



BRIEFER

Climate justice leadership by **BANGLADESH**

Why Bangladesh matters for
Australian climate action





South Asia matters for Australia's climate actions

South Asia is home to one fourth of humanity. It is a highly climate vulnerable part of the world on account of the hundreds of millions of South Asians who are socio-economically vulnerable. Entire regions are at risk - South Asian coasts are battered by cyclones and threatened by rising sea levels, low-lying areas prone to flooding, and mountain areas susceptible to the cataclysmic effects of melting glaciers.

Sapna is putting the spotlight on the efforts of small and vulnerable South Asian countries, about what initiatives they have been taking, and how they have been supported (or not) by the global community. This year we are focussing on Bangladesh, South Asia's second largest economy and home to 173 million South Asians. Bangladesh's leadership in climate adaptation in the face of worsening cyclones, floods and rising sea levels, as well as Bangladesh's championing role in turning 'loss and damage' funding into a reality, are both exemplary.

We are also putting the spotlight on Australia's climate actions (or lack of) towards Bangladesh. Australia has not contributed to the newly established global Loss and Damage mechanism fund, which aims to provide debt free financial reparation to small and vulnerable countries fighting climate disasters. Besides urgently phasing out fossil fuel exports, Australia needs to consider climate actions not just towards vulnerable small island Pacific countries, but also South Asia, an Australian neighbour and key economic partner, which has several small, climate vulnerable countries.

DR. RUCHIRA TALUKDAR

Co-founder and Project Director





Bangladesh - my cursed paradise!

Before writing about my homeland I pay my respect to the First Nations people of this unceded land of so-called Australia who have been protecting their country for the last 65,000 years and fighting against ongoing colonial violence on their land, waterways, knowledge and communities. It always was, always will be Aboriginal land.

Bangladesh - my homeland..is a place I also call my cursed paradise! It is a paradise blessed with the world's largest mangrove forest the Sundarban, over 900 rivers, a pristine coastline and blissful greenery everywhere! But this paradise is cursed with climate change related extreme weather events - cyclones, floods, sea-level rise, soil erosion, droughts and heat waves. The curse of delayed climate action from the global North, fossil fuel hegemony, a neoliberal growth fetish, and lack of climate reparation is battering our homeland.

The saddest part of it all is that we have contributed the least to this crisis! Yet, with bare minimum resources our communities have developed par excellence local-led climate adaptation measures. Bangladesh has also shown leadership in climate justice advocacy globally. This briefing attempts to shed light on the climate resilience and climate justice leadership of Bangladesh. And how Australia should take accountability for its fossil fuel fetish and pay up climate reparations to countries like Bangladesh, Pacific Island Nations and other climate vulnerable countries of the global South, NOW!

SADIYA BINTE KARIM

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Climate justice profile of Bangladesh

Home to one-fourth of humanity, South Asia is one of the most climate vulnerable places in the world, largely on account of the hundreds of millions of South Asians who are socio-economically vulnerable, and likely to face the brunt of South Asia's changing climate.

As a low lying small country situated in the Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh is highly vulnerable to increasingly severe and frequent cyclones, coastal erosion and flooding, along with rising heat and humidity. Millions of socio-economically vulnerable Bangladeshis are facing the brunt of advancing climate change.

Bangladesh contains the world's largest mangrove forests at Sundarban in the south where some of South Asia's largest rivers - the Ganga/ Padma and Brahmaputra/ Jamuna - flow out to the sea through the world's largest delta



A house is seen in the middle of a flooded area Sunamganj District, Sylhet Division, Bangladesh



SIZE

At 147,570 sq km, Bangladesh is nearly the same size as Nepal, but holds six times its population.

POPULATION

OVERALL

At 173.6 million as per the 2022 census, Bangladesh is the 8th most populous country.

COASTAL POPULATION

Around 20% of the population or 35 million Bangladeshis live in coastal areas that are the most affected by climate-induced extreme weather.

URBAN VS RURAL POPULATION

Around 40% Bangladeshis live in cities, the remaining 60% in villages. Increasing internal displacements from climate events are shifting Bangladesh's urban vs rural distribution figures.

