Exploring equity in partnerships

Lessons from five case studies

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About the editor

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1. Introduction

Global inequality and partnerships

Structural inequalities and power imbalances between the global North and South still exist at every level of development and research systems, including in how partnerships are nurtured and managed. Gender inequalities, social injustices, colonial legacies, racism, and other intersectional inequalities continue to manifest in relationships among individuals and institutions.

The above inequalities are happening in a context where research and development partnerships between global North and global South organisations have been assessed to be unequal by decolonial activists raising issues of spatial injustice[1]. Moreover, institutions in developing countries are often positioned as secondary to their counterparts in the global North when designing research partnerships. This positioning reinforces unequal power dynamics that penetrate the research process funded by northern organisations in neo-colonial contexts[2].

Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) demands coherent collaboration to transform society across all countries. However, research on partnerships for the SDGs found that partnerships are unequally distributed and may perpetuate the North–South divide in countries' resources, including access to data and scientific capabilities. It also found that partners from low-income countries are involved in far fewer SDG partnerships than partners from countries in all other World Bank income categories, although the former are least able to develop sustainably. Furthermore, unequal distribution of SDG partnerships globally may perpetuate existing inequalities in resources between higher and lower-income countries. Inequalities in partnership establishment and implementation need to be addressed for the SDGs to be achieved[3].

Unequal partnerships systematically and negatively affect global South organisations and communities through increasing resource, epistemic and power inequalities, as well as lack of acknowledgement of existing inequalities, denial of inequalities, and taking advantage of inequalities in pseudo partnerships. Genuine collaboration requires addressing power imbalances and must be based on a shared understanding of equity and fairness. Reimagining partnerships will mean adopting actively decolonial, anti-racist, gender-equitable approaches that promote and strengthen ethical and equitable partnerships.

Why IIED is investing in strengthening ethical and equitable partnerships

Partnerships have been central to IIED's work and mission, and we have made progress on defining ethics and terms of engagement. IIED's 2022 annual review shows the breadth of IIED partnerships, highlighting how we work with 120 partners in over 80 countries. IIED's strategy 2019-2024, partnerships statement and research ethics and partnership policy set out principles and commitments on how IIED works with partners across the globe. We also have internal policies and guidelines that relate to partnerships, including granting and financing, due diligence, and co-authorships, among others. These seek to shape our relationships with partners in terms of operations, sharing of resources and co-production of knowledge through research products.

[1] Rethinking Research Collaborative (2018) Promoting fair and equitable research partnerships to respond to global challenges. fair-and-equitable-partnerships_research-report-public.pdf (wordpress.com)

[2] Daszkiewicz, C, Shawoo, Z, Nazareth, A, Coleoni, C, Kwamboka, E, Ghosh, E, Yi-Chen Han, J, Inga, K, Tran, M and Diaz-Chavez, RA (2022) Shifting power through climate research: applying decolonial methodologies. Stockholm Environment Institute. www.sei.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/shifting-power-through-climate-research.pdf

[3] Blicharska, M, Teutschbein, C, and Smithers, RJ (2021) SDG partnerships may perpetuate the global North–South divide. *Scientific Reports*, 11(1), 22092. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-021-01534-6

IIED partnership principles and commitments

IIED's Partnership Statement[4] has defined core principles, commitments, and aspirations, as set out below:

IIED core principles of partnership	Commitments and aspirations
• Shared objectives: the added value of working together identified by all partners • Complementary attributes: diverse capacities and resources contributed by each partner • Values in common: shared values and beliefs as well as accepting of different world views • Transparency and accountability: mutual accountability as well as accountability to others with a stake in relationship • Significance of personal relationships: personal connections that come alive through organisational relationships • Commitment to learning, monitoring, and developing the partnership as deemed appropriate • Safety and wellbeing of staff	• Financial transparency: share budgets and ensure fairness in the use of resources • Zero tolerance for abuse: protection of all groups from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect, and exploitation • Possibilities for change: periodic joint assessments to inform required improvements and changes • Adequate financing for the establishment and management of key partnerships • Respect for the capacity of our partners: not overburdening partners beyond what they can do • Clarity about the terms of collaboration • Ideas, problem definition and solutions should come from both sides • Both sides should have flexibility to respond to evolving understandings and needs

As IIED is a learning organisation, there have been various iterations to clarify partnership values, definitions, guidelines, and policies to improve how IIED works fairly with partners. IIED has also recently been challenging ways of working internally by assessing inequality using racial and decolonial approaches, through studies to understand antiracist narratives in development and how to decolonise climate action and development.

Despite the above partnership principles and commitments, an anti-racist narrative analysis undertaken by IIED researchers[5] notes that the words 'partner' and 'partnership' were used in relationships where power relations between organisations were imbalanced. Participants in the research pointed out that the umbrella term 'partner' was used in a homogenous way, contributing to partner invisibility. The report also noted that IIED was explicitly and implicitly centred in much of the content analysed, with narratives prioritising IIED knowledge and voice. Conversely, in the content selected for review, the voices of partner organisations, the majority of black staff and staff of colour working for global South organisations were noted as peripheral, even when they were co-authors. Respondents noted that the poor visibility of global South partners is harmful in the context of broader narratives within the international development and aid sectors that position and profile white Western organisations and their staff as principal thought and practice leaders.

A report on the decolonisation of climate action (unpublished)[6] commissioned by the Climate Change Group within IIED notes that the issues of accountability, power and money are tied directly to the types of relationships that IIED can build with partner organisations. The report notes that IIED could do more

[4] IIED (2019) IIED Partnership Statement. www.iied.org/sites/default/files/uploads/2019/04/iied-partnership-statement-april-2019.pdf

[5] Lartey, N and Beauchamp, E (2022) Discomfort to discovery: an exploration of racism and anti-racism in development narratives. IIED, London. iied.org/20761iied

[6] IIED (unpublished) The Impacts of Colonisation on Climate Action and International Development.

to address power through redistribution by building mutually beneficial partnerships and supporting demand-driven research and programmes to ensure that IIED uses its power and leverage as an intermediary to devolve power to grassroots organisations.

Strengthening ethical and equitable research partnerships research project

IIED acknowledges that as a research institution working to achieve social, climate, environmental and economic justice, there is a risk of perpetuating the dynamics of inequality by not acknowledging these issues of power and resource differences and, therefore, not addressing them. IIED's research project on strengthening ethical and equitable research partnerships, initiated in 2022, aims to define pathways for actively addressing these dynamics and shifting power in partnerships.

Through this research, IIED is working with existing partners to develop a shared vision of what equitable partnerships mean and embed this thinking in its internal operations and future work with partners IIED is also working to use the evidence to influence and create impact in the wider sector.

As part of this research, we have worked with partners to document case studies of the good practices on promoting ethical and equitable partnership practices that IIED and partners have learned, given IIED's many years of work in partnerships. The case studies also document where the partnerships have not been equitable, the lessons we learned and how partners addressed these dynamics.

The case studies are one component of the research on strengthening equitable partnerships. We have also reviewed literature on equitable partnerships, conducted internal surveys, assessed our policies and guidelines and conducted four dialogues as part of the research outputs. The lessons will inform the final research report with recommendations to strengthen equitable partnerships, based on what has worked and what has not.

2. About the case studies on ethical and equitable partnerships

This collection of five case studies shares experiences of good practice in building and maintaining equitable partnerships.

In our call for case studies, we also encouraged cases that celebrate failures and the lessons that emerge out of the process, which we called the 'fail fest' case study type. The fail fest concept was initiated by John Wechsler,[7] a social entrepreneur and innovator, out of a desire to celebrate success. Fail fest was based on the idea that innovation and success are possible because of our failures[8]. When we fail, if we have the courage and strength to try again, we open the door to possibilities. Failure is important because it pushes us to keep going. The successful inventor, entrepreneur, creative or researcher, among others, is successful because of their perseverance. Many organisations are now using the fail fest approach to allow discussion of failed processes to learn from mistakes and find solutions. The goal is to inspire others to embrace failure as part of their path to success.

One case study shares a reflective experience of a partnership that did not work well; it recognises and celebrates the lessons that came from some approaches that were not equitable, and it also shares experiences of how the partners found solutions which other organisations can learn from. The other four case studies share what worked well and also identify challenges, since inequity exists in most partnerships.

The case studies selected include profiles of long-term partnerships with organisations that know IIED well and vice versa, as well as partnerships with organisations at different levels targeting different categories of constituencies. These include governments, Indigenous organisations, grassroots organisations, and other peer organisations. The case studies were largely co-produced with the aim of representing the views of partners, and some included interviews with partners to capture their assessment of the partnerships. The format was flexible, allowing partners to describe their experiences; thus, the issues raised in the case studies vary based on how each partnership was initiated and maintained.

The five case studies are as follows:

1. The **2050 Collective** case study describes a partnership process that aimed to advance grassroots-led collaboration and voice. It was a multi-level partnership with different types of organisations. It included funders who were allies, international organisations, national organisations, large global grassroots networks, and grassroots organisations. This case study analyses inequity in partnerships between organisations of different types, resources and decision-making power, and shares useful approaches to addressing inequity in partnerships.
2. The **Least Developed Countries Initiative for Effective Adaptation and Resilience (LIFE-AR)** challenges business-as-usual approaches. The LIFE-AR case study highlights relations between Least Developed Country (LDC) governments and international development partners. It presents lessons on using principle-based approaches to partnerships and shares experiences of the challenges of working in 'business unusual' ways.
3. **ANDES**, the Association for Nature, and Sustainable Development, is an Indigenous NGO based in Cusco, Peru. The case study of the long-term ANDES/IIED partnership shares experience of partnering with Indigenous organisations and communities. The case study addresses Indigenous Peoples' values and knowledge systems and shows how decolonial and emancipatory principles and approaches have led to multiple impacts. It also highlights the significance of personal relationships in partnerships, one of IIED's core partnership principles.

