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# Effective Support for Communities Experiencing Climate Mobilities

Lessons from the Climate Justice Resilience Fund grant portfolio (2017 - 2024)



## Disclosure and copyright

This report is the main deliverable of a consultancy project commissioned by the Climate Justice Resilience Fund (CJRF) and benefited from the guidance of **Ayesha Dinshaw** and **Heather McGray**.

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The report was authored by **Dr. David Durand-Delacre**, **Douwe van Schie**, **Humaira Anjum**, **Kariūki Werū**, **Dr. Robert Oakes**, **Ann-Christine Link**, **Dr. Lisa Thalheimer-Prężyna** and **Dr. Kees van der Geest** of the Environment and Migration: Interactions and Choices (EMIC) Division of the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS) in Bonn, Germany. The recommendations provided in this report are the result of analysis and interpretations made by the EMIC team, based on interviews with CJRF grant partners and the review of project documents. Any errors, including in the interpretation and contextualization of direct quotes, are those of the author team.

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This report benefited from additional guidance and feedback of a Guiding Committee comprising CJRF grant partners and other thematic experts: **Ashish Barua**, Helvetas Bangladesh; **Robin Bronen**, Alaska Institute for Justice; **Aminul Hoque**, COAST; **Jackie Qataliña Schaeffer**, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium; **Mohammad Shahjahan**, Young Power in Social Action; **Salote Soqo**, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee; **Claire Poelking**, MacArthur Foundation; **Nilesh Prakash**, CJRF board member; **Alex de Sherbinin**, Columbia Climate School; **Amali Tower**, Climate Refugees.

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# Acronyms

## Institutional acronyms

AIJ	Alaska Institute for Justice
ANTHC	Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
CJRF	Climate Justice Resilience Fund
COAST	Coastal Association for Social Transformation
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNU-EHS	United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security
UUSC	Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
YPSA	Young Power in Social Action

## Other acronyms

CM	Climate mobilities
HMCCC	Human mobility in the context of climate change
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations

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## Executive Summary

### Scope of the report

The Climate Justice Resilience Fund (CJRF) is one of the first major philanthropic initiatives framed explicitly around climate justice, and one of the few that works internationally on climate resilience. CJRF works by re-granting monies from diverse funders. Their “Phase 1” pool of funding (2016-2022) totaled nearly US\$25 million, enabling approximately fifty major grants to support women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples to build and share their solutions for climate resilience.

*We put people, their rights, and their lived experience directly at the center of climate action. We envision a thriving planet built on participation, equity, human rights and justice, where people who have been disproportionately affected by climate change issues are recognized and resourced to lead solutions and act at the emerging frontiers of climate justice.<sup>1</sup>*

This report reviews 11 CJRF grants that address challenges arising from diverse climate mobilities.<sup>2</sup> The CJRF-funded projects were implemented by partner organizations working closely with communities, between 2017 and 2024 in Alaska, Bangladesh, and the Pacific. These 11 grants offer a rare opportunity to identify the kinds of community-led projects and initiatives that effectively address challenges arising from climate-related displacement, relocation, migration and immobility (so-called “trapped populations”), at a time when these are a growing concern for people around the world but few

funders of any size provide dedicated funding with this thematic focus.

The discussion and analysis in this report are based on in-depth review of grant documents (including application forms, progress and narrative reports, and project outputs such as advocacy materials, news coverage, and policy reports) as well as interviews with the project managers in each of the implementing organizations (also referred to as “CJRF grant partners” throughout). The recommendations and all analysis provided in this report are the result of analysis and interpretations made by the author team.

### Purpose of the report

The report answers the following four questions based on CJRF grant partners’ experiences designing and implementing projects:

1. How do CJRF grant partners and affected communities address issues related to diverse climate mobilities?
2. What participatory methodologies did grant partners use in projects to address climate mobilities, and how effective were they?
3. What is the relationship between different types of climate mobilities and types of losses and damages, both economic and non-economic?
4. How did the characteristics of the grant program influence the project partners’ ability to address community needs, with what advantages and limitations?

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<sup>1</sup> CJRF Vision Statement

<sup>2</sup>We use the term climate mobilities (CM) to describe the full range of human movement in the context of climate change, accounting for variations in distance, duration, degree of voluntariness and spontaneity, and including cases where people are unable to leave or choose to stay where they are. Climate mobilities encompass climate-related displacement, planned relocation, migration and immobility.

Based on these questions, the report distills recommendations to guide not only CJRF’s future grantmaking but also other philanthropic funders and international policy advocates supporting communities dealing with challenges and difficult decisions pertaining to climate-related displacement, relocation, and migration.

### An inventory of activities to address climate mobilities

In addressing climate mobilities, communities face distinct challenges depending on the specific climate hazards they face, past development and

climate adaptation measures, the adequacy of governance frameworks, and other place-dependent considerations. Thus, the projects reviewed cover a wide range of situations, including work with already displaced people now living in highly-vulnerable situations, communities seeking durable relocation but not receiving the necessary assistance, or people seeking assistance to avoid movement. The projects consequently also involve a broad spectrum of activities, based on grant partner interviews and project documentation, which are categorized according climate mobility type (Table ES.1).

*Table ES.1. Inventory of project activities, by climate mobility type*

<b>Climate mobility type</b>	<b>Related activities</b>	<b>Examples from the grant portfolio</b>
Displacement	(1) to provide support for people coping with the negative impacts of displacement	Essential service provision (e.g. safe water and sanitation, electricity) Repairs to shelter Repairs to infrastructure (e.g. roads, embankments, sea walls)
	(2) to prevent first-time (or further) displacement	Microfinance programs Livelihood skills training Connecting displaced people with government services (e.g. health, education, social protection schemes) Support for relocation
Relocation	(3) to support relocation needs and risk assessments, decision-making, and planning	Relocation site selection / site suitability assessments Community needs assessments Community capacity-building for planning Advocacy for relocation
	(4) to implement a decision to relocate	Land purchase and registration Housebuilding, provision of building materials Essential service provision at relocation site (e.g. water tanks) Connecting relocating people with host community Connecting relocating people with government services (e.g. health, education, social protection schemes)
	(5) to cope with the negative impacts of relocation (whether historical, pending, partial or inadequately completed)	Adaptation measures in origin site (e.g. building evacuation center, sea wall repairs) Psycho-social support Cultural preservation and revitalization

Migration & immobility	(6) to assist the involuntary immobile to migrate	Migration Information Hubs Awareness raising on migrants' rights Livelihood skills training (opening new job opportunities)
	(7) to assist the voluntary immobile to stay	Livelihood skills training (to pursue similar but better adapted activities) Local risk reduction / adaptation measures Support to immobile populations for claiming entitlements
Cross-cutting community engagement	(8) Support for effective community consultation and leadership.	Forming community teams, youth, women's' and other groups to consult and let decide project activities. Regional and international convenings Indigenous-led monitoring Local/Indigenous authoring and peer-review of reports Local/Indigenous staff hires in project management roles Training and capacity-building for local staff and volunteers Financial compensation for time invested in projects

### Principles to guide projects on climate mobilities

Based on this inventory, we provide cross-cutting recommendations for philanthropic funders seeking to design new grant making programs to address challenges arising from climate mobilities. While grant partners shared concrete examples of measures (Table ES.1), they also repeatedly emphasized several broader values and principles that guide their approach.

#### Recommendations for climate mobility projects include the following guidance:

- Begin with the recognition that colonial histories, development policies, and socio-economic inequalities are just as important to understand peoples' mobilities as the climate hazards communities face.
- Adopt a human rights and climate justice lens, to address the potential rights violations and injustices associated with climate mobilities, which cannot be fixed through technical interventions.
- People should not be excluded from participating in projects based on their mobility status. Some community

members may choose to stay where they are, and require support to do so. The perspectives and needs of host communities also need to be integrated into CM projects, to avoid creating new tensions or injustices.

- Projects should focus on reducing vulnerabilities and enabling choice, facilitating peoples' movement when they seek migration or relocation options, while supporting community members to avoid involuntary mobilities.

### Participatory approaches and community leadership

CJRF emphasizes the importance of community engagement and leadership in the projects it funds. The modalities varied from project to project and included, for example, the organization of consultations and "courtyard meetings" to understand local peoples' needs and priorities concerning basic service provision after displacement. Moreover, grant partners worked to hand over planning and decision-making powers to local and Indigenous people, whenever possible. This included setting aside funds for local communities to hire local project managers,



and to support them with training and technical assistance. Other modalities for engagement included the creation of local and Indigenous peer review groups, who can provide feedback on project design and reports, increasing local ownership of projects in the process. Several partners noted that volunteer community labor, though in some places necessary and beneficial, is in others inappropriate without financial compensation. Regional and international convenings to facilitate cross-community exchange and learning were also mentioned as particularly valuable.

Some specific mobility-related needs and challenges stood out as requiring particular forms of community engagement. This was especially the case for relocation projects, for which crucial decisions, such as identifying which families should be relocated first, could not have been taken by the grant partner alone. For this, the grant partner created and trained local volunteers to form community teams, who were involved at all stages of this decision.

**Recommendations include:**

- Involve community members at all stages of project design, especially by allocating resources to hire local staff or create community groups with decision-making power.
- Create the conditions for grant partners to build trust with communities, by promoting local and Indigenous knowledge and integrating this into project plans and activities.
- Provide training and technical assistance to local staff and volunteer groups, to build up local capacity to address mobility-related challenges.
- Continue to support grant partners' and

communities national and international advocacy efforts, even if results are hard to measure.

### Climate mobilities and Loss & Damage

Loss and Damage was the explicit focus of only two grants in the reviewed portfolio, both starting in 2022. We nonetheless retrospectively applied an L&D lens to our review, in an effort to understand the diverse ways in which climate mobilities may intersect with L&D. We do this for three reasons: (1) Although prior projects may not have used the language of L&D, they address similar climate change related harms; (2) Recent international climate negotiations, notably on the modalities of the “Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage”, may lead to new funding opportunities to address some CM types, specifically planned relocation and; (3) Growing interest in non-economic losses and damages, on which grant partners had thoughts and lessons to share even if this had not been central to their prior projects. It should be noted that while several of the grant partners see value in pursuing these discussions, others highlighted that the international Loss and Damage framework is not useful to the communities they support – as they expect no additional support or funding from adopting it.

**Recommendations include:**

- Provide spaces for community members to learn about the international Loss and Damage framework and to identify the opportunities for funding and advocacy it may open.
- Avoid artificially separating economic and non-economic losses and damages, as this does not always make sense in practice. Project interventions reviewed in this

report often address both simultaneously.

- Approach the topic of non-economic losses and damages with extra care, ideally with the help of trained professionals and people knowledgeable about local experiences and cultural sensitivities, to mitigate the potential for additional harm.

### Effective grant making practice

The final section of the report focuses on identifying what, from the perspective of grant partners, makes a “good grant”. Grant partners shared their perspectives on a range of practical grant-related issues including goal-setting, funding scale and duration. Grant partners’ experiences suggest that CJRF’s flexible, trust-based grant making approach is responsive and adaptable to community needs in ways that many other grant funding organizations are not. However, it is not without challenges. Some grants were too short (1 year) to enable effective relationship-building or long-term impact in communities. Some grant partners expressed a need for further discussion of “success” metrics, particularly for long-term, hard-to-measure activities such as advocacy and policy change. The recommendations in this section are relevant not just to the CJRF’s future grant making but will be of interest to other funders aiming to work with community-based organizations.

#### Recommendations include:

- Embrace flexibility, as project goals, activities, budgets and timelines will necessarily evolve over time if projects are responsive to community inputs.
- Cultivate an understanding of grant partners’ and communities’ perspectives through active listening and participation

in consultations, site visits, and local peer-review of project plans and reports, among other potential measures.

- Provide long-term, uninterrupted grants, ideally three or more years, as projects require at least this time to build trust, genuinely engage with community needs, and deliver lasting change.
- Ensure reporting requirements are not too heavy, especially for small community-based organizations. Facilitate regional and international exchange and learning opportunities between grant partners.

### Reading further

Readers unfamiliar with the challenges specific to climate mobilities and how they relate to adaptation, resilience, climate justice & human rights in practice.

#### → Section 1

Philanthropic funders asking what activities and projects to fund to support communities facing climate mobility challenges.

#### → Section 1 and 2

Policymakers, researchers and others interested in Loss & Damage, non-economic losses and damages, and the complex relationship between climate mobilities and L&D.

#### → Section 3

Philanthropic funders looking to decolonize their funding practice.

#### → Section 4

# Introduction

## **Purpose of the grant portfolio review**

**The purpose of this report is to gather and reflect on lessons learned from climate mobility related, community-driven initiatives in the Climate Justice Resilience Fund's (CJRF) grant portfolio.** The grants reviewed all involve one or more forms of climate mobility: whether displacement, migration, relocation, or immobility, which the partners address through lenses of climate resilience, climate justice, and human rights.

**The CJRF grant portfolio offers a rare opportunity to identify the kinds of projects and activities that can most usefully be implemented to address climate mobility-related challenges** in diverse places around the world. The report identifies and categorizes the activities partners used to address community needs arising from specific mobilities. It also provides cross-cutting recommendations emerging from grant partners' diverse experiences (Section 1). A second area of inquiry focuses on the "how" of grantmaking. This includes an overview of how grant partners ensure effective participation and enable the leadership of affected communities, so that projects meet communities' basic needs, improve their living situations, guarantee their rights, and contribute to climate justice (Sections 2 and 4). It also discusses the relationship between climate mobilities and Loss & Damage (Section 3).

**From all this, the report distils recommendations to inform not just CJRF's future grantmaking but also that of other philanthropic funders and international policy advocates interested in supporting communities facing climate-related displacement, relocation, and difficult choices around migration.** We provide practical recommendations wherever

possible but also outline more general values and principles – such as trust, curiosity, inclusivity, and a relentless focus on the needs and rights of the most vulnerable – that grant partners demonstrate to be crucial to their work and should guide grantmaking and community engagement practice to address climate mobilities.

