as “what goes beyond” adaptation to climate change. At the same time, addressing L&D inevitably overlaps with adaptation measures on the ground, and we find that it can be counterproductive to try to draw a clear boundary between the two.

2. Address underlying factors of vulnerability in L&D responses

Lesson 2.1: L&D interacts with pre-existing vulnerability factors and unequal power dynamics that infringe on human rights and aggravate climate impacts at the local level. L&D finance needs to consciously account for and address the underlying intersectional vulnerabilities of populations as they relate to gender, race, religion, ethnicity, age, disability, sexuality and other categories that make people targets of oppression.

Lesson 2.2: Past maladaptation can worsen L&D, while poor L&D response can lead to maladaptation. Addressing L&D must factor in climate impact scenarios to avoid creating future risk. Good L&D response contributes to adaptation, vulnerability reduction and resilience building, which can be easier to enable through predictable, long-term and large-scale funding.

3. Enable participatory and co-productive approaches to addressing L&D

Lesson 3.1: Participatory and inclusive processes of self-determination enable local communities to identify the right activities on which to focus and to be actively involved in making decisions. Such processes are important for ownership, to get buy-in and generate a sense of pride among local beneficiaries. However, funders should ensure that such inclusive processes are not too demanding of community members’ time and should avoid imposing unnecessary burdens on individuals and oppressed groups.

Lesson 3.2: Capacity and agency building of local organizations and populations can unlock long-term benefits of short-term L&D action. Such activities offer many synergies with participatory approaches, as they enable affected populations to better understand the impacts they are

facing, what actions need to be taken, and how they can advocate for themselves. Funders can enable effective capacity building by embedding it in the design and implementation of a project.

Lesson 3.3: Funders and organizers of co-productive and participatory approaches must provide safe and adequate spaces to incentivize locals' involvement. They must also actively ensure that all participants benefit from their engagement. This is especially true for marginalized and oppressed groups, such as women, the disabled, the elderly, youth and the extremely poor. To the extent possible, activities should respect existing local protocols of community engagement, as long as they do not undermine the meaningful contribution of such social groups and individuals.

4. Learn from migration and relocation support activities

Lesson 4.1: Migration support should better include "trapped" people who cannot afford to migrate, people who choose not to migrate, and extremely poor migrants. The provision of social security, reskilling and livelihoods for all three groups is crucial for migration support. Poor migrants and trapped people especially often lack access to public services and social safety nets, as well as to enabling factors for dignity of life.

Lesson 4.2: Relocation support comes with a number of challenges, especially regarding land procurement processes, which is one of its most expensive and sensitive aspects. Non-economic losses and damages also must be considered, as they are a key factor in who most needs relocation support.

Lesson 4.3: Small grants can enable migration support by funding needs assessments, capacity-building activities, and early action. But comprehensive and transformative migration support requires long-term and large-scale funding, combined with strong leadership and ownership from public authorities.

5. Transform partnerships by grounding practices in trust and climate justice

Lesson 5.1: Funders should prioritize the achievement of the ultimate purpose of their projects (i.e. addressing L&D) over the completion of a rigid list of agreed activities. Such an approach offers more flexibility to local partners to adapt their plans in a context of L&D, where needs and priorities shift frequently. This shift in priorities also has the potential to transform how success is assessed within projects addressing L&D, by better including the perspective of affected populations.

Lesson 5.2: An alignment in values and worldviews between funders and partners, such as prioritizing locally led approaches that are aligned with climate justice, can be transformative. It can create space to pilot new approaches, and it can decolonize the relations between funders and their partners. This requires political will from the funders to give agency and autonomy to partners to take ownership of how they use the funding.

6. Acknowledge successes and limits of small grants for locally led action to address L&D

Lesson 6.1: Small grants succeed in enabling early action as well as capacity and agency building. However, their short period and size could limit affected communities to short-term choices that lead to maladaptation. Psychological support and addressing non-economic L&D are often sidelined due to lack of budget. Robust exit plans and adequate provisions for the long-term sustainability of projects contribute to long-term recovery.

Lesson 6.2: Disbursing small grants through long-term and trust-based partnerships can alleviate some of their limits and enable longer-term recovery and non-economic L&D support by building on continuous portfolios of work. Such an approach also eases the dissemination of funds, increases access, and reduces reporting requirements for recipients. However, partnering with existing organizations that already have capacity can lead to "gatekeeping", which shuts out newcomers who may have similar or greater need but less capacity.

Lesson 6.3: Small grants can play a crucial role in generating national awareness; they can also enable larger forms of action by mobilizing additional funding through advocacy, cooperation and partnership with public authorities. However, in practice, small grants and larger funding pools have typically operated on different tracks, as they target different actors and types of support. Climate finance institutions that are starting up new L&D funding programs have an opportunity to avoid replicating these siloes by putting in place mechanisms to bridge smaller grants with large-scale action.

Calls to action

- Funders of L&D should give small and locally led grants a central role in their portfolio as a mechanism for assessing local needs, enabling rapid action, piloting new approaches, and building the capacity and agency of vulnerable groups. Such grants should also embed flexible provisions for non-economic L&D and psychological support.

- Public finance institutions should complement small grants with larger-scale, flexible and programmatic finance instruments. Small grants could fund activities that map L&D action needs and feed into larger-scale programs and national strategies for addressing L&D.

- Recipient countries of L&D finance should disseminate a share to the local level as part of national recovery plans, and the future UNFCCC L&D fund should enable small grants, for instance in the form of enhanced direct access finance.

- Future L&D finance should follow the Scottish government's example of requiring small grant partners to have community-driven approaches and to embark a climate justice and human rights framework to their work.

- Parties to the UNFCCC should prioritize pragmatism and the interest of affected people above political differences in designing the L&D fund. The Parties should ensure that adaptation and L&D response can be funded jointly without creating burdens to the recipient countries and organizations.

Introduction

Vulnerable countries and communities are already facing losses and damages as a result of climate change, and by 2030, the economic costs in the Global South are expected to reach USD 290 billion to USD 580 billion per year (Markandya & González-Eguino, 2019). Less than a decade away, these costs highlight the urgent need for financial support to enable recovery from trauma and from the loss of homes, lives and livelihoods.

At the 26th UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow (COP26), Scotland made history as the first Global North country to pledge bilateral finance specifically for addressing climate-related loss and damage (L&D). The announcement has spurred increasing momentum on L&D finance over the past two years, with additional bilateral pledges from Global North countries, initiatives such as the Global Shield Against Climate Risks, and the breakthrough decision at the 27th UN Climate Change Conference (COP27) to establish a new fund for responding to L&D.

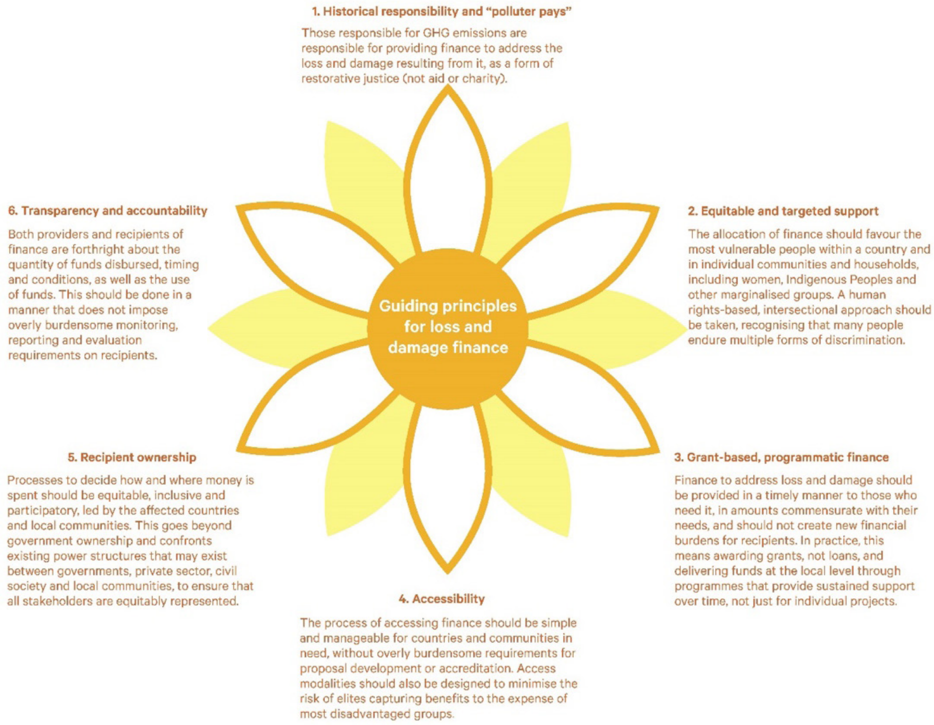
Negotiations on operationalizing the new L&D fund will officially kick-start at the 28th UN Climate Change Conference (COP28) this month, and other initiatives outside the UNFCCC will increasingly begin mobilizing and implementing L&D finance. In this context, this first round of Scottish government funding offers valuable lessons as the first form of financial support to have explicitly aimed to address L&D on the ground. As such, the purpose of this report is to assess and evaluate how the Scottish government funding was disseminated and utilized, and how this can inform the operationalization of both the L&D fund and L&D finance more broadly.

Here, we gather lessons from the first GBP 1 million of Scottish government funding dedicated to L&D, disseminated through the Climate Justice Resilience Fund (CJRF). Over the course of 2022, CJRF provided the funding as small grants for locally led action to five non-governmental organizations (NGOs, that are referred to in the report as “grant partners”): Young Power in Social Action (YPSA) in Bangladesh, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) for their work with their partner NGOs in the Pacific, Churches Action in Relief and Development in Malawi (CARD Malawi), HELVETAS Bangladesh, and the Loss and Damage Youth Coalition (LDYC) working in Asia and Africa.Overall, we highlight 16 key lessons, grouped under 6 overarching recommendations, for L&D finance. These lessons shed light on the benefits and limitations of small grants for locally led action, what trade-offs might manifest when implementing locally led approaches, and how L&D finance can be used in a manner that can reach and serve vulnerable and affected groups. We end with calls to action for how the new L&D fund and future L&D finance can mobilize and disseminate L&D finance in a manner that is both just and effective.

