

Cascading Crises, Bounded Warnings, and Climate Injustice: Anatomy of The 2026 Bhote Koshi - Trishuli Catastrophe in Nepal

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ABSTRACT

The catastrophic Bhote Koshi–Trishuli disaster of August 2026 has brought the unequal geography of climate risk into sharp focus (National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority [NDRRMA], 2026). Nepal, a country with a relatively small contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions, has experienced extensive human, infrastructural, economic and social losses from a major mountain disaster (Insecurity Insight [INSEC], 2026; NDRRMA, 2026). Preliminary government estimates reported in September 2026 place direct losses at approximately NPR 387.5 billion (US\$2.56 billion), with thousands of people dead or missing and substantial destruction of homes, transport infrastructure, hydropower facilities and livelihoods (INSEC, 2026; NDRRMA, 2026). This article examines the disaster through a climate-justice framework and asks whether humanitarian donations provide an adequate response to increasingly severe climate-related losses in highly vulnerable, low-emitting countries. Drawing on the principles of distributive, procedural, recognitional and intergenerational justice, historical responsibility, common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC), and the emerging international architecture for addressing loss and damage, the article argues that Nepal's climate diplomacy should move beyond a predominantly charity-oriented paradigm. Humanitarian assistance remains indispensable for immediate relief; however, it cannot substitute for predictable, accessible and grant-based finance for loss and damage and climate-resilient reconstruction. The article deliberately distinguishes between event attribution and broader climate responsibility: the occurrence of the Bhote Koshi disaster should not be presented as proof that a particular country or emitter caused the event. Rather, the disaster is examined within the scientifically established context of Himalayan warming, cryospheric change, changing hydrological conditions and growing exposure and vulnerability. The article proposes a prospective climate-justice framework for Nepal based on systematic loss-and-damage documentation, scientific attribution capacity, direct access to international climate funds, grant-based reconstruction, regional Himalayan cooperation, recognition of non-economic losses, and stronger representation of vulnerable mountain states in global climate governance. It concludes that the central issue is not whether Nepal should accept humanitarian donations, but whether international climate governance can evolve from discretionary charity toward equitable responsibility-sharing for unavoidable and residual climate-related losses.

KEYWORDS: Climate justice, Loss and damage, Bhote Koshi, Nepal, Himalayan climate change, Climate finance, Historical responsibility, Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC), Climate compensation, Disaster governance

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1. INTRODUCTION

The catastrophic flash flood was triggered by the collapse of an ice-rock avalanche from the Langtang Himal into the Lende Khola—a tributary intersecting the Bhote Koshi at the Rasuwagadhi border crossing—releasing an estimated 100 million cubic meters of debris-laden water and mud through the gorge (Britannica, 2026). This destructive surge obliterated the Rasuwagadhi border checkpoint, critical infrastructure including hydropower plants and bridges, and vital sections of the primary overland transit route

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connecting Kathmandu to Tibet, resulting in thousands of fatalities and missing persons in Nepal alone, rendering it the nation's most severe natural disaster since the 2015 earthquake (Britannica, 2026). Although predating the event by several years, the 2076 National Climate Change Policy did not explicitly envision this specific occurrence, yet the disaster exemplifies the exact class of climate-linked hazards that the framework's habitat-resilience and adaptation mechanisms were formulated to confront (Government of Nepal, 2019).

Consequently, the catastrophe highlights an acute requirement for enhanced upstream flood observation, glacial hazard evaluation, and resilient infrastructural planning across high-mountain river basins in Nepal—gaps repeatedly emphasized by subjectmatter experts as demanding substantial post-disaster fiscal commitment (Britannica, 2026).

Furthermore, the Bhote Koshi disaster has laid bare a profound disconnect between the strategic commitments codified in Nepal's National Climate Change Policy 2076 and practical, on-the-ground execution, igniting renewed appeals to transition adaptation frameworks from theoretical pledges into actionable field interventions (Government of Nepal, 2019). Post-event investigations revealed that automated telemetry and gauging stations situated at Rasuwagadhi and Syabrubesi went offline within minutes as the torrential wall of water obliterated the instrumentation itself; moreover, even where preliminary metrics survived, water levels remained beneath official Amber warning thresholds until remediation was impossible (Plan International Nepal, 2026). The Department of Hydrology and Meteorology retains the technical capacity to issue forecasts, yet it lacks the statutory authority to mandate evacuation orders—a regulatory void previously highlighted by academic evaluations following antecedent disasters, whose proposed binding standard operating procedures were never formally instituted (Britannica, 2026). In response to these systemic vulnerabilities, the government has formally petitioned the Loss and Damage Fund Board for international financial support, framing the tragedy explicitly through the lens of global climate justice.

