USAID: A GUIDE TO THE MODIFIED BASIC NECESSITIES SURVEY WHY AND HOW TO CONDUCT BNS IN CONSERVATION LANDSCAPES

Description

Tweet

Published June 2015. The principle authors of this guide are Dr. David Wilkie, Dr. Michelle Wieland and Diane Detoeuf of WCS. With thanks to Dr. Rick Davies for many useful discussions and comments about adding the value of owned assets to the BNS (the modifcation). Available as pdf

â??This manual is offered as a practical guide to implementing the Basic Necessities Survey (BNS) that was originally developed by Rick Davies (https://www.mande.co.uk/special-issues/the-basic-necessities-survey/), and was recently modified and then field tested by WCS. The modified Basic Necessities Survey is imperfect, in that it does not attempt to answer all questions that could be asked about the impact of conservation (or development) actions on peopleâ??s well-being. But it is the perfect core to a livelihoods monitoring program, because it provides essential information about peopleâ??s well-being from their perspective over time, and implementing a modified BNS is easy enough that it does not preclude gathering additional household information that a conservation project feels they need to adaptively manage their activitiesâ?•

â??This technical manual was developed to offer conservation practitioners with limited budgets and staff a simple, practical, low-cost, quantitative approach to measuring and tracking trends in peopleâ??s well-being, and to link these measures where possible to the use and conservation of natural resources.â?•

â??This approach is not based on the assumption that people are doing well if they make more than 1-2 dollars per day, or are in poverty if they make less. Rather, it is based on the understanding that people themselves are best able to decide what constitutes well-being. The approach is based on a United Nations definition of poverty as a lack of basic necessities. More specifically the approach asks communities to define what goods and services are necessary for a family to meet their basic needs. Examples of goods include material items such as: an axe, mobile phone, bed, or cook-stove. Services can include: access to clean drinking within 15 minutesâ?? walk, reasonable walking distance to health care, children attending school,
women participating in community decision making, or absence of domestic violence, etc. Families who do not own or have access to this basket of goods and services are, by community definition, not meeting a basic, minimum standard of well-being and thus according to the community-defined are poor (i.e., living below the community defined poverty line).â?•

Rick Davies comment: It has been gratifying to see WCS pick up on the value of the BNS and make its potential more widely known via this USAID publication. I would like to highlight two other potentially useful modifications/uses of the BNS. One is how to establish a community-defined poverty line within the distribution of BNS scores collected in a given community, thus enabling a â??head countâ?• measure of poverty. This is described on pages 31-37 of this 2007 report for the Ford Foundation in Vietnam. The other is how to extract from BNS data a simple prediction rule that succinctly summarise what survey responses best predict the overall poverty status of a given household. That method is

described in this June 2013 issue of the EES Connections newsletter (pages 12-14)

Category

1. Uncategorized

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