

Race and racism audit recommendations 2024/25 update

June 2026

Introduction

In December 2022, IIED internally published the findings of an independent race and racism audit, which examined how racism, coloniality and unequal power relations manifest within the organisation's culture, systems and ways of working. The audit, alongside subsequent narrative analysis and research on [equitable partnerships](#) and [decolonisation](#), set out a clear and challenging set of recommendations for institutional change.

Following internal engagement and reflection, IIED [published the audit findings externally](#) in July 2024, together with an [initial update](#) on actions taken in response to the audit's 18 recommendations. At that point, IIED committed to providing regular public updates on progress against these recommendations, recognising that institutional change requires sustained effort, transparency and accountability over time.

This document, prepared by IIED's Race and Racism Working Group (RRWG), provides our next externally facing progress update. It reflects learning from approximately 24 months of implementation, experimentation and reflection across the organisation. It marks a shift from diagnosis towards delivery, governance and longer-term accountability for embedding anti-racist, decolonial and justice-centred practice across IIED.

This work builds on a longer journey that began in 2020, when IIED initiated internal dialogue on race and racism in response to the global mobilisation following the murder of George Floyd and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement. As part of this process, the RRWG was established in December 2020 as a cross-organisational group of staff volunteers, including staff of colour and allies, working alongside senior leadership and the board to help guide and advance IIED's anti-racism commitment.

From the outset, the RRWG has recognised that the international development sector within which IIED operates carries deep legacies of colonialism, racial inequality and structural power imbalances. These legacies continue to shape professional relationships, institutional practices and global funding structures, often privileging Northern organisations, knowledge systems and decision-making power. Confronting IIED's own position within these dynamics required listening carefully to the lived experiences of staff, engaging in sustained internal reflection and commissioning a series of independent studies to examine how racism and unequal power relations manifest within the organisation and its partnerships.

Over this period, IIED has taken steps to translate audit recommendations into concrete actions. These include resourcing and strengthening the RRWG and the Equity, Inclusion and Justice Committee (EIJC); introducing new safe spaces for staff dialogue and reflection; embedding equity considerations into people policies and performance processes; deepening organisational reflection on power and partnerships; and increasing engagement at senior leadership and board levels. Progress has been varied across different areas of work, and some actions remain at an early or exploratory stage. However, momentum has developed in several key areas, providing a foundation for further institutional change.

Alongside the race and racism audit, IIED has developed a growing body of work on equity, inclusion and justice. In February 2025, the organisation [published its equity, inclusion and justice \(EIJ\) strategy](#), setting out how these principles will be embedded across all areas of IIED's work. Additional research and reflection from staff and partners has produced a growing body of work on ethical research practice, power shifting and equitable partnerships. While these outputs were authored by different teams and external experts, they demonstrate a high degree of convergence in their findings and recommendations.

In early 2025, IIED undertook a synthesis of this work to identify shared priorities across these strands of activity, particularly around shifting decision-making power, challenging dominant development paradigms, and strengthening accountability to partners and communities. This synthesis was presented to the IIED board in June 2025 and is now informing the development of an organisation-wide intersectional justice strategy.

This work has not been linear or straightforward. Advancing anti-racism and decolonisation within a global development institution requires navigating deep-seated structural constraints, colonial legacies, unequal power relations, as well as the operational realities of funding pressures and a shifting geopolitical landscape. In recent years, efforts to advance racial, gender and social justice have also been increasingly contested, which has made it both more urgent and more challenging to sustain institutional change processes of this nature. The work has also involved significant emotional and relational labour, much of it disproportionately carried by Black and Brown staff and staff of colour. Recognising this has been an important part of the organisation's learning journey. Moving from a model driven primarily by committed individuals towards broader institutional ownership remains a central challenge, requiring sustained leadership engagement, continued reallocation of resources and ongoing cultural change across teams and functions.

This progress update summarises activity against each of the 18 race and racism audit recommendations. It does not claim that change has been fully achieved, nor does it capture the full depth of the original audit and related analyses. Rather, it aims to provide a transparent account of where progress has been made, where work is ongoing, and where further action, resources and leadership attention are required.

IIED recognises that this journey is part of a broader movement across the development sector to confront structural racism, colonial legacies and unequal power relations. Meaningful progress will require solidarity, collaboration and continued learning across organisations, including those historically marginalised within global systems of knowledge, funding and decision-making. IIED therefore remains committed to engaging openly with peers and partners navigating similar challenges.