The Government of Nepal continues search, rescue, relief, and recovery operations on the 13th day following the severe Bhote Koshi River floods of 26 August 2026. The disaster has caused extensive loss of life and major damage to settlements, roads, bridges, hydropower projects, electricity and telecommunications infrastructure across Rasuwa, Nuwakot, Dhading and other affected areas. As of 7 September 2026, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA) reported that comprehensive search, rescue, and recovery operations remained active following the severe flash floods (The Hindu, 2026). A total of 13,396 individuals have been successfully rescued, which includes over 300 foreign nationals, while approximately 5,000 people remain missing—among them around 600 foreign nationals hailing from 35 countries (The Hindu, 2026; Global Nation, 2026). Recovery efforts have accounted for 1,355 bodies recovered from various flood-impacted regions (The Hindu, 2026). Amid ongoing multi-day operations, four individuals were pulled out alive during the preceding four days, featuring notable survivors extracted from hydropower tunnels and a residence in Betrawati (The Hindu, 2026).

To manage the disaster, the Nepali Army, Nepal Police, Armed Police Force, and the NDRRMA have maintained full mobilization, reinforced by specialist tunnel-rescue teams deployed from India, China, South Korea, the UAE, and Malaysia (The Hindu, 2026). Specialized technical equipment and drones are actively being concentrated around critical hydropower infrastructure, including Upper Trishuli 1, Upper Trishuli

3A, Upper Trishuli 3B, Chilime, Rasuwagadhi, and Langtang projects (The Hindu, 2026). Furthermore, the government has appealed for expanded international backing—specifying high-capacity drones, LiDAR systems, Bailey bridges, DNA testing kits, epidemic-prevention supplies, surge pumps, and advanced tunnel-rescue apparatus—while concurrent engineering efforts focus on re-establishing roads, power grids, and telecommunication networks, such as constructing temporary bridges along the Galchhi-Trishuli Road (The Hindu, 2026).

Nepal has received assistance and solidarity from numerous countries and international organisations, including India, China, the United States, United Kingdom, Japan, UAE, Qatar, South Korea, Australia, Germany, Malaysia, Canada and others, as well as the UN, World Bank, Asian Development Bank and European Union.

Climate change has fundamentally altered the political, ethical, and economic dimensions of environmental disasters. Contemporary hydrological and cryospheric hazards—including floods, landslides, and extreme precipitation events—are no longer viewed merely as isolated natural phenomena whose aftermath can be managed exclusively through ex-post emergency relief. Instead, disaster risk is understood to emerge from complex interactions among physical hazards, climatic shifts, exposure, socioeconomic vulnerability, development trajectories, infrastructural resilience, governance structures, and structural inequalities (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2023). Consequently, contemporary climate governance increasingly confronts an ethical imperative far more profound than the conventional humanitarian query of how to assist victims post-disaster: determining who should bear the financial and moral costs of climate-induced losses, and according to what principles of distributive justice (Rajamani et al., 2021). This question carries distinct urgency for Nepal, a nation that occupies a geographically vital yet environmentally precarious position within the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region (Mool et al., 2001). The country's precipitous topography, glacier- and snow-fed drainage systems, fragile geological slopes, and rapidly transforming cryosphere expose human settlements and critical

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infrastructure to compounding hazards (Bajracharya et al., 2020). Concurrently, Nepal's contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions remains negligible, a stark asymmetry formally codified in the nation's climate planning instruments; Nepal's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) 3.0 explicitly highlights that despite generating an infinitesimally small fraction of historical and contemporary global emissions, the country faces disproportionate vulnerability to anthropogenic climate impacts (Government of Nepal, 2025).

The catastrophic Bhote Koshi disaster of August 2026 provides an empirical lens through which to examine this structural inequity. The event triggered widespread devastation across mountain communities and critical infrastructure throughout the Himalayan corridor. The scale of the losses has generated renewed debate about Nepal's demand for international climate justice. Recent analysis in Nepal has explicitly raised the question of whether the country should seek compensation rather than conventional aid and whether the international climate-finance system is sufficiently capable of addressing such losses.

The argument of this article is not that humanitarian donations are undesirable. On the contrary, emergency humanitarian assistance is essential during catastrophic events. Nor does the article assert that the Bhote Koshi disaster can automatically be attributed to anthropogenic climate change or to emissions from any particular state. Such a claim would require event-specific scientific attribution and a corresponding legal basis. Instead, the article makes a broader normative and institutional argument: when climate-vulnerable countries experience severe and potentially increasing losses within a climate system transformed by anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, international responses should progressively move from discretionary charity toward predictable, equitable and accountable mechanisms for addressing loss and damage.

The distinction is significant. Charity responds primarily to immediate need. Climate justice asks questions of responsibility, equity, recognition, participation and rights.

