

Supporting climate negotiations: examining the evidence

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Key messages

- Projects to support climate negotiators should focus on three broad drivers of influence: strengthening delegations, developing strategies and shaping international negotiations.
- The first tranche of negotiations support projects tended to focus on strengthening delegations, primarily by providing financial support to enable delegates to attend negotiations. More recent projects place a greater emphasis on assisting beneficiary countries to develop negotiation strategies and shape international negotiations.
- Negotiations support projects should: ensure that activities are demand-led but flexible in their approach; target the right audience and identify credible suppliers to deliver the support; consider a range of delivery options; and build sustainable capacity. These principles should underpin the design and delivery of future projects.
- Donors and beneficiaries should establish processes to capture lessons learned and understand how individual projects contribute to existing negotiations support efforts.

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1. Introduction

The world's poorest and most vulnerable countries often have the most to lose from climate change. But they usually have fewer climate-related resources and limited expertise to fully represent their interests at international climate change negotiations.

Over the past decade, various donor agencies and private funders have provided assistance to these countries to try and redress this imbalance. These negotiations support projects have ranged from providing financial support to enable delegations to attend negotiations, to building their technical capacity to help them develop negotiating strategies and influence final agreements.

A new global climate deal that reflects the interests of the poorest and most vulnerable countries will only be possible if their negotiators make their voices heard in the negotiations. In the run up to the crucial climate negotiations in 2015, it is important to understand how effective these projects have been and how best to enhance future negotiations support projects.

This paper draws on the findings of a study commissioned by the Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) and undertaken by AEA-Ricardo.¹ Through desk-based research and stakeholder interviews, the study reviewed the existing negotiations support literature and a selection of negotiations support projects related to climate change, trade and environmental negotiations to inform how future support efforts should be designed and delivered.² The study captured lessons from 15 projects; these will inform the efforts of both recipients from the poorest and most vulnerable countries, and current and potential donors to negotiations support.

2. What have we learned from support to negotiators?

Drivers of influence

To date, there has been very little analysis of the effectiveness of different types of negotiations support. The absence of a clear definition of what constitutes success in negotiations, and the lack of agreed criteria for measuring impact, have hampered these efforts. This paper reviews the existing evidence base to identify what lessons can be learned.

Negotiations support projects target three broad areas to enhance the participation and influence of the poorest and most vulnerable countries in multilateral

climate negotiations. We summarise these as 'drivers of influence':

- Projects **strengthen delegations** by providing financial assistance to enable the poorest and most vulnerable countries to send representatives to negotiations, and by supporting activities that enhance their negotiating and technical skills.
- They help these countries to **develop strategies**, including clear national positions, to enable them to articulate their interests in negotiations.
- They help the poorest and most vulnerable countries to **shape international negotiations** by identifying opportunities for collective action where there is common ground, and equipping negotiators with the skills to set and influence agendas in negotiations.

All three drivers interact against a set of external factors that can be unpredictable and difficult to influence. These include the countries' relative economic and geopolitical power, and the degree of national support for addressing the issues under negotiation. The **Drivers of Influence framework** assumes that negotiations support activities do not seek to directly affect these broader international power structures or wider influences, although to do so successfully is likely to increase the likelihood of success in negotiations.³

Sustainability is an important overarching consideration when designing negotiations support projects. A project can enable negotiators from the poorest and most vulnerable countries to make important achievements on a one-off or short-term basis, and influence in such short timescales should not be discounted. However, it is desirable for projects to deliver enduring capacity improvements to recipient countries that are sustainable over the long term.

Lessons from current negotiations support projects

The study used this Drivers of Influence framework as the basis for analysing 15 negotiations support case studies, summarised in Table 1. These were selected from more than 40 projects supporting developing countries in the international climate negotiations arena, as well as case studies from other environmental areas and trade. The projects varied in focus and scope: some were issues-based, for example the Coalition of Rainforest Nations,⁴ whereas others took a more generic approach, such as support to the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Group.⁵

