

# 15 Years of Legal Expertise for Climate Justice



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# Welcome

The UN climate negotiations are amongst the most complex multilateral law and policy-making processes ever established. They are characterised by technical jargon, carefully crafted language, and references to intricate legal principles and international obligations. Delegations from industrialised countries are supported by teams of legal and technical experts. In contrast, many developing countries—despite being among the most vulnerable to climate change—lack access to equivalent expertise.

This imbalance affects their ability to participate meaningfully, challenge proposals, and shape outcomes. As the number of agenda items continues to grow, the process becomes even more demanding, raising concerns about equity and the integrity of decision-making.

One root of this disparity lies in the global imbalance of legal capacity. In the United States, there is roughly one practicing lawyer for every 249 people. In Germany, it is one for every 524. But in Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ghana, the ratio drops to one lawyer per 7,194 and 13,774 people, respectively. In Burkina Faso, the estimate is closer to one for every 125,000.\*

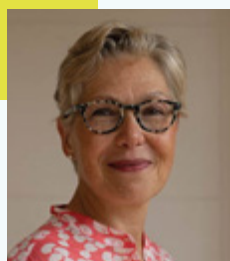
At the domestic level, these same countries often face further constraints in translating international commitments into action. A lack of legal and institutional capacity can limit ambition, slow implementation, and hinder the development of tailored climate governance frameworks.

Legal Response International (LRI)'s mission is to address these imbalances. With a small staff and minimal cost base, we have, since our inception, leveraged a global network of expert volunteers to provide free legal assistance to developing country and civil society delegates in the international climate negotiations, both during and outside negotiation sessions. We are widely regarded as a neutral and trusted source of high-quality legal advice.

Building on this model, we have expanded our support to help countries review and develop national climate plans and legal frameworks aligned with their international commitments. While our rapid response legal advice service remains vital, it is by nature reactive and ad hoc. To strengthen long-term capacity, we also deliver a wide

range of training formats to negotiators, policymakers, lawyers, civil society groups, students, and others involved in climate governance.

This report highlights key achievements, what we have learned, and where we are headed next. We are deeply grateful to our volunteers, law firm collaborators, partner institutions, universities, and donors. Thank you for your continued support as we work together to empower developing countries to shape international negotiations and drive forward their national climate priorities.



**Pascale Bird**  
Executive Director,  
Legal Response  
International



\* Lawyers per capita by Country 2025. World Population Review.  
Retrieved August 18, 2025, from <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/lawyers-per-capita-by-country>



# Strategic Evolution: Responding to Emerging Needs

In 2022, LRI undertook a strategic review to assess how our work could evolve in response to shifting global needs and the growing complexity of the legal climate landscape to better support developing countries.

## The review confirmed

- ◆ A widening legal capacity gap, both internationally and domestically
- ◆ Rising demand for structured, long-term legal training
- ◆ The need to strengthen regional networks and implementation ecosystems
- ◆ Increasing calls to translate international agreements into domestic law
- ◆ The importance of ensuring our expert network evolves with the field
- ◆ The uniqueness of LRI's service and its trusted standing with delegates distinguish it from other organisations engaged in similar work

This shift marks a move from purely reactive support to a more proactive, systems-strengthening approach, grounded in the belief that fair, effective climate governance depends on lasting legal capacity across all levels.

## In response, we have

- ◆ Launched modular legal training programmes tailored to different audiences
- ◆ Expanded support for the review and development of climate legislation, including framework laws
- ◆ Deepened collaboration with regional organisations and negotiation groups to enhance long-term and sustained capacity
- ◆ Enhanced coordination and knowledge exchange across our global expert network and partner institutions
- ◆ Continued to deliver real-time legal assistance ahead and during climate negotiations
- ◆ Boosted the production of explainers and knowledge products, including in different languages to reach more delegates and stakeholders

## We are also exploring

- ◆ Regional legal hubs to foster peer learning and sustained local expertise (starting with sub-Saharan Africa)
- ◆ New training formats adapted to regional priorities and needs
- ◆ Tools to support continuous learning for our pro bono advisers





# How We Support Climate Justice

At LRI, we work to ensure that all countries, regardless of legal capacity, can engage effectively in international climate negotiations and implement their commitments at home.