## **Questions and objectives**

**This review is an exploratory fact-finding and knowledge-sharing exercise from which to draw widely applicable lessons, not a formal assessment of grant partners' "success" against stated aims or an external evaluation framework.** The analysis and discussions are guided by four key questions:

**Q1: How do CJRF grant partners and affected communities address issues related to diverse climate mobilities?**

The report identifies the different kinds of local solutions partners have implemented to address each type of climate mobility in their respective contexts. It asks how the climate mobility-specific needs of affected communities have been identified, and to what extent the activities undertaken differ from or overlap with broader adaptation, disaster risk reduction or other development projects. (Section 1)

**Q2: What participatory methodologies did grant partners use in projects to address climate mobilities, and how effective were they?**

The report investigates what participatory, community-led methods have been used, what they entailed. It identifies the types of capacity building, knowledge or technical assistance needs expressed by communities and the extent to which these were met. (Section 2)

**Q3: What is the relationship between different types of climate mobilities and types of losses and damages, both economic and non-economic?**

The report asks what types of losses and damages the projects sought to address and how they relate to climate mobilities. Part of the discussion focuses specifically on non-economic losses and damages, including the extent to which they can in practice be separated from economic losses and damages. (Section 3)

**Q4: How did the characteristics of the grant program influence the project partners' ability to address community needs, with what advantages and limitations?**

The report reviews grant partner's experiences with CJRF's grant making program, focusing on various aspects including funding process, goal setting, project revisions, budget scale and flexibility, relationship with CJRF, reporting requirements, and more. Based on this, the report aims to provide lessons that can be useful to CJRF's own grant making but also as lessons for the wider community of international funders, policymakers and community organizations seeking to decolonize funding. (Section 4)

## **Policy context**

**This report is inscribed within a broader policy context and will likely be of interest to policy advocates and policymakers working on climate mobilities** within policy arenas including climate negotiations on adaptation and Loss & Damage, human rights protections, and the mainstreaming of climate and environment into migration policy. The report has three main policy-relevant aspects.

**The first policy-relevant aspect of this report is that funding explicitly dedicated to addressing the impact of climate mobilities (encompassing climate-related migration, displacement, relocation, and "trapped populations") remains relatively rare.** Available research has shown that most aid and development projects on these issues are research focused.<sup>3</sup> One recent analysis of development banks' projects that go beyond research to fund interventions is limited to two high-level categories. First are measures to "prevent climate displacement" such as investment in climate resilient infrastructure (to allow disaster-displaced people to return home quickly), in planned relocation (to allow people to resettle in areas less exposed and vulnerable to climate impacts), and in technical tools to limit climate-related displacement risks (hotspot modeling; early warning systems; emergency funds). Second are measures to "support both climate migrants and host communities", such as investment in infrastructure and shelter in the places to which people are displaced, in basic service provision; and in livelihood support activities. Generally, the available evidence lacks community-driven insights into what activities are beneficial and why. This report addresses this gap.

**The second policy-relevant aspect is the growing interest in climate mobilities in various international policy arenas.** To start, human mobility in the context of climate change (HMCCC) has been gaining traction in international climate policy. The Paris Agreement mentions the need to respect and promote human rights, including of migrants, in climate action<sup>4</sup>; human mobility is increasingly featured in countries' National Determined Contributions and National Adaptation

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Stojanov et al., '[Climate Mobility and Development Cooperation](#)', *Population and Environment* 43, no. 2 (1 December 2021): 209–31.

<sup>4</sup> UNFCCC, 'Report of the Conference of the Parties on Its Twenty-First Session, Held in Paris from 30 November to 11 December 2015. Addendum. Part Two: Action Taken by the Conference of the Parties at Its Twenty-First Session. Adoption of the Paris Agreement' (Paris: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2015).

Plans<sup>5</sup>; and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) increasingly highlight the link between climate change and human mobility in its assessment reports<sup>6</sup>. In addition, international migration policy has recently incorporated the environment as a consideration, including in the Global Compact on Migration<sup>7</sup>. Climate mobilities are also increasingly discussed in human rights arenas, with for instance the recent publication of a thematic report on planned relocations by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons<sup>8</sup>. The insights shared by grant partners in this report are relevant to one or all of these policy arenas.

**A third policy-relevant aspect is that the context-dependent relationships between diverse climate mobilities and losses and damages are not yet properly detailed and understood.** Over the last decade, Loss and Damage has developed into “the Third Pillar of International Climate Change Policy”<sup>9</sup> and increasingly intersects with climate mobilities. For instance, under the Warsaw International Mechanism Executive Committee on Loss and Damage, a constituted body under the UNFCCC, the Task Force on Displacement was mandated to develop recommendations for integrated approaches to “avert, minimize, and address displacement related to the adverse impacts of climate change”.<sup>10</sup> Clarifying how climate mobilities and L&D intersect is of practical relevance to work to be conducted in future projects.

## **CJRF’s approach to grantmaking**

**The Climate Justice Resilience Fund (CJRF) is one of the first major philanthropic initiatives framed explicitly around climate justice, and one of the few that works internationally on climate resilience.** CJRF works by re-granting monies from diverse funders. Their “Phase 1” pool of funding (2016-2022) totaled nearly US\$25 million, enabling approximately fifty major grants to support women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples to build and share their solutions for climate resilience. CJRF’s grant-making program stands out for its emphasis on a human rights-first, justice-based approach to climate resilience. In CJRF’s words:

*We believe that lasting climate resilience must start with those communities hit first by climate change. We help communities reduce risks, manage shocks, rebound, and continue charting a path to sustainable development. Our theory of change prioritizes community empowerment, policy advocacy, and movement-building, working from local to global.*

**CJRF has adopted and aims to promote a funding model based on direct access to finance that does not just promote development interventions but pursues justice and transformational change by developing leaders, building movements, and**

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<sup>5</sup>Dennis Mombauer, Ann-Christine Link, and Kees van der Geest, ‘[Addressing Climate-Related Human Mobility through NDCs and NAPs: State of Play, Good Practices, and the Ways Forward](#)’, *Frontiers in Climate* 5 (14 March 2023).

<sup>6</sup>IPCC, *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, M. Tignor, E.S. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Alegría, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Lösche, V. Möller, A. Okem, B. Rama (Eds.)] (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

<sup>7</sup>IOM MECC, ‘[Environment and Climate Change in the Global Compact on Migration](#)’ (International Organization for Migration, 2018).

<sup>8</sup>Paula Gaviria Betancur, ‘A/HRC/56/47: [Planned Relocations of People in the Context of the Adverse Effects of Climate Change and Disasters \(Advance Edited Version\)](#)’, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons (Geneva: OHCHR, 2024).

<sup>9</sup>Morgen Broberg and Beatriz Martinez Romera, [The Third Pillar of International Climate Change Policy: On ‘Loss and Damage’ after the Paris Agreement](#) (London: Routledge, 2023).

<sup>10</sup> See the UNFCCC webpage for [the Task Force on Displacement](#).

**supporting change through research and advocacy.** Grant partners are either community organizations or established non-governmental organizations acting as trusted intermediaries. These grant partners also often re-grant part of the funds to community organizations. Approximately 80% of CJRF grants between 2016 and

2022 supported place-specific strategies in East Africa, the North American Arctic, and the Bay of Bengal. The remaining 20% went toward scaling solutions through advocacy and exchange at the global level. CJRF also hosted several initiatives to promote funder learning and collaboration on climate justice.

*Table 1. Portfolio of CJRF grants reviewed*

CJRF Grant Partner	Geography	Project title	Project duration	Main CM types addressed
Alaska Institute for Justice (AIJ)	Alaska, USA	Community-Led Climate Adaptation Protects Human Rights	2018 - 2021	Planned relocation
Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC)	Alaska, USA	Capacity Building - Center for Environmentally Threatened Communities	2018 - 2023	Planned relocation
Coastal Association for Social Transformation (COAST)	Bangladesh	Community led initiatives for climate justice and resilience in the islands and coastal areas of the Bay of Bengal in Bangladesh (I)	January – December 2017	Migration, Displacement
		Community led initiatives for climate justice and resilience in the islands and coastal areas of the Bay of Bengal in Bangladesh (II)	January 2018 – September 2022	Migration, Displacement
Helvetas Bangladesh	Bangladesh	Panii Jibon (Water is Life)	January 2018 – December 2020	Voluntary immobility
		Loss and Damage grant	July 2022 – June 2023	Migration, Displacement
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC)	Global	UUSC First Peoples’ Convening on Climate Forced Displacement	June 2018	Climate mobilities
	Pacific region	Loss and Damage Partnership	June 2022 – June 2023	Voluntary immobility
Young Power in Social Action (YPSA)	Bangladesh	Developing a project for Community-driven Planned Relocation of Highly Vulnerable Climate Displaced Households in South-Eastern Coast of Bangladesh	January – December 2019	Migration, Displacement, Planned Relocation for trapped population
		Addressing the Rights and Needs of Climate Forced Displaced people in the South-Eastern Coast of Bangladesh (I)	December 2020 – November 2021	
		Addressing the Rights and Needs of Climate Forced Displaced people in the South-Eastern Coast of Bangladesh (II)	May 2022 – April 2023	

### Overview of grant portfolio

**The report reviews 11 displacement and migration-oriented grants implemented between 2017 and 2024 by six CJRF grant partners working closely with communities located in Alaska, Bangladesh, and the Pacific (Table 1).** Grant partners received between

one and three grants. Many of them re-granted a part of the funds to small, local, community-based organizations, as in the case of UUSC’s Loss and Damage grant, a little under 90% of the total budget was passed on to community organizations across the

Pacific. Most projects were co-funded, so CJRF was rarely the sole project funder.

**These grants cover a wide range of climate hazards, mobility contexts, and associated losses and damages.** Consequently, they involve very diverse project activities that are specific to the needs of places and people where and with whom grant partners work. Nonetheless, they also hold some generalizable lessons that are of relevance to other funders and practitioners.

**The grants included in this review all had climate-related migration, displacement and/or relocation as a key entry point.** In practice, this typically implies a project focus on populations that are either being displaced, relocating, migrating, or facing risks and choices that may lead them to do so. Other entry points include support for meeting basic needs, water access, and food security, as well as promoting sustainable livelihoods. These other entry points are often directly connected to people’s mobility decisions but are also often provided to people in need regardless of their mobility status – with both voluntarily and involuntarily immobile people as well as host communities included in grant partners’ programs.

**Grant partners conceived their projects through the lens of climate adaptation and resilience, climate justice, and human rights, and – more recently – Loss & Damage.** Only two of the grants reviewed, started in 2022, explicitly adopt a Loss & Damage lens, although some of the other funded projects may arguably be reconsidered in this light, and hold some lessons for future L&D funding (see Section 3).

## Methodology

**The heterogeneous nature of the projects reviewed required a flexible approach to the portfolio review.** The review team did not apply a pre-defined assessment framework to analyze the grants. Instead, grants were reviewed individually using a bottom-up, empirical approach. This report focuses on drawing out both shared lessons and context-specific differences as shared with us by grant partners: we do not systematically assess the grants, or report on all aspects of each. We identified common experiences and key differences across contexts and used examples from across the range of projects to illustrate the diverse, context-specific relationships between climate mobilities and losses and damages, as well as the measures taken to address their impacts on affected communities.

**The report team focused on interviewing grant partners and reviewing all available project documentation.** The review began with an extensive review of grant documentation, including application forms, progress reports, and narrative reports, and other significant project outputs such as advocacy materials, news coverage, and policy reports. Interviews were held with project managers in the 6 grant partner organizations and 2 of UUSC’s sub-grantees. The interviews, which lasted approximately one hour each, were recorded, transcribed, and then coded using the qualitative analysis software MAXQDA 2022.

# 1. Inventory of CJRF grant partners' activities to address climate mobilities

## Section summary

Each of the projects covered in the review activities implemented to address each of the addresses one or more of four mobility four climate mobility types (Table 2). We discuss types: climate-related displacement, planned migration and immobility jointly, as they are relocation, migration and immobility. We use fundamentally connected in practice by grant the climate mobilities (CM) as an umbrella term partners, whose activities focus on enabling people encompassing these four types and thus the to choose the path that best fits their aspirations: full range of human movement in the context whether that means migrating or adapting to stay of climate change (HMCCC), with variations in where they currently live. Having described and distance, duration, degree of voluntariness and illustrated the full range of activities, we draw spontaneity, including cases where people are some general lessons and recommendations. unable to leave or choose to stay where they are. Cross-cutting questions concerning community engagement and leadership listed in Table 2 are

In this section, we identify and list the further discussed in Section 2.

