



Engaging for change



Photo credit: Mike Goldwater/IIED

IIED strategy update 2017–19



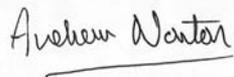
IIED's mission:

To build a fairer, more sustainable world using evidence, action and influence in partnership with others.

Welcome

We are halfway through our five-year strategy, and this is a good time to reflect on what we have achieved so far and what we need to do next. An independent review¹ of our work shows there is much to be proud of. Working with partners, we have: contributed to landmark agreements on climate change and sustainable development; mobilised powerful voices for social and environmental justice; and helped implement sustainable and equitable development from local to global levels.

But there is always room for improvement and the review has made us think harder about the value IIED can bring to sustainable development, particularly given recent shifts in the national and global arenas in which we work. Our overall strategy remains one of engaging for change: pushing the boundaries of research; building partnerships to influence decisions in policy and practice; and ensuring the poor have a voice at every level. We have updated our approach to reflect the changing world around us and the special value — as a knowledge broker, innovator and strategic collaborator — we believe IIED can bring to sustainable development at this critical time.



Andrew Norton
Director of IIED



¹ See IIED External Review 2012–2016: Final Report (<http://pubs.iied.org/G04153>)

Making change happen

The world has promised to end poverty and protect the planet for a future that is both fairer and more sustainable. But these high ambitions cannot be realised without a significant increase in rights, accountability and influence for the vulnerable citizens and communities living at the sharp edge of poverty and climate change.

IIED has spent more than four decades linking local priorities with global challenges and building the bridges needed to ensure that marginalised stakeholders and systems can engage in the decisions that affect them and find a voice that truly counts.

With our partners, we can help turn global promises into local and national realities.

The signing of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 and the entry into force of the Paris Agreement on climate change in 2016 mark a fundamental shift in the global development agenda. Development is now recognised as a universal enterprise involving all countries, rich and poor. And sustainability has been placed at the heart of this agenda, with the fight against extreme inequality included as a fundamental element.

For more than 40 years, IIED has worked with partners at the interface of environment and development, and the new agreements represent a breakthrough for our shared agenda.

But we live in challenging times. There has been a rise in nationalist politics that can be hostile towards the type of international cooperation and action needed to tackle global challenges. And arenas for civil society voice and influence are being eroded in many of the countries where we work, while the interests of minorities and dissenting perspectives are often under real threat. At the same time, newer spaces, such as social media, are growing in significance in many contexts. These challenge our traditional ways of working and open new possibilities for communication and development. These changes force us to reflect on our strategy and how we can maximise our contribution to the new development agenda. We specialise in linking local priorities to global challenges and have a long history of working with vulnerable communities to secure their rights and strengthen their voice in the decision-making arenas that affect them.

Over the next two years, we will draw on our collective experience and expertise to steer a course through the changing landscape and to support governments and others to turn international commitments into reality at national and local levels. Our sights are set on achieving three broad ambitions:

- Making the Paris Agreement and the SDGs work
- Building resilient and thriving local communities through partnership
- Bringing local realities and innovation to national and global policy.

At the same time, we will redouble our emphasis on rigorous and inclusive research, evaluation and communication to enable our continued contribution as a credible source of advice, advocacy and thought leadership on sustainable development. That means sharpening our analytic capabilities to promote gender equity and combat all forms of social exclusion and discrimination. It means enhancing our use of strategic communications to shift attitudes and behaviours. And it also means routinely assessing our programmes for effectiveness and impact, being ready to adapt them as needed.



Effective and engaged

Our partnerships inspire what we do and influence all our work.

By collaborating with others, we can challenge powerful bodies, strengthen the skills and voices of marginalised groups and gather evidence of what works, where and how — to help deliver on global promises of a fairer, more sustainable world.

Our research remains focused on countries and regions where we judge we can have the most effect with the resources available. We have a network of partnerships in Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia and strong working relationships with the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

We focus on participatory approaches — building joint capacity and learning to create opportunities for new initiatives and research that can bolster expertise in the global South and build inclusive policy development processes.



Photo credit: Isabelle Lemaire/IIED



A focus on impact

Our goals are ambitious and to achieve them we must strengthen our organisation and boost the quality, effectiveness and impact of our work. We have already recalibrated our business model in our effort to work more efficiently and effectively. Over the next two years, we will also evaluate our portfolio of interventions in light of a shifting financial, institutional and development framework. We will capture any necessary changes in the focus and balance of our work in our next multi-year strategy, to be published in 2019.

We want to strengthen our position as a learning organisation in which monitoring and evaluation have a central role — not only in assessing our own contribution to social and environmental change, but also in steering discourse and generating evidence for effective policies and practice.

Over the remaining two years of our current strategy, we will invest in learning about what works to deliver change in local-to-global systems. That includes strengthening our ability to monitor and evaluate the work we

are involved in, as well as using comparative analyses to learn from others and building alliances to advocate for best practice.

