Dr. Richard Moss comments on GaIn™ Index

March 22, 2011

1. Subjectivity & Audience
   * State up front subjectivity. An objective state of vulnerability does not exist and is in the eyes of the audience. Don’t just make this an academic exercise.
   * GaIn™ is putting together an index for a particular audience, how well defined is it?
     1. JJD described GaIn™’s focus on decision-makers, primarily in the private sector; discussions with leaders for direction (President of Mexico and water investments); and our goal to provoke action while continuing to improve the model
   * Indicators will have different meanings for different audiences
     1. MM pointed out that the same indicator might propel one audience, the private sector, for instance, to work harder while the government might view this same information as a reason for inaction (an indicator with different “orders”)
     2. RM suggested keeping the same categories but using different variables/indicators for different audiences. NGOs will be interested in wealth distribution, the private sector in IEF.
2. Readiness and Adaptive Capacity
   * Do Readiness and Adaptive Capacity capture the same characteristics?
   * Conceptually, placing all Adaptive Capacity indicators with Readiness will easily align as (+) and “sensitivity” as Vulnerability will be (-) (MM: I am unclear about the point being made. Perhaps something was missed.)
3. Energy/Infrastructure
   * Energy is interesting, but inclusion as part of infrastructure might be better
     1. IN noted that energy has surprising and frequent instances of vulnerability
4. Ecosystem indicators
   * A metric for the state of ecosystem goods and services should be considered
   * Proxies could include acid-deposition, land fragmentation, protected areas, marginality index (IN). It’s a matter of finding the right indicator.
5. Aggregation of indicators
   * Using an aggregation of indicators as an indicator may lead to significant correlation
     1. MM expressed openness to using subindicators, pick out some uncorrelated components to reduce overlap.
     2. JJD mentioned our use of deltas to glean more information out of the data
     3. RM suggested looking at leading indicators (drivers)
6. Indicator time frames
   * The model mixes time frames for water (e.g. biophysical indicator is for future precipitation while other water indicators are based on current conditions). Its “apples and oranges.”
   * One option is to only pick indicators for which one can get a measurement today
     1. Productivity of agriculture today could show how vulnerable a system is in the future. Productivity per hectare/extent of irrigation ….
7. Indicator time steps
   * We are on to something important differentiating the slow and fast variables
   * However, the capacity vulnerability indicators are NOT fast
     1. One solution could be to use process-oriented variables (evacuation plans, water distribution systems, similar to NAPAs). Look for things where you can see real improvement.
     2. Adaptometer will likely be part of this
8. Spatial scale
   * In past work, Moss started at the national level, but worked down to the regional/provincial level.
     1. JJD mentioned the work of Cladio on spatial scales in South America – could serve as a good model.
   * Seek out indicators that can show variation within a country (GINI coefficient?) MM mentioned that degree of authoritarian government captures much of the difference in income distribution, with wider spread in more authoritarian countries.
   * This is something everyone is struggling with
9. Imperfect indicators
   * Better to include an imperfect indicator and make note of this than have nothing at all
   * Part of our work is to (make light of ? Point out?) where data needs exist

In attendance:

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