Reflections on an action-learning project for payments for watershed services

Working forests in the Tropics - Training Innovations

Ivan Bond,
International Institute for Environment and Development,
London
If two thirds of the world must remain poor so that one third can stay rich, it just won’t work – it’s as simple as that

Barbara Ward 1972

My hope is that there is now a recognition on behalf of the rich world that they cannot stay rich if the world is destabilised by poverty

James Wolfensohn 2005
IIED’s Mission and vision

- IIED’s vision of a fairer more sustainable world built through partnership and shared values
- Our mission – to change the world, in alliance with others – through expertise, advocacy and partnerships to achieve sustainable development at local, national and global levels
Payments for Watershed Service

A project in four phases
A model for payments for ecosystem services

- Carbon
- Watershed services
- Bio-diversity
- Landscape beauty
Phase one: Investigation

- Preliminary investigation of a topic
- Payments for ecosystem services (carbon, watersheds, landscape beauty, bio-diversity)
- Strategic intervention or personal involvement
- Based on literature or secondary sources
- Output: Silver Bullet or Fools’ Gold
Phase two: Preliminary analysis

- Diagnostic studies in India, Indonesia, South Africa and the Caribbean
- More detail – geographically and issue
- Developing partnerships with ‘in-country partners’
- Output – brief grey literature reports
Phase three: Action-research

- Action research – learning by doing
- Identified 10 sites in which to develop payments for watershed services.
- Objective – impact on environment and their impact on poverty (win-win)
- Substantial project – 3.5 years, > US$3.6 million (funded by DFID), 6 partners
- Countries: Indonesia, India, South Africa, Bolivia, China & Caribbean
Phase 3 project level – generic activities

- Contractual arrangements, work-plans, skills and capacity, project advisory group
- Base-line studies, site meetings, learning groups
- Exchange visits, workshops
- Communications: ‘Shed-loads’, FLOWS, ‘Lake Matters’ web-site
- IIED Researchers role: monitor progress, assist with documentation, develop communications (internally and externally) & provide leadership
Phase Four: Communication and dissemination

• Have a message that needs communicating
• Completing the publication ‘Fair-deals Series’ – 8 publications
• Attend relevant meetings – World Water Week, conferences, workshops
• Feedback to donors
• Reflect, plan and ……move on
What did we learn?

- Payment for watershed services will not eradicate poverty
- There is little evidence that these payments have had a positive impact on landuse
- Potentially some indirect benefits
- Payments need to be integrated into regulatory framework
- Governments can play multiple roles; legislators, buyers and sellers
An assessment

- Concept, design and execution
  - Project ‘concept and quality’ at entry
  - IIED’s approach and comparative advantage
  - Continuity of project staff and leadership
  - Recognition of confirmation bias

- More scientific methods & tools needed
- The need for rigorous measurement of outcomes
- The risks of downplaying the need for zoning and regulation
An assessment (cont)

• Analysis, communication and dissemination
  • Good impact in participating countries
  • Comparison with other PWS initiatives
  • IIED’s good profile in the international policy dialogue

• Insufficient peer-reviewed journal articles
• Timeliness of reporting of results
• Comparisons across sites*
Topic, theory, time, triangulation, time.....tensions & trade-offs (5Ts)

Multi-disciplinary natural resource management research

Action-learning sites

Case base analysis

International literature