



The Urban Crises Learning Fund evaluation

Final report

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Evaluation case study

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Working in collaboration with MEL professionals across the globe, the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning team has been leading the field by researching appropriate frameworks, approaches and methodologies to monitor and evaluate sustainable development.

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What impact can research make in the long-term on people, policy and practice? What are the most valuable types of learning and knowledge products generated through research and why? This ex-post evaluation explores these questions, using a body of research generated under IIED’s Urban Crises Learning Fund from 2015–2017. With financial and collaborative technical support from IIED, the Urban Crises Learning Fund produced over 30 research projects on preparedness, response and recovery to urban crises, conducted by independent researchers and institutions from the global North and South, representing a diverse set of voices and urban crisis contexts. This report highlights the types of positive change that this learning fund model contributed to across themes of effectiveness, efficiency, enduring research partnerships, capacity building and impact of key pieces of evidence. It concludes with recommendations on how IIED can build on the success of the Urban Crisis Learning Fund experience.

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Summary

The International Institute for Environment and Development's (IIED) Urban Crises Programme (2015–2017) was funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), now the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), and sought to address gaps in knowledge, skills and understanding among donors, local and national governments, and national and international humanitarian actors, to help them better prepare for and respond to humanitarian crises in urban areas. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) and IIED shared management of the overall programme, with IIED responsible for the creation and management of the Urban Crises Learning Fund (UCLF). IIED commissioned this ex-post evaluation of the UCLF in early 2022, four years after the learning fund closed. The UCLF intended to increase the knowledge, technical capacity and commitment to work in partnerships to better meet the immediate needs of cities and urban residents affected by crises, foster recovery and sustainable development in their aftermath, and strengthen preparedness for future events. It supported small-scale research on urban humanitarian response, disaster risk reduction (DRR) and related knowledge products. This was executed through 31 small research grants (between £10,000 and £30,000) to independent researchers and institutions from the global North and South, aiming to represent a diverse set of voices and urban crisis contexts.

This report presents the evaluation findings in response to Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs) on four themes of effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact, as well as a set of targeted recommendations for how to improve the learning fund model or similar programming in future. The themes of sustainability and impact have been represented by:

- Enduring partnerships
- Capacity building of grant recipients, and
- Impact of key pieces of evidence.

The evaluation relied on primary and secondary data, including literature reviews, website and social media analytics, a participatory workshop, and key informant interviews (KIIs) with a purposive sample of internal and external UCLF stakeholders. Analysis was primarily qualitative, and coded by key themes and KEQ concepts.

Findings for effectiveness

Both the KIIs and documentary evidence provided a strong consensus that the learning fund model was valuable overall for IIED and key staff, as well as for grant recipients and their institutions, and as a general model for research generation and knowledge transfer. UCLF resources were strategically used to enable a large set of small grant awards, allowing for innovation to explore a diverse set of themes and contexts. The strategic management approach facilitated research into new areas for urban crisis and explored cross-linkages between them. The experience also enabled IIED to reach new audiences and establish its credibility in the humanitarian space. The organic, flexible process for calls for proposals and grant selection was considered appropriate for meeting the UCLF aims. An advisory board of relevant sector and research experts provided critical support to ensure relevance of themes. The themes under each call for proposals were selected according to gaps in the overall evidence base: specific crisis events, along with affected populations and national actors' needs. This approach led to timely and relevant research; it also supported the UCLF's aim to increase researchers' access to funds, and to amplify the voices of diverse researchers and institutions globally.

Findings for efficiency

The model required the management of multiple small grants to entities with varied administrative systems and capacities, possibly leading to efficiency losses that may not have occurred during a large research project. This represented an inherent trade-off in seeking to gain

value and effectiveness through diversity of research and grant recipients. There were also efficiency gains, with the small grant sizes requiring lower thresholds for sign-off and compliance, resulting in quicker approvals. The application of lessons and tools from IIED's previous experience also supported efficiency but, overall, this was not found to be a significant challenge or shortcoming. However, it did require substantial effort from key staff closely involved, to ensure the high-quality and hands-on technical support required for all grants.

Findings for enduring research partnerships

The highly supportive partnership approach facilitated by IIED in collaboration with grant recipients was highlighted by key informants as especially appreciated and effective, leading to mutually beneficial partnerships for research. IIED has, in general, benefited most from continuity of research partnerships, while there are some grant recipients who have continued research partnerships or collaboration with IIED in the long-term. Several grant recipients during the evaluation noted the UCLF's provision of an entry point to foster useful research partnerships and networks in their local contexts. No evidence of collaboration between grant recipients was found, with this noted by some key informants as a missed opportunity. Many expressed that creating linkages between grantees throughout the process would have been beneficial for building potential new research partnerships, developing a community of practice for urban crisis, and fostering cross-learning during the research process.

Findings for capacity building

Both IIED and grant recipients identified institutional and individual capacity gains through engaging with the UCLF. These included:

- Increased knowledge and best practices for responding to urban crises
- Organisational finance and grant administrative capacity
- Framing research work from a policy and communications lens, and
- Enhanced research skills, especially for junior and student members of research teams.

Sustained capacity was demonstrated through access to new research opportunities and potential to build on UCLF research in different ways. There was evidence of

capacity transfer at an individual level, but it was harder to trace transfer of capacities to other organisations. More use of virtual and creative means for events and dissemination was noted by key informants as an area for improvement that could increase the UCLF's sustainability and impact.

Findings for impact of key pieces and types of evidence

The most cited and downloaded publications related to the community of practice on "local collaboration" and topics were commissioned through the discretionary fund. An analysis of how refugees cope in their context, along with a review of area-based approaches (ABAs), attracted a wider audience from the global South. Since the UCLF ended, most interest over the long-term has been focused on coordination processes and institutional structures, alongside existing tools, recommendations and frameworks for urban crisis response and recovery. The recognition and use of research post-UCLF has led to grantees accessing funding or being solicited for work on similar themes, as well as using the dataset in other work or repurposing their UCLF outputs into other research and knowledge products. Grant recipient research under the UCLF has contributed to at least 19 other research and knowledge products since it ended, based on a sample of six grant recipients. Therefore, the actual number of additional products the UCLF has contributed to is probably much higher.

Conclusions

Overall, the UCLF accomplished what it set out to do, especially in terms of generating a sizable and well-executed body of research and knowledge for urban crisis. Both grantees and IIED built their capacity in several areas and considered the model to be strong. The UCLF enhanced IIED's credibility in the humanitarian space and its access to new audiences and networks. Evidence is insufficient to assess direct causal influence on sector policy and practice, though the report includes some accounts of outcomes that are plausible for UCLF's contribution. There were no other initiatives that generated this type and breadth of evidence at the start of the UCLF, and during its active lifespan. Collaboration with small institutions and researchers, including several from the global South who might not be otherwise well represented, is also noteworthy. Specific topics have maintained citations and online engagement post-UCLF, highlighting the significance and sustainability of some of the evidence and knowledge generated. Gaps identified during the evaluation included a lack of a long-term dissemination

strategy, a missed opportunity for grantee cross-learning and networking, and limited creative and virtual engagement means.

The evaluation identified ten recommendations to build on the success of UCLF and enhance future similar programming. In summary, these included:

- Implementing another learning fund
- Documenting best practices and processes
- Balancing the number and budgets of grants for optimal efficiency and effectiveness
- Ensuring adequate HR capacity for programme administration and coordination
- Lighter reporting and more consistent donor engagement
- Linking grant recipients during the programme
- More virtual and international events
- Investing in more visual and creative research dissemination approaches
- Ensuring a long-term dissemination strategy for UCLF products, and
- Exploring how small grants can be better linked for future funding, cross-fertilisation and wider knowledge transfer.

Acronyms

ABAs	area-based approaches
ACCCRN	Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance
CCCM	Camp Management and Camp Coordination
CCCMC	Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster
CfPs	Calls for Proposals
DFID	Department for International Development
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
FCC	Freetown City Council
FCDO	Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office
GA	Global Alliance for Urban Crises
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IRC	International Rescue Committee
KEQs	Key Evaluation Questions
KIIs	Key informant interviews
SLURC	Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre
UCLF	Urban Crises Learning Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WFP	World Food Programme

1

Introduction

1.1 Background

The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) commissioned the organisation's annual internal evaluation in early 2022 on the Urban Crisis Programme, funded by the UK's (former) Department for International Development (DFID), now the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). The programme, implemented from 2015 to 2017, sought to address gaps in knowledge, skills and understanding among donors, local and national governments, and national and international humanitarian actors, to provide a better basis for preparing for and responding to humanitarian crises in urban areas. It also included the convening and coordination of advocacy, learning events and networking activities to disseminate best practices and advocacy messages, discuss policy changes, disseminate and analyse learning from urban programming in humanitarian contexts, and build the capacity of key actors. There were two key elements of the programme: two learning partnerships (led by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Habitat for Humanity) and an Urban Crises Learning Fund (UCLF). While the IRC and IIED shared management of the overall programme, IIED was responsible for the creation and management of the UCLF, which was IIED's largest contribution to the wider Urban Crisis Programme.

The UCLF's intended outcome was to increase the knowledge, technical capacity and commitment to work in partnerships, through appropriate institutional support, to better meet the immediate needs of cities

and urban residents affected by crises, including from a gender perspective. There was an aim to foster recovery and sustainable development in the aftermath of such crises, and to strengthen preparedness for future events. To achieve this aim, the UCLF supported small-scale research and related knowledge products in the field of urban humanitarian response and disaster risk reduction (DRR). Through four thematic Calls for Proposals (CfPs) and a discretionary fund, IIED commissioned small research grants, ranging between £10,000 and £30,000, to research and academic institutions, along with independent researchers, from across the global North and South. The UCLF also organised a few events to disseminate the research and knowledge generated and connect key stakeholders of relevance and interest, including grant recipients, donors and consortium partners, along with practitioners and academics in the humanitarian space).

The UCLF is the focus of this ex-post evaluation, as IIED is interested in understanding and evidencing the outcomes, sustainability and impact four years after the programme's official end in 2017. Responding to a set of Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs), this report provides the key findings of the post-ex evaluation regarding four evaluation themes of effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact; the last two are represented by enduring research partnerships, capacity building of recipients and the impact of key pieces of evidence. The report also provides an overall assessment of the UCLF and ends with a set of targeted recommendations based on lessons about the learning fund model, and how future learning funds or similar programming can be built upon and improved.

1.2 Evaluation overview

1.2.1 Purpose and Key Evaluation Questions

This evaluation's overall purpose was to assess the UCLF with the available evidence as follows:

- Assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the small grant mechanism in developing a new body of evidence.

- Assess the sustainability and impact of the project as defined by:
 - Enduring research partnerships
 - Capacity building of recipients of the small grants, and
 - Impact of key pieces and types of evidence.

To enable assessment on these themes, the evaluation consultants and IIED developed and agreed the KEQs listed in Table 1 by theme.

Table 1: Key Evaluation Questions

THEME	KEQ
1. Effectiveness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What evidence/knowledge generated from the learning fund and/or management approach were or could be taken into other IIED programmes? 2. What is the average difference of relevant metrics to measure the value of a publication produced by an established well-resourced institution compared to a less affluent under-resourced one? 3. Was the learning fund model a valuable one overall? 4. Did it reach its anticipated potential/aims in this IIED programme? 5. How could future learning funds as a model for IIED be strengthened?
2. Efficiency	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the key lessons on how resources for learning fund-type activities were managed and adaptively adjusted?
Sustainability and impact	
3. Enduring research partnerships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How did IIED and/or learning fund recipients enable continuity of the research partnerships created in the Urban Crisis Programme after it ended?
4. Capacity building of recipients	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the capacities acquired by learning fund recipients to support increased knowledge and best practices for responding to urban crises? How well have these capacities been sustained? 2. After the end of the programme, were capacities of recipients transferred to other organisations? If so, how and which ones?
5. Impact of key pieces and types of evidence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What reports and publications have been most recognised and used by relevant humanitarian actors (institutions/practitioners/policymakers) since the programme ended? 2. Which knowledge and evidence produced by the learning fund have informed the development of preparedness, response and recovery best practices/strategies in urban crisis settings?

1.2.2 Scope

The scope for the evaluation was limited to the UCLF component of the Urban Crisis Programme. It sought to respond to the KEQs to the extent possible based on a sample of UCLF research and knowledge products and key programme documents (donor reports, communications strategy and the final evaluation report of 2018), relevant website and social media analytics, and key informant interviews (KIIs). The evaluation also included a brief scan of the funding and programming landscape for urban crisis response and research. The sampling size of KIIs and documentary evidence was also determined by the time and budget available and relevance to the KEQs.

1.2.3 Methodology

The evaluation methodology relied on both primary and secondary data comprised of literature reviews, website and social media analytics, inputs from a workshop with two key IIED staff, and KIIs of internal and external stakeholders. Quantitative data and analysis were employed to assess metrics related to reach of and engagement with the UCLF research and knowledge products, such as citations, downloads and social media activity. However, the primary form of analysis informing the findings and recommendations are qualitative, with data coded by key themes and concepts, then triangulated to the extent possible within the evidence base and KIIs. The four main data sources were as follows:

Desk literature reviews. This included a set of 35 knowledge and research products (working papers, journal articles, policy briefs and one short documentary film) delivered through the UCLF based on its core themes in the four CfPs: local collaboration, protection, local markets, and the humanitarian and development nexus, along with the discretionary fund. The literature review also included grey literature, blog entries and internal project documents such as the final evaluation of the Urban Crisis Programme, the communications and marketing strategy and donor reports. This sample provided a useful snapshot of the UCLF's production of a sizable body of relevant evidence related to urban crisis preparedness, response and recovery. A second brief literature review of the funding landscape was conducted during primary data collection from six websites and five reports, to gather a snapshot of the current state of institutional donor funding and prioritisation of urban crisis preparedness, response, recovery and research. The evaluators also collected and compiled a list of research and knowledge products that were identified by KIIs as linked to or

as contributions of the initial UCLF-funded work they conducted. These can be seen in Figure 5 under section 2.5.

Website and social media analytics. The evaluation team analysed trends in the view counts for each relevant knowledge and research product, disaggregated by region, over the past five years. In addition, the analysis included social media statistics (ie impressions and engagements) as made available by the IIED communication team and from the hosting sites of relevant content (primarily YouTube).

Key informant interviews. The evaluation team conducted 14 KIIs with internal stakeholders, including former and current IIED staff and the UCLF donor representative (now an IIED staff member), and external stakeholders (mostly grant recipients, as well as a UCLF advisory board member and a representative from UN-Habitat who had engaged with the programme).

Participatory workshop. Due to the importance of institutional memory to enable a post-ex evaluation, a participatory component of a short workshop with two key stakeholders who engaged closely in the UCLF from design to close-out (and are still working with IIED) was also integrated into the evaluation. This was used to gain deeper insights into the design and aims of the UCLF, key concepts and outcomes, and the profile, interests and influence of different stakeholders and key informants.