YOUTH POPULATION

At around 45.9 million, youth make up 28% of the Bangladeshi population as per the 2022 census. Their futures are at risk from advancing climate change.

POPULATION DENSITY

At 1,300 people per sq.km., Bangladesh has the 9th highest population density in the world.

GDP

At 437.42 billion US dollars in 2023, Bangladesh is the second largest economy in South Asia. Globally, its economy ranks 25th in nominal terms and 35th in terms of purchasing power parity.

CARBON EMISSIONS

Bangladesh contributes only 0.3% toward global emissions and ranks 146th on the global list for CO₂ emissions.

Bangladesh has one of the world's lowest per capita emissions at .607 tonnes per person; at nearly one-third of its neighbour India. This figure indicates a large economically vulnerable population who have not contributed to the climate crisis but are the most exposed to it.¹

¹ <https://www.iea.org/countries/bangladesh/emissions>



EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS

FREQUENCY AND INTENSITY

- Between 2000-2019 Bangladesh experienced 185 extreme weather events including tropical cyclones, coastal inundation, floods, heatwaves and droughts.

ECONOMIC LOSS

- Average losses per year from cyclone damage amount to an estimated \$1 billion, which is 0.7% of Bangladesh's GDP.²
- Between 2014 and 2021, climate-induced disasters claimed around 850,000 households and 250,000 hectares of harvestable lands; loss of agricultural land in turn resulted in crop failure that increased the price of rice by 30% between 2014 and 2021.³
- Economic loss also occurs from increasing salinity from rising sea levels: studies show that Bangladesh bears losses worth \$18-\$20 million due to increasing salinity in wetlands.

INTERNAL DISPLACEMENTS OR INTERNAL CLIMATE MIGRATIONS

DAILY

Around 2,000 Bangladeshis move to the capital Dhaka everyday; 70% of them due to climate-induced extreme weather events.⁴

YEARLY

Over 7.1 million Bangladeshis were internally displaced in 2022. Under a pessimistic scenario, Bangladesh is likely to experience 13.3 million new climate-related internal displacements (lower estimates were made for the more inclusive and climate-friendly development scenarios).⁵

CLIMATE VULNERABILITY

All these factors contribute toward Bangladesh's ranking as the 7th most climate vulnerable country on the Global Climate Risk Index 2021 considering long term impacts.⁶

2 https://www.icccad.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Bangladesh_Final_Covers_26-Jan-2024_ONLINE_compressed.pdf
3 IPCC 6th Assessment report
4 <https://icccad.net/news/dhaka-climate-refugees-a-warning/>
5 https://researchinginternaldisplacement.org/short_pieces/climate-induced-displacement-in-bangladesh-through-the-lens-of-loss-and-damage/
6 https://www.icccad.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Bangladesh_Final_Covers_26-Jan-2024_ONLINE_compressed.pdf

IPCC SIXTH ASSESMENT ON BANGLADESH'S CLIMATE FUTURES - KEY POINTS

- A sea level rise of 30 to 45 cm could displace more than 35 million people - about a quarter of Bangladesh's population - from its coastal districts.
- By 2050, Bangladesh will lose 17% of its territory due to rising sea levels, resulting in the loss of 30% of its agricultural land, creating severe challenges for food production.⁷
- Drinking water and human health can be affected by the infiltration of saline water into ground and surface water.⁸ Freshwater scarcity has and will further lead to a high diarrheal disease rate, increasing the disease burden in climate hot-spots; leading to 2.2 million more cases of E.coli in Bangladesh by 2100.
- The effect of salinity intrusion on the menstrual health and hygiene of women and adolescent girls in coastal regions of Bangladesh is often-overlooked; this problem can serve to intensify wider social insecurities.

- Impact on social fabric, mental well-being along with severe economic damages.
- Climate-induced disasters are forcing the poorest communities to turn to illegal livelihoods such as logging in Sundarbans, further increasing human-tiger conflicts.
- Risk of increasing gender disparity and gender-based violence is likely with advancing climate crisis.