The former is episodic; the latter is structural. The former may provide immediate relief; the latter addresses the conditions that repeatedly produce unequal exposure to climate risks.

The central research question is therefore:

How can Nepal transform the experience of the 2026 Bhote Koshi disaster from a humanitarian crisis into a catalyst for a more equitable international climate-justice and loss-and-damage framework?

Three subsidiary questions guide the analysis:

1. How does climate justice illuminate the unequal distribution of climate-related risks and losses between Nepal and historically high-emitting countries?
2. To what extent is the emerging international loss-and-damage architecture capable of responding to Nepal's needs?
3. What institutional and diplomatic reforms could enable Nepal to move from an aid-dependent disaster-response model toward a climate-justice-oriented model?

The article contributes to the climate-justice literature by connecting the global normative debate on responsibility and loss and damage with a contemporary Himalayan disaster case. It also contributes to policy discourse by proposing a prospective framework through which Nepal can strengthen its evidence base, international negotiations and access to climate finance.

2. CONCEPTUALISING CLIMATE JUSTICE

2.1 From Climate Change to Climate Justice

Climate change is not merely a biophysical phenomenon. Its causes and consequences are distributed unevenly across countries, communities, generations and socioeconomic groups. This unevenness makes climate change a question of justice.

Climate justice scholarship has developed around several interconnected dimensions. Schlosberg (2007) identifies distributive, procedural and recognitional dimensions of environmental justice, while subsequent climate-justice scholarship has extended these concerns to include intergenerational justice, capabilities, responsibility and participation.

To rigorously back up your argument regarding climate injustice and disproportionate impacts in a research paper, you can use the following precise carbon emission percentages and comparative metrics:

Carbon contributors

- **Nepal's National Share:** Nepal's annual fossil CO₂ emissions hover at approximately **0.04% to 0.05%** of global emissions (roughly 15.9 to 18.8 million metric tons annually), translating to a minuscule per capita footprint of about **\$0.5\$ tons per person** (Our World in Data, 2024; Worldometer, 2026).
- **Global North / Industrialized Nations' Responsibility:** Empirical studies on historical responsibility (such as Hickel, 2020; Center for Global Development, 2024) establish that industrialized economies account for the vast majority of cumulative excess CO₂ emissions driving global heating. Specifically, the Global North is responsible for roughly **92% of excess global**

carbon emissions over historical baselines, while high-income countries account for over **43% of all cumulative greenhouse gas emissions since 1850**.

- **Major Emitting Comparators:** In stark contrast to Nepal's 0.04% share, top global emitters dwarf individual contributions—with China accounting for approximately **29%** and the United States accounting for over **10%** of current annual global CO₂ outputs (World Population Review, 2026). Per capita disparities are similarly stark, with the U.S. emitting roughly **14.2 tons per person** compared to Nepal's 0.5 tons.
- **Distributive justice** concerns the allocation of benefits, risks and costs. In the climate context, it asks who has benefited from carbon-intensive development and who is experiencing its consequences.
- **Procedural justice** concerns participation and decision-making. It asks whether vulnerable states and affected communities have meaningful influence over institutions that determine climate finance, adaptation priorities and loss-and-damage arrangements.
- **Recognition justice** concerns the recognition of different identities, histories, vulnerabilities and knowledge systems. It is particularly important for mountain communities whose experiences may be marginalized in global climate policy.
- **Intergenerational justice** concerns obligations between present and future generations. Climate change is inherently intergenerational because current emissions influence risks that future generations will experience.

These dimensions are highly relevant to Nepal. A purely distributive interpretation might ask how much financial assistance Nepal should receive. A broader climatejustice approach asks why Nepal is vulnerable, whose development patterns contributed to the global risk, whether Nepal has meaningful influence over global climate institutions, and whether the interests of future generations are adequately represented.

2.2 Historical Responsibility

The concept of historical responsibility occupies a central position in climate politics. Industrialization and fossil-fuel-intensive development generated substantial economic and technological benefits while simultaneously increasing atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations.

The principle does not necessarily imply that every historical emitter can be assigned direct legal liability for every contemporary climate disaster. Rather, historical responsibility provides an ethical and political basis for differentiated contributions to climate action.

This distinction is crucial for Nepal. The appropriate question is not: Which particular country caused the Bhote Koshi flood? Such a question would require specific scientific attribution and legal analysis.

The more defensible question is:

How should the costs of climate-related risks be distributed internationally when countries have contributed very differently to the accumulation of atmospheric greenhouse gases and possess very different financial capacities to respond?

This formulation connects historical responsibility with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC).

3. NEPAL AND THE UNEQUAL GEOGRAPHY OF CLIMATE RISK

3.1 A Low-Emitting and Highly Vulnerable Country

Nepal presents a clear example of the climate-justice paradox. The country has contributed relatively little to global greenhouse gas accumulation but faces significant exposure to climate-related hazards.

