

June 2024



Pacific Rising

Non-Economic Loss & Damage

Convening Synthesis Brief



Synthesis Brief

From June 3-7, 2024, The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) held a meeting with grant recipient partners based in the Pacific islands. The meeting, *Pacific Rising: Non-Economic Loss & Damage*, provided an opportunity for the UUSC team and grant partners to:

1. **Reconnect** with each other
2. **Reflect** on the successes, challenges, and lessons from the past year
3. **Engage** in a collaborative and participatory design process to establish guidelines for the new granting cycle

By the end of the meeting, the partners better understood non-economic loss and damage (NELD), identified their specific needs for learning and partner support, agreed on a fair distribution of funding, and developed achievable action items.



During the meeting, partners worked together to:

1. **Discuss** the grant parameters (i.e. NELD, gender sensitivity, and intersectionality)
2. **Design** a learning framework
3. **Identify** partner support and coordination needs
4. **Establish** guidelines for how to distribute resources

The organizations in attendance:

UUSC (USA)

Kioa Island Community Organization (Fiji)

Banaban Human Rights Defenders Network (Fiji)

Pacific Climate Warriors (Fiji)

Climate Tok (Fiji)

Ecological Solutions Foundation (Solomon Islands)

Te Toa Matoa and KIRICAN (Kiribati)

Jo-Jikum (Marshall islands)

TUCAN (Tuvalu)

Tulele Peisa (Papua New Guinea)

Types of NELD work the grants will support:

- Trauma
- Human Security & Livelihood Impacts
- Loss of Coastal Resources
- Loss of Traditional Artifacts/Knowledge/TEK*/Roles
- Food Insecurity
- Water Insecurity
- Health Impacts
- Loss of Social Cohesion
- Gendered Impacts of NELD
- NELD Impact of Youths
- NELD Impacts on People with Disabilities



Participatory Design

Colonization and extraction have directly caused NELD impacts in partners' communities. Likewise, colonial and extractive legacies inform present-day philanthropy and international funding. UUSC is committed to decolonizing the funding sphere and promoting equity. As a part of this, the NELD funding process is **rooted in participatory design**, not protocols and requirements dictated by the funder.

At *Pacific Rising*, the collective of partners, which included UUSC, worked collaboratively and as equal stakeholders to determine key aspects of the funding process, including:

- a. Shared values
- b. How the grants will be allocated
- c. Evaluation and learning

Why Participatory Design?

A participatory process not only fosters transparency and collective understanding, but it *embeds Indigenous knowledge and culturally-appropriate protocols* into the grant framework. This is not a one-size-fits-all model, but it offers an example for funders who are working to advance climate justice.

Partner feedback and experiences were pivotal in shaping the discussions on culturally appropriate resource distribution and funding prioritization.

The meeting encouraged open dialogue and fostered **a sense of shared purpose and collaboration.**

These are key tenets to a participatory process.



Outcomes

Values to Guide Decision Making

The participants identified a set of values to guide and support the activities and the collective decision-making of the group.

Shared Values to Guide Decision-Making

- Equity
- Transparency
- Open Communication
- Flexibility
- Balance
- Shared alignment and understanding
- Culturally appropriate methods
- Respect
- Reciprocity



In a participatory decision-making process it is important to establish key values that are shared by all to guide decision-making



How to Distribute the Grants

Each participant suggested approaches to grant distribution. These included equal distribution as well as distribution based on considering equity and need. There was intense facilitated discussion around these issues. The group grappled with what was most culturally appropriate, which choice best served the self-determination of the partners, and how the decision would affect their NELD work. Ultimately, the collective decided on **equal distribution among grant recipients** (*a notable decision*).

Partners will be revising concept notes and re-submitting their plans based on the budget limits and in line with the parameters of the grant (i.e. gender sensitivity/intersectionality and NELD).

Partners agreed to collectively review the distribution of grants for Years 2 and 3 based on lessons from Year 1.

UUSC's goal of advancing self determination is key in shaping this process and its outcomes



Staying true to the values of equity and equality, **partners decided to distribute Year 1 of the NELD grant funds equally** amongst the nine existing grassroots partners.