Our support focuses on three core areas:

## Free Legal Assistance

Real-time support for developing country negotiators and civil society organisations in the lead up to, during, and after climate talks, and ongoing legal assistance at the national level.

## Capacity Building

Training programmes, mentoring and peer learning designed to strengthen legal knowledge and long-term climate governance capacity.

## Resources

Plain-language guides, templates, and legal tools that help translate complex international law into action.

Together, these efforts help level the playing field for more just and inclusive climate outcomes.



# Free Legal Assistance

LRI provides legal support to developing country negotiators and civil society representatives at both the international and national levels, year-round and at no cost.

## At the UN Climate Negotiations

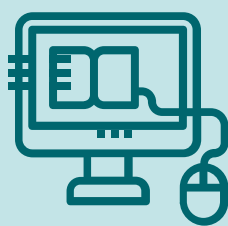
Since 2009, we have been present at every COP and most intersessional meetings, supporting delegates on-site and remotely. Legal queries range from interpreting negotiation text to drafting submissions or clarifying proposed obligations or rules of procedure.

### Key mechanisms include



#### Liaison Officers

A team of trained volunteer lawyers who attend negotiations to support delegates directly, take notes, and facilitate legal queries.



#### Situation Room

The London-based Situation Room is staffed by volunteers who conduct research, prepare negotiation updates, and coordinate responses from senior lawyers.



#### Virtual legal hub

of legal experts on standby to assist remotely and delivers written advice in real time.

### We've supported

- ◆ Delegates from **70+ developing countries** and **40+ civil society organisations** (since 2018)
- ◆ Groups including LDCs, AOSIS, AGN and COMIFAC
- ◆ The development of **draft text** and **group positions**
- ◆ **Post-session follow-up** on decisions and their implications

We responded to



**490+**

queries on the international negotiations (since 2018)

## CASE STUDY

# Legal Resources & Networks: Harnessing Expertise for Capacity Building

## LRI's Intervention

Mika Morissette's climate law expertise was shaped and strengthened through her firm's engagement with LRI. Beginning as a volunteer and later coordinating the Situation Room, she provided legal insights that directly supported international climate negotiations. She would then join LRI as liaison officer for one of the negotiation sessions. This hands-on experience allowed her to engage with complex legal issues in real time, alongside negotiators and a global network of legal experts.

Her work later extended to advising a state government on the design and implementation of a carbon markets framework. She focused on integrating Emissions Trading Schemes (ETS) with voluntary carbon credit schemes, ensuring alignment with international climate commitments. During the Bonn negotiations, Mika was involved helping the state delegation navigate complex procedural objections related to carbon market governance.



Scan the QR code to  
watch the video

## Impact & Outcomes

The collaboration enriched Mika's understanding of climate law across both international and domestic levels, strengthening her ability to advise sub-national policymakers on carbon market frameworks. For the state government, Mika's legal guidance — grounded in the expertise developed through her work with LRI — translated into more informed and effective policy design and implementation strategies. Her experience demonstrates how collaboration between legal professionals and global climate initiatives can deliver mutual value: expanding professional expertise while equipping governments with clear, applicable legal advice essential to effective climate regulation.

**Mika Morissette,**  
Senior Associate, Herbert Smith  
Freehills Kramer, Global



A truly remarkable experience. The exposure and knowledge I gained through LRI is not easily accessed in countries like Papua New Guinea.

**Oliver Nobetau,** Papua New Guinea



# At the National Level

Outside the negotiation halls, LRI supports governments as they implement their climate commitments, particularly in the legal review and development of national climate legislation.