Methodology

We assessed the grants against a previously published framework of six principles stipulating how L&D finance can be best aligned with climate justice (see Figure 1): historical responsibility and the “polluter pays” principle; equitable and targeted support; grants-based and programmatic finance; accessibility; recipient ownership; and transparency and accountability. We see this framework as well-suited to our assessment, given that it draws on literature on both the justice and effectiveness of climate finance.

Figure 1. Framework of principles for assessing the L&D grants



Source: Bakhtaoui et al. (2022)

The evaluation was conducted based on three key data sources. First was a document review: the lead authors conducted a desk-based evaluation of all relevant documents pertaining to each grant, including project concept notes, status reports, end-of-grant narrative reports and blog posts, to extract relevant background information on each grant and the activities for which the funding was used. Documents available and their format differed based on the grant partner, given CJRF's approach of enabling flexibility and not imposing a common template. This exercise was also used as a first-step evaluation of the grants against our framework of principles and to identify gaps and questions requiring further insights. We also evaluated CJRF's documentation, including any published materials on how they disseminated the grants, as well as their final end-of-grant report to the Scottish government.

Second, we conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with NGO staff members responsible for managing and implementing the grants. For each grant partner, we interviewed at least one staff member to hear their perspective on what went well and what didn't go well with the grants, their experience working with CJRF, and any lessons they wanted to highlight. The interview was structured around our framework of principles (Figure 1). Since LDYC and UUSC both acted as regranting facilities for multiple local projects, in addition to the five grant partners, we also interviewed representatives of two sub-grant partners for each organization, to gain a more local perspective on how the grants were used on the ground. This was complemented by interviews with two CJRF staff members and a representative of the Scottish government, to also gain the funder perspective on the justness and effectiveness of the grants, including the challenges faced in implementing a locally led approach. Henceforth, we refer to the interviewees by the organization for which they work; we acknowledge that their views may not fully reflect the views of their institutions.

Finally, we held an informal roundtable discussion with interviewees from grant and sub-grant partners and CJRF to share our initial findings, gain feedback and additional perspectives, and collectively brainstorm lessons and recommendations to highlight for future L&D finance. All the interviewees had the opportunity the review the first draft of the report to ensure that their projects were accurately represented. This step shed lights on gaps in our interview protocol on aspects related to embedding future climate risk management and adaptation in each project (see section 2). Their feedback was included in the final version of the report.

This report is not a full and extensive evaluation of the effectiveness of the grants in achieving their objectives, especially given that we did not consult the local communities that benefited from the funding to gain their perspective, did not rely on result-based frameworks or quantitative metrics, and also did not conduct a full audit of how the grants performed on the ground. Such traditional monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) approaches were beyond the scope of this study, though we did gather information on the partners' MEL practices (see section 6). Rather, we focused on gathering initial perspectives on how well CJRF's approach to L&D finance dissemination worked, the extent to which it can be replicated, and what lessons it can provide to other funders.

In this report, we refer to the funding provided via CJRF as small grants in comparison to conventional climate finance provided through the UN system, which is often at the scale of millions of dollars. However, different funding institutions have different benchmarks for what size of grants they classify as "small". We also refer to these grants as locally led, given their dissemination to local NGOs and the autonomy given to these NGOs to use the funds according to their own priorities. For more details on the five CJRF grants and the projects implemented through them, see Annex 1.

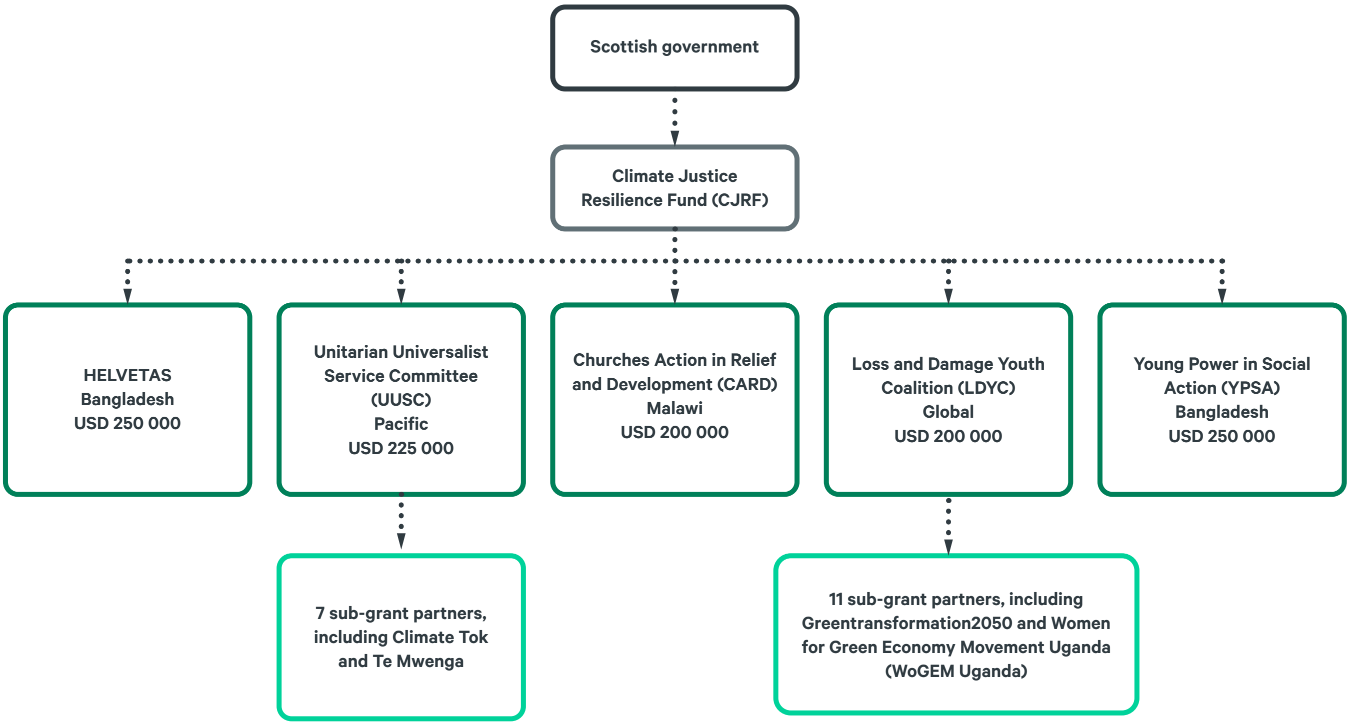
Description of activities implemented by grant partners

The Scottish government chose to disseminate its first round of L&D funding through CJRF, which is a philanthropic fund that has worked since 2016 to provide finance to projects in regions that may be at risk from climate change. The philanthropy began its grant-making activities on migration and relocation issues in 2017, aimed at strengthening communities' abilities to demand effective planning from their governments and to take control of their migration choices.

These grants on migration laid the foundation for CJRF's work on L&D. From 2021 onwards, CJRF has made L&D grants that focus on participatory processes of grant-making and support for community-determined and driven activities. Figure 2 summarizes the flow of funding from the Scottish government's pledge.

Prior to the activities presented for each grant, all the grant partners conducted consultations with the affected communities, mostly in the form of locally led needs assessments, to design their projects (see section 3 for further details).

Figure 2. Flow of funding through the different actors involved



Recommendations and lessons learned

The following sections lay out six overarching recommendations and corresponding lessons learned, drawing on our interviews, consultations and document analysis.

1. Prioritize self-determination, human rights and dignity when addressing L&D

Lesson 1.1: Affected communities should have the autonomy and agency to define what L&D means to them and how to address it according to their own needs and priorities. Finance for L&D should aim to ensure human and environmental well-being, dignity and the agency of individuals and communities that are suffering from climate impacts through processes of self-determination.

Lesson 1.2: Conventional categorizations of economic and non-economic L&D are not sufficient to understand lived experiences of L&D. The lens of human rights and human dignity is particularly relevant to address L&D at the local level, and this lens is highly compatible with a locally led and self-determined approach to defining, identifying and addressing L&D.

Lesson 1.3: Grant partners identified L&D as "what goes beyond" adaptation to climate change. At the same time, addressing L&D inevitably overlaps with adaptation measures on the ground, and we find that it can be counterproductive to try to draw a clear boundary between the two.

"Addressing L&D" through the lens of human rights

In its pilot L&D funding project, the Scottish government set its priority on "addressing L&D" but left the interpretation of the term to the grant and local partners. The government justified this approach as a form of procedural justice, since they defined climate justice as a guiding principle for their work, but also for the learning benefits that an inductive methodology to defining "addressing L&D" could bring to other funders. Indeed, there is little agreement on what "addressing L&D" means in practice.

The Scottish government required also the activities to be as participatory and locally determined as possible. All the grant partners therefore conducted locally led needs assessments with the affected populations to determine what their needs are and what activities can address them (see section 3).

We observed that the needs assessments did not necessarily follow the mainstream categories traditionally used to identify L&D and their associated actions (i.e. slow onset events, rapid onset events, economic and non-economic L&D) (Shawoo et al., 2021). Instead, the grant partners followed an approach to identifying L&D and ways to address it that is more aligned with human rights, involving identifying what rights have been infringed by L&D and how L&D finance can support the protection of those rights.

We therefore mapped the needs identified in our assessment against the fundamental rights of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) to see if such a framework provides a better understanding of needs and how to address them. Examples are presented in Table 1 below. We observe that the human rights lens provides a more nuanced understanding of the local needs, and of the compounding and pre-existing factors of vulnerability that affect local needs, than the mainstream classification categories for L&D needs. Through that lens, the activities implemented can be understood as aiming to either address immediate survival needs in the short-term, to maintain and restore well-being and dignity in the long-term, and to enable the capacity of the population to retain and regain their agency over addressing L&D.