Initially, the evaluation terms of reference and plan included a contribution analysis component that was intended to frame findings in relation to causal contribution and whether outcomes observed proved (or disproved) the causal assumptions and expectations of the UCLF, four years after closing. However, after the first phase of desk literature — and in assessing priorities for the evaluation in relation to the sample, initial outcomes identified, and the time and budget available — the evaluation team and IIED stakeholders decided to forgo the contribution analysis element. This could have been possible in a larger evaluation process, but given the limited time and budget available, conducting contribution analysis for one or two outcomes would have come at the expense of reviewing the full set of KEQs in question and led to a much narrower set of findings. Nonetheless, the findings under KEQs regarding the impact of key pieces and types of evidence included a few outcomes identified during primary data collection that would be applicable and interesting to apply contribution analysis to in the future should IIED wish to do so.

1.2.4 Limitations

The evidence used explored the KEQs based on information retrieved from key informants, the internet, UCLF programme documents, and from the IIED communication team. However, there are inherent limitations to the type of evidence and the inferences and analysis that can be drawn to answer the KEQs. For primary data these include:

Key informant sample size: The total of 14 KIs was a relatively small sample size to assess the range of questions and themes, but the nature of the UCLF component of the programme meant that there was not a significant number of stakeholders (internal and external) who would be able to speak deeply about the UCLF, especially four years onwards. For internal stakeholders, the key informants interviewed represented IIED staff most closely engaged at the time of the UCLF (the technical research lead, the programme coordination/administration lead and the accountable programme manager), along with the key donor representative, who was also highly involved throughout the programme. For external KIs, people from nine of the 31 funded research projects were interviewed, representing about 30% of the possible frame (the remaining external key informant was not a grant recipient). Although the net for external stakeholders could have potentially been wider to include more research grant recipients, the sample size was also determined by the short window for conducting KIs (about three weeks) and the total budget available for the evaluation.

Key informant selection: The selection of the ten KIs beyond internal stakeholders was provided by IIED. This presented a potential for increased bias and 'cherry picking' of the most favourable research projects or those key informants with a stronger relationship with IIED. This could have been challenged by the evaluation team, but was not, therefore representing a limitation on both sides. Triangulation between interviews was used to validate findings and mitigate for bias, while the key informants were quite candid in their reflections, offering balanced accounts of the experience with the UCLF. However, in retrospect, a few additional key informants that were randomly selected among the research projects could have supported a more well-rounded evaluation evidence base.

For secondary data, these limitations included:

Limited disaggregation: The number of view and download counts could not be disaggregated further than location. It remains to be confirmed if the individuals downloading and using the information were from the place appearing in the geolocation of each download or if they were simply based in these locations regardless of their origin.

Hidden citations: The informal use of publications cannot appear in Google Scholar or other internet sites. For this reason, it is not possible to definitively conclude that the rate of use or level of influence of one document corresponded to the number of citations. For example, the publications or information within them may have been cited in other ways, such as in national journals or even smaller publications, or other items that are not generally online (such as policy documents from local government, UN bodies, Clusters or civil society organisation actors for whom the country-specific crisis research may have been particularly useful).

Though not a limitation, it is important to note that the interpretation of 'impact' for the purpose of this evaluation has been framed within what IIED aimed to achieve, and the reasonable limits regarding what could be expected in a sector of significant size, with several different actors at multiple levels and with varying geopolitical interests and funding dynamics. IIED was not expected to directly impact policy change, for example, but rather to provide credible research to fill existing gaps in the humanitarian sector's evidence base for urban crisis, which could help inform practitioners and policymakers. The body of evidence generated by the UCLF was impressive when considering the relatively limited budget and timeframe of £3,523,593 over three years, which included the two learning partnerships as well as the UCLF (the UCLF component was approximately £1.25 million during the project's life). Such a fund value is relatively small in comparison to the sheer amount of evidence and time required to shift sector practice and policy in direct, observable and measurable ways. Therefore, the evaluation's assessment of the UCLF's impact was guided by realistic ambitions and reasonable expectations.

2

Evaluation findings by theme and Key Evaluation Question

The following subsections discuss the findings for each KEQ, with two of these reserved for the conclusions and recommendations section (namely, KEQs 1.4 and 1.5, under theme 1 of effectiveness); therefore, some especially salient findings and data points are repeated within this document.

2.1 Findings for effectiveness

2.1.1 What evidence/knowledge generated from the Learning Fund and/or management approach were or could be taken into other IIED programmes? (KEQ 1.1)

The strategic use of UCLF resources enabled a large set of small grant awards, also allowing for more creativity and innovation to explore a diverse set of themes and urban crisis contexts. Therefore, the management of UCLF facilitated research into new areas and explored cross-linkages between them, while also reaching new audiences and networks by IIED. Key informants in this evaluation reported that IIED's decision to avoid a pre-selection of themes was helpful and allowed for an organic and flexible process. UCLF selected topics based on gaps in the overall evidence base — crises that required more empirical evidence, such as Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines and the Haiti earthquake — and the needs of affected populations and national actors. This approach also supported the overarching aim to increase access to funds, and to amplify the voices of diverse researchers and institutions.

2.1.1.1 Management aspects to carry forward

As will be elaborated under KEQ 1.3, the value of the learning fund model is evidenced in several ways, reflecting positive practices to take forward:

1. The large body of research and knowledge products generated, along with the breadth of the portfolio on urban crisis, was managed within a relatively short timeframe.
2. The wide variety of small grants enabled risk taking, innovation and greater thematic spread because the financial resources were not consumed by one or two large pieces of research.
3. The way UCLF was managed opened new areas of work and cross-linkages between them, with entry points to new audiences and networks for IIED.
4. The collaborative approach between IIED and the grant recipients and the quality of engagement with the IIED focal points were appreciated and advocated for, with advice for this to be replicated in future programming. The interactions between IIED and grantees were not just transactional, but genuinely collaborative, which enabled trust and mutual learning for both sides.

The value of relationship management and collaboration are reflected by two KIIs as follows:

- “A way of creating new relationships, several of which have picked up and [been] maintained in different ways. There were power dimensions of being a funder and contractor but because the research grants were small, there were fewer power

inequalities in the way we worked with partners. It was not only a transactional money driven relationship.” (Internal KII)

- “Most valuable experience [was] working with [the IIED staff on the programme]. They brought very rigorous methodology in the urban crisis field. They also brought a long-term development perspective [and] more structure in longer-term systems approach development. They were supporting and open minded in the handling of the grantees (pro-local and pro-small). Their facilitation of the grantees was strong, since they approached it from capacity-building.” (External KII)

2.1.1.2 Thematic aspects to carry forward

A key positive outcome of the UCLF has been filling evidence gaps and exploring new facets of urban crises, such as responses for informal settlements, empirical case studies in the field, area-based approaches (ABAs), informal economies and urban cash transfer programmes. More details about the most cited articles and more impactful pieces of work are presented for KEQ 1.2 and KEQ 5.2 respectively in this report. These details are based on the fluid and dynamic timespan and context of humanitarian crises throughout the UCLF.

Key informants in the evaluation also reinforced that the thematic focuses were fairly organic and driven by specific crisis events and evidence gaps in the humanitarian context, meaning the research was timely and relevant. For example, one key informant explained that “[The UCLF] filled a gap in the research. Haiti had a specific large-scale disaster, [and like the refugee crisis] in Syria, no documentation on lessons learned were available, just operational experiences. [The UCLF] filled that gap to inform future urban crisis ... It was timely research, not just on displacement but also on crisis-based disaster in urban settings in Western Africa and MENA.”

Therefore, rather than pre-selecting or recommending themes, a flexible, context-driven approach seemed to work well. This included selecting themes based on the gaps in the wider humanitarian evidence base and specific crises in need of more empirical evidence, as well as the needs of affected populations and national actors. It also comprised researching the following:

- How to better meet the humanitarian needs of overlooked and/or underserved groups in urban crisis response, such as urban refugees and those living in informal settlements
- Emerging approaches without enough documented evidence, such as ABAs), and
- The role of different actors, especially local entities in delivering urban crisis response (as explored in several UCLF grants).

The practice of collating the diverse work in a dedicated journal issue, as done in the *Environment and Urbanization* journal issue on urban crisis, was an effective way to meaningfully showcase that multifarious material as a cohesive portfolio. This also offered a strategic way to drive readership and online traffic to the UCLF research.

2.1.2 What is the average difference of relevant metrics to measure the value of a publication produced by an established well-resourced institution compared to a less affluent under-resourced one? (KEQ 1.2)

When examining metrics such as citations, publications by authors based in the global North appear more frequently. This is possibly because they can publish more readily through institutions with larger online footprints and stronger reach. However, it is noteworthy that many papers are produced or cited by *Environment and Urbanization*, a journal published by IIED that is meant to amplify the voices of disadvantaged and marginalised groups and ensure diversity of research work. This also underlines the relevance of the content produced through UCLF, as the topics addressed in these papers are not the usual content for the journal's audience.

The online availability of publications depicts a limited picture, however, because there might be more informal dimensions of value that cannot be inferred from citations or social media engagement. It is reasonable to assume that reputable academic institutions can disseminate and cite work to a wider network, thanks to well-resourced communication teams. However, there might be a more informal, hidden side of references to UCLF work that may remain unrepresented across global platforms online and do not demonstrate the use in national humanitarian contexts. For example, this was the case in technical organisational or sector documents such as the ABAs' outputs produced by the Shelter Cluster and the Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster (CCCCMC), which were supported by two of the UCLF research grant recipients, building on their work under the UCLF.

2.1.2.1 Citation analysis — general findings

The sample of publications analysed sheds light on the frequency that UCLF knowledge and learning products reached different types of audiences and organisations. Furthermore, many of these publications largely focus on specific thematic areas relevant to urban crisis. These publications are intended to provide an analysis of approaches and practices in the context of urban crisis, which was — at the time of the UCLF — an area with a

dearth of evidenced-based reviews in the humanitarian sector. The documents reviewed are diverse — some are fixed on specific topics or crises, while others focus on approaches and modalities for urban crisis responses that are also referenced in other publications outside the UCLF. Therefore, some publications apply to specific contexts, while others can inform multiple urban crisis response situations. This indicates that the evidence produced by the UCLF could have contributed to both the strengthening of national/local response in specific urban crisis contexts and to influencing the underlying principles and practices of the sector in a more global sense.

According to Google Scholar, the average number of citations for all the UCLF knowledge and research products is close to nine. The most cited articles are a mix of country-specific and general publications released by international institutions. This is an indication that the most popular publications correlate with the international profile of an author who is either internal to IIED or associated with external organisations. Among the most cited publications presented in Table 2 below, the international journal *Environment and Urbanization* features prominently alongside the IIED website.

As presented in Figure 1, when disaggregating the analysis of citations by category of documents, the first ‘Local Collaboration’ CfP seems to have received most attention in terms of citations while the ‘Local Markets’ CfP has been the least cited category. The most cited publications in each CfP relate to a country

experience. This indicates the relevance of information when connected directly to operational experiences in addressing urban crises (here in the contexts of Syria, Nigeria, India and Nepal). Conversely, the most cited articles under the ‘Discretionary Fund’ link to a more general set of publications associated with approaches and modalities to respond to urban crises.

2.1.2.2 Type of authors

By examining the list of 80+ authors citing UCLF publications, as presented in Table 2, most external experts are citing one specific publication. Only experts associated with IIED are found to be citing multiple publications produced through UCLF. In addition, about 25% of all authors citing UCLF outputs belong to institutions in the global South and more than 60% are affiliated with academic institutions. The greatest portion of citations (almost 30% of the total list) come from universities and institutions based in the UK.

The average number of citations related to the work of these authors is approximately 1,590. However, there are large differences between those based in the global South and those based in the global North: an average of 716 and 1,896 citations per group respectively. This average is skewed by two authors based in the global North, whose total number of citations range between 20,000 and 30,000 on Google Scholar: David Satterthwaite working at IIED and Eric King-wah Chu, a Senior Research Fellow at Monash University.

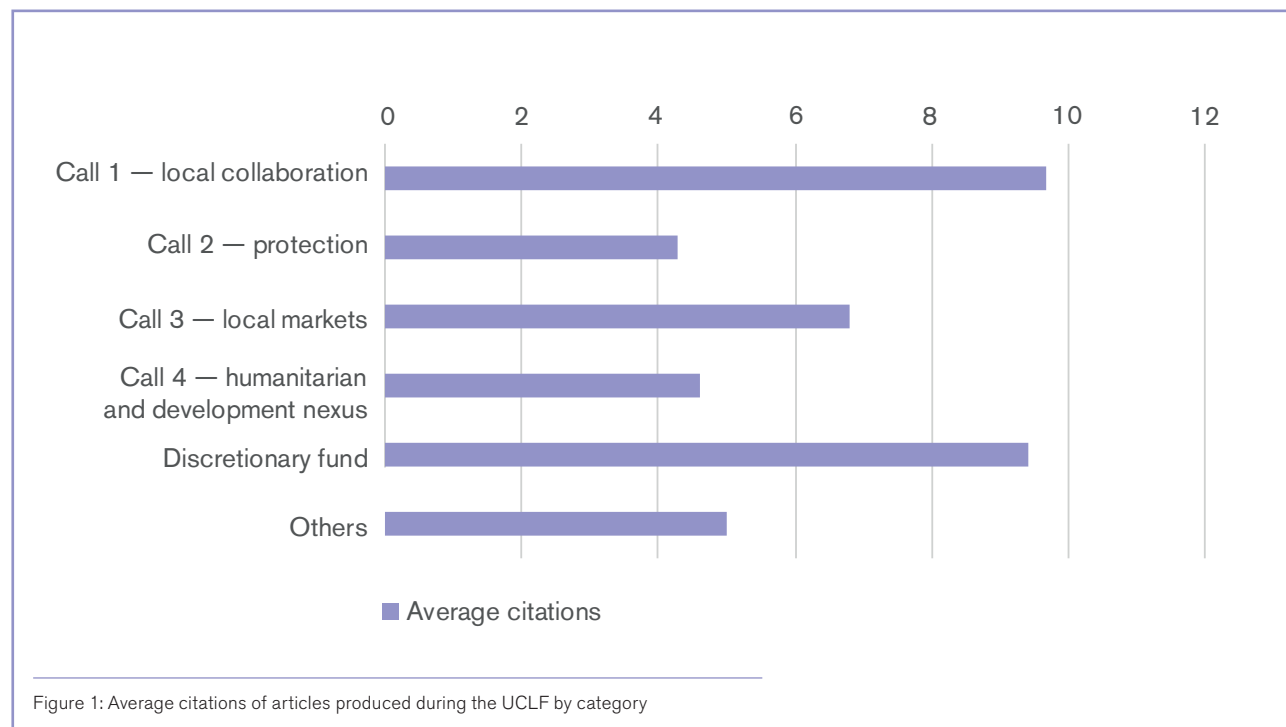


Table 2: Most cited articles produced during the UCLF

NAME OF ARTICLE	INSTITUTION	PUBLICATION	CITATIONS
Responding to the Syrian crisis in Lebanon: collaboration between aid agencies and local governance structures	UN-Habitat Lebanon	IIED website	39
Humanitarian response to urban crises: a review of area-based approaches	Human Settlements Group (IIED)	IIED website	24
The participation of urban displaced populations in (in)formal markets: contrasting experiences in Kampala, Uganda	Human Settlements Group (IIED) and School of International Development at the University of East Anglia (UEA)	Environment and Urbanization	18
Editorial: The urbanization of humanitarian crises	IIED	Environment and Urbanization	16
Urban planning following humanitarian crises: Supporting local government to take the lead in the Philippines following super typhoon Haiyan	IIED	IIED website	12

2.1.2.3 Value between institutions (well-resourced versus small)

IIED's journal publication *Environment and Urbanization* hosts relevant content and insights from empirical findings that increase understanding about the context and modalities of urban crisis preparedness, response and recovery. One of the main purposes of this journal is to amplify the voices of activist representative groups and movements that are rarely seen in the scholarly literature.