[7] Springer, J and Shoemaker, B (2016) 'Failing With John Wechsler', *Launchpad* (Podcast). 19 July 2016. https://launchpadistaken.com/2016/07/19/failing-john-wechsler/

[8] Failfest, Get failfest resources. https://failfest.us/innovation-resources/

4. **Slum Dwellers International (SDI)** is a transnational movement of urban poor federations at the city and national level. This case study shares experiences of the long partnership between SDI and IIED, which is built on trust and common values. The case study highlights maturity in the partnership, where one partner questions the other on research approaches and methodologies and on whose voice needs to be at the forefront. The case study concludes that inequity between global North and South organisations is inevitable and that a decolonial approach is needed to address power imbalances.
5. The fifth case study profiles the **Forest Farm Facility**, a long-term partnership between IIED, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Agricord. The case study shares the successes and challenges of managing a wide-ranging and ambitious partnership that also spans local women, men and youth smallholders, technical support agencies, multi-lateral agencies, NGOs, and government officials.

The analysis across the case studies focused on the enablers of equitable partnerships, inequitable practices which emerged in the partnerships and exacerbated the power dynamics, and the lessons learned through these experiences.

Factors that enabled equity in the partnerships

Shared values and objectives between partnering organisations

Across the case studies, it is observed that the partnerships were guided by shared values and objectives. The value of working together was recognised by partners, with agreed ways of working to achieve the set objectives, including sharing of resources, co-creation and co-production of knowledge, advocacy and strengthening capabilities. In some cases, the shared values emerged because of long-term relationships of working together on common problems, thus building trust in the long run.

In some case studies, principle-based approaches were used to support common values and beliefs. In these partnerships, although the capabilities of organisations in the partnership were different, they were all bound by the same principles. While this approach does not immediately address power imbalances, it creates an equal accountability platform for the institutions involved. For example, in the LIFE-AR case study, organisations that sign the partnership compact signal their commitment to the LDC 2050 Vision and a commitment to deliver against the shared partnership principles with clear roles.

Transparency and accountability

Transparency and accountability are important aspects of equitable partnerships and need to exist between partners, funders, and other stakeholders. The case studies share examples where partners have been open and have challenged IIED's ways of working. This has prompted changes in attitude and working practices. Some examples, such as the work with ANDES, include investing time and resources in co-design and training workshops with Indigenous community researchers and developing flexible proposals. There is also an acknowledgement that while the results of projects in the partnerships are important, the partnership processes are equally key, and if these are well managed, the partnerships are stronger and more equitable. Open communication has helped to manage difficult conversations on accountability, which sometimes leads to redefining roles, agenda setting and improving allyship.

Investing in partnerships through learning and monitoring

Learning, constant review and improvements in the partnerships have been highlighted as success factors. The Forest Farm Facility case study reports on how the partners always endeavour to identify problems and find solutions jointly. This has led to innovative and equitable approaches, including strengthening inclusivity by using translation, devising grant mechanisms that enable direct access to funding by grassroots organisations, organising annual learning events, co-management retreats and peer-to-peer exchanges.

The SDI/IIED case study reports that it has been useful to introduce intentional and purposeful processes for providing institutional capacity-strengthening to local organisations that is not top-down but supports their equitable participation and meaningful contribution. The bottom-up approach has strengthened discussions on fair and balanced distribution of resources, information, expertise, and

access to technology for research analysis and documentation. The learning has been two-way, with IIED also learning from partners. The ANDES/ IIED partnership has enhanced learning for IIED on working with Indigenous Peoples in decolonial ways, with ANDES influencing IIED to support Indigenous research methods and to advance thinking on decolonisation and ethical partnerships.

Inclusive decision making

Equitable partnerships mean that each organisation is heard, and that there is mutual respect for different contributions based on capabilities. The case studies show approaches to joint decision making on strategic issues, as well as on providing platforms that enhance equitable decision making during implementation. The inclusion of diverse perspectives from a range of stakeholders helps to inform better understanding and decision making. The case studies show that locally led approaches improve decision making in partnerships. The LIFE-AR case study notes that LDC-led approaches and ways of working create space for LDC voices and priorities to be heard and inform direction and decision making. The ANDES case study notes that Indigenous Peoples' leadership is important to counter racism, epistemic injustice and coloniality, a reminder that non-Indigenous researchers need to create space for local decision making to ensure they are not leading or making decisions from their own perspectives.

Being aware of power dynamics

Awareness of power dynamics is important to enable partners to challenge them when they emerge and create spaces for discussion. The SDI case study highlights examples where SDI has been able to question IIED's research methods, reflecting on who has the legitimacy to speak for the urban poor, and ensuring that local perspectives are informing all processes. In this partnership, they have used co-design and negotiation processes to ensure that tasks and responsibilities and co-authorship are distributed fairly based on complementary skill sets for the mutual benefit of all partners. Such examples demonstrate that if organisations in the partnerships are aware of the power dynamics and are open to discussing them, some of the inequities can be addressed.

Significance of personal relationships

IIED views partnerships as relationships between organisations which come alive through relations between individuals. These personal connections are significant as sources of new ideas, mutual support, learning and advice. IIED's approach intends to facilitate and foster these interactions and to benefit from them. The ANDES case study demonstrates the significance of personal relationships, with a partnership spanning more than 20 years with the same staff, who have learned to trust and respect each other. The two organisations have learnt to enhance the value systems and research methods that support Indigenous Peoples' self-determination.

Causes of inequity in partnerships

Power dynamics in funding mechanisms

The case studies demonstrate experiences of inequity through funding in three ways: inequity on who accesses the funds and who does not, exerting power and influence by those who hold the funds, and inadequate funds to support partnership processes.

There is inadequate funding for global South and grassroots organisations, which affects partnership processes with larger organisations that act as intermediaries and control decisions on funding and budgets. In one of the case studies, it is noted that there are limited in-country budgets, and a small amount of funding goes to core management, thus restricting country engagement, monitoring, and learning.

In another case study, it is reported that where smaller organisations partner with large organisations that can easily access funding, the organisations with more resources exhibit power over smaller organisations and take the lead in decision making. In some cases, smaller organisations are brought into the partnership later in the process when decisions have already been made. Creating platforms that are genuinely equal continues to be difficult and requires learning and unlearning to ensure that those close to the local problems provide the solutions.

It was also noted that few donors provide institutional support to allow effective partnership management practices. Good partnerships take time to nurture and require resources to allow flexibility and learning. IIED has supported some partners with some costs through flexible funding, support for developing broad funding proposals and by supporting the training of community researchers. However, IIED also depends on donors to provide flexible funding.

Limited time for co-designing programmes with partners

The nature of funding demands leaves limited time in the partnerships to have an effective co-creation process due to tight deadlines. The 2050 Collective case study shares important lessons on how the problems of aligning global agendas and local needs and capabilities affect co-creation processes, leaving less time for consulting partners.

Homogenisation of different organisations in the partnership

The case studies bring out the difficulties of managing multi-level partnerships spanning different geographical locations, powerful organisations in the global North, multi-lateral agencies, governments, national organisations, and grassroots organisations, among others. The power dynamics emerge when organisations in the partnership do not have the same levels of capabilities and influence and mostly have different needs and ambitions.

Colonial legacies and mindsets

Co-creation of knowledge and collaboration practices need to address colonial approaches and mindsets and consider the use of non-Eurocentric methodology in research design. Hierarchies in knowledge production persist, privileging Western knowledge systems over others.

3. Summary of key lessons

- **Long and sustainable partnerships require time, commitment, and resources**. Lessons show that partnerships lasting four to five years and more have enabled more holistic relationships to emerge, centred on strengthening capabilities, co-design, and co-production. Long partnerships also facilitate learning between the different partner organisations. To do this, however, there must be a commitment to the partnership values and objectives, time to engage and the financial resources to support, monitor and learn.
- **Self-reflection and acknowledging power dynamics** are the first steps towards committing to address inequity in the partnerships. It is possible for global North and other powerful organisations to foster equitable partnerships where there is trust, mutual respect, flexibility, and accountability. Recognising different capabilities, knowledge systems, resources and languages can enable meaningful institutional support to smaller local and Indigenous organisations and give them space to make decisions and lead.
- **Open communication channels** are key to addressing inequity in partnerships. It is important for partnerships to create room for open communication between partnering organisations despite the discomfort that might arise, especially with having difficult conversations. Honest communication and feedback increase trust and provide opportunities to confront difficult issues and jointly find solutions. Being open to difficult conversations and acting on feedback, however, requires humility, transparency, accountability, honesty, and the acknowledgement of structural root causes of inequalities, including colonial legacies in the wider development sector.
- **Inclusion of different experiences and voices is key for sustainability of partnerships**. It is important to include voices of the different impact groups in the partnerships, which can include Indigenous Peoples' organisations and communities, grassroots organisations, and women and youth organisations, among others. Their voices and experiences matter. Thus, decentring the partnership's focus from the interests and agendas of the larger organisations to those with less power and enabling them to be part of decision making is key in ensuring equitable processes in the partnerships.
- **Address epistemic inequities in the partnerships.** There is a need to recognise non-Western knowledge systems. It has been noted that partnerships that discredit and trivialise non-Eurocentric knowledge frameworks promote power imbalances and inequities[9]. Such actions influence institutional practices through dominance and imposition of research agendas, inequalities in resource distribution, and extractive research partnerships, among others. Conversely, where Indigenous Peoples' knowledge systems and priorities are allowed to lead, this can lead to innovation and impact. The case studies also identify language as a source of inequity and a power dynamic. When grassroots organisations and Indigenous Peoples' organisations attend events or meetings to represent their constituencies, most often, the primary language is English, a second or third language for them, which can limit their ability to present their views effectively.

