

IIED Partnership Statement

April 2019

‘Partnership’ for IIED entails a mutual commitment to make change happen, working with others to achieve common goals in pursuit of sustainable development. Partnership is based on a shared set of values, reciprocity and fairness within the relationship, a joint vision of success and a mutual commitment to working and learning together.

This Partnership Statement outlines IIED’s approach to working with partners across the world. It sets out some core principles and shows how, why and with whom IIED seeks partnership. It also presents a set of commitments and areas for future attention which are intended to translate these principles into more tangible actions, and to show what IIED’s partners can expect from their interactions with us.

Why partnerships are important to IIED

Partnerships are key to the way IIED operates, as reflected in the organisation’s mission statement: “**our mission is to build a fairer, more sustainable world, using evidence, action and influence in partnership with others**”. IIED’s partnerships expand our capacity by extending our reach and influence across a broader range of geographic, policy and thematic spaces than we could cover on our own: they make our research and advocacy possible. Our partnerships enrich IIED’s understanding of sustainable development issues and needs by widening the range of experiences, perspectives and expertise on which we can draw. They make it possible for IIED and our research to remain innovative, cutting edge and relevant, especially to marginalised people.

Working in partnership is central to IIED’s [theory of change](#) and the pathways we follow to achieve joint impact. Effective collaboration helps both IIED and our partners to test and strengthen the rationale and objectives of new initiatives, mobilise and build capacity, strengthen voice and increase access to different policy arenas.

Our ultimate aspiration in many of the contexts where we work is to reach the point where IIED is no longer needed, as the organisations with which we work are fully able to operate without our active engagement. Our approach therefore focuses less on oversight of joint work (though that is necessary in some contexts) and more on putting systems and approaches in place to make this transition possible.

Through partnership:

- higher-quality and more relevant concepts and research are generated;
- actors are brought together with multiple perspectives and context-specific knowledge;
- efficient use is made of limited resources;

- spaces are created for discussion and voice is amplified in key arenas, with fair and balanced representation of women and men;
- learning and capacity is improved for all involved; and
- ways are found to use these spaces and capacities to optimise collective impact in influencing policy and practice.

IIED has a grounded approach to learning through practical research, documentation and policy engagement throughout the world. The quality of our policy research relies on a deep understanding of issues and, often, on the capacity to feed knowledge of local situations into global processes. We recognise that IIED is one of a vast and complex range of organisations working towards sustainable development, and that our role is often to support the agendas and agency of other actors, as well as to seek complementarity of approaches and objectives.

At times IIED has a lead role in shaping and delivering collaborative work with partners; sometimes we are a junior partner in joint initiatives led by others. In all contexts we will do what we can to ensure the approach set out in this statement is adhered to by IIED staff and in collaborative activities.

The core principles of partnership

The following characteristics are evident in most of IIED's partnerships:

Shared objectives: Any partnership between IIED and other organisations is based on shared objectives to inform and help realise sustainable development. The added value of working together is clear and recognised by all partners.

Complementary attributes: Each partner brings different capacities and resources to an interdependent relationship. The diversity and value of all contributions is acknowledged and creates synergies.

Values in common: Whilst they recognise and respect differences, partnerships are partly defined by common ground in terms of shared values and beliefs. Partners share a desire to work towards a common position on important issues. It's important also to note that partnerships are not dependent on complete congruence: it's more important to share particular values and beliefs which are directly relevant to our collaboration. Differences in broader world view and perspective can often be beneficial in testing and improving our joint work.

Transparency and accountability: Parties involved in the partnership recognise the need to be mutually accountable as well as to be accountable to others with a stake in the relationship, often including donors and governments. As part of the process of developing partnerships, IIED will explicitly discuss how it is accountable to partners, and vice versa, and how IIED and its partners are accountable to the stakeholders with whom they work (see further detail below).

Significance of personal relationships: IIED views partnerships as relationships between organisations, which come alive through relations between individuals. These personal connections are significant as sources of new ideas, mutual support,



learning and advice. Our approach is intended to facilitate and foster these interactions, and to benefit from them.

