

Water and Poverty

- lessons & implications from
Costa Rica and South Africa

DFID-CRD, 24th June 2005



Lesson 1: Water alone cannot pull people out of poverty

Implications:

Poverty is the main cause why people do not have adequate water for domestic use or water for food; lack of water is a symptom of being poor, not the primary cause

Water policy offers one approach to reduce poverty but must be demand-led and considered with complementary policies that tackle land, credit, market, capacity and health constraints



Lesson 2: Evaluate water policy impacts against the priorities of the poor

Implications:

Improving domestic water availability outside the home may address water quantity constraints but not accessibility

For many of the 'un-served' (particularly women) the key constraint is often not quantity of water but carrying water to the home



Lesson 3: Rain-fed innovations will help more of the poor than irrigation schemes

Implications:

95% of African arable land is rain-fed; customary land allocation in rural Africa often excludes the very poor, particularly women

Reducing inequitable resource access and risk and increasing market access for poor farmers are key challenges for rural agricultural growth

Policy incentives and support for rain-fed farming innovations will reach more of the poor and be a less privileged solution than irrigation



Lesson 4: Environmental service mechanisms do not benefit the very poor

Implications:

Be realistic about poverty reduction impacts from PES

PES is an innovative financing mechanism that may improve NRM, help marginal farmers but it does not benefit the landless and very poor

Pro-poor options to consider are:

- a) workfare schemes (i.e. WfW),
- b) wholesaling 'community' ES,
- c) land tenure-for-ES, and
- d) land-intensive/ labour-intensive coffee farming.



Building on lessons and implications to develop a Negotiation Support System tool

- Testing new methods to evaluate social priorities, impacts and responses to land and water policy interventions
- Valuing economic benefits from water-based environmental services
- Comparative analysis of institutional arrangements for negotiating upper catchment environmental services