AUSTRALIA'S BANGLADESHI DIASPORA

Bangladeshi diasporas around the world carry lived experiences of climate change. Australia's Bangladeshi diaspora is estimated at 51,491 (ABS, 2024).

With a high population density and one of the lowest contributions to global fossil fuel emissions, Bangladesh and the majority of Bangladeshis, have done the least to contribute to the climate crisis, and yet share a disproportionate burden of its effects. Bangladesh is a litmus test for global climate justice. Bangladeshi youth are facing a nearly unlivable future.



⁷ <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2019/09/17/Bangladesh-Selected-Issues-48683>

⁸ Consuming salty, contaminated water has been linked to, for example, increases in cardiovascular disease, hypertension and waterborne diseases such as diarrhoea and dysentery, primarily in children.

Climate leadership at home and in the world by Bangladesh



Cyclones and climate resilience

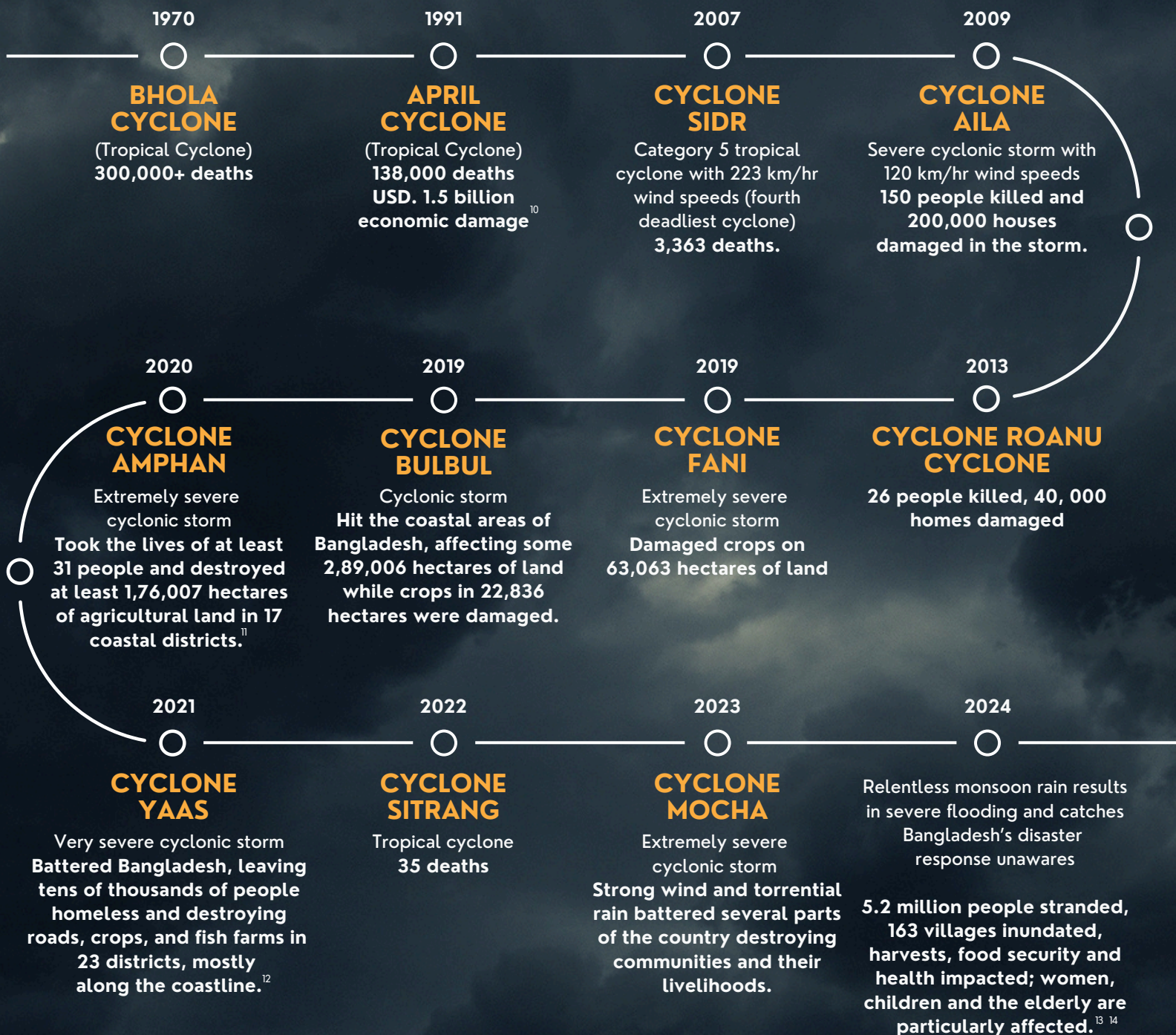
Bangladesh has received significant attention in the last few decades both for its climate vulnerability, and increasingly for its leadership in climate change adaptation - in the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (Working Group II), Bangladesh was mentioned 430 times.⁹

