



Keeping up the pressure



IIED annual review 2021

'Super' thinking supports green recovery

2021 was dubbed a 'super year' and we launched our super year advocacy campaign in January, making strong links across IIED research areas to meet the complexity of urgent interconnected crises. The climate emergency, unprecedented biodiversity loss and rising inequalities have all been made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing the debt burden in many developing countries and hindering progress towards the SDGs. Our multi-issue, multi-actor approach was exemplified by new research offering a potential 'triple win': a refreshed and refined financial system able to tackle the debt, climate change and nature emergencies together, helping developing countries reduce poverty and get on the path to an inclusive green recovery.



Building on our research, and working closely with partners, we will act to influence change at every opportunity. We will actively collaborate to drive a cohesive agenda on climate, nature and development, to build a fairer and more sustainable world.”

— IIED's Ebony Holland, blogging at the start of the super year (www.iied.org/super-year-big-deal)

➔ Watch IIED chief economist Paul Steele explain the challenges and opportunities of 'debt swaps' for climate and nature: bit.ly/debt-steele

➔ Watch IIED director Andrew Norton reflect on 2021 and take a strategic look at how 2022 is shaping up: bit.ly/Norton-2021

Within the year, we successfully introduced public and private lenders, national governments and other target audiences to the possibilities of this 'green lifeline', through accessible online events, media coverage and targeted calls to action. We continued to grow our evidence base and to increase our practical experience, working with government and civil society partners in Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania and Senegal. Our ideas caught the attention of the World Bank, which quoted a methodology we had generated from this work in a November 2021 report on sovereign bonds.

By COP26, we were ready to support others to apply this thinking, launching a 'how to' guide at a well-attended session of the Development and Climate Days event. The guide sets out seven practical steps for developing country governments to complete a debt transaction linked to their sustainability goals for climate and nature. Our co-authors embody the breadth of public and private actors who recognise the benefits of this approach: the Potomac Group LLC, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

This work has huge potential. In the coming year, we will promote the guide more widely and offer support to governments in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and other countries that are keen to know more about implementing debt management initiatives.

Building momentum for local climate leadership



IIED's super year climate advocacy wasted no time. At January's Climate Adaptation Summit, all 40 members of the Global Commission on Adaptation (GCA) endorsed eight principles for locally led adaptation. The principles — created and published by IIED in consultation with partners and other GCA actors — call on governments, global institutions, and local and international NGOs to enable far greater local influence over adaptation action, especially from women, young people, children, disabled people, displaced people and marginalised ethnic groups. In May, the G7 officially welcomed the principles and by the close of COP26 in November, more than 70 actors had endorsed them.



The seas are rising; it invades our homes. Adapting is our only option, [yet] adaptation finance has always played second fiddle to mitigation ... But the calls from developing countries have not gone unheard; raising our voices has not been in vain.”

— Angelique Pouponneau, CEO of the Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust, reacts to the formation of the Adaptation Finance Champions Group

➔ Read about the eight principles for locally led adaptation: pubs.iied.org/10211iied

Diverse supporters included organisations representing young people, women and Indigenous Peoples; nature-focused partners like Flora and Fauna International and IUCN; and national development agencies, including the first two Southern governmental supporters, Costa Rica and Nepal. This wide-ranging swell of support places local leadership firmly on the agenda for COP27.

Our role in convening the Adaptation Finance Champions Group — a coalition of countries committed to improving the quantity, quality and accessibility of adaptation finance — also had impact. The original group announced at September's UN General Assembly (Ireland, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, the UK and Finland) was ready just months later to make a call for action. At a COP26 side event supported by IIED and E3G, the Champions Group announced its five-point plan to accelerate adaptation finance solutions. This sent a strong message: adaptation must rise up the global climate agenda. In 2022, the Champions anticipate welcoming more donor countries and working with developing countries; this is a coalition to watch in the run-up to the coming year's climate summit, which many are calling 'the adaptation COP'.

COP26 also saw the US and Norway sign up to support the Least Developed Countries Initiative for Effective Adaptation and Resilience (LIFE-AR), a re-imagining of climate finance that would see 70% of funds reach local-level action. By the close of COP26, finance pledged for locally led adaptation hit approximately US\$1.5 billion.

While this funding is welcome, it has long been unclear how much adaptation finance reaches LDCs and how far this falls short of the amount needed. In July, IIED provided the strongest estimate yet: LDCs have received less than 3% of the funds they need to adapt their societies and economies to climate change. This figure, quoted by international media outlets, further backs the LDC Group's call to localise international climate adaptation finance. In 2022, we will work with LDCs, small island developing states (SIDS), Southern-led social movements and others to hold governments to account, both on their finance commitments and on their endorsement of the locally led adaptation principles, which should see funds reach local communities and projects led by marginalised groups.

Action for equality, everywhere

When we committed to address the challenge of increasing inequality in IIED's current five-year strategy, we never expected that a global pandemic would accelerate the urgency of this work. In 2021, we turned our focus within IIED as well as out.



