



IIED support to the Least Developed Countries Group

Influencing global climate change negotiations

Bernardo Monzani

Evaluation case study

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Climate change

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About the author

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IIED commissioned a consultant to carry out and write up this evaluation case study. The consultant chose an objective and recognised methodology and independently arrived at their conclusions.

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Working in collaboration with partner organisations and individuals in developing countries, the Climate Change Group has been leading the field on adaptation to climate change issues.

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Cover photo: IIED's Achala Abeyasinghe advises Giza Gaspar-Martins, the former chair of the Least Developed Countries Group, in Paris at COP21. Credit: Matt Wright/IIED

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Poverty, vulnerability and a lack of relevant capacity to respond effectively to expected changes mean the members of the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Group are most vulnerable to climate change and have limited capacity to influence global climate change negotiations. To help them advance their priorities and make their voices heard in talks leading up to the Paris Agreement, IIED provided technical, logistical and financial support to increase the group's engagement, strengthen the role and profile of its chair, and promote LDC positions in the media from 2011 to 2015. This independent evaluation aims to assess the impact of this support.

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Summary

The Paris Agreement was the culmination of a five-year negotiation process under the auspices of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in which 197 countries sought convergence and compromise around a global response to climate change. Although deep divisions had derailed previous negotiations, and discussions remained contentious to the end, the landmark agreement was officially adopted on 12 December 2015.

Poverty, vulnerability and a lack of relevant capacity to respond effectively to expected changes mean the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Group's 47 member countries are most vulnerable to climate change and have limited capacity to influence global negotiations. To help them advance their priorities and make their voices heard in global climate negotiations, IIED provided technical, logistical and financial support to increase the group's engagement, strengthen the role and profile of its chair and promote LDC positions in the media from 2011 to 2015. This evaluation aims to assess the impact of this support.

Methodology

I used contribution tracing, a rigorous theory-based evaluation approach combining contribution analysis tools and process tracing. This involved extrapolating the theory of change behind IIED's initiative, developing a contribution story to assess whether it was reasonable to assume that IIED's actions had contributed to the observed change, then gathering and validating evidence for six contribution claims to further reduce uncertainty about IIED's impact.

Theory of change and contribution story

The theory of change behind IIED's initiative identified three main strategies, focused on:

- Improving coordination within the LDC Group and ensuring delegates were actively engaged in official UNFCCC meetings
- Strengthening the role of the LDC chair, improving institutional memory, increasing the chair's profile and reputation and strengthening their relationships with other negotiators, and

- Increasing LDC visibility by clarifying group positions, increasing media presence and creating public pressure for an agreement that supported LDC demands.

Extrapolating the theory of change drew attention to several key assumptions, chiefly that the LDC Group would make effective use of IIED's support and that increased cohesion, coordination and reputation would translate into greater negotiating power.

Main findings

The contribution story confirmed that the narrative about IIED's impact was reasonable. The analysis of the final outcome showed that, although it was more effective on some issues than others, the LDC Group ensured the Paris Agreement addressed many of its demands, including:

- Recognising LDCs' special circumstances
- Limiting temperature increases to 1.5°C over pre-industrial levels in the long term, and
- Including loss and damage as a stand-alone article.

My analysis found that, although the LDC Group received support from a number of organisations and institutions, IIED was mainly responsible for:

- Creating the LDC core team, a group of experienced negotiators who supported the chair and coordinators
- Helping organise annual strategy meetings
- Giving the chair demand-led, real-time technical assistance, legal advice and logistical support within and outside formal negotiations
- Financially supporting key LDC Group members' participation in UNFCCC sessions
- Organising training workshops for negotiators
- Helping disseminate press releases, blog articles, media outreach, and
- Managing the official LDC Group website.

Before IIED's engagement, the LDC Group was represented at UNFCCC meetings, including the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action and the Conference of the Parties. But its engagement was weaker than that of other blocs', mostly due to a lack of capacity and resources. Its presence at subsidiary body meetings was even more limited. The group's output — in terms of press releases, statements and regular official submissions in preparation of UNFCCC sessions — has increased steadily since 2011.

The UNFCCC secretariat, Alliance of Small Islands States, European Union and France all played a significant role in paving the way for the Paris Agreement. But other countries, such as China and the United States, were more ambiguous, sending strong signals of support without committing on key issues. Non-negotiating groups, namely the Climate Vulnerable Forum and the High Ambition Coalition effectively used media outreach to create public pressure for an ambitious agreement.

Against this context, I found that **IIED's contribution claim is valid**. The LDC Group ensured that several of its positions were endorsed in the Paris Agreement and IIED played an instrumental role in this. My evaluation confirms the validity of several components of the theory of change, including how IIED support led to greater and more active LDC engagement and a stronger profile for the group, its chair and other

negotiators endorsing official LDC positions. I also found that:

1. The effectiveness of each strategy varied by issue — for example, the strategy on loss and damage was more effective than the one on climate finance.
2. Breakthrough in Paris often required champions and the LDCs did not generate as much high-level or ministerial support as other groups.
3. Positive outcomes largely correlated with coalitions' and individual blocs' abilities to mobilise support.

The main challenges I identified for IIED, which will both need careful consideration in the future, were its efforts to engage high-level LDC government representatives and its media strategy.

Conclusion and recommendations

Much of IIED's extensive support to the LDC Group was unique and linked to its theory of change, which reflected well-defined, contextualised strategies for pursuing desired outcomes. The successful validation of five out of six components of the main contribution claim proves that IIED's strategies of promoting more active LDC engagement and increasing the chair's profile are fundamentally correct.

To further improve this work, I recommend that donors increase funds to support the participation of more LDC delegates in official UNFCCC events. IIED should also:

- Increase efforts to engage LDC national ministries in negotiations
- Identify and sustain champions who can use their personality and skills to embody change
- Help the LDC Group invest in coalitions and increase outreach to traditional and new allies
- Review and improve its media strategy, and
- Work with the LDC Group to develop a skills-enhancing programme for the LDC chair.

List of acronyms

ADP	Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action
AGN	African Group of Negotiators
AILAC	Independent Alliance of Latin American Countries
AOSIS	Alliance of Small Island States
CA	Climate Analytics
CAN	Climate Action Network
CDKN	Climate and Development Knowledge Network
COP	Conference of the Parties
CVF	Climate Vulnerable Forum
ECBI	European Capacity Building Initiatives
EU	European Union
HAC	High Ambition Coalition
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
LEG	LDC Legal Expert Group
LMDC	Like-Minded Developing Countries
LRI	Legal Response Initiative
NGO	Nongovernmental Organisation
OCP	Oxford Climate Policy
SBI	Subsidiary Body for Implementation
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

1

Introduction

This report explores the impact of the International Institute for Environment and Development's (IIED's) support for the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Group throughout the negotiations that led to the adoption of the Paris Agreement. This landmark accord was the culmination of renewed negotiations that started in 2011 under the auspices of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Over the next four years, 197 countries regularly convened to seek convergence and compromise for a global response to the increasing threats of anthropogenic climate change. Deep divisions had derailed a previous attempt at agreement in Copenhagen in 2009 and discussions remained contentious into the last days of negotiations. But the process was a success and the Paris Agreement was officially approved on 12 December 2015.

Poverty, economic vulnerability and a lack of relevant capacity to respond effectively to expected changes makes the LDCs the most vulnerable to climate

change. As a result, they were eager to ensure that any final agreement reflected their positions and interests. But LDC negotiators lacked the resources, time or technical capabilities to effectively represent their countries in the global process, so their capacity to influence the negotiations was weak.

IIED has supported the LDC Group and its 48 member countries (now 47, following Equatorial Guinea's graduation from the category in June 2017) since 2001.¹ After the climate negotiations restarted in 2011, IIED entered a new phase of support — which included training workshops, demand-led technical assistance and logistical and financial support — to increase the group's active engagement in the negotiations, strengthen the role and profile of its chair and promote LDC positions in the media. Its goal was to ensure that the Paris Agreement endorsed and reflected the positions of the LDC Group.

2

Background

2.1 The UNFCCC negotiations and the Paris Agreement

Negotiations to address and respond to climate change have been ongoing since the UNFCCC was adopted in 1992. The UNFCCC aims to promote:

- Mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions by all countries on the basis of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, and
- Adaptation to climate change, particularly through cooperation between developed and developing countries.

The UNFCCC is governed by the Conference of the Parties (COP), made up of the 197 countries that have signed the convention. The COP meets annually to take decisions on global climate change responses.

In 1997, the COP approved the Kyoto Protocol to accelerate efforts to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions by imposing legally binding targets and timetables. But its effectiveness was undermined from the start, as some countries strongly resisted it and others — such as the United States — never ratified it. When it finally entered into force in 2005, its targets only extended to 2012.

COP 13 subsequently adopted the Bali Action Plan in 2007 to ensure long-term cooperative action for the full, effective and sustained implementation of the convention. But in spite of public pressure for strong action on climate change, negotiators at COP 15 in Copenhagen failed to reach an agreement by the deadline in 2009 and were only able to produce the Copenhagen Accord. While never adopted, this document reflected important progress, signalling an agreement for reducing temperature increases to 2°C over pre-industrial levels and establishing the Green Climate Fund.

The Cancun Agreements, adopted at COP 16 in 2010, allowed for the regime established under the Kyoto Protocol to remain in place while countries negotiated its replacement. The new phase of negotiations — which eventually led to the Paris Agreement — began in 2011 at COP 17, where parties agreed to establish the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action: a more comprehensive road map for reaching a new global agreement. It allocated four years for negotiations (2012–2015) and created the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP) to steer the process. The ADP held 14 sessions between 2012 and 2015.

Through ADP and COP sessions, the UNFCCC allowed negotiating blocs and coalitions to form and consolidate, creating alliances that were critical for the final outcome. Historically, the main division in the negotiations has usually been between developed and developing countries. Groups representing the interests and positions of developing nations included the Alliance of Small Islands States (AOSIS), the Africa Group of Negotiators (AGN), the LDC Group, the Arab Group and the Independent Alliance of Latin America and the Caribbean (AILAC).² Several developing nations, including China, formed the Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDC) Group, which often held positions that were different from those of AOSIS and the LDC Group. All these blocs formed part of the Group of 77 And China, the largest coalition during most of the negotiations.

Developed country blocs included the Environmental Integrity Group, the European Union (EU) and the Umbrella Group of non-EU developed and emerging economies.

The number of actors involved — and the wide scope of issues discussed — made the UNFCCC negotiations extremely complex. Coalitions and the structure of the negotiation sessions were two ways of simplifying the complexity, through convergence and compromise. Forums such as the Cartagena

Dialogue sought to transcend the divide between developing and developed countries. Its members — which included the EU and several LDCs and small islands states — came together outside the UNFCCC to discuss how to make progress in the negotiations. At the same time, many countries, including China, France, the Marshall Islands and the US, were engaged in bilateral negotiations to gain leverage or build consensus for an agreement. In the end, these efforts paid off with the approval of the Paris Agreement in December 2015.