Bangladesh has been experiencing rising frequency and intensity of extreme weather events - between 2000-2019 Bangladesh experienced 185 extreme weather events including tropical cyclones, sea-level rise, floods, heatwaves and droughts.¹⁰ But, while cyclones battering the Bangladeshi coast have grown in intensity and frequency, the country has built climate resilience and avoided their worst effects on people. Bangladesh is known to have a world leading system to protect people from disasters. Despite this, at times - such as seen during the 2024 floods -, Bangladesh's climate resilience has been overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of the climate event.



⁹ <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/>

¹⁰ https://www.ipccad.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Bangladesh_Final_Covers_26-Jan-2024_ONLINE_compressed.pdf



¹¹ <https://icccad.net/news/dhakas-climate-refugees-a-warning/>

¹² https://www.icccad.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Bangladesh_Final_Covers_26-Jan-2024_ONLINE_compressed.pdf

¹³ https://www.icccad.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Bangladesh_Final_Covers_26-Jan-2024_ONLINE_compressed.pdf

¹⁴ <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/local-news/8by81ocjoh>



Leadership at climate COP

Professor Saleemul Huq¹⁵ (1952-2023), Director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD)¹⁶, was one of the longest and most persistent advocates of loss and damage funds.¹⁷ Under his leadership Bangladesh became a leading advocate for climate justice, demanding that rich nations which have done by far the most to cause climate change, pay to help developing countries to tackle the crisis.

“Loss and damage isn’t aid. “When money is given as aid, all the power rests with the donor. It is an unequal relationship.”

SALEEMUL HUQ

Bangladesh is a leading voice for climate vulnerable nations from the Global South. Along with other least developed countries (LDCs)¹⁸, Bangladesh has been advocating for a loss and damage finance stream (on top of adaptation and mitigation streams) since 2005.



¹⁵ <https://www.ied.org/users/saleemulhuq>

¹⁶ <https://www.ied.org/>

¹⁷ <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/what-you-need-know-about-cop27-loss-and-damage-fund>

¹⁸ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/least-developed-country-category.html>



United Nations
Climate Change



UN CLIMATE
CHANGE
CONFERENCE
UK 2021

COP11 MONTREAL

2005

Bangladesh, on behalf of LDCs, calls for compensation for damages caused by climate change, in a foreshadowing of later conversations around loss and damage.¹⁹

COP15 COPENHAGEN

2009

Bangladesh along with other countries submit text concerning loss and damage, arguing that it is needed beyond small island nations.

CLIMATE VULNERABLE FORUM

2009

Bangladesh has been a key member of the CVF since the beginning. It led the group twice between 2011-2013 and 2022-2024, advocating for justice-centric accountability from historical climate disaster contributors.

COP19 DOHA

2013

Discussions of loss and damage took on an added urgency. In the run-up to the meeting, Dr Huq gathered representatives from LDCs in Dhaka, and invited experts to talk through specific topics, including loss and damage. He told Carbon Brief:



"That really was an eye-opener for the LDC negotiators to say, well, this affects us. It's not just a small-island thing...Ever since then, the LDC group has been very active on loss and damage."