The update is accompanied by a [public reflection from IIED's executive director, Tom Mitchell](#), and will also inform future conversations through an episode of [IIED's 'Make Change Happen' podcast](#) later this year. Together, these outputs aim to contribute to continued sector-wide learning and reinforce IIED's commitment to holding itself to account as we continue this long-term process of transformation.

In solidarity,

IIED's Race and Racism Working Group

Review of progress against our objectives

The below table presents progress in 2024/25. All descriptions reflect the status of work at the time of drafting this report, and may be updated as organisational decisions and processes conclude. Where actions are marked as ongoing, this reflects IIED’s intention to be transparent about work that is still developing rather than overstating completion.

Table key:

✓ = **complete**. This indicates actions that have been implemented and embedded within organisational practice.

≠ = **ongoing**. This indicates actions that are underway, being refined, subject to review, or dependent on further governance, resourcing or consultation.

In the original race audit recommendations and the 2023/24 progress update, IIED’s senior leadership was referred to as the Senior Management Team (SMT). Following an internal transition in 2024, this body is now known as the Strategy and Leadership Council (SLC).

	Recommendation	2023/24 progress updates	2024/25 progress updates
1	Demonstrate recognition of the time, energy, effort and cost being disproportionately given by Black staff and staff of colour and team members in their continued efforts to push for an anti-racist organisation and hold IIED accountable.	≠ Acknowledge all individuals who have contributed to date and, based on the revised reward and recognition strategy, ensure they are recognised adequately or proportionately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Institutional days allocated to RRWG and EIJC to formally recognise their continued efforts to push for an anti-racist organisation. ✓ RRWG programme of work consistently funded through FY25 and FY26 budgets. ✓ Black History Month celebrations and staff profiles in October 2024 and 2025, platforming Black colleagues. ≠ Began exploring opportunities to broaden recognition and celebration of ethnically diverse staff and partners, including the development of campaigns aligned with additional key moments such as South Asian Heritage Month, Indigenous Peoples’ awareness initiatives and Race Equality Week in FY27. ≠ Further review of reward and recognition approaches will be considered as part of the organisational review of additional responsibilities, to be discussed with Management and Union Management.
2	Provide ongoing, supported facilitation spaces to promote communal care and wellbeing, and safe	✓ Reflection spaces have taken place, facilitated by The Better Org. Feedback has been shared to improve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Internal report and support tool launched. ✓ Internal Safe Space facilitators trained and now hosting quarterly

	<p>and brave discussion on racism and anti-racism. Recommend external facilitation so as not to overburden staff and to provide equal access for all.</p>	<p>these spaces and inform training.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Three-month pilot of a safe reporting mechanism, provided by external consultancy Howlett Brown. ✓ In advance of bringing supported reflection spaces and safe reporting in-house, the People Team organised a training for staff on safe spaces facilitation and enhanced peer-to-peer support. Ten people were trained in January 2024. ≠ Work is underway to develop a new internal safe reporting tool, incorporating feedback and learning from the Howlett Brown pilot. 	<p>confidential Safe Space conversations, with one-to-one support also available.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ≠ People manager training delivered to strengthen the facilitation of safe and constructive conversations. This is now embedded as a recurring activity to support sustained behavioural and cultural change. ≠ Following two successful refresher training sessions, planning for the relaunch of Safe Spaces is underway, with continued emphasis on staff safety and wellbeing.
<p>3</p>	<p>Review the existing mental health and wellbeing support systems that are available to staff and work to ensure that staff are aware of, have access to and can navigate these. Consider also informal support systems, given issues with staff trust</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ People Team continue to communicate with staff about the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and plans for international mental wellbeing support. ≠ Plan underway to incorporate support into IIED's formal staff mentoring scheme, ensuring there is adequate diversity and representation among mentors and mentees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) introduced for staff based outside of the UK. ✓ Buddy programme launched in November 2024 to support the wellbeing and integration of new staff. ✓ Reviews of 'Working at Home' and 'Sickness' policies completed. ✓ Introduction of a new 'Wellbeing and Care' policy in October 2025. ≠ Further consideration of formal mentoring scheme is subject to operational priorities, resource availability and team capacity in FY27.
<p>4</p>	<p>Put in place stronger internal accountability systems for staff and associates. These should include a robust reporting facility, complaints oversight mechanism, clear safeguarding and whistleblowing policies, and accountability for line managers by Senior Management Team.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Three-month pilot of an external incident reporting mechanism, provided by consultancy Howlett Brown. ✓ Governance and accountability structure for EIJC finalised. ≠ Work is underway to develop a new internal safe reporting tool, incorporating feedback and learning from the Howlett Brown pilot. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Internal reporting and support tool launched, providing clear and accessible pathways for raising concerns. ✓ New safeguarding policy introduced in December 2024, following in-depth consultation and professional guidance. ✓ Updated whistleblowing policy implemented in March 2024, aligned with IIED's global operating context. ≠ Remaining policies will be reviewed further in FY27 as part of the People Team's operational plan.