2.2 IIED's support to the LDC Group

The LDC Group includes the 47 countries whose poverty, economic vulnerability and lack of relevant capacity to respond effectively makes them most vulnerable to climate change. While global decisions on climate change policies can have significant impact on them, LDCs' ability to influence or take part in decision making is limited. This is partly because LDC negotiators lack the resources and often the technical expertise they need to effectively represent their countries in global decision making.

IIED has supported the LDC Group since it was created in 2001, providing demand-led legal, technical and strategic advice in negotiations, building the group's expertise in key topics through research and analysis and building its capacity to represent its members' interests in the negotiations. IIED has organised capacity-building workshops, convened learning spaces, provided logistical and administrative support to selected LDC delegates, helped the group establish an online presence and provided communications-related advice.

At the beginning of 2011, it launched a new phase of this work to ensure that the comprehensive UNFCCC agreement at COP 21 endorsed and integrated LDC positions and interests. This included providing direct, demand-led support to the group's chair, coordinators and core team members. As well as offering logistical support, IIED produced briefing papers and talking points on the issues under discussion and the negotiation process itself. From 2012, it also supported the organisation of annual strategy meetings and regularly accompanied key group officials to ADP and COP sessions.

3

Evaluation methodology

This evaluation focused on learning and its overall goal was to assess the impact of IIED's work with the LDC Group between 2011 and 2015. In particular, IIED wanted to better define what kind of impact its work had contributed to over the long term and understand how this contribution came about.

IIED was also interested to learn about applying contribution tracing, a relatively new methodology the potential of which for assessing social change and advocacy programmes is still being explored.

This evaluation used contribution tracing to assess the evidence and test the chosen contribution claims by:

- Extrapolating the theory of change behind IIED's intervention
- Defining a series of contribution claims specific to IIED's efforts around COP 21 — my hypothesis of causal inference
- Gathering the necessary evidence, and
- Testing and validating these claims.

I collected my primary data between November and December 2017 in 15 interviews with IIED and partner organisation staff, LDC Group delegates, a non-LDC negotiator and other experts. The latter included UNFCCC insiders who were external to the LDC Group and IIED but had specific knowledge about the positions and efforts of different negotiation blocs and coalitions.

I collected secondary data from a review of nearly 120 documentary sources, including:

- IIED project reports, briefs, memos and talking points, meeting reports and other internal communications

- Official LDC Group documents: press releases, statements, speeches and official submissions to the UNFCCC
- Statements and reports from other negotiating groups or countries
- Official UNFCCC documents: draft agreements, meeting reports and issue papers prepared for ADP and COP sessions
- Reports and publications from think tanks and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working on climate change, and
- Articles, exposés and analyses published in major and specialised media outlets.

These data are rich and specific. Most of the UNFCCC process leading up to COP 21 has been extremely well documented through official UNFCCC records and regular, detailed updates on the negotiations from NGOs, think tanks and specialised news agencies. There is also a wide amount of academic literature on some issues, such as loss and damage. It is rare for researchers to have access to such a large quantity and high quality of documentation for evaluations like this one. It was an opportunity to gather strong evidence and allowed for an uncommon level of analysis.

Although there were a number of challenges to this evaluation, I do not believe they have affected the quality of my findings.

Scope: Methodologically, I defined IIED's main claim in somewhat broad terms. Although this reflected IIED's theory of change, it created a problem of scope, as this evaluation could not possibly focus on all the issues negotiated in the lead-up to Paris. I was able to partially mitigate this by identifying

sub-components of the main claim and making a small adjustment mid-course to focus on three particular issues. But my choice was arbitrary, and focusing on other issues might have led to different conclusions.

Unusual year: 2015 was an exceptional year, with an intense schedule of official sessions, bilateral meetings and informal gatherings — and accompanying rise in media attention — that differed from previous years.

The extraordinary nature of this year might make my findings less reflective of what IIED and the LDC Group would normally be able to achieve.

Key informants: Some key informants were not available for interview. In particular, it would have been helpful to gather insight from more negotiators from non-LDC countries.

WHAT IS CONTRIBUTION TRACING?

Contribution tracing is a rigorous, theory-based evaluation approach that combines methods and tools from contribution analysis and process tracing.

Researchers start with a theory of change that is sufficiently well designed to allow them to identify specific logical sequences that link actions to outcomes. After choosing a significant outcome, observed in reality, they develop a hypothesis to explain how the given intervention might have led to the observed change.

Next, they apply contribution analysis tools to build a contribution story — a first, more complete narrative — and assess this against all available evidence to reduce uncertainty about the contribution of the given intervention to that outcome.

To further reduce uncertainty and increase confidence in claiming contribution, the evaluation approach then relies on process tracing tools. Process tracing uses evidence within a particular case to adjudicate between alternative possible explanations. This method uses specific contribution claims to identify the presumed causal mechanism from agent to action to outcome. A rigorous use of process tracing requires defining a main claim related to the role of the intervention and reflecting the theory of change behind it, and one or more alternative claims that could also explain the observed outcome. Researchers run the following tests, each more demanding than the one before, to assess the probative value of collected evidence:

- The straw-in-the-wind test assesses whether a claim is relevant, but cannot confirm or disconfirm it
- The hoop test assesses whether the evidence is necessary to accept a claim, but cannot by itself confirm it
- The smoking gun test assesses whether the evidence is sufficient to accept a claim, but cannot by itself reject other claims, and
- The doubly decisive test has the highest probative value, as any evidence that passes this test confirms a claim and rules out all others.

By combining elements from these two approaches, contribution tracing allows for the development of extremely granular explanations, not just about whether and how a specific intervention contributed to an outcome, but also about the relationship between it and other initiatives that aimed to achieve the same change.

4

Findings

4.1 IIED's theory of change

In a participatory workshop in October 2017, I worked with IIED staff to elaborate the theory of change behind IIED initiative and contribution claims. Until this first step of the evaluation, the theory of change had remained largely implicit.

This process of extrapolating the theory of change provided an opportunity to flesh out, in greater detail, the outcomes IIED was pursuing, how they related to each other and the assumptions underlying these efforts. Figure 1 is a visual overview of IIED's theory of change since 2011.

IIED's work with the LDC Group pursued three main strategies, each with its own intermediate and long-term outcomes:

Strategy A: Actively engaging the LDC Group.

IIED ran training workshops and provided technical, administrative and financial support to increase coordination within the group and improve engagement by LDC delegates in official meetings, including through a critical mass of active members.

Strategy B: Role of the chair. Through activities such as technical assistance, administrative support and accompaniment, IIED sought to improve institutional memory for incoming chairs, increase the profile and reputation of the role and strengthen the chair's relationships with other negotiators to get political endorsements for the group's positions.

Strategy C: Increasing media visibility. By establishing an online presence for the group, publishing reports and blog articles and offering media advice, IIED aimed to clarify LDC positions, increase the group's media presence and contribute to greater public pressure for an agreement that endorsed LDCs' interests.

Extrapolating the theory of change identified a number of key assumptions. At activity and intermediate outcome level, these included that:

- Group members consistently presented LDC positions and priorities on the basis of IIED briefs and talking points
- The chair supported IIED's assistance, and
- Cohesion and coordination within the group would translate into greater leverage within the negotiations.

At the long-term outcome level, IIED assumed that the chair had the institutional power to gain the endorsements of other groups and that increased media attention to LDC positions would have translated into increased public pressure.

Although we could have unpacked these assumptions in greater detail, the process of defining the theory of change revealed a strong design to IIED's initiative and a thorough understanding of the context.

4.2 The contribution claims

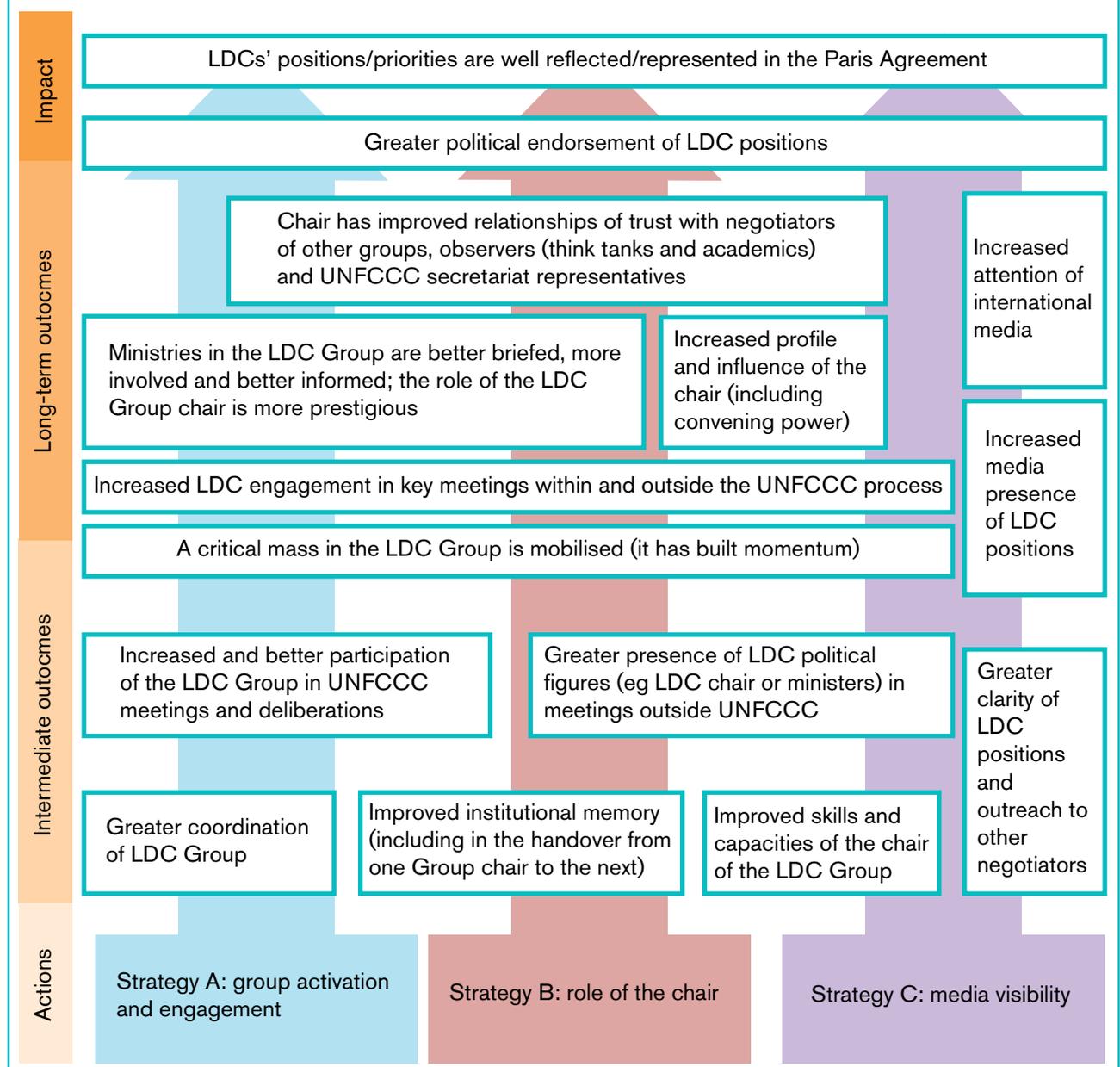
The second step for this evaluation, in line with the requirements of contribution tracing, was defining IIED's contribution claims.