This enabled the whole of the G77 to unite and back the creation of a loss-and-damage mechanism.

"Rich countries were caught unaware" by the strength of feeling around it,"Harjeet Singh, head of global political strategy at Climate Action Network, told Carbon Brief.²⁰

WARSAW CONVENTION

2013

Bangladesh played a crucial role in shaping the discourse around loss and damage. Its advocacy contributed to establishing the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage, which signaled a step forward in recognizing and addressing the impacts beyond adaptation.²¹

COP27 SHARM EL-SHEIKH

2022

The Loss and Damage Fund was first suggested by Vanuatu in 1991. Thirty one years later, countries finally agreed to provide "loss and damage" funding for vulnerable countries hit hard by climate disasters.

COP28 DUBAI

2023

A decade after being officially introduced into the UN framework, countries finally operationalised the global Loss and Damage Fund. Several countries made funding pledges. Australia supported the global fund but has not yet made a funding pledge.

¹⁹ <https://enb.iisd.org/events/unfccc-cop-11/summary-report-28-november-10-december-2005>

²⁰ <https://interactive.carbonbrief.org/timeline-the-struggle-over-loss-and-damage-in-un-climate-talks/>

²¹ <https://unfccc.int/topics/adaptation-and-resilience/workstreams/loss-and-damage/warsaw-international-mechanism>

Other facets of climate leadership

- Bangladesh was one of the first developing countries to establish a coordinated action plan in 2009.²²
- Bangladesh has become one of the world leaders in Solar House Systems, with 6 million households using solar photovoltaic systems.²³
- During the pandemic, Bangladesh launched the South Asian regional office for the Global Center on Adaptation (GCA) in Dhaka in September 2020. The GCA Bangladesh office will promote indigenous nature-based sustainable solutions and innovative adaptation measures with the regional countries.²⁴
- In December 2022, Bangladesh even became a party to the case by an international organization of small island states, known as the Commission of Small Island States (COSIS), on states' obligations regarding climate change at ICJ.²⁵
- Finance based justice advocacy: In response to the Paris Agreement's provision of a new collective quantified goal to be reached by 2025, the Dhaka-Glasgow Declaration included a clause of a Delivery Plan for the annual \$100 billion in climate finance from developed countries over the period 2020-2024, totalling \$500 billion as additional finance in support of developing country climate actions which include Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans.

²² <https://bangladesh.un.org/en/260959-bangladesh%E2%80%99s-energy-transition-journey-so-far#:~:text=Setting%20a%20precedent%2C%20Bangladesh%20was,resources%20spanning%202009%20to%202012.>

²³ [https://theconfluence.blog/transforming-solar-energy-landscape-in-bangladesh/#:~:text=Currently%2C%20Bangladesh%20has%20around%206,solar%20photovoltaic%20\(PV\)%20employment.](https://theconfluence.blog/transforming-solar-energy-landscape-in-bangladesh/#:~:text=Currently%2C%20Bangladesh%20has%20around%206,solar%20photovoltaic%20(PV)%20employment.)

²⁴ <https://gca.org/events/launch-of-the-global-hub-on-locally-led-adaptation/#:~:text=Event%20description%3A,Heads%20of%20State%20and%20Government.>

²⁵ <https://whiteboardmagazine.com/3977/bangladesh-in-climate-justice/>



Australian climate action towards Bangladesh



Bangladesh matters for Australian climate action

Australia has said that:

"Climate change is the greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of our closest neighbours in the Indo-Pacific. The Government is taking real and ambitious action to address climate change at home and in our region."

While Australia recognises the climate crisis in the entire Indo-Pacific region, its regional climate actions primarily prioritise the small island nations of the Pacific.

'SHOULDER TO SHOULDER' WITH THE PACIFIC, BUT GAPS REMAIN

Committing to "stand shoulder to shoulder with our Pacific neighbours", Australia has launched various initiatives to bolster its support for Pacific Island nations in addressing critical climate challenges, particularly since 2022. Australia is the biggest climate finance contributor in the Pacific.