How IIED will use the lessons from the case studies

The lessons from the case studies will contribute to the final research report and contribute to the ethical and equitable partnerships framework which will be co-created with partners and allies. It will set out a common understanding of what equitable partnerships should look like, what the normative standards should be, and how the identified inequalities in this research project can be addressed to bring about reforms in IIED and the wider sector. The tool will also develop metrics to track equitable partnership practices and methods of accountability, that IIED and other institutions can adopt and use and continue learning together using the evidence generated.

[9] Gebremariam, EB (2022) The Primacy of Epistemic Justice for a Transformed Knowledge Production Ecosystem in Africa. https://parc.bristol.ac.uk/2022/04/26/the-primacy-of-epistemic-justice/

4. Case studies

4.1 Recognising institutional differences in collaborative partnerships; challenges and lessons from the 2050 Collective

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Partners	Huairou Commission (HC) Slum Dwellers International (SDI) Pastoralists Alliance for Resilience and Adaptation in Northern Rangelands (PARAN) Indigenous People's International Centre for Policy Research and Education (Tebtebba) Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) International Alliance of Waste Pickers Women's Climate Centers International (WCCI) International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) Global Resilience Partnership (GRP) Least Developed Countries Universities Consortium on Climate Change (LUCCC) Climate Justice Resilience Fund (CJRF)
Locations	Africa, Asia, Latin America, The Caribbean, Europe, North America
Type of partners	Grassroots organisations Social movements Universities Membership organisations Research organisations Funders
Time frame of the partnership	2019-2020

In 2019, IIED and several organisations started a partnership to advance grassroots-led collaboration and voice. In this case study, IIED and partners reflect on what did not work well and celebrate the strong approaches that emerged to address the challenges. Though the partnership has not formally continued, the organisations involved have maintained strong relationships that continue to thrive to date.

About the 2050 Collective partnership

The 2050 Collective was a multi-level partnership comprised of three types of organisations:

- Grassroots organisations and social movements
- Co-facilitators and intermediaries, which included IIED, GRP, ICCCAD and the LUCCC, and
- Allies, which were also funders, including the CJRF and the Ford Foundation. (The latter organisation left the Collective after realising that the Collective was not aligned with its interests.)

The 2050 Collective was envisioned as a long-term grassroots-led platform for collaboration, evidence generation and advocacy. Its long-term vision was to strengthen the capabilities of grassroots networks and social movements led by the poor and most vulnerable groups to increase resilience, adapt, and respond to climate risks.

The partnership initiation process

The initiative first emerged from a one-to-one discussion between CJRF and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors in 2017 during a conference call on climate finance with foundation representatives. Participants were interested in collaborating to find better ways of channelling funds to grassroots organisations.

Around the same time, IIED was finalising a Ford Foundation-commissioned paper on funding grassroots groups, which was to inform thinking about the partnership. Also at that time Slum Dwellers International (SDI) and the Huairou Commission, a women-led social movement of grassroots women's groups, were discussing how to work together.

In April 2019, at the 13th international conference on Community-Based Adaptation to Climate Change (CBA13) in Addis Ababa, IIED launched the Funds for the Frontier report, proposing a new climate finance framework to get more finance to local institutions. They also convened a "collective" of researchers and grassroots groups (including the Huairou Commission and SDI) with the aim of influencing global processes such as the Global Commission on Adaptation and the climate commitments being developed by the Least Developed Countries Group (LDCs). The Global Resilience Partnership was also holding its annual partners' meeting, and joint conversations led to the initial concept note, and an agreement to bring in grassroots organisations, paving the way for the 2050 Collective.

The partnership emerged in response to several external processes that offered important influencing opportunities for grassroots organisations and social movements to increase the recognition of their role in delivering climate action at scale. These high-level processes included the Global Commission on Adaptation (GCA) and UN Secretary-General António Guterres' call for a UN Climate Action Summit (UNCAS) in New York in September 2019. There was a recognition that LDCs and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) should have a voice in the adaptation track of UNCAS and in the GCA, and of the value of a platform to give grassroots and social movements greater visibility.

The following initial shared objectives were agreed:

- Developing shared messages drawing on learning of what works and evidence of the value of locally led interventions on adaptation
- Reimagining the architecture to govern and finance climate action - building shared language across social movements
- Pressing for more inclusive representation of grassroots women and men, young and old, in decision making and building the capabilities of local climate leadership for national and international influence
- Pressing for recognition of the limits of adaptation and how to support communities to thrive as they move to safe locations and livelihoods (including into urban centres).

Discussions at CBA13 explored which organisations might be interested in joining forces in a movement of movements. The organisations present shared their vision for a collective, their collective interests were grouped together, and a draft concept note emerged. Other grassroots organisations were invited after CBA.

At the same time, the GRP notified the organisations involved in the 2050 Collective that GRP was developing a proposal to the UK Department for International Development (DFID) (now the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, FCDO) to help catalyse and deliver significant outcomes on resilience and adaptation at UNCAS, with a focus on highlighting the voices of the least developed countries (LDCs). The partners in the collective thought that, rather than enabling a tokenistic participation at UNCAS, the potential support could and should nurture the concept of the collective. This led to IIED designing a component within GRP's proposal incorporating a sub-grant to IIED to

secure representation from organisations and to invest in time to facilitate dialogues between organisations and collective planning for advocacy.

IIED convened Listening and Learning virtual dialogues among representatives of the group of grassroots networks and federations; created interaction spaces to connect the group with climate decision makers and influencers from multilateral banks and funds, LDC representatives, philanthropists and research institutions; organised in-person planning meetings during London Climate Action Week in London and the UNCAS in New York, and coordinated the collective engagement at Resilient Future Day.

Observed manifestations of inequity in the partnership initiation and processes

While this partnership was strong, with all the right partners, some processes could have been better, as elaborated below**.**

1. Homogenising the different organisations in the partnership

The partnership included several grassroots social movements, but they did not have the same levels of capacity and influence. While some were large-scale movements, working across multiple countries with larger constituencies, others were smaller, newer and operating at smaller scales. They had different capabilities and capacities, and it emerged that their needs were also different. These differences emerged during the workshops aimed at defining priority focus areas for the partnership.

2. Power dynamics between the co-facilitator partners and grassroots organisations

The partnership featured co-facilitators and intermediaries. These included membership organisations like GRP, which has both global North and South members; ICCCAD, which is not a grassroots organisation but a global South organisation; and IIED. These were more powerful and influential than most of the grassroots organisations. Lack of clarity on the roles of the co-facilitators, with GRP both a fund manager or grantee and also a member of the 2050 Collective, was a problem. This manifested later in terms of roles and responsibilities and in terms of sharing resources to support the co-facilitators' (IIED and ICCCAD) time.

The partners held a workshop to develop a theory of change. A clear purpose emerged, and the partners drafted a plan for capacity building, but there were issues of legitimacy in the process. SDI and Huairou Commission, as larger social movements, questioned why the co-facilitators were supporting the process of organising social movements when they themselves were not social movements. They proposed a change in the governance of the Collective, suggesting that the Collective should include only organisations that were similar and of similar institutional maturity.

3. Challenges with decision making processes

The Collective received financial support via the DFID grant to GRP. This was part of the accountable grant for delivering actions and commitments on resilience for the UNCAS in September 2019. While the co-facilitators saw this as an opportunity for grassroots organisations to influence the outcomes at UNCAS, some organisations in the 2050 Collective, especially grassroots organisations felt that the funding could have supported investments in their constituencies rather than attending the global events.

While efforts were made to set norms for working together, the role of coordination, logistics and final decision making ended up sitting largely with IIED, which had accessed funds from GRP as part of the wider DFID funding for UNCAS.

4. Identity and recognition

The partners agreed to use the name '2050 Collective' for their joint identity, collective influence, and fundraising. However, some members felt that the 'Collective' name obscured the identities of the individual partners and, as a result, struggled to embrace it.

5. Challenges with co-designing

The nature of funding demands, the focus on UNCAS, and the timeline to apply for grants meant that there was not enough time to consult partners on the concept note that GRP submitted to DFID. Some members noted that the concept note for the Collective that had emerged from conversations had advanced without checking with the grassroots organisations to see what plans and strategies were already in play, which caused considerable discomfort – particularly as it was creating a mechanism parallel to similar efforts already underway and diluting grassroots partners' attention.

6. Different capabilities and inequity in the distribution of resources

There were inequities related to bigger organisations accessing funds within this partnership. The facilitating organisations (IIED and ICCCAD) engaged in a range of coordinating and facilitative roles, which included higher professional fees, and GRP as the grant manager also had administrative costs – as it is with every intermediary role.

There were also concerns about having to follow the rhythm and pace of global events with work plans (including distribution of resources) that relied on grassroots inputs but left grassroots organisations and their small secretariats struggling to create time to participate and contribute to collective discussions within timeframes that were not aligned to their workflows and capacities.

How the challenges in the partnership were resolved

Whilst there were many challenges, it was notable that this collective of organisations contributed and were highly visible at prioritised events such as the CBA conferences, London Climate Action Week, UNCAS, and so on. They contributed to the consultation processes for developing the principles for locally led adaptation, which were launched at the Climate Adaptation Summit, as well as in the design of the "club rules", such as committing to be part of the annual LLA learning journey.

The partnership facilitated some difficult but respectful conversations. Below, we set out the approaches taken.

Open communication channels

The 2050 Collective encouraged open communication despite the discomfort of managing difficult conversations. Members of the partnership provided feedback to the co-facilitators in meetings or in writing, which helped them confront the issues and resolve them. IIED hosted meetings during London Climate Week that created a space for open, candid discussions about expectations and roles, and allowed organisations to get to know each other in terms of their values, expertise, and commitment to the original purpose of the partnership.