The main contribution claim was that IIED's support to the LDC Group — and the LDC chair in particular — led to greater endorsement and formal acceptance of LDC positions and priorities in the Paris Agreement. This claim reflects the logic behind IIED's initiative, as described in the theory of change.

IIED then disassembled the main claim into the following six sub-components, which, when taken together, are necessary and sufficient for the claim to be true:

1. Greater coordination of the LDC Group, spurred by IIED support, led to increased and better participation of the LDC Group.
2. IIED support to the LDC Group chairs increased their capabilities to play a more prominent role in the negotiations.

Figure 1. The theory of change behind IIED's LDC Group work since 2011.



3. IIED funding and logistical support led to increased engagement by LDC Group members in key meetings within and outside the UNFCCC.

4. The chair's increased profile brought greater political endorsement for LDC common positions and priorities, both internally and externally.

5. Joint IIED–LDC Group efforts led to greater clarity on LDC positions and priorities and outreach to other negotiators.

6. IIED contributed to increased media presence for LDC positions and priorities.

IIED also identified the following five alternative claims that could have provided competing explanations for why the observed change took place:

1. The pressure to make a deal forced developed countries to prioritise global cooperation and move closer to LDC positions.

2. Other negotiating groups such as AOSIS pushed for the same issues as the LDC Group and had more influence in ensuring that these were endorsed and accepted in the final agreement.

3. France was committed to getting an agreement and pushed for one that accommodated the positions of all blocs, including the LDC Group.

4. Support for the LDC Group from other institutions, such as the UNFCCC, led to greater endorsement and formal acceptance of LDC positions and priorities in the final Paris Agreement.

5. China was committed to getting an agreement that accommodated the positions of developing nations, including the LDC Group.

The evaluation sought to find all available evidence to validate each of these claims and the sub-components of IIED's main claim. This involved developing a contribution story to assess the general plausibility of the claims and then applying different process tracing tests to determine the strength of collected evidence.

4.3 Contribution story

The objective of the contribution story was to allow for a first assessment of IIED's contribution to the outcome and compare this to the theory of change. The story was meant to describe whether or not it was reasonable to assume that IIED's actions contributed to the observed change. To do this, I present the story from a number of perspectives: the outcome; IIED actions; LDC Group actions; the efforts of other actors, including NGOs, working with the group; and the efforts of other negotiating blocs within the UNFCCC.

i) The outcome

Since 2011, IIED has supported the LDC Group's call that any post-Kyoto agreement should safeguard the highest possible legal rigour under international law and universal participation, include effective provisions for adaptation and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and address loss and damage from irreversible climate impacts.³

In the lead-up to Paris, and specifically towards the end of 2014, the LDC Group developed more specific demands, which included:⁴

- Recognising the specific circumstances of LDCs
- Committing to limit warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels
- Acknowledging the inextricable link between mitigation ambition, adaptation and loss and damage needs
- Giving full consideration to loss and damage, separating it from adaptation
- Five-year commitment cycles and a commitment to progression (an upward spiral of ambition)
- Developed and other countries that are able to do so committing to provide new, additional, predictable climate finance of at least US\$100 billion a year by 2020
- Grants-based finance, particularly for LDCs and primarily from public sources
- Anchoring institutions such as the LDC Legal Expert Group (LEG) and the LDC Fund in the agreement to give them permanence, and

- A balanced treatment of all elements in the agreement, including key aspects of the means of implementation such as finance, technology development and transfer, capacity building and transparency of action and support.

In the end, the Paris Agreement included many of the demands advocated by the LDC Group, in particular:

- Recognition of special LDC circumstance, chiefly in the preamble, but also in its operational elements
- Limiting temperature increases to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels (Article 2)
- The principles of progression and no-backsliding around global peaks of greenhouse gas emissions (Article 4)
- Acknowledging the link between mitigation ambition and adaptation needs and costs (Article 7)
- Loss and damage as a separate and stand-alone article, with several provisions for action (Article 8)
- Special LDC access to financial resources (Article 9), and
- A five-year cycle for global stocktaking (Article 21).

Although the Paris Agreement reflects many LDC positions, the group compromised on a number of demands to balance concessions by other blocs. For example, the success of Article 8 on loss and damage was significantly offset by the specific inclusion, in the COP decision that accompanied the agreement, that this would not involve or provide the basis for any liability or compensation.⁵ The mitigation targets are not legally binding, so the process is essentially voluntary and can be driven by countries' interests. And, although the agreement adopted a proposal to discuss scaling up global climate funds above US\$100 billion, the timescale is five years later than the LDCs had hoped.⁶

The Paris Agreement and the negotiation process could not accommodate the positions of all 197 countries. All participants had to compromise, both with other negotiators and against the prospects of additional rounds of discussions. Ultimately, the LDC Group fared well: to many extents, the Paris Agreement addressed their key demands.³

ii) IIED actions

Although IIED has supported the LDC Group since its creation in 2001, it developed a new strategy from 2011, structuring its work around three broadly defined strategies, all reflected in the theory of change. IIED's efforts grew rapidly and exponentially, and by 2015 it was working with a host of external collaborators.

IIED provided demand-led technical assistance to the group's chair and coordinators in the lead-up to

and during all official UNFCCC sessions, including those of subsidiary bodies. In 2011, it created and supported the LDC core team, a group of experienced negotiators from LDC delegations who took part in relevant LDC Group meetings and could assist the chair and coordinators as needed. The team initially had ten members, brought together by IIED. But funding constraints meant the team became more fluid in later years.

In 2012, IIED introduced the practice of holding annual strategy meetings, internal coordination and planning meetings attended by the chair, coordinators and core team members.

As well as providing group delegates with advice through hundreds of briefing papers and talking points, as officially accredited members of LDC delegations, IIED staff had access to all meetings at ADP and COP sessions and accompanied the chair and selected coordinators during those meetings. IIED also organised capacity-building workshops for junior negotiators as part of the European Capacity Building Initiative (ECBI), including pre-COP trainings between 2012 and 2015.

IIED's support for the chairs included:

- Preparing or contributing substantively to their talking points and speeches for formal negotiation sessions, public events and informal, bilateral meetings
- Managing their official schedule and email accounts
- Supporting transitions from one chair to the next, with handover notes and accompanying incoming chairs as they familiarised themselves with UNFCCC proceedings
- Facilitating coordination with other LDC Group members by supporting strategy meetings and daily coordination sessions during ADP and COP sessions, and
- Supporting their engagement outside of the UNFCCC — for example, with the Cartagena Dialogue.

Finally, IIED's activities also included working with selected group members to produce publications highlighting issues under discussion in the negotiations. It published four reports in 2015 on different topics, including compliance and gender. IIED's financial, administrative and logistical support allowed key LDC Group delegates to attend official UNFCCC meetings. Its communication efforts and media outreach activities included disseminating blog articles and press releases, organising interviews with media outlets and managing the official LDC Group website, which IIED set up in 2012.

iii) LDC Group actions

To a large extent, the efforts and activities of the LDC Group reflect the efforts by IIED, although they followed the more rigid institutional framework of the UNFCCC negotiation process, including ADP and COP sessions as well as meetings of several subsidiary bodies and committees. Although the LDC was always represented at those events, their delegates recognise that their presence and engagement were generally weaker than those of other blocs, attributing this to a lack of financial resources.

The LDC Group chair's mandate lasts two years. Three countries chaired the group between 2011 and 2015, with four individuals occupying the role:

- Pa Ousman Jarju from the Gambia (January 2011–December 2012)
- Prakash Mathema from Nepal (January 2013–October 2014)
- Ram Prasad Lamsal, also from Nepal (November–December 2014), and
- Giza Gaspar Martins from Angola (January–December 2015).

Angola's chairmanship was unconventional, handing over to the Democratic Republic of the Congo after only one year, in line with a specific agreement between the two countries.

Individual chairs brought their own approach, skills and interests to the role, ultimately reporting to the group and their own countries for their actions. They also requested different levels of support from IIED. While they all attended official UNFCCC meetings and were engaged in similar meetings from one session to the next, their engagement with actors outside the official negotiation process varied. For example, Gaspar Martins took part in more unofficial events and conducted more media interviews than his predecessors, although this was partly due to the increased political and media attention around COP 21.

Coordinators were also active, although their participation was uneven. The UNFCCC secretariat financially supported two or three LDC negotiators per national delegation to attend official sessions. While these were individuals chosen by their governments to act as official national representatives, they were not always active in the LDC Group. At the same time, active group members were not necessarily their countries' national focal points. As a result, group coordinators and core team members could not always attend official UNFCCC sessions.

Overall, the LDC Group was very active from 2011 to 2015, at official events and in internal strategy and coordination meetings. In line with its demand-led

approach, IIED supported the LDC Group officials, who attended all these events.

The group also published regular press releases, statements and its representatives' speeches at official sessions. It made regular submissions ahead of UNFCCC sessions, including to sub-bodies like the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI)⁷ and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice,⁸ highlighting perspectives on key issues under discussion.⁹

iv) Actions by other actors supporting the LDC Group

The LDC Group received assistance from a host of other organisations, including:

- Institutions officially mandated under the UNFCCC, including the LEG and the LDC Fund
- NGOs providing direct financial and/or technical assistance, including the Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN), Climate Analytics (CA), ECBI, German Watch, the Legal Response Initiative (LRI) and Oxford Climate Policy (OCP), and
- NGOs providing advocacy or indirect assistance, including the Climate Action Network (CAN), the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice, Nature Conservancy and the World Resources Institute.¹⁰

Most of these NGOs worked collaboratively and openly, relying on their specific competencies and sharing information as necessary to improve the group's effectiveness in negotiations. But there were differences in mandate and approach.

The LEG mainly provided specific assistance for developing national adaptation plans and programmes of action. The LDC Fund and CDKN acted as donors for a number of initiatives benefiting LDCs, within the negotiations and at national level.¹¹ Some NGOs offered very specific support: German Watch, for example, assisted the group only on loss and damage, OCP mainly on finance and the Mary Robinson Foundation on advocacy.

