

ABSTRACT

Climate change has become one of the most pressing global issues, generating significant impacts on small island nations, particularly through sea level rise, which threatens coastal areas, ecosystems, infrastructure, and the sustainability of local communities. As one of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Fiji is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change while possessing relatively limited national capacity to address such challenges. In this context, the Loss and Damage financing mechanism under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) serves as an essential instrument to assist vulnerable countries in addressing climate-induced losses and damages. Nevertheless, the operationalization of this financing mechanism continues to face various challenges throughout international climate negotiations.

This study aims to analyze the impacts of sea level rise on Fiji as a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) that have driven the need for Loss and Damage financing within the UNFCCC framework. Furthermore, it seeks to examine Fiji's diplomatic process in advocating for Loss and Damage financing at the 28th Conference of the Parties (COP28) through the UNFCCC mechanism, as well as to analyze the environmental diplomacy strategies employed by Fiji in pursuing Loss and Damage financing resulting from sea level rise at COP28.

This research employs a qualitative research method using a descriptive-analytical approach through library research. Data were collected from secondary sources, including official UNFCCC documents, reports published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), publications of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), scholarly journals, books, and other relevant publications issued by international organizations. The analysis applies Environmental Diplomacy as the analytical framework and Liberal Institutionalism as the theoretical approach to explain the role of international institutions in facilitating interstate cooperation within climate change negotiations. The collected data were analyzed through the processes of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

The findings reveal that sea level rise has intensified Fiji's environmental, social, economic, and cultural vulnerabilities, thereby increasing the need for a Loss and Damage financing mechanism within the UNFCCC framework. During the COP28 negotiations, Fiji utilized the UNFCCC multilateral forum to advance its national interests by strengthening coalition diplomacy through the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), employing the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC), implementing science diplomacy through the use of scientific evidence, and optimizing the institutional mechanisms of the UNFCCC. These strategies contributed to the

operationalization of the Loss and Damage Fund at COP28 and strengthened Fiji's bargaining position in international negotiations. Nevertheless, the implementation of the financing mechanism continues to face several challenges, including limited financial commitments, the voluntary nature of donor contributions, and the disparity between the needs of vulnerable countries and the funding commitments made by developed countries. The study concludes that environmental diplomacy constitutes a strategic instrument for Fiji in advancing its national interests within multilateral forums, although the effectiveness of Loss and Damage financing implementation remains constrained by structural power asymmetries within the global climate governance system.

Keywords: Environmental Diplomacy; Fiji; Loss and Damage; COP28; United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); Small Island Developing States (SIDS).