On paper, Australia's climate actions towards the Pacific, as seen in Australia's Pacific Climate Strategy 2022, demonstrate a commitment to addressing devastating climate impacts. However, the Pacific Island Forum and its member states are calling for ambitious and transformative climate action from Australia, particularly in emissions reduction, climate finance, and contributing to the global Loss and Damage fund.

BEYOND THE PACIFIC, CLIMATE VULNERABLE SOUTH ASIA ALSO MATTERS

When it comes to climate action towards its Indo-Pacific neighbours, Australia also needs to consider the South Asian region since its not just small island nations that are bracing for catastrophic climate change; small, low-lying coastal countries such as Bangladesh are equally if not more vulnerable.

The additional climate vulnerability of places like Bangladesh arise from the fact that the South Asian region has one of the world's highest population densities. Bangladesh experiences thousands of internal migrations from the coast to the country's capital Dhaka - a large proportion of which are induced by climate change - daily.

The Bangladesh government estimates that by 2050, one in every seven Bangladeshis will be displaced due to climate change – that's 13.3 million people.

As climate change worsens, internal climate migrations are likely to give way to significant climate migrations across borders and other parts of the Indo-Pacific. Australia needs to assume climate responsibility towards vulnerable communities from Bangladesh and South Asia at large. South Asian countries also share with Australia a colonial history and a membership of the Commonwealth of nations.

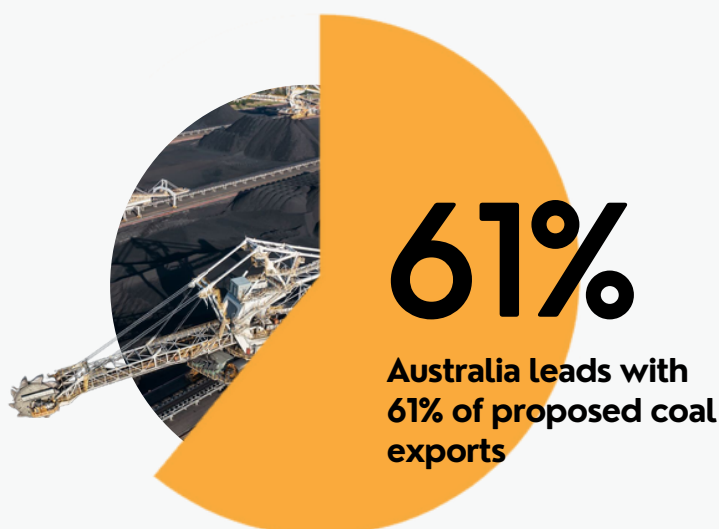
PROMISE OF CLIMATE COOPERATION AND MAJOR OMISSIONS TOWARDS BANGLADESH

Australia announced an \$1.8 million AUD in humanitarian relief after the devastating Bangladesh floods in Aug-September 2024. In addition, Australia intends to build up climate cooperation with Bangladesh through:²⁶

- Funding climate adaptation mitigation, and capacity building for Bangladesh to access international climate finance
- Playing a 'climate resilience facilitator' role in the Indo-Pacific region by sharing Bangladesh's adaptation best practices with Pacific Island nations.

But Australia's intent towards climate cooperation with Bangladesh, a small, climate vulnerable South Asian neighbour is largely overshadowed by Australia's continuing fossil fuel production and exports, and its global climate finance contributions falling vastly short of its fair share:

- Australia has the largest pipeline of coal export projects in the world, making up 61% of proposed coal export projects globally²⁷
- A part of Australia's aid funding towards Bangladesh is directed towards fossil fuel projects through multilateral development banks.
- Australia's combined contribution towards climate finance and aid for development in the Indo-Pacific region remains vastly inadequate; Australia's 2022-23 climate finance contributions were only 15% of its fair share of the current global USD 100 billion annual climate finance target.²⁸
- While Australia supported the establishment of the global Loss and Damage Fund at COP28, it is yet to make a contribution to the Fund.



Australia can phase out fossil fuels and their exports, support the development of self-sufficient and just clean energy systems in South Asia, and contribute its fair share of global climate finance, in addition to committing global loss and damage funding.