ECBI is not a formal organisation, but a consortium of NGOs including IIED, LRI and OCP that provide different types of assistance to the LDC Group. CA and LRI have similar approaches to IIED, providing technical, on-demand and real-time advice. CAN led a civil society movement to create public pressure for an agreement that was fair and ambitious.

v) Actions by other negotiating blocs and parties

The UNFCCC secretariat, coalitions, individual countries and intergovernmental advocacy groups all made a massive effort throughout 2011–2015.

The UNFCCC secretariat had the most specific remit. It was responsible for organising official negotiation sessions — including all ADP and COP, subsidiary

body and committee meetings — and for collecting and analysing intended nationally determined contributions, the concrete plans for reducing greenhouse gas emissions that all countries were asked to prepare ahead of COP 21.

Linked to the secretariat's work, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's scientific assessments underlie the climate change negotiations. Its fifth report, published in September 2014, played an important role in clarifying the risks from unchecked climate change and received strong attention in the media.

Coalitions' and individual countries' efforts were much wider and more difficult to untangle. In the lead-up to Paris, most sought to converge around common positions, a trend that represents a helpful guiding principle to analyse their efforts. Several countries and blocs came together to champion an ambitious and inclusive agreement, spending significant resources on multilateral and bilateral efforts towards this outcome. These included AOSIS and the EU, which shared many of the positions of the LDC Group.

AOSIS was particularly active on advocating for an ambitious agreement that recognised the 1.5°C target, included legally binding commitments for national greenhouse gas emissions and had clear and transparent compliance mechanisms. As well as their tireless efforts at official meetings and through the media, they sought to engage other negotiators, including those from the US.

Although the EU was equally active on pushing for ambition, their demands slightly deviated from AOSIS, including on the 1.5°C target and loss and damage. The EU pushed consistently on commitments for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, a position that was in line with its internal policies. Importantly, the EU was also a leader in defining the Sustainable Development Goals, which the United Nations adopted in September 2015. This was a process that, while running separately and in parallel to the UNFCCC negotiations, overlapped with it in many respects.

Within the EU, France played a critical role in shaping the negotiations during the last, critical session. The country, which was COP president in 2015, mobilised the full resources of its diplomatic forces well in advance of COP 21 and worked with the Peruvian and Moroccan governments (responsible for COP 20 and 22 respectively) to ensure a smooth transition between these events. Bilaterally, France promoted agreements that were partly intended to influence the positions of key countries like India.¹²

China and the US were also active players — albeit with considerably more limited objectives — and President Obama was a staunch supporter of a comprehensive agreement. Their engagement was

particularly visible in bilateral efforts, as evidenced by the agreement they signed in November 2014 to adopt ambitious greenhouse gas emission targets,¹³ which many saw as a tacit signal that both nations would lend their force to a strong agreement.¹⁴ But within the negotiations, their roles remained limited by their positions. The US was largely opposed to most blocs on key issues — including the nature of the agreement and loss and damage — and did not join any coalition until the very end of COP 21.

Although not negotiating blocs, the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) and the High Ambition Coalition (HAC) both played important roles in paving the way for the Paris Agreement. CVF was an advocacy group without official standing in UNFCCC negotiations whose 20 member countries were particularly vulnerable to climate change and included several LDC Group members. One of the most vocal and visible supporters of several key issues — including the 1.5°C target and loss and damage — CVF sought to influence public opinion and create pressure for an ambitious agreement in Paris.

The HAC revealed itself in the final days of COP 21 to support the inclusion of several unresolved issues.¹⁵ Formed by the Marshall Islands and EU six months before Paris, the coalition gathered support from more than 100 countries, including the LDC Group and, eventually, the US. The efforts of the HAC — and the Marshall Islands in particular — are often credited for generating the momentum necessary to reach the Paris Agreement.

4.4 Evidence for the main claim

In this section, we discuss evidence for the individual components of the main contribution claim: that IIED support to the LDC Group, and the LDC chair in particular, led to greater endorsement and formal acceptance of LDC positions and priorities in the Paris Agreement (see Table 1, page 26).

Component 1: Greater coordination of the LDC Group, spurred by IIED support, led to increased and better participation of the LDC Group

Multiple sources confirm that IIED provided a great deal of assistance to the LDC Group and that this was qualitatively different from its previous work. After IIED's shift in strategy in 2011, the team working with the LDC Group quickly grew to provide the logistical and technical support the group, its chair and coordinators needed. IIED focused on synthesising relevant information on key issues, analysing the status of negotiations and supporting the group's engagement

during official UNFCCC meetings by drafting briefing papers and talking points.

To evaluate this component of the claim, I reviewed more than 40 documents relating to meetings held by the chair and coordinators in 2014 and 2015, including with high-level official UNFCCC representatives and civil society networks such as CAN and Greenpeace. The documents are indicative of IIED's ongoing assistance to the LDC Group during that time.

Under the aegis of ECBI, IIED was also responsible for organising various training events for junior negotiators from LDC delegations.¹⁶ Some of these events took place right before the start of COP meetings, allowing new delegates to become acquainted with the nature and content of the negotiations and the working procedures of the LDC Group.

IIED assistance to the LDC Group was qualitatively and quantitatively different from that provided by other institutions. This is best seen in the role of the core team, the strategy meetings and relationships between key group officials and IIED team members.

All positions in the LCD group — including coordinators — are voluntary. The chair is an extra job on top of this, and IIED realised that the role was seriously under-supported. So it created a core team to support the coordinators and help share information, which acted as a link between the coordinators and chair.¹⁷ The core team was originally formed of ten individuals from LDC delegations who could provide technical expertise on specific areas of work and act as institutional memory for the group as a whole.¹⁸

Initially, IIED's financial and logistical support allowed members to meet regularly, though this has been more fluid since it had to sharply reduce funding in 2012. But the core team has continued to function as an informal body to support successive chairs and coordinators in internal and external meetings. That IIED was responsible for creating this team is evidence of how its assistance to the LDC Group was qualitatively different from other agencies' support in the same timeframe.

IIED's support in organising the group's annual strategy meetings — discussed in greater detail under Component 5 — and the special relationship between key LDC officials and IIED team members also provide evidence for its unique role. IIED staff members shadowed the chair and several coordinators during all ADP and COP sessions from 2011 to 2015. As Angola's former chair said: "I don't remember going anywhere without IIED."¹⁹

To establish whether IIED support helped improve LDC Group delegates' participation in the negotiations, I had to first understand the limitations and challenges they faced in participating to the UNFCCC process. These included:

- Delegation size: Compared to other countries and coalitions, the LDC Group's delegations are very small, often numbering no more than three dedicated negotiators. Delegations from larger countries or blocs can often send a representative to each thematic session, something the LDCs can rarely do. As a result, they find it difficult to collect and share information, which can limit the group's impact on negotiations.
- Overstretched delegates: LDC delegates are not generally assigned to cover UNFCCC negotiations full time. Instead, they have other jobs that limit the time they can spend preparing for and attending UNFCCC meetings. One LDC negotiator said: "My job description has nothing to do with climate negotiations; this is my second job."²⁰
- Lack of resources: The LDC Group has very limited financial resources to promote participation. Most of these are made available by the UNFCCC secretariat and international donors, such as the UK Department for International Development.

Starting from this baseline, I found that the participation of LDC delegates has steadily improved between 2011 and 2015. Both LDC delegates and experts agree with regards to this trend. "I think there has been a steady increase on capacity and influence on negotiations by the LDC Group ... the quality of their inputs has increased since then."²¹

One challenge under this component was that LDC Group participation was limited in quantitative terms. Multiple sources confirmed that the number of active delegates — including coordinators and other core team members — did not increase between 2011 and 2015.²² Interviewees suggested this was due to high turnover among delegates and levels of personal commitment. LDCs' national governments, which have the strongest influence on their representatives' participation in the group, also played a significant role in this.

Conclusion: Overall, the evidence I found is solid. It has strong probative value and successfully passes the hoop and smoking gun tests. This component is validated.

Component 2: IIED support to the LDC Group chairs increased their capabilities to play a more prominent role in the negotiations

Considering the capabilities of the LDC Group chairs and whether IIED support helped increase them, it is important to note that the same challenges that affected individual LDC Group delegates also applied to the role of chair. These include: gaps in technical knowledge; low familiarity with UNFCCC proceedings and the nature of climate negotiations; competing

demands for time and attention; limited logistical and administrative support; and weak communication, coordination or negotiation skills.

IIED support helped the chairs overcome some of these challenges, particularly around administrative support, familiarity with UNFCCC and communication and coordination capabilities.

I found ample evidence of IIED's administrative support, including:

- Drafting of official speeches, talking points and memos (see Component 1)
- Coordination of the chair's schedule and email account
- Management of online systems to share information between the chair and the wider LDC Group, and
- Arrangement of the travel and contributions of core team members.

IIED also helped the different chairs gain familiarity with the nature and scope of climate negotiations, mainly around transition times, by creating handover notes and working with outgoing and incoming chairs to ensure they shared all relevant information. IIED staff members accompanied the chair to all official negotiating sessions between 2011 and 2015, providing technical assistance through a vast production of briefs and talking points. They also increased the chair's capability for coordination and communication by creating the core team and managing their inputs to the chair, through written reports²³ and media advice.

Although other agencies also supported the LDC Group during this time (see Section 4.3), CA was the only one providing support at a level comparable to IIED.²⁴ CA staff participated in the same events as IIED, giving the LDC Group and chair similar real-time, technical advice on climate issues and negotiations. But I found that IIED's assistance was unique on two levels. First, CA channelled some of their contributions through arrangements, such as strategy meetings, that IIED had devised and managed. Second, IIED team leader Achala Abeyasinghe was a widely recognised advisor to the Group in climate negotiations,²⁵ with LDC negotiators indicating that she enjoyed a level of trust and legitimacy that hardly anyone else matched.²⁶

Multiple sources confirmed that IIED support enabled the chair to play a more prominent (and effective) role in the negotiations, particularly during COP21. The chair was responsible for pushing the LDC Group's positions, representing the group in plenaries and the main bilateral meetings, sharing relevant information and leading coordination meetings during ADP and COP sessions.

