FTGU L&D episode transcript

00:00:12:15 - 00:00:30:08

Katie

Welcome to From the Ground Up podcast by the UK Youth Climate Coalition. This is a podcast by and for young people who are passionate about climate justice and want to make a difference. In each episode, we will be talking to young activists about a particular issue within the umbrella of climate justice they're passionate about, what it means to be an activist and what you can do to help.

00:00:31:02 - 00:00:31:20

Katie

I'm Katie.

00:00:32:03 - 00:00:32:19

Josh

And I'm Josh.

00:00:33:02 - 00:00:52:23

Katie

And we'll be your hosts today. This episode's theme is Loss and Damage and we'll be talking to our special guest, Brenda Mwale from the Lost Damage Youth Coalition.

00:00:55:19 - 00:00:58:00

Josh

Hi Katie, how are you?

00:00:58:11 - 00:01:05:00

Katie

I'm all right. I'm busy. I started a new job this week. It's been a lot.

00:01:05:03 - 00:01:06:02

Josh

oh my god congratulations, how stressful.

00:01:06:11 - 00:01:13:24

Katie

Yeah, literally. I've moved cities and I've moved jobs. It's a little overwhelming, but I think I'll be settled in soon. Yeah. It's going to be alright

00:01:15:12 - 00:01:20:14

Josh

How you feeling about activism this week?

00:01:20:14 - 00:01:50:08

Katie

This week? I'm excited about activism because next week is the - there's a big Stop Cambo week of action. It's not stop Cambo is it? It’s stop jackdaw. So for those of you who don't know about Stop Jackdaw, Jackdaw is a new gas field that's being greenlighted by the UK government and so stop jackdaw is a campaign to get rid of it and stop Cambo was the previous campaign to stop an oil field that was going to be developed in the North Sea.

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Katie

And yeah, next week, there's a big week of action. So I'm going to go to an event locally to me and do some leafleting and get people interested in the campaign, which is exciting.

00:02:02:04 - 00:02:33:09

Josh

That's really exciting. I'm also taking part in some of the local stop jackdaw action in Liverpool, so really excited to be talking to people about it and raising awareness. I feel like this week, while there's been a lot of rubbish things happening in the world, I feel like activism and organizing is having a good time in that people are getting engaged and people are standing up for themselves and there is solidarity across groups.

00:02:33:23 - 00:02:50:23

Josh

You see it sort of with the don't pay campaign, which is rising. Enough is enough. All the strikes which are happening within the UK at the moment make me feel very positive that people are pushing back and fighting back.

00:02:51:04 - 00:03:11:13

Katie

Yeah, I think I've got some kind of like conflicting feelings of like you keep reading stuff about the cost of living crisis and being quite like distressed and overwhelmed because it's like distressing and overwhelming and you know, you think of all the people that are going to be horribly, horribly affected by the price of energy and stuff that is going up so much.

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Katie

But yet to see all these kind of campaigns springing up and people getting engaged and even like ridiculous things like apparently Katie Hopkins, the far right nutter who I don't endorse in any way, shape or form, is apparently on board with the don't pay stuff. Like even people who I think are like politically so opposed to where I am seem to be like this is getting ridiculous.

00:03:35:18 - 00:03:38:18

Katie

Like it's a strange time.

00:03:40:13 - 00:03:47:10

Josh

So, what do you know about today's topic that we're talking about.

00:03:47:10 - 00:04:07:12

Katie

So today's theme is loss and damage, which again is one of those terms that I feel like I heard a lot when I came into UKYCC and was first in the sort of like climate activist space but like nobody really explained to me what it meant for ages. I again just didn't know what it was for ages. I can tell you what Wikipedia has to say about loss and damage.

00:04:08:13 - 00:04:36:12

Katie

Love to have a Wikipedia definition. So Wikipedia says the term loss and damage is used within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change - that's the UN F Triple C - process to refer to the harms caused by anthropogenic climate change. So loss and damage basically means the the damage caused by climate change, which could be like the damage caused by a major flood or a drought or something like that.

00:04:36:12 - 00:05:05:21

Katie

And then it goes on to talk about what should the appropriate response to loss and damage be. So that is kind of like ongoing debate in the sort of COP process about like vulnerable countries, which tend to be global south countries that have less resources and are more vulnerable to climate change have been asking for more developed countries who are causing the climate change to asking them to kind of pay up for the damage that they're doing.

00:05:05:21 - 00:05:18:12

Katie

And it's something that the developed countries have been very resistant to in the past. That's that's what I have gained knowledge of from skim-reading Wikipedia. Josh, do you have anything to add about what loss and damage means?

00:05:20:01 - 00:05:46:08

Josh

I feel like if you look at it in terms of it's been a very sort of technical subject for a long time. Developing countries have been fighting for for over 30 years and it's only really started to gain traction and developed countries are going Oh we might have to recognize this. So therefore, it's very much the issue of the moment and it's the biggest climate justice issue that is really not talked about.

00:05:47:10 - 00:06:10:22

Josh

And that's why I feel like today's conversation is very important. And another thing I feel like it's really important in this subject is to really have the human element. And it's it's about people's lives, it's about their livelihoods, about their communities, it's about their culture. It's very much the social impacts of climate change as well as the economic and the negative impacts.

00:06:10:23 - 00:06:25:18

Josh

If we cannot adapt to that, we cannot stop already coming, and what do we do about that? And it's a serious topic, but it's a very important topic. So yeah, I'm looking forward to this conversation today.

00:06:26:04 - 00:06:45:07

Katie

Yeah. And I think you've kind of touched on a bit there, that like loss and damage is like it's many different things and it's very dependent on like the context of the country that you're looking at. So like and that loss, you know. Yeah, I'm glad you brought up the kind of cultural side of things because that was something that I hadn't really thought about until quite recently.