Based on our evaluation of the L&D activities conducted, we therefore suggest that addressing L&D on the ground should aim to ensure human and environmental well-being, dignity and the agency of individuals and communities suffering from climate impacts, through processes of self-determination. This framing largely aligns with existing literature highlighting the need for a human rights–based approach to L&D (Adelman, 2016; Toussaint & Martínez Blanco, 2020).

Breaking the silos between L&D and adaptation

A recurring issue with attempts to define "addressing L&D" is how to distinguish it from other forms of support. The boundary between adaptation action and addressing L&D is a contentious point for policymakers. Adaptation focuses on minimizing risks associated with potential future climate impacts, while addressing L&D consists of responding to impacts that have already happened.

For purposes of tracking and accountability, many funding institutions insist that L&D finance must be defined in a way that clearly distinguishes from adaptation finance, development finance and humanitarian aid. On the ground, however, we find that these distinctions are unhelpful for grant partners and communities.

Grant partners recognize the proximity and even the overlap of these two categories of activities. For instance, UUSC in their interview defined L&D as: "a failure of adaptation, materialized as an injustice and a violation of human rights through the impacts of climate change".

In practice, many of the activities they implemented could have been labelled as adaptation action, such as training the affected population to be able to choose alternative livelihood options (YPSA and Greentransformation2050), or as humanitarian aid, for instance, providing relocation support to populations affected by Tropical Storm Ana and Gombe and later Cyclone Freddy (CARD Malawi).

A characteristic shared by all the projects, which clearly differentiated them from adaptation work, is that they all addressed impacts of climate hazards that had already occurred (see Table 2 below). Adaptation projects focus instead on anticipating and minimizing risks from future projections and scenarios.

Table 1. Illustration of the identification of infringements of human rights caused or worsened by losses and damages in the contexts of the needs assessments led by the grant partners, based on the UNDHR (UN General Assembly, 1948)

Article of the UNDHR	Fundamental human right threatened by climate-induced losses and damages	Examples of needs, losses and damages identified by the communities within the projects reviewed
3	**Life, liberty and security**	**Te Mwenga** reported that a disabled man died during a cyclone because he could not access the caves used as shelters at the time. As a result, accessibility was a key design criterion when building a shelter and new pathways.
7	**Equal protection from discrimination**	**Some projects** reported that local and national powers (public and informal) tried to influence how resources and support would be allocated to favour certain groups. **The Scottish government** recognized that in general across their work, some discriminated groups (e.g. LGBTQIA+) may not be explicitly supported because of threats to their lives and safety.
13	**Move freely**	**CARD Malawi** reported that not all needs could be accessed because some of the most affected populations were stuck and could not be reached. **Climate Tok** reported that people affected were constrained in their ability to relocate.
14	**Asylum**	**YPSA and HELVETAS Bangladesh** reported that households often migrate because of a lack of livelihood options at home, but that the most precarious cannot even afford to relocate, lacking both the resources and networks to do so. These “trapped” populations are therefore even more exposed to current and future climate impacts.
16	**Marriage and family**	**YPSA** reported that child marriages are more frequent because of the increasing insecurity of families linked to climate impacts. They could not properly address these needs by lack of funding and time. Women for Green Economy Movement Uganda (**WoGEM Uganda**) linked rise in child marriage with breaches in the rights to education of girls (see “Education” below).
22	**Social security**	**YPSA** reported that trapped and poor displaced people often don’t have access or lose access to government services and benefits. **In most projects**, some L&D was aggravated by an absence or limitations of some public services.
23	**Work protection**	**Greentransformation2050** reported that the farming communities learned fishing because of the flooding and salinization of their land. **Many projects** report that people migrate because of a lack of income or livelihood provision at home.
25	**Adequate standard of living/basic needs**	*Food and water security:* **Greentransformation 2050** reported that the salinization of agricultural land caused food and water stress in affected villages. *Housing and clothing:* **WoGEM Uganda** reported the destruction of houses, unsafe shelters, loss of heating and loss of personal belongings. *Medical care:* **HELVETAS Bangladesh** identified the discontinuity of medical care for migrants and trapped people, while **most projects** stressed the urgent need for mental health support in affected areas. *Security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age, and more:* **YPSA** reported that many migrants lose their identification documents and cannot access public social security services as a result. *Special care and assistance for motherhood and childhood:* **WoGEM Uganda** reported that many men abandoned their households, which led to burdens for women left to lead their households. **YPSA** identified reproductive health for women as a priority they could not address, due to lack of funding and time.
26	**Education**	**CARD Malawi and HELVETAS Bangladesh** reported a need to maintain the continuity of school access for relocated populations, which could not be properly addressed due to lack of funding and time. **WoGEM Uganda** reported that students (especially girls) dropped out of school because infrastructure and supplies were washed away by floods, while some parents could no longer afford school fees.

Table 2. An overview of climate hazards addressed by the early grants reviewed (three grants and four sub-grants)

Climate hazard addressed	Number of grants or sub-grants addressing a climate hazard
Sea level rise / coastal erosion	5
Cyclone / tropical storm	4
Floods	2
Drought / desertification	2

The grant partners themselves recognize that on the ground, the distinction does not always apply, given that adaptation activities can be necessary to and inseparable from L&D action, and the focus should be more on meeting the needs of affected communities, regardless of what category of action those needs fall in. A member of Climate Tok in Fiji pointed out that "adaptation and L&D action tend to merge, especially in slow-onset–event contexts, it can be hard to draw a line between both. For instance, mangrove planting serves both".

Strong overlap with humanitarian aid and adaptation may even be considered a good sign, as rebuilding the lives of those affected by climate change should ensure that communities not only survive and then recover, but also thrive, with each step anticipating and avoiding new and future risks.

Limits and recommendations

We recommend that funders of local and small-scale projects consider a human rights approach to identify the needs and vulnerabilities associated with L&D, as well as the appropriate solutions to address these needs and vulnerabilities, as relevant and appropriate.

Our evaluation demonstrates that adopting a locally led approach can work particularly well for that purpose, given that local NGOs often play a role in protection of human rights and already work with vulnerable and marginalized groups within their existing portfolios. Future L&D finance should allow and even encourage projects to go beyond addressing L&D, to meet other objectives, such as development, adaptation and humanitarian aid, so as to contribute to building overall resilience to future climate impacts.

For purposes of transparency and accountability at the global level, public funders should consider labelling funding as addressing L&D as a primary objective if the activities implemented aim to ensure human and environmental well-being, dignity and the agency of individuals and communities that are suffering from climate impacts, through processes of self-determination.

One of the main limits of this approach is that it omits pure financial losses of businesses, public stakeholders and households associated with the destruction of infrastructure and assets, the interruption of business operations, and so forth. The proposed approach does consider secondary impacts that these finance losses have on human well-being, but none of the projects reviewed include measures of financial compensation to people and businesses. This area requires more consideration, especially given the contention over liability and responsibility for the compensation of losses incurred by climate change.

2. Address underlying factors of vulnerability in L&D responses

Lesson 2.1: L&D interacts with pre-existing vulnerability factors and unequal power dynamics that infringe on human rights and aggravate climate impacts at the local level. L&D finance needs to consciously account for and address the underlying intersectional vulnerabilities of populations as they relate to gender, race, religion, ethnicity, age, disability, sexuality and other categories that make people targets of oppression.

Lesson 2.2: Past maladaptation can worsen L&D, while poor L&D response can lead to maladaptation. Addressing L&D must factor in climate impact scenarios to avoid creating future risk. Good L&D response contributes to adaptation, vulnerability reduction and resilience building, which can be easier to enable through predictable, long-term and large-scale funding.

Design L&D activities to address drivers of vulnerability and marginalization

Our assessment finds that a human rights–based approach has the benefit of better revealing pre-existing and compounding vulnerability factors and unequal power dynamics that aggravate climate impacts at the local level. The projects reviewed showed that learning collectively and in an inclusive manner from past L&D offers crucial guidance on who the most vulnerable to climate change are, and how to better recover from and prepare against future climate impacts.

Communities consulted by Te Mwenga, for instance, reported that a disabled person died in a previous cyclone because they could not access the caves that served as shelters at the time. This tragedy motivated the locals to prioritize building a new shelter accessible to people with disabilities, as well as accessible paths lit with removable solar lights. This solution presented many co-benefits, especially for children, the elderly and women, who also benefited from these new safe and accessible infrastructures.

This example illustrates the benefits of participatory solution designs, which make sure that all groups of society are represented, and that the most vulnerable in particular are able to attend and contribute to addressing L&D. Indeed, unequal power dynamics within communities and with other external actors can bias the consultation processes and their outcomes. For instance, HELVETAS Bangladesh reported that they had to shift their job training activities in Bangladesh after they realized that the opportunities for skill development that they offered tended to reach comparatively more privileged groups of people, who were already literate and who had some financial capacity and could afford to take the time to attend the trainings. They instead decided to engage directly with local employers to reach most marginalized people. Several grant partners also admitted to the difficulty of selecting beneficiaries in an unbiased way because of local conflicts of interest and power dynamics over resource allocation.

Women and girls were among the most in need of support to address L&D in the projects reviewed, yet many of their needs were left unaddressed. For instance, Women for Green Economy Movement Uganda (WoGEM Uganda) and YPSA noted that reproductive health struggles and child marriage were becoming more frequent because of climate impacts but were left unaddressed owing to lack of budget.

An oppressed group that was not mentioned in any of the projects reviewed was LGBTQIA+ people, who are generally heavily discriminated against, marginalized and silenced in society, and they are therefore particularly vulnerable to climate change and associated L&D. When asked about it, the Scottish government explained that LGBTQIA+ people are often not explicitly targeted within projects in partner countries for their own protection, but that they are taken into account in plans of action. Nonetheless, LGBTQIA+ people tend to be left out of L&D action because of the heavy stigma they face in most countries. Other marginalized groups, such as Indigenous Peoples, disabled people or the elderly, might face similar barriers to having these needs addressed.

Address maladaptation and future climate risks in L&D responses

As outlined in the previous section, addressing L&D strongly overlaps with adaptation. As such, it is important for stakeholders to account for past, current and future risks in the design and implementation of L&D activities.

