

**Scoping a DFID research programme on
*Water ecosystem services and poverty reduction under climate change***

**Report on Initial Findings Discussion Workshop
26th April 2007, British Medical Association, Tavistock Square, London**

The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) is steering a team, working to the end of June 2007, to scope a possible DFID research programme on freshwater ecosystem services and poverty reduction in the context of climate change and other drivers of change. The work aims to identify both key research areas and delivery mechanisms that enable research to be used in the practice of policy. The **scoping work** is triangulating responses from:

- Stakeholders internationally through interviews and a web-based survey
- Key lessons from the literature
- Policy and practice analyses in selected developing countries

The **objective** of the workshop was to share the results of the process so far with key UK-based stakeholders, to interrogate the findings to date and identify issues that need further examination or emphasis.

A good range of perspectives was brought together in the workshop (Annex 1 - participants list). The group was facilitated by Tighe Geogeghan. A wealth of ideas and information was generated, and these will be incorporated by the team as the work moves to the prioritised findings stage. This brief report highlights some of major outputs of the day.

Participants broadly endorsed the approach taken by the team and the validity of the major themes emerging from the work to date. These **themes** are work in progress, and are currently couched in the following terms:

- Water politics
- Vulnerability, adaptation and resilience
- Water resource management

Progress was also made with identification and prioritization of key researchable issues based on the experience and disciplinary perspectives of participants. Advice was also generated on completing the study and synthesizing the data into a useful research agenda for DFID.

Key issues emerging from the work to date were also emphasized in the workshop:

- The political dimensions of the research-into-use challenge - the need to understand the reasons for gaps between policy and practice and the drivers of change with which research might ride
- The simultaneous need for, and challenges of, implementing integrated water resource management at a range of scales, which is seen as the key to more rational, sustainable and equitable water allocation and use
- The challenges of developing effective institutions for allocating and managing water ecosystem services in ways that support poverty reduction, in the face of trends such as:
 - the application (by DFID and many developing countries) of a rights-based approach to water;
 - catchment closures in water-scarce regions;
 - globalizing markets and the resultant shifts in demand for agricultural water;

- diverse and often poorly anticipated social and economic repercussions of the impacts of climate and other changes on water ecosystem services, and their implications for poverty and livelihoods

Climate change as a lead component of the research problem was persuasively challenged, validating the project team's decision to look more broadly at the effects of a range of trends, changes, variabilities and shocks that affect the relationship between water ecosystem service and poverty reduction, rather than focusing exclusively on climate change.

Some issues that had not emerged strongly from the study, or that contradicted the survey results to date, were also noted as important, including:

- Issues relating to the management of water for urban use and of the watersheds serving urban areas
- The role of technology, as opposed to much direct technological research, and key areas of new and "soft" technologies, that DFID may be well placed to examine
- Human health impacts of climate change on water ecosystem services
- Business and enterprise governance issues associated with water ecosystem services are evolving fast and present a new constellation of potential partnerships and challenges that need assessment.

In terms of **gaps that need filling**, workshop participants provided several useful suggestions to make the work as robust and inclusive as possible in the timeframe:

- Despite the knowledge base of on-line survey respondents being predominantly Africa and Asia, there was concern that the on-line survey and semi-structured interviews were not capturing an adequate sample of intended beneficiaries and end users of the proposed research. Remaining time and effort in this area will focus on increasing the input from developing country professionals and other stakeholders.
- Development of the research agenda needs a clearer conceptual framework to frame and structure the issues, and several suggestions were offered
- 'Mapping' existing relevant knowledge bases should be begun in this work and a defined stream of research prioritized on this and on assessing what approaches are being used, by whom and with what results

On **research methodologies**, participants noted in particular the:

- Value of interdisciplinary approaches and action research
- Attendant importance of adequate time frames in which to track change
- Need to explore issues across the range of scales on which they are operating
- Need for adequate systems of monitoring and evaluation
- Importance of designing research in ways that both generate necessary information for management and policy lessons back to stakeholders

Finally it was noted that this work will help shape a broader research programme on ecosystem services that DFID is developing with others (including ESRC and NERC). The work should therefore not look solely at researchable questions that fall within DFID's comparative advantage, but consider what might be taken up by other actors.

Website for this scoping study: <http://www.iied.org/NR/waterecosystem.html>

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Annex 1

List of participants

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