5	<p>Explore the impact of high staff turnover in the People Team. As the People Team stabilises, work to address low levels of trust in the organisation’s HR function by promoting greater awareness of HR policies, procedures and protections for IIED staff and associates.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ IIED appointed a head of people and five further staff to the People Team in 2023, stabilising the HR function. ✓ The People Team published (internally) a service level agreement to highlight their offer and commitment to the organisation. ≠ Plans are underway to continue to strengthen the People Team, and a permanent organisational development manager/lead is being recruited. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Director of People recruited in September 2025. ✓ IIED has recently undergone an organisational restructure, with revised roles and responsibilities across the People Team. ≠ Further progress on strengthening the HR function will follow once staff are fully in post (new recruits and transitions), expected by Q1 FY27. ≠ An organisational development role has been established to support policy refinement and organisational change, with arrangements continuing to be reviewed.
6	<p>Review current recruitment cycle, and revise employment policies and practices that may negatively impact the attraction and progression of candidates or staff who are Black or people of colour, with specific attention to explicit or implicit biases.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The People Team, in consultation with the Union and others, has updated recruitment and selection policies and revised IIED’s contracting templates after reviewing them with a decolonial and anti-racist lens. ✓ The People Team has developed a training on inclusive recruitment for all hiring managers, and all job interviews now include one values-based question and one DEI-based question. ≠ The organisation now holds DEI data for staff and has undertaken gender and race pay gap analyses. Improvements have been agreed, specific targets and key performance indicators not yet set. ≠ When updating and refreshing all other policies, look into biases against Black staff and staff of colour. ≠ Plans are underway to continue to strengthen the People Team and a permanent organisational development manager/lead recruited. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Recruitment and resourcing intranet page updated with guidance and supporting materials. ✓ Inclusive recruitment and selection training made mandatory for all hiring managers. ≠ DEI data collection and analysis is underway to strengthen the evidence base for equitable recruitment – this will be taken forward by the incoming HR Business Partner (DEI Focus). ≠ Further review and refresh of related policies pending, including addressing potential biases affecting Black staff and staff of colour. Additional work needed to strengthen how the impact of inclusive recruitment practices is measured and tracked over time.
7	<p>RRWG should be formally placed within the executive director’s office, and its activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A sprint workshop was held with staff, RRWG members and The Better Org that led to the creation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interim Intersectional Justice Leads (IJLs) appointed in September 2025, reporting directly to the Executive Director.

aligned with the directorate budget and strategy; it should have a similar level of visibility across the organisation as other key strategic areas.

of a new decision-making body — the EIJC, which is accountable to SLC.

≠ Development of the intersectional justice strategy is underway under the leadership of the interim IJLs.

≠ Continuation of the IJL role is subject to the outcome of the governance review – interim roles have been extended into Q1 FY27.

8

Leadership at IIED must explore, via a curated coaching program or supported facilitation, spaces on anti-racism. Topics on anti-racism should include discussions on power, privilege, positionality, and inclusive and intersectional leadership.

✓ SMT has undertaken training with Mountain Top, a coaching and consulting agency who specialise in diversity, equity, inclusion and justice training.

✓ The Board of Trustees has participated in the first of a series of trainings, facilitated by The Better Org.

✓ Topic of inclusive leadership brought to SMT meetings and tender agreed for inclusive leadership training modules.

≠ Additional senior management training may be needed, as well as encouragement to join relevant staff training and development initiatives.