We have:

- ◆ Received **60+ requests** for assistance at the domestic level (since 2018)
- ◆ **Assisted countries** in drafting or reviewing national framework laws and carbon market regulations
- ◆ Provided **comparative legal analysis** to inform policy decisions
- ◆ Collaborated closely with local partners to ensure advice is **contextually relevant** and aligned with national priorities

We received



# 60+

requests for assistance at domestic level (since 2018)

## CASE STUDY

## Legal Assistance – Domestic Level: Embedding Climate and Disaster Finance in National Legislation

### LRI's Intervention

Tasked with aligning The Gambia's public financial management system with its international climate commitments, Isatou F. Camara faced a pressing challenge: limited legal and financial capacity to embed climate finance and loss-and-damage mechanisms into domestic law. In response, LRI provided timely, pro bono legal and technical support, working to assist in drafting and overhauling the country's public finance bill. In parallel with assistance to clarify the financial provisions under the UNFCCC, LRI also supported the development of The Gambia's carbon trading legislation, ensuring coherence with international best practices.

### Impact & Outcomes

With this expert support, The Gambia now has a strengthened legal framework that aligns national priorities with global climate finance standards — laying essential foundations for improved climate resilience and the implementation of loss and damage measures. Isatou describes LRI as an indispensable partner for least developed countries facing resource constraints, showing how pro bono legal assistance can be a powerful enabler in crafting robust, enforceable climate legislation that addresses both domestic needs and international responsibilities.

**Isatou F. Camara**, Director, Climate Finance Directorate, The Gambia



Scan the QR code to watch the video

### Did you know?

LRI has helped align national climate legislation with the Paris Agreement in: **Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chile, Eswatini, Haiti, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Mauritania, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, The Gambia, Uganda, Zimbabwe.**



# Capacity Building

LRI works to equip negotiators, lawyers & policymakers, and CSOs in developing countries with the tools needed to engage confidently in international negotiations and implement commitments domestically.

## Training the Next Generation of Climate Law Leaders

In response to demand and gaps we identified, LRI has contributed to and developed 35+ tailored training programmes for negotiators, lawyers, parliamentarians, CSOs, and law students. These trainings focus on the legal dimensions of the climate regime, treaty interpretation, and implications for national implementation. These are:

- ◆ Delivered via **in-person** and **online formats** across multiple regions
- ◆ Delivered through **pre-COP workshops**, **legal readiness sessions**, and **regional partnerships**
- ◆ Designed with **flexibility** to match different audiences and learning needs
- ◆ Future plans include **regional peer-learning hubs**, starting in Africa



The training scaled up my understanding to all thematic areas — I can now confidently say I'm an all-round negotiator.

Eunice Asinguza, Uganda



## CASE STUDY

# Capacity Building & Training: Empowering New Climate Negotiators Through Legal Support

## LRI's Intervention

When Prakriti Koirala entered the international climate negotiations at COP26, she faced the common challenges experienced by many junior negotiators from developing countries — limited exposure to negotiation procedures, complex terminology, and language-related barriers. Referred to LRI by IIED, she received tailored legal mentoring designed to demystify the intricate procedural landscape of UNFCCC meetings. A key element of this support was a regional training session held in Nepal in 2023, where participants engaged in a mock negotiation that provided practical, hands-on experience. This incremental, simulation-based approach helped build both technical skills and confidence in navigating negotiation texts.

## Impact & Outcomes

Prakriti describes LRI's accessible, foundational mentoring and training as instrumental in her rapid development. She is now able to work with complex negotiation documents more comfortably and contribute meaningfully to discussions that once felt out of reach. Her experience illustrates how dedicated legal support, and practical training can dramatically shorten the learning curve for new negotiators — empowering early-career professionals from developing countries to engage more confidently and effectively in global climate policymaking.