Embracing a collective identity

The partners had initially pushed back against having one name, given their different identities. They were not sure of the implications of the proposal for having one identity as the Collective and what role each individual organisation would have in it. However, it was agreed later that partners could advance common messages in forums like UNCAS and UN COPs and would be stronger together than as individual organisations.

Re-defining roles and agenda setting.

Some of the grassroots organisations and social movements were concerned that there would be duplication of what they were already doing if they were not fully engaged in decision making. A fair amount of time was used to unravel the relationship between the different efforts, especially related to decision making and agenda setting. In the end, multiple lines of collaboration between different organisations were explored and served to build a track record of open communication and trust.

"Today, in part because of the above experience and the patience brought to its resolution, IIED stands as one of our most valued partners, and we are much more agile in setting out common plans based on shared principles.'' – Glenn Dolcemascolo, Huairou Commission

Acting on feedback

During the final period of the DFID grant to GRP, IIED made a shift in approach to the 2050 Collective, also listening to concerns from SDI and the Huairou Commission. Instead of bringing all the organisations with different power and interests together, some of whom already felt that the grouping was forced, one-to-one meetings with participating organisations were held to understand their interests, priorities and what they wanted to do after the DFID grant to GRP ended. With this background information, IIED grouped interests together and realised that the Huairou Commission and SDI had similar interests related to accessing climate funds and establishing relationships with decision makers. As a result, the Frontline Funds Accelerator (FFA), which had started in parallel discussions with CJRF, Ford Foundation, GRP and IIED, was rejuvenated and has been central in defining the LLA principles and initiating the LLA community of practice.

Continued Engagement between the 2050 Collective partners

Collaboration and communication via a WhatsApp group with partners has continued, including conversations about joint research projects, amplifying demands for recognition of land rights in advocacy spaces, access to funding during COVID-19, and engaging in global events, as well as working together on the LLA agenda.

Using allyship to facilitate internal processes.

Due to the small budget, there was limited funding to facilitate proper consultative processes, which never get funded. CJRF offered to contract an external facilitator to support processes of co-designing workplans and strategies for the FFA. These processes helped FFA partners to understand how to manage the relationship with clear roles.

Key lessons

- Partnerships need to start with a mutual knowledge and recognition of the priorities, interests and challenges of the member organisations. Often, funding opportunities rush organisations to form alliances with organisations that do not know each other's priorities, interests and challenges.
- Partnerships need to be built on shared objectives which strengthen the added value of working together and where all partners benefit and are able to play an active role in the partnership.
- Adopting open, transparent approaches to structuring budgets based on multiple levels of input is key, including valuing the time of grassroots organisations.
- Flexible funding is key in facilitating equitable partnership approaches, given that funding for partnership processes is never planned for - or included - in grants. The CJRF support enabled processes of co-design of the FFA.
- Trust and open communication with sufficient time to develop partnerships is vital to resolve any emerging issues.
- Some partners observe that the use of language is another power dynamic. Grassroots organisations participated in a number of global events, but the dominant language at these events was English, which was not their first language, and some struggled to follow the discussions. This raises a question about the extent to which grassroots organisations can be effectively represented in global forums.

4.2 The Least Developed Countries Initiative for Adaptation and Resilience partnership; challenging business-as-usual approaches

Authors

Gebru Jember Endalew (LDC Technical Lead, LIFE-AR); Sarah McIvor (senior researcher, IIED's Climate Change Group); Clare Shakya (director of strategic impact, IIED)

Partners	Initiative led by Least Developed Countries (LDC) Group on Climate Change partnering with: Six Least Developed Countries (Malawi, Uganda, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Bhutan, and Burkina Faso) International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) Eleven international partners (UK, Ireland, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States)
Location	Least Developed Countries
Type of partners	Governments National NGOs
Time frame of the partnership	Ten years (has been running for four years)

Background and context

The least developed countries (LDCs) are 46 low-income countries identified by the UN as being highly vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks. In 2019, the LDCs launched the LDC Initiative for Effective Adaptation and Resilience (LIFE-AR) to deliver their Vision for all LDCs to be on climate-resilient development pathways by 2030 and deliver net-zero emissions by 2050.

LIFE-AR is an LDC-led and LDC-owned initiative which aims to support a shift away from business-as-usual approaches to a more effective, more ambitious climate response that ensures support reaches the most vulnerable countries and communities, with no-one left behind.

This LIFE-AR partnership is about changing how the climate action and development space operates, including equitable partnerships paving the way for more equitable ways of working at international, national, and local levels. The ambition of LIFE-AR is to offer a clear demonstration of the value of shifting away from business-as-usual top-down approaches where external experts propose solutions, to one where experts listen to, recognise and appreciate countries and communities deep contextual understanding of how to tackle the fundamental drivers of vulnerability.

Recognising that achieving the LDC Vision will require strong partnership, the Vision includes an 'ask' to the international community. This ask is to work together with LDCs as equals to support delivery of the LDC 2050 Vision. This includes providing long-term and predictable finance to help realise the plans and systems being put in place. The ask is also for development partners to work with the LDCs to reduce transaction costs and improve efficiency of support, with rules and procedures built on transparency and mutual accountability. The LDCs hope that, collectively with development partners, there will be reform of how climate action is delivered, that centres vulnerable communities and countries, including through reform of the climate finance system so that international finance flows to systemic and distributed climate action with effective accountability to both funders and recipient communities.

Six Front Runner Countries including Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Uganda, Malawi, Bhutan and The Gambia are currently leading on establishing LIFE-AR in-country by designing and strengthening delivery mechanisms that will incentivise and support climate action across society. This involves innovating in how support is provided to enable a shift away from business-as-usual practice and setting the direction for the delivery of the LDC Vision, pioneering approaches consistent with their national priorities and contexts, and generating learning for other LDCs, development partners and global finance providers.

Eleven international development partners have signed up to the LIFE-AR Partnership Compact and are looking at ways they can embed business unusual in how they work, including through minimising the reporting burden placed on LDCs through joint reporting, encouraging others to adopt the LIFE-AR principles and through listening to the needs of LDC communities and working together with LDC governments, ensuring an appropriate response.

LIFE-AR's purpose has been defined by the LDCs' 2050 Vision. And the LDCs have defined and drive this Vision, which charts out their journey towards a climate resilient future by 2050, in response to their needs and priorities. On this journey, they do not merely ask for planning and coordination support. They do not seek single-project, short-term funding. Instead, they aim to build the institutional systems and capabilities needed for long-term transformative change.

Partnership process

IIED has been working as a partner to the LDC Group for more than 20 years, working to strengthen the position of LDCs in international climate negotiations and related global forums. IIED provides legal, technical and strategic advice, and research support to the LDC Group in the UNFCCC process, collaborating with and responding to the LDC chair, the LDC elders and the thematic leads of the LDC Group's team of negotiators in delivering the work.

IIED was invited by the LDC chair's office to the LIFE-AR partnership to serve as the (interim) Secretariat and host for LIFE-AR. IIED will hold this temporary position while supporting the LDC Group to establish a longer-term LDC-owned legal entity. The invitation builds on IIED's existing work with the LDC Group, a long-term relationship which has built a strong foundation of trust between the two partners.

LIFE-AR is guided by a principles-based partnership. In inviting the international community to support the delivery of the LDC's 2050 Vision and respond to the shared ambition of the offer and ask, the LDC Group developed a set of partnership principles to guide their work under LIFE-AR. The LDCs first invited the international community to sign the partnership compact in 2019, at COP25 in Madrid. At each COP since then, further development partners have joined. Each institution that signs the compact is signalling their commitment to the LDC Vision, the LIFE-AR strategy and their commitment to delivering against the shared partnership principles.

The principles underpinning LIFE-AR include:

Equality: between LDCs and the international community, and between government and non-government actors, involving equal decision-making and mutual accountability that values all contributions to generate shared solutions.

Integration: uniting sectors and actors horizontally and vertically to deliver whole-of-society action through long-term planning and programmes. Donors and climate funds can play their part by improving their collaboration and integration and by simplifying procedures to minimise burden.

Ownership: emboldening LDCs and their communities to lead on the development of climate solutions, following their direction, guidance and pace, and working with existing LDC institutions, structures and systems in-country to build sustainable capabilities for delivery.

Local action: placing this at the centre, with a target of 70% of finance flowing to the local level to support climate action on the ground in the LDCs by 2030.

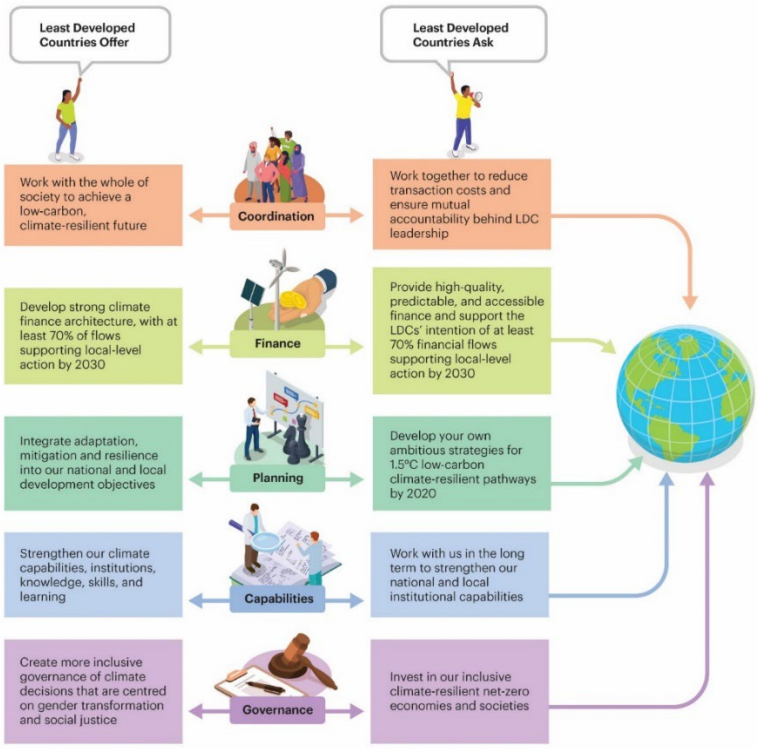
Inclusion: leaving no country and no one behind, challenging social barriers that exclude and limit people's potential with a focus on gender transformation and social justice.