Table 1: Negotiations support case studies

Case study	Project summary
Acting Together for Bold Outcomes*	This project brings together developing countries that show the potential for leadership within international climate negotiations, and encourages engagement with middle-income and developed countries. Support consists of workshops, analysis and the production of formal position papers and draft submissions that articulate common interests.
African Development Bank Support to the African Group of Negotiators	A broad programme of financial, technical, legal and logistical support to enable African negotiators to participate effectively in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
African Union Biosafety Project	This project developed an African strategy on biosafety and started to revise the African model law on biosafety. It primarily supports negotiators via a series of preparatory workshops prior to international negotiations.
Building and Strengthening Institutional Capacity on Climate Change	This is a research and capacity development project that enables countries to undertake analytical work to determine what kind of national and international climate change actions fit best with their circumstances and priorities.
Capacity Building Related to Multilateral Environmental Agreements in African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries	This project supports the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements by providing information, technical and legal advice, training and in-country support activities.
Coalition of Rainforest Nations*	Negotiations support to the Coalition of Rainforest Nations includes technical reports, workshops, submissions and briefings on several issues, including domestic and international frameworks for rainforest management, biodiversity conservation and climate stability.
European Capacity Building Initiative*	This project provides support to climate negotiators via its integrated Fellowship Programme and Workshop Programme, including policy-relevant analysis for the climate negotiations.
Hub and Spokes Project	This project assists regional integration organisations and trade ministries from African, Caribbean and Pacific member states to develop their capacity in trade policy and trade negotiations.
Legal Response Initiative*	The Legal Response Initiative provides legal advice and written responses to queries from least developed and developing country delegations, during and between climate negotiating sessions.
South Centre	South Centre provides negotiations support, research and analysis on issues related to trade and climate negotiations. It also creates networking opportunities for negotiators and policy-makers within countries (across different government ministries) and between different negotiation groups (trade and the environment).
Strengthening Women's Leadership at the UNFCCC	This project was designed to support and enhance the participation of women in the UNFCCC process. Support includes covering the participation costs of women negotiators, providing networking events, capacity building and knowledge enhancement.
Support to the LDC Group*	This project provides LDC Group negotiators with scientific, analytical, strategic and technical assistance, before and during climate negotiations.
Support to the Republic of Marshall Islands in the UNFCCC*	Via a specialist consultancy, the Republic of the Marshall Islands is provided with on-demand legal and technical support.
SURVIVE	This project provides scientific, legal, technical and policy support for the Alliance of Small Island States and LDC negotiators. Support is provided during and between negotiating sessions.
World Trade Organisation Trade Related Technical Assistance	This assistance is largely directed towards supporting government officials to better understand World Trade Organisation rules, so that they can make use of their membership rights and negotiate more effectively with their trading partners.

* denotes projects that are or have been funded by CDKN

These projects have several broad characteristics, described below.

Scope of the projects

- All the projects addressed a combination of the drivers of influence, confirming that negotiations support has moved beyond just assisting delegates to attend negotiations.
- Recent projects place greater emphasis on developing national positions on priority technical issues, and on increasing power and influence through building alliances with other nations. Comparatively fewer case studies focused on shaping the agenda of negotiations.

Selecting participants and providers

- A number of negotiations support projects targeted a specific set of stakeholders, ranging from negotiators to politicians to the media. Most projects supported individuals across varying levels of seniority.
- The organisations providing negotiations support varied in size and nature. They included international, national and regional organisations, North–South and South–South collaborations, and ranged from large bodies such as the United Nations and the European Commission to small specialist consultancies. Some organisations implement support, while some act as donors who pay others to deliver technical support.
- In most instances, institutions from developed countries delivered negotiations support in beneficiary countries. Collaborative working through consortia of delivery partners proved to be a particularly effective way to meet the beneficiaries' demands, in particular where multidisciplinary support was required.

Planning design and delivery features

- There are many options for delivering projects to strengthen delegations and develop negotiating strategies (see Table 2). Projects that sought to shape international negotiations encouraged the development of formal and informal networks to share experiences, and the development of alliances to give parties greater leverage in negotiations.
- Most projects did not have a comprehensive sustainability strategy or exit strategy in place, despite the fact that future support was not always certain.

Monitoring and evaluation

- The monitoring and evaluation of negotiations support projects so far is limited; what exists tends to be guided by contractual requirements. Some voluntary monitoring and evaluation has been

conducted, often driven by the desire to capture the wider benefits of projects.

3. Principles for designing and delivering negotiations support

Negotiations support projects vary in terms of the nature of support they provide, to whom, at what scale and how that support is delivered. We found the Drivers of Influence framework to be well reflected in reality across the case studies reviewed, and it resonated with the expert stakeholders interviewed. This analysis has enabled us to establish some principles to assist those planning negotiations support projects.