Strategic communication plays an integral role in the evidence-to-action process that underpins much of IIED's work. We stand ready to redouble our efforts in strategic communications, developing approaches based on their underlying purpose — be that influencing policy change, mobilising communities, stimulating better practice, sharing information or raising profiles — and choosing tools and tactics based on the needs of the audiences they are designed to serve.

Over the next two years, we will work across the organisation to integrate policy research with communication for social change and innovation. That includes making sure we have a clear focus on what we want to achieve at the start of our own projects, as well as engaging with peers to learn and share evidence about what works to steer change.

Ambitions for change

From 2017 to 2019, our collaborative efforts will be directed at fulfilling three broad ambitions, which we believe can help deliver the change towards environmental and social justice that the world has committed to.

“Creating space for voice and participation and tackling the policy environment is as much an essential part of IIED’s strategy as is conducting policy research and providing expert advice.”

Review 2012–2016: Final Report (<http://pubs.iied.org/G04153>)

Making the Paris Agreement and the SDGs work

We will support the successful implementation of the Paris Agreement by working with the LDCs Group in the climate negotiations, as well as our broader networks, to promote global ambition and help shape interventions that can deliver sustainable development and ensure that climate warming is kept within 1.5°C.

We will also work across programmes to help governments and others implement the SDGs effectively, with a particular focus on the intersection between environmental sustainability and social inclusion. We believe that implementing the new global development agenda requires changes in social, political and economic systems, and we will plan our work accordingly.



Photo credit: Espen Ramussen/PANOS

Building resilient and thriving local communities through partnership

In the face of climate change, conflict and growing pressures on resources, poor communities want to secure and defend their rights, cope with disruption and change their circumstances for the better.

IIED has long worked to build this type of local resilience in vulnerable contexts — from urban informal settlements to poor rural communities — and can mobilise a broad network of partners at different levels to help. We will draw on our collective experience to ensure that the policies and practices of governments, organisations and companies are shaped to support communities' priorities for securing rights and building productive enterprises in resilient landscapes and local economies.



We also aim to provide global leadership on the task of 'getting money where it matters' — making sure that climate, development and humanitarian finance reaches the vulnerable citizens and communities that need it most. We are generating evidence, fostering dialogue and building capacity to design and test approaches for delivering climate finance built on inclusive, responsive and adaptive mechanisms that can reach the poor.

Bringing local realities and innovation to national and global policy

Over the next two years, we shall put our experience in linking local issues with global debates to work to bring the voices and realities of marginalised people into global, national and regional policy processes. That means working at multiple scales to strengthen the capacity of poor people's organisations as well as helping them engage in global arenas.



Shaping policy and practice

IIED has an international reputation for action research on natural resources, human settlements, climate change and sustainable markets.

We work towards long-term strategic goals in each of these areas, ensuring that our findings help drive change for the public good.

1. Increased investment in locally controlled land and natural resource use

The squeeze on natural resources and ecosystems — and the livelihoods they support — is tightening, in part because land and resource rights lie in the wrong hands, and partly because many of the people who are close to realising sustainability lack power. That is why IIED focuses on improving investment in local control and the sustainable management of natural resources and other ecosystems. We work with networks and organisations in Africa, Asia and Latin America and aim to have a tangible impact in 15 countries. Together, we raise awareness of the roles that small scale producers and local people play in maintaining their resources, and we help identify tools and tactics to strengthen their capacities. We also generate evidence and build the capabilities needed to improve the policies, laws and working practices of governments, companies and institutions.



Photo credit: Deccan Development Society



Photo credit: Cecilia Tacoli/IIED

2. Cities that work for people and planet

The global 'urban transition' — and the increasing attention paid to it by donors, international organisations and the media — create both opportunities and challenges for IIED, which has been working in these contexts for several decades. Much of the growing interest is in the idea of 'smart cities', with an emphasis on economic growth. Very little of it engages with approaches for addressing urban poverty, ensuring inclusive urbanisation or delivering sustainability that prioritises the needs and vulnerabilities of low-income urban residents. This poses a challenge for us: how can we continue to work on the vitally important issues of urban poverty, inclusivity and sustainability in a way that engages with, and influences, the new actors entering the urban space?

Over the next two years, we will continue to push for impact in six areas:

- Using legal tools for fairer and more sustainable natural resource investments in low- and middle-income countries
- Building greater local control and resilience into agricultural and food systems
- Supporting locally controlled forestry for improved livelihoods, justice and sustainability
- Investigating and promoting the role of biodiversity in sustainable development
- Ensuring water in West Africa is equitably allocated and governed
- Improving Chinese aid, trade and investment in African natural resources.

Over the next two years and beyond, we will work to achieve towns and cities that generate benefits for all residents, using a three-pronged approach. First is stressing the needs and priorities identified by low-income groups. Second is increasing recognition of the social and environmental inter-dependencies and relationships between urban centres, rural areas and the global environment. Third is emphasising the importance of decision making and priority setting by local organisations and local governments. We do all our work with partners — local, national and international — to ensure that our priorities are rooted in the concerns of urban residents and practitioners, while remaining relevant to global research and policy debates.