The interviewees reported that the populations they worked with had already anticipated major climate risk factors and trends, and most projects included components to help local communities prepare for future climate impacts. For instance, CARD Malawi built new infrastructure and houses for households affected by Tropical Storm Ana, using resilient material and designs.

Yet, by several accounts, the local population was not aware of some important climate change risks and dynamics at play and how their behaviour exposed them and contributed to these risks. Greentransformation2050 in Guinea provided an example of how past risks and maladaptation can interact with L&D and create greater impacts. They assisted the relocation and reskilling of communities whose members' homes were destroyed and whose fields were salinized because of sea level rise. Despite sea level rise being a slow and gradual event, the disaster occurred rather suddenly in the region because impacts had been delayed by a sea wall built more than 20 years prior as an adaptation measure. The lack of maintenance caused the sea wall to break, triggering heavy losses and damages for the population, which was unaware of the risks, and displacing 5000 out of the 20 000 inhabitants.

This example illustrates how both projects for adaptation and to address L&D must account for future climate impact scenarios in their designs, to avoid creating more risks for a population. Community-led approaches, which prioritize justice and the autonomy of affected people in the process of responding to L&D, can benefit from integrating external technical and scientific advice on specific risk scenarios and risk reduction strategies.

External advice and expertise on risks and vulnerability should, however, be provided with the perspective of enabling the local populations to make an informed choice on how to address their current and future L&D needs, rather than to discredit their knowledge, to patronize them or to exploit them. Otherwise, the introduction of institutionalized forms of knowledge might perpetuate oppressive and colonial knowledge power dynamics to the projects, which goes against the procedural and epistemic justice principles that underpin locally led approaches.

In the projects reviewed, the grant partners played this role of knowledge brokers or advisers, which was particularly relevant when the workers came from local communities. For instance, CARD Malawi and HELVETAS Bangladesh both reported including future climate risk scenarios in the needs assessment processes with the communities and in the design of solutions.

Another important enabling factor to integrating future climate risks in L&D action is public policies, guidelines and regulations on where and how to rebuild and relocate. Climate Tok, for instance, is following the 2023 Standard Operating Procedures for Planned Relocation in Fiji, which accounts for the safety of relocation grounds and detail steps for a just and inclusive relocation process (Office of the Prime Minister, Fiji, 2023). Still, UUSC warned that even land deemed safe by public authorities can be exposed to different or future climate risks. In general, the grant partners met difficulties in procuring adequate land for the relocation of communities, and they identified rampant climate impacts as an aggravating factor.

The interviewees also reported internal and external limitations to the CJRF grants, which constrained their ability to avoid maladaptation. Providing external expertise to locally led and short-term projects is furthermore costly and requires data and knowledge that are rarely available at that scale in often neglected and most vulnerable areas. The grant partners also explained that the short-term nature of the grants did not allow for a robust exit strategy in most of the projects, which could constrain the continuous maintenance and upgrade of the projects' outcomes and infrastructures.

The short-term and small-scale nature of the CJRF funding further incentivized short-term coping strategies rather than long-term transformative recovery. These grants enabled the identification of both immediate and longer-term needs, as well as risk factors, but were not large enough to cover the entirety of the activities identified by the affected populations. There is always a risk that path dependence imposed in part by budget constraints and survival imperatives leads to unsustainable situations in the long-term, while closing other avenues that might have been more desirable and beneficial for the affected communities. Our findings suggest that even at the local level, long-term, predictable and larger-scale funding should complement such small grants, to allow for anticipating future risks when enabling recovery (see section 6).

Limits and recommendations

Learning from the experiences presented above, we recommend that all funders ensure that projects aiming to address L&D account for local power dynamics and pre-existing vulnerabilities consciously and by design. They could include budget for conducting needs assessments in advance of project implementation, to identify who the most vulnerable and marginalized groups are and how interventions can be targeted to reach and benefit them. Importantly, funders should be conscious of the local formal and informal power dynamics to ensure that action is truly reflective of local needs (also see section 3 on locally led responses).

All funders should also systematize the consideration of future climate scenarios and risks factors in the design of projects aiming at addressing current L&D. Not doing so creates a risk that investments will become obsolete and lead to additional future losses and damages for a population.

Short-term and small-scale funding can limit the extent to which future risks can be considered. To go beyond coping responses, funders must be ready to provide long-term and predictable funding for locally led action to complement small grants.

Furthermore, complementary investments for risk mapping and building impact scenarios (i.e. adaptation) are needed, especially in regions suffering from data gaps. These assessments should be as granular as possible to serve the local level, and they should be accessible to the local level to enable informed choices of strategies to address L&D. On the ground, L&D action and adaptation overlap and are inseparable.

Since it is impossible to predict all future risks, funders should also collaborate closely with their partners, other funders and implementing organizations to define and implement a robust and viable exit strategy for their projects. Exit strategies may include long-term funding agreements to guarantee the upgrading and maintenance of past and current projects, as well as plans to transfer responsibilities of maintaining infrastructure and services to adequate local and national stakeholders with the knowledge and capacity to retain project gains. They could include provisions for capacity building to ensure that expert knowledge is transferred and disseminated to the affected populations and to safeguard community agency to address their L&D needs autonomously in the future, among other possibilities.

3. Enable participatory and co-productive approaches to addressing L&D

Lesson 3.1: Participatory and inclusive processes of self-determination enable local communities to identify the right activities on which to focus and to be actively involved in making decisions. Such processes are important for ownership, to get buy-in and generate a sense of pride among local beneficiaries. However, funders should ensure that such inclusive processes are not too demanding of community members' time and should avoid imposing unnecessary burdens on individuals and oppressed groups.

Lesson 3.2: Capacity and agency building of local organizations and populations can unlock long-term benefits of short-term L&D action. Such activities offer many synergies with participatory approaches, as they enable affected populations to better understand the impacts they are facing, what actions need to be taken, and how they can advocate for themselves. Funders can enable effective capacity building by embedding it in the design and implementation of a project.

Lesson 3.3: Funders and organizers of co-productive and participatory approaches must provide safe and adequate spaces to incentivize locals' involvement. They must also actively ensure that all participants benefit from their engagement. This is especially true for marginalized and oppressed groups, such as women, the disabled, the elderly, youth and the extremely poor. To the extent possible, activities should respect existing local protocols of community engagement, as long as they do not undermine the meaningful contribution of such social groups and individuals.

Ensure participatory and inclusive locally led actions

When pledging its first round of L&D funding, the Scottish government required the activities to be as participatory and locally determined as possible. To meet this requirement, CJRF emphasized that the grantees should employ participatory and inclusive processes that empower affected communities to identify L&D priorities and make decisions on how to utilize the funding on the ground.

Within the projects, we found that creating long-term partnerships with the communities allows funders to ensure truly inclusive processes, in which traditionally marginalized people are better identified, the local dynamics are known, and people are more likely to join since they feel this is a safe environment. Many of the grant partners already had participatory processes embedded into their ways of working. Rather than imposing the burden of proof on the grant partners when designing the projects, CJRF trusted the participatory processes they employed to identify activities on which to focus, and they did not ask them to justify what priorities came out of those processes.

This trust resulted in several of the activities being community-owned and driven. For instance, UUSC deferred the decision-making processes to the local level, with each village or tribe having its own protocol. Some chose robust consultation processes followed by approval from community elders, while others made tribal agreements for projects, and so forth.

In several cases, however, individuals and groups within the communities faced social, economic and physical access barriers that prevented their meaningful contribution to the projects; the grantees had to offer alternative engagement options. WoGEM Uganda shared that they struggled to reach out to the women because of the pressure from local and national formal and informal power structures; they instead used surveys approved by local leaders. Climate Tok found it particularly difficult to include women and disabled people in consultations and found it hard to have consistent communication with remote communities that are difficult to reach. They overcame their communication issues by finding intermediaries on the ground who could act on their behalf.

Most grant partners interviewed also reported having safeguard systems in place for locals to complain or report on issues related to the projects. For instance, CARD Malawi offered a dedicated phone number, though they felt that local populations might have been reluctant to utilize this due to fear of retaliation from the rest of the population.

We observed limits to community engagement. No project formally considered financial compensation of the local volunteers and other community members who were taking an active role in implementing the projects; this may have acted as a barrier to further engagement, although we could not assess this last point. YPSA explained that they instead relied on building experience, agency and a sense of pride for their youth volunteers. One interviewee noted that some communities (including some Indigenous ones) may prefer non-financial forms of compensation over monetary ones.

Local capacity and agency building to address L&D needs

Our review also showed that the imperative for participatory approaches translated into strong capacity-building components, which can play a role for meaningful locally led action. Here, we define capacity building as building on the existing capacity of communities to enable members to practice their knowledge and agency as well as to increase their agency, rather than by imposing external methods and approaches to addressing L&D.

Six projects out of the seven reviewed explicitly mentioned activities specifically aiming to build the capacity of the affected population to address current and future L&D. In particular, the main output for HELVETAS Bangladesh was an advisory platform that provided advice on livelihood opportunities, cost-benefit analyses and connections with reliable intermediaries for households likely to migrate or to relocate because of climate impacts, in particular among the poorest, women and youth.

Empowering youth was a recurring theme in capacity-building activities we reviewed. For some grant partners, such as YPSA and Te Mwenga, capacity building relied on recruiting local young volunteers to implement the projects. CARD Malawi also combined participatory implementation with professional skill building by tasking young locals to manage the production of soil-stabilized bricks for the construction of new and more resilient houses for families that lost their homes in Tropical Storms Ana and Gombe; the production of bricks provided employment for the youth, while teaching them methods that can be replicated in the future.

The Loss and Damage Youth Grantmaking Council of the LDYC also set its primary objective to offer access to grants for youth to build project development and management skills in the new field of L&D response. The decision was built on the observation that young people in affected communities struggle to access such funding because of funding organizations' tendency to perceive youth organizations as too risky and inexperienced.