00:06:45:07 - 00:07:07:02

Katie

It's like if you're an island nation that's going to be swallowed up by sea level rise, then you're going to be dis- or the people are going to be displaced. And then what happens to their culture in a few generations time when they're displaced from from their homeland and where where they're from? So it's not just the kind of like my town has flooded.

00:07:07:02 - 00:07:12:11

Katie

It's also like what where do our people go and what does our culture become in the future?

00:07:12:11 - 00:07:19:16

Josh

Very, very important points. Well, I think this is a good point to introduce Brenda to the conversation.

00:07:20:04 - 00:07:26:21

Katie

Hi, Brenda, welcome to the podcast. It's great to have you. Would you like to just introduce yourself in a few words to our listeners?

00:07:28:14 - 00:07:54:20

Brenda

Hi, Kate. Hi, Josh. Thank you so much for having me here. My name is Brenda Mwale and I’m based in Malawi and a member of Loss and Damage Youth Coalition. But locally I work with Green Girls platform. I'm the chief operations officer. So Green Girls Platform is an organization that is a female led organization which established to address challenges that women and girls face as a result of climate induced disasters or climate impacts.

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Brenda

And I'm also actually affiliated to a number of organisations, so I'm part of the Global Coordination Team for YOUNGO, so YOUNGO is the official youth constituency for UNFCCC. And I'm also an upcoming negotiator, a climate change negotiator for Malawi. So glad to be here.

00:08:16:04 - 00:08:19:15

Katie

You say you are a negotiator for Malawi.

00:08:19:15 - 00:08:20:04

Brenda

Yes.

00:08:20:16 - 00:08:30:06

Katie

Wow, that's cool. I didn't actually know that. How did you. Yeah. How did you get into that role?

00:08:30:06 - 00:08:58:18

Brenda

So I have always had interest when it comes to climate change negotiations. I have been like starting my journey in like the climate change sector. I was affliated to the National Youth Network on Climate Change. So I've been with the network for like three or four years since I was a freshman doing my undergrad. And that also gave me a platform to be able to have that platform to do policy engagement.

00:08:58:18 - 00:09:23:00

Brenda

So I was able to like meet so many policy makers, decision makers. So it was very like for me it was very easy to be part of decision making processes and have a seat on the table. And that's when I got to know about COP. And I was very curious and I was in touch with National Focal Point and he just helped me.

00:09:23:00 - 00:09:51:14

Brenda

And I was especially because after they saw like my, how curious I was, I was given this other lady to say she should be my mentor and she was just there like taking me through all the COP negotiations. How it goes and if I'm interested. And that was when I was very interested to be part of it. And last year, for the first time, I actually attended COP because I was just following the country.

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Brenda

So for the first time last year, COP26, that was when I went to COP and could be there in the negotiation rooms and I'll start looking forward to this year as well.

00:10:04:20 - 00:10:29:07

Josh

oh my god that is actually amazing. So this year and this is what we were kind of talking about a lot in this podcast and it's what UKYCC are focusing a lot at COP this year is the issue of loss and damage. We briefly mentioned loss and damage on our little intro, but do you want to just tell our audiences what loss and damage is and what it means to you.

00:10:30:08 - 00:10:52:14

Brenda

All right. Thank you so much, Josh. So for me, I think loss and damage refers to the impacts of climate change, but go beyond what people can adapt to. For example, we have like extreme weather events such as floods, storms, droughts and wildfires that are becoming more frequent and severe every year, leading people to risk their lives and livelihoods.

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Brenda

And you find that those people who did the least to cause climate change are the ones who suffer the most from loss and damage, you know, and the cost of damage to homes and communities and the incomparable toll on life, culture and connection to land upon by some of the poorest and most oppressed people in the world. So like, in brief, that's how I can describe loss and damage.

00:11:18:03 - 00:11:33:02

Katie

Yeah, that's a good a good definition I think. I guess the question that I have is of obviously loss and damage can kind of be different in different parts of the world. What what does it look like for a country like Malawi?

00:11:33:02 - 00:12:08:20

Brenda

So Malawi is one of the countries that you have been badly hit by the impacts of climate change. And I'm going to give an example of 2019 when we face Cyclone Idai, which hit Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. And you find that we have like a hundred of thousands of households that were affected, like lives were lost, people were displaced, infrastructure was destroyed, houses, you know, education is being affected, health is being affected.

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Brenda

You have like more chronic diseases that are coming up all because of the floods that we had that year and this year alone in 2022, we've been hit by cyclones storm tropical storms that I mean, gomba and Anna. And you'll find that Malawi for the first time has registered an increased number of Florida cases among its children that it has never like we have never encountered in the past 8 to 10 years.

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Brenda

So for countries like Malawi, it's really extreme because we haven't even recovered from the impact of Cyclone Idai in 2019 and this year alone, with two cyclones hitting us so hard, it's really hard because economically we are already struggling as a country. And then you have all of these floods that are coming in and then some other parts of the country that are like fishing, droughts, which means there's increased cases of hunger.

00:13:06:02 - 00:13:29:03

Brenda

And in Malawi this year, I'm seeing that there's going to be like increased cases of hunger, which means malnutrition as well. And you find that education also is being affected, why?, Because almost like 90% of Malawians are like farmers and they live like they're subsistence farmers and they rely on their yeilds for them to be able to earn their living for their homes.

00:13:29:07 - 00:13:42:00

Brenda

And now that they don't have anything to harvest, how are they going to be how are they going to be able to sustain their families? So it's something that we really like for countries, Malawi, it's really very hard on us.