Commitment to learn, monitor and develop the partnership as appropriate: IIED and our partners should agree relevant measures to assess the value generated from our collaboration, ways in which it could develop or change, and options to scale back or terminate.

Safety and wellbeing of staff: We recognise the need for both sensitivity over cultural differences and expectations, as well as for mutual respect, in all our activities. Staff should not be subject to inappropriate or threatening behaviour when working for IIED or for partner organisations. If IIED staff report such instances the organisation will take them very seriously and follow up as appropriate. Likewise, we expect IIED staff to demonstrate professionalism and courtesy in their relations with all those with whom they interact and will act on any information to the contrary.

What kinds of partnership does IIED have?

IIED uses the term ‘partner’ to describe an organisation, a part of an organisation, and on occasion an individual with whom IIED works to pursue the objectives outlined above.

Short-term partnership is more often to deliver a discrete project, or from common interest in a time-bound opportunity for influence. Longer-term partnership is usually based on deeper shared objectives. While recognising that every partnership is different, IIED seeks to collaborate with partners in five broad types of engagement:

Project partnerships: for a specific project with mutually agreed aims and objectives and specific timeframe. These include relationships in which partners share responsibilities for the management of a funded project, as members of a consortium.

Thematic partnerships: alliances with individuals, single organisations or groups of organisations for specific goals, even though institution-wide mandates and long-term purposes may be quite different.

Capacity development partnerships: alliances for provision of training, support and learning, to enable key actors to improve their skills and understanding of the contexts in which they are working.

Longer term institutional partnerships: like-minded organisations working together over time with sufficient alignment of goals and objectives to achieve a lasting impact.

Funding partnerships: collaboration with funding agencies, based on common values and objectives; or instances when IIED’s principal role is management of funds and grant-making, where the overall programme is strongly aligned with our mission and values.



In practice there is often overlap between these categories: thematic partnerships can focus on capacity development, for example. But they serve as a useful point of reference in exploring the main purpose for collaboration and how each can best be supported. These types of engagement are not mutually exclusive and IIED might engage with the same partner differently at different times.

What kinds of work do IIED's partners carry out?

Across all five categories of engagement with partners identified above, our partners may be of several types – and some partner organisations may cover several or all of these:

Research partners focus on the analysis and co-production of knowledge, notably universities, individual researchers, research institutes, think tanks and NGOs. They also include partners who document learning from practice or provide technical assistance, generally with local and central government bodies, international federations of membership organisations, NGOs, CBOs, multilateral organisations, private and corporate agencies. The principles for research partnership are set out in more detail in our [Research Ethics Policy](#).

Communication and knowledge brokering partners focus on increasing the reach and dissemination of their knowledge and research. They include networks, coalitions, international organisations, multilateral and NGOs that share learning and disseminate findings.

Policy and practice influencing partners focus on advocacy, from advisory roles to support for campaigning initiatives. They include NGOs, international organisations, and umbrella federations of membership organisations, as well as public policy actors (governments, public financial institutions) and private sector actors.

Sometimes IIED is the junior partner in joint work. We collaborate with consultancies, companies, governments and international NGOs – and often IIED does not decide the terms for our involvement in work programmes. In these contexts, IIED will aim to apply the principles set out here, in particular when we are the intermediary responsible for subcontracting organisations in developing countries.

Not all relationships with other organisations and individuals that IIED engages in and values are partnerships. For example, some of our key audiences, donors and funders, and members of project consortiums under contract for specific purposes, are extremely important for IIED, but might not be defined as partners. We also engage in contractual arrangements with service providers or consultants for specific, clearly defined services through sub-contracting arrangements. Other critical relationships for us include broad coalitions and alliances where members enter with their own objectives and agendas that may not manifest all the core principles of institutional partnerships.

Meeting the requirements for effective partnerships

A. IIED's commitments and aspirations

We will use the following as a checklist to guide our collaborative work, recognising that in some areas IIED is in a position to make commitments while in others it's more realistic to set out our aspirations:

Firm commitments

Financial transparency: IIED will always make available budgetary information on joint projects to all partners, unless this is precluded by factors outside our control. We will also be open and aim for fairness in use of resources provided through grants and project funding for overheads, communication, learning, monitoring and evaluation. We would normally expect reciprocal arrangements from partners, but appreciate that this might contradict some partners' business practices or way of operating.