Table 2. Inventory of activities from the CJRF grant portfolio, by climate mobility type

Climate mobility type	Related activities	Examples from the grant portfolio
Displacement	(1) to provide support for people coping with the negative impacts of displacement	Essential service provision (e.g. safe water and sanitation, electricity) Repairs to shelter Repairs to infrastructure (e.g. roads, embankments, sea walls)
	(2) to prevent first-time (or further) displacement	Microfinance programs Livelihood skills training Connecting displaced people with government services (e.g. health, education, social protection schemes) Support for relocation
Relocation	(3) to support relocation needs and risk assessments, decision-making, and planning	Relocation site selection / site suitability assessments Community needs assessments Community capacity-building for planning Advocacy for relocation
	(4) to implement a decision to relocate	Land purchase and registration Housebuilding, provision of building materials Essential service provision at relocation site (e.g. water tanks) Connecting relocating people with host community Connecting relocating people with government services (e.g. health, education, social protection schemes)
	(5) to cope with the negative impacts of relocation (whether historical, pending, partial or inadequately completed)	Adaptation measures in origin site (e.g. building evacuation center, sea wall repairs) Psycho-social support Cultural preservation and revitalization



Migration & immobility	(6) to assist the involuntary immobile to migrate	Migration Information Hubs Awareness raising on migrants' rights Livelihood skills training (opening new job opportunities)
	(7) to assist the voluntary immobile to stay	Livelihood skills training (to pursue similar but better adapted activities) Local risk reduction / adaptation measures Support to immobile populations for claiming entitlements
Cross-cutting community engagement	(8) Support for effective community consultation and leadership.	Forming community teams, youth, women's' and other groups to consult and let decide project activities. Regional and international convenings Indigenous-led monitoring Local/Indigenous authoring and peer-review of reports Local/Indigenous staff hires in project management roles Training and capacity-building for local staff and volunteers Financial compensation for time invested in projects

## Displacement-related activities

**Displacement** is defined in the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement: “internally displaced persons (IDPs) [are] persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized border.”<sup>11</sup> While most displacement occurs within countries, it can also occur across borders.<sup>12</sup>

### Section summary

**Climate-related displacement is a prominent form of climate mobility in the CJRF grant portfolio**, particularly in Bangladesh and the Pacific where grant partners worked

with populations displaced or at risk of displacement, whether by extreme weather events such as cyclones or by slow-onset processes such as sea-level rise and river erosion.

**Depending on the context, CJRF grant partners' work on climate-related displacement aims to either (1) provide support for people already displaced or (2) help people prepare for and avoid displacement.** In Bangladesh, project partners COAST, Helvetas and YPSA work with displaced people who - having lost and/or left their land without being able to return - are now landless, often unemployed, living in highly vulnerable environments such as roadsides and embankments, where shelter is poor and basic services (electricity, water, sanitation), health care and education are absent or difficult to access. In the Pacific, CJRF grant partner UUSC works with displaced

<sup>11</sup> OCHA, ‘[Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement](#)’, 2004.

<sup>12</sup>The Nansen Initiative, ‘[Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change](#)’, International Journal of Refugee Law 28, no. 1 (March 2016): 156–62.

communities who have lost their homes due to past disasters, often living in tents or other temporary shelters, some for several years. In some cases, these communities have been displaced more than once by repeated extreme weather events.

**Among those displaced, grant partners focus on the most affected, most vulnerable populations.** For example, YPSA emphasized the differentiated nature of displacement. Households that are socio-economically better-off tend to be able to buy land and in general endure less serious impacts. Poorer households do not have the resources to buy land and find themselves in more precarious living situations, so YPSA prioritize their needs.

#### **(1) Activities to support displaced people**

**Projects with displaced people focus first on immediate rehabilitation support, providing access to basic services (such as water and sanitation) and emergency resources and materials (for example to improve temporary shelter).** Displaced and landless people are often living in emergency conditions or protracted vulnerable situations, and so require support from grant partners to address basic needs. Immediate rehabilitation activities in the reviewed projects included the provision of much-needed basic services and basic income to climate-displaced people. For example, YPSA installed water points and sanitary latrines to address poor hygiene conditions and provided roofing materials to improve the quality of temporary shelter.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, COAST built deep tubewells, while Helvetas contributed – in

collaboration with local authorities – to rebuilding damaged infrastructure, including roads, and to securing the embankments on which displaced, landless people live. In the Pacific, UUSC has identified similar measures such as the purchase of water tanks.

#### **Beyond immediate rehabilitation, projects aim at longer-term empowerment, sustainable development and resilience for displaced people.**

These longer-term activities support resilient livelihoods through a combination of skills training, introduction of new or improved climate-adapted technologies and methods, and microfinance. For instance, YPSA provided displaced people with training for sewing, goat rearing, and driving. COAST has a microfinance program for displaced people to restart their pre-disaster economic activities or to start new businesses.

**Given the large populations in need of assistance, CJRF grant partners also worked to reconnect people with available government programs for health, education, and social protection.** This was particularly the case in Bangladesh, where grant partners COAST and YPSA worked with local authorities to re-engage children and youth who had dropped out of school following their displacement, identify homeless displaced people and link them to government shelter schemes, or link small-scale coastal fishermen to social protection schemes (such as catch loss compensation on days where fishing was banned).

**More than connecting people directly to government programs, grant partners highlighted the importance of supporting community members to claim their rights for themselves,** by providing information

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<sup>13</sup> YPSA, 'Project Narrative Report: Addressing the Rights and Needs of Climate Forced Displaced People in the South-Eastern Coast of Bangladesh' (Young Power in Social Action, 2021).

and advocacy support.<sup>14</sup> Participants to the UUSC Convening also made this point, they: “were really interested in understanding how they can advocate for their human rights after they’ve been displaced”.<sup>15</sup> At the convening, this meant inviting international experts who could ideally speak in non-technical terms. Overall, grant partners highlighted the importance of popular education and awareness raising in their projects, so that people can access the support they are entitled to.

## **(2) Activities to avoid (further) displacement**

**When working with people already displaced, grant partners also conduct activities that they described as climate adaptation, allowing people to stay in their new areas of residence.** Many of the activities highlighted above are a response to need arising from displacement but are also intended to prevent further forced displacement. To avoid further displacement, for example, COAST trained local farmers in a range of climate adaptive income generating techniques – thereby building resilience to climate stressors and allowing them to stay. This included training in vegetable growing via raised bed agriculture and sack gardening, which enable horticulture in waterlogged areas. They also supported income diversification via integrated agriculture (“3F” Fishing, Fruit, Forest model) and goat rearing.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Helvetas supports “climate smart agriculture”, including the introduction of saline tolerant seeds and integrated farming. Such measures benefit all program participants, many (but

not all) of whom were previously displaced.

## **In addition to these economic empowerment and service access activities, CJRF grant partners work to facilitate other forms of climate mobility as potential durable solutions to climate-related displacement.**

With CJRF support, YPSA has implemented a planned relocation process for some of the landless people it works with, while Helvetas has implemented several project activities to support migration decision-making. Other communities, in Alaska and the Pacific, have been identified as being at risk of displacement but have not yet been displaced. In these cases, the work of grant partners focuses on disaster protection, prevention, and/or anticipatory relocation. Ultimately the emphasis of actions on displacement is to enable people to choose the best path for themselves and their communities, whether that means staying where they are, or seeking to move elsewhere.

## **Activities to support relocating communities**

**Planned Relocation** is a planned, coordinated process in which persons or groups of persons move or are assisted to move away from their homes or places of temporary residence, are settled in a new location, and provided with the conditions for rebuilding their lives.<sup>17</sup> Planned relocation is intended to be permanent.

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<sup>14</sup> Interview, YPSA

<sup>15</sup> Interview, UUSC

<sup>16</sup>COAST, ‘Evaluation Report: Community-Led Initiatives for Climate Justice and Resilience’ (Coastal Association of Transformation Trust, 2021) section 6.3.

<sup>17</sup>Adapted from Elizabeth Ferris, Jose Riera, and Sanjula Weerasinghe, ‘Guidance on Protecting People from Disasters and Environmental Change through Planned Relocation’ (Brookings, Georgetown University, and UNHCR, 2015).

### Section summary

**Planned relocations can take many different forms**, the specific needs of communities and corresponding project activities varying according to community histories of prior relocation and displacement, current livelihood practices, access to shelter and essential services, and local and national governance, among other considerations. Projects in support of relocating communities thus encompass a wide range of activities.

In the CJRF grant portfolio, we identify three categories of activities related to planned relocation, varying based on the timing of the project intervention (before, during, or after relocation) and the degree of support already available to communities from other sources (primarily the presence or absence of government support). Grant partners work with communities that are considering relocation, but still need assistance with decision-making and/or planning; already in the process of relocation, perhaps already partially relocated; or dealing with the effects of relocation.

### (3) Activities to support pre-relocation decision-making, planning, funding, and advocacy

External support and capacity building are needed even beginning at the decision-making and planning stages because very few communities have the financial or logistical resources to autonomously

organize such a complex and expensive process – as relocation experiences around the world have tended to show.<sup>18</sup>In addition, “it’s very difficult when you’re on the receiving end [of relocation] to really start to identify all the gaps because you’re living it day to day”.<sup>19</sup>For ANTHC, the work therefore focused on convening members of affected communities to review recommendations on how to best implement relocation – as a last resort option for communities for whom adaptation in place is not a viable long-term option – shaping the contents of the consortium’s Unmet Needs report.<sup>20</sup>

In Alaska, several Native Tribes supported by AIJ or ANTHC are currently advocating for support in terms of funding, community capacity-building, and technical assistance. These communities have either (i) made plans and applied to the government for relocation assistance but have not yet received the necessary support to implement the move, or have begun the physical relocation of homes and community buildings but have not yet completed the process. Alaskan grant partners highlighted the extremely long timelines for relocation in the state. Some villages, such as Shishmaref, Kivalina or Newtok, voted to relocate over 20 years ago, but have not been able to implement their decision due to numerous legal and administrative hurdles and a corresponding lack of financial and practical support.

Ultimately, the aim of these activities is to enable the creation of rights-based relocation governance frameworks to ensure relocations are adequately resourced and conducted in ways that guarantee

<sup>18</sup>IFRC, [‘Planned Relocation in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change: A Guide for Asia Pacific National Societies’](#) (Geneva: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2021).

<sup>19</sup> Interview, ANTHC

<sup>20</sup> ANTHC, [‘The Unmet Needs of Environmentally Threatened Alaska Native Villages: Assessments and Recommendations’](#) (Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, 2024).

**community decisions, needs and rights.** AIJ's CJRF-supported work has focused on the design of a human-rights based planned relocation governance framework "that protects the individual and collective human rights of Alaska Native communities".<sup>21</sup> AIJ used CJRF funds to facilitate exchanges between tribes, government agencies at both state and federal levels, and non-governmental organizations. Major relocation-related aspects of this work included identifying technical and financial needs, and how to facilitate community access to these. In addition, AIJ supported communities in the identification and suitability assessment of potential relocation sites.

#### **(4) Activities to support the physical relocation itself**

In contrast to the situation in Alaska, grant partners in Bangladesh mostly discuss planned relocation as a potential solution for forcibly displaced people who are landless and highly vulnerable because of prior displacement. YPSA is implementing its own small-scale relocation projects – with 12 households relocated so far and 4 more to come (totaling ~100 people). This project exemplifies many key issues grant partners face when engaging in these types of activities.

**Relocating families require access to land and new housing.** In some cases, as is often the case in the Pacific, communities are able to relocate on nearby land they own, within traditional territorial boundaries. In other cases, however, land for relocation needs to be identified, surveyed and assessed, purchased, and registered. The YPSA-led relocation involved the selection and purchase of land for landless families to

relocate to, the official registration of this land with the local Land Registration Office, and the construction of new houses on this land, including the provision of electricity (obtained by liaising with local electricity suppliers) and clean water.<sup>22</sup>

**YPSA reports that the process of identifying, surveying, buying and registering land is very time-consuming and difficult,** as it requires finding an area that is "dispute-free and safe" and "where there is access to the road or a location from where they can easily link to a different growth center, educational institution or health support"; and overcoming administrative hurdles to ensure formal ownership of the land, a necessary condition to ensure relocating families are able to stay in their new homes without fear of it being claimed or seized. This experience – though shaped by contextual governance and land issues – exemplifies a common issue with most relocations: the process of identifying and accessing land that communities have the right to acquire, occupy, and build on is a common, significant hurdle.<sup>23</sup>

**Beyond housing, relocating families need holistic support to ensure especially that they have resilient livelihood options and access to essential services.**

For YPSA, the choice of a small-scale relocation is also intended to ensure adequate support can be provided to the relocated families – something which large-scale government-led relocation projects in Bangladesh have not been able to achieve. While new housing has been built to rehome tens of thousands of people on government land, these relocations have provided little to no access to jobs, markets,

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<sup>21</sup> AIJ, 'Community-Led Climate Adaptation Protects Human Rights - Final Report' (Alaska Institute for Justice, 2020); Robin Bronen, '[Rights, Resilience and Community-Led Relocation: Creating a National Governance Framework](#)', N.Y.U. Review of Law & Social Change 45 (2023),

<sup>22</sup> YPSA, 'Project Narrative Report: Addressing the Rights and Needs of Climate Forced Displaced People in the South-Eastern Coast of Bangladesh'.

<sup>23</sup> IFRC, 'Planned Relocation in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change: A Guide for Asia Pacific National Societies'.

healthcare and education, ultimately leading many relocated people to return to vulnerable areas and requiring assistance there.<sup>24</sup> A small-scale relocation can more realistically provide these essential services and opportunities. YPSA has also introduced resettled families to local government officials and schools to ensure they have access to their rights and education in their new host community.

**In cases where relocating people settle on already occupied lands, grant partners have an important role to play in facilitating often fraught relations with host communities.** YPSA also reported that larger relocations are more likely to create tensions in the relations between relocated people and host communities (i.e. people already living in the area where they are relocating to). If you relocate many people “to some particular place, people will easily identify them as outsiders then - and surrounding people don’t cooperate with them.” To address this, YPSA organized meetings and made sure that the building of a deep tubewell for the relocating families would also benefit the surrounding families in the host community, both easing tensions and creating new connections: “through this work, they are getting social bonding” and “they are becoming the part of the community ... feeling that they are not alone.” With this, YPSA highlights the importance of considering both relocating and host communities in relocation work.

#### **(5) Activities to address the losses and damages caused by relocation**

**In some cases, grant partners work with communities who have already relocated, but are facing significant**

**challenges in their new homes due to inadequate past support.** Relocations always involve some degree of loss.<sup>25</sup> Relocation-related losses and damages can arise from relocations that have been completed (in the limited sense that people have been re-housed in a new site) but where crucial community needs remain unmet and where, by extension, the relocation process itself may have led to new risks and losses and damages. This is the case with projects on Rabi Island, Fiji, where UUSC is supporting the Banaban Defenders to improve access to water, for example. In Bangladesh, YPSA’s relocation program incorporates a range of measures to ensure the long-term viability of relocation. These include support for livelihoods (e.g. training in goat rearing, sewing and driving) and the provision of basic services, particularly water points and sanitation.

