



**Economics in support of conservation in West Africa**  
an IUCN workshop on key concepts, approaches, and tools

***Workshop Summary***

April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2009

IUCN West and Central Africa Regional Office, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

On Friday April 24<sup>th</sup>, a methodological workshop on economics was organized in the IUCN West and Central Africa regional office. The main objective of the event was to present and discuss key concepts, approaches, and tools that can be applied to support ongoing conservation activities in the region. The workshop raised general issues while also leading to more specific discussions on ongoing work related to wetland ecosystems and Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES).

The workshop began with a general overview of the main paradigms within which economic and environmental issues are jointly assessed. Key concepts were presented, and the general applicability of economics in conservation was discussed. The second session was dedicated to the topic of valuation, drawing specifically on case study examples from wetlands. A step-by-step approach to wetland valuation was presented and debated. The ensuing discussion was mainly articulated around the methodological challenges of implementing non-market valuation surveys. The apparent difficulty in comparing results collected through a variety of methodologies was seen as being particularly problematic.

In the third session of the workshop, the focus was shifted to a specific economic tool: payments for ecosystem services (PES). The presentation offered an introduction to various opportunities for ‘bundling’ ecosystem services transactions – notably through the extension of the forest carbon market to a broader range of ecosystems (e.g. wetlands). The participants raised the issue of market access, and recognized the need to further work on bringing carbon finance to support conservation efforts in West Africa. The desirability of implementing cash-based PES transactions was questioned, as participants highlighted the importance of instituting adaptive compensation mechanisms that are sensitive to local socio-economic realities.

Overall, the event highlighted a remarkable interest in experimenting with economic approaches and tools in West Africa. Relevant activities will be carried out in the coming months in an effort to enhance local livelihoods through a stronger recognition of the wide range of benefits that are delivered by ecosystems.