"In Uganda, we're ensuring wide representation from across society in LIFE-AR's governance structures. That includes government institutions such as the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development, the Ministry of Local Government and Uganda Meteorological Agency, as well as

representatives from local government authorities. We are also including academia from Makerere University.''[10] — Joseph Epitu, LIFE-AR Uganda Focal Point

The governance of LIFE-AR has been designed to respond to the partnership principles, with the LDC leadership providing oversight and technical support, and leading the LIFE-AR Board and its bodies. Development partners are part of the Board, and LDCs and the international community have equal voice in contributing to how the initiative is run. But the LDC's leadership of LIFE-AR ensures inclusive decision making and maintains the fundamental right of this being an LDC-focused initiative. The LDC Group decided on the offers by the LDCs and the asks to the international community, thereby ensuring that each group is clear on their roles and contribution to the partnership following direction of LDCs.

Fig.1. LDC offers and asks to the international community



Source: IIED/LIFE-AR Partnership

Equity in the partnership

Equitable partnerships bring in the full range of perspectives from different constituencies to the table, are aware of power dynamics and seek to address them so that all partners are included and play their part. The LDC-led approaches and ways of working create a space for LDC voices and priorities to be listened to, heard, and inform direction and decision making. This is opposite to the top-down, externally driven approaches common in international development spaces.

We have had the privilege of observing LIFE-AR Board meetings where decisions are informed by a range of perspectives. LDC representatives are also gaining confidence to lead and make decisions, recognising that different approaches are needed in different countries due to the diversity of contexts and challenges. The LDCs are much closer to the challenges being discussed, therefore their perspectives of what solutions will work are vital and must be heard and recognised equally with the voices of development partners. This also includes international organisations such as IIED that are not based in-country and therefore do not have the relevant lived experience of climate impacts in the LDCs.

[10] IIED, Q&A: LIFE-AR in Uganda gets local climate finance flowing with decentralised model. www.iied.org/qa-life-ar-uganda-gets-local-climate-finance-flowing-decentralised-model

"Meanwhile, climate solutions are often developed by experts in countries or cities far from where they are implemented, overlooking the expertise of local communities or authorities. Unsurprisingly, these top-down approaches often fail. Despite the LDCs' decades-long experience in tackling the climate crisis, the door is still closed to the very communities and countries whose expertise the world would benefit from most." — Gebru Jember Endalew, technical lead, LIFE-AR

LDCs understand the contexts and local realities and contribute technical and strategic expertise. In its first few years, LIFE-AR has been able to demonstrate the huge value of shared decision making and debate, where the inclusion of diverse perspectives from a range of stakeholders helps to inform better understanding and decisions.

The partnership principles consider equity in decision making and reporting: both the LDCs and the donors report on progress in addressing the asks and offers, which is not a common practice. The partnership also specifically considers the need to work at the pace of LDCs, so work is not driven by short term externally set timeframes but can benefit from a longer term more strategic vision to deal with and respond to complex challenges.

There is a strong commitment to leave no country and no one behind, with LDCs offering to create more inclusive governance of climate decisions centred on gender transformation and social justice. While this work is still in progress, the principles provide an opportunity to address structural challenges to delivering equity in the partnership.

"…A second challenge is around securing the participation of marginalised groups. There is a long history of women, youth and marginalised groups being side-lined in society, and they are heavily underrepresented in leadership roles. For instance, we recommended that members to the governance structures of the LIFE-AR programme be selected from officers at the level of Principal and Assistant Commissioner and above for the task team and steering committee respectively. Unfortunately, there are very few women, and even fewer representatives from marginalised groups, who sit at this level within government. So, this is a challenge we're grappling with."[11] — Joseph Epitu, LIFE-AR Uganda Focal Point

There is still work to be done in creating equitable partnerships and strengthening relationships, even within the LIFE-AR partnership. The power dynamic between those that hold the money, and therefore power, and those that do not, persists. There is still work to do to tackle this. At the very least, to ensure all decisions are made openly and transparently and everyone understands each other's perspectives and where the room to innovate is. Applying the principles of the LIFE-AR partnership compact is vital to address the power dynamics.

Key lessons and recommendations to strengthen equitable partnerships

There is need for organisations to remain alert to the power they hold and to be aware when there is a need to step back and let others make the decision or lead. This is work in progress.

Working in 'business unusual' ways is not easy but could strengthen equitable partnerships through challenging the status quo. It is hard; mistakes will be made. We need to own these mistakes and adjust every time. Investing in being open, honest, and reflective is essential. It involves unlearning our experiences and reflecting on the power we hold both as individuals, as governments and as an international institute working in this space. It is largely about changing behaviour and systems. We are up against established structures, systems, and mindsets; it will take time to change these. We have learnt that:

- It is important to identify LIFE-AR champions and co-produce evidence of what works so that they can influence within the systems they work in and externally with other relevant actors, to promote business unusual ways of working.

[11] IIED, Q&A: LIFE-AR in Uganda gets local climate finance flowing with decentralised model. www.iied.org/qa-life-ar-uganda-gets-local-climate-finance-flowing-decentralised-model

- Building and maintaining trust is vital and requires strong communication and diplomacy skills, working with humility, equality, transparency and honesty.
- Money is power. Those in control of resources often have the upper hand. Creating platforms that are genuinely 'equal' continues to be difficult and requires learning and unlearning to ensure that those close to the local problems provide the solutions.
- IIED should continue to undertake self-reflection to better understand its role in the wider sector and acknowledge the power dynamics in order to work as allies of LDCs and communities most affected by the climate crisis.
- Shared principles in a partnership provide a useful reminder of what we are all trying to achieve. The LIFE-AR principles provide clarity of what each partner has signed up to. Frequent reporting against these principles by all parties is a useful tool for accountability to the values and commitments of the partnership.

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4.3 Ethical partnerships case study: Asociación ANDES Peru

Authors

Alejandro Argumedo (director of programmes at Asociacion ANDES, Peru, and Andes-Amazon Lead at the Swift Foundation); Krystyna Swiderska (principal researcher in IIED's Natural Resources Group); Tammy Stenner (director of the Pluriversity Programme at Asociacion ANDES, Peru)

Partners	ANDES – the Association for Nature and Sustainable Development and the Potato Park communities IIED
Location	Peru
Type of partners	Indigenous People's organisation and Indigenous communities
Time frame of the partnership	25 years

Background and context

ANDES – the Association for Nature and Sustainable Development - is an Indigenous NGO based in Cusco, Peru. ANDES aims to protect the rights, livelihoods, biocultural heritage, agrobiodiversity and food systems of Indigenous Peoples in the Andes and worldwide, focusing strongly on decolonial approaches. We work together and in partnership with Indigenous communities in the Andes and worldwide to conduct decolonial and emancipatory action-research, support the establishment of self-determined biocultural territories, facilitate horizontal learning exchanges based on traditional knowledge, and influence global policies.

IIED's partnership with ANDES emerged through relationships between two IIED researchers (Michel Pimbert and Krystyna Swiderska) and Alejandro Argumedo, the founder and co-director of ANDES. IIED's first direct contract with ANDES as a partner was through a project coordinated by Pimbert on "Sustaining local food systems, agricultural biodiversity and livelihoods", which started in 2001. From the start, the idea was to shift from the prevailing extractive research model to a more reciprocal relationship – a reciprocity knowledge network rooted in local paradigms of Indigenous Peoples.

Through this and subsequent projects, IIED has worked with ANDES to support the establishment and scaling out of the Andean Potato Park and promote recognition of 'biocultural heritage' – a concept which reflects the holistic Indigenous worldview – in global policies on biodiversity and traditional knowledge. The Potato Park biocultural heritage territory is a globally recognised successful example of Indigenous agrobiodiversity restoration and ecosystem conservation. The partnership between ANDES, the Potato Park and IIED supported the development of decolonising and emancipatory action-research methodologies and led to a number of innovations. These include ground-breaking agreements for repatriating 400 native potato varieties from a gene bank (International Potato Centre) in 2004 and for depositing the Park's potato collection in the Svalbard Seed Vault in Norway (2015), as well as the development of the Park's inter-community agreement, a community protocol for collective governance and equitable benefit-sharing based on customary laws.

In 2014, IIED worked with ANDES to support the establishment of INMIP – the International Network of Mountain Indigenous Peoples - which ANDES coordinates. IIED continues to provide support to INMIP, a network of mountain communities and partners in 13 countries, particularly for global report writing, communications and fundraising. INMIP has created a 'knowledge tapestry' approach, where multiple types of knowledge are interwoven. It has built community capacity to establish biocultural territories through five global horizontal learning exchanges in mountain communities (in Bhutan, Tajikistan, China, Peru and Kyrgyzstan). It has also amplified the voices of mountain communities in UN policy processes on climate change, biodiversity, food and water through several INMIP Declarations, webinars and side events with live-streamed presentations by communities from mountain landscapes.