Photo credit: P. Casier/CGIAR

3. Fair and equitable solutions to climate change

With the Paris Agreement in force, we will spend the remaining two years of our strategy period seeking to deliver its ambition, working with the poor to achieve a just and equitable transformation to climate-positive societies. We have four strategies to help us achieve this.

First is supporting the LDCs Group in their climate diplomacy and domestic action to deliver commitments in 2020 that keep us below a 1.5°C rise in global temperatures.

Second is improving the governance of resilience by identifying how to change the incentives in investment and risk finance, and improving risk mechanisms that reach the poorest, such as shock-responsive social protection.

Third is working to ensure finance flows behind the priorities of the poor and in support of local action by encouraging a decentralised approach to climate funds and mobilising private and domestic finance to invest in local climate-positive enterprise.

Fourth, given the dominance of expert-led processes in climate policy, is working towards ending the culture of 'fly-in, fly-out' technical assistance by increasing the capabilities of Southern partners to develop locally owned climate action plans that enable a higher climate ambition in 2020. This includes building skills and tools for future analysis and supporting innovation ecosystems in the South that can flip the centre of innovation.

4. Sustainable markets that work for the many, rather than the few

We want to help make the markets of the future more inclusive, sustainable and prosperous — especially for the poor and marginalised. Over the next two years, we will engage with civil, private and public sectors in four areas:

Working with informal markets and small enterprises — in areas such as agriculture, food and nutrition, and artisanal mining — to help them secure productive jobs and sustainable supply chains, and advocate their role as major contributors to prosperous societies.

Using our work on the green economy, business transformation, productive uses of energy and fisheries to foster inclusive green prosperity. This includes building international partnerships and coalitions, working with large and small businesses and collaborating with grassroots organisations.

Strengthening the practical contribution economics makes to sustainable development by making the case for natural capital investments, scaling up our programme on payments for ecosystem services and investigating how best to devolve development and climate finance to the local level.

Investing in new areas of work that can help us deliver both high impact and thought leadership. These include initiatives to advance LDC interests in an inclusive 'blue economy' (the marine version of the green economy) and to provide practical support to the public and private sectors on transforming to a climate-changed world.



Photo credit: Mike Goldwater/IED

The outside perspective: insights from an external review

In 2016, an independent team of development experts was convened to review IIED's work and assess our contribution to positive change. The external review had a twin focus, designed to help us think about both our past and our future. Looking back, the reviewers examined IIED's work over the past five years and reflected on our performance and value. Looking forward, they looked at the changing environment and reflected on our strategic role and direction for the next five years and beyond.

Looking back: pathways to impact

The review emphasises that IIED's strengths lie as much in our ways of working as in the specific environment and development issues we address, and that how we work is at least as important as what we do. It points to four consistent ways of working that cut across our research areas and have been shown to deliver positive change. These are our tried and tested pathways to impact:

1. Multi-stakeholder dialogue

Convening networks and facilitating dialogues to share local knowledge, build the capacity of less powerful actors and influence decision makers in policy processes.

2. Research to policy

Building on existing bodies of work and partnering with local stakeholders to develop practical solutions that support pro-poor governance.

3. Targeting policymakers

Reframing the knowledge of decision makers and developing policy frameworks to domesticate global plans and make them relevant to local contexts and realities.

4. Empowering the powerless

Building capacity and enabling less powerful and marginalised groups to get their voices heard in decision-making arenas, share their knowledge and advocate for their priorities at national and global levels.



Looking forward: future challenges

The review describes IIED as “an organisation in the midst of change” — our funding environment is changing; the capacity of Southern organisations is growing; and there has been a major shift in development discourse and research. Each of these changes presents both risks and opportunities for an organisation such as IIED. As we consider our strategic options for the future, the external review presents a set of recommendations across three future challenges:

Improving and sustaining IIED's intervention model

This includes:

- Prioritising gender issues, both in how IIED operates as well as in the focus of our work
- Supporting strategic communications that are focused on outcomes and are relevant to our audiences
- Helping Southern partners strengthen their capabilities for research, policy and advocacy.

Addressing higher level strategic challenges and opportunities

This includes:

- Reviewing and resolving trade-offs between short-term incubator initiatives and long-term engagements
- Reviewing our mixed portfolio of interventions in the light of a shifting financial, institutional and development framework.

Bringing research and strategy together through impact assessment and learning

This includes:

- Developing and promoting approaches and standards to ensure our applied research is rigorous and inclusive
- Improving our institutional capacities in monitoring, evaluation and learning
- Working with impact pathways as dynamic theories of change to test, reflect and share learning within and beyond IIED's doors.

Find out more about the 2016 external evaluation, and IIED's response to it at:

IIED External Review 2012–2016: Final Report (March 2017) <http://pubs.iied.org/G04153>

External review management response (April 2017) <http://pubs.iied.org/G04154>



IIED is a policy and action research organisation promoting sustainable development and linking local priorities to global challenges. We are based in London and work on five continents with some of the world's most vulnerable people to strengthen their voice in the decision-making arenas that affect them.

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