Development as we know it is based on rules that each nation must follow in order to find economic and social status at the cost of nature. This is based on western economics — Adam Smith and neoliberalism — which assume that environment and development are hard to balance. But these [ideas] are fully integrated in the Indigenous worldview.”

— Alejandro Argumedo, programme director of Asociacion ANDES, speaking at a meeting of the IIED race and racism working group in 2021

➔ Read IIED's statement on our journey to becoming an anti-racist organisation: www.iied.org/our-progress-towards-being-anti-racist-organisation

➔ Read reflections on IIED's progress with our gender equality research ambitions: pubs.iied.org/20036iied

Inequality is embedded within the development and environment sectors — from where funding flows to and from, to colonial aspects of environmentalism, failures in climate justice and more. We must identify how we can live our values better, among ourselves and with others, if we are to be effective in promoting social and climate justice.

In 2021, our Gender Equality Champions Network (GECN) both pushed its agenda forward, exploring intersectionality in research design with partners and others, and reflected back, publishing an assessment of how well IIED teams are meeting the organisation's ambitions for gender equality in our research. Actions from the assessment form part of GECN's 2022 workplan, and IIED's Climate Change research group have publicly set out five steps they will take to place gender, intersectionality and social justice at the centre of their work on the climate crisis.

Our race and racism working group also took stock, publishing a statement on our progress towards becoming an actively anti-racist organisation and sharing our current thinking with other organisations. The group also completed internal research to identify colonial or racist narratives in the environment and development sector and specifically within IIED. We will publish the findings and recommendations in 2022, including milestones to act on and be held accountable to. All-staff training on equity and inclusion throughout 2021 helped establish a shared practice of learning and action.

Our work is always — and must always be — based in partnership, and the process of learning, reflection and action on inequality was no exception. In October, IIED joined with the Green Economy Coalition to launch a blog series that challenges dominant approaches to the nature and climate crises and highlights the strengths of locally controlled and run conservation. This is a space created for the voices of Indigenous Peoples' organisations, activists and others. Contributors to date include Gustavo Sánchez of the Mesoamerican Alliance of Peoples and Forests (AMPB). This series is highly relevant to some of 2022's most critical policy spaces, including the fast-approaching IUCN Africa Protected Areas Congress and the much-anticipated Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Conference of Parties (COP15).

Setting an ambition for urban transformation



Urban areas have arguably been the ‘ground zero’ of the pandemic and people living in cities continue to experience a range of hardships beyond ill health. In the global South, strict lockdowns, lack of work, scarcity and evictions have intensified the many challenges facing the poorest urban communities.



Achieving rapid decarbonisation needs to be socially just. The Transformative Urban Coalitions programme allows us to ... work alongside a broad coalition of actors and innovate to generate needed changes both in action and policy. Cities are building their climate commitments, we want to see that these commitments address the needs of every citizen.”

— Jorgelina Hardoy, senior researcher and team coordinator at IIED América Latina on the Transformative Urban Coalitions programme

➔ Listen as IIED and our project partners explore the impact of COVID-19 on low-income communities and why a shared vision is vital to green and inclusive recovery:
www.iied.org/MCH-12

Early in the pandemic, our Human Settlements research group led IIED's efforts to share partners' lived experiences and to apply local insights to opportunities for sustainable and socially just recovery. Informed by these direct links to urban communities and their priorities, we began work in 2021 that seeks nothing less than transformational change in Southern cities.

Our framework for transformative urban recovery, launched in April, represents another multi-issue, multi-actor approach. The framework is designed to unify efforts to tackle the interconnected issues cities face; it works through inclusion and collaboration across all sectors and all levels, from community groups to government agencies. Rooted in the experiences of low-income urban communities in Zimbabwe, Kenya, India, Brazil, Liberia, Vietnam and South Africa, we co-created the framework with our project partners: Slum Dwellers International, Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), Cities Alliance and ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability. This shared vision for change struck a strong chord: the IIED paper proposing the framework was downloaded over 1,000 times in just six months, with 70% of readers based in the global South.

In 2022, we will develop the framework to respond to priorities for COP27, engaging with people and organisations who are instrumental to sustainable urban change. This will include people living in cities, urban administrations, private companies and others — all of whom must battle a pandemic while also under pressure to manage the increasing impacts of climate change. The framework will be relevant to the aims of both the World Urban Forum coming up in June and COP27 at the end of the year. It will inform our work in a programme started in 2021 on transformative urban coalitions, seeking far-reaching, community-led change for urban areas in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico.

Amplifying local and Indigenous knowledge



With the UN's first Food Systems Summit offering little opportunity for input from small-scale producers and representatives of food-insecure communities, these actors mobilised around their own agenda instead in 2021. IIED launched a 'food year' blog series before the summit to create a platform for partners to share views on food systems transformation. Contributors spanned continents and included representatives of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center and the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa.



Social movements are attempting to wrestle control of the food summit process, while promoting policies and strategies on agroecology and the right to food.”

