



in association with



Designing a Research and Practice Network for Natural Capital and Environment Accounting in the Pacific

WORKSHOP | 27 MARCH 2017 | BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA

The Global Development Network, in association with development partners such as Wealth Accounting and the Valuation of Ecosystem Services Global Partnership (WAVES) and with inputs from United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) – Pacific Office, intends to engage research and policy institutions in Oceania working in areas closely related to environment/natural capital accounting. The workshop, part of the Oceania Ecosystem Services Forum (27-31 March 2017, Brisbane) will address the opportunities and challenges related to the production and use of environment and natural capital accounts in the region, and discuss the value proposition of a research and practice network to catalyze efforts on the topic. The workshop departs from the premise that the production and use of the accounts, rather than two parallel tracks, are two deeply intertwined activities, and that countries in the region can benefit greatly from sharing experiences.

Context

Countries in the Pacific are subject to serious threats regarding their environment, the sustainability of socio-economic activities and the livelihoods of their population. It is critical for Pacific island countries to develop strategies to adapt to climate change, to better understand the environment and ecosystems and how they support each islands' socio-economic activities.

Development of evidence-based sustainable development strategies and policies relies on regularly available and reliable statistics. Mainstreaming the measurement of natural capital as part of the regular data collection programs of national statistical offices and other government agencies would give policy makers the means with which to make balanced policy choices for sustainable development. Not only can better measurements improve national decision making, they will also be useful in monitoring and evaluating national and international sustainable development initiatives, including the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and the SAMOA Pathway for Small Island Developing States.

Natural Capital Accounting (NCA) has been recognized as a key concept for improving the management the economy and the environment. The System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) provides the framework to integrate information on the environment into more conventional economic accounts and thus integrate NCA into decision-making. However, as countries embark on the implementation of SEEA, there is a need to strengthen capacity to use this framework both analytically and in public policy to better to take into account interactions and trade-offs between the environment and economic factors.

National policy stakeholders and research institutions, together with development partners, have a key role to play, both in creating demand for producing such data and in building capacities to use the information that emerges. Stronger linkages and capacities on the ground in policy and research circles are necessary to ensure the production and uptake of the information, and to enable the exploration and implementation of alternative policy options by governments and other stakeholders.

Building and using accounts requires cooperation and coordination between different agencies and institutions. This includes government information agencies, such as the National Statistical Offices and government scientific agencies as well as research institutions. Such cooperation can help to ensure high quality accounts are both produced and used by government. While direct use of accounts can be made in policy, in many cases the accounts need to be further analyzed to inform decision making (through modelling for example).

In the Pacific, a regional stakeholder network, leveraging ICT, could generate synergies, increase returns on activities through more efficient knowledge exchange, experience sharing and enhanced collaboration.

The Network

The network intends to offer an appropriate modality, including through a virtual and physical platform, for collaboration and will also be the catalyst for implementing activities related to the production and use of natural capital accounts in the region. In particular, the network aims at:

- (i) sharing experience on different existing accounting activities in the region;
- (ii) supporting networking and feedback amongst institutions in the region with a shared interest in producing and using accounting;
- (iii) supporting capacity building efforts at the individual and institutional levels that aim at associating producing and using data and generating policy relevant research.

The expected outcomes over the medium term of such a network are:

- (i) a better understanding of the relationship between socio-economic activities and the environment through natural capital and environment accounts that inform decision-making;
- (ii) better capacity at the individual and institutional level to produce and use the accounts;
- (iii) better integration of the value of environment and natural capital in decision-making;
- (iv) a regional strategy for the sustainable production and use of the accounts - including an offer of research, research training and capacity building programs - that leverages national priorities.

The research and practice network will be underpinned by an online platform that will support networking within and between the demand and supply for accounts and development partners, and in the longer term, become a repository of data that can facilitate the cumulative production of the accounts and enhance their use through knowledge and experience exchange.

The Workshop | 27 March 2017 from 8.30 to 16:30

Gathering experts, policy actors, development partners and representatives of research institutions from or working in the Pacific region, the workshop aims to host a seminal exchange and networking event with the goals to:

- (i) design core features of the network,
- (ii) establish the core partnerships,
- (iii) identify a short to medium term work program, and
- (iv) provide an appropriate platform for further networking.

Short presentations will be used to share the experience to date and identify key issues.

The workshop is addressed at both individuals and institutions with experience in environment and natural capital accounting, from a producer or user perspectives, or a strong interest in building a work program on the topic.

AGENDA

8:30-9:00 Session 1 | Introduction

- Aims of the workshop (GDN)
- Introduction of participants

9:00-9:30 Session 2 | Overview of current accounting efforts and tools

Carl Obst

9:30-10:15 Session 3 | Linking the production and the use of accounts – Experiences from the region

- Accounting for Energy, Waste and Tourism in Fiji (Bimlesh Krishna)
- Accounting for the Southern Palawan and Lake Laguna, Philippines (John Pontillas)
- Water accounting in Samoa (Mose Topeto)

10:15-10:30 Coffee-Break

10:30-11:00 Session 4 | Linking the production and the use of accounts – Experiences from Australia

- State of Environment Reporting in the ACT (Becky Smith)
- Accounting for the Central Highlands of Victoria (Heather Keith)
- Accounting for Port Philip Bay, Victoria (Mark Eigenraam)

11:00-12:00 Session 5 | Actors and factors needed for linking account production to use in policy at the national level

Based on the previous presentations, participants work in groups to identify key actors and factors needed for linking account production to use in policy.

12:00-12:30 Session 6 | Reporting on Session 4

12:30-13:30 Lunch

13:30-14:00 Session 7 | Experiences of partnerships and collaborations: WAVES and UNESCAP

- WAVES Achievements, lessons and way forward (Michael Vardon)
- Regional Update on SEEA Implementation Experience in the Pacific – UNESCAP-Pacific Office (Michael Vardon on behalf of Sanjesh Naidu)

14:00-15:30 Session 8 | Designing a research and practice network.

This session is dedicated to discussing the scope of a regional network in terms of activities, human and financial resources, with an aim to identify key features and activities that respond to a shared demand for collaboration. These will be discussed in groups and reported back. Questions discussed will include the following:

- What are the priorities in data and research and training?
- What are the gaps and opportunities in terms of capacities?
- Who should be part of the network? Should the network include both individuals and institutions? What type of institutions should be part of the network?
- What strands of activities could be prioritized for production, use and research related to accounts, on the short and medium term based on the existing demand in the region? What are the low-hanging fruits?
- What are the existing resources? What additional resources are needed? From whom could additional resources be secured?

15:30-16:00 Break

16:00-16:30 Wrap-up and next steps

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