When disseminating their grant, the LDYC identified capacity barriers that constrained applicants' chances to win the global tenders. First, many of the applications they received focused on reducing future climate risk (i.e. adaptation) rather than addressing current impacts. Second, they identified gender and geographical imbalances in the applications they received for their grants, the majority of which were led by men and located in Africa and south Asia. They deduced that future iterations of tenders will require training and awareness-raising on what L&D is and how to identify it better, and better targeting organizations led by women and girls, as well as organizations in regions with lower awareness of concepts of L&D.

Greentransformation2050 also identified language as a big barrier for capacity building in non-English speaking countries. The vast majority of resources on L&D are only available in English and not accessible to French-speaking African countries, for instance. Greentransformation2050 has started translating and publishing resources in French on recognizing and addressing L&D. Translation of resource material in French and in Spanish could benefit a large proportion of vulnerable countries, and we invite funders to support such projects.

Outreach through advocacy, knowledge and public awareness activities

Enabling the affected communities to raise their profiles at higher levels of decision-making and to advocate for their rights and their agency was also an integral part of at least four of the projects reviewed. This was mostly done by training the communities to advocate directly for their rights to public authorities, or by raising public awareness on the issues and rights of the affected populations.

For instance, UUSC convened multiple regional gatherings with their local Pacific sub-grant partners with the objective of building common narratives, steering cooperation and agreeing on advocacy strategies together. The two UUSC sub-grants reviewed included strong human rights–based advocacy training components. Several interviewees also noted that they witnessed the self-organization of the populations with which they worked to form advocacy groups coalitions, especially on migration rights.

Many grant partners shared that the L&D projects presented the opportunity to document and collect knowledge on the lived experiences of L&D and actions to address them, with the goal of better informing policymakers and decision-making. For example, HELVETAS Bangladesh and Greentransformation2050 both gathered information and knowledge on climate migration, relocation and alternative livelihood provisions to educate, alert and advocate for better policies to support migrants. WoGEM Uganda engaged in radio and newspaper campaigns to inform the local population and authorities on the work they were doing, and to spread the information that they offered training on climate action.

However, some organizations, including HELVETAS Bangladesh and CJRF, recognized that despite their insights and experience in supporting local needs, they struggle to be heard by policymakers. The CJRF interviewee also explained that advocacy and outreach to higher circles at the national and international levels were new activities for the organization, which still lacked the capacity for these tasks.

Limits and recommendations

Locally led approaches and capacity-building activities have strong synergy potential. The locally led and bottom-up nature of the CJRF-funded projects enabled capacity building to be deeply embedded in the projects. Local populations building their own capacity to address L&D drove more inclusive and participatory activities and processes. Such practices are critical to comprehensively address L&D and to consolidate the gains of projects beyond their implementation, especially when other options for a robust exit strategy are limited, as was the case with the CJRF grants.

However, effective and comprehensive participatory processes and capacity building cannot happen without adequate funding provisions. We therefore recommend all funders of L&D finance to allocate adequate funding for capacity building in all of their projects; to consider capacity building and advocacy training as a necessary component of action to address L&D; and to incentivize recipients to engage in such activities.

Capacity building and advocacy should also preferably happen through participatory, inclusive and locally led processes. Most existing climate funds include clauses that require some degrees of consultation with affected populations, but their standards are far below those of locally led action and they have rarely been applied stringently (Schultheiß et al., 2023).

Funders should also finance capacity building in projects addressing L&D regardless of whether capacity building is labelled as adaptation. In the UNFCCC context, where the distinction between adaptation and L&D matters, some stakeholders consider that capacity-building activities fall within the realm of adaptation, as adaptation aims to *prepare* populations to respond to future needs (Boyd et al., 2017). Echoing findings in sections 1 and 2, on adaptation and addressing L&D overlap; this section confirms that capacity building is a need on the ground in the aftermath of climate impacts that must be addressed, regardless of bureaucratic silos.

Finally, given how costly reconstruction, relocation, recovery and rehabilitation activities are, it might be tempting for funders to prioritize resource allocation toward capacity building, which is less capital-intensive. While capacity building is necessary to address L&D, it is not sufficient and should not divert funding away from activities meant to secure safety, dignity and well-being for affected communities; rather, it should complement and enable them.

4. Learn from migration and relocation support activities

Migration, displacement and mobility were components of almost all the projects reviewed, and especially HELVETAS' and YPSA's projects in Bangladesh and CARD in Malawi. This is partially explained by the pre-existing portfolio of projects funded by CJRF, which already included a

> **Lesson 4.1:** Migration support should better include "trapped" people who cannot afford to migrate, people who choose not to migrate, and extremely poor migrants. The provision of social security, reskilling and livelihoods for all three groups is crucial for migration support. Poor migrants and trapped people especially often lack access to public services and social safety nets, as well as to enabling factors for dignity of life.
>
> **Lesson 4.2:** Relocation support comes with a number of challenges, especially regarding land procurement processes, which is one of its most expensive and sensitive aspects. Non-economic losses and damages also must be considered, as they are a key factor in who most needs relocation support.
>
> **Lesson 4.3:** Small grants can enable migration support by funding needs assessments, capacity-building activities, and early action. But comprehensive and transformative migration support requires long-term and large-scale funding, combined with strong leadership and ownership from public authorities.

focus on migration. Given the short time frame for the L&D pilot grants, CJRF prioritized funding existing partners, with migration as an obvious overlap between L&D and CJRF's strategic focus.

Analysing the projects' mobility components under the lens of L&D generated several lessons that can benefit all funders. We also note that in 2024, CJRF will publish a learning report focusing on mobility in the organization's portfolio. We focus here on a few key lessons emerging from our review of the selected projects and recommendations for migration and relocation assistance in a context of L&D.

Enable the choice to migrate and relocate

Getting people to relocate in decent conditions starts by giving them the choice to move. HELVETAS Bangladesh and YPSA insisted that spontaneous migration occurs when livelihood options are not viable at home. Supporting livelihood options both in the place of origin and for migrants is therefore a key component of migration support. HELVETAS Bangladesh did so by providing skill training for alternative livelihoods. YPSA targeted the households that did not have the capacity to migrate. Providing viable livelihood options helps limit migration.

YPSA also reported that households in Bangladesh that migrate to flee climate impacts are generally not the most vulnerable and precarious ones. Migrating in decent conditions is expensive and requires financial resources, livelihood opportunity perspectives, and a network to fall back on in the host location. As a result, the most vulnerable are actually those who cannot afford to migrate. YPSA refers to them as "trapped" households and communities. Both YPSA and HELVETAS Bangladesh worked to raise awareness of this specific group that is often forgotten in public discourse.

Our review found similar patterns in other projects dealing with migration, even though the grant partners did not identify them as such. In particular, WoGEM Uganda found that after the floods, many men abandoned and cut ties with their families, leaving women and their children trapped behind with few opportunity perspectives. All the grantee interviewees agreed that poor people, women, children, the elderly and disabled people are more at risk of being trapped.

Non-economic L&D, often referred to as NELD, was another factor that prevented relocation in the case of CARD Malawi's project. CARD Malawi found that several households affected by Tropical Storm Ana refused to relocate to safer ground, even after being presented the risks of staying. Reasons for remaining were closely related to local belief that the spirits of their ancestors protected them. The inhabitants refused to abandon their land, as the cost of abandoning the burial grounds of their families was too high in their belief system. Only when Cyclone Freddy hit during the project implementation were these individuals and families persuaded to move.

Social and psychological support was another form of a non-economic L&D need identified as crucial in relocation activities. However, the projects reviewed rarely addressed psychological support due to lack of time and resources.

Challenges in supporting migration and relocation

Finding appropriate land to relocate households was a recurring challenge for the projects reviewed. YPSA in Bangladesh and CARD Malawi stressed that the scarcity of land exacerbates inequalities between climate-induced migrants. According to YPSA, valuable land is often grabbed by those with power and resources, while poorer migrants end up "parked" in isolated plots with little to no access to essential infrastructure, facilities and public services.

Several grant partners also noted that extreme weather events affected their projects' implementation. Cyclone Freddy disrupted the timeline of CARD Malawi's project, while at the same time causing more and new L&D needs. Many projects also noted that more predictable weather patterns such as seasonal monsoons, which normally don't cause harm to a population, can worsen experiences of L&D in situations of extreme vulnerability. Reconstruction and relocation activities must also take into account that land will become more and more scarce because of future climate impacts and construction techniques, planning and materials chosen must also be compatible with future risk scenarios (see section 2 on maladaptation).

The YPSA team also found that, on average, public authorities are not sufficiently trained to handle the specifics of climate migration. For instance, they explained that an identification document is often required to access public services, but that migrants often lose these documents during extreme weather events and in their relocation processes. Migrants might also struggle to access municipal services when they settle in informal housing at the edge of cities. To fix this, YPSA organized national level workshops and meetings with relevant stakeholders and the national government, to create better connections between migrant and/or trapped communities and the government and also incentivize better rules and policies for migrants. They also hosted orientation sessions with local journalists to draw the attention of the media to the issue.

Finally, YPSA found that making sure that migrants feel integrated in their host location eased the process. They recommended that relocation be done within villages close to the origin of migrants, and that several households relocated together can maintain both familiarity with their surroundings and a connection with their point of origin. Missing infrastructure must be provided, and the continuity of services and social safety nets maintained. The host locations must also be ready to welcome the new households, which may require capacity-building and communication activities.

Limits and recommendations

Our assessment indicates that addressing relocation and human mobility effectively is expensive and requires prolonged support. A full-spectrum approach to addressing mobility would need to include infrastructure, services, land acquisition and cooperation with local authorities so that communities have adequate livelihood support and the meaningful right to choose to remain or leave.

For this reason, small grants such as CJRF's appear to be insufficient to comprehensively support migration and relocation. Small grants can support locally led identification of needs, foster capacity building, and enable urgent or preliminary steps in relocation. Yet funders must be ready to provide prolonged and large-scale support at various scales to solve broader issues with migration. Programmatic approaches with packages at the national and local level could be an appropriate approach.

We invite funders to consider trapped communities in their scope of action, and to take into account all the barriers and factors of risk identified in the sections above. Non-economic L&D should also be at the heart of migration support, particularly given that cultural ties can often influence vulnerable populations' decision to migrate. Addressing L&D therefore should include social and psychological support, and conscious allocation of resources towards this.