Nepal's NDC 3.0 explicitly states that the country has negligible contributions to past and current global greenhouse gas emissions while being highly vulnerable to climate impacts. It also recognizes the environmental importance of Nepal's forests and snowcovered mountains to regional ecological systems. (Government of Nepal, 2025).

This asymmetry does not mean that Nepal has no domestic responsibilities. Nepal must continue strengthening adaptation, disaster-risk reduction, land-use planning, early-warning systems and resilient infrastructure. Climate justice should not become an argument for institutional passivity.

Rather, the justice argument concerns capacity and responsibility. A country with limited historical contribution and constrained fiscal capacity should not be expected to absorb the full cost of increasingly severe climate-related impacts.

3.2 The Himalayan Cryosphere

The scientific evidence concerning Himalayan climate change is increasingly robust. The IPCC reports observed changes in temperature, precipitation, snow cover and glaciers across the Hindu Kush Himalayan region. Snow cover has declined in many parts of the region, while glaciers have retreated and lost mass.

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The Himalayas are also critically important as regional water towers. Himalayan glaciers contribute to major river systems that support hundreds of millions of people across Asia. The IPCC notes that these cryospheric systems are highly sensitive to continued warming and are projected to experience substantial changes under future emissions scenarios.

Climate change therefore interacts with an already complex mountain hazard environment. Glacier retreat, permafrost changes, snow dynamics, precipitation changes, unstable slopes and extreme rainfall can interact in ways that create compound hazards.

However, the existence of these trends does not establish that any particular flood is caused exclusively by climate change.

That distinction should be preserved throughout climate-justice analysis.

4. THE 2026 BHOTE KOSHI DISASTER

4.1 The Disaster

The Bhote Koshi–Trishuli disaster of August 26, 2026, produced catastrophic consequences in northern and central Nepal. Current reporting describes a major release of ice, rock and mud following a glacier-related collapse in the border region, generating destructive flows downstream. More than 1355 people were reported dead and thousands remained missing during the early September response period.

The event severely affected settlements, roads, bridges, electricity infrastructure and hydropower facilities. The economic consequences therefore extend beyond direct physical destruction.

The disaster interrupted transport, energy production, trade, tourism and local livelihoods. At least 7,500 houses were reported destroyed, with approximately 20,000 houses requiring reconstruction according to preliminary government estimates.

These figures demonstrate why conventional emergency relief is insufficient as the sole policy response.

4.2 Attribution and Academic Caution

The disaster presents an important methodological challenge.

It is tempting to describe a catastrophic Himalayan flood as direct evidence of climate change. However, such a conclusion risks confusing hazard occurrence with climate attribution.

Climate change can influence the probability and intensity of particular hazards without being the only causal mechanism. Mountain disasters may involve geological instability, glacial processes, extreme precipitation, land-use change, infrastructure vulnerability and human settlement patterns.

Accordingly, this article adopts the following analytical position:

The Bhote Koshi disaster is treated as a climate-justice case within a changing Himalayan climate system, not as proof that anthropogenic climate change alone caused the disaster.

The appropriate research agenda should therefore include event-specific attribution studies examining temperature trends, glacier conditions, precipitation anomalies, permafrost stability, slope failure, river discharge and other relevant variables.

5. HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE VERSUS CLIMATE JUSTICE

5.1 The Value and Limits of Donations

Humanitarian donations perform an indispensable function. They provide food, shelter, medical care, emergency transportation and other life-saving assistance.

The United Nations and humanitarian partners launched an emergency appeal following the 2026 disaster, illustrating the continuing importance of humanitarian mechanisms. The problem is not the existence of humanitarian donations. The problem arises when donations become the dominant international response to structural climate-related loss.

5.2 Climate Justice as a Different Paradigm

Climate justice changes the question from: "How much can donors provide?"

to: "What institutional responsibility should the international community assume for climate-related loss and damage?" This difference is fundamental.

Humanitarian paradigm	Climate-justice paradigm
Need	Responsibility and need
Emergency relief	Long-term recovery and resilience
Voluntary assistance	Predictable international finance
Short-term	Long-term

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Donor-recipient relationship	Responsibility-sharing
Mainly economic relief	Economic and non-economic loss
Charity-oriented	Rights- and justice-oriented

The climate-justice paradigm should not eliminate humanitarian assistance. Instead, the two should operate at different levels. Humanitarian assistance saves lives.

Climate finance and loss-and-damage mechanisms rebuild societies.

6. LOSS AND DAMAGE IN INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE GOVERNANCE

The recognition of loss and damage represents one of the most important developments in international climate governance. For many years, climate policy was dominated by two pillars:

1. Mitigation;
2. Adaptation.

Mitigation seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Adaptation seeks to reduce vulnerability to climate impacts. Yet some impacts cannot be prevented through mitigation or adaptation alone. This is the conceptual space of loss and damage.

