



Community perspectives on translating global progress into national policies and actions addressing loss and damage

The Philippine context

POLICY BRIEF | September 2025

Author: **John Leo Algo**, National Coordinator, Aksyon Klima Pilipinas

Acknowledgments: We express our gratitude to Atty. Jameela Joy Reyes and Dr. Rosa Perez for reviewing this paper and providing expert advice, to Forest Foundation Philippines for providing financial support for the production of this policy brief, and to network members and partners Bantay Kita, Inc., Ecosystems Work for Essential Benefits (ECOWEB), Inc., Greenpeace Philippines, Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center, Negrosanon Initiative for Climate and the Environment, and Pagtambayayong – A Foundation For Mutual Aid, Inc., for their support that made this publication possible. We also thank all the participants for their time and invaluable insights towards the formulation of this paper.

***Aksyon Klima Pilipinas** is the Philippines's leading civil society network for climate action since 2007, aiming to build campaigning capacities and leadership among its partner communities, CSOs, and the academe on climate and environment-related policies and issues.*

www.aksyonklima.org | secretariat@aksyonklima.org

POLICY CONTEXT

The past two years have seen Loss and Damage (L&D) become a significant issue within the Philippine policymaking discourse. In 2024, the country was hit by opposing ends of the spectrum of climate extremes – the heatwave affecting the Philippines and other parts of Asia from April to May, and the occurrence of six tropical cyclones within four weeks towards the end of the year. Both of these incidents have been scientifically attributed to be caused by anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissionsⁱⁱⁱ that has triggered ongoing global warming and resulting climate change.

During the month of July in 2024 and in 2025, multiple parts of the country were hit by extreme rainfall caused by a combination of the third tropical cyclone to enter the Philippine Area of Responsibility for the year (local names Super Typhoon “Carina” (Gaemi) and Severe Tropical Storm “Crising” (Wipha), respectively) and the southwest monsoon. These resulted in high flooding, many in the same cities and municipalities across both years, while causing billions of pesos’ worth of damages to the economy, especially to the agricultural sectorⁱⁱⁱⁱ.

These climate-related disasters have raised the question of to which factor the extreme flooding should be attributed: to anthropogenic climate change or to public institutions and participating businesses that implemented flood control projects.

Accountability has been at the core of discourse on L&D at the global level, framed on the liability of developed countries and fossil fuel corporations, which historically caused most of the GHG emissions, to pay developing countries that are the most affected by climate change impacts. One of these nations is the Philippines, often cited as among the most vulnerable to this crisis.

The country is playing a pivotal role in addressing L&D under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It serves as the host of the Board of the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD), which was created at UNFCCC COP27 in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt^v. In its most recent Board meeting held in July 2025 in Cebu, central Philippines, Board members continued their deliberations on operationalizing the Barbados Implementation Modalities, which will allot USD250 million worth of grants to country-led proposals for addressing L&D at the national and sub-national levels^{vi}.

Aligned with this, there is a need for the Philippines to figuratively “walk the talk”: to match its presented leadership among the most vulnerable countries most at risk at the global level with strong measures to respond to L&D in its own backyard.

Currently, a proposed legislation known as the Climate Accountability (CLIMA) Bill is being pushed by civil society organizations to fill the current gap of a national policy that specifically address L&D. If enacted, it would create what is functionally a national counterpart to the FRLD, while also adopting the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights that strengthens corporate accountability in the context of the climate crisis and steers the nation towards genuine decarbonization^{vii}.

Meanwhile, the national government is also in the early stages of formulating a National L&D Action Plan (NLDAP), having already commissioned the United Nations Development Program in 2024 to scope the current climate and disaster finance landscape, in aid of developing a roadmap to accessing the FRLD.

With many communities in the Philippines at high risk to the climate crisis, it is vital to ensure the involvement of non-government stakeholders in the entire process of a potential NLDAP, from planning to monitoring. This is even more important for local communities in Visayas and Mindanao, which are disadvantaged from being meaningfully involved in national-level policy and decision-making processes that tend to be Manila-centric.

OBJECTIVES and METHODOLOGY

To start national discourse on the need for a national NLDAP, AKP published a policy brief “Synergies between FRLD and the CLIMA Bill: Enhancing Philippine actions against loss and damage” on April 2025. This paper examined the interlinkages between the two to define the country’s approach to translating perceived global progress on addressing L&D into national-level actions that would benefit the most vulnerable peoples to the climate crisis (i.e., children and youth, women, Indigenous Peoples, farmers).