**Grant partners often face cases where relocation-related losses and damages have arisen from slow-moving, partial and incomplete relocations, requiring interim adaptation measures and psychosocial support.** For example, much of the community in Cogeia, Fiji, has lived in tents since floods during tropical cyclone Yasa (2017) destroyed their homes. The village was subsequently declared unsafe by government authorities due to unstable ground. While the government initiated a relocation process, the project was not implemented for lack of resources until funding German international non-governmental organizations Brot für die Welt provided funding via their local partner the Fiji Council for Social Services. CJRF grant partner UUSC, via its subgrantee Climate Tok, is supporting some aspects of this relocation such as the construction of a footpath (allowing safe

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<sup>24</sup>Afroza Parvin, Sheikh Serajul Hakim, and Md Azharul Islam, ‘[Policy, Design, and Way of Life in Resettlement Projects: The Case of Ashrayan, Bangladesh](#)’, International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction 77 (1 July 2022): 103073.

<sup>25</sup>David Durand-Delacre et al., ‘[Integrating Planned Relocation in National Climate Action: Five Key Insights for Consideration by Governments and Policymakers](#)’, UNU-EHS Policy Brief, 1 November 2023.

movement between new and origin site, especially for children and the elderly), repairs to the sea wall in the origin site, and the preparation of plans for a safer temporary evacuation center.

**Finally, some grant partners work with communities who historically experienced relocation, the effects of which continue to be felt today, requiring many of the aforementioned forms of support as well as cultural revitalization activities.** The Banaban people on Rabi Island in northern Fiji, for instance, were forced to relocate from Banaban Human Rights Defenders Network in the 1940s because of the British colonial government's decision to mine the island for phosphate, making it uninhabitable.<sup>26</sup> Today, UUSC is supporting the Banaban Human Rights Defender Network to address the losses and damages associated with this historical experience, demonstrating that communities may need support even long after a relocation has occurred. Moreover, the Banaban's current villages are exposed to climate risks, posing the question of future relocation. We further discuss the Banaban Defenders' efforts to address losses and damages in their communities with cultural revitalization activities in Section 3.

### Activities to empower people to choose between migrating or staying

**Migration** is an umbrella term designating the permanent or temporary movement of persons away from their usual residence.<sup>27</sup>

The minimal duration for migration to be registered as such is – by statistical convention and depending on the country – typically set as a minimum of 6 or 12 months. Migration can also be seasonal, or cyclical, in which cases the timing may vary significantly. Migration can be internal or international. In contrast to displacement, migration is usually understood to be a voluntary process although in practice any decision to migrate sits on a spectrum from forced to voluntary.<sup>28</sup>

**Immobility** refers to continuity in one's habitual place of residence. Voluntary immobility refers to individuals having the capability but no aspiration to migrate. Involuntary immobility (also, "trapped populations") refers to individuals who need to or aspire to migrate, but do not have the capability.<sup>29</sup>

#### Section summary

**In contexts marked by diverse aspirations and capabilities to migrate or stay, grant partners' projects are mostly focused on reducing vulnerabilities and enabling people to choose the best path for them.** This means ensuring that people negatively affected by climate impacts can make informed and supported decisions about whether to migrate or stay and adapt in place.

<sup>26</sup>Tammy Tabe, '[Climate Change Migration and Displacement: Learning from Past Relocations in the Pacific](#)', Social Sciences 8, no. 7 (July 2019)

<sup>27</sup> Adapted from the [IOM definition of migration](#).

<sup>28</sup>Marta Bivand Erdal and Ceri Oeppen, '[Forced to Leave? The Discursive and Analytical Significance of Describing Migration as Forced and Voluntary](#)', Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 44, no. 6 (26 April 2018): 981–98.

<sup>29</sup>Kerilyn Schewel, '[Understanding Immobility: Moving Beyond the Mobility Bias in Migration Studies](#)', International Migration Review 54, no. 2 (1 June 2020): 328–55.

In addition to measures that support individual or household capacities and decision-making, grant partners emphasized the continued importance of advocacy and movement-building: activities that allows displaced or involuntarily immobile people to claim and access support they are entitled to.

#### **(6) Assisting the involuntary immobile – or “trapped” – to migrate or relocate**

Central to support for involuntarily immobile people, aka. “trapped populations”, are activities to provide potential migrants with the skills training and information that enables them to decide whether migrating is a desirable option for them.

In Bangladesh, for example, Helvetas notes that “seasonal migration because of climate change has been increasing”.<sup>30</sup> Helvetas therefore developed “Migration Information Hub” where “awareness sessions” are held, to support and empower people so that they may choose the best course of action for themselves. Migrants are informed, for example, of where work opportunities may be available, but also warned about the risks of entering into unfair and exploitative labor arrangements.

*We created this to disseminate updated information [...] if people want to migrate they should, with the right information in hand, and they should have the knowledge of the – you know – the risks, opportunity, cost-benefit analysis: where they should move or where not?<sup>31</sup>*

While the migration hubs support individuals and household-level decision making, other projects take

a more collective approach by supporting community relocations, as discussed above. In addition to awareness raising and skills training that enable greater choice at the individual level, grant partners emphasized the importance of activities that help displaced people to collectively claim their rights and to access support and services they are entitled to, including exchange and coordination meetings, report-writing to help present challenges and plans to government agencies, and advocacy support.

#### **(7) Supporting the voluntarily immobile to stay**

A major form of support for people who wish to stay where they are is through livelihood skills training. For instance, Helvetas reports engaging 538 non-migrant youth (266 women, 272 men) in a local apprenticeship model. They linked beneficiaries either with employers, working with 11 different trades such as welders, carpenters, IT technicians, motor mechanics, hairdressers, and wig makers, all potential local alternatives to more conventional but climate-affected livelihoods. Trainees often make use of their recently acquired skills in local job markets, but can also seek work elsewhere:

*These trainings are designed based on the local job market availability and their interests [...] now their migration decision has been changed and they secured a job in local job markets. What the Migration Hub did is matchmaking between non-migrants and intermediaries, and also with the government, so that if they want to move with that new alternative skill and want to do job in other cities, they also can do this through this Migration Hub.<sup>32</sup>*

<sup>30</sup> Helvetas, ‘Panii Jibon: Water Is Life - Final Report 2018-2020’ (Helvetas Bangladesh, 2020).

<sup>31</sup> Interview, Helvetas

<sup>32</sup> Interview, Helvetas



Ultimately, Helvetas envisage the future of Migration Hubs also as “adaptation clinics” or “climate resilience centers”, where local people, displaced or not, can access whatever information, support, or training they need to pursue their intended strategy, without predetermining if this should include any form of mobility.

In the Pacific, having identified food insecurity and water insecurity as drivers of displacement, UUSC helped communities “to create more sustainable strategies in order for them to stay in place”. Similarly, in Cogeia, Fiji, where Climate Tok is supporting a partially relocated community, the project contributed to the repair of seawalls at the old site - to ensure continued protection for those who chose to stay - by purchasing and transporting the necessary materials to the island. This project is also supporting the community in the planning and design of a new, safer temporary evacuation center. Currently, the community takes shelter in their church during extreme weather events, but this building is on lower ground and increasingly vulnerable. However, the estimated cost of a new center is much higher than the funds available, so their focus is on ensuring that the community has the necessary paperwork and plans ready to present their case to the government and other potential donors.

### Lessons about climate mobilities

#### Section summary

In this section, we formulate more general, cross-cutting principles and recommendations, based on the grant partners’ project

implementation experiences. The activities to address climate mobilities – detailed above – were designed with place and community-specific needs in mind, and may therefore not be reproducible in other places. However, the values, norms and principles applied by grant partners have wide applicability.

Although the activities reviewed in this report were designed to address the needs of people affected by climate risks and hazards, other crucial aspects of their experiences were highlighted. Accounting for the needs of people displaced, relocating, trapped in place, or facing difficult choices about migration also requires understanding and addressing the influence of colonial histories, development practice and socio-economic inequalities (**recommendation 1.1**). It is this recognition that underpins the need to adopt a human rights and climate justice lens to guide climate mobility projects (**recommendation 1.2**).

Climate mobility projects include diverse groups of people, who are not solely defined by their mobility status. Some people receive assistance to stay, others to move. The perspectives and needs of host communities also need to be considered (**recommendation 1.3**). Consequently, the focus of climate mobility projects is on addressing vulnerabilities and enabling choice, so that people can make the decisions that best suit their needs (**recommendation 1.4**).

**Recommendation 1.1: Recognize and address the fact that the current mobility experiences of many communities are not just the result of climate-related impacts and disasters but also of colonial histories, development policies, and socio-economic inequalities that influence their living conditions.**

**Communities' current living conditions and perspectives on climate mobilities are shaped by long-term historical experiences of displacement and forced relocation.** In Alaska, many communities currently considering relocation were forcibly sedentarized in areas previously only used for summer encampments (ANTHC) where they are now exposed to a combination of erosion, permafrost thaw, and flooding known as *usteq*.<sup>33</sup>

*They were forced to locate there, on fragile ground. Now they're being forced to relocate, and in this case, negotiate with the federal government for the land they need. So, it's just layer and layer of complexities.*<sup>34</sup>

**Contemporary climate-related mobilities must thus be understood and addressed considering these histories and how they shape contemporary socio-economic inequalities, injustices, and human rights violations.** For example, the Banaban Defenders see strong “similarities between extractive industries and climate change and environmental degradation” based on their historical experience of forced relocation from their original home island, Banaba, due to phosphate mining under British colonial rule.<sup>35</sup>

**These histories are associated with chronic under-investment in infrastructure and other major socio-economic inequalities;** people were experiencing hardships even without negative climate impacts. Since relocating to Fiji, the Banaban people have not benefited from much needed infrastructure investments. Many communities in remote parts of Alaska lack crucial infrastructure – including for running water in homes or proper sewage management – and only have limited healthcare and education facilities due to chronic under-investment and investments wasted on measures not adapted to the specific needs of Alaskan communities.<sup>36</sup> These themes are also summarized in the First People's Convening on Climate-Forced Displacement report, which highlights that the risks faced by Indigenous communities “are elevated due to the long-term effects of colonialism, institutionalized racism, and histories of forced relocation”.<sup>37</sup>

**Ultimately, awareness of colonial histories underscores the importance of tackling not only climate risks, but also the colonial schema that have led to Indigenous peoples' current marginalization and vulnerabilities.** This implies a strong focus on self-determination (see recommendations 1.4 and 3.1) as well as the integration of local and Indigenous knowledges into decision-making in meaningful, practical ways (see recommendation 2.1), enabling Indigenous peoples to reclaim mobilities in ways that address past mobility injustices and are compatible with their cultures and connections to land.

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<sup>33</sup> AIJ, 'Community-Led Climate Adaptation Protects Human Rights - Final Report'.

<sup>34</sup> Interview, ANTHC

<sup>35</sup> Gil Marvel Tabucanon, '[The Banaban Resettlement: Implications for Pacific Environmental Migration](#)', *Pacific Studies* 35, no. 3 (2012): 1–28.

<sup>36</sup> Interviews with AIJ, ANTHC

<sup>37</sup> UUSC, '[One Story: A Report of the First Peoples Convening on Climate-Forced Displacement](#)' (Girdwood, Alaska: UUSC, 2018), 14.

**Recommendation 1.2: Use human rights and climate justice as guiding principles and frameworks to develop activities to address climate mobilities.**

**Project partners across the board adopt a human rights or climate justice framing to understand and address climate mobilities.** For Helvetas, displacement and migration are “part of our human rights perspective”. The AIJ’s work is motivated in large part by relocation as one of “the greatest human rights challenge related to the climate crisis”. For the Banaban Defenders, the conversation about climate mobilities “has always been a question about justice” and the “right to life with dignity.” UUSC notes that this point applies to all the communities they work with, it is what they share most strongly. Reflecting on lessons from the Convening, UUSC notes how important it was for it to “let it be open and about human rights and human dignity because that was shared amongst all the participants.”

**Fundamentally, the adoption of a human rights lens serves to underline that the losses and damages experienced by displaced and other mobile people are violations of their human rights** to life, liberty and security, to land, adequate housing, water and sanitation, health, education, livelihoods, to Indigenous and cultural rights. Several grant partners highlight the right to self-determination as foundational. This is “the right of a people to shape their collective futures and control their economic, social, and cultural development through meaningful participation in decision-making and freedom from discrimination”.<sup>38</sup> It is central to climate mobilities because defending it ensures that communities are not forced to move against their will and are

empowered to choose and implement the appropriate manner and timing of their own movement, should they decide to move.

**Recommendation 1.3: Address the shared vulnerabilities of both mobile (displaced, migrating, or relocating) and immobile people, without excluding anyone based on their mobility status. To identify project beneficiaries, consider using other locally-relevant categories – such as landlessness in Bangladesh – which correlate with but are not strictly related to mobility status. Include host communities in project design.**

**Project activities and benefits are not restricted purely to people who have moved, or even to people with the intention to move.** Grant partners also highlight the importance of supporting people who intend to stay where they are. When relocations involve moving people to already inhabited places – as is the case in Bangladesh – projects also call for attention to the needs and perspectives of host communities who have vulnerabilities of their own.