00:13:42:00 - 00:14:08:22

Josh

I was going to ask just following up on that, you said it's very, very hard for people who are on the ground in Malawi. Yes, I was just wondering, do you think people recognize the connection between the climate crisis, the international injustice that has happened because the climate crisis and the impacts that they're now feeling in their everyday lives?

00:14:08:22 - 00:14:37:03

Brenda

I believe people are don't really see the connection. Otherwise, I think everybody would have been seeing the sense of urgency in dealing with like loss and damage or for example, in like contributing much to towards climate finance. I think people when we're talking about climate change, people are always looking at floods, they're always looking at droughts. They'll like we're just looking at weather events, but then they're like more impacts.

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Brenda

There's like more impacts that are happening on the ground beyond the floods that we've seen, beyond the droughts that we are facing. I want to give you an example of the cyclones that we've had. You find that all the schools in southern region were closed, no student was allowed to go to school because the schools were being used as camps where people could find shelter.

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Brenda

And for like two or three months, people are still there. And that means student also, they're still not going to school. They cannot have like they're being denied their right to education. And yet in the end, right now we have those that are writing the Malawi National Exams, but it doesn't necessarily mean that those from the southern region are being considered to say, okay, they were out of school for two months.

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Brenda

No, they're still expected to use the same syllabus but they're still expected to cover this same syllabis but they're still expected to write the same exams. And at the very same time is still the same southern region that has increased access to I mean, increased cases of chloera. And it means more children right now. Like right now it is like that campaign, chloera campaign that's going on, that's being funded by UNICEF.

00:15:50:22 - 00:16:29:10

Brenda

And these are some of the things that like, it's it's scary, especially being someone who is like on the ground and you go in those communities and you're meeting these victims firsthand. It's really very emotional and very scary to see the how the impact, how people, how devastated, how how how livelihoods are lost. And you find that more households right now that like children headed because their parents don't either, you know, injured or maybe they've actually lost their lives in the process, which is very scary.

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Brenda

And then the rest of the time, when you go out there, when you go into those negotiation rooms and you're trying to push for like, for example, loss and damage finance facility or climate finance, we're not just doing that because we want the money. It's about the impact that we're seeing on the ground. You are you are actually seeing how people are devastated on the ground.

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Brenda

And at the very same time, also, it's not just about, okay, this is the money that's being channeled towards loss and damage or towards adaptation. It's about is it really like are the funds really like the people who actually need those funds have the access to the funds? Because it's not just them. It's not just enough to actually say, okay, these are the funds, but is it like the people who can need the funds having access?

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Brenda

Because we're also looking at the complexity when it comes to have access to the finances. Also local organizations. It's very hard for like local based organizations to have access to those funds. It's really a hassle. And you wonder if actually the money being given is actually being given for the people they are intended for or is just a model for the locals to say the money is just being is being given towards adaptation of towards mitigation?

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Brenda

No, but we actually have to see beyond that because climate change is not like if if we don't change or if we don't see in the sense of urgency, then nothing is going to change. I'm going to give you an example of COVID 19 situation. I'm looking at the sense of urgency that was put in place by everybody.

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Brenda

When we're hit by the pandemic, it didn't matter whether your business even had rich areas. Everybody knew there's COVID 19. Everybody knew that. Everybody has that sense of responsibility to make sure that we are containing the pandemic. Everybody knew that you have to be your brother or sister's keeper in making sure that your neighbor is actually taking measures, in ensuring that you don't like you.

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Brenda

You're not exposing yourself to that virus. So what if we use the same effort, the same energy, the same coordination, this mobilization, when it comes to climate change urgency, what if we use like the same channels in making sure that even the best communities, if they had to reach areas that actually know that this possibility and that actually have that platform where they can actually be involved in climate action.

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Brenda

I think with that will be able to fight, to watch like we'll be able to fight against climate change.

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Josh

That's incredibly powerful to me. I think I personally just like sitting here listening to you, it seems like the situation on the ground can feel quite overwhelming. And then how do you how does it make you feel personally for then how do you go about saying you're going to fight for this change? You obviously you're talking about you are.

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Josh

You are go into the COP26 negotiations, you're going to other COP negotiations. You know, not everybody has the opportunity to go to the negotiation. So how do you go about mobilizing a broader coalition of people to fight this injustice and to make a difference?

00:19:53:23 - 00:20:21:09

Brenda

So that's a very good question, actually. So when when I was going to COP26 for me last year, the situation last year was very bad because a lot of people from the Global South, especially the youth, didn't have access for them to actually attend COP26 in Glasgow. It was very hard for people from for people in the Global South to actually have attend visa or have funding to go to COP26.

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Brenda

So when I was going there to COP26 for me, I made the decision to say, Brenda, I'm going to go, you're going to the COP26, you're not going there to present yourself. I'm going there to present a thousand number of youth from the Global South who would have loved to come here. But because of the situation at hand, they're not here.

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Brenda

They're not able to come or to attend these to attend. So for me, every opportunity that I had to go into that, like the negotiation rooms or for example, at the side event, I really enjoyed the side event because that was like mostly the time where I could be able to express myself and that could speak for the many others out there who didn't have the platform that I had.

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Brenda

For example, I remember I had an opportunity when I was being interviewed by Sky News and for them they just wanted to know I had like this situation in Malawi and in the global south in how youth are being affected. For me, I saw myself representing many other youth in being that voice for the many others. So when I'm attending these like this meeting for me is that great opportunity to see that so many youth who would have loved to come here.

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Brenda

But I have they didn't they were not able to come here. So for me, I'm representing them. And whatever I say, I'm speaking for like a million others out there would have loved to come here. So for me it's always that like it's always exciting and that great opportunity because even in like negotiation rooms, not many youth have like that opportunity to be the party delegate.