— Million Belay, coordinator at the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa, on why African social movements call on UN food summit to give people back control



Read IIED's comprehensive guide to 30 practical options for climate resilience, published with the Forest and Farm Facility, which brings together expertise from many organisations representing forest and farm smallholders and working on the frontline of climate change: pubs.iied.org/20311iied

Indigenous Peoples were also largely missing from the summit, despite Indigenous food systems' resilience being proven yet again during the pandemic. With the International Network of Mountain Indigenous Peoples, we identified Indigenous communities keen to share experience and ideas: the Parque de la Papa (Peru), the Rabai community (Kenya), the Farmer' Seed Network (China), and the Lepcha and Limbu of the Eastern Himalayas (India). IIED hosted a series of webinars, led by the communities directly from their Biocultural Heritage territories, to ensure the world could hear and learn from the technical knowledge of these farmers, elders, women and youth. With local partners and interpreters, we set up live links, encouraged peer-to-peer learning and proved how, with solutions designed with equity in mind, technology can unify rather than exclude.

Developing the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework was another policy process likely to sideline Indigenous and local rights and knowledge. IIED's message that an equitable framework must work for people as well as nature remains key to our approach for CBD COP15 in 2022, where the framework will be finalised. Our podcast episode carrying this message received over 1,400 listens. Our practical guides to support national negotiators in reinforcing equity and other critical aspects of the framework have been downloaded more than 1,300 times. And we made integrating equity and rights into the post-2020 framework the focus of an IIED-led session at September's IUCN World Conservation Congress.

In 2022, we will push for locally-led action in land and marine areas to be central to delivering the Global Biodiversity Framework and transforming our relationship with nature.

In a world facing multiple interlinked crises, everybody welcomes a 'win-win'. In June, IIED and the Nature-based Solutions Initiative published an analysis of new data showing that nature-based interventions can deliver tangible development outcomes for local people. The report was downloaded more than 700 times within a month, with half the readership in the global South. We will continue to assess how far investments in nature can support development goals without compromising biodiversity and keep these communities of practice talking right up to COP15.

Bringing lived experience to COP26



Sonam P Wangdi, chair of the LDC Group, addressing the 15th International Conference on Community-based Adaptation to Climate Change, described COP26 as a chance to “scale up support for real actions on the ground.” Working with many partners, IIED responded to the opportunity. Besides focusing on locally led adaptation, we supported recognition and resources for local climate leadership before and during the UN conference.



Global action on climate change must include responding to loss and damage. And that response must consider not only the type of threat and geography, but who is affected. This requires a full understanding ... informed by those who know.”

— Alok Sharma, UK MP and COP26 President, in his foreword to 'Loss and damage case studies from the frontline: a resource to support practice and policy', an IIED/ICCCAD co-publication: pubs.iied.org/20551iied



Watch our loss and damage animations, co-created with local climate activists: www.iied.org/loss-damage

To ensure local and community representatives could play a full part in the first wholly online Development and Climate Days (D&C Days) event, we worked with the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre and others to bring together 806 grassroots representatives, researchers, development practitioners and policymakers from 127 countries for the most inclusive D&C Days event yet.

We co-hosted the COP26 side event 'Recognition, rights, and finance for locally-led pathways towards just and equitable resilience', supporting Indigenous Peoples and local communities to be heard as experts in climate change mitigation and resilience. Our partners in the event were Alianza Mesoamericana de Pueblos y Bosques (AMPB), the Ford Foundation, Fundación PRISMA El Salvador, Mainyoto Pastoralist Alliance, Rights and Resources Initiative, and Rainforest Foundation Norway.

Making space for LDCs, SIDS, civil society organisations and Southern climate activists to hear and be heard on climate loss and damage before COP26, we co-convened with the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) four 'deliberative dialogues'. Participants shared knowledge, built relationships, and discussed action and support needed and their delivery and finance. With ICCCAD we co-published summaries of all four dialogues.

We helped bring lived experience of loss and damage to life ahead of COP26 through powerful animations co-created with local climate activists and featuring Rwandans, Sierra Leoneans and Solomon Islanders describing, in local languages and in English, the human impacts, locally-led action and support needed. The animations were shown at Climate Week NYC and watched on our YouTube channel. In 2022, a story from Nepal will complete the series.

While COP26 did not deliver all we hoped, positive outcomes included an agreed process for reaching a post-2025 climate finance goal, which IIED and the LDC Group had argued strongly for. We will not lose our focus on this as post-2025 negotiations commence in 2022.



Experiment, adapt, collaborate

Collective action and local agency have been at IIED's core for 50 years, fulfilling the pioneering vision of our founder, Barbara Ward. In December, former Vice-President of Costa Rica Rebeca Grynspan delivered IIED's Barbara Ward Lecture, speaking (due to travel restrictions) from the offices of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), where she is the first female secretary-general. Ms Grynspan, also previously IIED's chair of trustees, spoke about the possibilities for change and highlighted the value of experimentation, collaboration and adaptation in pursuit of sustainable development.

➔ **Sign up to the IIED newsletter: www.iied.org/sign-up**

We also have a range of newsletters containing news and publications on subjects including biodiversity, climate change and urban work.

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

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