

THE COMMUNITIES FIRST PILOT FUND:

CJRF'S LOSS AND DAMAGE SPECIAL INITIATIVE

CJRF's special initiative on climate-related loss and damage launched in late 2021 with funding from the Scottish Government. Now called the Communities First Pilot Fund, the initiative supports a growing portfolio of small grants that address loss and damage through the lens of equity and inclusion. CJRF grantee partners around the world use inclusive, participatory processes to enable impacted communities to identify and implement their own solutions to L&D. Through grants from the pilot fund, people experiencing the worst impacts of climate change can access some support, now. This early action allows CJRF to test and showcase how community-driven approaches to addressing L&D work. In less than two years, these lessons have already informed the work of government and philanthropic L&D funders, as well as the new UNFCCC Loss and Damage Fund.





Image: UUSC

COMMUNITIES FIRST:

PRINCIPLES GUIDING CJRF'S APPROACH TO ADDRESSING L&D

CJRF's grantee partners develop inclusive plans to address their L&D by accounting for different perspectives and priorities. Women and girls, along with other traditionally marginalized populations, take the lead in identifying the ways in which L&D affects them, and in formulating interventions that can make a difference. Through the process of implementing these grants, the people worst affected by climate impacts co-create approaches and narratives that put climate justice at the center of how to address L&D.

CJRF's grantmaking on L&D ensures that:

- Interventions are identified by local partners and community members, so that they are contextually appropriate and effective.
 - CJRF, our grantee partners, and our donors take a learning-by-doing approach, recognizing that addressing L&D is a new area of work with potential risks and challenges.
 - Interventions explicitly include women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, people with disabilities, and other traditionally marginalized or excluded communities. Each grant takes an intersectional approach, identifying the communities that are marginalized in the given location. Gender-sensitivity is expressly designed into each grant.
 - Grants to address L&D are participatory in ways that match partners' interests and ways of working, and are appropriate for their contexts.
 - Grants are flexible to accommodate the continual and evolving nature of loss and damage, and the changing perspectives of those who experience loss and damage.
 - Grants are made rapidly, to ensure funds reach affected communities at a speed that matches the ongoing impacts of climate change.
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FOR FUNDERS:

AN OPPORTUNITY TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY-LED L&D NOW

Climate impacts continue to harm communities every day. While small amounts of funding cannot meet the vast scale of L&D need, funds currently available begin to address some of the loss and damage being experienced by communities at the frontlines of climate change. CJRF's work shows it is doable to address L&D in a community-led manner now, while broader political decision-making and set-up of the UNFCCC L&D Fund continue. Funders who are interested in supporting community-driven, participatory approaches to addressing L&D can work through CJRF's Communities First Pilot Fund to:

- Test innovative approaches: with modest-sized grants and a risk-positive attitude, CJRF can support donors to test ways to address L&D that can inform their future funding streams.
- Shift power to communities: CJRF grant partners use context-specific approaches to engage community members who are often marginalized and put them in the driver's seat around decision-making.
- Transform funding models: CJRF has mechanisms to devolve decision-making to different stakeholders, to move away from donor-led grantmaking towards participatory grantmaking. These include a youth-led grantmaking board and regional consortium-driven models of decision-making.
- Learn together: CJRF's approach to grantmaking includes a focus on learning-by-doing, and gathering donors, grant partners, and experts to engage in learning processes that support evolution toward more climate-just approaches.
- Support rapid, impactful change in communities now: Since early 2021, CJRF has made seven major L&D grants. We have a £5+ million program of L&D grantmaking planned for 2023-2026.

Through Communities First, CJRF seeks to fill a gap in the current climate architecture by creating a funding pool that makes L&D grants immediately and invests substantially in learning from these experiences. Funders have the opportunity to step forward and be a first-mover for tangible action on the ground. By acting now, we have an opportunity to offer lessons learned to larger L&D funding efforts that may be slower to get off the ground.