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Brenda

Most of the youth even like given that like the observer badge. So they don't have that opportunity where they can be able to like say all give their input. So for me, going into those negotiation rooms and following Loss and Damage, that's like a great opportunity because I'm treated like so many, like a number of organization and we have our own priorities and we have our own demands.

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Brenda

So for me, it's like that, that opportunity where I can be able to say what the youth want and be that voice for like many others.

00:22:27:10 - 00:22:47:10

Katie

BE Thanks. I think that makes a really you made a really good point there about kind of how you're representing the millions of people that can't be there because I think it's is very easy for like how the media presents like climate activists or whatever to kind of put somebody like Greta Thunberg up on a pedestal and like they're the face of climate action.

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Katie

But actually this is a movement for everyone. And we all kind of need to play our part and kind of speak up for those people that can't be in the room that we're able to be in if we're in these kind of negotiating spaces. I guess what can be done to get more access for young people into these kind of spaces?

00:23:08:03 - 00:23:23:03

Katie

And also, do you think the situation will be different in Egypt this year compared to Glasgow last year in terms of young people from the Global South being able to access the space right now?

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Brenda

I think what can be done in terms of what can be done, I think we need more capacity building because there are many agreements that our countries are part of. There's so many visions. All I can say, a commitment that our countries like they're making out the. But then I feel like those commitments and those agreements shouldn't be for the people out there to see that, oh, Malawi is part of this agreement or Malawi is coming up is coming up with has come up, has developed this partnership or Malawi has made this commitment.

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Brenda

It's about this commitment should be with and for the people. How many people in Malawi actually know the commitments that our governments are making or, for example, that the agreements that our countries are part of because it's the people on the ground who will be able to carry out or bring those visions and to fruition. For example, I'm going to give you an example of Malawi 2063 agenda.

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Brenda

The people who have developed the agenda, 2063 agenda, they'll not be there in 2063 to see the vision that should be coming to fruition. The 2063 agenda. It's young people and children right now who will be the ones to carry those, like the vision and to fruition. And if we are going to see if we want to see generational success, I think it's high time where we need to involve more youth and children and they should also be part of the decision making processes and policy making processes.

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Brenda

Let the process be with and for the children. And if in a cop, like even when like for the delegation and I know its very hard even for governments to find funding. But then I think it's also very true with each with it if we can they can also when they are like finding funding for like the DETI, the delegation also the way they're doing with the people from the ministry.

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Brenda

If they can deliver different funds for like young people and children also to be part of it, like, well, we're going to learn how negotiations go. Like if we are not being given the space to do that, it's it's not enough to just be taught being taught here to say this is how the processes are done. I think it's worth it if they can have even for example, let's say a delegation of like ten youth, who can be there because one person is not enough.

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Brenda

For example, if I go there, I'm just following Loss and Damage. What about climate finance? What about gender? What about agriculture? What about adaptation then? Because you also need youth in is that those negotiations will be able who will take the baton, you know, from them going forward when they retire? Who is going to be that? We need to learn from them.

00:26:06:00 - 00:26:32:02

Brenda

I think it's high time African leaders stop seeing youth as threats. It's high time they respect us as partners because we are all fighting the same battle. It's like it's not worth it, seeing youth as threats. We are not threats. And, you know, it's very hard for like when it comes for like African leaders for for us to have like an audience with African leaders, it's very hard and it has a very hard to like to have an audience with.

00:26:32:10 - 00:26:55:17

Brenda

You know, it's very easy for me to actually have make an appointment with like a UK ambassador and say, okay, I want to have a meeting with you. It's Oh, it's very easy. And they'll be open and they'll actually answer whatever questions that you have. But when you also when every time you try to reach out to your like your local leader, that they're always acting dodgy and they don't want to have like an audience with you.

00:26:55:23 - 00:27:17:04

Brenda

You're like, what are you learning from? Like what's that about? So I still feel like, okay, there's need of more capacity building. There's need of more mobilization. And for example, like this year and I think like as the youth also should also take the lead in making sure that we are mobilizing a lot of youth. Are they like most of them?

00:27:17:04 - 00:27:48:17

Brenda

Also, they should be aware of the processes and the policies that are there and how best they can also take a lead and be part of climate action. And for the first time ever in Malawi, at green girl platform the organization that I work with, we are hosting the first ever local conference of Youth, which has never happened in Malawi, and I feel like an opportunity will be able to mobilize youth in Malawi and teach them on like the policy processes and they'll be able, like we planning on coming up with our own position paper.

00:27:48:21 - 00:28:17:03

Brenda

What are the demands for African youth so that when we go going there we should be able to know this? Okay, this is what the African youth wants on the ground. Oh, this is what Malawian youth wants on the ground in Malawi, when you go see. So I think there's more need of more capacity building, more coordination, mobilization of the youth, as well as access to fund funds as well for them for us to be able to like have a sit on the table also needs some funds.

00:28:17:03 - 00:28:19:08

Brenda

So yeah, that's what I can see.

00:28:21:06 - 00:28:50:23

Josh

What you've telling us so far. Brenda is very, very informative and very, very eye opening. And so I'm just sort of letting it all sink in, I think. I guess then you talked about we need to mobilize the youth and the youth need to be listened to more. I think a lot of young people will talk about these issues or they hear about these issues and they all agree, though nod their head.

00:28:51:05 - 00:29:13:13

Josh

Yeah, I understand. This is really important, but they often don't feel like they have agency or power in how to do something about this. So I'm wondering if you could provide some insight into the work of groups like the Loss and Damage Youth Coalition and other ways that young people can start to make a difference and fight for our future.

00:29:14:24 - 00:29:38:15

Brenda

Okay, so the Loss and Damage Youth Coalition is a coalition of youth from like the global south and North who have come together to demand action on addressing the loss and damage caused by climate change. So like the number of ways in which we do our work, we do a lot of campaigns, we do advocacy, storytelling, we also do negotiations and training.