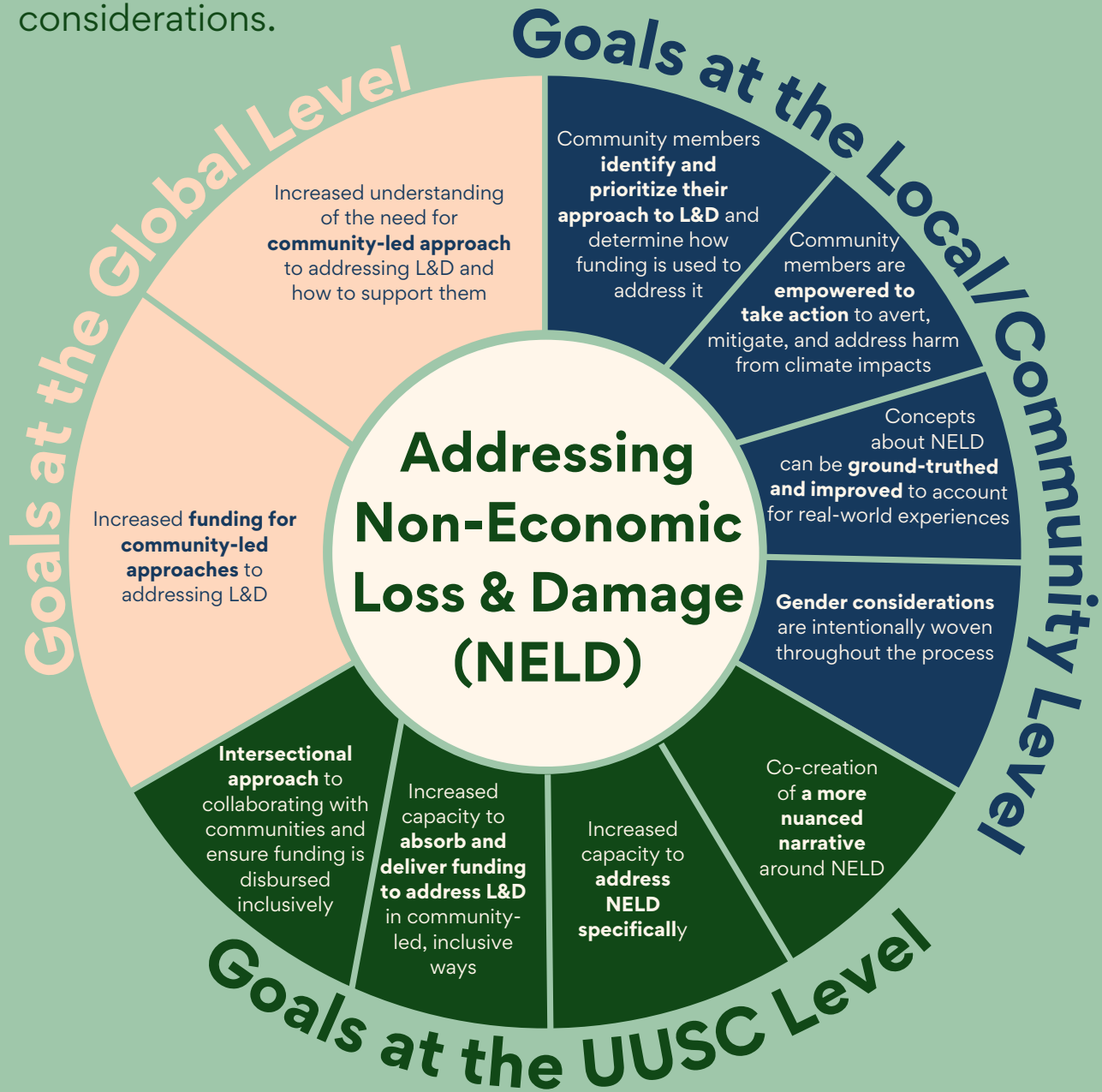


Partners also requested that the **contribution of communities** in addressing and implementing NELD strategies **be recognized and considered equally as important as the funding provided**.



Learning

Partners reviewed **this proposed learning framework** and developed additional modes of learning, guidelines, and considerations.



