Event Summary

Global Stakeholder Consultation on the Climate Debt Risk Index 2025 (CDRI’25)

Date: 14 November 2025
Time: 12:00–12:55 PM (UTC-3 | Brasília Time)
Venue: Meeting Room 6, Area D, COP30, Belém, Brazil
Organized by: Change Initiative

Overview

The Global Stakeholder Consultation convened policymakers, researchers, civil society leaders, and youth representatives to discuss the Climate Debt Risk Index 2025 (CDRI’25). The session highlighted the rising climate-debt burden across 55 vulnerable economies and explored future pathways for debt-free climate resilience grounded in Natural Rights Led Governance (NRLG).

The event underscored the mismatch between climate vulnerability and the loan-heavy structure of current finance and called for a shift toward grant-first, justice-driven support systems for Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and climate frontline communities.

Key Presentation

Mr. M. Zakir Hossain Khan, Chief Executive of Change Initiative and CIF Observer, opened the session with a detailed presentation on CDRI’25 findings.
He outlined:

- the acceleration of climate debt risk in LDCs and recent graduates;
- the economic distortion caused when adaptation and loss-and-damage responses are financed through loans;
- the limitation of development-led governance frameworks that allow unrestricted extraction; and
- the value proposition of NRLG, noting that investments in nature and rights-based governance deliver significantly higher long-term gains.

He posed three central questions to the participants:

1. How can global climate finance architecture shift from debt-creating to debt-neutral or debt-negative for LDCs?
2. What responsibility-based mechanisms can be introduced to link historical emissions and ability to pay with present-day obligations?
3. How can enforceable rights of nature and communities be embedded into climate finance to avoid carbon-driven extraction?

Interventions and Key Messages

1. Academic and Expert Reflections

Dr. Fazle Rabbi Sadeque Ahmad, Deputy Managing Director, Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (Bangladesh) emphasized that LDCs, despite emitting only 3.3% of global emissions, face a deepening debt trap from adaptation loans that do not produce revenue. He highlighted the burden this places on national development and biodiversity. He mentioned that the CDRI brings a new kind of finding—showing that climate finance is not just inadequate, but is actively driving LDCs into a debt crisis that blocks their path to development.

Dr. Mizan R. Khan, Deputy Director, ICCCAD noted the structural shortcomings in global debt mechanisms, including the ineffective IMF debt sustainability framework and the G20 common framework. He recommended a borrowers' coalition, stronger global tax cooperation, and domestic reforms such as improved tax-to-GDP ratios.

Md. Ziaul Haque, Additional Director General, Department of Environment (Bangladesh) reinforced that Paris Agreement Article 9 already requires grant-based, public support for adaptation in LDCs and SIDS—a commitment that has not been honored. He highlighted alarming per capita climate debt trends across vulnerable economies.

2. Youth Perspectives

Afra Nawar, Youth, Bangladesh drew attention to the generational injustice created by loan-driven climate finance. She stated that young people in Bangladesh are becoming collateral for a crisis they did not create.

Lautaro Carranza, Argentina / Latin America Youth shared parallels across Latin America, noting that countries across the region face severe impacts while receiving inadequate financial support. He urged stronger regional visibility in global climate finance decisions.

Jasmima Sabatina, YOUNGO – Loss & Damage addressed the erosion of future opportunities through debt-linked finance and called for grant-first funding, debt relief, and genuine youth inclusion in decision-making structures.

3. Civil Society & Indigenous Voices

Mrinal Kanti Tripura, Indigenous Rights Activist, Executive Director, Maleya Foundation raised the question of whether current institutions have the capacity to listen to nature and understand the consequences of actions taken against ecological systems.

Dipika Lama, representative of Indigenous Women & Girls with Disabilities, Nepal provided testimony on the compounded harm faced by indigenous women and girls with disabilities. She described how loan-based finance intensifies their vulnerabilities by reducing access to education, health, and cultural continuity.

Dr. Arifur Rahman from YPSA, Bangladesh reaffirmed the need for fast, direct, and grant-based finance, particularly for locally led adaptation.

Ndayishimiye Rénilde, Director of Environment and Climate Change, Ministry of Environment, Agriculture and Livestock (Burundi) stated that 94% of people in Burundi depend on agriculture. When rainfall is disturbed, everything collapses — food, GDP, exports, roads, even the budget. Climate change is dismantling the economy from the ground up.

Dr. Tijani Al-Badawi from Nigeria asserted that frontline communities should not be required to repay loans for impacts they did not cause and called for increased concessional and grant financing.

4. LDC Group Priorities

Manjit Dhakal, Advisor to the LDC Group Chair, recognized Bangladesh's long-standing leadership, from the first NAPA in 2005 to current negotiation priorities. He outlined the LDC Group's call to triple adaptation finance to at least USD 120 billion per year, fully public and grant-based, and urged clarity in the definition of climate finance.

Cross-Cutting Themes

Climate Debt Trap Recognition	CDRI'25 highlights the rising burden of climate-linked debt in countries least responsible for the crisis. Participants agreed that the current system reinforces economic fragility.
Shift from Loans to Grants	Speakers repeatedly stressed the need for grant-first climate finance, both for adaptation and loss-and-damage, arguing that loan-heavy structures worsen inequality.
Rights-Based Finance and NRLG	The session linked climate finance to the enforcement of nature's rights, community rights, equity, and natural accountability—core components of NRLG.
Youth and Marginalized Communities	The consultation highlighted the need for inclusive finance that supports youth, indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities in shaping climate governance.
Institutional Reform	There was broad agreement on the need to strengthen global climate finance governance, introduce responsibility-linked funding mechanisms, and align with commitments under the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement.

Conclusion

The consultation closed with a shared commitment to advancing debt-free climate resilience and amplifying the findings of CDRI'25 at COP30. Participants agreed that climate finance must move beyond loan-driven responses and integrate natural rights, equity, and community leadership.

Change Initiative reaffirmed its dedication to continuing this dialogue globally and pushing for climate finance models that reflect justice, responsibility, and long-term sustainability.

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