The establishment and operationalization of the Fund for Responding to Loss and

Damage (FRLD) represents an institutional recognition of this problem. The

UNFCCC identifies the Fund as a central mechanism for supporting developing countries particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.

7. WHY NEPAL NEEDS A LOSS-AND-DAMAGE STRATEGY

Nepal should move beyond responding to individual disasters through isolated appeals. Instead, it should establish a permanent national system for documenting and communicating climate-related loss and damage.

Such a system should include at least five dimensions.

7.1 Economic Loss

This includes: houses; roads; bridges; hydropower; agriculture; tourism; industry; telecommunications; public infrastructure.

7.2 Indirect Economic Loss

This includes: lost income; interrupted trade; reduced electricity generation; disrupted tourism; increased transportation costs; business interruption.

7.3 Social Loss

This includes: displacement; family separation; loss of community networks; interruption of education; reduced access to health services.

7.4 Cultural Loss

Mountain communities may lose: religious sites; cultural landscapes; ancestral settlements; traditional knowledge; community institutions.

7.5 Non-Economic Loss

This includes: loss of life; psychological trauma; cultural identity; biodiversity; ecosystem services; social cohesion.

8. CLIMATE COMPENSATION: CONCEPTUAL AND LEGAL CAUTION

The term climate compensation has political power but requires conceptual precision.

Compensation may imply legal liability. International climate governance has not established a simple automatic system through which a vulnerable country can identify an individual emitting country and obtain damages following a particular disaster. Therefore, Nepal's international strategy should avoid simplistic claims of bilateral liability. Instead, Nepal could frame compensation as a multilateral responsibility-sharing mechanism.

This approach is more compatible with CBDR-RC and with the existing architecture of international climate governance.

9. CLIMATE DEBT AND THE PROBLEM OF LOANS

A major concern for climate-vulnerable developing countries is the increasing use of loans to finance climate-related reconstruction. Consider a simplified cycle:

Figure 1

The Climate Disaster-Debt Trap: From Disaster Losses to Recurrent Borrowing



https://chatgpt.com/s/m_6a9fe41879148191a00697e3f95c2547D

If Nepal must repeatedly borrow to rebuild infrastructure destroyed by climate-related disasters, it may lose fiscal space for education, health, poverty reduction and development. Climate-justice principles therefore support prioritizing **grants and highly concessional finance**, particularly where resources address residual loss and damage rather than productive investment. This does not mean that all climate finance must be grants. Rather, finance for unavoidable loss and damage should not unnecessarily increase the debt burden of highly vulnerable countries.

10. NEPAL'S DIPLOMATIC OPPORTUNITY

The Bhote Koshi disaster creates an opportunity for Nepal to reposition itself in global climate diplomacy. Rather than approaching international institutions only as a recipient of assistance, Nepal can present itself as:

- A climate-vulnerable mountain state; □ A low-emitting country;
- A steward of Himalayan ecosystems;
- A contributor to regional water security;
- An advocate for mountain communities;
- A claimant for equitable climate finance.

Nepal's NDC 3.0 already provides a policy foundation for such positioning by connecting national climate commitments with adaptation and loss-and-damage priorities.

The diplomatic message should consequently be evidence-based:

Nepal is not asking the international community to assume responsibility for every natural hazard. Nepal is asking for an equitable international system capable of addressing climate-related losses that exceed its domestic capacity to prevent, adapt to and finance.

11. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 Recommendations for the Government of Nepal

First, Establish a permanent national climate-loss-and-damage mechanism.

Second, Undertake event-specific scientific attribution studies following major disasters.

Third, Develop a standardized national methodology for economic and non economic loss assessment.

Fourth, Establish a publicly accountable national climate loss-and-damage registry.

Fifth, Strengthen Nepal's institutional capacity to access the FRLD.

Sixth, Advocate internationally for grant-based rather than debt-creating loss and-damage finance.

- Seventh,** Establish a Himalayan coalition for mountain climate justice.
- Eighth,** Incorporate climate justice into Nepal's foreign-policy strategy.
- Ninth,** Strengthen early-warning systems and mountain hazard monitoring.
- Tenth,** Ensure that reconstruction incorporates projected future climatic conditions.

11.2 Recommendations for International Institutions International institutions should:

1. Increase the scale of loss-and-damage finance;
2. Improve direct access for vulnerable countries;
3. Simplify application procedures;
4. Prioritize grants for residual loss and damage;
5. Recognize non-economic losses;
6. Strengthen support for mountain states;
7. Support climate attribution science;
8. Expand early-warning systems;
9. Finance climate-resilient infrastructure;
10. Increase representation of vulnerable countries in governance structures.