**Moreover, the categories grant partners use to define who is involved in the project may be shaped by other considerations including community self-definition, as well as officially recognized categories that shape access to rights and government programs.** For example, project partners in Bangladesh focus their attention on landless people as the key determinant of vulnerability. Landlessness in Bangladesh is of course closely related to climate-related displacement, as one of the major impacts of climate change in this deltaic country is land loss from river and coastal erosion. However, while most

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<sup>38</sup> Lilia Yumagulova et al., ‘[Indigenous Perspectives on Climate Mobility Justice and Displacement-Mobility-Immobility Continuum](#)’, Climate and Development, 13 July 2023, 1–18,.

landless people have previously been displaced, not all displaced people are landless (and thus in less need of assistance). Displacement alone is thus not a sufficient category to identify the most vulnerable people. An additional reason to focus on landlessness is that this status entitles people to some forms of government assistance and rehabilitation programs, whereas ‘climate migrant’ or ‘climate displaced’ status is not similarly recognized, as it does not in practice provide access to government housing and other support programs.

**Ultimately, the most locally relevant terminology depends on a variety of socio-cultural and political considerations and importantly: which official status or process can provide access to services or guarantee the rights of displaced or resettled people.** While grant partners may also advocate for the recognition of the specific needs of climate-related displacement, other parameters that highlight some of the vulnerabilities of displaced people, such as landlessness, are useful and valuable and should be considered as a valid, even integral, part of climate mobility projects.

**It should also be noted that while migration, displacement, and relocation were prominent aspects of all the projects reviewed, the activities deployed are in some cases best classified as more general adaptation measures.** With its Panii Jibon (Water is Life) project, for instance, Helvetas took “more of a holistic approach”, supporting “climate adaptation activities” like WASH, infrastructure repair, the installation of rainwater harvesting tanks, solar panels, measures to improve pond sand filters (a low-cost technique for water filtration), and the construction of resilient housing. In this

context, climate mobilities are only one entry point alongside water and sanitation access, food security, and livelihoods through market access and income diversification.<sup>39</sup> Much the same can be said of the other projects by YPSA, COAST, and UUSC sub-grantees whose projects include activities to support livelihoods, providing basic services, access to education and healthcare.

**Ultimately, the centrality of project activities easily classified as adaptation or resilience highlight that the central purpose of climate mobility is fundamentally about enabling improving the living conditions of vulnerable communities** facing negative impacts of climate change, whether they have already experienced forced displacement or are trying to avoid the risk of displacement. In this view, the more voluntary and anticipatory forms of migration and relocation detailed above are best understood as potential pathways to more secure, thriving living conditions, which communities should be empowered to implement.

**Recommendation 1.4: Regardless of whether projects intervene before, during, or after mobilities occur, focus on enabling community members to choose the mobility options that best fits their needs. Depending on the situation, projects can help prevent undesired movement, but also facilitate new mobilities.**

Grant partners underlined the importance of intervening before displacement occurs, by taking preventive and anticipatory measures that help avoid emergency decision-making. This was one of the key concerns in Alaska, where AIJ is supporting the development of human-rights based relocation

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<sup>39</sup> Helvetas, ‘Panii Jibon: Water Is Life - Final Report 2018-2020’, 2.

governance framework to help communities safely relocate:

*To protect human rights, people need to be in their current locations and not displaced because of an extreme weather event. Because if they're displaced [...], they are in crisis and need to have their immediate needs taken care of, and it makes it really hard for those decisions to be made. The heart of our work is before people are displaced.<sup>40</sup>*

**In cases where displacement had already occurred, grant partners focus on uplifting affected people, improving their living conditions and creating opportunities to avoid future (forced) displacement.** This may include activities that facilitate other forms of movement (relocation, migration), but under the

best possible conditions, or to adapt to changing conditions in one's new living area. None of the projects reviewed emphasized return to places of origin following displacement.

**Overall, grant partners work in dynamic contexts where community members express diverse needs and mobility preferences.** The grant portfolio demonstrates that affected communities face repeated mobility decisions. Communities that have already been displaced may want to return where they previously lived; or may seek permanent relocation where they currently live or at third site; or may choose to migrate to urban centers. Whatever their aspirations, many are unable to put their chosen strategy into action due to insufficient support, knowledge, or resources.

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<sup>40</sup> Interview, AJJ

## 2. Enabling community participation and leadership

### Section summary

CJRF grant making places the emphasis on community-led projects. Grant partners implemented a wide range of activities, from the formation of trained community teams to assist in a relocation process in Bangladesh (YPSA), the organization of indigenous peer review for a major planning and advocacy report to meet the needs of Alaskan Tribes (ANTHC), to hosting co-designed meetings bringing communities together at regional and international levels (UUSC).

Moreover, grant partners shared lessons on promoting community engagement and leadership, from which several recommendations can be derived. Effective projects to address climate mobilities are built on long-term, trust-based relationships. Building such relationships requires sustained engagement with communities and placing local and Indigenous knowledges at the center of project design (**recommendation 2.1**). To place local expertise at the center of decision-making, communities need to be involved at all project stages. In practice, this also means going beyond consultation to hiring locally and putting funds and decision-making power directly into community members' hands (**recommendation 2.2**). Few communities have the resources to carry such projects on their own and so require not just funding but also training and technical support. When working with multiple small and remote communities, pooling resources and expertise

at the regional level can be an effective way to ensure capacity-building over the long term (**recommendation 2.3**).

Advocacy also remains an essential component of projects to address climate mobilities. The scale of need, whether to address the needs of vulnerable displaced people or to implement durable relocation solutions, is often much greater than can be addressed by grant partners alone. In most countries, advocacy is required to promote national policies so that governments provide necessary services and guarantee the rights of people moving in the context of climate change (**recommendation 2.4**). One particularly effective way in which funders can support advocacy efforts is by funding research and planning reports. When supported by insights from community members, these can help unlock additional funding and provide policymakers with actionable plans (**recommendation 2.5**).

**Recommendation 2.1 Build long-term relationships based on trust. To do this, avoid approaches theorized from the outside. Instead, integrate local and Indigenous knowledge in project activities by engaging with communities in practical ways – such as Indigenous led environmental monitoring – that put their expertise at the center of planning and decision-making.**

**Project partners emphasized that local solutions cannot be theorized from outside, by people who are not familiar with the daily lives of communities.** Prior experiences with extractive research relationships – where external researchers or practitioners design

projects without local input, while also requesting time, resources, and approvals from community members – only underscore the urgency of adopting other approaches that concretely value Indigenous knowledges.<sup>41</sup>

**CJRF grant partners worked systematically to consult communities to shape project priorities, activities, outputs, and advocacy goals. Modalities for participation varied** and included, for example, professionally facilitated regional and international convenings of communities (UUSC & CJRF); the creation and training of community teams (YPSA), the holding of courtyard meetings (Helvetas), all of which offered opportunities for people to share concerns and ideas about the projects.

**For CJRF grant partners, demonstrating that local and Indigenous knowledges are genuinely valued requires not just consultation with communities, but actions that give their expertise a central role, with concrete, practical applications.** For AIJ, “the heart of our work is doing Indigenous led environmental monitoring [...] because that is a really important way of building trust.” To achieve this, AIJ worked closely with 15 tribal communities to define *usteq* in a way that could then be integrated in the Alaskan State’s Hazard Mitigation Plan and Statewide Threat Assessment. This incorporation of an Indigenous concept into the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s disaster funding framework now allows communities to track hazard risk themselves and secure assistance based on phenomena they know to be harmful but were not previously recognized.

**In a similar vein, ANTHC’s CJRF-supported activities included the creation and facilitation of an Indigenous peer-review group for their 2024 Unmet Needs report.** This document was initially drafted by technical experts who, though familiar with the challenges specific to Alaska native communities, were not members of these communities. 18 Indigenous experts reviewed and helped restructure the report, meaningfully shaping the final assessment and recommendations. As the report notes:

*Indigenous experts, inclusive of community and subject matter experts, can contribute relevant framing, representative language and tone, link key points and concepts, and assist in elevating and forwarding suggested key messages and actions at the institutional, governance, and societal level.<sup>42</sup>*

Ultimately, Indigenous peer review was crucial also because the report became “an information lever for them to discuss these inequities with federal agencies that fund them”. At the same time, peer review appears as only a minimum level of involvement. Indigenous and local communities should ideally also be involved in report design, priority-setting, and authoring.<sup>43</sup>

**Recommendation 2.2. Ensure local and Indigenous people are actively involved at all project stages, including planning, implementation and the monitoring of outcomes. Pay attention to intersectional perspectives within communities, allocate resources directly to those affected, and provide appropriate compensation for their work.**

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<sup>41</sup>Issues related to extractive research in Alaska have been detailed at length in a letter from Alaskan tribal leaders to the National Science Foundation, see: Kawerak Inc. et al., ‘[Letter to the National Science Foundation on the Navigating the New Arctic Program](#)’, Open Letter, 19 March 2020.

<sup>42</sup>ANTHC, ‘The Unmet Needs of Environmentally Threatened Alaska Native Villages: Assessments and Recommendations’.

<sup>43</sup> Kawerak Inc. et al., ‘Letter to the National Science Foundation on the Navigating the New Arctic Program’, 19 March 2020.

**Several CJRF grant partners highlighted the importance of involving local communities not simply in the planning of projects, but also in their implementation. In practice, this is often to be achieved with direct community access to funds.**

That is “to shift resources in a very flexible way from [donors] directly to the hands of the people most affected”, even if this means disbursing funds to informal community action groups that not officially registered as NGOs or charitable organizations, as is the case with some of UUSC’s re-grantees in the Pacific. In Alaska, in communities formally organized as sovereign tribal governments, AIJ re-granted funds to hire local staff, leaving the hiring decisions entirely to the tribal governments, demonstrating respect for their sovereign decision-making. In addition, where community representatives contribute to projects in a punctual and irregular way – in workshops for example – AIJ emphasized the importance of compensating them monetarily for their time.

**In other contexts, interviewees highlighted how communities’ direct contributions to the project activities – often in the form of voluntary labor – could also be beneficial if organized in the right way.**

For instance, on Rabi Island, Fiji, “it was the community that provided the labor to implement the project and it was the community that celebrated this very special milestone,” (Banaban Defenders) the first safe, freshwater access point since their relocation 80 years prior. In such cases, involvement in the practical work of implementation can create a sense of ownership, empowerment, and achievement among community members.

**In Bangladesh, grant partners YPSA organizes trainings for youth to form a “youth forum”, as well as**

**training for “community teams”:** groups of volunteers who then play a key role in community engagement events such as rallies and processions, social dialogues with duty bearers (local administrations responsible for public service provision), and conduct needs assessment surveys, providing valuable insight into every activity carried out by the grant partner, whether that meant helping to select potential relocation sites and appropriate building materials for new houses, or installing tube wells themselves. Ultimately, YPSA reports that their project “completely depends on the active involvement of community team members in the working areas”.<sup>44</sup>

**These diverse relationships between CJRF, their grantees, sub-grantees, and the community members highlight the importance of context-sensitive approaches to enable community participation and ownership of the projects being implemented.**

While this may involve volunteer involvement, care must be taken to provide community members with the required financial resources or compensation, logistical support, and training – so that participation remains an empowering, long-term capacity-building process and not one that drains the community of often scant resources.

**Finally, project partners highlighted the importance of attention to intersectionality within communities, arising from differences in perspectives according to age, gender, ability, religion, race, or ethnicity.**

Examples shared by grant partners emphasized that certain project activities were only identified because of this close attention to heterogeneous experiences: including for instance the need to ensure safe spaces for women in evacuation centers or walkable pathways for elderly people. Understanding these needs

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<sup>44</sup> YPSA, ‘Project Narrative Report: Addressing the Rights and Needs of Climate Forced Displaced People in the South-Eastern Coast of Bangladesh’.



and dynamics may require separate participatory approaches for constituencies within communities –

for example speaking to women or youths alone (see Box 1).

### **Box 1. Gender and intersectionality in climate mobilities grant making**

**In the first phase of grantmaking (2016-2022), CJRF focused on projects that amplify the voices, and address the needs specific to women, youth, and Indigenous People.** The choice of these three constituencies was rooted in CJRF's broader commitment to funding projects that take an intersectional approach, to identify and address issues specific to different constituencies within communities:

We recognize that different forms of systemic oppression, discrimination, and domination (such as racism, sexism, ableism, colonialism, homophobia, and others) intersect and impact people and communities differently. We recognize these intersections often result in the marginalization from decision-making spaces of people who hold multiple identities, which are often context-specific. We value and promote interventions and practices that shift power to those most impacted by intersecting forms of oppression. It is our hope to empower and to recognize and uplift their contributions to better address the causes, impacts, and solutions of the climate crisis, ultimately fostering human rights and dignity. (CJRF intersectionality statement, as agreed by their practitioner-led board)

**Different constituencies within communities have different vulnerabilities related to climate**

**mobilities.** Grant partners in Bangladesh reported that female-headed household tend to be more vulnerable to displacement, and face even greater marginalization than other households once displaced.<sup>45</sup> At the same time, women are often the ones to stay behind in hazard-exposed areas following disasters, taking care of children, the elderly, and the community, while men seek out income opportunities elsewhere. This was the case in both Pacific and Bangladesh contexts discussed with grant partners.<sup>46</sup>

**Consulting communities in an intersectional manner also highlighted the failings of some activities that may seem a success from some perspective, but fail some community members.**

One Pacific grant partner noted that proposed "solutions" to mobility issues can fail women and other constituencies within communities, in the absence of proper consultation guided by an intersectional approach. To illustrate their point, they cited a relocation in Fiji, in which the exclusive consultation of men led to houses built without kitchens. The recognition of this failure has since led the Fijian government to thoroughly integrate a diversity of views in their consultation procedures, to avoid such omissions. Similarly, the elderly and disabled can be put at risk by inadequate housing designs. For instance, houses on stilts can make it difficult for them to reach safety without assistance in the case of sudden flooding.

<sup>45</sup> Interviews, Helvetas, COAST

<sup>46</sup> Interviews, Climate Tok, Helvetas

Another prominent issue emerging was that climate mobilities can also exacerbate issues related to gendered violence. One partner in the Pacific mentioned such as when women find themselves in unsafe situations in crowded evacuation shelters.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, women's vulnerability to gendered violence can increase when relocations provide single-family homes, when multiple families previously shared larger communal homes.