The Scottish government has pledged an additional GBP 5 million for addressing non-economic L&D, which will also be disseminated through CJRF. This next round of funding is likely to offer further valuable lessons on this point, although it also raises questions regarding the suitability and feasibility of grants dedicated exclusively to non-economic L&D (see section6 below).

5. Transform partnerships by grounding practices in trust and climate justice

Lesson 5.1: Funders should prioritize the achievement of the ultimate purpose of their projects (i.e. addressing L&D) over the completion of a rigid list of agreed activities. Such an approach offers more flexibility to local partners to adapt their plans in a context of L&D, where needs and priorities shift frequently. This shift in priorities also has the potential to transform how success is assessed within projects addressing L&D, by better including the perspective of affected populations.

Lesson 5.2: An alignment in values and worldviews between funders and partners, such as prioritizing locally led approaches that are aligned with climate justice, can be transformative. It can create space to pilot new approaches, and it can decolonize the relations between funders and their partners. This requires political will from the funders to give agency and autonomy to partners to take ownership of how they use the funding.

Non-burdensome monitoring, reporting and evaluation requirements

When it comes to MEL, transparency and accountability, the Scottish government aimed to adopt an approach focused on assessing outcomes rather than outputs, and defined success as communities reporting that their L&D needs were addressed. CJRF therefore adopted a proportionate approach to MEL; this included reporting requirements that would limit the burdens imposed on grant partners to one narrative report, supplemented by ongoing updates from the field.

The grants included some safeguarding language regarding what the funds could and could not be used for, and the need for permission from CJRF if budget varied over a certain amount. However, CJRF did not always have full oversight of those sub-grants, given the decision to limit reporting burdens, as well as the choice to delegate full responsibility for due diligence for the sub-grants to UUSC and LDYC.

However, existing long-term and trusted relationships meant that CJRF could rely on grant partners' existing MEL and reporting processes rather than imposing additional burdens. The flexibility given to the grant partners even created space for innovation and experimentation with new MEL approaches, from which CJRF and the Scottish government learned.

For example, UUSC developed indicators with their local sub-grant partners that were specifically meant to assess whether the grants had contributed to systemic change in decolonizing philanthropy and development assistance. These included facilitating meaningful access to decision-making power, fostering connections to build and strengthen movements, following the leadership of those most impacted by injustice, supporting grass-roots solutions that challenge oppressive systems, and dismantling harmful laws and policies (the full framework is included in Annex 2).

Local sub-grantees of UUSC and LDYC relied on innovative formats to capture knowledge on the ground (e.g. video, photo, podcasts, opinion pieces). They could then use these materials for advocacy education and awareness-raising purposes.

These approaches were meant to enable and capture the transformative nature of the work done within the CJRF projects, and to focus on serving the needs and priorities of communities, rather than the interests of the donors. However, only long-term and continuous assessments of outcomes can determine whether the projects had their desired impact, and whether the MEL approaches of the CJRF projects were successful in capturing it.

The transformative power of a climate justice approach

From the inception of this first L&D funding round, the Scottish government, CJRF and the grant partners aimed to adopt a climate justice approach to how the funds were used and distributed, focusing on ensuring affected communities would have autonomy and decision-making power, locally led approaches to utilizing the funds, and limiting burdensome access and reporting requirements. From the perspective of the Scottish government, political will from higher management levels (particularly from then-First Minister Nicola Sturgeon) enabled such a participatory and climate justice-oriented approach.

The Scottish government employee interviewed noted that they learned from practices of CJRF and their grant partners, especially when they clashed with the Scottish government's usual practice. For instance, the government's conventional procurement processes were at odds with the devolved nature of locally led project design. The government had to adapt its practices and agree to invest in an outcome without knowing in advance what activities would be conducted and how the funding actually would be used. Restrictions on government funding also meant that the Scottish government could not pay grant partners in advance, which can limit the extent to which they could fund smaller civil society organizations that may be unable to absorb the risk; working with an intermediary like CJRF, which was able to absorb the fiscal liability, meant that they were more able to fund local and smaller NGOs.

Having a similar theory of change that made funding accessible and easy to use by local NGOs was also transformative for the grant partners themselves, as they were able to experiment and change their plans without too much administrative burden. For instance, HELVETAS Bangladesh shared that they were inspired by CJRF to shift their management practices to be more community-led and that they used the project as a testing ground to implement this change. They allocated 75% of the grant to partner organizations on the ground, who managed it. They also shifted their project management unit to include local community members. Te Mwenga also shared that they hoped that these practices would influence the finance architecture as a whole to be more accessible to local civil society organizations.

Limits and recommendations

The examples presented in this section highlight how an alignment of values and worldviews and a shared theory of change that is rooted in climate justice can lead to relationships that are built on trust and provide flexibility and autonomy to partners to best support populations affected by L&D. Given that addressing L&D is a new field, enabling experimentation in activities and ways to monitor and assess them is particularly relevant.

Changing the practices of mainstream climate finance institutions towards more equitable and effective ones requires political will and is a difficult task. Most stakeholders do not uphold principles of climate justice and decolonization of climate finance. Yet the outcomes reported in this section show that pragmatism, fairness and equity can result in successfully implemented projects.

We invite funders in the future to prioritize the achievement of desired outcomes and objectives of L&D projects over the simple implementation of planned activities and the validation of outputs. Such a shift in priority could give more flexibility to local implementing actors to adapt projects to the local situation, especially since circumstances and needs can evolve rapidly in a L&D context. This translates into MEL practices by prioritizing participatory and inclusive processes to define ways to measure these outcomes in a way that is meaningful to grantees, over standard results-based monitoring practices.

From our interviews, we felt that the stakeholders involved were overall satisfied with the results of the projects so far. This statement is limited by the fact that we did not interview all stakeholder groups (in particular, local beneficiaries), did not extensively audit the projects, and most importantly, that impact and success for L&D projects can only be assessed in the long term. We therefore remind funders that they should plan provisions for continuous, long-term and independent evaluation of their work and impact.

6. Acknowledge successes and limits of small grants for locally led action to address L&D

Lesson 6.1: Small grants succeed in enabling early action as well as capacity and agency building. However, their short period and size could limit affected communities to short-term choices that lead to maladaptation. Psychological support and addressing non-economic L&D are often sidelined due to lack of budget. Robust exit plans and adequate provisions for the long-term sustainability of projects contribute to long-term recovery.

Lesson 6.2: Disbursing small grants through long-term and trust-based partnerships can alleviate some of their limits and enable longer-term recovery and non-economic L&D support by building on continuous portfolios of work. Such an approach also eases the dissemination of funds, increases access, and reduces reporting requirements for recipients. However, partnering with existing organizations that already have capacity can lead to “gatekeeping”, which shuts out newcomers who may have similar or greater need but less capacity.

Lesson 6.3: Small grants can play a crucial role in generating national awareness; they can also enable larger forms of action by mobilizing additional funding through advocacy, cooperation and partnership with public authorities. However, in practice, small grants and larger funding pools have typically operated on different tracks, as they target different actors and types of support. Climate finance institutions that are starting up new L&D funding programs have an opportunity to avoid replicating these siloes by putting in place mechanisms to bridge smaller grants with large-scale action.

The challenge of targeting the most vulnerable populations under time and budget constraints

When it came to identifying recipients for the committed funding, the challenge was to reach "the most vulnerable". Funders, experts and Parties to the UNFCCC agree that adaptation and L&D finance should prioritize the most vulnerable individuals, communities and countries, but disagree on how to prioritize them. Defining and assessing vulnerability is a contentious and politicized issue (Robinson et al., 2023). In this report, we consider that there is no objective way to assess, quantify and rank vulnerability to climate change, and we do not question whether the groups targeted by the projects reviewed were among the most vulnerable. Among the interviewees, we observed two approaches to disseminating funding to vulnerable groups.

The Scottish government felt that an open call for applications, while potentially leading to a more equitable approach to allocation of funds, would be unsuitable given the small amount of funding available. Such an approach to identifying grant partners would have led to time burdens on several NGOs, for applying and ultimately not getting selected, and would also drain much of the resources in the review of applications rather than actual implementation. Moreover, the time limit of only having one year to implement the grants meant that there was an urgency to identifying recipients and drawing up contracts for administering the grants. CJRF thus decided to go through some of its existing, long-term and trusted partnerships.

UUSC, which acted as a sub-granting facility to smaller organizations in the Pacific, followed a similar approach. They consider that the NGOs and civil society organizations with which they work represent some of the most vulnerable people in the world and within their own countries, and that thus fulfil their mandate. Furthermore, they also convened the sub-grant partners in a workshop to collectively discuss and decided how to distribute the funding among themselves, giving them the agency to define and prioritize needs and vulnerability.

Going through existing, trust-based relationships also eased conventionally burdensome access and reporting requirements. All five grant partners mentioned that the CJRF grants were significantly easier to access compared to other bilateral and multilateral climate finance avenues. Similarly, Te Mwenga and Climate Tok, two of the sub-grant partners of UUSC, mentioned that accessing the funding was easy for them, given their long-term partnership with UUSC.

Relying on existing partnerships also allowed grant partners to build on ongoing portfolios of work, thus enabling continuity in activities on the ground. The representatives of UUSC and HELVETAS Bangladesh explained that it was also a way to address some of the limits of such short-term and small-scale funding, in particular the struggle to plan a robust exit strategy, by better blending the outcomes of the CJRF-funded activities into their other projects (also see section 2). The main limit of this approach is the risk of selection bias and gatekeeping of the funding. Groups that have received funding in the past are more likely to receive more in the future, while new organizations and overlooked communities are left behind.

The LDYC, which also acted as a sub-granting facility, held a global open call for applications with the idea of addressing these issues, but the organization still faced challenges linked to the limited capacity of applicants to submit strong applications (also see section 3). As a result, it is possible that established organizations with existing track records and capacity in the field of L&D had a competitive advantage, and might have had more chances of being selected, thus reproducing this same selection bias.