12. LIMITATIONS

This article has several limitations.

First, the Bhote Koshi disaster is still an unfolding event. Damage, mortality and reconstruction estimates may change as comprehensive assessments are completed. The NPR 387.5 billion figure should therefore be treated as a preliminary estimate rather than a final accounting.

Second, this is primarily a conceptual and policy analysis rather than an eventattribution study. It does not independently establish the causal contribution of anthropogenic climate change to the August 2026 event.

Third, historical responsibility remains contested within international climate politics. Different methodologies produce different assessments of responsibility depending on whether they emphasize territorial emissions, consumption-based emissions, cumulative emissions, per-capita emissions or economic benefits.

Fourth, the article uses climate justice as a normative framework. Its recommendations therefore involve ethical and political judgments in addition to empirical claims.

Three research directions are particularly important.

13. CONCLUSION

The National Adaptation Plan (NAP) 2021–2050 was formulated by the Ministry of Forests and Environment (MoFE), Government of Nepal, supported by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and executed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Approved by the Council of Ministers on October 28, 2021, it outlines Nepal's medium- and long-term adaptation strategies to build climate resilience and safeguard vulnerable communities and ecosystems.

Key Financial Data & Budget Breakdown

- Total Implementation Cost (2021–2050): USD 47.4 billion
- Government of Nepal Contribution: USD 1.5 billion
- External Support Required (Climate Finance): USD 45.9 billion
- Annual Medium-Term Requirement: USD 2.1 billion / year
- Structure & Strategic Timeframes

The NAP outlines 64 priority programmes spanning 8 thematic areas and 1 crosscutting sector (aligned with the National Climate Change Policy 2019):

1. Short-Term Horizon: Actions up to 2025
2. Medium-Term Horizon: Strategic targets to 2030
3. Long-Term Vision: Resilient nation goals extending to 2050

Priority Sectors & Key Interventions

Sector / Priority Area	Focus Areas & Interventions
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1. Agriculture & Food Security (AFS)	Climate-smart agriculture, commercial resilient livestock, crop insurance, soil/nutrient management, and agricultural climate information systems.
2. Forests, Biodiversity & Watersheds	Ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA), habitat restoration, wildlife corridor connectivity, watershed management, and payment for ecosystem services (PES).
3. Water Resources & Energy	Early Warning Systems (EWS) for Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs), run-of-river and reservoir sustainability, water pumping systems, and check dams.
4. Rural & Urban Settlements	Climate-resilient housing, sustainable urban planning, eco-townships, and resilient community infrastructure.
5. Industry, Transport & Infrastructure	Climate-proofing roads, bridges, and industrial estates against landslides, floods, and extreme weather events.
6. Tourism, Natural & Cultural Heritage	Safeguarding heritage sites, resilient eco-tourism development, and cultural landscape preservation.
7. Health, Drinking Water & Sanitation	Disease surveillance, climate-resilient WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) infrastructure, and health system preparedness.
8. Disaster Risk Reduction & Management (DRRM)	Multi-hazard EWS, landslide risk mitigation, flood hazard mapping, and local DRRM capacity building.
9. Gender, Livelihood & Governance (GESILG)	Socially inclusive adaptation, empowering marginalized groups/indigenous communities, gender-responsive budgeting, and local-level mainstreaming (LAPA integration).

Institutional Framework & Governance

- High-Level Oversight: Environmental Protection and Climate Change Management National Council (EPCCMNC) and Inter-Ministerial Climate Change Coordination Committee (IMCCCC).
- Focal Point & Execution: Climate Change Management Division (CCMD) under MoFE.
- Review Cycle: Progress is monitored periodically, with formal updates scheduled every 5 years and a comprehensive revision planned for 2031.

Source: Government of Nepal. (2021). *National Adaptation Plan (NAP) 2021–2050*.

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Damage and recovery assessment

The Government is finalising a Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA) and simultaneously conducting a comprehensive Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA). These assessments will determine the scale of loss and damage and the financial and other requirements for reconstruction and recovery.