²⁶ <https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/penny-wong/media-release/bangladesh-australia-ministerial-dialogue-dhaka>

²⁷ <https://www.jubileeaustralia.org/storage/app/uploads/public/647/6cb/aa7/6476cbaa7ee3b988473830.pdf>

²⁸ <https://www.oxfam.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/14246-NCQG-Policy-Paper-WEB.pdf>

CLIMATE ACTIONS MATTER FOR THE SOUTH ASIAN DIASPORA IN AUSTRALIA

As a part of the Indo-Pacific, as a region that is growing in economic relevance for Australia, and a place from where migrations to Australia are occurring at the fastest pace, South Asia at large matters for Australian climate action.

South Asian diasporas in Australia are likely to find relevance in Australia assuming climate responsibilities towards South Asia because South Asian migrants, especially Bangladeshi diaspora, are likely to carry lived experiences of climate change. South Asian Australians also have a sense of justice towards the “global South” and think that developed countries like Australia should do more first.

South Asian solidarity: three things Australian climate groups can do

Australian climate groups recognise the climate crisis in the Pacific. But South Asia, the world’s most populous region, could also face a catastrophic future under advanced climate change, with millions of socio-economically vulnerable South Asians displaced and dispossessed, and hundreds and millions of children and youth inheriting an unlivable future. As an Australian climate organisation you can:

1

Acknowledge the unfolding climate crisis in neighboring South Asia

2

Follow and share Sapna’s stories from the ground in South Asia on Instagram @sapnaclimatesolidarity

3

Stand with Bangladesh at COP29: share the following messages and hashtags on socials.



#climatejusticenow #COP29 #climatejusticeforBangladesh #lossanddamage #climatereparations

1

As a small, low-lying, coastal country in the global South, with one of the highest population densities, Bangladesh is at the forefront of the climate crisis from the combined effects of cyclones, rising sea levels and floods, and rising heat.

2

With one of the lowest per capita CO₂ emissions in the world, Bangladesh has done the least to contribute to the climate crisis but is already facing its worst effects.

3

Bangladesh has developed par excellence local-led and women-focussed climate adaptation methods and practices despite limited resources and escalating economic costs from climate events.

4

The devastating floods of August 2024 show that the increasing intensity of extreme weather events is overwhelming Bangladesh's climate resilience capacity.

5

Bangladesh has played a leading role amongst climate vulnerable small countries that are least developed (LDCs) for 'loss and damage' funding. Australia, although supportive of global 'loss and damage' funding, is yet to financially commit to the fund.

Key messages

6

Not just loss and damage funding; Bangladesh needs climate reparations from those historically responsible for the largest emissions – both global North countries and fossil fuel corporations.

7

Australia is deepening its economic and energy ties in South Asia and has climate responsibilities towards its climate vulnerable South Asian neighbours. South Asians are Australia's fastest growing migrant community. South Asian migrants, who are experiencing climate change in both South Asia and Australia, would want to see Australia assume climate responsibilities toward South Asia.

8

Australia needs to consider its climate responsibilities toward Bangladesh, a small, climate vulnerable South Asian neighbour in the Indo-Pacific. A growing Bangladeshi diaspora in Australia, who have experience of climate change in both places - Australia and Bangladesh - would want to see Australia assume climate responsibilities toward Bangladesh.

9

Part of Australian aid to Bangladesh is being directed towards fossil fuel development through Multilateral Development Banks, instead of clean and just solutions, further fuelling the climate crisis.

10

Australia can phase out fossil fuels and their exports, support the development of self-sufficient and just clean energy systems in South Asia, and contribute its fair share of global climate finance, in addition to committing global loss and damage funding.

Sapna South Asian Climate Solidarity is a climate justice project in the South Asian diaspora in Australia. The word Sapna means a vision or a dream in many South Asian languages. For us, it signifies our vision for a safe and equitable future, and for climate solutions that are clean and just.



This briefer is meant as a climate justice resource.
Remember to cite Sapna South Asian Climate
Solidarity when using it.