Overall, going through trust-based relationships to disseminate L&D finance is likely to work well when it comes to smaller-scale and targeted projects. However, such local level grants are often the only entry point for many vulnerable communities with no prior partnerships. Funders providing such grants therefore cannot rely solely on existing partnerships but must also offer clear paths for newcomers to reach out and connect. Open calls could fit the purpose, as long as they account for the barriers in the application process that most vulnerable communities often meet.

Activities enabled and restricted by the small grant format

The CJRF grants were very limited in time and in size. Grant partners had one year to deliver on addressing L&D with USD 200 000 to USD 250 000 (and even less for the sub-grant partners of LDYC and UUSC). This constraint affected the choice of which activities to prioritize within the long list identified during locally led assessments. As a result, large-scale and long-term projects were identified but often left aside.

We also observed that often, activities focused primarily on addressing early stage and acute needs related to surviving and early recovery after rapid onset events, for example, relocation or evacuation after a cyclone or a flood, reconstruction of buildings, restoring drinkable water access, or providing lights. While the grants offered immediate and temporary coping relief, there is a risk that choices made under this time and scale constraint will lead to stranded assets and maladaptation for the future (see section 2).

Beyond this one-off support, the small grants did manage to address some longer-term needs and needs induced by slow onset events. In particular, they were successful in helping affected individuals rebuild their livelihoods, through offering reskilling, advice and asset recovery. For instance, CARD Malawi initiated a livestock “pass-on” scheme in Malawi to support goat herding, where families supported in the program would give offspring of their goats to other families. The small grants also proved successful for capacity-building support (see section 3).

We noticed that organizations that already benefited from long-term and continuous funding partnerships undertook more long-term activities and activities addressing slow onset events than other grant partners. They explained that they were able to identify slow onset patterns thanks to the continuous activities with their local partners that were meant to address the rampant effects of climate change. In particular, UUSC framed the small grant from CJRF as a one-time top-up to their budget, which allowed them to take a step further and explore the needs of their partners under the new lens of L&D.

The other dimension that was the most neglected was non-economic L&D, and in particular psychological support, which was systematically identified in the needs assessments but rarely prioritized due to lack of budget. The main exception we noted was WoGEM Uganda, which had to provide psychological support to women in their project before they were able to tackle their ecosystem restoration activities.

Grant partners benefiting from long-term partnerships were, however, quite successful at generating unplanned co-benefits, especially in the field of non-economic L&D. In one example, HELVETAS Bangladesh reported that once communities felt safe, they spontaneously started celebrating cultural and religious holidays that had been abandoned for many years, after their migration. Te Mwenga and Climate Tok also observed that local partner communities acted for the protection and promotion of their cultural and spiritual heritage, with celebrations and the creation of heritage protected areas.

Our review suggests that funding for non-economic L&D is only relevant once basic safety and stability standards are met, and that non-economic L&D specific needs and activities can be hard to isolate from other needs. This questions the distinctions between economic and non-economic L&D, and the suitability of grants and support focusing exclusively on non-economic L&D. We recommend, however, that all grants to address L&D should include provisions for addressing non-economic L&D as they arise, and they should include budget for psychological support.

The role of small grants and locally led action within broader L&D support

When pledging this funding, the Scottish government intended that it would be a pilot programme to demonstrate the ways L&D can be addressed. CJRF took forward this approach and communicated at the outset with partners that this would be a one-off initiative, but that it could be useful for catalysing action on the ground as well as generating additional future funds.

Lessons from the grant partners reaffirm that the small grants helped promote local awareness of L&D and can help government institutions understand local needs and vulnerabilities to respond to L&D. Small and locally led grants could therefore play a role in unlocking larger forms of action in the future, thanks to the local needs assessments and the capacity-building activities.

However, such partnerships are rare. First, structures to ensure this continuity do not exist, and second, local NGOs responsible for small-scale projects struggle to access larger-scale funding because they lack the capacity and do not meet due-diligence criteria of big funders (Omukuti et al., 2022). Small-scale funders such as CJRF, as well as public authorities, could endorse the intermediary role of connecting these two sets of actors.

In practice, almost all the grant partners reported positive partnerships with public authorities, especially local ones, which provided some technical support and enabled collaboration with other local actors. For example, CARD Malawi worked closely with officials from the district council, which also helped with identifying which households to target.

We noted a few instances where trust was breached. Greentransformation2050, for instance, communicated to their national government that the sea wall that broke and caused massive floods needed to be repaired and upgraded. However, they reported that for a reason unknown to them (and to us), no further action had been taken yet by public authorities. One grant partner also reported that they did not trust their national government's willingness to help address L&D at the local level.

Limits and recommendations

Overall, these insights demonstrate that although small grants cannot address the full spectrum of needs on the ground, they can play a valuable role in building local capacities and institutions, raising awareness, enabling connections between different actors, and creating the necessary landscape to receive future L&D finance at a larger scale, thereby catalysing further support. We therefore recommend funders of small-scale and local finance, such as other philanthropies or countries pledging bilateral finance for L&D, to learn from these experiences and see their support as a vehicle to catalyse further L&D response both nationally and through the L&D fund.

We further recommend funders to include provisions for non-economic L&D in their funding and especially for psychological support. However, we recommend avoiding funding non-economic L&D in isolation of other issues. Our review suggests that non-economic L&D are tightly linked to other aspects of L&D and can only be properly addressed in combination with other factors of material, physical, mental and social insecurity induced by climate change.

Small-scale and locally led action is not suitable to all funders, but all funders should consider whether their scope of funding and objectives would benefit from small grants, and how such instruments can complement their activities. For instance, the new UNFCCC L&D fund could consider an initial phase of small grants to build the response landscape in countries before providing larger-scale support, or it could include a window for small grants specifically for locally led action.

Conclusion

The purpose of this report was to review the GBP 1 million issued by the Scottish government and disseminated by the CJRF for addressing L&D, using our framework of principles to gather lessons to inform future L&D finance. Here, we highlight five key calls to action.

First, we find that small grants for locally led action have an important and complementary role to play next to larger-scale and programmatic finance for countries to enable full-spectrum approaches to addressing L&D. While small grants are limited in their scope by their size and time frame, they have the potential to target specific communities and socio-economic groups that may be otherwise left out, to provide rapid and acute support in the aftermath of a disaster, and to prioritize locally led and human rights–based approaches.

We also identify a number of trade-offs that providers of L&D finance need to consider, such as (a) disseminating funding rapidly to meet the urgency of local needs versus having inclusive and participatory approaches; (b) enabling immediate recovery versus unlocking longer-term recovery and non-economic L&D support; and (c) prioritizing locally led action that centres marginalized groups versus more comprehensive approaches implemented by national government actors.

We therefore recommend that small and locally led grants play a central role in future L&D finance as a mechanism for assessing local needs, enabling rapid action, piloting new approaches, and building the capacity and agency of vulnerable groups. They should be complemented with larger-scale and longer-term grants at the local and national level to address their limitations, and they should embed flexible provisions for non-economic L&D.

Public finance institutions could combine these two approaches, with small local grants feeding into large-scale programmatic finance. For example, a finance institution could create a repository of L&D action needs identified by small and local projects (among other projects), with the expectation that recipient countries of larger sums take up the needs collected in this repository in their national strategies for addressing L&D. The public and transparent nature of the repository would guarantee a form of accountability, by enabling third parties to track the inclusion of those specific local needs in national plans.

Second, at this stage, whether much public finance will go toward small grants for locally led action to address L&D remains uncertain. The new multilateral mechanisms and structures for L&D, such as the G7/V20 Global Shield Against Climate Risks, focus solely on country-driven approaches (with provisions for consultations with civil society). Within the UNFCCC, there is disagreement among Parties and with civil society on whether the L&D fund should include provisions for small and local grants. Bilateral finance for such small-scale initiatives will operate on a case-by-case basis.

We therefore recommend that recipient countries of L&D finance disseminate a share to the local level as part of national recovery plans. We also recommend that the future UNFCCC L&D fund enable small grants, for instance in the form of enhanced direct access finance.

Third, we should note that all the projects reviewed in this study were designed and implemented with justice, fairness and equity principles in mind. We found that these principles contributed in more than one way to the positive feedback of all the stakeholders we interviewed on the projects. They enabled the agency of affected groups and ultimate beneficiaries of L&D finance in determining their future. They also created space for reflection and improvement of practices of the funders and the implementing partners, with the intention to decolonize climate finance and to embrace transformative approaches. The impulse from the Scottish government to prioritize these approaches was critical to their implementation.

We therefore recommend that future L&D finance follow the Scottish government's example of requiring small grant partners to have community-driven approaches to identifying what activities the grants prioritize and how they are implemented. They should also apply a climate justice framework to their work.

Fourth, our last words are reflections on the links between adaptation and L&D. Our review found multiple times that not only the actions on the ground mix between adaptation and addressing L&D, but that the implementation of comprehensive responses is a good sign. Recovery and reconstruction cannot be successful without future impact risk assessments, before designing new buildings or choosing relocation sites, for example. Money will be wasted if populations are assisted but not given the capacity to address L&D themselves, or to hold accountable those who are responsible for their safety.

Yet in discussions on the new L&D fund thus far, Parties have argued about whether capacity building should be within the fund's scope, as some see it as adaptation. It is important to reflect on the practical implications of this, and whether, in the aftermath of a disaster, a country or a population would be expected to seek parallel support from the L&D fund and the Adaptation Fund to support different aspects of their needs. If so, will provisions be made for these two funds to coordinate and provide funding in a timely manner? The preoccupation with creating silos for the sole purpose of political accountability is detrimental to the most vulnerable people that the L&D fund is supposed to serve.

Finally, we invite Parties to the UNFCCC to prioritize pragmatism and the interest of affected people above political differences in designing the L&D fund, and to find ways to ensure that adaptation and L&D response can be funded jointly without creating burdens to the recipient countries and communities. One approach could be that ex-ante labelling and allocation of climate finance is done based on outcomes and objectives, rather than activities and outputs. Then, final accounting and adjustments could be done based on the ex-post reporting and MEL of activities implemented with the funding.