The recognition of intersectional needs and vulnerabilities such as these led grant partners to adopt dedicated measures, starting with dedicated partnerships and consultations with specific constituencies. For example, in the Pacific, UUSC adopted a feminist approach to grantmaking, leading it to work mostly with women-led organizations (representing three-quarters of sub-grantees). In other places, partners organized women-only or youth-only discussions, to ensure they have a space to share their views and needs in a safe and free environment. Others created dedicated action groups, such as women-led

Village Health Groups (Helvetas) and Youth Fora (YPSA). Proper consultation and review of project plans from a diversity of perspectives already goes a long way to prevent potential issues from arising in project implementation.

**Taking an intersectional approach to community engagement and leadership and to project design led partners to shape their interventions so they meet the needs of particularly vulnerable groups, but also generate solutions from their own strengths.** For instance, In Bangladesh, grant partners provide livelihood skills training (such as goat rearing) specifically dedicated to the situations and needs of marginalized women and youth. To provide another example, the Banaban Defenders designed new water installations on Rabi islands in such a way as to allow disabled people to easily access the water. The consultation of diverse groups within the community also helped reinforce ties between groups, with for example the facilitation of cultural revitalization activities in which elders could share stories and skills with the younger generations.



Signs of coastal erosion in Fiji © UUSC

<sup>47</sup> Interviews, Climate Tok

**Recommendation 2.3. Provide the capacity-building, technical training and outside expertise that communities ask for to make better mobility and adaptation decisions.**

**Communities regularly express specific technical training needs that only external supporting actors can provide, whether for risk assessments, legal and regulatory advice, or advocacy support.**

Communities often do not always have access to the necessary tools and expertise to make and implement their decisions. Their needs include information, with ANTHC identifying for instance the need to share “all the modeling and the risk assessment data that we possibly can so that they then can make those informed decisions.” Sometimes, support is required more on the practical, logistical level, because many of them are working with “small populations, sometimes there isn’t the physical human capacity to build there.” Similarly, Climate Tok stated their ambition to “ideally ... bring in all the funds ... to someone in the village with the necessary expertise, and they do the work”. In practice, however, this proved impractical. The community required external assistance from a plumber to fix their water sources, and Climate Tok’s help to purchase and transport building materials to their remote island.

The Banaban Defenders, meanwhile, hope to digitize many of Banaba’s cultural artefacts, as one of several strategies to ensure their long-term preservation. They have therefore requested the assistance of outsiders with the technical expertise and tools to implement the digitization – while remaining closely involved to ensure this happens in a manner compatible with their cultural requirements.

**Many communities also often request assistance to navigate the complex technical, regulatory and legal questions that arise when in conversation with state and federal agencies.** This is especially clear in the case of planned relocations, as a long-term, challenging process that requires significant financial, technical, and logistical resources, and so by extension, requires government involvement. The reality is that relocation can be “overwhelming and daunting” even for well-resourced federal agencies: “very few people in any type of government, tribal or otherwise, are designated with the task of trying to facilitate the relocation of their community, and it is an epic amount of work.”<sup>48</sup> Often, the solution is to help communities pool resources at the regional level.

**Recommendation 2.4. Advocate for national and international support for climate mobilities projects, recognizing that the scale of the challenges cannot be met by communities and grant partners alone, requiring government support.**

**The scale of needs identified and the complexity of the challenges arising from climate mobilities are such that grant partners cannot be expected to provide for all the needs expressed by communities.** Alaskan relocations, for instance, are estimated to cost tens of millions of US dollars. In Bangladesh, YPSA was only able to relocate a dozen families from a population of thousands of displaced people. In some instances, grant partners can focus on reconnecting displaced or relocated people with available government programs and services, as these connections are often severed in the process of moving. In Bangladesh, for example, grant partners work to ensure that vulnerable people are (re-)registered into social protection mechanisms and have access to education.

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<sup>48</sup> Interview, AIJ

For the most part, however, grant partners in all contexts highlighted the absence or inadequacy of government policies to support communities facing climate mobilities and associated losses and damages. Government agencies do not have appropriate knowledge, tools and policies in place to meet the needs specific to HMCCC. Advocacy at various scales therefore remains a crucial aspect of all the projects reviewed. This is to ensure that the specific needs of displaced, relocating, or involuntary immobile people are recognized and addressed in terms that best preserve their human rights.

**Recommendation 2.5: Fund risk and needs assessment reports and studies. These can be powerful advocacy tools to shape policies and plans, as well as to unlock additional funding. Ensure these reports are developed with substantial community input.**

**Most reviewed projects included research and report-writing activities** (distinct from reporting to CJRF, see recommendation 4.4). These studies were needed to identify and understand the climate mobilities and losses and damages communities experience, as they remain poorly understood in many contexts. Their clear presentation in reports serves to guide project action and set advocacy goals. For example, Helvetas produced a socio-economic study as part of its CJRF-funded activities,<sup>49</sup> to better understand the situation faced by vulnerable displaced populations and advocate for their rights:

*We are advocating for people who are suffering. Having this baseline data will tell us what's happening. Strong evidence from the ground will help us influence the government and other relevant stakeholders to take action.<sup>50</sup>*

Similarly, the complexity of Alaskan relocation needs is such that grant partners need to set out clear, community-approved recommendations to design or advocate for any interventions. For ANTHC:

*What we're seeing is the acceleration of a variety of climate impacts that are pushing more of those communities into that high-risk pool relocation category. And that's the part that we don't have enough information to really assess what we're dealing with yet. So, that's the next step in the next few years is to really build up a risk assessment program, so we fully understand what we're dealing with.<sup>51</sup>*

**Once equipped with more information, and clear recommendations, grant partners highlighted how much advocacy efforts are improved.** For ANTHC, the Unmet Needs report acts as “an information lever” for communities “to discuss inequities with federal agencies that fund them”. Similarly, AIJ reported a direct connection between their reporting’s quality and tribal leaders’ ability to connect with federal entities, organize meetings, and present clear recommendations.

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<sup>49</sup> Mostafizur Rahman and Mohammad Al Amun, ‘Local Voices For Resilience’ (Dhaka: Helvetas Bangladesh, 2019).

<sup>50A</sup> Barua (Helvetas) in: Climate Justice Resilience Fund, ‘[A Climate Justice Approach to Address Loss and Damage in Bangladesh](#)’, Climate Home News, 8 September 2022.

<sup>51</sup> Interview, ANTHC

**Given the uncertainty surrounding future losses and damages from climate mobility, philanthropic funders with limited resources, or those seeking to build new relationships of trust with communities can start by supporting communities assess and clarify their needs as a basis for larger funding applications.** The Banaban Defenders note they obtained funding from CJRF via UUSC, because they had voluntarily produced two reports, “a work of love for our community” that presented a co-designed “community-driven solution to the water crisis” which they then implemented. Seeing this as a success, they later requested to use “leftover funds” from their CJRF project to “do some other studies and projects that are disaster related.” Another example comes from Cogea community in Fiji, which needs a new evacuation center. Climate Tok cannot build it, the cost being several times the grant received from UUSC. Instead, they used CJRF funds to formulate a plan, complete with site surveys, budgets, logistics, and administrative paperwork – which the

community can now take to potential government or private funder to demonstrate the need for and viability of their project. While these reports have yet to leverage funding, a successful example comes from Alaska: based on the recommendations formulated in their Unmet Needs report, ANTHC recently secured \$US83 million in funding for large-scale risk assessment, technical training for adaptation, and knowledge sharing for Alaskan Tribes (see recommendation 4.3).<sup>52</sup>

**In short, local-level studies and reports, particularly if community-designed and led, can be very useful to support community goals.** They help identify and clarify needs in ways funders and policymakers find actionable. This is especially useful for policymakers who are faced with the often-overwhelming complexity of climate mobilities – such as the need for holistic relocation plans – and are therefore in search of clear recommendations and plans to implement.

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52 ANTHC, ‘The Unmet Needs of Environmentally Threatened Alaska Native Villages: Assessments and Recommendations’



A community meeting. Image taken during CJRF Field visit in Bangladesh © YPSA

### 3. Loss and Damage

**Losses and damages (uncapitalized, plural)** are the “impacts of climate-related stressors that have not been, or cannot be, avoided through mitigation and adaptation efforts”.<sup>53</sup> A distinction is typically drawn between economic losses and damages, which can be quantified in economic terms, and non-economic losses and damages (NELD) which can be understood as “a broad range of losses that are not easily quantifiable in financial terms or commonly traded in markets”.<sup>54</sup>

**Loss and Damage (capitalized, singular)** refers specifically to the political debate under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) following the establishment of the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage in 2013, which is to ‘address loss and damage associated with impacts of climate change, including extreme events and slow onset events, in developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the

adverse effects of climate change.”<sup>55</sup> Examples are emotional well-being, biodiversity and ecosystems, and cultural heritage.<sup>56</sup>

#### Why focus on the intersection of climate mobilities and loss and damage?

**Loss and Damage was not central to the design of most reviewed projects but grant partners still had significant lessons to share on this subject.** Of the 11 projects reviewed, only two of the more recent grants (since 2022) were designed and funded with an explicit focus on Loss & Damage. Nonetheless, we asked grant partners about the potential connections between past project activities on climate mobilities and Loss & Damage, with a particular focus on non-economic losses and damages. We did this for three reasons.

- 1. The issues now discussed in terms of Loss and Damage have long been experienced and addressed by affected people.** Although L&D

<sup>53</sup>Kees van der Geest and Koko Warner, ‘[Loss and Damage in the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report \(Working Group II\): A Text-Mining Analysis](#)’, *Climate Policy* 20, no. 6 (2 July 2020): 279.

<sup>54</sup>UNFCCC, ‘[Non-Economic Losses in the Context of the Work Programme on Loss and Damage](#)’, Technical Paper (Bonn, Germany: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2013); Md Monirul Islam et al., ‘[Economic and Non-Economic Loss and Damage to Climate Change: Evidence from a Developing Country Shrimp Farms to Cyclone Bulbul](#)’, *Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences* 25, no. 4 (2022): 214–30; Karen E. McNamara et al., ‘[The Complex Decision-Making of Climate-Induced Relocation: Adaptation and Loss and Damage](#)’, *Climate Policy* 18, no. 1 (2 January 2018): 111–17; P. Tschakert et al., ‘[One Thousand Ways to Experience Loss: A Systematic Analysis of Climate-Related Intangible Harm from around the World](#)’, *Global Environmental Change* 55 (1 March 2019): 58–72.

<sup>55</sup>IPCC, *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, M. Tignor, E.S. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Alegría, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Lösche, V. Möller, A. Okem, B. Rama (Eds.)], 2914.

<sup>56</sup>Tschakert et al., ‘One Thousand Ways to Experience Loss’.

has only recently become an established concept within the international climate policy arena,<sup>57</sup> the frequency and magnitude of hazards such as hurricanes and floods have been increasing due to global warming well before.<sup>58</sup> Revisiting past projects in this light may hold valuable insights.

**2. Recent international discussions on Loss & Damage funding have explicitly considered the inclusion of some types of climate mobility.**

Planned relocation is seen by some as a measure to address losses and damages.<sup>59</sup> However, there are many uncertainties surrounding the operationalization of the Loss & Damage Fund (LDF), and these are compounded by the fact that the connection between climate mobilities and L&D is poorly understood, especially in terms of project implementation.

**3. CJRF's has renewed its funding partnership with the Scottish government, specifically to address non-economic losses and damages.** Announced in September 2023, this program will provide CJRF with £5 million in funds for grants, technical assistance, and advocacy.<sup>60</sup> We further anticipate that other entities may be interested in providing funds for the specific purpose of addressing NELDS.

## Mapping relationships between climate mobilities and losses and damages

The relationship between climate mobilities and losses and damages can take several forms (Table 3):<sup>61</sup>

1. Climate mobilities can be an **indicator** or **consequence** of losses and damages, if people are moving because of losses and damages attributable to climate change;
2. Climate mobilities can be a **form** of losses and damages when communities experience the move itself – at the time, or subsequently – as damaging or incurring losses;
3. Climate mobilities can **drive** losses and damages when communities, having moved, are more exposed and vulnerable to negative climate impacts.
4. Climate mobilities can be a strategy to **avoid** losses and damages.

In addition, international policy and academic literatures have identified some specific ways in which different climate mobility types relate to losses and damages:

<sup>57</sup>Erin Roberts and Saleemul Huq, '[Coming Full Circle: The History of Loss and Damage under the UNFCCC](#)', International Journal of Global Warming 8, no. 2 (January 2015): 141–57.

<sup>58</sup>Kerry Emanuel, '[Increasing Destructiveness of Tropical Cyclones over the Past 30 Years](#)', Nature 436, (August 2005): 686–88; Maarten K. Van Aalst, '[The Impacts of Climate Change on the Risk of Natural Disasters](#)', Disasters 30, no. 1 (2006): 5–18.

<sup>59</sup>McNamara et al., 'The Complex Decision-Making of Climate-Induced Relocation'; Melanie Pill, '[Planned Relocation from the Impacts of Climate Change in Small Island Developing States: The Intersection Between Adaptation and Loss and Damage](#)', in Managing Climate Change Adaptation in the Pacific Region, ed. Walter Leal Filho (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 129–49.

<sup>60</sup>CJRF (2023) Scottish Government and Climate Justice Resilience Fund Renew Partnership to Deliver £5 Million to Address Non-Economic Loss and Damage, see <https://www.cjrfund.org/news/scottishgovernmentrenewal>

<sup>61</sup>Loss and Damage Collaboration, '[Loss and Damage and Displacement: Key Messages for the Road to COP 28](#)' (Researching Internal Displacement, 2023); Erin Roberts and Stephanie Andrei, '[The Rising Tide: Migration as a Response to Loss and Damage from Sea Level Rise in Vulnerable Communities](#)', International Journal of Global Warming 8, no. 2 (January 2015): 258–73; McNamara et al., 'The Complex Decision-Making of Climate-Induced Relocation'.

