



International Institute for
Sustainable Development

The Knowledge to Act



“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

— Brundtland Commission, *Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development*

GLOBAL PROBLEMS, CONNECTED SOLUTIONS

Air pollution from North America affects air quality in Asia. Pesticides sprayed in Argentina could harm fish stocks off the coast of Australia. The decisions we make about economic policies or how to farm land today could affect the lives of our grandchildren and their grandchildren.

Sustainable development requires seeing the world as an interconnected system that links economies, communities, ecosystems and lives.

For nearly three decades, IISD has championed solutions from this interconnected perspective. Our comprehensive reach is what it takes to solve the problems of the 21st century. Our unique big-picture view allows us to advocate for holistic solutions that can make a real difference.

OUR APPROACH

IISD’s work is organized around six programs and a core set of strategic goals.

Economic Law and Policy:

Rethinking the design of our economies for sustainable growth

Energy:

Transforming energy systems to support universal access to low-carbon energy

Water:

Combining world-class science and policy for freshwater management

Resilience:


Strengthening the capacities of human and natural systems to cope, adapt and reorganize

SDG Knowledge:

Tracking the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Reporting Services:

Providing accurate, neutral, high-quality analysis that informs decision making



The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) is an independent policy research organization working to deliver the knowledge to act. From our offices in Winnipeg, Geneva, Ottawa, Toronto and New York, our work impacts lives in nearly 100 countries.

Sustainable Economies



Rethinking the design
of our economies
for sustainable growth.


Sustainable development demands new thinking in how to design and implement public policies to ensure long-term economic and social benefits without compromising the natural environment. IISD's Economic Law and Policy Program focuses on those areas of economic policy-making that are essential to shifting trillions of dollars in private and public investment in the right direction, including finance, trade, government procurement and industrial policy. Our sector-specific work focuses on agricultural and mining investments in developing countries, given the urgency of the reforms needed and the impact of sustainable development.

Because poorer countries are often at a disadvantage when negotiating with wealthier countries and

investors, a core focus of our work is building the capacity of developing country government officials. Through trainings, forums and applied research, we equip public officials with the knowledge needed to design policies, treaties and contracts that contribute to inclusive and sustainable growth.

We provide supply chain decision-makers—public officials, investment advisors, CEOs, policy-makers and non-governmental organizations—the data and analysis needed to navigate the complex world of sustainability standards, and deliver technical support to government officials in Africa, Asia and Latin America in their investment-related negotiations.

Clean Energy



Transforming energy systems
to support universal access
to low-carbon energy.

Energy is essential for the development of our economies and for our well-being. But the scale and types of energy we currently use contribute to what makes our activities unsustainable: fossil fuel subsidies burden our public budgets, pollution harms our health and traffic congestion wastes our time.

IISD's Energy Program devotes much of its effort to helping authorities choose the right system of electricity generation and reduce consumption of fossil-based transport fuels, while offering practical assistance in implementing international climate change commitments.

Societies face crucial multi-billion dollar investment decisions. To get it right, political decision-makers must properly measure the economic and social impacts of planned electricity systems, choose the right policies and technology options, and ensure financial viability. Access to energy must be fair-priced and universal—but attuned to local dynamics.

Our experts offer practical guidance based on unique comparative knowledge of different national situations. We work side-by-side with local partners for less costly, more equitable energy systems. Aware of international policy developments, we identify wasteful practices, encourage new thinking, engage civil society and support policy reform.

Fresh Water

Combining world-class science and policy for freshwater management.



From Lake Winnipeg in Canada to Lake Chao in China, fresh water is at risk from overuse, pollution, invasive species and demands that outpace supply. All of this is compounded by the increasing impacts of climate change.


Just as water flows across borders, our work stretches across sectors and nations. We are experts in large-basin management, addressing complex nexus issues such as the interactions between watersheds and climate change or water, energy and food.

IISD focuses on policy and programming solutions for governments, civil society and industry that protect and enhance the natural environment,

while also improving socioeconomic well-being. We conduct economic analyses and hydrologic assessments so that governments can consider different options before making final decisions. And we support the management of watersheds across national boundaries, bringing together all relevant sectors and stakeholders.

Our policy work is informed by scientific research conducted at IISD Experimental Lakes Area, a one-of-a-kind outdoor laboratory that allows us to conduct safe experiments on whole lakes in a way that no other research site in the world can do.

Resilient Communities



Strengthening the capacities of human and natural systems to cope, adapt and reorganize.

Shocks and stresses from climate change, environmental degradation, rapid demographic shifts and conflict are placing unprecedented pressures on ecosystems and livelihoods, potentially overwhelming existing capacities to respond.

In this uncertain context, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals will mean redesigning economic policies, development programs and business strategies to perform under a variety of new conditions.