Partnership process

The partnership was initiated because IIED and ANDES were both working on traditional knowledge, genetic resources and local food systems and shared similar goals on protecting Indigenous People's rights and reclaiming autonomy through emancipatory methodologies. Both partners recognised that working with communities that have been oppressed for many years due to racism requires a liberating approach to rebuild self-esteem and confidence in their own knowledge systems and identity that have been destroyed. As Argumedo explained: "racism is not just about skin colour but about how people despise the knowledge system." This shared vision laid the groundwork for our collaboration. The partnership and how the research was framed was founded on principles of self-determination, emancipation, knowledge reciprocity and a local-to-global approach rooted in Indigenous models and paradigms:

"Pimbert was the first person to establish a partnership based on trust, allowing the local organisations and communities to fully define the research agenda and control how the funds were used and administered. This enabled ANDES to confront systemic inequities in research and inherent power imbalances between Northern and Southern organizations, resulting in a healthier, more equitable and decolonial partnership. On a practical level, it meant multi-year unrestricted funding, which allowed community innovations such as the Potato Park to emerge, streamlined reporting, and fostered relationships based on transparency, dialogue and mutual learning" (Argumedo).

Swiderska first met Argumedo in 1998 at the IUCN Global Biodiversity Forum ahead of the Biodiversity Convention (CBD) COP4 in Bratislava. They met again through an IIED workshop on traditional knowledge policy in Peru in 1999 and at CBD COP5 in 2000, where Argumedo proposed that they develop a project together to explore the role of customary laws in protecting traditional knowledge. Swiderska at IIED valued Argumedo's in-depth knowledge and radical vision, while Argumedo valued Swiderska's writing ability for fundraising and policy advocacy, and their intellectual connection formed the basis for initiating a partnership. There was no specific discussion to co-define roles, but they saw mutual benefits of working together.

For the traditional knowledge project, there were other partners in Panama, Kenya, India and China – but ANDES proposed the project, played a key role in its design, helped identify the partner in Kenya and approached its donor contact in IDRC for funding. Meanwhile IIED drafted the project proposal and identified other in-country partners (with IDRC). ANDES hosted the project planning workshop in Cusco and led the development of its conceptual framework – the biocultural heritage concept. Much of the funding was for in-country work by local partners and communities – ANDES worked closely with Quechua community researchers in the Potato Park who co-developed decolonising methods and tools and facilitated the action-research activities. ANDES also provided intellectual guidance for the project as a whole (for example, through annual project workshops) and worked closely with IIED to inform and influence global policies. ANDES prepared a draft case study report, which IIED edited, published and helped disseminate. The report was co-authored by ANDES, the Potato Park communities and IIED. This action-research in the Potato Park developed an inter-community agreement for equitable benefit-sharing based on customary laws that require balance and reciprocity with nature and social equity. The agreement forms the basis for collective governance by six communities and for a solidarity economy in the Potato Park, where 10% of revenues from various micro-enterprises are shared equitably through a communal fund and used to reward stewardship and support an administrator. The project findings also informed CBD policy guidance for developing sui generis regimes to protect traditional knowledge.

The partnership between IIED and ANDES was largely based on the relationships between Pimbert and Swiderska at IIED and Argumedo at ANDES and has continued to date through Swiderska (Pimbert left IIED in 2012).

The partnership with Swiderska evolved over the years through learning by doing, as she gained a deeper understanding of how to promote decolonial and emancipatory approaches. Through the partnership, Swiderska has learnt what it means to work ethically with local Indigenous organisations and communities – shifting from co-creating projects and basing proposals on partner inputs while maintaining some control over decisions through project coordination, to recognising ANDES leadership in decision making throughout the project cycle and beyond individual projects.

This transition has happened gradually over the years, facilitated by Argumedo's assertiveness and the two-way learning nature of the relationship (rather than top-down), which enabled an ethical and decolonial partnership to emerge. But there have also been instances where ANDES (Argumedo) has challenged IIED (Swiderska) or refused to engage unless things were done differently, such as adopting more community-led and decolonial approaches in our partnership and broader work with Indigenous Peoples. Despite these tensions, the partnership has endured due to a strong common vision, mutual respect and friendship. Stenner (ANDES) says: "IIED (Swiderska) now supports ANDES in a different way, more as colleagues, and better understands the work we do", for example, the critical importance of investing time and resources in co-design and training workshops with community researchers, and of developing proposals that are as broad and flexible as possible. Acknowledging that the process of working together has been important and not just the results, has also helped maintain the partnership. There has been room for disagreement, for adapting methods to the local context, flexibility in terms of participants, and so on.

Equity in the partnership

Despite being a UK-based organisation, IIED took a local-to-global approach from the start that enabled Indigenous models and responses to challenges to be translated into policy and fostered equity in the partnership. IIED helped to bridge the gap between ANDES and the Potato Park and international organisations, using all possible opportunities and different tools to promote local sovereignty and self-determination. The Potato Park's innovative direct collaboration agreements with CIP and with Svalbard (part of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, known as the FAO Plant Treaty) helped create a system whereby self-determination can be implemented. Although IIED did not directly support the agreement with Svalbard, it emerged as a result of the decolonial and emancipatory partnership approach.

A knowledge reciprocity and tapestry approach creates the basis for equitable partnership because it fosters trust between partners, creates self-esteem and a strong feeling of self-determination, and fosters transparency. Equity means allowing local control – not just in defining knowledge management or research agendas so that local people can include their ideas but also in the management of funds – that is important for recognition and trust building. Once there is a trust-based partnership, creativity and innovation emerge. Equity means giving local people the freedom to be creative. It also means a commitment to supporting local struggles for social justice: Argumedo says: "Pimbert and I were activists, not just researchers". This decolonial partnership model has provided the basis for creativity and innovation in local hands, which in turn has led to significant policy impacts (see Outcomes below).

Equity is not the same as equality – equity acknowledges different starting points, such as dominant versus marginalised knowledge systems. For a partnership with an Indigenous organisation to be ethical and equitable, this means recognising the need to undo colonisation and to privilege Indigenous knowledge systems that have been suppressed in order to make different knowledge systems equal as the endpoint.

A key principle that guides our work is the importance of community leadership, which has influenced the work from the start, along with decolonisation. Leadership of ANDES' work by Indigenous Peoples is important as an Indigenous organisation. ANDES' Tammy Stenner says: "non-Indigenous staff and partners need to ensure they are not leading or making decisions from their own perspective". So, for a partnership with an Indigenous organisation to be equitable and ethical, this means going beyond equal decision-making and co-creation to promoting leadership by Indigenous partners and communities, particularly given the need to undo colonisation and ongoing coloniality which is eroding traditional knowledge – a problem which this partnership has sought to address.

Although IIED coordinates projects and provides funding, the Institute is not the primary decision maker. Strategic decisions about our work with ANDES and global engagement on biocultural heritage are made by or with ANDES. This demonstrates that the partnership is decolonial, equitable and ethical. Any piece of work (such as a briefing paper or a proposal) usually starts with a conversation where Argumedo shares his vision, ideas and guidance, and Swiderska then prepares a draft for ANDES to comment on. IIED uses the concept of biocultural heritage – which was first proposed by ANDES and Quechua communities – as the framework for its work on traditional knowledge and agrobiodiversity.

This means that IIED does not impose a Euro-Western worldview or agenda, even though it provides the funding, and ensures that IIED's work supports Indigenous cosmovision, values and methods.

The long-term nature of the relationship between IIED and ANDES (about 25 years) is a good practice feature that has enabled a more ethical partnership to emerge. In short-term partnerships lasting a year, for example, it is difficult to get to know one another well and build momentum for a strong partnership that endures beyond projects and is, therefore, ethical and decolonial. Also, timelines for project-based funding often do not coincide with community timeframes, whereas long-term relationships allow for longer-term planning and implementation of more complex projects. IIED projects lasting four to five years have enabled more holistic and complex projects that are centred on capacity building for communities to co-design and facilitate research which underpins the decolonising action-research approach developed by ANDES and Quechua communities. The long-term relationship has also enabled IIED to better reflect the priorities, plans and ideas of ANDES and its community partners in funding proposals with short application timeframes. It has enabled us to identify appropriate funding sources and partners together and to build mutual respect and value our respective contributions and skills.

IIED staff's ability to speak Spanish has also facilitated an ethical partnership; speaking the same language has enabled us to communicate more easily and transparently with Quechua communities and ANDES staff. Language can be a barrier – things can get lost in translation, and English is not the best way to share research results with Indigenous People in Peru who speak little English. IIED has also been open to different knowledge systems and ways of learning and knowing – such as the Indigenous concepts of Sumaq Kausay and Ayllu (holistic wellbeing) and the use of oral methods – which could otherwise pose a challenge.

Donor rules can be a challenge for ANDES. Few donors provide institutional support for office costs, overheads and support staff, and it is hard to cover these costs and find funding to explore emerging opportunities. The SWIFT Foundation has been very good at covering these costs by providing very broad and general support. IIED has also been good at providing funds to cover ANDES running costs beyond particular outputs through its flexible funding and by developing broad funding proposals. IIED has also covered the costs of several community researchers and the processes to train them (they don't have training like university researchers). The partnership has also demonstrated ethical partnership practice by acknowledging the contribution of ANDES and the Potato Park communities in co-authoring publications, for example.

Outcomes

The benefits of the decolonial, emancipatory and long-term partnership are observable through the impacts of the work at policy level and on the ground. The policy impacts are significant because the Potato Park's innovations are widely regarded as models – including the repatriation agreement with CIP, the Svalbard deposition agreement and the Inter-community agreement (community protocol). The Svalbard agreement has given ANDES and the Potato Park a seat at the table in discussions about the FAO Plant Treaty. The decolonial and emancipatory partnership approach also led the Potato Park communities to declare the Potato Park a GMO-free zone, and this prompted the government of Cusco and other regional governments to do the same, culminating in a national moratorium on GMOs in Peru for about 20 years. The communities also proposed the introduction of the National Day of the Potato, which has been enshrined in law.

