



Holly Dublin

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“We have to find where the climate change, development, and biodiversity communities intersect.”

At the International Conference on Evaluating Climate Change and Development, integrating biodiversity and ecosystem considerations into climate change evaluation was brought up only a handful of times, and only in passing. This did not escape the attention of Dr. Holly Dublin, a key representative of the

biodiversity community at the conference.

As a biodiversity specialist, Dublin maintains a holistic approach to the issues and has always considered the bigger picture in relation to her work. Still, she notes that there is a marked separation of climate change, development, and biodiversity within the evaluation community; these three issues are not discussed together nearly as often as they should be given their inextricable links to one another. As surprising as this may seem, considering that species of plants and animals are essentially the building blocks that support all functioning ecosystems and are demonstrably vulnerable to the effects of climate change, sometimes with devastating results, there are reasons for this disparity.

Dublin puts these down to a number of factors. Among them, she finds that there is still a notable disconnect between the climate change, development, and biodiversity communities of practice and not enough sharing of information and experience among them. Although for some time now development and biodiversity have increasingly been linked, climate change also needs to be incorporated in a meaningful way. She says, “We have to identify where the three communities intersect,” and build on that, as there is so far no real cohesion in the theory and practice of each.

More clarity is also needed on how to go about setting up an appropriate climate change evaluation framework that considers biodiversity issues. For example, “Will evaluators be looking at the likely impacts of the project intervention on natural resources, or the impacts of changes in natural resources resulting from climate change on the likely success of the intervention, or both?” Clearly, a lot still needs to be done to reconcile evolving thought around climate change evaluation as it stands with biodiversity considerations.

Integrating biodiversity into the evaluation process is still in its early days, but some efforts are being made at the climate change–biodiversity interface. Dublin notes that the economic impacts of biodiversity loss are currently being captured in a report similar to the Stern report on economic impacts of climate change, and this should help emphasize the importance of paying attention to trends in the natural

environment. As Dublin aptly puts it, “Damage to ecosystems and loss of species will mean a loss of the critical goods and services they provide to mankind.”

In 2005, the Climate, Community, and Biodiversity Alliance, which is a partnership of 10 of the world’s leading companies and NGOs, published the *Climate, community and biodiversity project design standards* to promote multiple-benefit projects so that land-based carbon mitigation projects also benefit local communities and conserve biodiversity in a sustainable fashion (www.climate-standards.org). These standards are used in the early stages of the project cycle to help investors and funding organizations select projects with multi-level benefits, but even selected projects still require independent evaluation. This brings us back to the question of how to evaluate climate change projects without losing sight of biodiversity.

Because there is still a lot to be done in this arena, conferences such as this one are much needed — indeed overdue. It is the first international conference to bring together the three communities of practice around the issue of climate change evaluation and has encouraged the constructive exchange of thoughts and ideas, which will ideally result in longer-term cooperation.

Dublin remarks that the three days in Alexandria put issues into perspective for her and clearly highlighted where the gaps are. She also mentions that she plays an advisory role on the Global Environment Facility’s *Fourth overall performance study*, where she plans to promote the cause of biodiversity conservation within the climate change evaluation community.

For Dublin’s conference presentation, please see www.esdevaluation.org/images/Dublin.ppt