

Bertrand, Pierre¹

¹ Global Development Network

A research action program for natural capital accounting implementation in Madagascar

Key words: Natural Capital Accounting, Geographic Information systems, Action research

Abstract:

Implementing the SDGs calls for a holistic understanding of the interactions between socioeconomic activities and the environment, and hence requires the systematic integration of environmental and related data into mainstream socio-economic policymaking, in particular through the development of new accounting methods such as natural capital accounting (NCA). For developing countries especially the task is as daunting as the need is urgent. We propose here to analyze practical impediments to the implementation of NCA and to understand, through a proof-of-concept case study conducted in Madagascar, how an action research program to experiment NCA using geocoded natural wealth data can provide practical means to facilitate the introduction of these accounts to inform policies toward a sustainable and socially inclusive growth. The paper starts with a discussion on the main barriers to the implementation of NCA in developing countries. We identify three main barriers: incomplete knowledge, lack and scatteredness of environmental data rarely presented in reference to socio-economic activities and the lack of in-country capacities to conduct such interdisciplinary work. Based on these observations, the paper describes how an action research program can allow practical implementation and complement existing initiatives. The first feature of such a project is to collate existing data, especially through the utilization of GIS coupled with in situ observations and data stored in the different institutions. The paper then explains how experimentation, with the mobilization of the local research community and policy-makers, and through the data collection process and its multi-disciplinary aspect, can holistically enable the creation of a new knowledge-to-policy pathway. Moving forward, we propose to investigate the factors that can facilitate expanding the program nationally and internationally. More specifically, such accounts could then evolve into an integrated and reliable source of information across scales and different levels of governance.