This policy brief aims to highlight the perspectives of civil society groups and local communities in the Philippines on enhancing meaningful non-government stakeholders’ participation and access under the FRLD, the CLIMA Bill, and a potential NLDAP. It is a continuation of AKP’s ongoing advocacy work for inclusivity in L&D-relevant policies and actions from the global to the sub-national levels. It specifically aims to present the following:

- Present how civil society groups and local communities identify L&D within their respective areas and through their experiences;
- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the multistakeholder processes and other aspects of under the FRLD and the CLIMA Bill; and
- Develop recommendations for the formulation of a National L&D Action Plan, based on the perspectives on the FRLD and CLIMA Bill.

Four focused group discussions (FGDs) were conducted, on-site and virtual, with CSO and community representatives from Visayas and Mindanao between September 2024 and July 2025. The questions focused on the participants’ own definitions and perspectives on L&D, the strengths and weaknesses of the FRLD and the CLIMA Bill, and their recommendations for a national law or policy directly addressing L&D. They were also presented with the most recent updates regarding the FRLD and the CLIMA Bill, at the time that each FGD was held. All FGDs were conducted through the plenary format, using the Menti software to ensure all participants expressed their inputs.

A total of 86 participants participated in each of the four FGDs, spread across independent cities and provinces in the Visayas (Cebu, Eastern Samar, Negros Occidental, Negros Oriental, and Southern Leyte) and Mindanao (Agusan del Sur, Butuan City, Davao City, Dinagat Islands, Iligan City, Misamis Occidental, Surigao del Sur, Zamboanga City). Representatives from many vulnerable groups and sectors participated in these sessions, including youth, women, Indigenous Peoples, farmers, fisherfolk, and the urban poor.

MAIN FINDINGS

Defining loss and damage

There was a general alignment of how the participants viewed L&D as a concept with the definition for both “loss and damage” and “Loss and Damage”, as provided by the IPCC. Aligned with “loss and damage”, they highlighted the economic and non-economic costs to livelihoods, properties, nearby ecosystems, and cultural identities caused by climate hazards.

Meanwhile, they highlighted this issue as one that is anchored in demanding climate justice, associated with “Loss and Damage”. The need to uphold accountability on individuals and institutions responsible for adverse impacts was also highlighted, especially those that are irreversible and from which communities could no longer recover from.

Some participants also associated L&D with accountability imposed on national and sub-national actors and their perceived destructive practices that cause harm to communities and ecosystems. For example, one representative from Mindanao shared how the impacts of Tropical Storm “Basyang” (Conson) in 2010 were worsened by the nearby siltation pond of a mining company breaking down, leading to lower rice yields. Attempts of the affected communities and partner NGOs to report the incident were hindered by a news blackout to cover up the incident.

Another participant from Mindanao reported cases of massive land conversion near Mt. Apo and the Zamboanga Peninsula, some of which belong to Indigenous Peoples, into commercial areas. They are then forced to either relocate from the mountains or end up working for businesses in these commercial areas, partially driven to do so due to poverty and to enable sending their children to schools.

While accountability has been a core principle on addressing L&D for decades, this has largely centered on demanding reparations from developed countries and multinational corporations as the sources of most of the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that caused anthropogenic global warming and climate change. In contrast, the FGD participants view climate accountability as also extending to those that exacerbate existing risks and impacts that result in losses and damages, as shown through their experiences.

Effectively communicating the significance of addressing L&D to the community-level necessitates connecting global issues with risks and impacts that concern local stakeholders. Through the lens of accountability being applied to those that heighten their vulnerabilities to climate risks and impacts and hinder their capacity to address them, this points to a potential shift in terms of viewing L&D, translating it from a global to a national and sub-national-relevant issue, to also have a change in perspective to include actors responsible for worsening climate vulnerabilities and risks.

Strengths and weaknesses

- **On the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage**

The participants viewed the creation of the FRLD in a positive light, regarding it as a guaranteed source of funding to enable developing countries to implement programs to avoid or reduce climate risks (**Table 1**). Some of them value the potential co-benefits of said initiatives to enhancing conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems, specifically in areas threatened by deforestation and destructive mining operations.

However, they generally expressed caution about the direct impact of the FRLD on local communities. Many pointed to the total pledges to said funding mechanism being not enough to meet the estimated needs of developing countries. They questioned how certain and frequent it would be replenished, given the voluntary nature of contributions from developed countries.

Another concern by the participants across all FGDs is on accessing the resources under the FRLD. For example, several representatives from Visayas, including staff from a Local Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office, expressed disappointment about the lack of direct access for local governments and communities. They stated concerns about only national governments being able to access the resources and lacking safeguards to guarantee the involvement of local actors in the formation of country proposals.

