

Investing in locally controlled natural resource use

Research, capacity and policy work supporting communities to resist the assault on the natural world and achieve sustainability



Resisting the assault on the natural world

We are in danger of losing the struggle to protect vital biodiversity, on land and in the ocean. A false choice between people and environment is causing many conservation efforts to overlook communities and lay waste to local livelihoods, as well as failing to protect wildlife. Meanwhile, agribusiness, extractives and other investment projects often take an aggressively short-term approach. Across the world, people who co-exist with and rely on natural resources — terrestrial and marine — see their rights and livelihoods eroded. Environmental justice is at the heart of IIED. We believe solutions to the untenable pressures on the living planet must also be built on foundations of social justice. This can only be achieved through meaningful engagement with the people who feel the shifts in our natural world most keenly.

With our partners, we use research, dialogue and action to raise awareness of the roles that small-scale producers and local men and women play as stewards of their resources, whether on land or at sea. We help to identify tools and tactics to empower citizens. And we generate evidence to build the capabilities of governments, companies and institutions to improve policies, laws and working practices.

Our work covers many areas including forestry, biodiversity conservation, water governance and allocation, agriculture and food systems, and fostering sustainable development in China — including the way it engages with the world. We study the underpinning legal frameworks of natural resource management and engage with the main players at all levels from global to local, in both the public and private sectors.



Priorities for action

Stronger rights in natural resource investments

In many parts of the world, public and commercial investments in agriculture, mining, hydropower, petroleum and other infrastructure are compounding pressures on natural resources. Farmers, indigenous peoples, pastoralists and fisherfolk are feeling the squeeze. Investors can be a force for good, but only if they respect local rights to land, water and other resources. We will explore how enhancing the rights of natural resource users in the context of large-scale investments can promote more equitable and environmentally sustainable outcomes at local to global levels.

www.iied.org/legal-tools-for-citizen-empowerment

Conservation, communities and equity

Nature is being degraded at an unprecedented rate. Investment is urgently needed but interventions to date have failed to deliver sustainable conservation, with many still excluding community voices and leading to greater inequality between the men and women who rely on natural resources for their livelihoods. IIED leads the way in arguing that equity and justice in conservation are as much about equitable governance as fair systems for sharing benefits and costs. While pushing for more community voices in conservation policymaking, we will continue to make this case.

www.iied.org/conservation-communities-equity

Forests and prosperity

Deforestation, forest degradation and displacement of forest peoples are significant threats to resilience and prosperity — both locally and globally. Tensions have emerged over what types and features of forest land

are worth protecting, what models of use and business most securely propel development, and who has the power to make decisions in forest landscapes. IIED will work with partners to support women and men in forest organisations to secure rights, become stronger entrepreneurs, access finance and technology, and negotiate and transform forest governance systems.

www.iied.org/locally-controlled-forestry

More equitable and sustainable food systems

Most 'modernisation' of food systems ignores the systems in which the majority of people in developing countries participate — those that are largely informal, based on staples and local or regional in scale. These provide opportunities for non-farm employment and enterprise — particularly for women and young people, who often do not have access to agricultural land and labour to farm. Informal food systems can also help sustain agricultural biodiversity and ecosystem services. Our work will focus on these diverse food systems, producing evidence for better decision making.

www.iied.org/resilience-agricultural-food-systems

China in the world

China leads the world in developing wind and biomass power, but is also experiencing deepening inequality and the environmental downsides of rapid development. Its hugely ambitious Belt and Road Initiative is pushing a wave of state-backed and private financing for infrastructure projects deep into the lands and rural communities of developing countries. Our work will look for tangible points of engagement on sustainability issues with Chinese businesses, civil society and research institutions, and African stakeholders in the agriculture and forestry sectors.

www.iied.org/china-in-the-world

Biodiversity loss is a development issue

Biodiversity is about the sheer numbers and abundance of different species, genetic variation between and within species, and extent and diversity of natural habitats and ecosystems. That life and variety is being lost at an alarming rate. This threatens to undermine development gains in health,

resilience, food and nutritional security, GDP earnings and in turn, human rights. IIED will engage in the global debate about the 'New Deal for Nature and People' in 2020, trying to shape a fresh agenda shaped by local priorities.

www.iied.org/biodiversity



Key achievements

Contributing to international investment treaty reform. We have informed processes seeking reform of international investment treaties and dispute settlement. For example, we contributed analysis and ideas as an invited observer in the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) Working Group on Investor-State Dispute Settlement Reform. Through direct policy engagement, briefing notes and contributions at workshops with developing country negotiators, IIED, like-minded organisations and government delegates have secured inclusion of key sustainability issues in the Working Group's official reports and in-country policy processes.

Uncovering Chinese investments in Africa's forests. Our work on Chinese investments in African forest areas connects governments, business, investment agencies, and research and civil society organisations from Africa, China, the UK, USA and Europe. Four international learning events of our China-Africa Forest Governance Platform have established it as an influential mechanism that has stimulated policy and practice changes. Several large and small Chinese companies have made commitments to invest more responsibly and partnerships have formed amongst African artisanal producers working with Chinese companies on sustainable, locally rooted timber production and processing. Viewers in China watched IIED's film 'China's investment, Africa's forest' 363,000 times in 24 hours.

Revitalising indigenous biocultural heritage. Several years of action-research with partners in Kenya, India, Peru and China to revitalise smallholder farmers' traditional knowledge, agrobiodiversity and innovation systems — or 'biocultural heritage' — has strengthened food security in the face of climate change. In India, this has led the government to ask that the biocultural heritage territory in West Bengal be considered as an FAO Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System. We have supported communities to protect biocultural territories and have launched a global biocultural heritage labelling scheme coordinated by the International Network of Mountain Indigenous Peoples.

Making large dams more socially just and economically viable. Following six years of work in multiple processes, countries in West Africa adopted a regional Directive on the development of hydraulic infrastructures in 2017, which has since been recognised in investment developments. It was based on guidelines agreed in regional dialogues on

social and environmental costs and benefits of dams, facilitated by IIED and its Global Water Initiative partners. We are now in a new partnership — FutureDams — focusing on the huge challenge of improving the social and environmental impacts of hydropower dams.

Engaging communities to tackle illegal wildlife trade. Our work on a theory of change that puts communities at the centre of action to combat illegal wildlife trade continues to gain recognition. The Global Environment Facility's Global Wildlife Programme refers to it in its proposals for Zimbabwe and Kenya, while Conservation International has applied it to their programming in Southern Africa and Fauna and Flora International used it to develop a new situational crime prevention framework. At the London Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade in 2018, governments and international conservation organisations made strong commitments to engage communities in combatting illegal wildlife trade.



Get involved

We are keen to hear about new ideas and research from others. Get in touch with us to share your knowledge and find out how you can get involved.

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IIED applies original thinking to sustainable development issues, linking local priorities to global challenges. We work with marginalised people around the world to amplify their influence.

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Page 5: men loading up a haul of logs to be cut at a small sawmill, Mecati Forest, Mozambique. Credit: Mike Goldwater