The additional goals and guidelines that partners added to the learning framework speak to the need for reciprocal learning across all aspects of these partnerships. They also embed culturally appropriate and culturally specific understandings of knowledge into the process. **All of this can lead to deeper engagement, impact, and trust.**

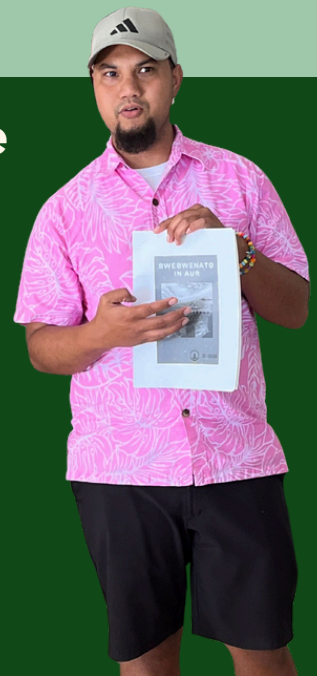
Partner's Additions to the Learning Framework

- **Peer learning between partners of similar initiatives or geographic proximity.** This could include partner visits, partner meetings, etc. This could also be done by creating more convening spaces throughout the grant period to learn, share, and troubleshoot between partners.
- **Inclusion of other partners** into the existing framework. These partners would rotate in the cohort with the current leads from the program partnership.
 - A learning approach that includes **culturally appropriate ways of learning**, including storytelling, experimentation (practical steps), language sensitivity, respect of community protocols, etc.
 - A commitment to **safeguard intellectual property and practices** through copyright, Free Prior Informed Consent, co-authorship, etc. Ideally, measures should be in place and agreed upon by knowledge-holders and external partners.
 - **Transparency of how learnings will be used and shared** with accountability measures in place, ideally via a written document.
 - An agreement that UUSC will **respect what is permitted to be shared** and not share what is not allowed. UUSC will rely on partners to provide permissions.
 - A pledge that **all information shared with communities be accessible in the local language and in simple terms** to respect the diversity of identities and populations and their right to access information for decision-making.

These considerations center Indigenous protocols and Traditional Knowledge.

What We Know About Traditional Knowledge

1. Traditional Knowledge must be recognized as **equally important as Western knowledge.**
2. Traditional Knowledge is often **embodied and embedded in Indigenous protocols and processes.** Learning practices should have a holistic framework that respects Indigenous systems.
3. Indigenous communities' **data sovereignty must be upheld.**



Reflections on Gender and Intersectionality

Partners shared various ways of integrating gender sensitivity and/or intersectionality in their proposals. This included the following:

- Increased participation and **empowerment of frontline communities**, especially women, youth, and disabled groups, in decisions and policies that affect them
- Work that relies on **collaboration with women's groups** to advise appropriate practices
- Active **participation of women and girls** in projects
 - Recognition and **valuing of the role of women as traditional healers**
 - Recognition of the role in **passing down traditional skills** to future generations
 - **Intergenerational transmission of knowledge** between younger and older people
 - Active participation of women and girls in the **preservation and transmission of cultural heritage**
 - **A narrative that focuses on women's roles** and the loss and damages experienced by women
 - **Inclusion of women**, who are often excluded from decision-making, in consultations
 - **Involvement of girls** in intergenerational dialogue
 - A focus on NELD impacts on **gender roles and awareness** in all knowledge products
 - **Mainstreaming of gender** in NELD approaches
 - **Inclusion of women** in trainings and in decisions about water management systems



Partner Support

During the convening, partners identified individual and collective partner support needs including:

Operational & Capacity Support

The support of UUSC in the compilation and sharing of collective stories in a booklet.

Technical Assistance on Data Collection and Aggregation

Creation of training resources to promote social media skills and training of team members to assemble and publish advocacy materials.

Strategy Development

Organization of a retreat to design strategy and workplans for the first year.

Networking opportunities

Development of spaces by and for team members to meet, connect, and collaborate.

Gender Assessment

Hiring of a researcher with gender expertise to assess the gendered impacts of NELD across partners' geographies and provide baseline data to help inform partners' understanding and strategies.

Partners also identified potential collaborators and networks to provide these various types of support.

More than Just Funding

It is critical to note that funding is not the only nor the most important factor in advancing NELD strategies. Partner support, community contributions, and learning must complement funding and be recognized as essential contributors to success.

UUSC and partners will carry out further reflection on strategies that can influence the governance of climate-forced displacement, NELD, and resource distribution.



Next Steps for Coordination

- UUSC will work on **creating and distributing training resources**, emphasizing individual partner support for work on grant proposals.
- UUSC will **coordinate for upcoming tasks**.
- UUSC will **organize bi-monthly catch-up meetings** on WhatsApp.
- UUSC and Partners will **continue using the WhatsApp group** to share updates and information.
- Pacific Climate Warriors and UUSC will **create and distribute materials aimed at promoting social media skills** and training.
- The partnership will use this NELD grant process to share **guidance for funders and governments** on participatory design and learning.