By all accounts, Gaspar Martins, chair in 2015, effectively managed a large portfolio of issues and

huge expectations from within and outside the group while successfully navigating the complex diplomatic landscape of the climate negotiations. In 2015, he was recognised as one of the key negotiators in the lead up to Paris,²⁷ and the experts I interviewed agreed that his role had crucially contributed to the success of the LDC Group.²⁸ When the HAC was announced, he was one of the key people quoted in the media.¹⁵

This said, it is impossible to credit Gaspar Martins alone for the work he did as chair. It is worth noting that until he took on the role at the beginning of 2015, he had participated in the negotiations sessions regularly on behalf of his country but had been less active in the group. Logically, it would have been impossible for him to gain a strong reputation and profile as a spokesperson for LDCs before Paris. So the effective role he played must have also been linked to — and would have arguably been unlikely without — the authority that came with holding the LDC Group chair, which appears to have increased in the years before COP 21. Several sources, including LDC delegates, negotiators and experts, have confirmed this.

Former LDC Group chair Pa Ousman Jarju, who took part in COP 21 as the Gambia's Environment Minister, was another influential figure at the negotiations. He was one of 14 facilitators chosen by COP president Laurent Fabius to assist the negotiations and ensure a successful outcome.²⁹ Jarju also worked closely with the LDC Group and chair throughout COP 21, becoming in many sessions the official spokesperson for LDCs. IIED had worked with Jarju since before 2011. After he ended his mandate as the LDC Group chair in 2012, he was the Gambia's Special Climate Envoy in 2013 and then Environment Minister.³⁰ The progressive nature of his leadership positions, coupled with his continued engagement with IIED and the LDC chairs up to COP 21, are indicative of a relationship that is unique to IIED's support of the LDC Group and to the outcomes the group achieved in Paris.

But the evidence also uncovered some limitations. IIED did not assess the capabilities of any of the chairs it supported, which could have informed tailored support and training activities to further enhance skills particular to holding the chairmanship (e.g. for engaging with media). And the nature of the support IIED provided each chair varied, both during and after their mandate. So, although IIED supported Jarju long after his chairmanship per his request, it did not do the same with the chairs from Nepal and Angola. This suggests that each chair's profile, pre-existing capabilities and the support they received from their own government were important factors for the success of IIED's efforts under this component.

Finally, the chair was always the LDC Group's representative, but not its champion: while the chair's

efforts were necessary to advance the LDCs' positions, they were not always sufficient. At pivotal moments, such as COP 21, having a champion was critical to reaching success. But to be effective, champions needed the full support of their national governments, to have a high-level, public profile and to be able to move beyond the institutional framework of UNFCCC negotiations. Not all these conditions applied to the LDC Group's chairs up to and including 2015.

Conclusion: Overall, these challenges are not enough to weaken the evidence I collected, which passes both the hoop and smoking gun tests. This component is therefore validated.

Component 3: IIED funding and logistical support led to increased engagement by LDC Group members in key meetings within and outside the UNFCCC

I have already discussed under Component 1 how LDC delegations faced greater restrictions and limitations than other blocs when it came to participating in UNFCCC negotiations. Delegation size was a particular challenge that meant LDCs could only bring two or three dedicated negotiators to most official sessions, mainly funded by the UNFCCC secretariat. The low staff numbers limited their participation when sessions took place in parallel, which is common at the COPs. As one LDC negotiator explained, "Normally, we are three [delegates] at COPs; we have limited experience [and] we are not specifically involved in the negotiations. We want to capture as much as possible, [but] we can't focus."³¹

LDCs faced even greater limitations outside official sessions, where resources for travel were scarcer still. This meant that under normal circumstances, LDCs did not have the opportunity to hold internal meetings to prepare for official events.

In this context, the engagement of LDC Group members increased over the period of IIED support. I have already discussed much of the evidence for this under Component 1. But it is important to discuss two other channels of engagement that are beyond the core team members and coordinators: IIED co-authoring and publishing several research papers with LDC Group members on key issues for climate negotiations³² and IIED's financial and logistical support to LDC delegates who would not otherwise have been able to attend official meetings. These individuals included core team members and coordinators such as the Gambia's Sidat Yaffa, Nepal's Batu Uprety, Bangladesh's Hafij Khan and Ethiopia's Gebru Jember Endalew, and junior negotiators such as the Gambia's Isatou Camara and Malawi's Catherine Musa Katombo. This support and participation increased the group's ability to engage in

ADP and COP sessions — for example, Yaffa was able to monitor discussions around agriculture and Khan on loss and damage. IIED also asked all the negotiators who received financial support to write reports of the sessions they attended and share these with the chair.³³

This support allowed the group to work more effectively, not just by having more delegates attend relevant UNFCCC sessions, but also by ensuring that those who attended had a high level of knowledge and commitment. IIED selected the negotiators to support on the basis of perceived commitment and performance, not on politics or representation. According to one core team member IIED supported to attend subsidiary body and COP meetings between 2013 and 2015, “IIED support has been instrumental in enhancing capacity of the LDC negotiators to negotiate on behalf of the LDCs on different thematic areas or agenda items, and in building capacity of the new government-nominated delegates in understanding issues under negotiation, and on ways how to put forward LDC issues in contact group or informals.”³⁴

The main challenge under this component was that the number of delegates IIED supported varied from year to year and from official event to official event. This was primarily due to funding restrictions, but also because national governments sometimes asked different delegates to represent them at the negotiations.

Conclusion: Despite the challenges, the evidence remains extremely strong and passes the hoop, smoking gun and arguably even the doubly decisive tests.

Component 4: The chair’s increased profile brought greater political endorsement for LDC common positions and priorities, both internally and externally

This was a critical component. Unlike Components 1–3, this one was specifically linked to IIED’s longer-term outcome of influencing other negotiators’ endorsement and acceptance of LDC positions and priorities. But I found it difficult to find specific supporting evidence for the main contribution claim and Component 4 because both were broadly stated.

For this reason, I decided to focus on three issues, all core to the LDC Group’s demands in the lead-up to COP 21: recognition of the special situation of LDCs; setting the overall target for global temperature increase to 1.5°C or below; and including loss and damage as a standalone article. Although there was progress in shaping a consensus prior to Paris on all three issues, significant items of contention remained around all of them and as such a deal was far from a foregone conclusion.

i) Recognition of the special situation of LDCs

The evidence suggests that the LDC chair’s role was crucial for achieving the desired outcome. And the fact that the LDC Group acted largely outside of formal coalitions — albeit with the strong support of key blocs such as the EU — makes success arguably attributable to the group specifically.

The main point of contention relates to which groups of countries deserved to be referenced specifically in the agreement. LDCs were adamant that they faced special conditions in adapting and responding to climate change and had the advantage of having already received special recognition under Article 4.9 of the UNFCCC.³⁵ But other groups — including the AGN, AOSIS and Latin America — also wanted special recognition.²⁶ Parties were so insistent about their own claims for recognition that the draft text was amended several times throughout 2015.

The LDC Group’s position remained consistently clear, constructive and firm, as reflected in this talking point from a meeting between the LDC chair and the ADP co-chairs in October 2015: “As you know, the special situations of LDCs goes beyond the question of vulnerability to climate change — LDCs must be given standalone special recognition — like in Article 4.9. We have no problem acknowledging the vulnerability of other countries/groups of countries, but this must not be mixed up with special situations of LDCs, which goes beyond vulnerability to climate change.”³⁶

In the end, although it underwent several iterations even in the last week of negotiations, the specific reference to LDCs was included in the Paris Agreement. It was the only group referenced in the preamble. This success was largely due to their insistence and cohesion, as expressed in the role and interventions of LDC chair, Gaspar Martins.

ii) The 1.5°C target

The evidence suggests that, while the LDC Group played a necessary role in setting the overall target for global temperature increase to 1.5°C, other actors were just as necessary and at times more effective in securing the outcome. Ultimately, the issue was resolved by the creation of the HAC, a coalition that overcame deep divisions between powerful countries and blocs. The LDC Group was one of the HAC’s key members, but not a vocal one. Media visibility and public pressure were also critical, but the LDC Group played a more limited role in this.

The agreement had to include a specific temperature target objective that countries could strive for through their mitigation and adaptation efforts. The point of contention was the level at which to set it. A level of consensus had emerged around 2°C since 2009, but in the lead-up to Paris, a new target began taking shape to

limit the global temperature increase to 1.5°C. In official negotiations, people saw AOSIS as the force behind this demand.²⁸ Although the LDC Group picked up on this target later than others,³¹ it became a key demand they consistently included in statements. Strong opposition to recognising the 1.5°C target remained, even at the onset of COP 21, specifically from India, China, the LMDC Group and Australia and Canada. The role of the US remained ambiguous. The lack of agreement between key countries is reflected in the agreement's final drafts.

The inclusion of the 1.5°C target represented a landmark achievement for the LDC Group. But multiple sources indicate that the breakthrough came in great part thanks to the intervention of the advocacy group CVF and HAC.²⁸

CVF statements in 2015 were firm on building international support for the new target. Because they often came from high-level representatives — including heads of state³⁷ — these statements attracted a lot of attention from the media and other countries, enabling CVF to influence UNFCCC parties.³⁸ As the CVF had no formal standing in the negotiations, AOSIS and the LDC Group both championed its positions in the UNFCCC.

But even so, agreement on the 1.5°C target issue remained uncertain at the start of the second week of COP 21. This changed when the HAC revealed itself on 8 December 2015. This group of more than 100 developed and developing countries had converged around four key issues and demanded that the agreement at Paris:

- Be legally binding
- Have a clear, long-term goal on global warming in line with scientific advice
- Introduce a mechanism for reviewing countries' emissions commitments every five years, and
- Create a unified system for tracking countries' progress on meeting their carbon goals.¹⁵

The HAC was an informal coalition with a core group of 15 countries including Angola and the Gambia, led by the EU and the Marshall Islands.³⁹ Once declared, the HAC immediately became the strongest coalition in relation to those four key issues. But its position on a long-term goal was not clear at that point, and while some have associated this group's efforts with the 1.5°C target, this was not necessarily the case. The evidence suggests instead that AOSIS and the LDC Group sought to use the HAC to push for 1.5°C and that the role of the Marshall Islands' foreign minister, Tony de Brum, was particularly important. But the HAC never endorsed this position officially,^{15,39} and had certainly not done so by the time the US joined it. The US's decision to join represented more of a

convergence from committing to a target of below 2°C to recognising the 1.5°C.⁴⁰ Endorsement did eventually come, but only with the final draft of the agreement, released on 10 December 2015.

So, although the HAC played a crucial role in reaching agreement on this issue, its emergence did not eliminate the need for further negotiations, among HAC members and between them and opposing blocs.