Zero tolerance for abuse: IIED believes that everyone we come into contact with, regardless of age, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation or ethnic origin has the right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation. IIED will not tolerate abuse and exploitation by our staff or associated personnel, and we apply the same criteria to those with whom we work in order to protect everyone involved in any given activity - including IIED's staff as they carry out their work.

Possibilities for change: we will schedule periodic joint assessments of our partnerships to identify areas for improvement and refocusing, as well as opportunities for collaboration to be downscaled or brought to an end.

Adequate financing for establishment and management of key partnerships: as a vital component of IIED's ways of working, which shouldn't be under budgeted.

Respect for the capacity of our partners: we will be careful not to overburden partners beyond what they can take on; as capacity increases, we will jointly adjust the terms of the relationship.

Aspirations

Clarity about the terms of collaboration: poor or *ad hoc* communication can lead to misunderstandings and disappointment, so expectations and requirements should be agreed and documented from the outset, for all involved.

Ideas, problem definition and solutions should come from both sides: IIED should not always be proposing, suggesting or leading.

Both sides should have flexibility to respond to evolving understandings and needs: this is possible because relations are grounded in mutual trust and shared experience.

B. Areas for increased attention

Working closely with our partners, we will explore scope for improvement in our



operations; areas for particular attention include the following:

Due diligence processes that reduce risk on all sides: We will continue to review and update the methods IIED uses to assess partners' expertise, capacity and organisational systems as part of project planning and delivery. At times the due diligence procedure is mandated by the funding agency, so IIED has limited capacity to alter the required activities. We will endeavour in all instances to be open and transparent about the purpose of these exercises and the results, and to minimise imposition of unnecessary or excessive bureaucracy on our partners. We commit to reciprocity in our collaboration and will actively support scrutiny in both directions, ensuring partner organisations have access to information to the same level as the information we ask them to provide. When appropriate, IIED can also provide analysis of the strengths and weakness of our partners, in order to help build their capacity to operate effectively in a changing and volatile environment.

Partners and IIED's organisational model: We will explore ways that our partnerships can be at the heart of changes in the ways IIED operates in future. This may entail our partners playing a more active role in decision-making and oversight (as part of a move towards a more 'distributed' decision-making model), and also our partners playing an even greater role in the organisation's research and advocacy.

Act as a learning organisation: We will seek feedback from our partners and other stakeholders on the way we manage partnerships. We will be open to criticism and we will act on partners' feedback – by discussing it internally and making changes where appropriate. When we receive input from partners we will let them know how we have acted on their points, and if necessary explain why no action has been taken. We hope that we can respond to partners' satisfaction, but if not, a formal complaint can be made by emailing complaints@iied.org.

Give more visibility to work led by our partners: We will use IIED's capacity to reach key actors and our communications expertise to draw attention to work led by partner organisations, helping them to connect with significant audiences in ways that would not otherwise be feasible. We will also document and share evidence and analysis from collaborative work, to show what can be achieved through these ways of working.

Provide effective support to partner organisations dealing with significant disruption: We recognise that the operating environment in many countries is becoming increasingly unpredictable (funding, public space, changing relations with powerful actors etc). The organisations which are able to survive and thrive may not be those best placed to play the most important and positive roles. And organisations which can themselves play a vital disruptive role may be crowded out. IIED can take this into account in our collaboration with key partners, and consider how we could help them deal with these challenges.

Support to younger people and younger organisations: Our commitment to working in collaboration and building trust through joint work can privilege longstanding personal connections and marginalise newer, younger participants. We will explore ways that we can actively support involvement of younger people (in particular younger women) and new organisations in our programme.



Management and facilitation of partnerships needs resources: Partnerships are vital for IIED's work so we need to ensure we invest proactively in making them effective for all those involved – in particular through listening to our partners' views and priorities and developing shared objectives. We can also facilitate more internal discourse on partnerships, better systems for evaluating and learning from collaboration, and a more comprehensive framework for making institute-wide decisions when needed about our ways of working and key strategic relations.