For over 15 years, IISD has worked with governments, civil society, communities and businesses to help them manage climate- and conflict-related risks. We are a multidisciplinary team

of policy researchers with field experience in Africa, Asia and Latin America and expertise in policy, economy, natural resource management, disaster risk reduction, conflict analysis and participatory processes.

IISD is a pioneer in participatory risk management. Our experts were among the first to develop tools that assess the links between environmental change and human security. We train practitioners around the world—from project managers to peacekeepers—to address the environmental sources of conflict. We turn assessments into action by supporting governments to devise climate adaptation strategies.

SDG Knowledge



Tracking the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The global process that led to the Sustainable Development Goals at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was one of the largest participatory processes ever. Information sharing, measurement and assessment of the policy development and implementation process will need to continue if the global community is to achieve the aims set out in the new agenda. The SDG Knowledge Hub plays an important role in this respect, enabling anyone interested in the SDGs to gain a rapid overview of progress towards implementation.

IISD's team of experts researches and writes the news and event posts featured on the

SDG Knowledge Hub. We are at the meetings we report on, talking to those involved and gathering information from official, primary sources. We also develop partnerships with the institutions and organizations we report on, and publish original content from invited experts who are working on the frontlines of SDG implementation.

We also develop and apply measurement and assessment tools and processes, including indicators, as well as build capacity and foster the engagement of policy-makers, decision-makers and future leaders.

Reporting Services

Providing accurate, neutral, high-quality analysis that informs decision making.



For over two decades, IISD Reporting Services has provided the international sustainable development community with a trusted, freely accessible source of neutral information on multilateral sustainable development negotiations.

IISD Reporting Services goes inside the negotiations, to track, filter and report on negotiations across a full range of sustainable development issues, from climate change to chemical management. In addition, our Knowledge Management platforms provide freely searchable databases that track the real-time story of sustainable development.


We provide clarity when the volume of information can be overwhelming. And we bridge the information deficit of developing countries, thereby contributing to environmental justice. As we move forward into the post-2015 period, IISD Reporting Services will track the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and communicate the sustainable development agenda.

In 2017, IISD Reporting Services celebrated the 25th anniversary of its flagship publication, the Earth Negotiations Bulletin, which has brought openness and transparency to international environment and sustainable development negotiations.

Our over 120 experts come from across the globe and from many disciplines. We are economists and lawyers, chemists and biologists, editors and reporters.

Our work impacts people in nearly 100 countries.

Here are 10 selected highlights:



CANADA: Manitoba's first Bioeconomy Atlas helps producers and consumers make better decisions about biomass resources to help develop a sustainable economy.

UNITED STATES: New York is home to IISD's Reporting Services, our flagship information service on environment and development negotiations.

ST. LUCIA: We support journalists and government communicators to develop and discuss strategies for telling stories about climate change adaptation.

UGANDA: Our model was able to calculate the cost of ending hunger in seven African countries, which together are home to 52 million hungry people.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO: IISD works with conservationists to develop skills on conflict-sensitive conservation and to create appropriate response strategies.

A world map with a green color scheme. Five callout boxes are connected to specific countries by thin lines. The boxes contain text about IISD's work in each country. The countries are: Switzerland (top left), India (center), China (top right), Bhutan (center right), and Indonesia (bottom center).

SWITZERLAND: The Geneva 2030 Innovation Sprint aims to build partnerships between diverse actors that focus on the needs of countries and communities delivering the Sustainable Development Goals.

INDIA: We are supporting India in their transition from kerosene to solar power, helping to understand how to promote cleaner, more efficient alternatives.

CHINA: IISD, with Chinese and international partners, is testing the potential of green finance approaches to deal with toxic soils and restore them to health and productivity.

BHUTAN: IISD works with civil servants and local businesses to integrate green public procurement into their official practices.

INDONESIA: Our Global Subsidies Initiative supports Indonesia in its phase-out of fossil fuel subsidies and transition to cleaner forms of energy.

For nearly three decades, IISD has been examining the root causes of some of the world's most pressing problems. Through our groundbreaking research and science, we are exploring innovative ideas and championing solutions that make a real difference. Thanks to our comprehensive reach, we know how to get things done and we make an impact in nearly 100 countries across the world.





As a non-profit organization, IISD relies on project grants and donations from individuals, governments, foundations and businesses.

If you are interested in supporting our work, please give us a call, send an email or pledge online.

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IISD is registered as a charitable organization in Canada and has 501(c)(3) status in the United States. IISD receives core operating support from the Government of Canada, provided through the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and from the Province of Manitoba. IISD receives project funding from numerous governments inside and outside Canada, United Nations agencies, foundations, the private sector and individuals.