As such, the LDC Group's presence was necessary: together with AOSIS, it lent additional strength to the positions of blocs and countries such as the EU and France that wanted to support them. As one analyst said:

“Ultimately, the coalition allowed a wide spectrum of developed and developing countries to advocate similar priorities together in the negotiating rooms and publicly in the media. This helped the French presidency propose a series of draft texts that maintained the ambitious end of the spectrum on a number of important political issues, which were ultimately included in the agreement. These included a reference to a 1.5°C warming limit as part of the long-term temperature goal.”⁴¹

At the same time, there were limits to the contribution that the LDC Group made to the efforts around this position. The group was not particularly vocal in the CVF or the HAC⁴² and the champions for this issue did not come from LDCs. Finally, while the issue received a high level of media attention, the LDC Group did not appear to have contributed significantly to this outreach, nor to have benefitted from the visibility it generated.

iii) Loss and damage

Loss and damage was one of the most contentious issues in the lead-up to and during COP 21, with some countries still advocating its inclusion under adaptation — rather than as an issue in its own right — as late as 9 December.⁴³ In the end, the LDC Group, AOSIS and AGN position was endorsed: loss and damage was included as a separate article. And, although this was compensated by specific text limiting liability and compensation,⁵ its inclusion was seen as a landmark success. The LDC Group's contribution to this result — and IIED support to them around this issue — were effective and unique.

The evidence suggests that, as well as being necessary to the loss and damage outcome, the LDC Group's role was significantly greater than other actors'. The group's distinct voice on loss and damage, coupled with the effectiveness of its efforts and cohesion, allowed it to play a leading role in influencing negotiations. There is also evidence that IIED support was critical for achieving this outcome.

Loss and damage has divided developed and developing countries throughout the post-Kyoto period. Originally championed by AOSIS in the late 1990s,

by 2010 most developing countries — including the AGN and the G77 and China — had lent their support to treating loss and damage as a separate issue from adaptation. The fiercest opposition came from the US, historically against acknowledging loss and damage for fear that it would pave the way for liability and compensation claims against developed countries. Other developed countries — including Australia, Canada and to some extent the EU — shared that position.

After 2010, developing countries started to push for a proposal to create a specifically dedicated mechanism for loss and damage. This was adopted at COP 19, in 2013, when UNFCCC parties established the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damages. This was surprising, given the contentiousness around the issue. Arguably, it came about partly to appease its supporters and pave the way to smoother negotiations in 2014–2015.³⁰

The LDC Group's engagement on loss and damage increased systematically over the years and by 2014, the group had adopted it as a flagship issue.³ Its position, aligned with AOSIS's, was that the agreement should give full consideration to loss and damage as a separate issue from adaptation.

IIED's efforts also increased at the same time. In 2011, IIED launched a two-year project aimed at enhancing the understanding of — and approaches to address — loss and damage among stakeholders in Bangladesh.⁴⁴ This led to a series of publications in 2013 that honed IIED's language and approach to the issue. IIED's former technical advisor to the LDC Group, Saleemul Huq, directed this project and co-authored a technical paper on loss and damage to support the LDC Group, which represented a departure from AOSIS's proposals.⁴⁵

Academic scholars have also noted this progression:

“In the lead-up to COP 18 in Doha [in 2012], a number of parties from the LDC group participated in an extensive set of expert group meetings and regional workshops in conjunction with the work program on loss and damage, as well as in a series of MCII workshops. They moved from a position of limited interest and engagement with the idea of loss and damage to pushing actively for an international mechanism beyond the adaptation and mitigation tracks. This can be partially explained by an effort to broaden the relevance of the loss-and-damage frame beyond the idea of sea-level rise to include more focus on, for instance, climate change-related desertification and the melting of glaciers, as well as extreme weather events. An increase in funding and support — for example, the establishment in 2009 of the pro bono Legal Response Initiative by WWF-UK and Oxfam GB, which provides legal support to LDCs during

the negotiations — also helps explain their growing engagement with the issue.”⁴⁶

But the information I collected through this evaluation leads me to a different conclusion. Unlike other agencies supporting the LDC Group on this issue, IIED were actively supporting the engagement of LDC delegates within and outside the UNFCCC. The evolution of the group's position on loss and damage matches IIED's increased level of engagement when IIED staff members were contributing key advice.

Two more points highlight the role IIED played. First, experts often attribute success on loss and damage to the mobilisation of civil society through specialised networks like CAN. In the lead-up to Paris, these networks relied on the LDC Group when working on loss and damage more than on other groups.⁴⁷

Second, a number of high-level bilateral meetings took place during the last days of negotiations in Paris, when there was no agreement on several issues. LDC Group chair Gaspar Martins, IIED's Achala Abeysinghe and key delegates from LDCs, including Tuvalu, played important advisory roles in these.²²

Informants I interviewed for the evaluation — including LDC negotiators and experts — agreed that the LDC chair played a crucial role in obtaining political endorsement for LDC positions. My analysis of the negotiations around the three chosen issues in the lead-up to and during COP 21 also found that the chair's role and profile were necessary to ensure that the LDC positions were heard in official negotiation sessions on all three. While there were other visible advocates — including some coordinators and Minister Jarju — the chair was the most visible face of the LDC Group and the person entrusted to make all statements in official sessions. All sources agreed that Gaspar Martins did this effectively. The group's success in getting LDC recognition in the Paris Agreement is most directly linked to him. No other group was advocating for this and he was the person within the group who most pushed this demand.

The chair's contribution on loss and damage was more significant than on the 1.5°C target, where it appears that his contribution, while necessary, was not enough despite IIED's support. This could be because efforts around the 1.5°C target took place both inside and outside of formal negotiations, whereas efforts around loss and damage more focused on the negotiations. As a result, he was able to play a more critical role and effectively leverage the LDC's Group's main strengths: its cohesion and moral standing.

The main challenge under this component is methodological rather than evidence-based. If the evaluation had focused on three other issues, the evidence of LDC Group and IIED contributions might have been weaker. Ultimately, in complex

negotiation settings like the UNFCCC, outcomes vary by issue, as my analysis confirms. So, to increase its effectiveness in the future, IIED could develop issue-by-issue strategy.

Another shortcoming was the gap in capacity within the LDC Group, which IIED's initiative did not adequately address. This includes the role of champions and the number of active LDC delegates. Larger delegations would have allowed the group to be more present and visible.

Conclusion: The evidence for this component is very strong and passes both the hoop and smoking gun tests. The evidence of how the LDC Group influenced the Paris Agreement with specific reference to LDCs' situations also passes the doubly decisive test, because it was unique to the group. Overall, this component is validated.

Component 5: Joint IIED–LDC Group efforts led to greater clarity on LDC positions and priorities and outreach to other negotiators

On top of the evidence I already discussed under Component 1, I found that multiple sources indicate that the annual strategy meetings were significantly responsible for increasing the clarity of LDC Group positions. Co-organised by IIED and the LDC Group chair, these meetings were instrumental in allowing key group officials to discuss and agree on common positions.

Four strategy meetings took place between 2012 and 2015 — in Dhaka (2012), Kathmandu (2013) and Bonn (2014, 2015) — and there were ad hoc strategy meetings during official UNFCCC sessions, such as ADP 2–5 in June 2014. Given the constraints many delegates faced, these meetings were a valuable opportunity for lead negotiators from the group to convene and prepare.

The meetings resulted in statements that highlighted the LDC Group's vision, priorities and positions, such as the press release highlighting the group's intention to become a leader in climate negotiations after the March 2013 strategy meeting.⁴⁸ As work towards COP 21 progressed, in 2014 and 2015, the group continued to publish statements and press releases on the status of the negotiations, clearly indicating its alignment and disagreement with the positions of other blocs.

The strategy meetings were also an opportunity to bring in external experts. The 2015 meeting, for example, was preceded by an exchange between LDC delegates and experts from leading think tanks working on climate change, including Smita Nakhoda from the Overseas Development Institute, Yamide Dagnet from the World Resources Institute and Sven Harmeling

from CARE International.⁴⁹ Such interactions helped the group clarify key issues, develop clearer positions and forge new relationships to support its work. For example, following her presentation, the LDC Group invited Dagnet to join them in Paris, where she provided technical advice to the coordinators working on capacity building.

In an effort to increase clarity over positions, IIED supported the drafting and dissemination of one briefing paper and three reports (under the LDC Paper Series).^{32,50,51,52}

Although the documents I reviewed indicate an overall progression in the clarity of LDC positions in the lead up to COP 21, progression varied by issue. On capacity building, one expert noted:

“In the run up to Paris, there was a lot of frustration and LDCs and developed countries were really at odds, and the LDC Group was really exasperated that this would end up in business as usual. So I intervened to try and help them to unpack the argument — instead of keeping the ‘ask’ general, [I advised to] focus on what it means to move away from business as usual. Why do you want a committee?, for example. This was giving them some ammunition and by the time the COP came around, they had a stronger position.”¹⁴⁷

Another important element that determined the quality of LDC positions was the number of LDC Group submissions to the UNFCCC, which increased significantly after 2011. Records on the group's website indicate that these ranged between 14 and 16 a year in 2012, 2013 and 2014, dipping to five in 2015 when the focus was on taking part in the negotiations, and 2016, then rising up to 19 in 2016.⁵³ This level of engagement was not the norm before 2011. For comparison, and looking at the SBI specifically, which has easily accessible pre-2012 records, the group made no submissions for SBI34 in June 2011, two each for SBI35–37 in December 2011, May and November 2012 and four for SBI38 (June 2013).⁵⁴

Evidence for outreach to other negotiators is less clear. IIED supported Jarju, then special climate envoy from the Gambia, during his visit to China in 2014 and later when he hosted a meeting of the Cartagena Dialogue as the Gambia's Environment Minister. But in general, the LDC Group appears to have met the same negotiators without actively trying to reach out to new ones. An analysis of bilateral meetings between 2013 and 2015, including in Paris, shows that group representatives regularly met with representatives from the EU, UK, US and the Nordic countries and less regularly with AILAC, China, the G77 and the LMDC Group. They met only once with representatives from the AGN and AOSIS and I found no evidence of official meetings with other blocs or countries, including Brazil and India.⁵⁵

LDC participation in strategy meetings was curtailed by available funding, which varied between 2011 and 2015. These meetings also only featured LDC Group officials invited by the chair in collaboration with IIED and did not include other LDC delegates, such as national focal points or ministers.

Conclusion: In spite of these challenges, the evidence remains generally strong and passes multiple hoop tests. Overall, this component it validated.

Component 6: IIED contributed to increased media presence for LDCs positions and priorities

IIED clearly supported media engagement by the LDC Group in general and the chair in particular. This included providing a media officer who supported the team at the end of 2014 and throughout 2015, coordinating outreach activities, providing communication advice, drafting official group press releases and conducting some capacity building, particularly around social media.