Three out of the five most cited articles are hosted in this journal, which indicates that the contributions gaining most traction are included in a publication that aims to share perspectives of disadvantaged and marginalised groups. Also noteworthy is that many *Environment and Urbanization* papers have been widely picked up, which signifies the relevance and visibility of the content produced through UCLF. It also highlighted topics that the journal had not usually featured in past issues.

Generally, though, it seems that papers by authors from and based in the global North tend to appear more often when analysing citations, probably because they can publish more easily through institutions with more significant online footprints. However, one possibly unexpected finding is that some non-academic pieces have attracted more academic interest than expected and, among the most cited articles, a significant portion are hosted by *Environment and Urbanization*.

2.1.3 Was the learning fund model a valuable one overall? (KEQ 1.3:)

All the accounts of the stakeholders interviewed and the analysis of documentary evidence indicates a strong consensus that the learning fund model was a valuable one overall. This applies to value for IIED as an institution as well as for the key staff involved, the grant recipients and their respective institutions, and as a general model for programming of research and knowledge transfer. Different types of value were identified and categorised in the analysis, as presented in the sub-sections below.

2.1.3.1 Value to IIED as an organisation

The evaluation has identified several examples of value that the learning fund enabled for IIED — enhancing its credibility and visibility in the humanitarian space and with new audiences; building networks and relationships with key humanitarian actors; and developing its organisational capacity and understanding of humanitarian sector practice and policy, specific to urban crisis preparedness, response and recovery.

Though IIED was already seen as a credible organisation with a strong research reputation in development and environment spaces by the time of the UCLF, the project offered a fast trajectory for organisational learning and capacity building related to urban crisis as well as a strategic entry point to new spaces for engagement with the humanitarian

community. It also created a niche role for IIED as a credible bridge between development and humanitarian research work. Continued markers of increased credibility include invitations to relevant events and discussions in humanitarian fora, citations of the IIED published work under the UCLF, and accessing new types of funding and partnerships for humanitarian research.

This would not have been possible without the UCLF, as highlighted by an internal KII: “IIED is really credible in this space now and was not before. [It is] a step-by-step process, but without this we wouldn’t have been able to attract certain staff [or] apply for other funding that speaks to these themes, and it’s really opened up both the urban work we do on crises and the links with humanitarian and development work. Considering how close the themes [are] that these sectors work on, there is a massive divide between them. I only realised this in my engagement with it: different languages, Communities of practice, ways of working, etc. To be a bridging organisation is a massive positive outcome for IIED.”

The UCLF also attracted new audiences to IIED’s work, and thus expanded its readership. One UCLF advisory board member explained this as follows: “It alerted people on IIED work’s; it put them on the radar for new people ... It is enough for them to remain a development organisation, but it highlighted a new audience. Their usual readership is more academic; they were not familiar with the DNA of international NGOs [that] defined the readership.”

Though the relationship building among grant recipients and a new network or community of practice due to the UCLF was not an outcome evidenced in this evaluation, for IIED there was immense value in the relationships built and strengthened for the organisation. An internal key informant expressed that the overall value gained for the cost was net positive: “When you look at the money versus the research and links we were able to make and communities of practice [for IIED], it was very positive. The variety of work was enormous, and people could see the value...”

2.1.3.2 Value to research grant recipients

All the UCLF grant recipients interviewed spoke about the value of the UCLF experience, and several expressed the desire to work with IIED under a similar model again. The KIIs yielded many positive reflections, such as “It was overall a very inspiring experience for us, for sure. It has really made significant impact in our trajectory of research even though it was a short-term process.” Though grant recipients’ experiences differed and the strength of outcomes varied in terms of the reach of their work and the opportunities created, the value identified can be framed in four main ways:

- **There was an opportunity for all the grant recipients to access rarely available funding for a new or expanded research topic under urban crisis.** This potential included filling important evidence gaps in the humanitarian context, such as the work under ABAs; urban crisis responses in informal settlements and for urban refugees in large-scale crises; the informal economies of urban crises; and cash transfer programming in the urban context. Key informants generally agreed that this would not have been possible for them without the UCLF. Two enabling factors for access were that the fund offered the right level of funding to absorb and do something worthwhile within a reasonable timeframe (not too long or short) and that the UCLF set-up made it possible for smaller institutions and independent researchers to access the funding. Many of these recipients were from the global South, where access is often more challenging due to stringent compliance requirements and more limited institutional capacity to apply for grants. One grant recipient explained that “Oftentimes, [available research] grants are either too small, like a few thousand pounds, to do any research, or too large to be accessible for small entities or require long-term heavy work and commitment.”
- **The UCLF was the springboard to access other funding or projects and build on learning from UCLF work.** For instance, the amount of usable data and analysis collected in their research could be expanded beyond the research deliverables grant recipients provided for the UCLF grant. It also sparked thinking on new ideas and themes, which grant recipients were interested to pursue after the UCLF. There was general excitement expressed among those interviewed and a passion for the type of work the UCLF enabled them to build on. For example, one grantee explained: “...Even though it was a short fund and timeframe, it has really opened up a whole lot of Pandora’s box on urban crisis. It gave us enough time and got us started and excited even though we couldn’t do all of what we wanted in the project as a researcher. [It was an] enlightening moment for me and colleagues — we did not know to what extent of implications and outcomes for humanitarian response in urban settings, not just human/social, but policy, planning, etc...” Section 2.5 offers more about how the UCLF work is linked to other work of grant recipients post-UCLF.
- **As was the case for IIED, participating in the UCLF led to a perceived credibility gain among grant recipients.** The association with IIED and its established research brand and reputation was said by many grantees to have increased their own visibility and credibility by proxy. For example: “IIED has a strong reputation of its own research ... so

having this done with IIED gave more credibility and exposure as a well-recognised and reputable research organisation.” This has also opened new doors for some grantees. The founder of grant recipient Optimist Films gave a strong example of this: “IIED helped give us credibility, which helped us to access other opportunities. The most fun was that we approached the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, and they showed this film as part of an exhibit in their Syria room for over two years. It was so awesome to have this film as a tool to empower non-profits and for them to use it.”

- **The collaborative approach of working with IIED and the hands-on technical support provided throughout the research process was perceived as reciprocally advantageous.** The appreciation for IIED’s approach to the UCLF and engagement with grant recipients was highlighted and welcomed overall. It differed from the more traditional funder/grantee model of contracts, finances and delivery requirements as the main relationship basis. Both IIED and grantees expressed that the UCLF experience felt like a mutually beneficial partnership. This spirit is well-articulated in the following quote: “The level of engagement from IIED was very helpful, very hands-on investment from IIED colleagues, which was quite unique. Usually, we just get funds and have to deliver, but here the engagement was both ways — a partnership — and we didn’t see them just [as] a funding agency, not just transactional.” Since many grantees were already experienced researchers, the support for the policy-focused aspect was highlighted as especially useful, and as a new way to frame and use their research: “That is one new thing that was appreciated and emphasised the need to spell out policy issues.”

2.1.3.4 Value as a model for programming and generating research and knowledge

Beyond the value for IIED and grant recipients, there are relevant findings in this report on how the learning fund model was a valuable way for IIED to implement programming and generate research and knowledge. As will be discussed in the efficiency section, there were trade-offs in this regard, along with some losses in efficiency based on the nature of the learning fund model, but the gains in terms of ‘value’ seem to have been worth it overall, based on the evidence reviewed.

First, the learning fund model of issuing several grants across different themes of urban crisis enabled a large body of work across a wide breadth in the relatively short timeframe of the UCLF. Second, the small funding pots provided across a diverse variety of grants allowed for more risk-taking and innovation because the money was not reliant on the success of one or two large pieces of more expensive research. Therefore, the

significant range of work and the innovation fostered also enabled new thinking and yielded interesting cross-linkages between pieces of work.

The UCLF model included both higher and lower risk factors for IIED. For the former, placing the research outside IIED’s direct control among so many different entities, brought a certain level of increased risk. However, on the other hand, risk was also reduced by making use of local networks and actors in the global South, where IIED would not be as well-placed or have the expertise to do the work itself. As an IIED key informant explained: “It could go out of the area of expertise of IIED staff ... [to local experts who had] stronger local knowledge and connections compared to the other modalities IIED implemented.” Having the research conducted directly by the recipients and their teams also decreased the logistical risk for IIED by “having people on the ground working in the response doing the research instead of IIED doing it directly. In certain contexts, we had a couple of risky settings, so it was necessary to have organisations outsourced to work on this topic ... so IIED was not doing direct data collection and they had more oversight”.

There was also value in terms of the distinctive role that IIED could play as both the administrator of the grants as well as serving in a hands-on technical advisory and intellectual role. This was an advantage of the model, adding to the quality of the work and enabling strong collaboration. One internal key informant explained the distinct role of IIED in the UCLF model: “I think that this is quite an important part of the programme that many funders don’t appreciate — a mismatch between what funders can do and administer and what small, targeted pieces of work can do. So being the intermediary is key — it is not just transaction. Being the organisation to manage both intellectual and transactions was vital — doing just one would not have been as effective.”

The flexibility of the model was also an added value that enabled more diversity in terms of grant recipients’ access and the higher level of innovation. Due to the relatively small funding amounts for each grant, the donor compliance requirements were also lower for IIED signoffs. Therefore, there was less bureaucracy involved than usual, which afforded more time for hands-on support and collaboration beyond administration. The combined value of this set-up is expressed in the following internal key informant quote: “Key to success of the project was [the] allowed flexibility by DFID and time we could dedicate to partner management and support ... It’s the closest way you could describe how IIED would like to work — grant-based not consultancies, working with partners not just disbursing money ... [going] to the core of relationship building — get them to complete a task together and these grants require that type of work.”

2.2 Findings for efficiency

2.2.1 What are the key lessons on how resources for learning fund-type activities were managed and adaptively adjusted? (KEQ 2.1)

There is a generally divergent perspective on the UCLF's efficiency between internal and external KIIs. The triangulated findings indicate that there were some efficiency losses for implementing a model with multiple small grants to administer among entities with such varied administrative systems and capacities, rather than managing one large pot of funding or just a few grants. However, this was intentional by design and represented an inherent trade-off to enable the different types of value explored under the effectiveness section, such as the wide range of work it enabled and the access for a diverse set of grant recipients. There were also enabling factors for efficiency, such as the small grant sizes that required lower thresholds for sign-off, which facilitated quicker approvals for contracts and payments. Overall, efficiency was not found to be a big challenge or shortcoming, but the UCLF model did require a high level of effort for staff closely involved. Documenting and applying learning from previous programming and the UCLF will be important for building on the successful factors and optimising efficiency for implementing a learning-fund oriented programme model.

2.2.1.1 Efficiency from the perspective of grant recipients

The grant recipients offered positive accounts of the UCLF's efficiency overall; they could not recall any particular challenges in terms of timeliness, contracting, payments, reporting or general administration of the grants on the part of IIED. There was a general consensus among the grant recipients interviewed that the UCLF was administered in a professional and smooth way, while IIED was also noted as being patient and flexible with the challenges of arranging certain grant structures to meet the needs of recipients, such as transferring funds to trickier locations or compatibility with different grantee organisational administrative set-ups. This was enabled by the flexibility of the donor and model as discussed above.

There were no complaints or concerns raised from the perspective of efficiency. The following grantee quote is quite representative of the overall responses received from grantees on this topic: "There was a project we agreed on and the process of getting it was very clear lines of communications, process, expectations and how we [would] proceed. The grant agreement outlined everything clearly with expectations from each of the organisations as partners, [with a] work plan and schedule within each of the periods of the research

project. [We] also clarified and agreed who would be focal points from both sides."

2.2.1.2 Efficiency from the perspective of internal IIED stakeholders

It is unsurprising that the efficiency from an internal IIED perspective was more varied since there was a significant level of effort required to administer a programme with so many grants. And it is arguably a credit to IIED that any inefficiencies were shielded from the grant recipients, as reflected above. Barriers and enablers for efficiency are discussed below before the key lessons.

Barriers to efficiency:

- **The administrative workload was high due to the number of grants and the need to adapt to the different grantee set-ups.** However, this was required for access to smaller organisations and independent researchers, including those based in the global South, who may not have been able to access it otherwise, which was a key aim of the UCLF.
- **The role of the programme coordinator was only 60% covered by the UCLF funding but required 100% capacity.** Fortunately, IIED was able to enable the programme coordinator to spend 100% of their time on the programme, therefore preserving the overall quality. However, it is inefficient that the role was under-budgeted and had to use other funding to supplement it.
- **Reporting to the donor so frequently on the several grants' activities and chasing reporting from grantees decreased efficiency.** Although the flexibility of DFID compliance requirements generally supported efficiency, the donor reporting was quite heavy in terms of paperwork as it was required on a quarterly basis and necessitated reporting into IIED by all the ongoing grants. Timely reporting was quite challenging; however, IIED had a structured system in place to manage this issue.
- **Beyond the key donor technical lead for the programme who engaged closely throughout, the administrative contact within DFID kept changing throughout the programme.** This hindered both efficiency and the ability to solidify long-term effective working. It also took a long time for the DFID business case to be approved after the grant was designed.

Enablers of efficiency:

- **IIED used learning and processes from a previous similar programme, the Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network (ACCCRN), to administer the UCLF.** This meant IIED was not starting from scratch and made use of what had already worked well: "It was helpful that before UCLF,

IIED had experience with another similar structured programme, ACCCRN, but different content. IIED learned from that ... how to do the systems, processes and calls for proposals for the UCLF.” This quote highlights the importance of institutional memory and building on what works to carry it into future programming.

