

# Addressing loss and damages to WASH and its wider implications in Bangladesh

## Evidence from the Ground

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### Definitions

- **Climate Resilient and Inclusive WASH:** Climate -resilient Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) refers to approaches and strategies within the WASH sector that are designed to withstand and adapt to the impacts of climate change alongside those being gender responsive, and inclusive.
- **WASH Poverty:** Communities who lack access to basic water, sanitation and hygiene services.
- **WASH Benefits (Improved health, disease prevention, enhanced productivity, poverty reduction, education) :** WASH services in Bangladesh provide an annual benefit of US \$28 per person for basic water services and US \$49 per person for basic sanitation.
- **Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR):** Principle of international environmental law establishing that all states are responsible for addressing global environmental destruction yet not equally responsible.
- **WASH-Climate Nexus Double Jeopardy:** Individual, entities, government or institutions facing double-pronged impacts of climate change and WASH in either coping , averting, minimizing or rebuilding to impacts.
- **Universal Access to WASH:** Universal access to WASH refers to ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their location, economic status, or other factors, have equitable and sustainable access to Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) services.
- **Joint Monitoring Program (WHO and Unicef) Ladder:**
  - **Water**  
Basic: Drinking water from an improved source, provided collection time is not more than 30 minutes for a roundtrip including queuing.  
Safely Managed: Drinking water from an improved water source that is accessible on premises, available when needed and free from faecal and priority chemical contamination.
  - **Sanitation**  
Basic: Use of improved facilities which are not shared with other households  
Safely Managed: Use of improved facilities that are not shared with other households and where excreta are safely disposed of in situ or removed and treated offsite.

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# Policy Brief

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### Who is this aimed at:

- Policy makers and sector actors

### Key insights

- Adequate measures must be taken to reduce the disparity between communities, loss of WASH benefits and ensure adequate adaptation practices
- Translating loss and damage to WASH into effective actions can, avert, minimize, rebuild communities from the impacts of climatic hazards and disasters effectively

### Policy Options

- Using existing evidence can help strengthen allocation of resources to implement the National Adaptation Plan effectively and the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100
- Good governance and regulations that addresses loss and damage with appropriate CR-WASH interventions can alleviate WASH poverty

### Policy problem

Bangladesh's climate vulnerabilities necessitate adaptation to the impacts of climate change by formulating and implementing adaptation policies to either minimize risk or address problems related to climate impacts. As the impacts of climate change continue to unfold, the realm of water and sanitation faces unprecedented challenges. Rising sea levels contributing to salinity, extreme weather events destroying WASH infrastructures, and changing precipitation patterns are not only threatening ecosystems but also jeopardizing the very foundations of human well-being. In this policy brief, we will explore the intricate connection between the loss and damage experienced in the critical sectors of water and sanitation and how addressing it might help the government and people better adapt for the future.

The 2023 accord with Loss and Damage Fund has been established after a year marked by climate emergencies, encompassing severe weather incidents like extensive floods in Bangladesh, China, Pakistan and Australia, prolonged droughts

spanning multiple years in Kenya and East Africa, intense heatwaves in Europe and India to name a few.

In Bangladesh, the floods of 2019 saw, 21 districts face floods unseen before, and it was estimated that 5,302,698 people were directly affected by it. As many as 27,170 houses had been destroyed and 419,336 damaged. As of 24 July, 2019 there were an estimated 287,513 people displaced. The WASH damage alone in the Sylhet flood of 2022 was 55.7 million USD.

The severe impacts of climate change are becoming more frequent, more intense, causing more damage and loss to communities with large WASH disparity already on the front line of climate change. Currently, 3.79 million people in Bangladesh still does not have access to clean drinking water and 75.4 million people lack safely managed sanitation.

In parallel to the damages the government and people are trying to adapt, but all are struggling to cope with continuous losses and damages. The global adaptation finance gaps and ignorance of the common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) by the global north are creating unfair and unjust scenarios, pushing governments to a scenario of "double jeopardy". For the vulnerable communities and the government these double-edged impacts of oscillating between 'recovery – loss and damage – recovery' are taking a toll.

Without access to water, which is the first line defense for the climate vulnerable communities (of global water access on the frontline: The state of the world's water 2020) or sanitation vulnerable communities are left without basic human rights. Therefore, access to climate resilient WASH is essential to **minimise, avert, and rebuilding** for the WASH-poor communities.

### Study

The study assessed both global and national data sets, published reports, country assessments and previously used evidence to explain the linkages to understand to what extent communities are facing loss and damage through the lens of WASH.

<sup>1</sup> Floodlist 2019: <https://floodlist.com/asia/bangladesh-monsoon-floods-july-2019>

<sup>2</sup> Bangladesh Floods and Landslides May 2022 <https://reliefweb.int/disaster/fi-2022-000217-bgd>



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The study consists of two parts. In the first part we assessed recent climate finance gaps for adaptation from renowned global literature. In the second part we assess existing data sets from the Department of Disaster Management’s Form-D (লোকসান ও ক্ষয়ক্ষতির নিরূপন ফর্ম) to look into the number of loss and damage to WASH in Bangladesh.