**Prakriti Koirala**, Youth Coordinator for  
The LDC Group, Nepal



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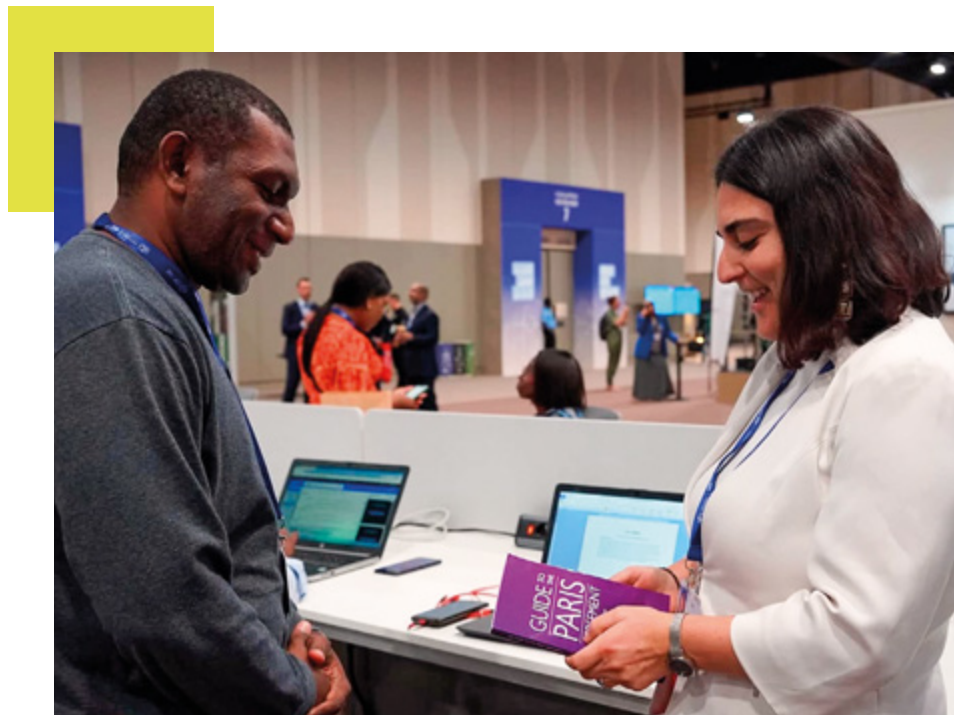


# Resources

## Practical Tools to Translate Law into Action

LRI produces plain-language legal resources to help practitioners interpret and implement international climate law. Some are translated into French and Spanish:

- ◆ **Legal advice database**
- ◆ **Guide to the Paris Agreement**, produced under the European Capacity Building Initiative (ecbi)
- ◆ **Paris Agreement A to Z App** that contains the text of Agreement, explanations, and links to decisions
- ◆ **Negotiation summaries** after each COP and Bonn negotiation session consolidating main outcomes and explain legal issues arising
- ◆ **Briefing Papers, Explainers, Policy Papers** explaining negotiation streams, governance and legal issues, with recommendations for legislation and implementation at the national level
- ◆ **Terminology guides** to support negotiators in interpreting, analysing, and suggesting text that reflects their positions accurately
- ◆ **Webinars**



Can't thank LRI enough for the Paris Guide — so helpful. I'm making a presentation now and understand the Agreement like I wrote it. Thanks again for linking me up.

**Constance Dlamini**, Head of Delegation, Eswatini

## CASE STUDY

# Legal Assistance – Multilateral Level: Strengthening Legal Clarity in Climate Technology Negotiations

## LRI's Intervention

Since 2015, Ambrosio Yobánolo del Real has been at the forefront of complex international climate negotiations, representing Chile and regional coalitions and global negotiation groups AILAC and G77 & China. Negotiating with Annex I countries — often backed by advanced legal and technical teams — delegates from developing countries frequently face challenges interpreting dense treaty language and intricate procedural texts. To help bridge this gap, Ambrosio partnered with Legal Response International, receiving expert legal advice on nuanced treaty provisions, interpretation of UNFCCC rules, and guidance on financial mechanisms like the Adaptation Fund and Green Climate Fund. A key aspect of this collaboration was LRI's tailored capacity building, particularly focused on strengthening non-native English speakers' command of legal terminology and improving drafting skills for negotiation decisions.