- **IIED had fit-for-purpose systems and procedures and the UCLF team ensured close tracking of all grants.** As one key informant explained: “There was a very structured system, and it was strict — templates for instance have to be followed by partners and then they use it a bit and get better ... [There was a] clear simple outline for budget expenditure ... and an internal spreadsheet to track all the grants closely.” However, it is important to note that IIED has changed administrative systems since the UCLF — one key informant warned that it would be much more challenging to administer the UCLF under the new system, advising that more programme management support would be required, as the burden for finance and grant management would be higher due to the increased number of steps and checks under the new system.
- **Lower compliance requirements by DFID and IIED increased efficiencies in terms of time for approvals and eliminating some financial procedures.** Due to the flexibility and small grant budgets, IIED was able to move through approvals more quickly, with the reduced thresholds for sign-off and could also (legally) avoid certain financial processes that would normally be required. IIED has a well-institutionalised risk register process, which was monitored closely in order to manage risk in a way that could still allow for this flexibility and reduced compliance requirements.
- **IIED designed a flexible and organic CfP and grantee selection process.** An advisory board established for the purposes of the UCLF played a critical role in terms of providing insights and recommendations to inform the CfP themes and on grant selection. Overall, IIED took quite an organic, but intentional, approach to the selection of grant recipients. Rather than the strict scoring rubrics to rank applications that are often used for research grants, IIED decided that it was more important to assess applications from a qualitative perspective that considered diversity, access, range and balance across the portfolio. This approach was intentional and enabled the UCLF to select grantees who may not have scored as highly on more traditional criteria of experience or capacity to write strong grant applications. As explained by an internal key informant: “A scoring system would not have been able to account for the different range of aspects we wanted to account for and would have knocked out

many good options — for instance prior experience or expertise — and would not have enabled the range, diversity and coverage ... The fact that we had the leeway to have the whole view of the package without the constraint of scoring made it successful.” Although many grantees were new to IIED, the organisation also targeted some potential grant recipients, which in turn increased the efficiency of grant selection. The learning from ACCCRN CfPs also contributed to a more efficient CfP process. However, the documentation of the UCLF process could have been documented better — this would have also lent itself well to maintaining records on learning and what worked for institutional memory’s sake.

2.2.1.3 Key lessons on efficiency for managing and adapting resource use

- **Ensure enough budgeted human resources (HR) capacity for programme administration and grant coordination.** The 60% budget for UCLF’s administration and coordination role was insufficient to cover the needs of 100% coverage to ensure high-quality delivery was achieved (ie, effectiveness). This was an efficiency loss as other funds were used to cover the deficit. This should be considered in future.
- **Build on previous experience and documenting learning on the process.** The lessons from ACCCRN served the UCLF well in terms of efficiency. Given that so much of this learning and institutional memory continues to rest with key personnel, some of whom have now left IIED, it would be useful to clearly document and store information about the specific processes and practices for learning-fund type management and resource use. For example, the CfP and grant selection process was deemed to have worked well, but it was also thought that it could have been documented better.
- **Use standard templates and processes and a fit-for-purpose internal system.** The clear and standard set of templates for reports and budgets, along with the risk register and internal tracking tool for grants, supported efficiency. The IIED system for contracting and finance approvals was also fairly efficient given the lower compliance requirements of the fund. However, given the transition to a new IIED system since the UCLF, its efficiency would need to be assessed for the purpose of administering a learning fund or similar model in the future.
- **Negotiate more reasonable reporting and compliance requirements.** The high level of flexibility from the donor and IIED in terms of financial compliance, decisions on grant selection and the use of UCLF resources increased efficiency. However, in the case of donor reporting requirements, quarterly

reporting and the chasing of grantee level reports to feed into those each quarter, decreased efficiency. It could be worth advocating for annual (or biannual) reporting (rather than quarterly) to enable resources to be placed in a more worthwhile area and create efficiency gains.

- **Balance the number and budget size of grants.**

It was difficult to assess with exact precision the number and budget size of grants for optimal effectiveness and efficiency of a learning fund model, and it would not have been wise to predetermine this rigidly, given that flexibility was key for success. However, given the high administrative load of the UCLF and comments offered by KIIs about the budgets, it is likely that there would be efficiency gains, while still preserving the breadth and diversity of research work, by reducing the number of grants slightly and funding grants between about 20,000 and £30,000, rather than a base of £10,000.

- **Have consistent focal points:** The few dedicated focal points within IIED who worked directly with grantees and made decisions on the grant selection worked well for efficiency, as well as the consistent technical lead from DFID who engaged closely throughout. However, the frequent changes to DFID's administrative focal points, while outside IIED's control, decreased efficiency.

2.3 Findings for enduring research partnerships

2.3.1 How did IIED and/or learning fund recipients enable continuity of the research partnerships created in the Urban Crisis programme after it ended? (KEQ 3.1)

Overall, the spirit of mutually beneficial partnerships and meaningful collaboration for research during the UCLF implementation was found to be strong and appreciated by both IIED and grantees, as emphasised above. The continuity of these partnerships by these UCLF stakeholders at different levels varies. In general, for IIED, the benefits of continuity of research partnerships are found to be the greatest, while for grant recipients there are a few who have continued research partnerships or collaboration of some kind with IIED in the long-term. Several grant recipients interviewed noted that the UCLF was helpful to them in terms of entry points for establishing useful research partnerships and networks in their local contexts. When it came to research partnerships, networking, collaboration or communities of practice (informal or formal) between grant recipients, no observable evidence of this was found. Although this was not a key

aim of the UCLF nor prioritised heavily due to the need to balance for other components, many grant recipients specifically mentioned that linking recipients throughout the UCLF programme was a missed opportunity that would have been welcomed.

2.3.1.1 Partnerships for IIED

The UCLF was strategic for IIED in a variety of ways, such as for establishing working relationships that could endure in the long-term when considering urban crises and other relevant themes of interest linked to IIED's mandate. As one internal key informant explained, the UCLF was "a way of creating new ones [partnerships], several of which have picked up and maintained in different ways." Key informants from IIED and a few grant recipients noted the longer-term engagement between them that the UCLF opened up, which has been a continued positive outcome. Even when opportunities have not materialised due to timing or funding, there seems to be a genuine ongoing desire to collaborate again in future and actively seek opportunities to do so.

The wide breadth of the UCLF research projects in terms of themes and geographic locations was also advantageous in terms of providing a range of options and opportunities for research work with grant recipients. Therefore, the cost-effectiveness for both the sizeable body of research work generated under UCLF as well as for potential future work can be deemed to be high. This variety was a strategic investment that has paid off for IIED in the long-term, as expressed by one internal key informant: "Lots of the UCLF partners continue to work with IIED — Cardiff University [researchers], for example ... a few from global south too — SLURC in Sierra Leone and [a partner] in Southeast Asia ... This speaks to the amount we engaged with them: two years of talking all the time and we felt like partners at the end ... close relationships, intense moments of research and deadlines ... We made connections across urban crisis themes: refugees, children and youth, gender. And also, layers: national level, municipal, individuals, and across regions and countries of the world. Suddenly, lots of partners to draw into other pieces."

The UCLF, along with the other components of the Urban Crisis Programme, also linked IIED with humanitarian networks and fora in connection with large institutions and actors in the sector. These included UN-Habitat, the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP), IRC and Habitat for Humanity. This has been useful for IIED in terms of collaboration, network building and cross-fertilisation of research and knowledge.

There was less traction and engagement than originally anticipated when it came to the creation of solid entry points within DFID on current and future urban crisis

research and programming. As mentioned above, the change in focal points was a deterrent to both efficiency and solidifying relationships. That said, the UCLF still allowed for a strong working relationship with the main technical DFID focal point, who was very engaged and retained a long-term working relationship with IIED post-UCLF.

2.3.1.2 Partnerships for grant recipients in their operating contexts

Partnerships and network building in the local context of their research was identified as a tangible benefit for UCLF grantees. Several key informants mentioned that they were able to use the research work as an entry point to engage with and build relationships and networks with local actors from government and civil society, some of which continued beyond the research phase and supported future work. In some cases, IIED supported grantees to make these linkages, for example with the Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC) who benefited from a field visit from IIED UCLF staff, which was very beneficial for relationship and network building. Other key informants also noted the positive outcomes for partnerships, as illustrated by the quotes below:

- “We were able to make local networks in [undisclosed] and that has been beneficial ... We also hosted a workshop in [undisclosed] with stakeholders, NGOs, activist groups, academics, [and] local government city and state level officials [with] a lot of interest shown. We had quarterly engagement with some of them after[wards] until ... late 2021 and we are still in touch for different relevant topics on research suggestions, resources, etc. ... We also made good connections with local housing activists.”
- “I have seen how some of the people we engaged in the research have continued to partner with me to continue to communicate and network together. This has been very positive.”
- “On the partnerships side, the non-profit connections we made in this led to future collaborations. UCLF was our first technical client project, as they brought us on to make this product, and since then we’ve been able to continue to do similar types of projects with clients.”

2.3.1.3 Partnerships among grant recipients

The evidence base points to a gap in this regard; IIED and the UCLF did not facilitate connections between grant recipients to promote peer exchanges or a community of practice for cross-learning or networking. There were a few events organised by the UCLF, most notably an end of programme event held in London (for the entire Urban Crisis Programme), which several grant recipients attended and spoke favourably about. These offered an opportunity for cross-recipient engagement,

but it was highlighted that the last event was too short and too late in the programme life to be impactful in terms of creating relationships/partnerships. It is also interesting to note that there were varied accounts from all key informants, including IIED stakeholders, about the number and location of events. The passage of time needed to enable precise recollection is one plausible reason for this; however, the UCLF events did not seem to leave a long-lasting impression. The events were one area noted as having room for improvement by some key informants, in addition to linking research grantees for cross learning and networking throughout the UCLF life. For example, some mentioned that virtual events and collaboration spaces would have been useful and enabled more access for cross-engagement. They also noted that it would have been beneficial for more in-person events to be held abroad and for there to be more in the global South. It should be noted that a couple of key informants did reference events outside London, but many did not and were unaware of any — perhaps indicating that the visibility of the events was therefore limited.

There was a strong consensus among the grant recipient key informants that they did not engage with other recipients during the UCLF, but that this would have been interesting and useful. However, some also noted that it might have been practically difficult to do this due to the limited time available to do the research. IIED emphasised this was not the aim of the UCLF: “We didn’t have [a] systematic way of linking recipients. We could have done, and I know other programmes do build it in; we didn’t have the resources for it and did not prioritise from other pots ... [this] was not core to our approach.” However, as this was a desire expressed by grantees, this could be considered as a priority in future similar programming as it could yield more outcomes for knowledge transfer, partnerships and sustainable impact for the resources invested, as highlighted by the following quotes:

- “[The UCLF] should have perhaps opened windows for dialogue and networking to compare experience[s] between researchers in the other countries and grantees ... Maybe it happened at the event, but should have been done other ways ... to cross-fertilise ideas and share knowledge, even on data collection and methods.” (External KII)
- “I didn’t know about other projects at the time, but looking at the list of publications and who is there, I know of some of them and would have liked to know them better and [I’m] sure they did good work. If we could have shared findings as we went along, [this] would have built networks and made the work better.” (External KII)
- “All the publications look great, but [there was] only one conference at the end and I was very focused on delivering my part of it. I worked on a huge project

in Asia and was on Knowledge Management and there were six-monthly events between stakeholders.” (External KII)

- “If a learning fund happened again, the community of practice would be a priority area since there was not [a] huge amount of interaction among the grantees. [There was a] big body of evidence but pre-design with this engagement would have been better.” (Internal KII)

2.4 Findings for capacity building

2.4.1 What are the capacities acquired by learning fund recipients to support increased knowledge and best practices for responding to urban crises? How well have these capacities been sustained? Capacities acquired and sustained: After the end of the programme, were capacities of recipients transferred to other organisations? If so, how and which ones? (KEQs 4.1 and 4.2)

Capacity building was found to be a positive outcome of the UCLF for grant recipients as well as for IIED. This applied to increasing knowledge and best practices for responding to urban crises as well as for other areas such as organisational finance and administrative capacity related to the grant process, framing research work from a policy and communications lens and developing the research skills for more junior research team members. Sustainability of these capacities has been shown through the ability of grant recipients and IIED to access new opportunities for research and build on their research work in different ways, as will be discussed in section 2.5. However, it was harder to trace the transfer of these capacities to other organisations, as capacity transfer was found to be most evident at the individual level. Although absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, it is not an outcome that can be strongly inferred without stronger data to support it. There are examples where the UCLF research was said to have contributed to influencing organisations, which will also be discussed in section 2.5.

2.4.1.1 Capacities acquired and sustained by learning fund recipients

There was consensus that capacity was built for grant recipients through their engagement, in different ways and for the range of roles involved within a research team (lead researchers, junior/student researchers and data collectors). Many grantees were already

experienced researchers, meaning the capacity they gained was less about research skills or writing outputs, and more about the thematic content they were researching. This suggests that the intent of the UCLF to increase knowledge and best practice related to urban crisis response was achieved from the perspective of those interviewed. Additionally, several grant recipients pointed to the capacity gained in terms of framing the policy briefs and communication pieces and in how to improve their own funding applications. One key informant even highlighted that IIED supported their administrative staff by increasing their capacity in financial management systems and using QuickBooks accounting software, which supported the skills of that new organisation in the long-term. The technical support provided by IIED was highly appreciated and added value to the research process and final products.

Both internal and external key informants highlighted that the research work itself and the process of being part of the small grant scheme yielded capacity building benefits, as per the quotes below:

- “IIED provided regular feedback even in the short timeframe so we would have landmarks to share and ensure [the] right direction, and [we] got feedback: once per month on average and then more at the end when finalising ... That worked well. The other aspect we liked but it took a bit longer than usual, when we were writing the policy brief [was that] we got really good substantive inputs from IIED team in terms of framing in addition to format[ting] and copy edit[ing]. This helped us really focus and narrow down on the policy brief.”
- “They [IIED] were supportive and open minded in the handling of the grantees: pro-local and pro-small. Their facilitation of the grantees was strong, since they approached it from capacity-building ... [and] editing support and also on how to structure documents and text-based outputs. [There were] great improvements of the work from other grantees ... [and] quality assurance throughout ... Also, on how to frame the learning that they were undertaking, how to think through methodologies and how to undertake an investigative approach. Larger NGOs needed less of that support [and] needed tougher handling especially in terms of timeliness. Smaller recipients needed more support and got more.”
- “This type of programme management is more effective than anything else we do for capacity building of partners because of the hands-on process, regular communications and joint learning together... [There were] partners that hadn't dealt with [the] structure of being in this kind of grant management process so that was a learning for them and working with IIED's system and donor regulations...”

The following quote highlights a benefit especially relevant to more junior team members, but also reflects comments from other grant recipients: “We had a few young local research staff to work with us on the project and they really picked up a lot of skills and interest research wise in this area at that time. Only one of them had [a] research background, as they were from the local community. We trained them on data collection, and they got engaged with it. And they had their own perspective and nuanced questions to offer and that was indicative of their interest. That was nice to see. [I’m] not sure if any of them have continued, as I wouldn’t know.”

2.4.1.2 Capacities acquired and sustained by IIED

Although not directly included in the KEQs, KIIs offered insights on how capacity building was mutual, not only from IIED to grant recipients but also for IIED as an institution and for the key staff involved. It is also important to highlight this to diminish prevalent tropes in the sector that characterise capacity transfer to flow one way: from the global North to South. As one internal key informant explained when asked about capacity building: “[We need to be] careful to talk about capacity, as we aren’t just there to build capacity of others; it’s two ways. In the learning model, we benefit as much — if not more than — the partners ... For us, it’s also relationships and the hands-on nature — we are involved in it; we learn. We weren’t always more senior than the research recipients. [There were] a lot who were at the same level or higher, with strong capacities.”