Findings

We found that communities facing the compounding impacts of climate change are losing WASH benefits. These includes impacts to health and wellbeing, due to increase in diseases, impacts on children health One child under five dies every 80 seconds from diseases from diseases caused by polluted water (Turning the Tide, 2023). Another hindrance is losing access to basic education, rise in gender disparity, hindrance to economic development, with negative impacts on the environment. The study also investigated how lack of WASH benefits leads to inadequate emergency response and unpreparedness. These communities are unable to effectively adapt to climate impacts leading to both non-economic and economic loss and damage which also results in either permanent or temporary internal displacement migration Fig 1.

Disasters and Hazards	Damages in USD to Tube Walls	Damages to Sanitation	Loss and Damage due to Waterlogging	Displaced population
Combined Damages	11.2 million approx.	16.4 million approx.	18.6 million approx.	928335 approx.

Fig 1: Selected evidence from Sitrang 2022, Bulbul 2019, Fani 2019, Flood 2019 extracted from D form.

Since we are seeing intensity and frequency of climatic disasters and hazards increasing. This along with the lack of adequate international climate finance for adaptation for communities, governments are facing a hard time coping with, and is missing out on effectively responding, averting, and rebuilding climate impacts.

WaterAid’s Mission Critical, states the costs of inadequate climate resilient infrastructures cost USD 259 million in repair costs and 217 million in WASH benefits while in contrast the cost of building climate resilient infrastructures is just 90 million USD, Fig 2.

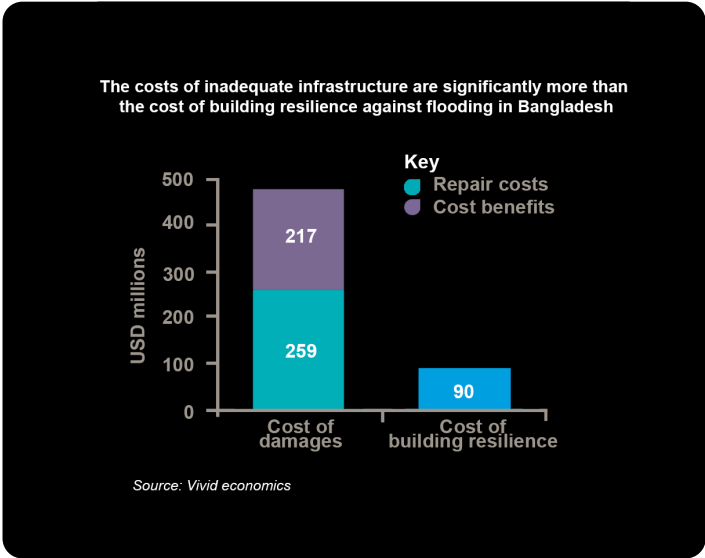


Fig 2: Cost of climate resilient infrastructure.

This year’s Oxfam’s Shadow Report finds that high-income countries have not only failed to deliver on their commitment, but also overstated on the level of support they have provided. Moreover, much of the finance has been provided as loans, which means that it risks increasing the debt burden of the countries it is supposed to help. These shows that the work to provide climate justice to the vulnerable will further deviate in the coming years.

The Adaptation Gap Report 2023 further backs up this claim; it states that although 81 per cent of countries have adaptation options that respond to the assessed climate vulnerabilities and risks in priority sectors, such as agriculture, water, and health however this only represents a 13 per cent increase compared with the 2021 analysis. Although, this trend is undoubtedly positive, the indicator does not reflect the quality or robustness and the loss and damages incurred in the process. Turning the Tide 2023, which was published before the Adaptation Gap Report, estimates suggest that around USD 200-400 billion per year of additional investment in low- and middle-income countries are needed to achieve universal access to clean drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene. If communities continue to sustain losses and damages while governments are working around the clock to secure funding, it further proves that communities will continue to incur loss and damage till then.

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## Policy recommendations

'Loss and damage' will keep happening if proper funding mechanism for adaptation or loss and damage is not undertaken timely and raises a grave concern for the vulnerable communities of Bangladesh. To eliminate WASH poverty due to climate change and to minimize, avert, and rebuild due to incurring loss and damage, the following recommendations are suggested in this policy brief:

1. **Evidence to ensure climate justice:** Research and evidence show the need of the fund to be allocated to address secondary and tertiary impacts of climate change that essentially results in poverty, inequality, socio-cultural discrimination that can eventually end WASH poverty.
2. **Allocation of adaptation and loss and damage finance:** Without addressing existing loss and damages, allocation of resources and funding ask of 230 billion for NAP will fall short of adequacy. With the announcement of the loss and damage pledges, mechanism to distribute and channel the funding to the most vulnerable is something to be considered.
3. **Phasing out loans:** Collaboration for the loss and damage finance with international financial institutions must phase out loans specifically for WASH and Water infrastructure related initiatives. Bangladesh government must ensure grants or private-public sector partnership to address the problem.
4. **Capacity building:** Establish training programs for WASH professionals to enhance their capacity in climate-resilient infrastructure planning and implementation.
5. **Facilitate South-South Cooperation:** Foster partnerships between nations with successful WASH and climate adaptation models to share knowledge and best practices.

## Reference

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