Overall, it is evident that how L&D finance is disseminated and the actors that it targets will be critical to its success in providing much-needed support to the most vulnerable groups. We hope that these lessons can be considered by both multilateral and bilateral funders, as well as negotiators at COP28, to ensure that future L&D finance can be fair, feasible and effective.

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Annex 1. Description of activities implemented by grant partners

Grant partner	Location	Size of grant	Description of activities	Number of sub-grants
Grant partners				
HELVETAS Bangladesh	Bangladesh	USD 250 000	The grant, implemented in partnership with Shushilan, Development Organisation of the Rural Poor (DORP), and the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD), helped families make more informed decisions about migration in a context of slow onset events. The activities implemented include: Support and advice for migration and relocation. The grant supported 6664 potential migrant family members (4543 women and 2121 men) affected by the loss and damage of their livelihood opportunities with appropriate information about migration, enhanced capacity to perform a cost-benefit analysis, enhanced skills for alternative livelihoods, and connections with reliable intermediaries. Support for reskilling and alternative livelihood provision. The grant provided training and capacity building for youth and women, and alternative means of livelihoods for non-migrants through skills development. Continuity of social services and public infrastructure. It also provided access to education, health facilities, etc. for vulnerable people and rebuilt damaged water infrastructure. Knowledge and research building. The project also developed a database of seasonal, temporary and permanent migrants to inform government policies around migration.	0
Young Power in Social Action (YPSA)	Bangladesh	USD 250 000	The grant supported displaced people from two coastal upazilas (sub-districts) in southeastern Bangladesh due to intense floods, and trapped families who cannot or do not wish to relocate. The activities implemented include: Support for relocation and migration. The project provided for the immediate basic needs of climate-forced displaced people in a safe location. Capacity building and empowerment. The project included activities to build the capacity of climate-forced displaced people, especially the youth, to advocate for the security of their rights and livelihoods. As part of this project, YPSA also advocated for rights-based solutions for climate-forced displacement. Support for reskilling and alternative livelihood provision. The project focused on increasing the income of women and women-headed families through alternative livelihoods and by providing them with safe shelter.	0
Churches Action in Relief and Development (CARD) Malawi	Malawi	USD 200 000	The grant supported the relocation and rehabilitation of households in Malawi affected by Tropical Storms Ana and Gombe (in 2022). The activities implemented include: Support for relocation and (re)construction of houses using resilient bricks made by youth groups and local artisans. Support for reskilling and alternative livelihood provision: the project implemented a livestock pass-on scheme, in which one set of families receive the first round of goats, which are supported by veterinary services and livestock insurance. Once the goats reproduce, the first set of families pass on the offspring to a predetermined second set of families.	0

Grant partner	Location	Size of grant	Description of activities	Number of sub-grants
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC)	Pacific	USD 225 000 grant	UUSC gathered seven partners from across the Pacific to collaboratively assess and address climate-induced losses and damages being faced in their communities. Common activities included: Locally led needs assessments and L&D mapping; Community-led strategy development to seek resources for rebuilding or relocation; Protection of traditional knowledge through storytelling and intergenerational dialogue; Empowerment, advocacy and capacity building at the regional and international levels.	7
Loss and Damage Youth Coalition (LDYC)	Global	USD 200 000	LDYC developed a L&D Youth Grantmaking Council composed of 11 youth from the Global South. This council decided on all aspects of grant-making for youth, by youth, including eligibility criteria, grant amounts, application processes and selection criteria. The grants were made to address a variety of experiences of loss and damage around the world, and to improve the accessibility of funding by youth, who are often excluded from receiving grants, to conduct action with their communities.	One large grant of USD 50 000 and 10 smaller grants of USD 10 000 each.
Sub-grant partners interviewed				
Climate Tok	Fiji	USD 45 000	Climate Tok supports front-line communities hit by both rapid onset (tropical storms, droughts) and slow onset events (sea level rise and salinization) across Fiji. They provide direct assistance to allow both displaced and relocated communities to cope with existing climate impacts, to resettle in dignity and provide support for advocacy. Activities included: Displacement and Relocation support: advocacy on behalf of evacuated and displaced households in villages affected by slow and rapid onset events. Provision of public and communal infrastructures (e.g. water tanks, footpaths, solar lights) and emergency and risk protection infrastructures (e.g. shelters and sea walls). Reconstruction and repair of houses and evacuation centres, procurement of utensils (e.g. cooking) to secure safety, livelihood and dignity. Active remembrance and heritage protection: creation of a heritage site, protection of Indigenous villages, protection of Indigenous knowledge and practices for resilience.	N/A (sub-grant partner of UUSC)
Te Mwenga	Fiji	USD 25,000	Te Mwenga's grant sought to support front-line Banaban communities to address the recurring droughts and salinization of freshwater resources. Activities included: Provision of public and communal infrastructure: Motawa's Water Project to mitigate the current acute water crisis that the community is experiencing due to drought and lack of rainfall; installation of cyclone-proof solar streetlights to ensure safety at night. Mental health support and counselling: creation of healing spaces for Banabans that have lived through and survived climate impacts and face trauma due to the legacy of forced displacement, colonialism and natural resource extraction. Capacity building and heritage protection: for the Rabi Island Community Hub (RICH) to better connect Rabi's communities with partners to deliver results and protect the people and the culture of the island.	N/A (sub-grant partner of UUSC)

Grant partner	Location	Size of grant	Description of activities	Number of sub-grants
Greentransformation 2050	Guinea	USD 50,000	The grant supported the relocation and resettlement of communities affected by climate change and equipped community organizations to better address loss and damage. It supported displaced people in the village in which a more than 20-year-old dike broke, causing saline intrusion which impacted crop yields. Activities included: Advocacy and capacity building: education and training activities with young and Indigenous people; support of local alliances for advocacy on migration; publication of educational and training content; advocacy for the integration of L&D in national planning. With the affected communities, they also envision the provision of public and communal infrastructures for relocated communities (e.g. a well and latrines) and the building of a fish smoking shelter, but these activities require the agreement of local and national authorities, whose support is lacking to this date.	N/A (sub-grant partner of LDYC)
Women for Green Economy Movement Uganda (WoGEM Uganda)	Uganda	USD 10 000	The grant was used to plant trees in areas affected by floods and mudslides. Activities included: Ecosystem restoration. The purpose of the grant was to restore the lost forest cover along the river that plays a role in protecting the community from floods. Education and capacity building; education of the population on climate change and on the link between deforestation practices and increased losses and damages caused by floods; communication and advocacy campaigns via radio talks, TV shows and opinion articles to create public awareness on loss and damage and the role of individuals and communities in addressing it. Counselling and mental health support. Psychological support for women, in particular those in charge of their households and/or abandoned by their husbands, was an activity identified as a necessity during the project implementation and performed outside of CJRF budget.	N/A (sub-grant partner of LDYC)

Annex 2. Monitoring, evaluation and learning approach and framework for systemic change developed by UUSC and their Pacific partners

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Approach and Framework
UUSC's monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) framework centers justice and equity, recognizing the systemic nature of both the challenges faced and solutions needed in advancing climate justice and the need for affected communities to inform how any financial and technical investments impact their lives and livelihoods. In this vein, UUSC has drafted indicators for MEL that we will continue to develop iteratively with partners and CJRF.

UUSC and Pacific partners understand the impact of the CJRF-Scottish government's L&D funding in meeting the region's ongoing and increasing advocacy for multilateral funding to address loss and damage and the importance of MEL in providing this data from the grassroots level. We also anticipate potential risks that may arise during the discussions such as the inability of partners to provide meaningful narrative of the impact of the grant due to its short-term or how the activities proposed can be affected by ongoing COVID-19 and climate change impacts and how that can affect data gathering and analysis. These reflections will be integrated into our impact reporting. We will continue to ask partners what *they* think would be useful "indicators" to include in the MEL framework as an example of participatory MEL that we could integrate in UUSC's and CJRF's approach.

To support partner engagement in the MEL process, UUSC is also providing technical assistance and leveraging our convening platforms to encourage cross-regional learning and problem-solving, as a critical part of the MEL framework.

Draft indicators for MEL of activities to address L&D (including non-economic L&D)

Systemic change indicator	How does this indicator relate to systemic change?
Facilitated meaningful access to decision-making power	Historically, interlocking systems of oppression have conspired to exclude impacted communities from participating in the decisions that affect them most. Supporting their participation in key decision-making spaces is one small way we begin to address historic inequities and integrate the critical perspectives of frontline communities into policy discussions.
Fostered connections to build and strengthen movements.	Robust and interconnected social movements are critical to systemic change. Yet the organizations and activists on the frontlines of this fight are often overworked, on the verge of burnout, and/or lack the resources necessary to build movements. UUSC helps fill this gap by facilitating the creation of interconnected spaces and covering the costs associated with participating in them.
Provided flexible, responsive and trust-based support	Providing flexible, responsive and trust-based support to our grassroots parners is an example of decolonization. It recognizes the expertise of those on the frontlines and acknowledges that our partners are best positioned to determine how our support can be most useful. Their ability to change course as challenges arise and opportunities emerge is critical to our collective success.
Followed the leadership of those most impacted by injustice	Following the leadership of those most impacted by injustice helps build and strengthen movements and directly challenges systems of oppression by supporting the leadership of communities who have historically been denied their rights, equal access to resources, and participation in decisions affecting them and their future. Partnering with such "directly led" groups ensures that our programs and strategies have the most impact because they are informed and led by those most proximate to the harms we are addressing together.
Leveraged additional resources to go beyond the grant dollar	Achieving positive changes in the world will require the redistribution of financial resources to grassroots organizations and movements. We maximize our impact by supplementing redistributive funding with support for activism, justice education, research, and other forms of partner and movement support.
Supported grassroots solutions that challenge oppressive systems	Systemic solutions will never come from our institutions. One of the ways UUSC contributes to systemic change is by partnering with groups and movements directly confronting oppressive systems and imagining and implementing their own alternatives.

Source: UUSC

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