IIED gained immense knowledge (and therefore credibility) about the humanitarian context and particularly urban crisis, due the body of work it generated and exposure to a wide range of urban crises-related research themes. Additionally, for a few of the grants, IIED travelled to the countries of the research. This was mutually beneficial in terms of capacity for IIED and the host grantees; IIED learned more about the specific urban crisis themes in context and grantees benefited from IIED’s methodological inputs and technical advice. For example, one internal key informant explained that “Working with IIED on the UCLF expanded my expertise in urban crisis, considering contextual factors that are out of control and the role of institutions and exclusion factors of urban refugees. As I kept involved in the review and oversight of quality control, I expanded my knowledge.”

Last, through the process of implementing a learning fund, the capacity of the organisation to effectively and efficiently programme this modality was also enhanced, as with the first time under ACCCRN. For

example, an internal key informant explained that “It helped us to learn how to do that too as IIED. I learned a lot myself about that in terms of budgets, templates, grant management: to adapt and accommodate all these types of partners ... This is the project I learned the most on for sure ... because [of the] nature of [the] funding, [the] level of engagement and the time I had to work on it.”

In summary, in all the accounts collected for this evaluation, engagement in the UCLF was a transformative learning experience for the IIED staff who were closest to it.

2.4.1.3 Capacities transferred to others

Several key informants shared examples of capacity transfer to others. As previously discussed, these mostly came from those directly engaged in the research at more junior levels, but also post-UCLF. The most impact seemed to be at the individual level rather than institutionally or via systemic capacity transfer outside the grant recipients’ organisations and IIED. This does not mean capacity was not transferred to other organisations, especially for those engaged in the UCLF who moved to other organisations post-UCLF. But the evaluation was not able to trace this in a concrete or measurable way. The following quotes offer examples from KIIs about capacity transfer to others:

- “[What I] fundamentally got that was new to me was on the policy briefing and how to put the research [in terms of] policy recommendations in the writing. This is something I learned and keep transferring to my research students.”
- “The capacity building did extend to researchers in [undisclosed] and six researchers in [undisclosed] benefited ... They also learned field skills. There was capacity transfer amongst the lead investigators [from both partnering universities]. The refugee council also learned about research approaches and skills, and they shared experience on refugee policy with the university. An assistant researcher used the funding to build on her PhD and she moved up in her career progression.”
- “We have started to build that capacity in our staff — this research helped us understand what it means: the critical issues in policy and planning and capacity to do research in urban settings.”
- “Students doing similar studies come to me for consultations because they are interested in the work and doing more themselves on the [urban crisis] area.”

2.5 Findings for impact of key pieces and types of evidence

2.5.1 What reports and publications have been most recognised and used by relevant humanitarian actors (institutions/practitioners/policymakers) since the programme ended? (KEQ 5.1)

The themes represented in the most cited and downloaded publications relate to the CfP on 'Local Collaboration' and topics commissioned through the discretionary fund, with the latter leading to a set of operational guidance documents and frameworks to benefit field practitioners. It is possible that local collaboration remains a relevant topic because of the increasing multi-layered complexity of urban crises prompting the need for a mechanism of response that integrates both formal and informal governance structures and access to resources by various stakeholders.

The analysis of how refugees cope in their contexts and reviews of approaches and practices seem to attract a wider audience from the global South, possibly because their relevance also applies to the present when looking at governance approaches to urbanisation, the politics of city spaces and the accessibility of support systems. By examining trends over time, the content attracting the most attention in the long-term has been centred on coordination processes and institutional structures (eg the Task Force in the Philippines response). Such content sits alongside existing tools, recommendations and frameworks (for needs assessments, response analysis or targeting approaches) for urban crisis response and recovery.

When analysing data from KIIs, the recognition and use of research post-UCLF is most commonly referenced as beneficial because it enabled grantees to build on their UCLF research by accessing funding or being solicited for work on similar themes, using the dataset in other work, or repurposing their UCLF outputs into other research and knowledge products. Figure 5 provides a visual representation of at least 19 other research and knowledge products (including papers, articles, media outputs, blogs and conferences) that the UCLF contributed to after their engagement, as provided by the key informants. This is one impactful way that UCLF research has been used and sustained beyond the products generated directly

by the programme, thereby contributing to a growing evidence base for urban crisis preparedness, response and recovery.

2.5.1.1 Publications citing the articles produced through the UCLF

Another level of analysis related to citations identifies the UCLF-produced publications most cited by other relevant publications and authors: a key parameter used to measure their influence in the academic field or among practitioners. Table 3 provides a list of these publications and their year of release in relation to the most cited articles identified in Table 2.

According to Table 3, the most relevant publications referencing articles from the UCLF were mostly released during the 2018 to 2020 period and can be found in international journals. When examining the set of publications with the highest number of citations, we can observe a crossover from IIED working papers not necessarily written for an academic audience but cited in academic journals and vice versa. For instance, the publication 'Humanitarian response to urban crises: a review of area-based approaches' was conceived for practitioners but has been cited in international academic journals such as *International Humanitarian Action* and *Environment and Urbanization*. Alternatively, the editorial 'The urbanization of humanitarian crises', which was drafted according to academic standards, received traction in other non-academic publications, such as those of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the New Climate Economy Report, as well as at events such as the IPCC Conference that took place in 2018.

Another observation from analysing this list of publications is that although the set of journals with citations is diverse, for one specific article 'Humanitarian response to urban crises: a review of area-based approaches' the highest number of citations can be found in the same IIED publication *Environment and Urbanization*. In light of the aim that this journal intends to provide a greater voice to marginalised groups in the urban crisis field, it is possible that the review of ABAs might have informed the thinking of some actors on the frontline of urban crises in the global South. However, this is an assumption that needs additional verification, as there is no specific secondary information regarding whether the people who are involved in the humanitarian sector read this journal. Otherwise, most other sources developed by UCLF grant recipients, mostly independent consultant researchers, are cited by publishing entities with an international reach. This finding indicates that although many of the grant recipients of the UCLF were independent consultants, the online visibility of their thinking in terms of citation is mostly hosted by international publishing entities.

Table 3: Most relevant publications and authors citing the articles/working papers produced by UCLF

NAME OF PUBLICATION	MOST RELEVANT PUBLICATIONS AND AUTHORS CITING THE LEARNING OUTPUTS
Responding to the Syrian crisis in Lebanon: collaboration between aid agencies and local governance structures	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. J Nassar, N Stel (2019) — Political Geography. Elsevier, 2019 2. E Carpi, H Pinar Şenoğuz — International migration, 2019 3. R Anholt, G Sinatti — Contemporary Security Policy, 2020 4. Eun Su Lee, Betina Szkudlarek, Duc Cuong Nguyen, Luciara Nardon — International Journal of Management Reviews, 2020 5. E Pascucci, J Häkli, KP Kallio — Borderless Worlds for Whom, 2018 6. E. Pascucci — Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space in SAGE Journals, 2018 7. L Kabbanji, J Kabbanji — Center for Migration Policy Development, 2018 8. B Akesson, D Badawi — Political violence toward children: Psychological effects, intervention and prevention policy. Oxford University Press, 2019
Humanitarian response to urban crises: a review of area-based approaches	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Patrick Daly, Sabin Ninglekhu, Pia Hollenbach, Jennifer Duyne Barenstein, Dori Nguyen — Environment and Urbanization, 2017 2. L Earle — Environment and Urbanization, 2016 3. Desire Mpanje, Pat Gibbons & Ronan McDermott — Journal of International Humanitarian Action, 2018 4. D Archer, D Dodman — Environment and urbanization, 2017 5. MT Tafti, R Tomlinson — Environmental Hazards. Taylor & Francis, 2019 6. A Sapat, AM Esnard — Coming home after disaster: Multiple dimensions of housing recovery, 2016 7. Victoria Maynard, Elizabeth Parker, Rahayu Yoseph-Paulus, David Garcia — Environment and Urbanization, 2019.
The participation of urban displaced populations in (in)formal markets: contrasting experiences in Kampala, Uganda	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. H Bohnet, C Schmitz-Pranghe — ssoar.info, 2019 2. Ojeda, A Pino — Cities. Elsevier, 2019 3. B Maharaj — International Development Planning Review, 2020 4. C McFarlane — Fragments of the City: Making and Remaking Urban Worlds, 2021 5. CT Boeyink — Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees, 2019 6. SKM Agblorti, M Grant — Canadian Journal of African Studies. Taylor & Francis, 2021
Editorial: The urbanization of humanitarian crises	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. D Satterthwaite, D Archer, S Colenbrander, D Dodman — IPCC for the International Scientific Conference on Cities and Climate Change in Edmonton, March 2018 2. Rocio Carrero, Michele Acuto, Asaf Tzachor, Niraj Subedi, Ben Campbell, Long Seng To — Urban Studies, 2018 3. Eric Chu, Anna Brown, Kavya Michael, Jillian Du, Shuaib Lwasa and Anjali Mahendra — Background papers commissioned to inform the Global Commission on Adaptation 2019 report 4. Matthew French, Abdul Popal, Habib Rahimi, Srinivasa Popuri, Jan Turkstra — Environment and Urbanization, 2019 5. Anton Cartwright, Ian Palmer, Anna Taylor, Edgar Pieterse, Susan Parnell and Sarah Colenbrander — The New Climate Economy Report, 2018 6. E Huq, F Miraftab — Planning Theory & Practice. Taylor & Francis, 2020
Urban planning following humanitarian crises: Supporting local government to take the lead in the Philippines following super typhoon Haiyan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I Amri, SR Giyarsih — GeoJournal - Springer, 2021 2. D Archer, D Dodman — Environment and urbanization, 2017 3. W Novalia, S Malekpour — Environmental Science & Policy, 2020 4. AF Roslan, T Fernando, S Biscaya, N Sulaiman — Sustainability, mdpi.com, 2021 5. J Ensor, H Tuhkanen, M Boyland, A Salamanca — World Development. Elsevier, 2021 6. CB Ndlovu — ukzn-dspace.ukzn.ac.za, 2019

Table 4: Common themes from most cited articles

ARTICLES	COMMON THEMES
Responding to the Syrian crisis in Lebanon: collaboration between aid agencies and local governance structures (39 citations)	Area-based approaches in urban crisis settings
Humanitarian response to urban crises: a review of area-based approaches (24 citations)	
Editorial: The urbanization of humanitarian crises (16 citations)	Long-term resilience in urban crisis response
Water, crises, and conflict in MENA: how can water service providers improve their resilience? (11 citations)	
Long-term implications of humanitarian responses: the case of Chennai (10 citations)	
Responding to the Syrian crisis in Lebanon: collaboration between aid agencies and local governance structures (39 citations)	Formal and informal collaboration mechanisms between local authorities, humanitarian actors and informal groups
Urban planning following humanitarian crises: Supporting local government to take the lead in the Philippines following super typhoon Haiyan (12 citations)	
Urban refugees in Delhi: identity, entitlements and well-being (11 citations)	Profiling diverse refugees' populations
The participation of urban displaced populations in (in)formal markets: contrasting experiences in Kampala, Uganda (18 citations)	

Beyond online visibility that can be analysed from platforms such as Google Scholar or Scopus Preview, there is a hidden set of documents referencing UCLF work that might not be easily detected. One example is the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Paper on ABAs, which details the CCCM Cluster's position on these, including the operational considerations and opportunities they may have for CCCM actors. When accessing the Urban Humanitarian Response Portal hosted by ALNAP, more than 300 publications also refer to IIED work, including from relevant agencies like UN-Habitat and European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO). It is plausible to assume that UCLF has contributed to the thinking in some publications released since 2017, although this cannot be inferred through citations alone; it would need to be explored in more targeted and qualitative terms, to investigate how the discourse has evolved in urban crisis response, as well as any plausible contributions that link UCLF to it.

From the analysis of these most cited products, there are common themes that seem to have sparked more interest and attention from the wider audience. The topics outlined in Table 4 therefore signal the recurrent issues presented by the UCLF's work that those other agencies and experts found to be most relevant and/or interesting (based on the parameters used herein) after the programme ended.

The most frequent key topics in terms of interest and longer-term traction can be divided into two broad categories:

1. Reflections on the best approach for urban crisis response interventions (eg ABAs)
2. How multiple stakeholders interact with each other formally and informally.

These two themes are interlinked, as ABAs are defined as being geographically specific and developed through participatory project management methods that are multisectoral in nature. The need to profile a group of diverse populations affected by a crisis and how they interact with various agencies implicated in an urban response leads to a need to adopt ABA-like approaches as a sectoral standard, particularly because of the focus on community dynamics within spatial contexts. This consideration is valid when bearing in mind the most cited publications and their thematic focus.

2.5.1.2 Downloads and view counts

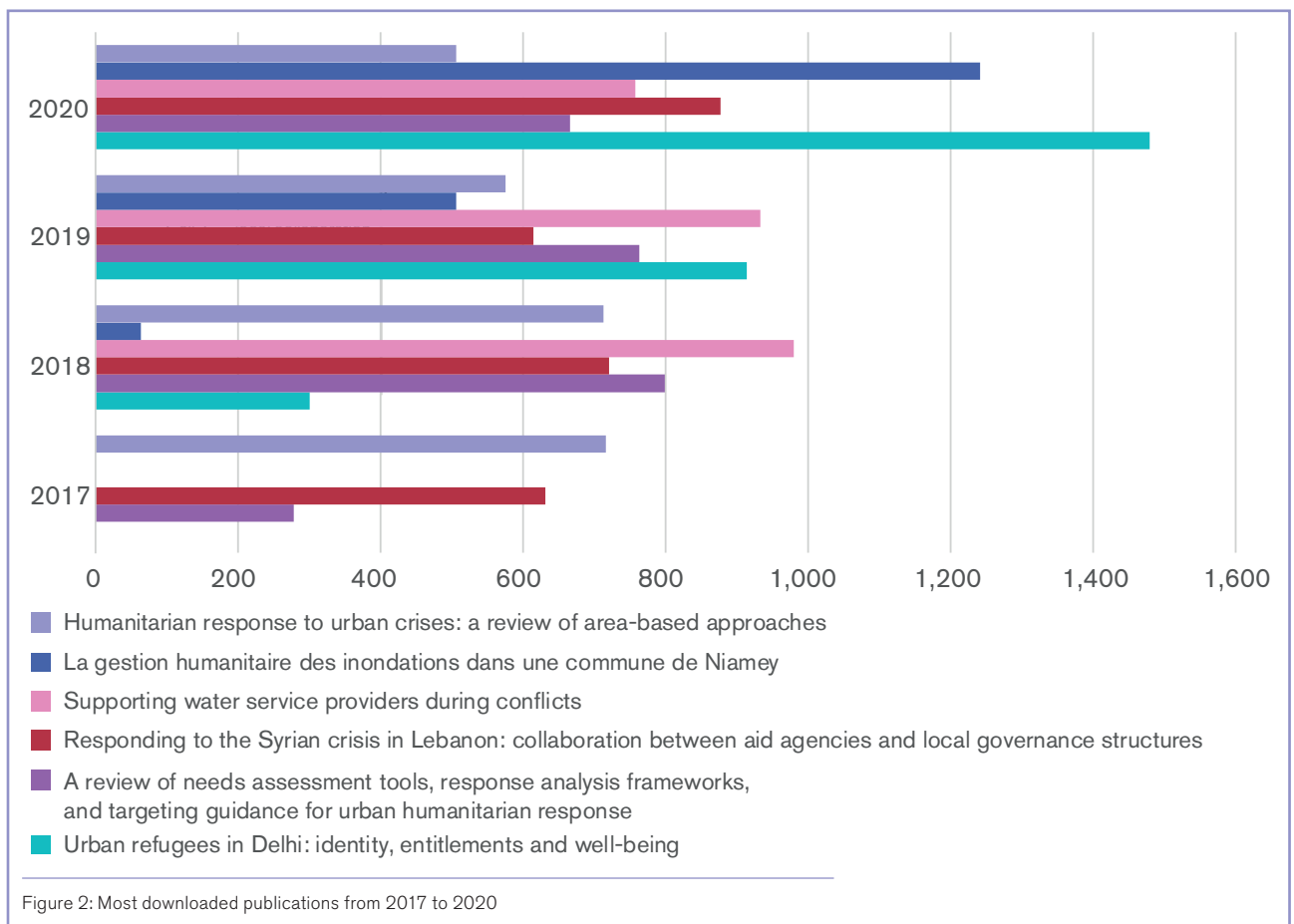
Another parameter selected to analyse the content's engagement as a proxy of recognition received by publications from the UCLF was the number of views and downloads received. At the time of the final evaluation in December 2017, more than 57,000 publications had been downloaded from the IIED website (also including the Stronger Cities component of the Urban Crisis Programme that has not been part of UCLF). Of these, 18,312 came from the global South, constituting about 30% of the total download value. Recent download data indicates a lower engagement from the global South in the last quarter of 2021 (8%); this might suggest a weaker incentive to use past publications that may have evolved in more recent papers.