IIED’s communication and media outreach support was unique. As well as managing the LDC Group’s website and updating it throughout the year, IIED published the LDC Paper Series in 2015, wrote several blog articles for its own website and coordinated the group’s spokespeople at COP 20 and COP 21.⁵⁶

There is concrete evidence that media attention towards LDCs and their positions increased in the lead-up to Paris. Figure 2 shows the media monitoring data IIED collected in 2014.⁵⁷

Media attention increased further in 2015, culminating in COP 21. Anticipating a high volume of requests from the media, IIED increased the resources it dedicated to media work:

“IIED and CDKN worked together to provide a dedicated press and public communications function at the Paris negotiations, the first time this has been undertaken. Media outreach mirrored diplomatic aims of the group, and worked primarily with the chair.”⁵⁷

The result of these efforts was an impressive rise in media coverage, with 290 media items in COP 21, compared to 38 in COP 20.⁵⁷ All the LDC delegates

and key experts I interviewed for the evaluation also confirmed that media attention towards LDCs increased in the lead-up to Paris.

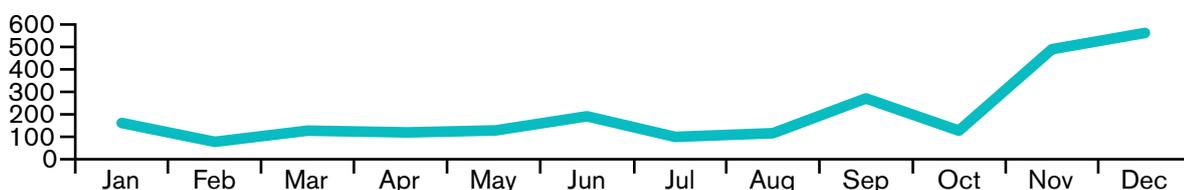
This said, the evidence on whether the LDCs reached a critical mass of visibility and media attention is weak. The evaluation sought evidence of relative as well as absolute increases. A key element of IIED’s strategy was elevating the LDC Group’s profile in the public domain compared to other groups. But interviewed experts tended to agree that, while LDCs got more media attention, the visibility of the group’s profile and negotiating positions was no greater than other blocs. Coverage of the climate change negotiations increased exponentially from 2014, reaching its peak in Paris and other blocs put equal, if not greater, efforts into communications and media outreach than the LDC Group. For example, AOSIS were much more visible than the LDC Group as champion of several issues, including the 1.5°C target.

The CVF and HAC also obtained greater visibility. The former was better supported by various coalitions of NGOs,⁴⁷ while the latter invested more in media engagement. “Although not interfering in the actual negotiation, the amalgamation of over one hundred long-time separated developing and developed countries paved the way for the agreement. With a savvy strategy, the HAC attracted vast media attention and put pressure on the more reluctant forces.”⁵⁸

But as neither was a negotiating bloc, a direct comparison between their and the LDC Group’s media record is neither useful nor fair. That said, it is important to note that several countries used the two groups’ efforts to gain leverage on key issues within the official negotiation process, including the Marshall Islands and the US in the case of HAC, and the Philippines for CVF. The LDC Group was much less proactive in this regard.

The LDC Group’s efforts on communication appear to have been driven more by opportunity than strategy. For example, although IIED helped the group issue a total of 12 press releases in the last quarter of 2015, when COP 21 took place, that number did not exceed three in previous quarters. Ultimately, IIED did not invest enough resources in this, which led to critical gaps in responding to opportunities during COP 21.

Figure 2. Media mentions of “LDCs” plus “climate change” (2014).



Conclusion: While the evidence I collected passes the hoop test, it does not pass the smoking gun test. For this reason, the component cannot be validated.

4.5 Evidence for the alternative claims

Alternative claim 1: The pressure to make a deal forced developed countries to prioritise global cooperation and move closer to LDC positions

One of the narratives in the lead-up to Paris was that the agreement was necessary to avoid the embarrassment that resulted from countries failing to reach agreement at COP 15 in Copenhagen.⁵⁹ The public fallout from that outcome was indeed large and, as negotiations restarted in 2011 and progressed towards Paris, it catalysed into a growing sense of pressure from civil society networks and movements and the media to reach a comprehensive deal and avoid 'another Copenhagen'. Some experts also indicated that UNFCCC parties felt the same, as reflected in the participation of a record number of heads of state in COP 21.⁴²

But the evidence supporting this claim ends there. As I discussed under the main contribution claim, a close analysis of the negotiations shows that strong disagreements existed up to the last day of the Paris negotiations, which made the deal far from certain. Countries held on to their right to opt out throughout the negotiation process and Nicaragua ultimately did.⁶⁰ And, although this does not negate the contribution that pressure had on getting a final agreement, it does suggest that the agreement was less a result of what happened in Copenhagen than of traditional coalition-building and bargaining.

Conclusion: While the evidence for this claim might pass the hoop test, it does not pass the smoking gun test. So this claim cannot be considered valid.

Alternative claim 2: AOSIS pushed for the same issues as the LDC group and had more influence in ensuring that these were endorsed and accepted in the final agreement

AOSIS and the LDC Group shared many key positions, including on the 1.5°C target and loss and damage. Historically, AOSIS is the recognised force on both those issues and it had the most vocal champion — Tony de Brum — during the critical Paris negotiations. AOSIS also made more high-level outreach efforts to other negotiators than the LDC Group did. In particular, some have credited the

meeting between President Obama and the leaders of the Pacific Island Forum on 1 December 2015 as having promoted convergence of the US position towards the 1.5°C target.⁶¹

From 2011 to 2015, AOSIS remained the moral voice on climate change and its support for key demands was necessary to achieve the outcome. At the same time, there are indications that in 2015 AOSIS was not the leader it had been in the past.²⁸ I have already discussed how the LDC Group profile had increased on some issues, such as loss and damage. AOSIS succeeded in obtaining recognition for its member countries' conditions under several articles, but not in the preamble. This suggests that either the group was less strong in 2015 than it had been in previous years or that it chose to make different compromises to advance its positions, which resulted in a lower level of engagement on fronts where the LDC Group stood firmer.

Conclusion: Most of the evidence I collected to support the LDC Group's contributions could also support AOSIS' contributions. In other words, this claim would pass several hoop tests and, in the case of the 1.5°C target, the smoking gun test. The evidence suggests a slightly more significant contribution by the LDC Group on the other two issues, but ultimately, it is impossible to separate the success of the two groups in the Paris Agreement and believe it likely to have been impossible without both of them. The claim is validated.

Alternative claim 3: France was responsible for getting an agreement and pushed for one that accommodated the positions of all blocs, including the LDC Group

France's approach to managing the COP presidency in 2015 was unprecedented and unique. All informants I interviewed for this evaluation — including LDC delegates, other negotiators and experts — agree on this and suggest that this had an influence on the final outcome. The uniqueness of France's role can be attributed to three elements.

First, the French government activated all its diplomatic resources in support of achieving the historic agreement in Paris. This included full support to its high-level representatives, including Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius and Ambassador Laurence Tubiana. Many credit these two individuals with the success of the negotiations and generally see them as champions without whom the agreement would not have been possible.⁶² France also decided to invite all participating countries' heads of state from the start of COP 21, which several experts saw as critical for success.

The second element was transparency. Before and throughout its stewardship of the negotiations, the

Table 1. Summary of validation results for all claims

CLAIM	STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE	VALIDATION RESULT
Main claim: IIED support to the LDC Group, and the LDC chair in particular, led to greater endorsement and formal acceptance of LDC positions and priorities in the final Paris agreement	Evidence for components 1 to 5 is strong, passing multiple hoop tests, the smoking gun test and, in at least one case, the doubly decisive test. Evidence on media outreach does not pass the smoking gun test	The claim is validated Findings have implications for IIED's overall theory of change
Alternative claim 1: The pressure to make a deal forced developed countries to prioritise global cooperation and move closer to LDC positions	Evidence is weak and does not pass the smoking gun test	The claim is not validated
Alternative claim 2: AOSIS pushed for the same issues as the LDC group and had more influence in ensuring that these were endorsed and accepted in the final agreement	Evidence is strong and passes multiple hoop tests and the smoking gun test. On many demands, the work of AOSIS and the LDC Group cannot be adequately separated	The claim is validated
Alternative claim 3: France was responsible for getting an agreement and pushed for one that accommodated the positions of all blocs, including the LDC Group	Evidence is strong and passes multiple hoop tests. And while no specific evidence passes the smoking gun test, the claim cannot be ruled out	The validity of the claim is unclear
Alternative claim 4: Support for the LDC group received from other institutions, such as the UNFCCC, led to greater endorsement and formal acceptance of LDC positions and priorities in the final Paris agreement	Evidence is weak and does not pass the hoop test	The claim is not validated
Alternative claim 5: China was responsible for getting an agreement that accommodated the positions of developing nations, including the LDC Group	Evidence is weak and does not pass the hoop test	The claim is not validated

French government was vocal about the need to keep all negotiations transparent, without the secretive or back-channel bargaining that some credited for the COP's failure to reach an agreement in Copenhagen.

Third, France's inclusive approach, allegedly informed by a leave-no-country-behind strategy,⁶² resulted in an extensive set of consultations before COP 21 and in Paris and the appointment of 14 ministerial facilitators to represent all negotiating blocs, including the LDC Group, helping ensure the agreement was approved

by consensus. As negotiations moved towards the final phases, France took the lead in inviting countries that were still disputing key issues into bilateral meetings. As the case of US and Tuvalu I discussed under Component 4 shows, this was crucial for pushing negotiators to a final agreement.

Conclusion: This evidence is strong enough to pass multiple hoop tests, increasing the likelihood that this claim is valid. But this evaluation did not find evidence that could pass the smoking gun test. The unique role

of France, while necessary, appears to have played out mainly in the format of the negotiations, which favoured openness and trust between the parties. Negotiators still had to reach agreement based on their own interests and positions, and it is unclear how much influence French officials had on these. As such, the validity of the claim is unclear.

Alternative claim 4: Support for the LDC group from other institutions, such as the UNFCCC, led to greater endorsement and formal acceptance of LDC positions and priorities in the final Paris Agreement

Many recognise the role of the UNFCCC secretariat as critical for the success of the negotiations, and consider UNFCCC executive secretary Christiana Figueres as one of the champions of the Paris Agreement, alongside Laurent Fabius, Laurence Tubiana and Tony de Brum. But the extent of the secretariat's efforts was considerably limited on a number of counts.

First, the UNFCCC secretariat was a convener, not a facilitator. Being largely responsible for all ADP and COP sessions, it provided an indispensable and necessary service, but was not an influencer. Second, it was limited to offering financial support that it received from other UNFCCC members. LDCs received funding for only a few delegates, which had negative implications on the LDC Group's ability to negotiate effectively. Third, the secretariat also relied on its members for several key tasks related to the negotiations — for example, although it actively supported the ADP process that started in Durban, these efforts were not led by the secretariat itself, but by co-chairs chosen from participating member states.⁶³

Conclusion: While there are indications that the UNFCCC secretariat — and Figueres in particular — played an important role in changing the narrative around climate change negotiations in an attempt to shift attitudes away from the pessimism that followed Copenhagen in 2009,⁶⁴ the evidence for this alternative claim is weak and does not pass the hoop test. The claim is not validated.