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Brenda

So for campaigns, that's why we organize and participate in campaigns to create external pressure required for decision makers to take action and address loss and damage and to give advocacy. This is where, like we we deliver our demands as open letters, and in bilateral talks to like the government and leaders to highlight the need to address loss and damage.

00:30:01:05 - 00:30:25:23

Brenda

And at the same time, with like negotiations, this is where we organize and participate in campaigns, too, or I mean, this is where we have like delegation of youth, support them and give them capacity for them to attend COP negotiations and be able to have their voices heard. And at the same time, we are more straight into storytelling.

00:30:26:05 - 00:30:55:05

Brenda

We know being a coalition of youth from different countries, we know everybody has their own. Like we are all affected differently by the impacts of climate change and everybody has a story to tell. So this is where like a platform where everybody who wants to have their their story taught out there they can like to have that platform where they can tell their story and how that being impacted by climate change and how is the situation in the country.

00:30:55:05 - 00:31:21:05

Brenda

For example, somebody from the Philippines, somebody from Malawi, somebody from like Latin America, everybody is being able to tell their story and how they've been affected by climate change. And at the same time, we also do we also do trainings. So we provide trainings on loss and damage and negotiation processes associated with it to help youth better advocate for loss and damage.

00:31:21:05 - 00:31:49:12

Brenda

Because you can't just tell somebody to be an advocate for Loss and Damage, but how are they going to do that? We shouldn't assume everybody knows exactly what they're saying or the processes or how everything goes. So first of all, we need to provide capacity to them and yeah, so that they can be better advocates. So how can they use our support, our work so through a like for example, our open letter.

00:31:49:12 - 00:32:21:09

Brenda

So right now we have a call for, for our open letter where we are addressing to the German government. I think this is where we would really want like out of youth, out the they can go through the open like the open court where we want as many youth as as possible to sign our letter. And so then we can send it to like the German government and at the same time also they can join us in like be part of the loss and damage youth coalition.

00:32:21:09 - 00:32:44:07

Brenda

Also, like we don't have a limit to how many members we want want every youth to have that platform form where they can be able to express themselves. And yes, so basically I think that's what I can say so far. Oh, and also we have loss and damage finance advocacy campaign that we're going to be doing right now.

00:32:44:12 - 00:33:02:15

Brenda

I think it would be really amazing if like youth can go on on on our website and check out our Loss and Damage Finance website where we are trying to map out advocacy campaign and reach out to the like chapter of the coalition at any time. If anybody has questions of any sort or they need help with anything.

00:33:03:03 - 00:33:26:14

Katie

That's really good, like, yeah, giving us a ways to actually get involved. Yeah. So Brenda, earlier when you were talking about the kind of situation on the ground in Malawi, you know, you talked about the kind of emotional toll that has on people experiencing that. And and also kind of working in that space, trying to help people. How do you how do you look after yourself in that situation?

00:33:26:14 - 00:33:38:16

Katie

Like, what do you do to kind of, you know, get a balance between kind of having to deal with things that are really terrible, but also like, yeah, just looking after your own well-being. Um.

00:33:39:04 - 00:34:05:13

Brenda

Well, it's, it's never easy if I'm, if I'm going to be honest, it has never been easy, especially when you're meeting the victims. Because when the fact that you're talking to them like you're okay, you're trying to balance between being emotional because of the story that you're hearing from them and then how you're looking at the situation. And at the same time, you're trying to give hope to them.

00:34:05:22 - 00:34:27:05

Brenda

You're trying to provide hope to them also because when they see you, they see like that kind of relief to say, okay, I think our voices are being hear out there. The so you're also trying to balance between okay. Being that source of hope to them and then at the same time not to try to be very emotional in their faces also.

00:34:27:13 - 00:35:07:15

Brenda

So yeah, it hasn't been easy. And this is where team building also, I think plays a big, big role for us at green girls platform where we just we’re being there and after like, okay, if we see I think this is getting too much for like everybody, like we have to take a break and yeah, reflect on it and come back on on like the situation because like when you're going into a community where like 5 or 6 people have died and you're meeting their families and they're telling you, oh, because of the floods, like, okay, like children are crying, okay, we've lost our parents and they've lost their children and all of that.

00:35:07:15 - 00:35:27:07

Brenda

And they'll just be like, okay, what can I do? You know? And it's like, you don't have answers to everything that the they're saying to you. And at the same time, you need to give them hope to say things will change, but then you'll end your thinking. When will things change? When will change come? You're not with them.

00:35:27:14 - 00:35:52:16

Brenda

And how do I say to them because okay, like we don't know the situation when it comes to resources and this year, how is the situation to be like? I remember in February when we were hit by Cyclone Anna and we're supposed to have like a community engagement meeting and weren't able to go there because even the road was like the bridge was washed away and there was no way we could go there.

00:35:53:00 - 00:36:13:10

Brenda

And you're like one of the leaders from that site is giving me a call or she's all tears and she's telling me, Brenda, the situation here is is very devastating. And I don't know, what can you do to help us? And you're just be like, okay, I wish I had like all the help in the world to give these people at this at this moment.

00:36:13:15 - 00:36:35:00

Brenda

But you can't you can't even go a day to be with them because there's no like there's no alternative to to have myself, like, go away. And it's really very emotional, like honest. It's very emotional. It's different when you just like hearing from the news. Oh, yeah. Like, if you're, like, getting secondary information, it's, it's it's very different.

00:36:35:00 - 00:36:40:23

Brenda

But yeah, so it has never been easy. That's why I can say it has never been easy.