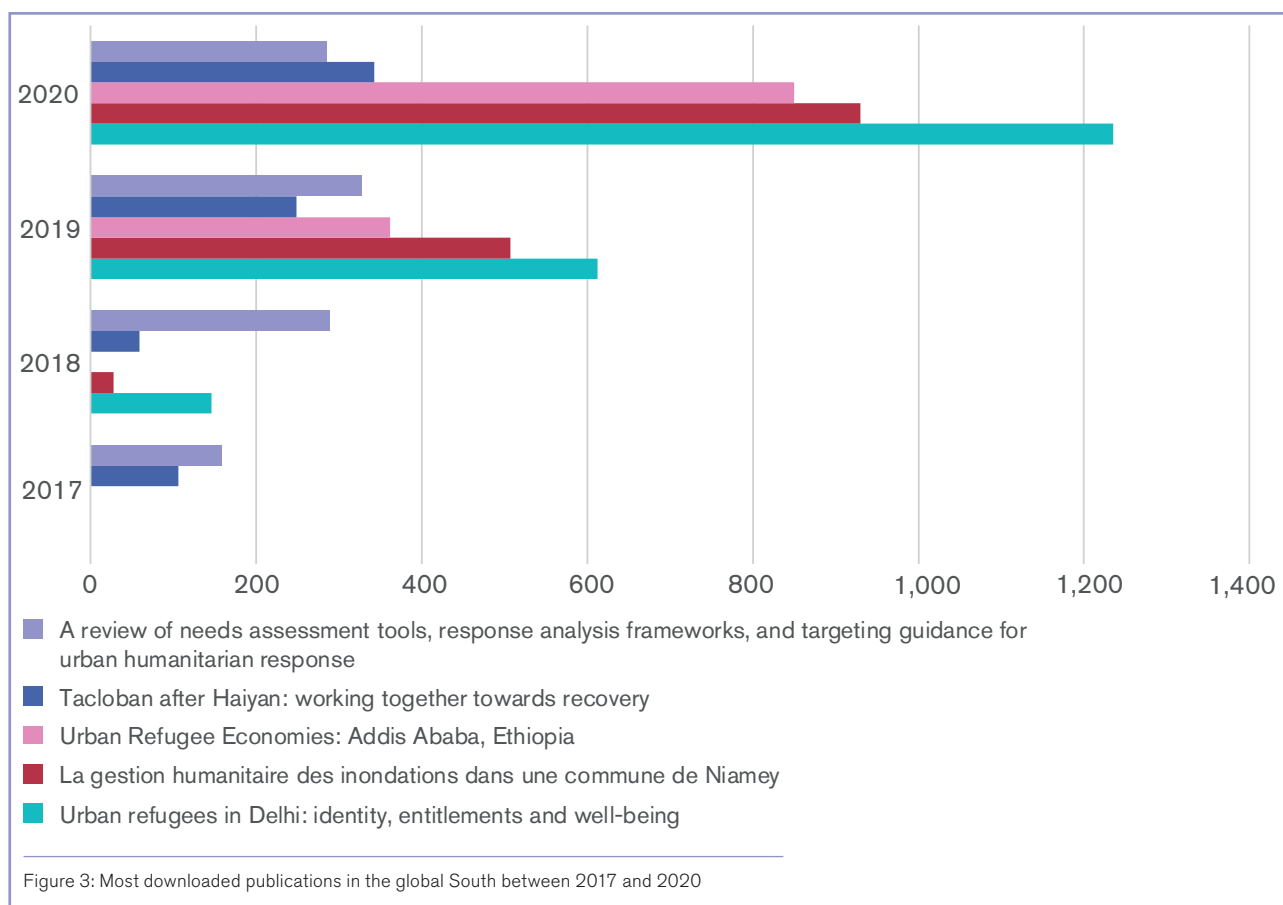
An additional dimension to consider in the analysis of downloads is to look at trends from 2017 to 2020. Figure 2 illustrates trends for the five publications that attracted the highest number of downloads (above 3,000 overall), while Figure 3 provides the same information but from users in the global South. In both figures, the x-axis represents the total number of annual downloads for each article, with the aim of showing a trend of downloads during the period between 2017 and 2020.

When looking at aggregate and disaggregate trends, the publication 'Urban refugees in Delhi: identity, entitlements, and well-being' shows the steepest upward trend for downloads between 2017 and 2020. This also features as the most downloaded publication from users in the global South. A similar trend in downloads can be seen for the paper 'La gestion humanitaire des inondations dans une commune de Niamey', which has attracted an increasing number of downloads over time from users. The paper on urban refugees analyses how refugee groups in Delhi have attempted to secure livelihoods and realise their aspirations, along with the extent to which their needs and ambitions have been supported by local, national

and international aid organisations. The paper on flood management in Niamey also looks at the humanitarian ecosystem, as well as its logic and stakeholders, along with the interactions between actors involved in the flood response.

'A review of needs assessment tools, response analysis frameworks, and targeting guidance for urban humanitarian response' and 'Tacloban after Haiyan: working together towards recovery' have both maintained a high interest over time among the users in the global South, in comparison with the other publications. Although the review paper identifies approaches, guidance and frameworks, especially in terms of needs assessments across different settings, the paper on Tacloban's response focuses on experiences, challenges, successes and lessons for a city government, from humanitarian response to the recovery and development phases after the disaster. This finding indicates a growing need to identify coordination processes and institutional structures that have worked for a task force, alongside existing tools, recommendations and frameworks (eg needs assessments, response analysis or targeting approaches) that are specific to urban crisis.





2.5.1.3 Social media and video engagement

Alongside knowledge and research products, IIED also implemented a communication strategy that included the organisation of events and the use of media and social media to disseminate and raise visibility of the UCLF's work. A set of relevant tweets and links is presented in Table 5.

A common metric for analysing social media content is the level of engagement by users that can be assumed from tracking the number of impressions, likes and resharing of specific content. Most of the tweets in Table 5 that attracted engagement relaunched content on the conferences held by IIED or specific learning from urban crisis responses such as 'empowering local governments and communities to manage their own recovery' or applying a 'more nuanced understanding of how communities operate'. Specific Typhoon Haiyan response publications also catalysed more than 1,000 engagements; these research pieces embedded case studies and provided a greater depth of understanding about urban planning processes in Tacloban through the triangulation of different sources.

In addition to social media, IIED employed other media strategies such as the creation of videos about refugees affected by urban crisis to show humanitarian crisis settings to a wider audience. One highlight is included

in the post 'The road from refugee to resident', which presents a virtual reality short documentary ('For My Son') about the journey of Firas, a 27-year-old Syrian refugee as he flees Aleppo and builds a new life for his two-year-old son in Jordan. This video has more than 8,000 views, the highest number when compared to other UCLF-funded media content

Another relevant UCLF media product is the documentary 'Lessons from a Storm', which follows Tacloban City's recovery after Typhoon Haiyan. The film tells the story of how the Philippines municipality of Tacloban city recovered from the strongest typhoon ever to make landfall. The film describes the experiences, challenges, successes and lessons of the Tacloban city government as the city moved from humanitarian response after the disaster to the recovery and development phases that followed.

When the video launched in 2016, the host webpage attracted more than 400 views, and now totals a value above 1,000. More than 65% of these viewers so far have been from the UK or the Philippines. The trend peaked immediately after the launch, attracting 25% of the total traffic within the first ten days in July 2016. After that period, no other peaks of views were detected and from the launch period until the time of writing this report, the average number of views per day has been 0.72. When looking at the level of interest by viewers,

Table 5: Most relevant tweets

MOST RELEVANT TWEETS	LINK ASSOCIATED WITH TWEET	IMPRESSIONS
Area-based assessments give a more nuanced understanding of how communities operate; how its needs are met. But it can become resource intensive #urbancrises		4,315
NEWS: It's time to put #urbancrises learning into practice – outcomes from last week's conference on how to improve humanitarian aid and collaboration when crises hit urban areas	https://www.iied.org/urban-crisis-conference-time-put-learning-practice	4,127
Today's #urbancrises conference with @IRCEurope is under way, as @BangkokDi introduces the focus on effective humanitarian response		3,459
NEWS: New research confirms the importance of urban planning in empowering local governments and communities to manage their own recovery after a humanitarian crisis, by @EParker000 --> #urbancrises	https://www.iied.org/post-crisis-urban-planning-lessons-southeast-asia	3,318
ICYMI: 3.7 million Lebanese and Syrian people need water - it's estimated demand on water services has increased by 30 % since the Syrian crisis began	https://iied.org/getting-lebanons-water-flowing-using-new-sdg-data-urban-crisis	2,365
Despite responses to the Syrian crisis in Lebanon, there's growing pressure to provide adequate water services. On #WorldRefugeeDay read 'Five fundamentals to keep Lebanon's water flowing'	https://buff.ly/2JYvqCJ	1,824
DOWNLOAD: <i>Urban planning following humanitarian crises (Typhoon Haiyan)</i> --> #WorldHumanitarianDay	http://pubs.iied.org/10813IIED	1,125
DOWNLOAD: <i>Typhoon Haiyan: lessons for urban disaster response and recovery</i> --> #PubsFriday #ResilientCities	http://pubs.iied.org/17377IIED	1,036

as presented in Figure 4, more than 70% of viewers are watching at around the 30 second mark, which shows that the content is maintaining the attention of viewers above a typical level, according to analysis from the IIED communication team.

2.5.1.4 Analysis from KII data about recognition and use of UCLF reports and publications

Although the sub-sections above provide a more quantitative analysis of recognition and use of UCLF reports and publications, based on different metrics of reach, the key informant data complements this with their impressions and experiences. Section 2.5.2 explores some cases in more detail, specifically those that emphasised in the evaluation as contributing to tangible outcomes in terms of influence on actors in the humanitarian sector and practices related to urban crisis.

The most common form of long-term use, recognition and sustainability identified by the grant recipients interviewed was related to what the UCLF research work enabled them to do after the programme ended. Many expressed that it helped them access and fund more work on similar themes and to use the key findings and data generated by the research in different ways or for new research and knowledge products. In many cases, future work was initiated by grantees themselves (ie they solicited the opportunities) but in a few instances, they were approached to do other work based on their UCLF research, also indicating recognition by other actors of the value of the UCLF-produced research and its credibility. The following key informant quote is a typical comment related to how the UCLF contributed to grant recipients' future work:



"I built on this work and it has led to other funding and research ... Even though the outputs were quite clear, a working paper and policy brief, the field work gave a lot of material to expand upon ... I am very proud of the work we did — more than a lot of other work I have done."

Figure 5 presents another interpretation of the reach of key pieces of the UCLF. Six key informants interviewed were asked to provide a list of related research papers, funded projects and other knowledge products (such as blogs and conference presentations) that built on their work under the UCLF. The net was cast wide for contributions of their UCLF research as there were a variety of ways that the research supported other endeavours. This included using parts of their UCLF datasets; building on the themes, ideas and findings supported or generated by their research; reformulating the UCLF research content for other knowledge products; and using their UCLF outputs as the basis for other funding applications.

Based on the lists provided, the UCLF contributed to at least 19 other research and knowledge products, with an average of four per recipient. However, Figure 5 only includes the lists provided by those interviewed, and is therefore not exhaustive. Given there are several research grantees not included in the sample, one can assume the reach extends far beyond what is presented here in this document. To estimate very roughly, one could use a crude calculation based on the average of four per research grant herein. Therefore, it is plausible that the 31 UCLF-funded research projects contributed to an additional 124 research and knowledge products, media outputs, and events such as conference presentations. This is an unverified estimate, but can be used to illustrate the potential continued influence of the UCLF, based on the small sample average herein. This figure doesn't account for the work of other researchers and students on grant recipients' teams who may also be using the UCLF research.

In this way, the UCLF is sustained beyond the specific research and products it generated and is helping to build the overall evidence base for urban crisis preparedness, response and recovery. Because, for many grant recipients, the UCLF grant was the first time they were able to research a certain theme/topic — or in some cases, the first time it was documented in the humanitarian sector (such as for ABAs) — the UCLF can be considered the starting point of several chains of research work that may continue to extend far into the future.

2.5.2 What knowledge and evidence produced by the learning fund have informed the development of preparedness, response and recovery best practices/strategies in urban crisis settings? (KEQ 5.2)

This KEQ was the most challenging to assess and provide concrete, verified evidence at the sustainability and impact level, with the scope of evidence and time available. There are however a few interesting examples of outcomes provided by key informants in this regard, which are presented in section 2.2.5.1. These cases can be viewed as promising indications of impact that would benefit from more rigorous verification of causal and contribution linkages.