- **Displacement** is generally considered “the clearest case of loss and damage across the continuum of human mobility”<sup>62</sup> because it is involuntary and unplanned, tends to result from a failure of adaptation, and has negative consequences for displaced peoples. Displacement drives or is experienced as a form of L&D, but cannot be thought of as a strategy to avoid L&D.
- In contrast to displacement, **voluntary migration** can be understood as an adaptation measure, that can help avoid losses and damages. However, research has shown that migration is in practice better understood as happening on a continuum from forced to voluntary<sup>63</sup> and so – depending on the context – can also lead to losses and damages.
- The relationship between **planned relocation** and losses and damages is similarly context dependent. Planned relocations can take place before (in anticipation of) or after (in reaction to) climate-related hazards. However, experience of past relocations has also shown that they can lead to many losses and damages for relocating populations.<sup>64</sup> In many contexts, planned relocation is considered only as a last resort, when adaptation options are exhausted. Planned relocation can therefore address, but also drive or be a form of L&D.
- **Immobile** people may experience losses and damage from their continued exposure and vulnerability to climate hazards in the place they cannot or do not wish to leave – but also from the experience itself: of not being able to choose.<sup>65</sup>

**Overall, it remains difficult to formulate general rules about the relationship between climate mobilities and losses and damages.** Understanding the relationship between different CM types and losses and damages requires close attention to context. This report helps close this gap by analyzing how CJRF grant partners’ projects help to understand as well as address losses and damage related to climate mobilities.

<sup>62</sup> UNFCCC, ‘Non-Economic Losses in the Context of the Work Programme on Loss and Damage’, 27.

<sup>63</sup> Erdal and Oeppen, ‘Forced to Leave?’

<sup>64</sup> Mumuni Abu et al., ‘[Social Consequences of Planned Relocation in Response to Sea Level Rise: Impacts on Anxiety, Well-Being, and Perceived Safety](#)’, Scientific Reports 14, no. 1 (12 February 2024): 3461; Giovanna Gini et al., ‘[Navigating Tensions in Climate Change-Related Planned Relocation](#)’, Ambio, 7 June 2024.

<sup>65</sup> Yumagulova et al., ‘Indigenous Perspectives on Climate Mobility Justice and Displacement-Mobility-Immobility Continuum’.





Table 3. Illustrative list of losses and damages associated with different climate mobility types, as identified and/or addressed by CJRF grant partners. The table presents non-exhaustive examples from the CJRF grant portfolio, to illustrate the kinds of relationships between climate mobilities and losses and damages that grant partners identify and seek to address through their projects.

CM type	Losses and damages		
	Link to CM	Example from (sub-)grantees	Related topic
Migration	Can be a <b>consequence</b> of losses and damages	In Bangladesh, declining agricultural production due to climate-related hazards reduces incomes and employment, and increases debt, driving people to migrate to regain livelihoods elsewhere.	Livelihoods
	Can <b>drive</b> losses and damages	In Bangladesh, high levels of (seasonal) migration among men increase the vulnerability of women who are now the sole heads of households.	Gender
Displacement	Can <b>drive</b> losses and damages	In Cogeia, Fiji, the community was displaced by Tropical Cyclone Yasa and has been living in tents and temporary shelters for three years now. Climate Tok, working alongside other civil society actors and the Fijian government, are assisting the community to permanently relocate.	Housing
		In Bangladesh, displaced/landless people live on embankments where they have little to no access to essential services to meet their basic electricity, water, and sanitation needs. To address this, Helvetas facilitated locally led operations like rainwater harvesting tanks, solar PSF and resilient housing, resilient toilets.	Basic services
		In Bangladesh, displaced children are no longer able to attend school. YPSA connects families with education administration and local schools.	Education
		Following their historical expulsion from Banaba, the Banaban people dispersed; not all chose to relocate to Rabi Island. The Banaban Defenders today seek to reconnect with the diaspora, in part to re-establish lost genealogies and family relations.	Community cohesion
Planned relocation	Can address losses and damages	In Bangladesh in Kutubdia and Bashkhali region people have lost their houses lands and all belongings due to climate induced disaster. YPSA alongside the government is planning and executing small scale relocation of one family at a time	Housing
	Can drive losses and damages	In Bangladesh, relocated households are treated as outsiders in host communities, when in large numbers. To address this, YPSA implemented only a small-scale relocation into a nearby community (allowing relocating people to create connection with their new neighbors) and installed deep tubewells in the area, providing safe drinking water to both relocating households and their host community, thereby facilitating social connections and inclusion.	Social exclusion and discrimination
	Can be a form of losses and damages	In Alaska, communities wait a very long time for relocation, to the detriment of their wellbeing. Some relocations, while initiated, take a long time to be implemented, leading the community to be physically split between two sites and live with the constant reminder of an ongoing but very slow move.	Mental health and wellbeing
		The experience of protracted relocation in the Pacific has also been the source of significant trauma, with grant partners noting increased depressions among community members.	Livelihoods
Immobility	Can drive losses and damages	Helvetas notes that in Bangladesh there are people whose livelihood are diminished by climatic effects who specifically don't want to move, and they don't have any other skills to survive. Helvetas arranges skill development programs and facilitates apprenticeship models with hands on training for people who do not want to migrate or relocate from affected areas.	Livelihoods

## Lessons about Loss and Damage

### Section summary

While only two of the projects reviewed in this report were designed and funded with an explicit Loss and Damage focus, CJRF grant partners shared several insights into the value but also the challenges of adopting an L&D framework in projects to address climate mobilities. CJRF grant partners highlighted that many communities do not explicitly speak of their experiences in terms of losses and damages. Project funders should start by evaluating whether or not adopting an L&D lens is beneficial – and does not distort local perspectives and calls to action. This can be achieved through community engagement measures such as grassroots meetings, regional convenings, and value-based assessments (**recommendation 3.1**).

Grant partners also emphasized that the distinction between economic and non-economic losses and damages, common in academic and international policy discussions, is not always useful in project practice. This distinction can be useful when it serves to highlight the intangible and often underestimated losses and damages arising from climate mobilities – such as loss of social cohesion, language and culture. However, project activities that ostensibly address economic losses and damages may contribute significantly to address non-economic losses and damages, such as when improved livelihoods also help restore social status and feelings of personal agency (**recommendation 3.2**).

This is important to recognize, because any insistence on discussing non-economic losses and damages explicitly with community members may in some cases be harmful. CJRF Grant partners urge funders and other external supporters of communities to exercise caution and adopt a trauma-informed approach in NELD projects (**recommendation 3.3**).

**Recommendation 3.1: Provide support for communities and grant partners to articulate and identify their losses and damages in ways that reflect local values and concerns and – if useful to access support and third-party funding – to present these in the language of international L&D frameworks.**

**Grassroots meetings, cultural mapping exercises and value-based assessments can help capture these experiences and integrate them into project planning.** Grant partners generally perceive the increased international focus on Loss and Damage and damage to be beneficial, as it provides a space to recognize and discuss the experience of communities exposed to climate-exacerbated hazards. The inclusion of Loss and Damage is also considered a victory, as it is the fruit of sustained advocacy by civil society organizations and governments from the most climate-affected countries:

*I am just really glad that economic Loss and Damage, especially the non-economic loss and damage came about, because we have been now living with these events for many, many years. And we have been trying to voice these in the climate discourse.<sup>66</sup>*

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<sup>66</sup> Interview, Banaban Defenders

**The emergence of Loss and Damage within climate policy has also caused grant partners to shift how they perceive already existing activities.** For instance, UUSC described the realization that their existing activities to address HMCCC-related challenges also address Loss and Damage:

*Most of the strategies that we found ... like recovering lost sites or lost ancestral land [...] we never saw it as a strategy to address loss and damage. It was part of our goal of advancing their rights and dignities in addressing the issue of climate forced displacement.<sup>67</sup>*

**Furthermore, an increase in Loss and Damage funding means that, to apply for international funding, organizations must now learn about Loss and Damage concepts and language and (re)classify their work within this framework.** This also means that how (sub)grantees frame and design their aims and activities is influenced by the global level Loss and Damage discourse, sometimes against their wishes. For instance, UUSC expressed that it is now required to differentiate what counts as economic or non-economic losses and damages. This can make it difficult for people to tell their stories how they would have wished.

*When they're doing advocacy where they now have to compartmentalize between the spectrum of issues that they experience within, the climate forced displacement in the spectrum of it. And they have to differentiate now what loss and damage is and sometimes when they're telling their story.*

**Working with new terminology and concepts might mean that grant partners now require support on**

**how to best integrate Loss and Damage thinking into their project plans,** and on how to discuss these matters in ways that help people affected by climate change identify losses and damages. In a 2022 regional convening with project partners held in Fiji, UUSC identified a range of activities such as community organizing (including of specific groups like youth or women's organizations), grassroots meetings and workshops, and "cultural mapping", as important ways to clarify what "counts" as losses and damages and to identify non-economic losses and damages especially.

**However, it should also be acknowledged that Loss & Damage language may not be helpful to meet all communities' advocacy goals.** Alaska Native tribes, for example, do not expect to be eligible to international L&D funding, so introducing the language of Loss and Damage to their discussions of climate impacts may not be useful, unless and until doing so is clearly established to help achieve communities' advocacy and funding goals. Similarly, one CJRF grant partner in Bangladesh noted that the government has yet to integrate Loss and Damage language into its development and planning agendas. Until their advocacy succeeds in getting this language integrated, the value of adopting Loss and Damage into their project design remains limited.

**Recommendation 3.2: Understand that while the separation of economic and non-economic losses and damages is conceptually useful, real-world interventions frequently address both jointly.**

**All grant partners highlighted that the line between economic and non-economic is hard to draw.** This difficulty arises in part from grant partners' adoption

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<sup>67</sup> Interview, UUSC, also subsequent quotes

of Indigenous knowledge perspectives, which do not draw strong conceptual distinctions between material and non-material world but see the “spiritual, mental, physical” as fundamentally intertwined (ANTHC). However, the line is hard to draw even when adopting a western lens. UUSC, in discussion with sub-grantees and community members from the Pacific, “could not actually come to a distinction.” The interviewee used the example of measures to address food insecurity in Tuvalu:

*There was a lot of salinization happening with their soils, they could not grow anything. So, they decided to build [a] food farm, to be able to grow salt tolerant foods and then we were talking about: ‘is this an economic loss and damage or non-economic loss and damage?’ And you know, it was like both. If we build this food farm you don’t have to rely on buying foods that are imported, right? But it also provides food security, provides safety and comfort, especially for women whose jobs are to go and source food.*

Similarly, Helvetas highlighted how reconstructing a road, which could be classified as addressing economic Loss and Damage, had restored people’s access to healthcare and education, impacts to which are often classified under Non-Economic Loss and Damage:

*We actually designed only for economic loss and damage. So, one activity you know, the rebuilding one road, one major road in the village, the road was broken for, I think, since Aila [in 2009]. After*

*that, actually, no political leader actually took any steps to rebuild it. [...] It was sometimes inundated [...] this is a major connection with schools, hospitals, and the market*

**Given this interconnection, work addressing economic losses and damages can have positive knock-on effects on non-economic losses and damages – even if this was not the stated intent.**

Another grant partner in Bangladesh spoke of how a program to provide livelihood support and microfinance to displaced people not only provided much-needed income (addressing a clear economic loss), but also to “uplift their social status”, a far more intangible loss affecting displaced people without lands or livelihoods.<sup>68</sup> Such observations were made by several grant partners. They confirm findings of other studies conducted in Bangladesh and in the Caribbean.<sup>69</sup>

**Recommendation 3.3. Handle discussions of non-economic losses with care to avoid causing further harm. Reflect on whether such conversations should be initiated at all. Where they are useful, ensure that interventions are sensitive to the often-traumatic nature of losses and damages. Consider hiring professional event facilitators and training project managers to provide culturally-sensitive, trauma-informed psychosocial support.**

**When asked about non-economic losses and damage, interviewees repeatedly turned to the topic of climate-related emotional distress, trauma and grief.** Several grant partners expressed the

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<sup>68</sup> Interview, YPSA

<sup>69</sup> Douwe van Schie et al., ‘[Centring Local Values in Assessing and Addressing Climate-Related Losses and Damages](#)’ (London: IIED, 2023); Melanie Pill, ‘[Re-Framing Non-Economic Losses to Non-Economic Impacts for Effective Policymaking: Evidence from the Caribbean](#)’, *Climate and Development* 14, no. 8 (14 September 2022): 770–79.

concern that discussing these issues – whether as part of project consultations, community meetings, or in sharing ones’ story with researcher, journalists, or policymakers as part of national and international advocacy efforts – can induce further harm as this distress can resurface, opening old wounds:

*I think we have to be careful until we really know what we’re dealing with, what spaces we share [...] sometimes it creates, especially for Alaskan tribal leaders, it is a little traumatizing because they are already dealing with their local traumas and then they go into the space and hear it from other Indigenous populations.<sup>70</sup>*

**Moreover, some community members can find it difficult to suggest solutions to NELDs, as they are already experiencing multiple forms of trauma and loss** – not exclusively related to ongoing climate change impacts, but also to historical colonial experience and ongoing under-investment in services for their communities (Recommendation 1.1). One interviewee underscored that “in some cases, they [community members] don’t know what that [the solution] is because they live with so many disparities already and layers of trauma, that it’s very difficult to ask that question and get a clear answer.”<sup>71</sup>

**Useful and beneficial conversations about non-economic losses and damages can nonetheless be had.** Another interviewee noted conversations about NELDs can be beneficial even if they are difficult. Another interviewee reported that discussing

these topics helped provide a sense of community, connection, and purpose that helped them cope with negative experiences and emotions:

*I found healing in the process of sharing my stories, with the hope that it will help future migration of people that may have to leave home because of environmental degradation. So, it has been years of, tears and, you know, resilience building and, trying to heal from all the trauma that have happened because of that experience and now having to go through another level of climate crisis.<sup>72</sup>*

These diverse realities described by project partners reflect established conversations around ethics in (disaster) research, concerning ethical clearances, consent, confidentiality, cultural sensitivity, transparency, and the provision of psychological support.<sup>73</sup> This literature shows that, with the right kind of support and trust-building, conversations about Non-Economic Loss and Damage can be conducted safely and be restorative.