The Potato Park communities have gained strong organisation and capacity and have resisted the impacts of neoliberal policies by influencing the introduction of new laws, defending their land rights against mining, tripling native potato diversity and revitalising Andean culture, leading to enhanced food security and climate resilience. These impacts and strong community ownership and their self-sustainability beyond projects can be attributed to the decolonising action-research approach. Funders do not always support ANDES' policy work (for example, on developing regional laws/ordinances), but this work has been important for achieving the broader vision of decolonisation.

IIED staff working with ANDES have also learnt about ethical and decolonial ways of working with Indigenous Peoples more broadly (for example, ensuring that workshops involving Indigenous Peoples have at least 50% Indigenous presenters in each session).

For ANDES, the benefits of the partnership include its ability to influence IIED to enhance its support for biocultural heritage and Indigenous research methods, and advance thinking on decolonisation and ethical partnerships.

Conclusion

The IIED-ANDES partnership has shown that ethical partnerships with local Indigenous organisations and communities should be founded on principles of decolonisation, emancipation, reciprocity and self-determination, and can generate considerable innovation and impact. Such partnerships go beyond 'co-design' and equal/joint decision making, or Indigenous leadership in some aspects but not others, to handing over decision making to local organisations and communities throughout the project cycle. Research priorities, themes and methods are framed by Indigenous communities so as to reaffirm and revitalise Indigenous knowledge systems that have been marginalised and suppressed.

This partnership has demonstrated that it is possible for IIED to hand over decision making to a large extent where there is trust, mutual respect, flexible funding and a relationship that transcends projects. It has highlighted the importance of providing institutional support to small Indigenous NGOs (which struggle to cover core costs and have minimal reserves), of supporting leadership by Indigenous community researchers (co-design and capacity building workshops), ensuring accountability to community authorities (as well as to particular projects), speaking and publishing in local languages, and recognising the contributions of Indigenous partners and communities (for example, through co-authorship). Key facilitating factors have been the decolonial and emancipatory approach, the long-term nature of the partnership, and having a strong and assertive Indigenous partner and a two-way learning relationship.

4.4 Effectiveness of long-term partnerships; lessons from SDI and IIED partnership addressing urban challenges

Authors

Marcelle Mardon (researcher, IIED's Human Settlements Group); Joseph Kimani (executive director, SDI Kenya); Patience Mudimu-Matsangaise (executive director, Dialogue on Shelter for the Homeless in Zimbabwe Trust); Boel McAteer (researcher, IIED's Human Settlements Group)

Partners	Slum Dwellers International (SDI): Dialogue on Shelter affiliate SDI Kenya affiliate International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)
Locations	Zimbabwe, Kenya, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Nigeria Malawi, Namibia, Ghana, India, South Africa Secretariat, Cape Town
Type of partners	Global social network of slum dwellers
Time frame of the partnership	1996 (27 years)

Background and context

Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI) is a global network of slum dwellers with national affiliates in more than 18 countries and partnered by national support NGOs working to give communities spaces for representation and voice in decision making. SDI's partnership with the Human Settlements Group at IIED was set up to ensure that IIED's work on urban environmental issues legitimately includes the voices of vulnerable and marginalised communities that it aims to support, and for SDI to provide these communities with greater influence over local, national, and global pro-poor policy.

Partnership process

In 1977, IIED set up the Human Settlements programme with the aim of documenting and reviewing commitments made by the global community to recognise urban informality at the first UN Conference on Human Settlements (or Habitat I), held in Vancouver in 1976. IIED's subsequent assessment highlighted not only a lack of progress by governments but also a lack of engagement with representative movements and organisations already addressing the challenges with innovative solutions.

During the 1980s, IIED focused on building partnerships with urban poor networks across Africa, Asia and Latin America, collaboratively carrying out action research programmes to address housing and infrastructure deficits in vulnerable urban neighbourhoods. In 1996, community federations in 11 countries agreed to create the SDI global platform, setting in motion the IIED/SDI partnership that continues to be a cornerstone of IIED's urban agenda, sharing common objectives centred on placing the urban poor at the heart of decision making for equitable and sustainable urban development.

Operationally, the IIED/SDI partnership works at three levels. At settlement level, IIED works with affiliates and federations to directly tackle challenges and implement solutions. At city level, the partnership supports settlement integration into city planning, collaborating with local government and other important stakeholders, and finally, working at global level with the SDI secretariat and across all affiliates through co-produced research papers and advocacy for pro-poor policies based on local realities.

"The essence of partnerships with common interests is to co-produce interventions with outcomes that will meet the individual organisation's needs, while having separate agendas, by combining strengths and minimising weaknesses." — Patience Mudimu-Matsangaise, SDI affiliate Dialogue on Shelter, Harare

One of IIED's roles is to support the directing of resources, not only towards community-led development strategies but also to provide flexible funding towards improving living conditions in

settlements. SDI has the role of organising, supporting and implementing projects with the federations, providing data and analysis that feeds into global discussions for the network as well as contributing to pro-poor policy discussions with decision makers. Final research outputs are co-produced and disseminated, amplifying key messages across all available research platforms and recognising all partners contributions through co-authorship.

Knowledge creation is a key element of this partnership and led to establishment of the widely distributed and read journal Environment and Urbanization (E+U) in 1989. The journal continues to play an important role in providing a platform for those directly representing disadvantaged communities to document and share learnings on urban poverty reduction with global audiences, most importantly in the global South.

Today, the partnership goes beyond tackling urban poverty to further understand, discuss and consider solutions to pressing urban crises such as experiences of climate change and forced displacement in cities, framed through the perspective of individual SDI affiliates working closely with several research groups at IIED.

Equity in the partnership

Patience Mudimu-Matsangaise notes that partners work directly with SDI affiliates over long periods, and relationships are based on mutual appreciation and respect, resulting in greater impact and depth of material produced.

"They [SDI] question the relevance (or even legitimacy) of some of the research methodologies we use. They raise questions that we often find uncomfortable, including who has the legitimacy to speak about the needs and priorities of urban poor groups. They bring a much-needed critical focus regarding what research is needed on urban problems and how it should be undertaken, but this can also question the legitimacy of what we plan to do." — David Satterthwaite, IIED Senior Associate and former Director of the Human Settlements Group

Another SDI affiliate, SDI Kenya, highlights that operationally, the strengths of partnership with IIED have manifested through co-designing and negotiation processes at the initial stages of research projects. This has allowed them to align projects to their goals and objectives and informed ongoing programmes.

Tasks and responsibilities have then been distributed accordingly, taking advantage of the distinct, yet complementary, skill-sets based on strengths and technical input for mutually beneficial outcomes.

The IIED/ SDI partnership has many successes, but one of its most significant achievements has been the decentralisation of finance that allowed SDI affiliates and federations to decide on how and where to allocate funding. This was facilitated by the setting up of the International Urban Poor Fund in 2001. Originally handled by IIED and SDI, the fund is now fully managed and administered by SDI affiliates and their federations. This has paved the way for opening up direct engagement between SDI and donors to continue financing upgrading settlements and support local level climate action.

Challenges

Despite efforts to co-produce and co-design, the partnership is inevitably affected by the fact that one partner (IIED) operates from the global North, and the other (SDI) from the global South. This creates an imbalance of power. IIED is working to decolonise planning structures that are driven from the top down and still inform development processes. This work is ultimately about knowledge production and addressing hierarchies that continue to reproduce Eurocentric knowledge, hence the successful establishment of the E+U journal more than 30 years ago, committed to ensuring a space for authors from the global South to be heard.

IIED has made great strides towards using its global North positioning to successfully demand space for SDI to engage directly with global decision makers and donors, but further action is needed. As climate change adaptation becomes a key focus area for SDI, more support is needed to push for decentralised climate finance that will see SDI involved not only in decision making processes but also managing the resources at the local level.

Successfully collaborating with partners to collect data may lead to positive outcomes for each project, but the bigger partnership questions centre on how we set our research agendas together, and how these agendas include community voices considering what they want and need to know about themselves. To actively change the colonial dynamic, direct engagement with federation members is needed, as well as ensuring that issues are well communicated from the community and back again in local languages.

"When each partner's contribution is acknowledged and respected, it promotes mutual respect and encouragement. Local partners have contributed their time, passion, empathy, and agenda setting in the reform space just as much as others." — Joseph Kimani, SDI affiliate SDI Kenya, Nairobi.

There are also differences between partners in operational capacities and the resources dedicated to human resources and management, which makes it difficult to be fully equal. If IIED and SDI could move towards joint funding processes at the outset of projects, it would address unequal power distribution within resource control and allocation and help ensure goals are realistic and achievable for all. Finally, while the SDI/IIED partnership at the institutional level evolves, there is a need to consider relationships at the individual level: providing further spaces for nurturing and building trust while maintaining continuity for incoming and outgoing members of staff.

Outcomes of equitable partnerships

The long-standing partnership between SDI and IIED has generated lessons that can be applied more broadly to north-south collaborations on research and programming in support of poor and marginalised communities, including the co-creation of knowledge and collaboration practices.

For SDI, the partnership continues to support the goal of influencing global policy makers on behalf of the urban poor. IIED has supported SDI to access new spaces for dialogue and learning, such as the World Urban Forum, negotiated with donors to decentralise development and climate finance to the local level, and provides data and research to support SDI's aims. IIED's support in gathering, documenting and disseminating SDI research through publications means work carried out across the network contributes to strengthening peer learning and replication across affiliates, a core component of SDI's work.