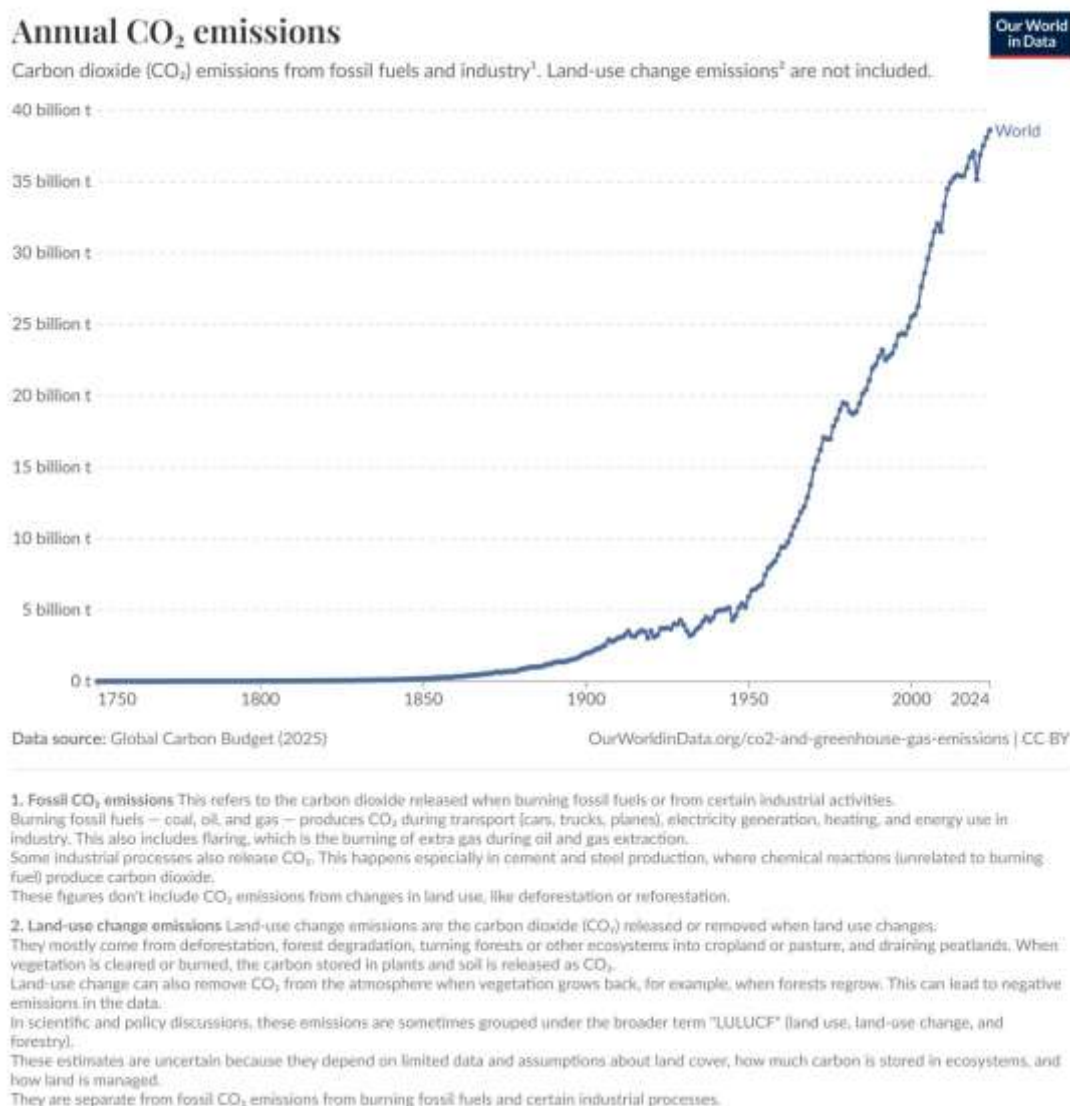
Missing-person identification

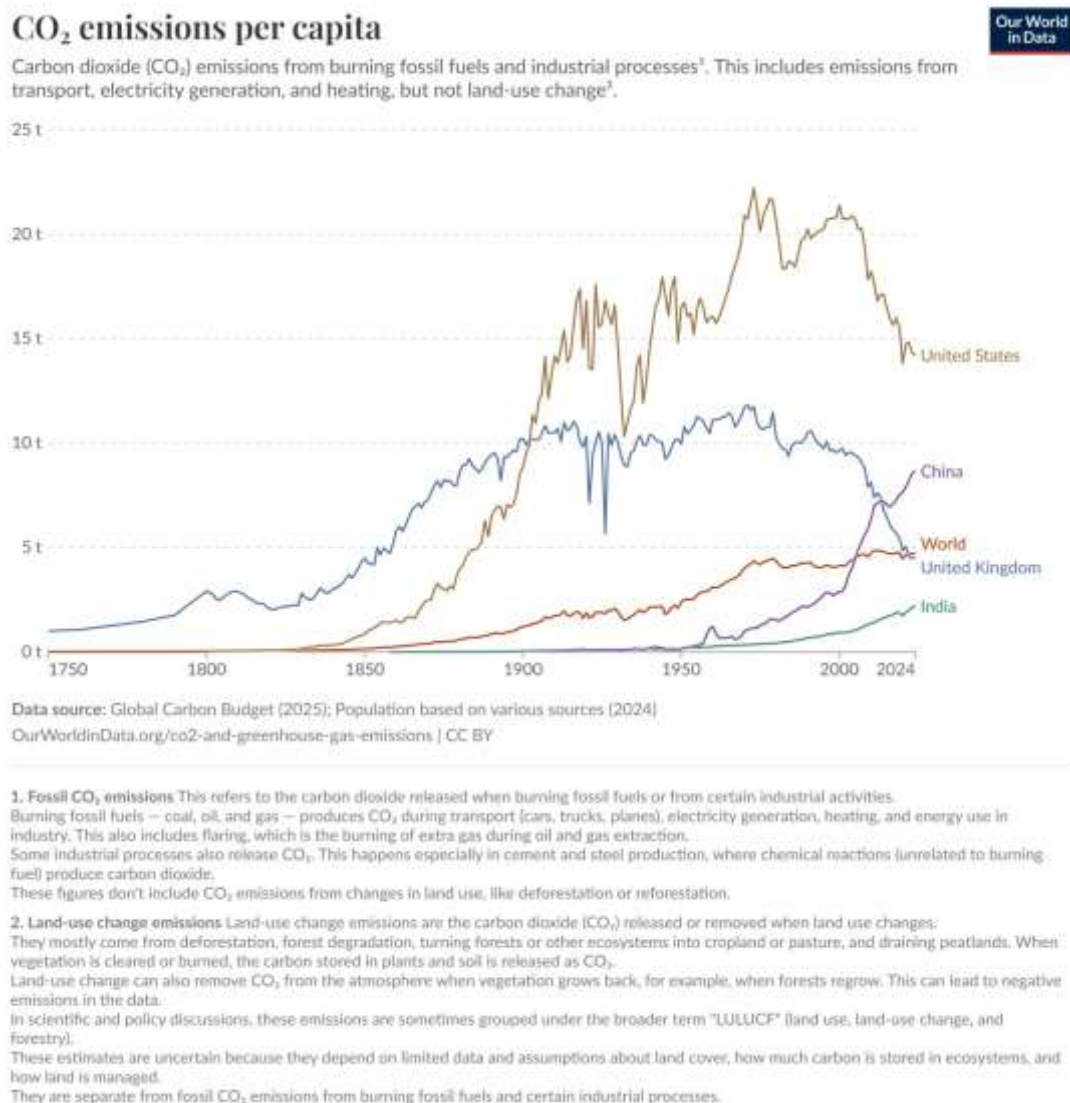
Recovered bodies are undergoing forensic procedures and temporary burial where necessary. DNA collection and identification are being accelerated with support from forensic teams from India, China, Japan, Singapore and South Korea.

Overall situation

The disaster remains a large-scale humanitarian and infrastructure emergency, with thousands still missing and extensive reconstruction needs. The Government is continuing domestic operations while seeking sustained international cooperation, technical assistance and financial support for search, rescue, relief, identification, connectivity restoration and long-term reconstruction.

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Nepal, Situation Update dated 7 September 2026.





The 2026 Bhote Koshi disaster presents Nepal with both a profound humanitarian tragedy and an important opportunity for rethinking climate governance.

The immediate priority is, unquestionably, saving lives, supporting survivors and rebuilding destroyed communities. Yet the scale of the disaster demonstrates that emergency donations cannot constitute the long-term architecture of climate response.

Nepal's experience illustrates the central paradox of climate change: those who have contributed comparatively little to global greenhouse gas accumulation may nevertheless experience severe and disproportionate consequences.

The climate-justice argument therefore extends beyond the question of whether wealthy countries should "donate" money to Nepal. It asks whether international climate governance should establish predictable mechanisms through which countries with greater historical responsibility and greater financial capacity contribute to addressing climate-related loss and damage.

This article argues that Nepal should pursue such a transition.

Humanitarian assistance for immediate survival; adaptation finance for reducing future vulnerability; loss-and-damage finance for unavoidable and residual impacts; and climate justice as the normative foundation connecting responsibility, equity and international cooperation. The Bhote Koshi disaster should therefore become a catalyst for institutional transformation.

Nepal's international message should not be reduced to:

"Please help us because we have suffered."

A stronger and more academically defensible message is:

"Nepal seeks an equitable international climate regime in which vulnerability, responsibility and capacity are recognized, and in which unavoidable climate-related losses are addressed through predictable, accessible and accountable mechanisms rather than discretionary charity."

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Such a position does not require Nepal to claim that every Himalayan disaster is directly caused by climate change. Nor does it require unsupported allegations of legal liability against particular states.

Instead, it requires Nepal to combine scientific evidence, climate-justice theory, international law, institutional capacity and diplomatic strategy.

The Bhote Koshi disaster therefore should not be understood only as a tragedy requiring reconstruction.

It should also be understood as a test of whether the international community is prepared to transform climate solidarity into climate justice.

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