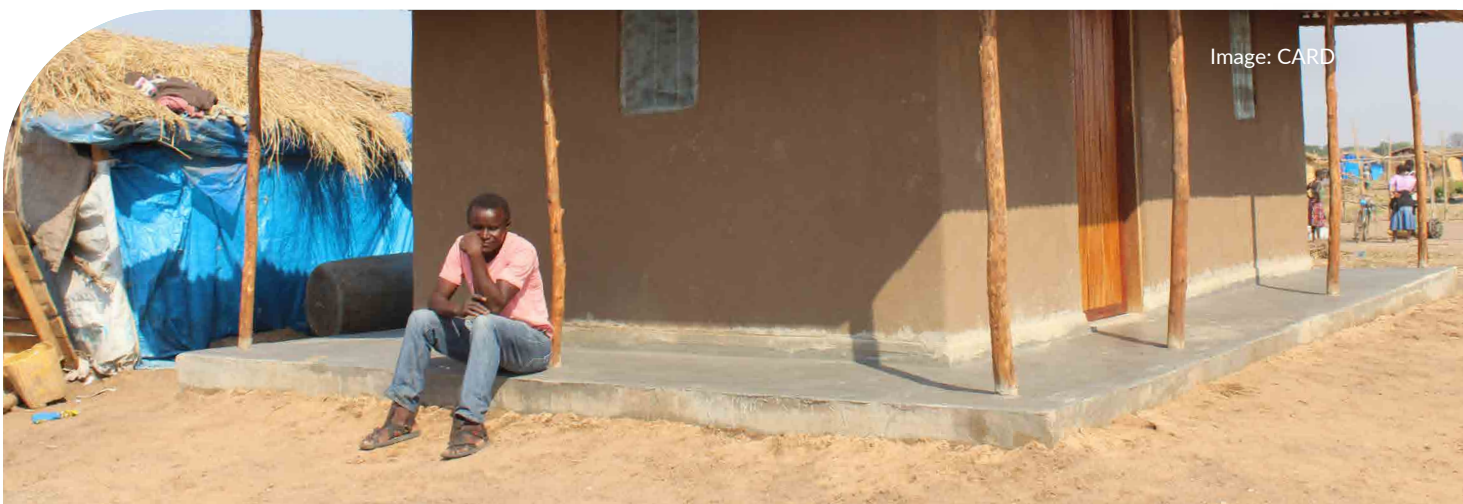


Image: CARD

IMPACT OF THE COMMUNITIES FIRST PILOT FUND

As a case study: the first £1 million in L&D funding from the Scottish Government enabled five significant grants in Bangladesh, Malawi, and the Pacific, plus a number of “micro” grants to youth-led organizations around the world. These grants have enabled the Scottish Government to deliver funding at speed, to test participatory mechanisms, and support community-led approaches to address L&D globally.

The Communities First Pilot Fund works towards impact at three levels:



Community level:

Our grants address the needs of some of the communities suffering most from climate-induced loss and damage, and support them to share their stories.

Examples of impact: In Malawi, our grant enabled the relocation and resilient reconstruction of 116 homes impacted by Cyclones Ana, Gombe, and Freddy. In Bangladesh, we communities were able to revive an important festival that could not be celebrated because of L&D.



Partner level:

We support organizations, including funders, that are taking innovative and inclusive approaches to addressing L&D, including support for network-building, learning and advocacy.

Examples of impact: Our partner UUSC experimented with regional, collaborative regranting mechanisms in the Pacific, which inspired the creation of the Kato Pacific Community Climate Fund. With LDYC we created the first youth-led L&D grantmaking mechanism. This youth grantmaking council attracted a doubling in funding from the Open Society Foundations, and they it announced another open call for youth-determined, youth-delivered grants at COP28.



Global level:

We work with our partners to share lessons from our work to catalyze additional future funding for L&D to adopt participatory, community-led approaches.

Examples of impact: The lessons from this grant portfolio have fed into the Transitional Committee deliberations and inspired a second round of funding from the Scottish Government, focused on non-economic L&D. A new report on the portfolio, published by the Stockholm Environment Institute, offers detailed lessons to grow the nascent evidence-base on L&D needs and actions.



LEARN MORE!

To explore how to contribute to Communities First contact CJRF's L&D Program Officer Ayesha Dinshaw at ayesha.dinshaw@cjrfund.org.