Alternative claim 5: China was responsible for getting an agreement that accommodated the positions of developed nations, including the LDC group

China's stance evolved steadily between 2009 and 2015, as it increasingly accepted a global leadership role on climate change. This appears to have translated into a more active role outside of the UNFCCC process, as evidenced by its 2014 agreement with the US. China's pledges under that accord were particularly

ambitious and a large improvement over previous ones; to some, they suggested a more compromising or more flexible stance in anticipation of COP 21.⁶⁵

Beyond this point, the evidence supporting this claim is much weaker. Findings I discussed under the main contribution claim indicate that China remained lukewarm on, or opposed to, many issues advocated by the LDC Group. For example, acceptance of the 1.5°C target would have required a quicker pace of greenhouse gas emission reductions than negotiators had previously discussed, which was not in China's interest. Its representatives were also considered to oppose the reference to 1.5°C up until the last few days of COP 21; and all interviewed experts agreed that China's role during the negotiations was not significantly different than in previous COPs.

Conclusion: The evidence supports the narrative that China did not block the Paris Agreement, as some consider it did in Copenhagen. But it was certainly not a leader in the negotiations, nor a champion for LDC positions. As such, the evidence does not pass the hoop test and the claim cannot be validated.

4.6 Explaining IIED's contribution

The main takeaway conclusion from this evaluation is that the contribution claim is valid: the LDC Group has clearly influenced the Paris Agreement, ensuring that several of its positions were endorsed and IIED played an instrumental role in this. The evaluation specifically confirms the validity of several components of IIED's work. The support IIED provided to the LDC Group chair, selected coordinators and the core team led to their greater and more active engagement, a stronger profile for the group as a whole and the chair in particular and other negotiators' endorsement of official LDC positions. The causal mechanisms described in Components 1 to 5 are correct and enough to explain the observed outcome.

We should not underestimate this conclusion. Although the model of empowering a small group of agents to create system-wide change is fairly common in advocacy and social change initiatives, it seldom works as effectively as hoped, for a number of reasons. These include: a lack of group cohesion; low ownership on the part of chosen agents; or unexpected institutional resistance to change. The fact that IIED's initiative made such a strong contribution to the impact of the LDC Group while avoiding those shortcomings is a testament to the quality not just of IIED's efforts, but also of the theory of change underpinning its strategies.

This analysis does not only confirm IIED's impact. It also sheds light on several elements or factors that

have influenced — and at times undermined — IIED's work and the LDC Group's work more broadly.

In particular, the evidence I discussed under Component 4 shows how the group's success varied by issue and the way it tackled each issue. For example, getting recognition for the LDCs' special situation required a strong 'go-at-it-alone' push, primarily by the chair. Although he had key support from some negotiators, it was a cause of tension with others, such as the AGN. The 1.5°C target, on the other hand, was achieved through a strong coalition, led by the Marshall Islands, in which the LDC Group did not play a decisive leadership role. A coalition was also needed to assure success on loss and damage. This time, the LDC Group played a significantly larger role than other groups.

That each of these issues required such different efforts is indicative of how both IIED and the LDC Group should think about strategies in a more nuanced matter. As the three examples above indicate, success is often not just the result of a specific strategy, but the combination of different ones. The effectiveness of strategies usually depends on how appropriate they are to a given issue, and whether they are adequately resourced. As a practical example, a strategy focused on increasing public pressure would have likely been more effective on an issue like the 1.5°C target, but only if more resources were allocated to it, which was not the case in the lead-up to COP 21. In the future, IIED should address these questions as it chooses how to engage.

This analysis also brings champions and coalitions into sharp focus. The Paris Agreement is associated with several champions — high-level political figures who can direct attention to specific issues, muster support from other blocs and personify the need for change — such as Laurence Tubiana and Tony de Brum. The LDC Group arguably had only one such champion, Minister Jarju from the Gambia, and did not generally succeed in activating the high-level support AOSIS did. This appears to have limited the group's outreach to other negotiators and its ability to influence the media narrative.

Looking at coalitions, although the evidence is not strong enough to confidently separate the contributions of AOSIS and the LDC Group on loss and damage and the 1.5°C target, I can say that the success of one group would have been impossible without the support of the other. Their alliance was the basis for effectively engaging the EU on the 1.5°C target and the G77 on loss and damage.

But there is evidence that neither IIED or the LDC Group invested in coalition-building: engagement on platforms like CVF and the Cartagena Dialogue appears limited and official meetings with AOSIS, a close ally, were rare compared to meetings with other negotiators. In the future, IIED should focus more on creating champions who can transcend the framework of UNFCCC negotiations, and building bridges with other groups to strengthen the impact of coalitions on specific issues.

My analysis found challenges in two areas: engaging LDC governments and IIED's media strategy. IIED generally assumes a certain level of support from LDC national governments, who are ultimately responsible for choosing and supporting the participation of delegates to the LDC Group and to UNFCCC sessions. But in some cases the lack of such support has limited what the group can do. It also negatively affects the group's capacity to monitor and respond to key developments in the negotiations. To build a stronger LDC Group with active participation of delegates beyond the usual ones, IIED must review this assumption and integrate actions to influence how LDC governments approach climate change talks.

Although IIED's efforts in communications and media outreach raised the LDC Group's profile higher than it had ever been before, they were not enough to shape the public narrative in the same way as other blocs did. IIED had assumed that media attention in 2015 would be the same as any other year. But it was much higher than usual, which made it harder for any one voice to rise above the fray. IIED's capacity for media outreach was not enough to meet media demands and its outreach to civil society networks and advocacy groups such as CVF was not enough to influence public pressure in favour of LDC positions.

While the evidence of France's impact on the final outcome remains unclear, it nevertheless provides some interesting insights that might help to guide IIED's and the LDC Group's work in the future. In particular, the principles of inclusivity and transparency, which French officials championed throughout 2015, are arguably strongly correlated with the success achieved in Paris. Both principles generate goodwill and trust among negotiators, which can then be leveraged to reach a general consensus even where disagreement on specific items remain. IIED and the LDC Group should continue to ensure that these principles are seen as foundational for all future negotiations.

5

Conclusion and recommendations

IIED's support to the LDC Group was extensive. Much of it was proactive and linked to a theory of change that, albeit implicit to IIED's work, reflected well-defined and contextualised strategies for pursuing the desired outcome. IIED had a strong understanding of the UNFCCC process and the issues discussed there. It also enjoyed a strong level of trust among LDC delegates and unparalleled access to its key officials, including the chair.

By testing all the chosen contribution claims, this evaluation has successfully found evidence to prove that IIED's initiative empowered the LDC Group and helped ensure the integration of several of the group's key demands and positions in the Paris Agreement.

IIED achieved this impact largely in the way it expected to do so. The successful validation of five out of six of the components of the main contribution claim proves that the theory of change is fundamentally correct around group activation and the role of the chair. Supporting LDC delegates improves the group's overall engagement in negotiations and strengthens its profile. This raising of profile improves the group's coordination and communication, making it more effective and allowing the chair to better engage other negotiators and increase the chair's media visibility. Taken together, these two strategies can be enough to ensure that other blocs endorse LDC positions. IIED should continue to pursue them in the future, with full support from IIED donors.

This evaluation found several challenges to IIED's work. Its media strategy, although successful in increasing the visibility of the LDC Group, did not influence public debates in the same way that CVF and HAC did. Evidence of these groups' impact, some collected under Alternative claim 2, highlight the importance of coalitions for overcoming deep

divisions, especially around issues — such as the 1.5°C target — where there is no consensus. To address these challenges, IIED should review its media strategy and invest more in coalition building.

I also found that IIED's work did not focus on creating champions: outside of Minister Jarju, the LDC Group could not muster the high-level support that AOSIS had. This clearly limited the group's visibility and negotiating power. An important challenge to creating champions in future is the role of LDCs' national governments, which can limit their countries' participation in negotiations. Although often for legitimate reasons, such as a lack of financial resources to send dedicated negotiators to the UNFCCC process, it has a strong impact on what IIED's support to the group can achieve.

I believe the following recommendations will help improve IIED's future work with the LDC Group:

- **Increased financial support for LDC delegates:** The evidence for Component 3 of the main contribution claim is some of the strongest I collected in this evaluation. This is, in other words, a crucial component behind the success of IIED and the LDC Group. I therefore recommend that **donors increase funds** to enable more LDC delegates to participate in future UNFCCC sessions.
- **Engage national ministries:** National governments are a significant constraint on LDC delegates' participation in group activities. Increased funding needs to be accompanied by extra efforts to sensitise national authorities on the need to support stronger engagement in the negotiations. To this end, IIED should: support the LDC Group in organising ministerial meetings in preparation for COP sessions; support champions to engage other blocs and LDCs; and assess

the possibility of engaging the private sector to influence LDC governments.

- **Identify and sustain champions:** To increase its success in the future, the LDC Group needs champions. These are individuals with a high-level public profile who enjoy the full support of their government and can embody, through a mixture of personality and skills, a given change. IIED should develop a specific strategy to identify and cultivate champions, integrated with IIED's current strategies, particularly around training. IIED must also foresee the need for extra efforts in the lead-up to particularly significant events like COP 21, organising high-level ministerial meetings to issue stronger statements and increasing media efforts.
- **Invest in coalitions:** IIED should help the LDC Group conduct more outreach to traditional and new allies by investing resources to hold regular meetings with AOSIS and other like-minded groups, such as AGN, AILAC and the Cartagena Dialogue and increasing engagement with the CVF and HAC. This should include appointing, among active LDC Group members, official focal points

from countries that participate in CVF and HAC work. IIED should also move beyond ad hoc events to promote stronger coalitions with civil society networks and movements.

- **Review the media strategy:** When reviewing its media strategy, IIED should bear in mind that some issues might not need media attention to gain endorsement. In some cases, it might even be counterproductive. An issue-by-issue analysis would help IIED and the LDC Group improve resource and energy allocation. When seeking media visibility, IIED should ensure it has the resources it needs to meet its targets.
- **Develop a skills-enhancing programme for the chair:** IIED should consider integrating activities aimed at further increasing the capabilities of the chair. These should be preceded by a formal or informal needs assessment with the individual chosen to occupy the role. This could help increase the influence of the chair and provide an incentive for greater LDC national government engagement.

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Poverty, vulnerability and a lack of relevant capacity to respond effectively to expected changes mean the members of the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Group are most vulnerable to climate change and have limited capacity to influence global climate change negotiations. To help them advance their priorities and make their voices heard in talks leading up to the Paris Agreement, IIED provided technical, logistical and financial support to increase the group's engagement, strengthen the role and profile of its chair, and promote LDC positions in the media from 2011 to 2015. This independent evaluation aims to assess the impact of this support.

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