



Loss and Damage - Talking Points

These talking points can be used to start a discussion around loss and damage within your community – as part of an event or action, or just for a conversation with someone you know.

1. What is loss and damage?

The climate crisis is affecting vulnerable communities around the world. People are already losing their homes and their livelihoods.

'Loss and damage' is a general term used in UN climate negotiations to refer to the consequences of climate change that go beyond what people can adapt to. For example, when damage caused by the climate crisis permanently alters places – such as when rising seas engulf low-lying islands or chronic droughts turn once productive farmland into dust.

“We can’t adapt to the loss of our cultures, the loss of our identities, the loss of our histories. We can’t adapt to extinction or to starvation. We cannot adapt to loss and damage”.

- Vanessa Nakate, Ugandan climate activist

Loss and damage can be counted in economic costs (such as impacts on farming or tourism) or in other, more human ways - such as the loss of lives or the trauma of having to migrate from your ancestral home. However it's counted, it is harming the poorest communities the most.

2. What does loss and damage look like in reality?

“Being from Bangladesh I’ve seen how loss and damage is already affecting my people. Houses, lands, schools, hospitals, roads are being lost and damaged by floods and cyclones. People are losing everything. Sea levels are rising.”

- Nushrat Chowdury, Christian Aid climate justice policy advisor

In Bangladesh there were 10 cyclones between the years 2007 – 2021. The last cyclone in 2021 impacted more than 1.3 million people's lives and damaged around 26,000 houses. It caused around \$3 billion (US) of damage in India and Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, in Mozambique, Cyclone Idai killed more than 1,000 people, left 400,000 homeless and destroyed 700,000 hectares of crops when it struck in 2019. Extreme



weather events like hurricanes and cyclones are becoming more frequent, and more severe, because of climate change.

As well as these extreme weather events, loss and damage also includes slow-onset catastrophes caused by global heating, like sea-level rises or land turning to desert. Some communities on low-lying islands like Kiribati and the Marshall Islands already know that everyone who lives there will have to leave within the next generation or so as the sea takes over.

3. What's the solution?

Communities living with the impacts of climate breakdown need an international fund, which can pay out when extreme weather is expected as well as providing money to deal with long-term impacts. Small island nations have been calling for this since 1991 – but now more and more people and countries around the world are joining them.

The costs of loss and damage are high. The world's ten most expensive climate disasters of 2021 [cost an estimated \\$170 billion](#). But getting money to communities in the poorest parts of the world shouldn't mean more taxes for the many people in the UK who are already struggling. It's clear where the money can be found: the combined 2021 profits of 25 of the biggest oil and gas companies [totalled \\$205 billion](#). A loss and damage fund could be paid for from the excessive profits of the fossil fuel companies responsible for climate change.

There are other possible sources of finance, too. Taxing frequent flyers or carbon emissions from shipping, cancelling countries' debts, and scrapping fossil fuel subsidies have all been suggested as ways to find the money.

By paying into an international fund, the countries and polluters who have done the most to cause the crisis could help people recover and rebuild when disasters strike and compensate them for what has been permanently lost. It's not charity, it's justice.

4. Can we convince rich nations to support a fund?

Yes, if enough of us make our power felt. Historically, money has been found, debt dropped, or systems altered when governments feel enough pressure from their citizens.

In relation to loss and damage specifically, momentum is building:

- During COP26 the Scottish Government announced that it would contribute £2 million towards loss & damage – a very small amount compared to the scale of



what is needed, but it made them the first 'developed'/Global North nation to offer concrete support for loss and damage.

- In summer 2022 there was a commitment to ensure that loss and damage is now officially discussed as part of the COP process (unlike previously, where it was a fringe issue in official talks).
- We are seeing more and more cases of citizens taking companies and governments to court in relation to practices that have contributed to the climate crisis.

There is also an existing compensation fund which oil companies pay into, to cover any international oil spill. While this isn't an exact parallel, it relies on the same 'polluter pays' principle.

These examples show that progress is possible – but it doesn't happen by itself. It is the power of public pressure that creates the environment in which decision-makers act, and so we have to increase that pressure and show this is an issue we care about.

5. Isn't it better to focusing on avoiding climate change in the first place?

It's essential that we dramatically increase efforts to cut emissions to zero, including by rapidly phasing out fossil fuel production. We must also continue to support communities in the UK and elsewhere to adapt to the impacts of the climate crisis.

But a significant amount of loss and damage is inevitable even if we get to zero emissions in the next ten, 20 or 30 years. Somebody pays the price for that – and at the moment, it's the communities who have done least to cause the crisis. That needs to change.

There are lots of good reasons to focus on loss and damage:

- **It's the right thing to do.** The people experiencing the worst impacts of the climate crisis are those who have done least to cause it – they need compensation for the harm that has been done to them. This is a fundamental principle of **climate justice**.
- **It gets much less attention than 'net zero'.** Thanks to scientists, campaigners and a few forward-thinking politicians, we all know we have to cut our carbon emissions (even if action is still much too slow). Loss and damage is much less well known – we need to get it into the spotlight.
- **Failure on loss and damage threatens international cooperation.** UN processes like the COP are flawed, but one amazing thing about them is



that almost every country participates. But climate-vulnerable countries are getting so fed up with the lack of progress on money for loss and damage that they might abandon the negotiations altogether.

- **Loss and damage finance is a foundation for a greener and more prosperous future.** Climate-vulnerable countries can't invest time and money in green energy, farming and transport systems if they can't meet basic needs or rebuild after climate disasters – and if they are deeply in debt. Debt cancellation and funding for loss and damage would provide breathing space for longer-term planning.

6. What can I do?

There are lots of ways to take action:

- Hold a discussion with a screening of the five-minute film [‘The Global Story of Climate Change Loss and Damage - and Who Should Pay for It’](#) to help people understand what loss and damage is and why it matters – see our guide to planning a discussion event.
- Email your MP asking them to support a loss and damage fund - Make Polluters Pay will be publishing a template to help with this in September: www.makepolluterspay.co.uk
- Host a photo exhibition on loss and damage - email charlotte@robinhoodtax.org.uk for details of how to bring the Make Polluters Pay exhibition to your local community.

On Loss and Damage Action Day, 22 September 2022:

- Join Green Christian's morning prayer event: <https://greenchristian.org.uk/loss-and-damage-day-prayer-session/>
- Join Make Polluters Pay's social media action – follow @MakePolluterPay and @FFTCnetwork for details.
- Hold a vigil for loss and damage. This is a powerful way to publicly show solidarity with those at the sharp end of climate breakdown. Our guide to holding an interfaith vigil can be found at makecopcount.org, along with more resources including a leaflet to hand out and placards to display.