≠ Unconscious bias training delivered across the organisation, with positive feedback on relevance and impact. This will be embedded as a recurring activity within the RRWG's workplan to support sustained behavioural and cultural change.

≠ A creative reflection session delivered in collaboration with EIJC and GJN, providing space for individual and collective reflection on justice, equity and decolonisation in IIED's work. Feedback highlighted the value of creating time for shared reflection and connection.

≠ Future sessions will build on this approach, incorporating more embodied and experiential learning methods and exploring how to better engage a higher proportion of senior colleagues.

≠ Budget has been allocated for FY27 to design and deliver a refreshed, bespoke training programme on equity, inclusion and justice, to be co-developed with an external consultant and IIED staff.

9

Leadership at IIED must commit time, resources and support to all staff actively working on anti-racism in the organisation, recognising in particular the disproportionate efforts of those who are Black or people of colour.

≠ Senior management level DEI/anti-racism champions (in addition to the executive director and the chief operating officer) to be identified and encouraged to continue to support staff and initiatives across IIED.

≠ Ensure this is linked to the reward and recognition strategy and plans.

✓ DEI objective included in IIED's revised Professional Development Review (PDR) process.

✓ Dedicated RRWG budget secured for FY25 and FY26.

✓ Dedicated EIJC budget secured for FY26.

✓ Institutional recognition of staff time through resource planner allocations.

≠ Work to revise IIED's rewards and recognition approaches in relation to anti-racism will continue in FY27 following

			implementation of the revised organisational structure.
10	Senior management should re-commit to the sufficient resourcing and full delivery of the IIED anti-racism action plan, in conjunction with the recommendations from The Better Org audit, the narrative analysis and the RRWG anti-racism work plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Members of the Board of Trustees are now more engaged in IIED's DEI/ anti-racism agenda and active discussions are taking place at board level. ✓ The terms of reference for various working groups (RRWG and so on) have been reviewed to ensure alignment with those of the newly established EIJC. ✓ Governance and accountability structure for the EIJC finalised. ≠ A clear DEI strategy, statement and annual plan is being developed. ≠ Work on external anti-racism and decolonisation strategies underway as part of the strategy development process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ IIED manifesto reaffirms anti-racism, decolonisation and equitable partnerships as core, cross-cutting organisational priorities. ✓ IIED Equity, Inclusion and Justice (EIJ) strategy published, setting out how the organisation will embed these principles across all areas of our work. ≠ Development of the intersectional justice strategy is underway. ✓ Joint board-staff discussions held in December 2024 and June 2025, reinforcing organisational anti-racism and decolonisation priorities. ≠ A monitoring system has been developed to track and report progress on race audit recommendations on a quarterly basis, overseen by the board.
11	Undertake a robust assessment of IIED's current engagement with partners and repeat this assessment annually. This assessment should explore IIED's approach to partnerships and the power dynamics embedded within partnerships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ≠ Advancing through an internal learning exercise (ILE) on equitable partnerships, which is also informing the new IIED strategy for 2024 onwards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Equitable partnerships internal learning exercise (ILE) completed and workstream established under EIJC. ≠ A draft equitable partnerships tool has been developed to support reflection and accountability across the partnership lifecycle. This is currently being refined with partners and IIED colleagues, with plans for piloting in FY27. ✓ A synthesis of findings across anti-racism, decolonisation and equitable partnerships work was completed in early 2025 and presented to the board, now informing the development of the intersectional justice strategy.
12	Initiate a robust, annual all-staff training programme on anti-racism. Accountability for this should rest with the People Team, in partnership with the RRWG and senior management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Training provided by The Better Org in October and November 2023. ✓ Reflection spaces were delivered, facilitated by The Better Org. Feedback has been shared to improve these spaces and inform training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Two successful in-depth refresher training sessions were provided to new and existing and Safe Space facilitators by The Better Org. ≠ Safe Spaces will be relaunched in FY27 with an improved and more structured approach informed by learning to date.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Commitment secured from the People Team to make future RRWG/DEI training mandatory for all staff. ≠ FY27 budget allocated to develop and deliver refreshed equity and justice training for all staff.
13	<p>Develop a robust data collection and analysis mechanism on anti-racism and DEI (particularly around staff and associates), and commit to annual assessments (for example, staff surveys on DEI, anti-racism and wellbeing, and pay gap analysis).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Organisational dashboard now includes DEI key performance indicators. ✓ DEI manager has completed gender and race pay gap analyses. ≠ New DEI data declaration campaign initiated in May 2024. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ≠ A DEI data declaration coverage increased to 69% of staff. Ongoing efforts required to improve completion rates. ✓ Gender and race pay gap analyses show a reduction compared to previous years, indicating positive impact from interventions carried out thus far. ≠ DEI commitments are being tracked through IIED's ESG framework to support monitoring and evidence-based decision-making.
14	<p>IIED should consider creating a new, full-time senior position dedicated to advancing its work on anti-racism and DEI. This role should be housed in the executive director's office. In creating this position, the RRWG's purpose may shift from implementation to advisory.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ New DEI manager role created and recruited. Among other responsibilities, the DEI manager co-chairs the EIJC. ≠ Work underway to create a decolonisation lead, who would co-chair the EIJC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ≠ Internal secondments within the Director's team established IJL roles in September 2025. This role is a member of the RRWG and co-chairs the EIJC. ≠ The IJL role remains interim and is subject to the outcome of the governance review. ≠ Following organisational restructure, the DEI programme of works will be led by the Director of People, supported by a HR Business Partner with a focus on DEI.
15	<p>Update existing employee management review mechanisms so that all staff and leadership are required to have an objective relating to anti-racism and/or the implementation of the anti-racist principles.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ PDR system updated to include questions related to DEI and anti-racism. ≠ Other tools and supporting guidance under consideration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 2025 PDR process includes DEI objectives for all staff. ≠ Further development of supporting tools and guidance for embedding anti-racism within performance processes will be taken forward once HR Business Partner (DEI focus) is in post.
16	<p>Senior management should reflect on the current state of leadership at the organisation and who (demographically) holds power in the organisation, and how</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Review of IIED governance structures undertaken and new terms of reference developed, which incorporates positive action into IIED's new SLC. ✓ Positive action at SLC includes two seats out of ten reserved for Black staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Current SLC membership (10 members) includes five staff from ethnically diverse backgrounds. ✓ SLC selection processes include mechanisms to support representation. ≠ Governance review will commence in 2026 to assess