**To ensure that future projects – especially those focusing on Non-Economic Loss and Damage – do not harm affected communities, additional measures must be taken under a trauma-informed approach.** It is important to establish that such conversations are necessary, occur in a safe space, and can be followed up with concrete action. Some grant partners are likely to require additional, dedicated resources for this. Furthermore, measures such as offering

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<sup>70</sup> Interview, ANTHC

<sup>71</sup> Interview, ANTHC

<sup>72</sup> Interview, Banaban Defenders

<sup>73</sup> Peter Allmark et al., ‘[Ethical Issues in the Use of In-Depth Interviews: Literature Review and Discussion](#)’, *Research Ethics* 5, no. 2 (1 June 2009): 48–54; Signe Mezinska et al., ‘[Research in Disaster Settings: A Systematic Qualitative Review of Ethical Guidelines](#)’, *BMC Medical Ethics* 17, no. 1 (21 October 2016): 62.

psychosocial support are instrumental in ensuring psychological safety for all stakeholders involved with crises resulting from losses and damages.<sup>74</sup>

**Navigating conversations shaped by grief and emotional distress requires careful organization and building long-term relationships rooted in mutual trust.** Interviewees emphasized this repeatedly. All underscored that to have “meaningful conversations” about non-economic losses and damages without causing further harm, “you have to have relationships [...] and this is really hard work because there is a lot of grief, and there is a lot of loss”. Crucially, this has implications for funding: “if you don’t have sustained funding to build those relationships with communities, [...] it’s a disservice to the people who are on the ground faced with inadequate resources, economic and non-economic loss and damage.” Such conversations cannot be rushed.<sup>75</sup>

**Events in which NEDs are discussed require significant planning, consultation, and investment to ensure participants feel safe.** When organizing the First Peoples’ Convening on Climate-Forced Displacement, UUSC “knew from the beginning that it wasn’t going to be an easy thing or part for communities who have been directly impacted to, like, tell their stories in a way that they felt safe.”<sup>76</sup>

Participants were closely consulted when determining their goals, with co-design beginning a year ahead. Even then, flexibility was maintained right until the event: part of the agenda was changed during the meeting: adapting to emerging needs.

**Also contributing to the creation of a safe space for participants is the selection of professional facilitation teams whose principles and skills align with the expressed needs of participating community members:** namely the ability to facilitate discussion in a room marked by different power dynamics, different languages. The selected facilitators had already “worked all over the world with other communities that had faced trauma” and had expertise “geared towards trauma and healing and having conversations that are very, very difficult.”<sup>77</sup>

**Finally, focusing on economic losses and damages may be a sufficient first step in contexts where trust is not yet established and/or where explicit discussion of grief and trauma is not desirable –** perhaps because funders and grant partners have not previously worked with the community. Given the close interconnection of economic and non-economic losses and damages measures ostensibly limited to addressing economic losses and damages may still yield beneficial outcomes so long as they meet the expressed needs of communities.

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<sup>74</sup>Suresh Bada Math et al., ‘[Disaster Management: Mental Health Perspective](#)’, Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine 37, no. 3 (1 July 2015): 261–71; Barbara Lopes Cardozo et al., ‘[Psychological Distress, Depression, Anxiety, and Burnout among International Humanitarian Aid Workers: A Longitudinal Study](#)’, PLOS ONE 7, no. 9 (12 September 2012): e44948.

<sup>75</sup> Interview, AIJ

<sup>76</sup> Interview, UUSC

<sup>77</sup> Interview, UUSC

## 4. Effective grantmaking

### Section summary

This final part of the portfolio review focuses on the characteristics of “good grants” according to CJRF grant partners. These are grants that most effectively enable communities to achieve their goals, without creating new challenges. Good grants are flexible grants. This means that funders and grant partners maintain an open conversation about project goals, focusing on community needs and enabling positive project outcomes even if this requires amendments to activities and corresponding budgets and timelines (**recommendation 4.1**).

CJRF grant partners further highlighted that funders’ flexibility is necessarily rooted in a genuine interest in community perspectives, which funders can demonstrate through activities such as site visits, participation in community consultations, to include communities in project design, review, and assessments (**recommendation 4.2**). As this requires time, to ensure relationship-building and the creation of trust, grant partners also called for long-term funding – ideally 3 to 5 years. If this is not possible, grant partners recommended using shorter-term, smaller-scale funding to lay the basis for future, larger-scale funds, including from other grant makers and governments (**recommendation 4.3**). Finally, this also means ensuring that reporting requirements are kept simple and manageable,

especially for time and resource-constrained community-based organizations, focusing on creating opportunities for exchange and mutual learning instead (**recommendation 4.4**).

**Recommendation 4.1: Embrace flexibility, allowing for adjustments in project goals, activities, budgets, and timelines to maintain effectiveness and responsiveness to grant partners’ and communities’ needs, which may change in unpredictable ways.**

**A major theme emerging from the interviews is the importance of grant makers’ flexibility – concerning goals, activities, timing and costs – for climate mobilities projects**, since these encompass a highly diverse, context-dependent set of challenges. Grant partners defined flexibility primarily as a willingness to iterate on project aims and activities even after the project starts. They valued the ability to continuously “review the project, based on the local context and changing situation” so that it “really can fit [the grant partner’s] approach and local needs”.<sup>78</sup> For example, Helvetas, having initially intended to provide skills training via workshops held with several dozen participants at a time, eventually decided on an entirely different apprenticeship model:

*After two or three training so we thought that this is not working. So, we then changed it [...] to the apprenticeship training because this is more fruitful for [people who] don’t have the time to spend for this theoretical training. This kind of flexibility is very effective.<sup>79</sup>*

<sup>78</sup> Interview, COAST

<sup>79</sup> Interview, Helvetas

**Flexibility also involves a willingness to accept additional logistical costs.** It can be complicated, time-consuming, and expensive for grant partners to reach remote communities, as in Alaska where unpredictable weather windows often require costly repeated flights before reaching one's destination. Similarly, rainy seasons in tropical areas can complicate logistics or impede building works. In such cases, grant partners reported many experiences with other funders who were unwilling to accept the costs and delays involved. Other grant partners reported administrative hurdles, such as the prolonged process for officially registering the land purchased for relocation by YPSA.

**Recommendation 4.2: Cultivate understanding of grant partners' and communities' perspectives and goals, centering local and Indigenous perspectives that are typically marginalized in grantmaking programs. Active listening and participation in consultations, site visits, and local peer-review can all contribute. Acknowledge that misunderstandings and mismatched goals are still possible, so ensure that expectations and any assessment metrics are clearly formulated.**

*Flexibility means [...] we share our ideas. In the projects, they never impose their thoughts to us. They always honor our approach, but they just want you to be clear about what you want to do.<sup>80</sup>*

**Flexibility arises from genuine attempts to holistically understand the aims and needs of grant partners and communities.** Grant partners "on the ground" find

their trust in funders grows when they demonstrate their understanding by actively engaging in discussion and problem-solving, as opposed to unquestioningly accepting proposed project changes. Grant makers' ability to ask pertinent questions gives grant partner confidence that their perspectives and expertise are taken seriously:

*They asked questions. They didn't just say: "Okay, let's pivot and do that". They wanted to know why. That engagement and that relationship building to me is really critical because it helps funders understand the lens we're looking through.<sup>81</sup>*

**Moreover, genuine attention to local and Indigenous perspectives is an essential first step to decolonize funding.** When CJRF funded the creation of an Indigenous peer review group for ANTHC's Unmet Needs report, this "allowed them [ANTHC] to pivot and kind of take a pause and then really look at it through a different lens ... it made it [the report] much more effective." Other ways in which grant makers can demonstrate their willingness to understand is by actively listening and participating in convenings and consultations (see also Recommendation 3.1), and in general by staying open to hearing directly from community members. Partners also specifically reported that site visits – such as when the CJRF director visited YPSA's relocation project and met with relocating families – are similarly beneficial.<sup>82</sup>

**Misunderstandings or mismatched expectations can be significantly minimized but are not entirely avoidable.** The diversity of project contexts means

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<sup>80</sup> Interview, YPSA

<sup>81</sup> Interview, ANTHC

<sup>82</sup> YPSA, 'Project Narrative Report: Addressing the Rights and Needs of Climate Forced Displaced People in the South-Eastern Coast of Bangladesh'.



that grant makers will inevitably only have a partial understanding of each project. Therefore, open discussions and regular consultation do not replace the need to be “very clear about what the metrics are”.<sup>83</sup> Project metrics and indicators do not have to be quantitative or overly prescriptive as they may change along with goals and activities but should identify process-oriented actions that respond to actual community needs. These should also be sufficiently concrete and small-scale, as generally, high-level goals are more likely to lead to mismatched expectations. This is especially true for grantees’ contributions to hard-to-measure, long-term processes, such as advocacy efforts to influence policy.

**Recommendation 4.3: Opt for longer grant durations whenever possible; ideally 3–5 years. Building trust with communities and addressing deeply embedded inequalities requires such timescales. Work with grant partners to avoid funding disruptions, as these undermine trust and project momentum. If funds are limited, provide interim support to address immediate needs and set the stage for future projects.**

**Grant partners were unanimous in calling for long-term funding.** Individual grants in the portfolio lasted between one and three years. Some were one-time grants, while others were issued as a series of grants, providing continuous support. Grant partners reported that one-year grants significantly limit what they can achieve and when asked for an ideal grant duration, cited three to five years.

*This type of funding should have a long duration of the project – like four years – because to get real results of the community, it takes time.<sup>84</sup>*

**Addressing climate mobilities and associated losses and damages requires careful, long-term exchange with communities to identify needs and responses and to address firmly embedded inequalities.**

Advocacy similarly requires long-term engagement with government representatives. Discontinuities in funding may mean having to lay off staff who had built these relationships on an individual level. Thus, grant durations have a significant impact on grant partners’ ability to build and preserve trusting relationships with affected communities. Grant partners who re-granted CJRF funds to community organizations or tribal governments – who often have few or no other funding opportunities – were even more concerned by short and discontinued funding. Any interruption has significant knock-on effects on the local community’s governance mechanisms and capacities.

**Finally, grant partners highlighted that limited resources and timeframes should not prevent funders from helping communities achieve intermediary or temporary goals.** Short-term support can meet immediate needs or lay the groundwork for future, larger-scale projects. ANTHC, for example, has obtained new, large-scale funding starting in 2024: totaling US\$83 million, US\$25 million of which will be sub-granted to Tribal and State partners in Alaska. A large share of the funds (US\$75 million) was awarded by the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to establish a community climate risk assessment program, expand statewide

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<sup>83</sup> Interview, AJJ

<sup>84</sup> Interview, YPSA

tribal adaptation technical assistance, and support the development of new networking and knowledge sharing activities.<sup>85</sup> ANTHC directly attributes recent funding successes to earlier CJRF support. ANTHC's *Unmet Needs* report,<sup>86</sup> written and published with CJRF support, informed the design and created a strong justification for the new, large-scale project. The process of working with federal and state agencies on the report also created momentum and ensured these partners were ready to act once funding came through.

**Recommendation 4.4: Reduce the complexity of reporting requirements to not overburden grant partners, especially small community-based organizations. Focus instead on creating opportunities for sharing experiences and best practices among grantees.**

**Grant partners are not always able to provide regular, extensive, and formal project reports** – especially when they are small, community-led organizations with limited time and resources. Sometimes, they also need help to learn effective reporting methods, especially on finances. In light of this, grantees were very positive about CJRF's flexible reporting requirements - allowing for short reports without imposing a format and, in the case of regranting, “not creating burdensome processes” with multiple layers of reporting. At the same time, partners acknowledge this “worked for us because we already have that established trust and relationship”.<sup>87</sup>

**At the same time, grant partners share a strong interest in monitoring, evaluation, and learning, and the possibility of more frequent exchange with other grantees who – despite working in very different places – may have valuable experiences to share.** Some grant partners suggested that they would benefit from more opportunities to exchange with others funded by CJRF, as they wondered what “successes and struggles other grantees face”, especially when it comes to implementing a responsive, flexible project that evolves in collaboration with communities:

*We had to pivot many times; it would have been nice to have shared with other grantees ... it would also be beneficial to us to understand maybe some other avenues that were taken through other processes that could have helped us.*<sup>88</sup>

**Grant partners also appreciated being involved in this report** – noting that it is an all-too-unusual way of including grant partners in the assessment of grant programs – one that is reflective of the efforts being made to implement a just and inclusive approach to funding, that respects grantees views and gives them the opportunity to offer constructive criticism on the grant program as a whole.

*I'm really appreciative that CJRF is doing this. I mean, I think that speaks volumes about you know what they're trying to do with the funding that they have.*<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>NOAA, '[Project Summary - Stronger Together: Expanding Climate Adaptation Technical Assistance for Frontline Alaska Native Communities](#)' (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Office for Coastal Management), accessed 31 July 2024.

<sup>86</sup>ANTHC, 'The Unmet Needs of Environmentally Threatened Alaska Native Villages: Assessments and Recommendations'.

<sup>87</sup> Interview, UUSC

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