- **On the Climate Accountability Bill**

The participants expressed overwhelming support for the enactment of the CLIMA Bill. They regarded it as a guaranteed source of funding for communities hardest-hit by extreme climate impacts, although citing the need for it to avoid the pitfalls observed with the People's Survival Fund (PSF). They also view it as, in the event of enactment, an indicator of coherence and consistency between the calls of the national government for climate justice at the global policymaking level and its initiatives at the domestic level.

There was an observed high level of confidence in the intent and desired impact of the CLIMA Bill due to the significant involvement of civil society organizations in its formulation and lobbying. This is due to the consistent work of these groups in responding to the needs and concerns of local communities and representing them in relevant decision-making processes, especially when local governments fail to address the issues they have raised.

Aligned with the general call for enhanced accountability, many participants also viewed positively the proposed enhanced reporting framework for corporations. Imposing stricter guidelines for businesses' reporting of their respective GHG emissions and the impacts of their practices vis-à-vis potential human rights violations is regarded as a necessity to protect communities from pollutive activities and other actions that enhance climate vulnerabilities.

Nonetheless, similar to the FRLD, the participants expressed concerns about the potential challenges relevant to the national L&D fund to be created if the CLIMA Bill is passed into law. The sufficiency of available resources and its accessibility in practice, especially for far-flung areas and Indigenous Peoples, were brought up in the FGDs. Some stakeholders also highlighted the need for educating communities about underlying factors aggravating climate change impacts, in aid of accessing this potential fund.

These concerns largely stem from the issues observed and experienced with the PSF, which in its first decade of implementation failed to utilize its initial allotment of PHP1 billion and only granted six proposals. Longstanding issues about the PSF such as the lack of technical capacity for developing proposals, inefficient procedures on processing proposals and fund disbursement, and lack of understanding by many local governments about its purpose or associated processes must be avoided in the potential national L&D fund.

Another main issue pertains to the implementation of the bill not just on the national L&D fund, but also on provisions related to climate litigation. Some participants raised their concerns about carbon majors exploiting weaknesses in the Philippine judicial system to avoid accountability, such as prolonging the processing of filed lawsuits through the filing of Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation cases to weaken the capacity of poorer communities to pursue this endeavor. While attribution science is a growing field, current capacity limitations for directly attributing GHG emissions of a business to losses and damages incurred by a community or the ability of courts to understand said attribution are also viewed as current weaknesses of the bill.

Table 1. Summary of the responses on the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the FRLD and the CLIMA Bill.

	On the FRLD	On the CLIMA Bill
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An additional, guaranteed source of funding for vulnerable countries • Co-benefits with enhancing efforts for environmental conservation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guaranteed source of funding for communities affected by extreme climate impacts • An initiative led and supported by civil society organizations that are grounded on community-based needs and perspectives • Enhanced framework for reporting GHG emissions and impacts of practices by businesses • Strengthened coherence with global efforts to address L&D
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited available funding vis-à-vis needs of developing countries • Potential delay in access or reduced accessibility of resources due to inefficient bureaucratic processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of reliable source of funding to fully address L&D-relevant needs • Lack of a mechanism for educating communities about underlying factors aggravating climate change impacts • Challenges in access to funding, especially for far-flung areas and Indigenous Peoples • Resistance from polluting industries on litigation

Components of a National L&D Action Plan

Based on the perspectives and responses of the participants on the FRLD and the CLIMA Bill, they provided their recommendations on the necessary features of a NLDAP in the Philippines.

- **The National L&D Action Plan must be needs-based, localized, and inclusive, implemented through a multistakeholder approach.**

With economic and non-economic L&D differing by locality and sector, applicable national strategies must be contextualized to suit local circumstances and address corresponding climate risks. Thus, participants emphasized that all programs, projects, and activities under this plan must be formulated based on the needs and concerns of local communities, especially of the most vulnerable groups and sectors.

It was also suggested for civil society groups and community-based organizations to set up an intra-sectoral coordination mechanism that would complement a possible NLDAP and aid in its implementation and localization. The provision of documented cases and studies from said groups would also aid in enhancing current L&D-related data collection and management systems in the country, especially those presenting examples of non-economic losses and damages and the impacts of slow onset events^{viii}.

Special considerations must be given to the circumstances of Indigenous Peoples, such as ensuring that their right to self-determination will be respected in all cases. The loss of indigenous knowledge, systems, and traditions is a key non-economic L&D that must be addressed under said plan.

- **The National L&D Action Plan must be coherent with other national and sub-national policies on climate action, ecological protection, and disaster risk reduction.**

Given the interlinkages of L&D with other climate and environmental issues, especially adaptation and DRRM, the participants raised the need for ensuring a potential NLDAP's coherence with current laws and policies. An example is ensuring the country's Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) system is properly implemented to enforce environmental and social safeguards and strengthened to avoid loopholes that

can be exploited by corporations. This would prevent worsening climate risks that results in further losses and damages.