Define the target beneficiaries and geography

It is critical to define the target beneficiaries at the project outset. This will determine various other design considerations, as well as the choice of supplier. Most projects work predominantly with negotiators and politicians at all levels of seniority. A balance is needed in terms of the function and seniority of the beneficiaries.

For example, the Coalition of Rainforest Nations' Secretariat works strategically with politicians and stakeholders across all levels of seniority to ensure that the right people hear their messages: people with the relevant power and influence to change things. On issued projects, chair- and spokespeople are important stakeholders to build relationships with, so that common positions are presented and negotiated effectively at talks.

Support can be provided at regional or country levels, though support focused on a specific issue may be best delivered at a regional level. For example, the African Union Biosafety Project found that biosafety negotiations were best approached at the continental level, rather than on a country basis, due to the cross-border impacts of biotechnology.

Conduct a market needs assessment for negotiations support

Negotiations support projects should be based on identified needs, to ensure that the activities delivered reflect the beneficiaries' interests and priorities, and target the right drivers of influence. A complementary approach is to develop negotiations support in collaboration with experts in the field, which means project proposals harness the demand and practical experience of negotiators at the earliest stage. SURVIVE

and the European Capacity Building Initiative both have clear processes to identify demand early on; for example, during project inception periods they consult with beneficiaries to develop suitable work plans.

Consider who should provide technical assistance

As previously described, the case studies vary in terms of who supplies technical assistance to negotiators. There are several important factors that help identify who is best placed to do this work. These include the potential supplier's technical expertise and their credibility among the target beneficiaries.

When demands from beneficiaries are varied, partnership working or commissioning a diverse yet complementary consortium of suppliers or implementing partners can be effective. This approach was adopted by the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) project to support African, Caribbean and Pacific member states on issues around multilateral environmental agreements. UNEP partnered with the European Union to engage several key regional and sectoral actors in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. These regional hubs plan, implement and monitor capacity building activities in their respective regions.

Consider a wide range of delivery options

The method of project delivery will depend on the context and available budget, but these can be deployed

in various combinations to encourage creativity and innovative approaches. Table 2 lists a range of potential delivery options, mapped against the drivers of influence.

Embed flexibility in the approach

Negotiations support projects need to contain a degree of flexibility (see box on p. 6). This will enable the demand-led approach to continue after the inception phase, and be balanced with an overall strategy for negotiations support that is likely to emerge as lessons are learned. The needs of developing country negotiators evolve over time as their capacities change, negotiations develop and international, regional and national circumstances shift.

Develop trust between the organisations delivering negotiations support and the beneficiary

It is important for organisations delivering negotiations support on the ground to demonstrate credibility, expertise and reliability, and to establish trust with the recipients of support. Testimonials from recipients of the following projects confirmed that a foundation of trust between the delivery partners and the recipients is essential: Acting Together for Bold Outcomes, the Legal Response Initiative, the European Capacity Building Initiative, SURVIVE and the LDC Group.

These approaches are all underpinned by a degree of autonomy in funding and project design. This affects the effectiveness of the projects supported: giving recipient

Table 2: Delivery options for negotiations support

Driver of influence	Delivery options
Strengthening delegations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide scientific, analytical, strategic, legal and technical support. • Provide a comprehensive grounding in negotiations history and mechanisms. • Use multiple methods, such as training workshops, advisory services and meetings, knowledge management systems, 'learning by doing', briefing notes, technical reports and mentoring. • Provide financial assistance to enable the poorest and most vulnerable countries to send delegates to negotiations.
Developing a strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide objective advice, evidence and technical support to delegates. • Advise and guide delegates on national policy positions, on specific issues and on issues of common interest with other countries. • Engage stakeholders – negotiators, officials from a range of ministries, experts – in the development of a strategy.
Shaping international negotiations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure networking is a key component of support and provide relevant opportunities to build alliances; potential forums include workshops, strategy meetings, online discussion forums, and formal and informal networking events.