00:36:42:12 - 00:37:02:21

Katie

Yeah, I think it's easy for people who are kind of like a step back, you know, seeing it on the news to kind of forget that like, yeah, it's, it's a really difficult thing for the people experiencing it and the people trying to help to kind of deal with all of that. So thank you for sharing sharing this.

00:37:02:21 - 00:37:45:15

Josh

That's it's yeah. Very important to remember the emotional side of this and the real human story around it, because people do become easily desensitized to just another, you know, news story of a cyclone. And you've mentioned you have to promise these people that change is coming. I think our audiences might want to hear about what what sort of change you want to see what is climate justice mean to you and that you can now start to give hope to yourself and to the people that you're working with.

00:37:45:15 - 00:38:11:24

Brenda

All right. So, um, I'll start by giving an example of an encounter that I had at COP26. I think that was the moment where it was like a breaking moment for me. I remember having an encounter with a lady from Australia. She was one of the negotiators and when somebody was telling their story, one of the people from the Global South, they were telling stories of how they had been affected by floods.

00:38:12:08 - 00:38:38:19

Brenda

And this lady I just said, you did not face issues like I oftentimes I feel like you people exaggerate your stories. I'm like, oh, and for me, it was like very like very emotional woman to say, okay, what do you mean? We exaggerate our emotions when someone is telling you 250 something households have been displaced or they're missing all like that, like lives are being lost in a way.

00:38:38:19 - 00:39:05:10

Brenda

And you're telling us we exaggerate our stories. Why would you say that? And for me, being somebody who actually working in rural communities with these people, for me that was like a total insult that that just shows how much, how, like how much people don't really believe in like the impacts of climate change. And to actually see that this person is among the negotiators, you're there then asking why are you in these negotiations.

00:39:05:17 - 00:39:44:04

Brenda

If, first of all, you don't believe what's actually happening on the ground and the people who are telling you these stories is because that they live in those communities, you know. So for me, it's like moving on to your question, what is climate justice to me? I think for me generally, I think climate justice, I would just say it's acknowledging that climate change like have like different socio economic health or impacts on like different or on people because climate change is like everybody is affected differently.

00:39:44:13 - 00:40:32:10

Brenda

Even for me in Malawi you're saying, okay, Malawi is highly affected by the impacts of climate change. But where I'm based regarding with somebody who I like, with people who are based in like flood prone areas or drought prone areas, like we are affected differently. You know, in a way. So I think with like the situation in Malawi or the situation between the global and the global north and the global south, I'd say climate justice is basically how people are being like acknowledging the fact that climate change... people are affected differently by the impacts of climate change and it's high time way everybody we didn't need to coordinate because wheather somebody from the

00:40:32:10 - 00:40:58:14

Brenda

Global North or the global south, we are all being affected by the impacts of climate change and like nobody is safe at this point. I'm going to give an example of the heatwaves that Europe faced this year. It actually shows that no one is safe, you know, because, like, that's something that we've never experienced before. Now we don't know moving forward, how is the situation going to be like?

00:40:58:20 - 00:41:19:19

Brenda

Is it always to be the global south countries being affected or is it now going to be all of us being affected? So it's not just about where I'm from or to say, okay, provided in a better situation than unsafe. No, I don't think at this point anybody, safe. Nobody is safe. I don't know if that answers the question.

00:41:19:22 - 00:42:05:00

Josh

I know. I think I think that does so. Just to circle back for a moment, just absolutely gobsmacked by the example you gave of the Australian negotiator who was claiming you were, exaggerating what you were saying. I think that really actually illustrates the intersectionality of climate justice was there must be a level of such subconscious, such in bed, xenophobia and racism to completely dismiss the experiences of those who aren't from a global north country, a white country like theirs, especially because Australia is going through a lot of these floods and wildfires itself every year for the past three or four years now.

00:42:05:22 - 00:42:20:19

Katie

Yeah, and it's one of these attitudes that you like, you see it kind of in this country as well. When you get people who are like dismissive about refugees and the experiences they've had and it. Yeah. Is racism and a yeah.

00:42:20:19 - 00:42:21:00

Brenda

That's.

00:42:21:09 - 00:42:23:10

Katie

Yeah. I can't believe they said that to you, it’s so awful.

00:42:23:10 - 00:42:55:17

Brenda

So for I'm actually going to agree with you, I kind of feel like there's still that racism thing going on inside, like the neogtiations that nobody talks about. It's like, okay, theres still like somebody seeing themselves as more surprior than the other person. But I don't think anybody talks about these things outside here. Like people don't know what actually happens inside those negotiations.

00:42:55:17 - 00:43:04:18

Josh

What do you think the reaction would be if you were to accuse negotiators of being racist, either openly or coercively or.

00:43:08:21 - 00:43:10:21

Brenda

The reaction from me or from everybody?

00:43:12:15 - 00:43:25:20

Josh

I think as in if you were to openly call out racism within these high level UN spaces, what do you think the reaction would be from the people within those high level UN spaces?

00:43:25:20 - 00:43:55:00

Brenda

Um, I still feel like there's so many politics that goes behind those, like these negotiation zones where specially the climate change negotiations and I don't know if okay, I think one of the problems that I've seen is the fact that people from like the developing countries, we still relying on like organizations from like developed countries to give us funding for us to attend the negotiations.

00:43:55:00 - 00:44:11:07

Brenda

So now the fact that you're going there, your your attending the negotiations, you've been there say you've been sponsored by USAID. When you're going there, obviously, there's no way you can call out on USAID, because I think.

00:44:12:01 - 00:44:14:21

Katie

What was USAID? Sorry.