Scan the QR code to  
watch the video

## Impact & Outcomes

With this specialised support, Chile and its allies were better equipped to articulate clearer, legally sound positions in negotiations. Ambrosio notes that the collaboration helped level the playing field, enabling his team to engage more confidently and effectively in multilateral discussions. With LRI's assistance, technology-related issues were more strategically connected to crucial climate finance mechanisms, increasing their visibility and impact in negotiation outcomes. His experience highlights the vital role of ongoing legal partnerships in helping developing countries navigate and shape the complex architecture of international climate agreements.

**Ambrosio Yobánolo del Real,**  
AILAC and G77 & China Lead Technology  
Negotiator, Chile







# Challenges We Face

Despite progress, a number of structural and operational challenges shape LRI's work.

## Limited resources

We remain a small organisation with global reach. Meeting growing demand, while maintaining quality and responsiveness, continues to stretch our core team and funding base. Many countries and groups request direct, in-person training, but our limited staff and resources make it difficult to provide this consistently. While online tools extend our reach, some skills and relationships are best built face-to-face, creating an ongoing tension between what is needed and what we can sustainably deliver.

## Scaling a volunteer-based model

Our legal advice relies on pro bono support. But coordination, quality control, and ongoing training require significant time and investment. Sustaining and expanding this network is a continuing priority.

## Keeping legal expertise current

Climate law evolves rapidly. Many of our advisers contribute alongside full-time roles, making it essential that they have access to legal briefings and peer exchange to keep our support relevant and rigorous.

## Navigating politically complex settings

As our work expands nationally and regionally, we operate in very different environments, each with its unique political social and cultural dynamics. Being sensitive to these, building and preserving trust, neutrality, and contextual insight is key to remaining effective.

We are committed to addressing these challenges transparently — strengthening our foundation so that we can continue to support climate-vulnerable countries fairly, flexibly, and with integrity.

# Looking Ahead

The scale of the climate crisis demands bold, sustained action, and legal capacity is a cornerstone of that response. While we continue to face real challenges, they are matched by the commitment, creativity, and collaboration of our global network.

At LRI, we have seen firsthand how access to legal expertise can shift outcomes — be it in negotiation rooms, national parliaments, or local communities. Every legal opinion we provide, every training we deliver, and every partnership we build is part of a wider movement toward fairness, equity, and climate resilience.

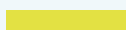
As we look to the future, we remain focused on strengthening legal systems from the ground up, investing in long-term capacity, and expanding the reach of climate justice. With your support, we are confident that the next 15 years will be even more impactful.

## LRI at a Glance

### Our Global Network & Reach

**165+**

legal advisers worldwide



Support provided by a network of lawyers based in

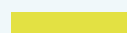
**18+**

countries, including: Australia, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Ecuador, France, India, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, Switzerland, Uganda, UK, and US

### Volunteer Engagement

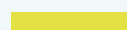
**160+**

volunteers per year on average in person



**100+**

volunteers in ad hoc research sprints annually



**15**

volunteers per year supporting blogs, translations and legal products



## Training & Knowledge Sharing

**35+**

training programmes  
delivered national & regional

**45+**

publications produced  
since 2018

**31**

international sessions  
attended since 2009

**1,115**

printed guides distributed  
at climate conferences  
since November 2024

# To our volunteers, collaborators, and funders: thank you.

You have helped LRI become a unique, trusted, and principled presence in international climate law. Your support empowers developing countries to engage more equitably in negotiations, and to turn international commitments into legal realities at home.

We look forward to the next phase of this journey, and to deepening our impact in the years ahead.

## LRI Team

Pascale Bird  
Olivia Tattarletti  
Montserrat Madariaga  
Mara Wendebourg  
Harrison Cox  
Rohan Barad

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