Best practices for responding to demand

The organisations sponsoring the 15 case studies made a range of provisions to ensure that their support is flexible and can respond to changes in demand. Examples include:

- The Legal Response Initiative responds to queries from developing country negotiators in real-time during climate negotiations.
- The European Capacity Building Initiative publishes 'Rapid Response' policy briefs and background papers, which are developed using a 'fast-track' approach to allow a timely response to issues of relevance to international negotiations.
- The Hub and Spokes Project develops country-specific work plans in collaboration with host ministries and regional integration organisations, in order to best adapt their approach to meet recipient countries' current needs.
- Many projects, such as Capacity Building Related to Multilateral Environmental Agreements in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, conduct evaluations after each capacity building workshop and review their work plan in light of the feedback received.

countries budgetary, management and project design responsibilities means projects have a greater degree of credibility among their target audience, with members having greater buy-in and a sense of responsibility towards achieving the project goals.

Engage with stakeholders for sustainability

Organisations designing and delivering negotiations support should engage a wide range of stakeholders – the private sector, civil society organisations and the media – because this enhances the sustainability and impact of projects, for example by building domestic support for the negotiations team. It also allows for skills and knowledge to be shared. For example, the Legal Response Initiative projects improve domestic capacity by training 'champions' to support negotiators on legal matters.

A strong domestic mandate for climate change is important for developing links between negotiations at the national and international levels. A number of the projects analysed actively engaged with the media to develop and strengthen domestic support for action. In the Republic of the Marshall Islands, this has directly led to a higher public profile for senior government officials in international negotiations, and highlighted the acute vulnerability of small island states.

Establish a monitoring and evaluation process

Approaches to monitor and evaluate negotiations support projects are in their infancy and there are no consistent criteria for assessing their effectiveness. However, there are many established monitoring and evaluation techniques that can be used to set baselines, triangulate quantitative and qualitative data, and consider this evidence alongside beneficiary perspectives for a comprehensive overview.

One emerging tool is outcome mapping, which CDKN is trialling.⁶ Rather than focusing simply on the delivery of outputs, outcome mapping complements other monitoring and evaluation approaches by identifying the different changes brought about by negotiations support projects.

5. Conclusions

The findings of the study commissioned by CDKN suggest that negotiations support efforts are generally heading in the right direction. Current projects are enhancing the ability of the poorest and most vulnerable countries to develop national positions and negotiating strategies. This is enabling them to shape agendas and represent their interests in negotiations more effectively.

While there is no evidence to infer that one form of support or one driver of influence is more effective or important than the others, it is logical that support needs to be built from the bottom up: from strengthening delegations, through developing strategies, to shaping negotiations. The Drivers of Influence framework is a tool to develop and review negotiations support projects and programmes. Used in conjunction with empirical findings, the framework can help to identify where the most significant gaps lie across the negotiations support landscape, and how to prioritise and target future efforts.

Furthermore, it is important for commissioners and providers of negotiations support to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches. They should consider the principles identified here when designing and delivering future negotiations support projects. Processes for disseminating lessons learned and for capturing synergies with other activities related to negotiations support should also be established.

Further reading

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Endnotes

- 1 Binsted, A., Dodwell, C., Mylvaganam, A. and Sefton, J. (2013) 'Supporting developing countries in the climate negotiations: lessons learned so far'. London, AEA-Ricardo.
- 2 Details of how to access the broader evidence base underpinning the analysis can be found in: AEA-Ricardo (2013) 'Supporting developing countries in the climate negotiations: lessons learned so far.' London, AEA-Ricardo.
- 3 Opportunities for influencing these wider restrictions are the focus of climate diplomacy. See: Schweimler, N. and Sura, K. (2013) 'Climate diplomacy: seeing the bigger picture'. CDKN policy brief. London: CDKN; Mabey, N., Gallagher, L. and Born, C. (2013) *Understanding climate diplomacy: building diplomatic capacity and systems to avoid dangerous climate change*. London: E3G.
- 4 The Coalition for Rainforest Nations is a negotiating group under the UNFCCC which focuses on building consensus among coalition nations, mostly from developing countries, on issues related to domestic and international frameworks for rainforest management, biodiversity conservation and climate stability.
- 5 The LDC Group is an officially recognised negotiating group, which consists of 48 least developed countries party to the UNFCCC.
- 6 Hamza-Goodacre, D., Jefford, S. and Simister, N. (2013) 'Supporting international climate negotiators: a monitoring and evaluation framework'. CDKN working paper. London: Climate and Development Knowledge Network.

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The Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) aims to help decision-makers in developing countries design and deliver climate compatible development. We do this by providing demand-led research and technical assistance, and channelling the best available knowledge on climate change and development to support policy processes at the country level.



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