this impacts the organisation at large.

and staff of colour. This is in addition to seats for established director positions that may be held by Black people and people of colour.

progress, review structures and identify improvements.
 ≠ Board demographic data will be analysed to establish trends, baselines and targets.

✓ The new terms of reference also indicate that each central governance body in IIED takes responsibility for diversity, equity and inclusion within its membership, and this will be tracked against key performance indicators as part of the DEI strategy. The new governance bodies have opened up membership and welcomed applications from all staff, particularly encouraging those from marginalised backgrounds to apply.

≠ DEI manager to explore a more inclusive leadership structure.

17

IIED's senior leadership must commit to transparency on sharing data and reports on DEI and anti-racism within the organisation as an active step towards (self) accountability.

≠ DEI data, pay gap analyses and key performance indicators will be shared in business plans and Board submissions for monitoring.

✓ DEI data drive yielding data for 69% of staff.

≠ Gender and race pay gaps will be published externally (via ESG reporting) and internally with action plans.

≠ Further development of DEI data, reporting and KPIs will be taken forward once HR Business Partner (DEI focus) is in place.

18

IIED board members should review their mandate to ensure that this includes upholding anti-racist working methodologies and oversight of IIED's progress on anti-racism.

≠ IIED board taking part in trainings on anti-racism to enhance their understanding, skill set and capacity.

✓ IIED board participated in a dedicated session exploring how anti-racism, decolonisation and equitable partnerships can be further embedded in IIED's work.

✓ IIED board include agenda items on anti-racism at Board meetings for oversight of progress in IIED.

✓ IIED is now formally part of the 'Race at Work Charter', which includes a zero-tolerance commitment to harassment and bullying at board level.

✓ Sub-board committee on people and culture established for greater oversight by board members.

≠ The board has requested that findings and recommendations from the race and racism audit are incorporated into a centralised tracker for quarter monitoring and review.

✓ Board member part of the EIJC at IIED.

≠ Work ongoing for review of overall strategy going forward for IIED, and how

we will be addressing
anti-racism, decolonisation
and DEI as an organisation.