The most recurrent and therefore potentially impactful key topics for informing the humanitarian sector on urban crisis are ABAs, targeting strategies (such as with respect to cash transfers) and how stakeholders interact in formal and informal spaces. These themes are interlinked because ABAs need to be developed through participatory and multisectoral engagement. The measurement of success is a prominent issue emerging from the literature on ABAs. The shift in

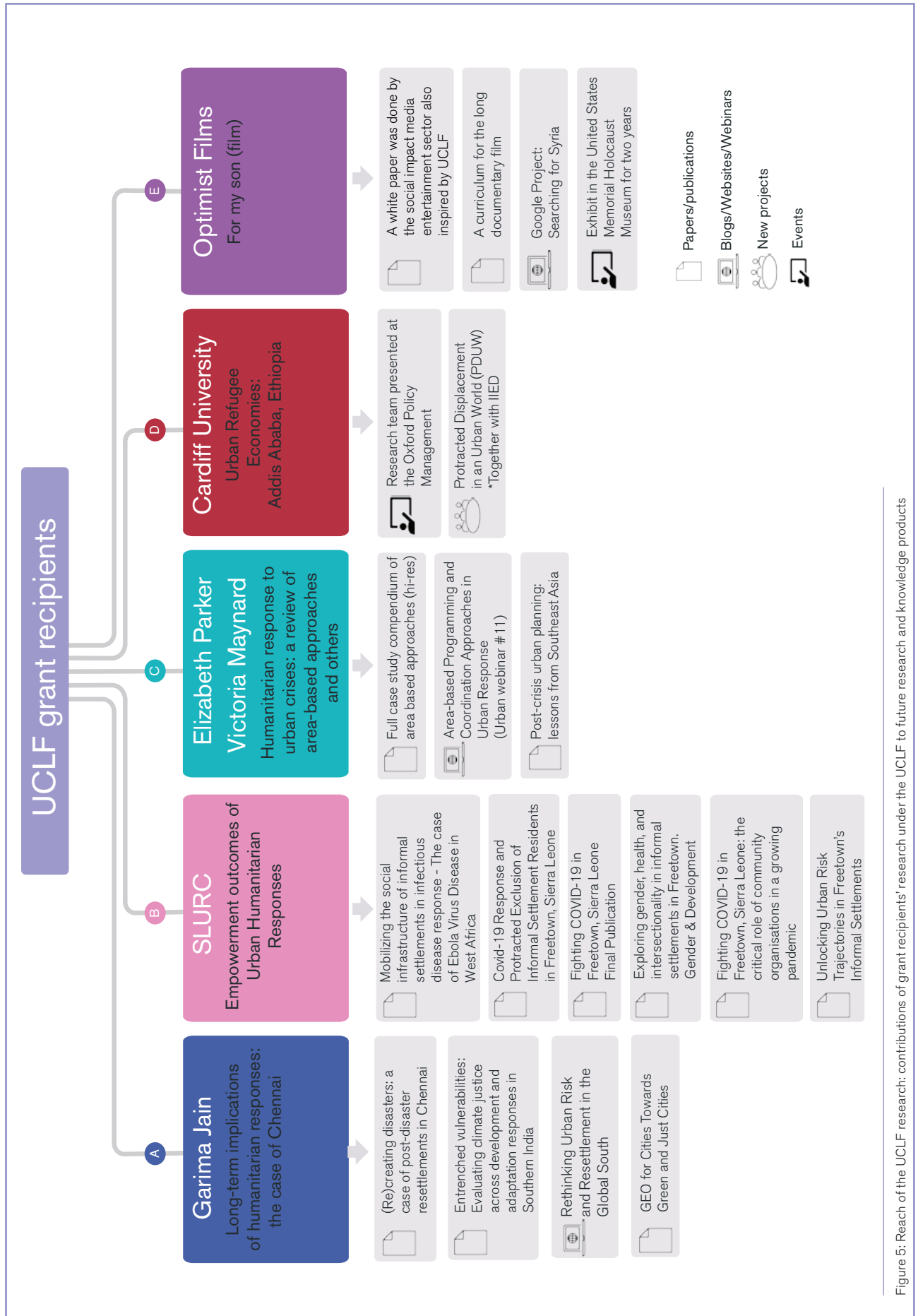


Figure 5: Reach of the UCLF research: contributions of grant recipients' research under the UCLF to future research and knowledge products

emphasis away from the logistically derived system of delivery equalling success and towards an aim to help improve the lives of urban dwellers is a critical reflection that the UCLF has contributed to. The shift to ABAs has also led to a review of tools and practices by other academic experts and practitioners. For example, there has been a change in the asset vulnerability framework, with greater emphasis on the need for a more flexible, iterative and agile management structure aimed towards local ownership, which must be planned for. Therefore, it is plausible that IIED has contributed to the humanitarian sector's recognition of the need for multistakeholder and multisectoral approaches at the centre of an urban crisis response. This has been reflected in the knowledge and evidence where the UCLF achieved the most reach and thus potential influence according to the secondary data available.

Key informants in the evaluation underpinning this report also offered perspectives on how the impact and sustainability of the UCLF research's knowledge and evidence could have been bolstered in the long-term and enabled more influence. A few noted that the long-term dissemination and continuity strategy for the work was lacking and could have therefore weakened the potential for impact and sustainability. Others suggested that the use of more visual and dynamic representations of research such as film (of which there were two that received decent engagement levels) and interactive platforms would have helped IIED and the UCLF stand apart and to reach a wider audience. This would also increase inclusiveness and accessibility for different groups who may not connect with the mediums of research papers and policy briefs. As one external key informant expressed: "We are in a crowded space; it can be highly visual, so why we are creating documents instead of videos/five minutes [clips]? [We need] more creative approaches in the collection of evidence and sharing information. It is more of a text-based organisation ... Experiential and visual topics [on urban crisis] can be used to show and explain that it was very possible to do. Academic language might not have the same impact."

2.5.2.1 Outcome cases: indications of UCLF contribution and impact

Although it is more difficult to verify impact of the UCLF in terms of directly informing practices and policies in the humanitarian sector, the key informants and other documentation reviewed have highlighted a few examples of how the UCLF research contributed to influencing the humanitarian sector and key institutions. Four brief outcome cases are presented below:

1. Defining of ABAs and best practices
2. More attention to urban response by humanitarian response actors in the context of Freetown, Sierra Leone

3. Emphasis on and prioritisation of urban crisis preparedness and response in organisational strategies, and
4. Increasing awareness in the US about urban Syrian refugees' humanitarian needs and experiences through the 'For My Son' Virtual Reality short documentary film and related campaigns and awareness raising efforts, which extended the reach and engagement in the content significantly.

Outcome case 1 — Formalising a definition and evidence base for ABAs. The paper 'Humanitarian response to urban crises: a review of area-based approaches', by UCLF grant recipients Elizabeth Parker and Victoria Maynard, impacted the humanitarian sector by providing a formal definition of ABAs and documenting evidence about their use that did not officially exist before the UCLF, even though ABAs were an emerging practice in the sector. In addition to being one of the most cited papers of the UCLF, the work also attracted interest from the Global Shelter Cluster, who approached Parker and Maynard to write an introduction and analysis for its compendium of 'Area-Based Approaches in Urban Settings'. Additionally, the CCCMC regularly references the paper, referring to it as seminal in its 2021 'CCCM Cluster: Paper on Area-based Approaches'. According to one of the key informants: "Anyone writing other ABAs will reference the UCLF ABA work. There is increased use and interest of ABAs in [the] humanitarian sector ... ABAs have become established and integrated into humanitarian delivery. For example, there is a shelter working group for 'settlements approaches' and it forms part of the CCCM strategy."

Outcome case 2 — Improved preparedness and response for the needs and capacities of informal settlement populations humanitarian actors in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The SLURC produced the research working paper 'Empowerment outcomes of Urban Humanitarian Responses', which "explores the extent to which approaches have been able to build the capacities of informal dwellers' groups, foster collaboration among different stakeholders, enable critical learning, and open up opportunities for the recognition of the diverse needs and aspirations of vulnerable groups within the wider policy and planning environment".¹ SLURC has also produced several other works post UCLF on this theme (presented in Figure 5). SLURC sees a tangible and positive shift in the ways crisis responders prepare for and address the needs of communities of informal settlements in Freetown, also impacting on how they interact with them. They believe the UCLF research and other related work of SLURC has contributed to this shift by providing stakeholders, such as the Disaster Management body of the government, with empirical evidence about how to consult and coordinate with community members to make responses

more inclusive and relevant to their needs and capacities. Beyond producing the research, the SLURC team have also engaged directly with government and civil society actors to share the research and promote the use of the findings in terms of improving humanitarian preparedness and response for these overlooked communities. The director of SLURC has provided the following explanation on the process, along with SLURC's contribution to this outcome, and its significance:

“We had to highlight these things in our research and paper and distributed to NGOs, aid agencies and the Disaster Management Agency within the Office of National Security (ONS) ... This helped to restructure the way they have been providing humanitarian response, especially in the face of COVID ... For example, the informal settlements residents were not considered as relevant [before] but in COVID, we saw that they were coordinated with — expanding governance space and role of communities in making decisions around response and the inclusion. The Freetown City Council (FCC) demonstrated that. For instance, in the three lockdowns, the FCC made plans of the spread of the disease, so this kind of collaboration were very visible in COVID crisis. ... It also helped to shift the agency in the informal settlements — that their voice and inputs to Urban Crisis response matters. This has been established and has been critical. Major reason why the COVID virus was less spread in Freetown than other cities in the subregion. There has been more prioritisation on urban response than before — this cannot be attributed to this one research, but a range of research contributed to the recognition of the importance of urban crisis response. There is now a new ministry for the Western Area — a region that is 98% urban. This ministry will work to address the needs of the people and to help coordinate all action in terms of development and humanitarian response.”

It is important to note that this is quite a significant contribution claim that could benefit from further substantiation. It would make an interesting case for a theory-based methodology such as contribution analysis or process tracing. However, it highlights how good research can contribute to changes in practice, if the right actors are engaged and presented with compelling evidence.

Outcome case 3 — Integration and emphasis on urban crisis in organisational strategies. Another contribution of the UCLF body of research (rather than a specific piece of research) highlighted in the KIIs related to how different institutions have referenced and prioritised urban crisis preparedness, response and/or recovery in their formal organisational strategies. Three institutions were specifically noted: IIED itself, UN-Habitat and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The inclusion of urban crisis

can be confirmed by reviewing the content of the strategies, but the contribution of the UCLF is based on the accounts provided by key informants. More formal tracing would need to be done to increase the confidence in these claims, but it is plausible given that the chronology matches (ie the inclusion was post-UCLF). It is also significant that representatives from these institutions had direct contact with the UCLF research work and stakeholders, and that the informants in question worked for these institutions (except in the case of UNHCR, where the information was second-hand rather than from a staff member). Given that there was a dearth of evidence in the sector on urban crisis themes before the UCLF, it is also plausible that the sizable body of research could have helped increase attention given to urban crisis. Given that strategy often informs funding allocations and governs the way agencies prioritise their work, the inclusion of urban crisis at this level has potential to influence outcomes downstream to practices on the ground.

Outcome case 4 — Raising awareness in the United States for urban refugees in humanitarian crises. The UCLF co-funded the aforementioned short Virtual Reality 360 degree documentary film, ‘For My Son’, by grant recipient Optimist Films (also see section 2.5.1.3 on social media and video engagement). The power of film and storytelling to galvanise awareness and support can be seen in several ways that this particular documentary has been used and the exposure it has gained:

Optimist films showcased ‘For My Son’ at 3,000 grassroots and grassstops events across the US at schools, the Hill in Washington DC and other public spaces.

- Congressman Ted Lieu of California and Senator Chris Murphy hosted events in association with the film and promoted the piece to gain more support for refugee causes within the public and the government.
- Queen Rania of Jordan watched the film, introduced one of the film’s events and spoke about the refugee experience in Jordan.
- These events raised more than US\$200,000 for urban refugees’ response, with donations going to Save the Children, UNHCR and IRC as partners of Optimist.
- ‘For My Son’ premiered at film festivals such as Hot Docs, an important annual film festival in Canada.
- The film was featured in an exhibit at the United States Memorial Holocaust Museum for two years.
- Other partners at that time, such as Global Citizen and Ryot Media, amplified the work and hosted screenings.

- The film was reviewed and featured in different media outlet publications such as in an article in the American magazine WIRED, with a monthly readership of 30 million people on its digital platform.
- After a screening of 'For My Son', Google commissioned Optimist Films to make a website called 'Searching for Syria', which took the most five googled questions about the Syrian crisis and answered them with data visualisation or clips. The site was featured on the Google homepage on World Refugee Day in 2016.

Though it is not possible to quantify awareness or how this particular film has directly impacted the thousands of people who viewed it, the above points indicate some high-profile publicity, leading to a significant amount of people being exposed to the documentary, thereby increasing awareness of urban refugees and the crisis being explored.

It is important to note that 'For My Son' was an accompaniment to the full-length documentary Salem Neighbour (which was not produced as part of the UCLF) and the related campaigns and events featured both films. Additionally, Optimist funded and planned the media, campaigns and events in the US, further extending the reach of the short documentary. Given this success, it would be useful to consider the budgeting and planning of campaigns such as this for future IIED-generated content and using the expertise of media organisations to take the work to different audiences.

2.5.3 Snapshot of the humanitarian sector's prioritisation of urban crisis and relevant initiatives (research and response) (additional findings for KEQ 5.2)

Although it was not a specific aim or an expectation for achieving direct impact of the UCLF, the evaluation team asked for key informants' views about how the humanitarian landscape has changed since its inception, in terms of funding and prioritising urban crisis preparedness, response, recovery and/or research. Perspectives on this topic varied, depending on the funding institution in question, but key informants generally perceived that there had not been a dramatic shift in this regard and that such changes would involve a slow process:

"On financing, we're not there yet with donors. We hoped we could build donor conversation, and the Global Alliance did this. We tried to build constituency on the knowledge side and to effectively engage the donor base on urban crisis — not singular convos but a systemic dialogue ... One thing that is important for us: DFID deprioritised urban at some point ... and there is a

gap here still, on the donor side. This requires long-term investment, and the knowledge and research needs are bigger — the funding is not enough from institutional donors in terms of scale and long-term commitment, which we need."

However, a few key informants also noted potentially increased awareness, interest, openness and activism geared towards funding and prioritising urban crisis in the humanitarian sector. This has been potentially fostered by more knowledge and evidence of its significance and increased recognition of the imperative to address urban humanitarian needs, due to both the growing displacement and scale of urban crises. This does not imply a causal link between the UCLF and sector trends for funding and programming for urban crisis, but sector trends tend to shift over long periods of time, and are often influenced by an increased evidence base and widespread demands for change. These occur among many other geopolitical dynamics that dictate the overall humanitarian agenda and funding landscape.

Below is a brief overview of the most recent initiatives and actors related to urban crisis in a humanitarian context that are tangentially related to UCLF engagements. Although this evaluation does not explore nor imply specific causal contributions by IIED/UCLF, it provides a snapshot of relevant initiatives and how other actors are tackling urban crises in terms of their current approaches and funding opportunities.

Protracted Displacement in an Urban World. As referenced above, as a programme that the UCLF's work contributed to, IIED is engaging in this new research initiative. Launched in 2020, it has been funded by UK Research and Innovation through the Global Challenges Research Fund programme, the Ikea Foundation, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Bernard van Leer Foundation. This research project is the first large-scale study to compare experiences of protracted displacement in cities and camps where people have been displaced for at least five years. A mixed method, comparative approach will be applied across one camp and one city, in four countries with large, displaced populations: Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Jordan and Kenya.

