

Keywords:

Green growth, green economy policy, environmental economics, participation

OVERVIEW

Sustainable Markets Group

Project name:

Green Economy Dialogues

Project leader:

Steve Bass

Time frame:

April 2012 – present

Objective:

To bring together a range of stakeholders in developing countries and provide the opportunity to understand the concepts of 'green economy' and 'green growth' better, redefining them in ways that work best for the country.

PROJECT SUMMARY

Green Economy Dialogues give stakeholders in developing countries the opportunity to deconstruct the 'green economy' and 'green growth' concepts and redefine them in ways that work for them. Since 2011, IIED and local partners have facilitated dialogues in the Caribbean, the Himalayan region, Botswana, Brazil, Cambodia, Ethiopia, India, Kazakhstan and Zambia. The workshops have used locally produced background papers and have brought together governments, civil society organisations, academia, media and business. Countries already working on green economy have expanded their aspirations towards more inclusive and pro-poor approaches, towards building local institutions, and towards reorienting existing financial flows.

CHANGE IN ACTION

The UK's Department for International Development (DFID) supported IIED to run Green Economy Dialogues in the Himalayas, Brazil and Zambia, and to organise follow-up diagnostic and planning work to earlier stakeholder workshops in the Caribbean and Kazakhstan. We also used DFID funds to produce a guide to green economy diagnostics, the draft of which attracted OECD partnership in workshops in three more countries. Caribbean participants conceived a 'new Caribbean economy' and

Redefining the green economy

Stakeholder dialogues have interrogated and refined the 'green economy' idea, and begun to influence in-country policy

Out of the 2008 financial crisis came a surge of interest in 'green growth'. G20 governments, development banks and corporations promoted the potential to reinvigorate economic performance by investing in greenhouse gas-reducing technology and infrastructure. But many developing countries remain cautious about the concept, which has been defined and promoted mainly by elite international institutions and addressed almost entirely to the formal sector. In IIED's Green Economy Dialogues, held in nine countries since 2011, stakeholders have had the opportunity to grapple with going green and what that might mean in their national or regional context.

A new Caribbean economy

In most places the dialogues have been one-off conferences, convened by IIED and partner organisations over two to four days, guiding participants to identify principles and strategies they could get behind. The dialogues have catalysed not only discussion and ideas, but institution-building and formal policy consultations. Many participants have concluded, for example, that green economy programmes will work for developing countries if they focus on inclusiveness and a 'doubly green' approach – valuing not only low-carbon growth but also high-carbon landscapes and sustainable use of natural resources. In the Caribbean and Kazakhstan the initial meetings have become part of a larger process of change. IIED and the Trinidad-based organisation CANARI

co-designed the Caribbean dialogue process, with support from the UK's Department for International Development (DFID). Interviews, focus groups and locally produced discussion papers led up to a workshop with a diverse group of experts, including a leading women's rights campaigner, the head of the St Lucia Investment board, professors at the University of the West Indies, and specialists in urban planning, tourism, rural development and macroeconomics.

This group initially rejected the notion of a green economy. They saw it as potentially an anti-competitive move from the North, and argued that sustainable development is a sounder paradigm. By the end of the dialogue they had reinvented the terms of the debate. In summing up, participants emphasised that a range of characteristics would be needed to shape an economy that worked for the many, and for the future. Rather than a narrow approach to 'green', an economy might be 'blue' for its better use of marine resources; pink for its greater gender equity; 'in-the-black', as opposed to 'in-the-red' for its discipline not to steal from future generations; and above all, a 'new Caribbean economy' based on self-reliance and better use of natural, human and cultural resources.

Energised by these goals, the group drafted a position paper and decided to move on from dialogue to testing ideas on the ground. CANARI produced a policy brief, *Towards a green and resilient economy for the Caribbean*, to

formed an action learning group to take their ideas forward into diverse policy and research work. For example, the Caribbean group is working on ways to identify and scale up green economic activities from within the local informal sector e.g. from local communities deploying beach-based assets. The dialogue in Kazakhstan is also informing a 'green transition' strategy, drawing on stakeholder perspectives to urge a shift from project-based plans to improving the enabling environment for more widespread change.

KEY LESSONS LEARNT & INNOVATIONS

- Many stakeholder groups resist green economy as a North-driven agenda. But once the dialogues redefined 'green' as making better use of natural resources and serving people failed by the 'brown' paradigm, they unleashed energy and drew interest from powerful institutions.
- Kazakhstan was focusing its green economy initiatives around foreign investment in greenhouse gas-reducing projects; dialogue stakeholders encouraged the government to think instead about domestic action to build an enabling environment for sustainable development.

PARTNERS' VIEW

In my parent's generation, we united by fighting for independence. The current generation is lost in awe of US lifestyles, but we know that's not sustainable; this [green economy dialogue] is the kind of thing that should be inspiring a new generation.

Alex Girvan
Head of Students' Union at the University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago



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communicate their messages more widely and used DFID funds to help organise and launch the Caribbean Green Economy Action Learning Group, which started developing a research workplan at its first meeting in May 2013. The group has met with several national governments and the United Nations Environmental Programme; most recently, the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) asked them to prepare a regional policy paper that will inform the bank's work on green economy. The CDB saw the advantage of bottom-up consultations with a broad stakeholder group, an approach that should be adopted by other regional development banks.

Kazakhstan's enabling environment

In Kazakhstan, IIED suggested stakeholder dialogue as a tool to help the government rethink its approach to greening the economy. Based on our previous work on sustainable development in Kazakhstan's oil industry, the environment ministry asked IIED in 2011 to assist in refining plans for a Green Bridge Partnership Programme. Green Bridge was conceived as a set of high-tech projects in energy and transport that would attract major investments from Europe. We urged officials to expand their focus to the enabling environment – the policy, fiscal and capacity changes that could allow ordinary people and

businesses, not just international megaprojects, to make sustainable choices.

In partnership with the ministry and the national office of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, IIED set up the Astana Green Economy Dialogue in November 2011. In the last 18 months, DFID funds have supported a follow-up assessment, to be published soon by IIED, which emphasises areas where Kazakhstan could take responsibility for building an enabling environment. These points are being promoted in meetings to prepare the formal green transition strategy. Potentially, Kazakhstan will move beyond plans based solely on foreign investment projects and take action in domestic policy and investment to nurture sustainable development.



Knowledge Products

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