For IIED, the partnership provides a corresponding connection to the grassroots, which supports research and ensures it remains relevant to the urban poor it aims to benefit. For both partners, the practice of joint north-south research helps to challenge historical colonial structures and their influence on development processes through more equal representation.

Conclusion

In order to further north-south collaborations and support decolonisation efforts, IIED and other global North organisations should consider developing non-Eurocentric methodologies for carrying out research design and analysis of data collected by communities, and work to address hierarchies in knowledge production where they persist.

Defining problems collaboratively will contribute to better alignment between north-south partners, which in turn will shape knowledge production in the long run. It is crucial for partners to jointly participate in identifying and engaging stakeholders and communities to broaden and strengthen reforms and transformation agendas beneficial to all. There should be an intentional and purposeful process for providing institutional capacity-strengthening to local organisations to ensure their equitable participation and heightened motivation to contribute. Capacity building support should also include a fair and balanced distribution of resources, information, expertise and access to technology for research analysis and documentation.

Finally, partnerships can benefit from jointly developing strategic tools and planning processes. This can include plans for monitoring and evaluation and regular reviews of the partnership and can be supported by intentional discussions and reflections where all partners are enabled and encouraged to discuss what is going well and what is not, developing and sharing mechanisms to resolve any grievances and miscommunications.

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4.5 Forest Farm Facility and IIED

Authors

Duncan Macqueen (director of forests, IIED's Natural Resources Group)

Partners	Forest and Farm Facility (FFF) IIED FAO IUCN Agricord
Locations	Edinburgh, Scotland Rome, Italy International
Type of partners	Global network of Forest and Farm Producer Organisations (FFPOs) and Indigenous Peoples and Local Community (IPLC) groups
Time frame of the partnership	2012 (12 years)

About the FFF-IIED partnership

The Forest and Farm Facility (FFF) was co-designed as a partnership to provide direct financial support to Forest and Farm Producer Organisations (FFPOs) and Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLC) groups globally as the key change agents for delivering climate-resilient landscapes and improved livelihoods. Phase I (2013-2018) mobilised US$16 million from multiple donors and, following independent review, expanded in Phase II (2019-ongoing) to US$55 million – with 67% directly reaching local organisations.

FFF strengthens FFPOs and IPLC groups to deliver four outcomes: (i) enabling policies (ii) sustainable entrepreneurship and business incubation (iii) climate action (mitigation, adaptation and resilience), and (iv) social and cultural protection services.

The management partnership consists of:

- FAO (operational management and national grants)
- IUCN (regional global organisational grants and advocacy)
- IIED (knowledge co-production and monitoring and learning), and
- Agricord (organisational capacity development).

Since 2012, the FFF has invited proposals from and developed longstanding partnerships with 900+ regional and global organisations of Indigenous Peoples and smallholder farmers, national apex-level FFPOs, regional FFPO associations and local FFPOs.

The FFF partnership is closely aligned with IIED's mission to build a fairer, more sustainable world, using evidence, action and influence, working in partnership with others. Working in partnership with FFPOs and IPLC groups to build a fairer, more sustainable world is FFF's central premise.

FFF serves ten core partner countries (Bolivia, Ecuador, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Nepal, Tanzania, Togo, Viet Nam, Zambia), several former or current network countries (Angola, Botswana, Gambia, Guatemala, Malawi, Liberia, Myanmar, Namibia, Nicaragua) and 12 regional or global alliances. In each country, dialogues are also facilitated with government agencies at local, regional, and national level in pursuit of more enabling policy changes. Funding to FFPOs is then deployed by them to draw in a wide array of technical and financial service providers.

The partnership is overseen by a Steering Committee composed in its majority of representatives of Indigenous Peoples and FFPOs. Annual national-level review meetings with the FFPO recipients of funds allows reporting, through national facilitators, to an annual co-management retreat, which then

prepares upward reporting to the Steering Committee and Donor Support Group, comprising the EU, Germany, IKEA, Finland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the USA.

The partnership process

The partnership arose from shared ideas emerging from a prior bottom-up 'Growing Forest Partnerships' initiative involving many local organisations, facilitated in five countries by FAO, IUCN and IIED. The shape emerged through a series of 11 country dialogues involving representatives of Indigenous Peoples, Community Forestry, and Family Forestry, together with investors, on how better to stimulate 'Investing in Locally Controlled Forestry'. A new fund to get money where it matters was proposed and FAO offered to host the new FFF as a follow-on to the National Forest Programme (NFP) Facility. The institutions involved negotiated early roles with an early Steering Committee and soon added smallholder agri-agencies (Agricord), as a fourth partner of the co-management team.

Each partner felt that their institutional values and objectives could best be achieved by directly financing, working with, and co-producing knowledge with FFPOs and Indigenous Peoples' groups. At first, donors were reluctant to allocate funds as the broad nature of FFPO ambitions, which integrated concerns for social, environmental, and economic outcomes, seemed too diffuse for narrowly defined, often sector-specific objectives of those donors. There were also tensions between local organisations committed to forest and farm business and Indigenous Peoples' groups more committed to territorial control and the protection of biocultural heritage. Visibly impressive impacts, a major redesign in Phase II, and growing financial support have helped address this.

Equity in the partnership

The duration of the partnership hints at its equitable nature. Weekly co-management meetings decide most operational decisions. Where decisions are of a more strategic nature (for example, new partner countries, new knowledge co-production topics) they are referred to the Steering Committee, which approves and signs off both the annual report and annual country, regional and global work plans. Annual co-management retreats involve all country facilitators in reporting and planning, and annual or biannual learning events draw in FFPO and IPLC leaders from all partner countries to share experiences on a wide range of relevant topics.

The most challenging inequity arises from the limited funding. Invitations to join the partnership at the beginning of Phase II in 2019 resulted in more than 40 country applications, but resources only allowed for support to ten core countries and a constrained global and regional organisational support programme. Support in-country is restricted to particular geographies chosen by national advisory groups based on national baselines and after broad national launch meetings. While not unethical, this is inequitable.

Challenges

The FFF partnership has so far in Phase II delivered: 76 cumulative changes in policy at national level and five at regional or international level through actions by 97 FFPOs with written advocacy agendas; 564 FFPO-led sustainable enterprises that have improved returns to members; 161,993 hectares of FFPO land that has been restored, protected or sustainably managed, and 57,004 people receiving improved social or cultural services.

Managing a partnership that spans local women, men and young people smallholders, technical support agencies, multi-lateral agencies and NGOs, government officials and donors across such a breadth of ambition is challenging. There are challenges of alignment, of translation into multiple languages, of overcoming bureaucracy in grant disbursement, of how to prioritise funding support and of where to focus knowledge co-production. There are limited in-country budgets and a small size to the core co-management unit that restrict country engagement and monitoring and learning. Not everyone can be represented on the Steering Committee or involved in co-management decision making.

The FFF partnership is constantly looking for solutions to these challenges. It employs local translators and printers. It has pioneered new grant mechanisms at FAO, such as the Direct Beneficiary Grant. It works with national advisory groups to assist with funding decisions. It conducts demand surveys to find out where knowledge co-production is most needed. It hosts annual learning events, co-management

retreats, and many peer-to-peer exchanges at which challenges are aired, discussed, and addressed. It has commissioned two independent reviews with wide consultation to help identify and address areas of concern.

Conclusions

The power to transform landscapes and livelihoods lies in the collective action of the people in those landscapes. For them, an inclusive and sustainable economy is imperative for their collective futures. Members of the FFF partnership are all deeply committed to putting finance and control directly into local hands. The benefits are reliable, fast, and effective impact across integrated domains of forest and farm livelihoods — society, environment and economy together.

The FFF partnership has learned many lessons. More central ones include (i) the power of getting money where it matters – to groups who have already committed to working together for each other's wellbeing; (ii) the advantage of building on what exists – prompting forest action by farmer organisations; (iii) the capacity to be successful at scale by funding interconnected tiers of organisation from local to global; (iv) the efficacy of building on traditional knowledge through peer-to-peer exchanges and co-learning through doing; (v) the power of strength in numbers to drive policy change in facilitated dialogues with government and private sector; (vi) the effectiveness of building first-hand business incubation capabilities into regional FFPOs mandates; (vii) the resilience and full-spectrum climate action that diversification on farms and in the market brings; (viii) the capability of local groups to develop effective shared labels to enhance incomes.

The FFF takes constructive criticism seriously. Independent reviews have challenged FFF to expand its strategic vision and outreach (for example, at COPs), focus on priority landscapes, expand the institutional buy-in from co-management partners, better track long-term impacts, improve the definition and scope of work on social and cultural services, improve communication to target audiences, strive towards gender-transformative impacts, revisit youth engagement, and make more visible the impacts on climate and nature action. In all areas, strategic action plans have already delivered better results.

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Structural inequalities and power imbalances between the global North and South still exist at every level of development and research systems, including in how partnerships are nurtured and managed. Gender inequalities, social injustices, colonial legacies, racism, and other intersectional inequalities continue to manifest in relationships among individuals and institutions. Partnerships have been central to IIED's work and mission, and we have made progress on defining ethics and terms of engagement. IIED's research project on strengthening ethical and equitable research partnerships, initiated in 2022, aims to define pathways for actively addressing dynamics of inequality and shifting power in partnerships.

This collection of five case studies shares experiences of good practice in building and maintaining equitable partnerships. The case studies selected include profiles of long-term partnerships with organisations that know IIED well and vice versa, as well as partnerships with organisations at different levels targeting different categories of constituencies. These include governments, Indigenous organisations, grassroots organisations, and other peer organisations. The case studies were largely co-produced with the aim of representing the views of partners, and some included interviews with partners to capture their assessment of the partnerships.

Knowledge Products

Case study collection

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Monitoring, evaluation and learning

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