The Global Alliance for Urban Crises (GA). Born from the Urban Crisis Programme, this is a multi-disciplinary, collaborative community of practice working to prevent, prepare for and effectively respond to humanitarian crises in urban settings. The GA originated as a vehicle to launch the urban crisis topic in the run up to the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 and is now hosted by UN-Habitat. According to a key informant from UN-Habitat, the summit was a critical opportunity to push the urban crisis agenda. It also offered a starting point to identify champions of the cause, such as local government networks and relevant agencies

(eg the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, IRC and DFID). This effort led to the formation of a loose coalition to advocate more strongly on issues related to urban crisis through an alliance of stakeholders on an equal footing and an advisory group with different stakeholders, including IIED. The UN-Habitat key informant specified that despite a lot of practice in urban crisis response, there was limited documentation on what works. Therefore, IIED was identified as a champion on knowledge and research to build evidence around the theme and to help increase the profile of the GA. The work under the UCLF and other Urban Crisis Programme's learning partnerships fed into work of the GA. Although IIED maintained a relatively light engagement with the GA post-UCLF, the key stakeholders of IIED/DFID under the Urban Crisis Programme worked with it more directly and provided valuable information based on the UCLF research findings.

Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). In 2021, the FCDO outlined seven priority areas: climate and biodiversity, COVID and global health, girls' education, humanitarian preparedness, open societies and conflict, research and development, and trade and economic development.² Although not directly for urban crises, according to the Devex's ongoing tracking of the UK government aid cuts and programmatic implications, several UK-funded development and humanitarian-focused research actors and programmes were significantly reduced between March and September 2021. One of the three main outcomes FCDO identified in its 2021–2022 delivery plan is to “shape the international order and ensure the UK is a force for good in the world by: supporting sustainable development and humanitarian needs; promoting human rights and democracy; and establishing common international standards”. Preparedness, response and research for urban crisis is not specifically mentioned anywhere in the plan; therefore, it is unclear how and if this will be addressed. It seems that urban support is more geared towards climate-smart housing and infrastructure. For example, FCDO's 2021 annual report noted that it worked internationally to support low-carbon, resilient and inclusive urbanisation in low-income countries by accelerating the development of compact cities.

European Union (EU) Commission. The EU promotes a multi-sectoral and collaborative approach to assessments and programming in urban settings to move beyond the traditional boundaries of refugee camps and remote rural areas. The EU also highlights urban resilience as one of its focus areas in its work on disaster preparedness.³ It has also played an active role in the GA. Through the Enhanced Response Capacity Humanitarian Implementation Plan, the EU has funded two relevant initiatives: (1) UNHCR's development of 'Alternatives to Camps: Enhancing Evidence-Based Programming and Targeting in Outside of Camp Contexts' (including urban areas); and (2) IRC's initiative to design, test and deliver guidance and tools to help humanitarian actors provide rapid and effective support to affected populations in urban crises.

UN-Habitat. The value of UCLF's research work, the collaboration with IIED and the integration of urban crisis into UN-Habitat's current strategy was discussed above as a contribution of the UCLF. During its 2014–2019 Strategic Plan period, UN-Habitat actively engaged in various relevant initiatives, including the Urban Crisis Programme (although less so in the UCLF specifically). Looking forward, UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan for 2020–2023 harnesses its role as a focal point in sustainable urban development and human settlements to accelerate progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda to achieve the urban dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals. UN-Habitat proposes to serve member states, subnational and local governments, and other key urban actors in the pursuit of four mutually reinforcing and integrated goals: (1) reduced spatial inequality and poverty in communities across the urban-rural continuum; (2) enhanced shared prosperity of cities and regions; (3) strengthened climate action and improved urban environment; (4) effective urban crisis prevention and response.

3

Concluding findings and recommendations

3.1 Concluding remarks

3.1.1 Did UCLF reach its anticipated potential/aims in this IIED programme? (KEQ 1.4)

Based on the evidence reviewed, the combined findings support an affirmative response to this KEQ — overall, the UCLF accomplished what it set out to do, especially in terms of generating a sizeable and well-executed body of research and knowledge for urban crisis preparedness, response and recovery. The greatest impacts have been found more at the level of grant recipients and IIED alike, in terms of capacity building gains, enduring partnerships, and supporting other research and funding opportunities for both. At the organisational level, the UCLF has directly contributed to building IIED's credibility in the humanitarian space, enabling access and visibility to new audiences and networks. At the level of influence of policy and practice, it is harder to verify causal impacts without more evidence. However, there are plausible accounts offered by key informants that the UCLF contributed to influencing some key outcomes related to wider sector knowledge transfer, humanitarian actors' organisational strategies and practices on the ground related to urban crisis, as discussed in section 2.5.2.

The UCLF established a solid foundation of research into real-world operational examples of urban crisis responses, as well as a review of approaches to assist practitioners in the design, monitoring and delivery of urban crisis preparedness, response and recovery, which was previously recognised as a gap in the humanitarian evidence base. Furthermore, the UCLF's collaboration with academics and practitioners from

the global South, as well as many small institutions and individual researchers who might not be as well-represented in the literature, has been noteworthy. There were no other programmes or initiatives identified in this review process that generated this type of body of evidence within the same timeline and with this range and breadth. In addition, when considering citations and the online engagement with the content produced, there are specific topics that have maintained considerable traction after the implementation phase ended. This highlights the longer-term contribution and impact of the UCLF in terms of the significance and sustainability of the evidence and knowledge it generated within a relatively short timeframe, through several diverse small-scale research grants.

In addition, the UCLF's work, through a combination of newsletters, social media campaigns and events, has strengthened partnerships with IRC and with other key humanitarian stakeholders, such as ALNAP, the GA, the Red Cross, NRC, Save the Children and War Child. In the final external evaluation conducted in 2017, UCLF was described as successful in identifying, reaching out to and liaising with other initiatives working on humanitarian preparedness and response in urban contexts, indicating the importance of creating linkages with other initiatives working in similar spaces.

Though these achievements were welcomed, some key informants underlined a lack of continuity in the engagement among stakeholders after the end of the programme and the need for a longer-term dissemination strategy to ensure sustained reach and more potential for the research and knowledge products to have impact. Another clearly identified gap was in the lack of linkages between grant recipients for cross-learning and networking. This was seen as a missed opportunity and one that could have fostered

enduring research partnerships among grant recipients and a peer researcher community of practice for urban crisis.

The KII accounts show general consensus that the UCLF was a strong model for programming research that the grant recipients genuinely enjoyed and benefited from. IIED stakeholders also expressed pride in the work and that the UCLF was strategically valuable to them and IIED as an organisation. The following KII quotes highlight the overall positive feedback received:

- “I like this model; [I] wish they would do it again. Access to small pots of funding [that are] easy to get and manage. And that we collectively contributed to one *Environment and Urbanization* journal issue was nice ... and the diversity of people in global South involved.” (KII, grant recipient)
- “Knowledge is not situated in one place and while there are different spaces, there are different sources that are shifted by different realities ... getting to do work collaboratively with actors from different countries and pool all these ideas together [was] revealing to me, as you understand there are new ways of looking at and dealing with particular problems you may not have considered before — and approaches can be shifted, and we all differ in our capacities ... The approach of collaboration and also maintaining the different identities and interests of the stakeholders was, to me, amazing.” (KII, grant recipient)
- “Directly and indirectly, it has been positive for me and those others associated with the research.” (KII, grant recipient)

- “[The] best funders are the ones that allow you to run with your idea. IIED helped them to get their ideas out. A small research piece of work was introduced to an international network, and it was really well-managed...” (KII, grant recipient)
- “[The UCLF] created more entry points to bring in things that are relevant to the mission in that space. [It] co-produced evidence to drive agendas that support low income and vulnerable people. We are not an advocacy focused organisation specifically, but we use evidence to support positive policy change. [The] biggest offshoot from the UCLF is that it is a core part within the IIED strategy now.” (KII, IIED stakeholder)

3.2 Recommendations

3.2.1 How could future learning funds as a model for IIED be strengthened? (KEQ 1.5)

Data collected and analysed for the last KEQ under the ‘effectiveness’ theme offer an appropriate vehicle to channel those recommendations that were offered by key informants and also evidenced through the evaluation process. The following ten key recommendations are grouped according to evaluation themes and relate specifically to how the learning fund or similar types of programming by IIED can be enhanced and amplified in future, building on the good practices and lessons to date.

	RECOMMENDATION AND EXPLANATION	THEME
1	<p>Implement another learning fund and continue with what works well</p> <p>One repeated recommendation among key informants was to implement another learning fund. Some proposed this in order to build more evidence on urban crisis themes specifically, while others recommended it as a useful model to generate solid evidence on any relevant themes in development and humanitarian sectors requiring more empirical research. The aspects of the UCLF that were highlighted as the most valuable should be integrated and continued in future learning fund models: flexibility, accessibility for small institutions and independent researchers, close collaboration and partnership between IIED and grant recipients, and the high-quality hands-on technical support offered.</p>	Effectiveness
2	<p>Document best practices and learning about implementing a learning fund</p> <p>This will be important for retaining institutional memory and ensuring accessible references to both the administrative and intellectual aspects of delivering an effective and efficient learning fund. Examples of this include monitoring tools, reporting and budget templates, and CfP processes and selection. Some of the successes and useful processes of the UCLF were informed by IIED’s previous experience in delivering ACCCRN; now these apply to the UCLF as well, there is more to build on and use to inform future similar models.</p>	Effectiveness

RECOMMENDATION AND EXPLANATION	THEME
<p>3 Balance the number and budgets of grants to optimise efficiency and effectiveness</p> <p>To decrease the administrative burden (and therefore shift focus from other priorities) and increase efficiency, it could be helpful to slightly lessen the number of grants provided and keep grants within the £20,000–30,000 range (rather than £10,000 upwards). Grants could be marginally reduced without losing the wide range of themes and diversity covered that contributed to the UCLF's effectiveness.</p>	Effectiveness and efficiency
<p>4 Ensure adequate HR capacity for programme administration and coordination</p> <p>The budgeted time of 60% for the main coordination role for the UCLF was insufficient and necessitated coverage from other IIED funds for a full 100% position. Although future budgeting allocation and percentage of time for such a role would need to take into account the exact size of the fund and the number of grants to be administered, it will be important that adequate HR is prioritised to ensure the hands-on support and administrative effort required to manage several grants across such a diverse pool of grantees.</p>	Efficiency
<p>5 Advocate for lighter reporting and more consistent donor focal point engagement</p> <p>Flexibility, in terms of compliance, was an overall enabler of efficiency, but there were two specific shortcomings for efficiency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The burden of quarterly donor narrative reporting, requiring a downstream approach and compilation of several grantees by IIED within that timeframe, and ▪ The inconsistent administrative focal points within the donor; these were not in the direct control of IIED, but the organisation could negotiate with future donors on these aspects using evidence from this experience to justify these requests in the name of increased efficiency. 	Efficiency
<p>6 Link grant recipients early on and more regularly</p> <p>Several grant recipients interviewed shared that they did not have the opportunity to engage with other grants and research projects, nor were they aware of the other work ongoing under the UCLF (except for the last short event in London for some of them). However, they emphasised that this would have been beneficial and a welcome way to share experiences, tips and resources during the process. Engagement between research projects could also establish more formal networking, which could potentially create a community of practice and/or future research opportunities and partnerships.</p>	Partnerships, capacity building and knowledge transfer
<p>7 Plan and organise for more virtual and international events</p> <p>Given the post-COVID-19 world and the span of grantees across the globe, more virtual event spaces to connect and share the research could widen the reach of learning fund events and make them more accessible and less costly. However, some of the KILs also noted that, if in-person events are to be held, hosting them in a greater variety of places, especially in the global South, would be welcome. It was also suggested that a specific effort to bolster and showcase the work and careers of research team members in the global South would be important in future. This could also be aided by more virtual and international events.</p>	Partnerships, capacity building and knowledge transfer

RECOMMENDATION AND EXPLANATION	THEME
<p>8 Invest in more visual and dynamic presentations of research for different types of audience, and budget for related dissemination to accompany them</p> <p>The significant reach of the UCLF-funded short documentary film is one strong example of how research does not need to be transmitted via traditional forms of written outputs. The two films produced through the UCLF generated much social media engagement and many views. A few key informants noted that knowledge transfer and accessibility of the research findings would be enhanced by funding more visual and dynamic products, either as accompaniments to the written research outputs or through standalone projects such as films or interactive platforms. However, it is also important to budget adequately for targeted efforts such as campaigns and events, as these can extend their reach beyond traditional sector audiences and enable local/grassroots actors to access and benefit from them.</p>	Capacity building and knowledge transfer
<p>9 Ensure a continuity strategy for long-term dissemination and visibility of the research and knowledge products</p> <p>There has been a drop in downloads and engagement with UCLF content online post-programme, and a few KIIs during this evaluation noted that there wasn't a sustainability strategy for the research dissemination beyond the life of the programme and dissemination efforts fell short. The use of the research after a learning fund could be enhanced by keeping the dissemination of the products going for years following the closure. This would necessitate extra communication resources from core funding and also implies long-term strategic prioritisation by IIED; this is challenging, given funding modalities and how they are tied to staff time. However, such a strategy could extend the virtual shelf life of the research and generate more citations, usage and influence among key target stakeholders.</p>	Effectiveness, impact and sustainability
<p>10 Help ensure small grants are strategically linked together and connected to other opportunities for funding, to enhance the potential for continuity in evidence building and influencing potential</p> <p>According to two key informants, the size of the grants was enough to build preliminary understanding of key research questions. It was mentioned that these grants were strategic, as they enabled innovative thinking and the piloting/testing of new methods, particularly in the case of the research led by Cardiff University. The research pieces even led to new funding for IIED and Cardiff, thanks in large part to the work done through the UCLF. Looking ahead, linking small-scale research pieces to larger research opportunities could amplify the effect of the initial efforts and direct them to tackle similar research questions in more depth and across larger geographies. Indeed, the collection of more evidence building on smaller grants was reported by key informants as an important driver to influence decision makers. Similarly, such an approach in future would help to link relevant learning fund research pieces in order to build preliminary findings for larger research questions that could be funded, which could ultimately be more influential in the policymaking space.</p>	Impact and sustainability

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What impact can research make in the long-term on people, policy and practice? What are the most valuable types of learning and knowledge products generated through research and why? This ex-post evaluation explores these questions, using a body of research generated under IIED's Urban Crises Learning Fund from 2015–2017. With financial and collaborative technical support from IIED, the Urban Crises Learning Fund produced over 30 research projects on preparedness, response and recovery to urban crises, conducted by independent researchers and institutions from the global North and South, representing a diverse set of voices and urban crisis contexts. This report highlights the types of positive change that this learning fund model contributed to across themes of effectiveness, efficiency, enduring research partnerships, capacity building and impact of key pieces of evidence. It concludes with recommendations on how IIED can build on the success of the Urban Crisis Learning Fund experience.

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