00:44:14:21 - 00:44:51:01

Brenda

All I'm saying, for example, I'm just giving an example to say most of the negotiators from like developing countries for them to attend COP, they rely on funding from international organizations. So when you're going there, those international organizations already have their own priorities. And when you go, there you can’t call out on those negotiations, all the countries from those from where the organizations belong because they have their funding, they're funding your trip and they have all the resources to take you back to say, okay, do cut your funding.

00:44:51:12 - 00:45:15:10

Brenda

So when you go there, I think that's on many issues and going on in those. But then people don't want to call them out because they're thinking, okay, what if they stop funding us? Like what will happen last for like the next time we want to come here? You know, because obviously the fact like for example, the delegation to go to like club from like developing countries, it's already small.

00:45:15:15 - 00:45:40:12

Brenda

You find that the whole countries only have like six people. And then let's say you're calling out like you're giving these claims and everything of this, and then the next time you're not going, they like there's nobody to give you a funding because now it's like you're breaching the is it like the agreement or anything because now if in as much as the French or you have your own priorities, it is, but still you have to align your priorities to their priorities.

00:45:40:22 - 00:45:53:04

Brenda

So I think there's like there's so much, so much going on and yeah, this part. But we are far from winning this battle anyway.

00:45:53:04 - 00:46:18:15

Katie

Yeah. Yeah. That's like a really interesting insight into the kind of power dynamics that are at play in in these spaces. The kind of. Yeah, I'd never thought about before. So that was really interesting to hear from you, but it's really frustrating that you're in that position where like, yeah, you're, you can't call out racism and bad behavior because you're kind of beholden to the people that are letting you in to the space.

00:46:19:20 - 00:46:22:24

Brenda

That's true. That's true.

00:46:22:24 - 00:46:44:17

Josh

Um, how can this UN system, how can the U.N. provide more support so that you and other Global South representatives able to talk more freely? Is it just financial or is it other things could be done?

00:46:44:17 - 00:46:45:15

Katie

Um.

00:46:46:14 - 00:47:18:06

Brenda

I think I don't know. Is it really just about finances? No. But then I'm looking at how deep are our relations with, like, international organizations, because it's not just about funding hope. Even when we are making the commitments that we are making. Yeah, even the commitments that we're making, the visions that we're setting for our countries, for them also to be like to be like to be accomplished.

00:47:18:06 - 00:47:49:04

Brenda

Also they need partnerships or funds from those international organizations as well. Like there's no country that's like so funded to say, okay, they're going to carry out to be the initiatives, their projects or whatever visions that they have. So we still need like those partnerships and everything. So I think the partnerships go beyond COP funding partnerships, which is something that we cannot just easily say pull out and everything because now you're looking at, Oh, okay, Malawi wants to do this, this, this and that.

00:47:49:04 - 00:48:28:04

Brenda

Oh, for example, Uganda wants to do this, this, this and that. But then for them to accomplish those, they'll still need those international organizations. So I think the again is like the partnerships have gone beyond. But to the extent where it's really hard to like people for people to call out on like these international organizations or like in, like the countries to say, okay, this is how we’re being treated or we feel like we're not being treated fairly or I'm going to give you an example where I think last week I was in this at this meeting and I was given a question to say, why do you think that when you go for

00:48:28:05 - 00:49:04:20

Brenda

negotiations, you find that developed countries, mostly they like whatever priorities that they have. It's mostly is like that, the ones that are mostly adopted as compared to like developing countries demands. For me, I think okay I would I would also say okay, for example, if a country has like six people at COP and they're like 100 plus meetings that are happening at the same time, it's very like it's impossible for like six people to find themselves in like all hundred rooms or to have like, yeah.

00:49:04:21 - 00:49:31:05

Brenda

To what extent that countries in all the hundred rooms, you know, and then you find that developed countries, they have like 100 plus delegations did delegation member, you know, and they are able to have like that input in each and everything because they have like a lot of people that want to support the people that know what's happening to follow up with everything that's happening.

00:49:31:12 - 00:49:42:23

Brenda

So this is why I'm saying, okay, I think like then the issue it goes beyond cop relationships also.

00:49:42:23 - 00:50:10:07

Josh

Just to also add to that for context, for some of you, as you mentioned, global north countries have having hundreds of representatives. I think the single largest delegation group in at COP 26 was the fossil fuel industry, which had something about 500 delegates. In the end it gives you a scale of like the uphill battle.

00:50:11:07 - 00:50:19:13

Katie

Bloody hell. Yeah. Challenged with. Yeah, it's like BP and Shell can get 500 people and Malawi has only got six people. That doesn't seem very fair is it?

00:50:21:13 - 00:50:44:10

Brenda

Exactly. And there's no way you can find yourself in all of the negotiation rooms because at the same time, you have to attend side events. You have to attend the negotiations. And sometimes it gets frustrating and you're just thinking, okay, let me just have some time to myself. And I don't I don't even want to go to any negotiation among that means your country isn't represented when you do decide that.

00:50:45:16 - 00:50:54:24

Josh

Wow I'm I think I'm going to start to wrap this up. I keep being like, oh, maybe, maybe, yeah.

00:50:54:24 - 00:50:56:11

Katie

You just keep saying so many interesting things.

00:50:57:01 - 00:51:14:12

Josh

It tends to go off on. We’ve been ending our podcast recordings with a question that we kind of been asking lots of our guests and the question is quite a simple one, but it's just what gives you hope?

00:51:14:12 - 00:51:40:05

Brenda

What gives me hope is the fact that in as much as youth do not really have a bigger platform for us to be involved in. But with the involvement or the engagement that we have, I feel like we still keep pushing and the fact that we are also being given a chance, there's hope to say, okay, one day, I mean, one day we'll be able to be engaged meaningfully.

