

PRESS RELEASE:

Addressing loss and damage in the context of social vulnerability and resilience

Doha, 4th December 2012 – Loss and damage is a reality today for most vulnerable communities worldwide. Climate change will further alter the frequency and magnitude of meteorological and hydrological disasters. The concept of loss and damage associated with climate change is new for science and policy. Given the major implication for policy, Munich Re Foundation’s Chair on Social Vulnerability hosted at the UN University brings seven targeted recommendations to COP 18 in Doha today. They focus on how loss and damage should be designed to find policies and practices that significantly reduce losses and damages related to climatic stressor in much of the world. These recommendations feed in to the discussions on loss and damage in Doha in order to find a mandated COP decision of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI) work programme on loss and damage.

Dr. Koko Warner, Head of the Environment Migration, Social Vulnerability and Adaptation Section (EMSVA) at **UN University** in Bonn, said “loss and damage from climate change is essentially an anthropogenic phenomenon, with social roots as well as social solutions. Understanding the causes of loss and damage – anthropogenic climate change and the way climate change impacts interact with elements of human society – is at the foundation of all policy and efforts to address it.”

Dr. Saleemul Huq, Director, **International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD)**, Dhaka, Bangladesh continued, “there is a high need to shape science - policy thinking about the interaction between climate change impacts and human society and particularly, when ecosystems are concerned upon which society depends.” Dr. Huq continued with examples’ from most research on loss and damage in Bangladesh, “women have reported reproductive health problems and incidences of miscarriage due to over salinization of soil. It is crucial to address resilience in the emerging policy discussions” he underlined.

Mr. Thomas Loster, Chairman, **Munich Re Foundation** added, “in this sense, policymakers need to consider the role of social vulnerability and social resilience in loss and damage policy discussions. A holistic thinking about this is required. They need to accept that societies interact with climate and the environment with strong effects in both directions. As these findings are delivered to Parties in the form of a submission, we aim to play our part by bridging the gap between real risk, risk research and policy decisions”, Mr. Loster concluded.

Background

In the past more policy space has been devoted to the concept of 'adaptation' to biophysical impacts. It failed to capture the full impacts of climate change including: secondary and indirect impacts, non-economic values, along with the perceptions of the people affected by these impacts and/or the range of alternatives open to them. To surpass these limitations, the policy brief recommends looking at loss and damage through the lens of social vulnerability with policy measures aimed to build social resilience. It recommends

1. Consider loss and damage as part of an emerging dynamic system in which interactions of climate change with social processes shape and transform human societies.
2. Mainstream the role of social vulnerability and social resilience in loss and damage policy discussions.
3. Recognize that both causes and solutions for loss and damage are found in social-climate interactions.
4. Evaluate loss and damage considering social processes across temporal and spatial scales.
5. Assess social vulnerability and monitor progress in social resilience.
6. Address potential loss and damage as part of risk reducing anticipatory, resilience building social processes.
7. Focus on addressing system vulnerabilities and increasing social resilience and equity in the face of loss and damage decision-making and subsequent international and national policy discussions on loss and damage.

About

The **United Nations University (UNU)** is the academic arm of the United Nations. Through a problem-oriented and interdisciplinary approach, it aims at applied research and education on a global scale. UNU has its headquarters in Tokyo, Japan, and over a dozen institutes and programmes worldwide. [UN University Institute for Environment and Human Security \(UNU-EHS\)](#) was established in 2003 in Bonn, Germany. [The Munich Re Foundation \(MRF\) Chair on Social Vulnerability](#) has been accommodated at UNU-EHS since 2005 in order to support and initiate policy relevant research on social vulnerability.

A Fact sheet (<http://www.ehs.unu.edu/file/get/10601.pdf>) and the full policy brief (<http://www.ehs.unu.edu/file/get/10570.pdf>) available under www.ehs.unu.edu or visit us at the UN University booth in Doha to receive hard copies!

Further Information on loss and damage:

- **Report: Evidence from the frontlines of climate change: loss and damage to communities despite coping and adaptation** <http://www.ehs.unu.edu/article/read/press-release-pioneering-study-shows-evidence-of-loss-and>
- www.loss-and-damage.net

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