

# Oxford Climate Policy Blog

Initiating debates on international climate policy

## Just Transition: Response Measures and Loss & Damage!

*Benito Müller with Saleemul Huq and Mizan Khan*

Measures to respond to climate emergency as well as climate change impacts affect jobs and livelihoods. The issue referred to in this context as 'just transition' is the need to ensure that social injustices due to resulting job and livelihood losses are addressed, so that no-one thus affected is 'left behind'.

### The Past: Just Transition and the Impacts of Mitigation Measures

As described in detail in the [ecbi Pocket Guide to Response Measures](#), the first formal occurrence of the notion of 'just transition' was in the 2010 [Cancun Agreements](#) which, in their *shared vision for long-term cooperative action*, recognized that "addressing climate change requires a paradigm shift towards building a low-carbon society that ... ensures continued high growth and sustainable development, ..., while ensuring a just transition of the workforce that creates decent work and quality jobs".

The second occurrence, is in the preamble of the section *economic and social consequences of response measures* which recognizes "the importance of avoiding or minimizing negative impacts of response measures on social and economic sectors, promoting a just transition of the workforce, the creation of decent work and quality jobs.



In short, in the multilateral climate regime, 'just transition' was from the outset associated with what became known as 'impacts of response measures' where 'response measures' were exclusively interpreted as mitigation measures, in particular measures that curtail the production of fossil fuels, resulting for example in the loss of coal mining jobs.

## The Present: Just Transition for Bangladesh





As alluded to in the introductory paragraph, this focus on the just transition of the fossil fuel sector, and more generally the just transition under impacts of mitigation measures, does not do justice to those whose jobs and livelihoods are affected by climate change. For one, adaptation measures are also response measures, with potential adverse effects on jobs and livelihoods, as highlighted in a [2010 presentation](#) by the International Trade Union Congress (ITUC):

“There is a general tendency to replace rice production by mango in semi-arid Bangladesh. While correct from an economic and agronomic standpoint, without planning and local consultation there is a risk of social unrest. Mango requires much less work than rice. That is bad news for the one third of households in the region who depend on their work as daily labourers in agriculture.”

A recent ICCCAD policy brief on *Just transition for Bangladesh* by Mizan Khan, and Afsara Mirza also highlight that just transition concerns in Bangladesh “relate more to climate change impacts and their effect on the workers including women, children and the disabled persons. Few million people, mostly poor, are displaced at least temporarily when a disaster happens. These people are sheltered in cyclone and flood protection centres and after the disaster is over, they usually go back to their dilapidated existence. Some-

times, they get government assistance for rehabilitation, but it is very inadequate. Climatic stress causes rural-urban migration and exacerbates poverty. A part of these displaced people moves to slums of big cities in search of work, often crowding the already crowded slums. The living conditions deteriorate in their villages due to losses in service facilities of health, safety, education, and food security.”

## The Future: Response Measures and Loss & Damage

To accommodate these wider reaching just transition concerns, the multilateral climate change negotiations need to extend the just transition debate to include **adaptation** measures in its just transition considerations under impacts of response measures in fora such as the *Forum on the Impact of the Implementations of Response Measures* (established in §93 of the Cancun Agreements), or the *Katowice Committee of Experts on the Impacts of the Implementation of Response Measures*, a.k.a. Katowice Committee on Impacts (KCI), established at COP24 in 2018.

As regards the housing the safeguarding of social workplace justice in the face of adverse impacts of climate change in the multilateral climate change negotiations, the most natural agenda item would seem to be *Loss and Damage* (L&D) as dealt with in bodies such as the Santiago Network on L&D.

Without these social justice extensions there can at best be partial justice in the relevant transitions.

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