Another example is on strengthening environmental accounting in the Philippines, in aid of not only biodiversity conservation and restoration, but also a more accurate valuation of potential environment-related L&D. The recent enactment of the Philippine Ecosystem and Natural Capital Accounting System Act (Republic Act 11995) should accelerate the attainment of this goal.

With current challenges in mobilizing sufficient funding under the FRLD or a possible national counterpart under the CLIMA Bill, other sources of funding might also be tapped that would result in co-benefits for this plan's implementation. Among the sources the participants mentioned include the Green Climate Fund and possible policies on carbon tax.

- **The National L&D Action Plan must include mechanisms for communities seeking compensation and/or restitution and the strict enforcement of social and environmental safeguards.**

For the FGD participants, climate justice can never be achieved as long as polluters do not pay. They view compensation and restitution, to name a few types of redress, as necessary for victims of climate-related disasters and others hit hard by the different manifestations of L&D. In this regard, the enactment of the CLIMA Bill and the creation of a national L&D fund, whose funding would be largely sourced from levies and penalties imposed on carbon majors and other polluters, would provide such a mechanism. This fund must be accessible, especially for highly-vulnerable groups like Indigenous Peoples and farmers.

A potential national L&D fund being the main receiving entity of any grant from the FRLD, which is currently funded by developed countries acknowledged as historical polluters, would also amplify this. However, this is not anticipated by many participants to be a reliable source of funds, given the failure and refusal of developed nations to sufficiently respond to the needs of developing countries.

Enhancing social and environmental safeguards is also recommended under a pending NLDAP. Examples of these include forest protection and reforestation, proper enforcement of the right to free, prior, and informed consent for Indigenous Peoples, enabling access to grievance mechanisms, and multi-stakeholder consultations that provide a safe and enabling environment for meaningful participation.

- **The National L&D Action Plan must include strategies to hold national and sub-national-level implementing and financing actors accountable for potential harmful practices.**

Across all FGDs, there was an overarching call for L&D-related accountability to not just be limited to national governments of developed countries and multinational carbon majors. Any accountability provision under a NLDAP must also cover all involved national and local government units and personnel, large corporations either directly conducting pollutive activities within the Philippines, and financiers behind said actions.

The provisions of the CLIMA Bill on corporate accountability provide an example of making big businesses take greater responsibility for their actions and impact on different stakeholders. This includes greater transparency on their emissions and practices through mandatory sustainability reporting and penalizing them for human rights violations resulting from their actions, aligned with the "polluter pays" principle. If not enacted, a potential NLDAP should adopt the framework described under this proposed legislation.

Such a plan must also define clear roles and responsibilities for national and local governments, ensuring smooth horizontal and vertical coordination in responding to economic and non-economic L&D; this would also form the basis of determining the liability of implementing actors that fail to execute their respective functions, in accordance with existing legal rules and processes.

REFERENCES

- ⁱ Otto, F. et al. (2024). When risks become reality: Extreme weather in 2024. *World Weather Attribution*, doi:10.25561/116443
- ⁱⁱ Merz, N. et al. (2024). Climate change supercharged late typhoon season in the Philippines, highlighting the need for resilience to consecutive events. *World Weather Attribution*, doi:10.25561/116202
- ⁱⁱⁱ Department of Agriculture (2025, July 24). *TC Crising, Habagat inflict P454M in farm damage; rice farmers hit hardest* [Press release]. <https://www.da.gov.ph/tc-crising-habagat-inflict-p454m-in-farm-damage-rice-farmers-hit-hardest/>
- ^{iv} Sevillano, S. (2024, August 2024). DA-DRRM: Carina, 'habagat' left P4.73-B agri damage in PH. *Philippine News Agency*. <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1231795>
- ^v Decisions 2/CP.27 and 2/CMA.4
- ^{vi} Civillini, M. (2025, April 11). Loss and damage fund to hand out \$250 million in initial phase. *Climate Home News*. <https://www.climatechangenews.com/2025/04/11/loss-and-damage-fund-to-hand-out-250-million-in-initial-phase/>
- ^{vii} Bradeen, E., Chan, T., & Higham, C. (2023, December 18). Philippines Climate Accountability Bill: loss and damage in domestic legislation. *The London School of Economics and Political Science*. <https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/news/philippines-climate-accountability-bill-loss-and-damage-in-domestic-legislation/>
- ^{viii} Domingo, S. & Manejar, A. (2023). Study on climate change and disaster-related loss and damage accounting. *Philippine Institute for Development Studies*, doi:10.62986/dp2023.47