00:51:40:11 - 00:52:04:11

Brenda

I mean, there's a difference between participating and being engaged and then also being engaged meaningfully. So it's all about meaningful engagement and not tokenistic, tokenistic approach, you know, so for me, the fact that I'm there for me, for example, the fact that I'm there, the fact that there are like a youth out there who are like who have passion and are willing to see change.

00:52:04:23 - 00:52:21:20

Brenda

For me, it gives me hope to say one day we are going to win this battle and to have youth who are being involved in like decision making processes from like grassroot level to like international policy decision making level, that's I want to see.

00:52:23:13 - 00:52:33:21

Katie

Thank you. What a great answer. I love to hear about the energy that youth bring to the movement and the fight for climate justice.

00:52:33:21 - 00:52:41:20

Josh

Um, is there anything else you want to promote or to shout out whilst you’re here.

00:52:43:14 - 00:53:06:24

Brenda

Okay. To all youth that are out there all I can say is that keep dreaming, keep pushing, and let's keep knocking on leaders’ doors. Never give up. And yeah, let's make sure that they remove the padlocks on their doors and give us the audience and give us the platform where we can be engaged meaningfully. And with COP27 coming to Egypt.

00:53:06:24 - 00:53:19:17

Brenda

This is our African COP and let's mobilize ourselves in large numbers. Let's make sure that our voices are heard and let's keep pushing and let's keep dreaming. See you at COP27!!!

00:53:19:17 - 00:53:20:14

Katie

Woooohhhh

00:53:27:12 - 00:53:30:24

Katie

Thank you so much, Brenda. It's been great to have you.

00:53:30:24 - 00:53:31:15

Josh

Thank you.

00:53:31:20 - 00:53:48:03

Brenda

Thank you so much, Katie Thank you so much, Joy. Josh, I'm sorry. My my my colleague, her name is Joy. So I think I'm very much saying joy hahahhaha

00:53:48:03 - 00:54:04:13

Katie

Thanks so much.

00:54:04:13 - 00:54:15:20

Josh

Wow, that was really great having Brenda on and I've really enjoyed hearing about her perspective and her work and I felt like it was really, really insightful. So. How did you feel about that conversation?

00:54:15:20 - 00:54:57:17

Katie

Yeah, like what? What an Amazing Speaker Oh, I kind of didn't realize when we booked her, like how, how impressive she was and yeah, like, amazing to hear about her work and it really kind of like to me is put in perspective like, well, that's not quite the right word. But you know, I think it's very easy as like a global north activist to like be a bit detached from the reality of like the impacts that climate change is having and to kind of yeah, hear her perspective really like highlight that we need, we need to hear more of these perspectives and like especially what she was saying too about like people at the UN,

00:54:57:21 - 00:55:20:18

Katie

like from Western countries, just like dismissing the experiences of Global South and particularly African activists like it shows how much work we have to do. Like, you know, it's all very well having like a U.N. process that everyone is involved in. But if you've got the people who've got the most power just being like, well, actually sounds a bit like you're making it up like that.

00:55:21:00 - 00:55:27:15

Katie

That's a really bad place to be. And yeah, there's so much more that needs to be done to kind of get rid of those horrible attitudes.

00:55:29:07 - 00:55:57:06

Josh

Yeah, I think obviously Brenda talking about that experience was shocking, but actually upon reflection, it almost is like there's racism everywhere within society. And to find racism also at that level almost shouldn't be a surprise, sadly. I mean, you just like you're right I realize there's a there's a mountain to climb and there's more work to be done.

00:55:57:06 - 00:56:04:03

Josh

But I need something hopeful to say now.

00:56:04:03 - 00:56:05:10

Katie

Yeah. I mean, like.

00:56:05:14 - 00:56:13:20

Josh

I'm lacking that inspiration at the minute.

00:56:13:20 - 00:56:15:00

Katie

Yeah, that's a good point.

00:56:15:18 - 00:56:40:03

Josh

No, seriously, I think something that was really important to come out of Brenda’s perspective was she had so much hope in the work that young climate activists are doing and had hope in us as a generation. And the power that we can have when we get involved is really, really a positive message to take home specifically.

00:56:41:03 - 00:57:05:13

Katie

Yeah, that's true. And I guess it's pretty important to like bring it back to what our organization, the Loss and Damage Youth Coalition, does. So like they - I heard their speakers when we were in Glasgow for COP26 and that whole thing is like this, not the whole thing, but one of the things they do that's really important is kind of like storytelling and making sure that like the message gets out of like the experiences that young people are having and how young people feel about their future.

00:57:07:02 - 00:57:23:22

Katie

So I think, yeah, support their work. They’re very cool. And you can get involved with them. You can like volunteer. It's like a coalition of global north and global south activists. So it doesn't matter where you're from, you can be involved in kind of like sharing the message that like climate change is already here and it's already affecting people.

00:57:23:22 - 00:57:28:13

Katie

And we need we need funding for loss and damage to support those most affected.

00:57:28:14 - 00:57:30:24

Josh

Sure, they're after more global north activists as well.

00:57:32:02 - 00:57:35:00

Katie

oooo are they?

00:57:36:22 - 00:57:47:07

Josh

Uh, thank you again, Katie, for this conversation. And I look forward to our next.

00:57:47:07 - 00:58:21:08

Katie

Um, yeah, if you don't have the time to get involved with something like Loss and Damages Coalition, there are other ways you can support them, like follow them on social media so you can hear more about their work. Or you can donate to support youth activists from around the world, woooo youth activism. Thanks for listening to From the Ground Up, a podcast by the UK Youth Climate Coalition.

00:58:21:16 - 00:59:01:08

Katie

Our guest today was Brenda Mwale, your hosts were Katie and Josh and our music is by Nick Battle. To learn more about our work, follow us on social media or go to UKYCC.com to learn more about Brenda's work with the loss and damage Youth Coalition, go to LDYouth.org.