



Dhaka Declaration:

Mainstreaming land rights in the narrative of climate change

10-11 October 2023 | Six Seasons Hotel
Dhaka, Bangladesh

We are from grassroots and local communities, civil society organizations, academic and research institutions, international organizations, and a cross-section of the citizenry from twenty-one countries¹ who have participated in the conference on *Mainstreaming land rights in the narrative of climate change: views from the ground*, held on 10-11 October 2023, in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

We recognize that the climate crisis is the result of global injustice and continues to create conditions for greater inequality. Developed countries became wealthy through fossil-fuel powered industries that unleashed the carbon emissions responsible for climate change. In a world severely impacted by the climate crisis, developed countries are demanding that poor, developing countries cut their carbon emissions at the cost of their own development pursuits.

We acknowledge the existing global instruments and commitments such as the Kyoto Protocol, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, Paris Agreement, Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage, and others.

Climate change affects everyone. Yet the poor, vulnerable, and excluded groups suffer its worst effects. It exacerbates existing inequalities. Women and children are the hardest hit in the face of climate-led disasters and slow-onset climatic changes.

¹ In person and virtual participants from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Ivory Coast, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Madagascar, Nepal, Netherlands, Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States of America, and Vietnam.



We declare that the lack of land rights such as landlessness and insecure land tenure of the rural poor:

- render them extremely vulnerable to the impact of climate change, as they are forced to settle in areas that are fragile and disaster-prone;
- inhibits their ability to recover from impacts of climatic events;
- restricts their capacity to engage in climate adaptation and mitigation which protect and sustain their lives and livelihoods;
- deter them from implementing sustainable land use and governance practices;
- severely limit their right to make decisions and investments that ensure their survival and improve their resilience; and,
- disqualify them from government compensation for loss and damage, extension services, and support for resettlement.

We are concerned that climate-induced migration and displacement detaches people from their source of livelihood and can cause socio-cultural disintegration of communities, thereby, increasing conflict.

We express concern that people affected are often treated as a problem rather than an active partner in climate action. The planning and implementation of adaptation and mitigation programs are often top-down, and communities are excluded from discussions and decision-making.

We affirm that the rural poor can lead climate solutions in their communities as shown by experience. These include adopting sustainable land use and governance practices, transitioning to sustainable agriculture, promoting indigenous knowledge, diversifying their livelihoods and crops, including growing climate-resilient varieties, and sustainable and participatory management of community forests and rangelands, among others.

We recognize the close linkages among climate injustices, insecure land tenure, and violations of human rights. A human rights-based approach to climate action requires safeguarding the most vulnerable people while responding to



their needs and supporting them to be agents of their own resilience.

We therefore submit the following recommendations to operationalize a human rights-based approach to climate justice that affirms the link between climate action and the land tenure

security of the rural poor:

- Amplify the voices of the poor and marginalized. Those who are most vulnerable to climate change impacts must participate and be represented in political and decision-making processes.
- Ensure that land governance, land reform, and equitable access to land, water, and natural resources are the building blocks for climate resilience. Secure tenure will increase the capacity of the rural poor to sustainably use their land.
- Recognize and protect indigenous peoples' rights to land and culture, and support customary use, management, and governance of land and natural resources, including forests, rangelands, and fisheries. Governments and policymakers should enact and reform laws, ratify and implement international conventions to safeguard indigenous peoples' stewardship over their domains.
- Address gender discriminatory laws, policies, and practices which hinder equal land rights for women. Remove barriers to women's full participation and decision-making in sustainable land use, management and governance.
- Ensure the full involvement of all stakeholders, particularly those most vulnerable to climate change, in the formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policy instruments for land-based climate change adaptation and mitigation. People in vulnerable situations who face greater risks and threats from climate change have the right to meaningful and informed participation in all decisions that affect their rights and survival. The rights to free, prior, and informed consent of indigenous peoples and other affected communities must be respected.
- Respective governments should adopt open data principles and



standards when publishing land governance and climate change data in accordance with FAIR² and CARE³ Principles. Open data is a precondition to the right of people to meaningful and informed participation in decisions that affect their rights and survival.

- Governments should uphold, protect and enforce the rights of all persons that have been internally displaced due to climate change – in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and international obligations.
- Develop new normative arrangements to respect, protect, and enforce the rights of persons displaced across *international* borders due to climate change. This includes the development of a protocol to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees to ensure that the human rights of persons displaced due to climate change across international borders are formally acknowledged and enforced.⁴ The global community has an obligation to care for these displaced persons.
- As governments and multilateral institutions have committed to establish climate funds, these funds must reach local communities and must align with community-identified priorities to build resilience and address loss and damage due to climate change.

We pledge our commitment and solidarity in pursuit of the above recommendations.

²In 2016, the “FAIR Guiding Principles for scientific data management and stewardship” were published in Scientific Data. The authors intended to provide guidelines to improve the Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability, and Reuse of digital assets. The principles emphasize machine-actionability (i.e., the capacity of computational systems to find, access, interoperate, and reuse data with none or minimal human intervention) because humans increasingly rely on computational support to deal with data as a result of the increase in volume, complexity, and creation speed of data.

³The “CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance” (Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, and Ethics) was developed by the International Indigenous Data Sovereignty Interest Group (within the Research Data Alliance) – a network of nation-state based indigenous data sovereignty networks and individuals – in consultation with indigenous peoples, scholars, non-profit organizations, and governments. The CARE Principles are people and purpose-oriented, reflecting the crucial role of data in advancing innovation, governance, and self-determination among indigenous peoples. The Principles complement the existing data-centric approach represented in the “Fair Guiding Principles for scientific data management and stewardship.”

⁴Promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change mitigation, loss and damage and participation. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change, Ian Fry. Document A/77/226. Seventy-seventh session of the United General Assembly, 26 July 2022.



Signatories:

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Landesa
Law and Society Trust
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South Asia Rural Reconstruction Association (SARRA)
STAR Kampuchea
Abma Cultural Development Forum (ACDF)
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