

# Lessons from practice and pathways toward policy applications

*SEEA implementation in Latin America*

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# Argument in one slide

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## **Central claim**

SEEA produces governance value when institutional design keeps pace with statistical production.

## **Empirical anchor**

Guatemala is used as a deep case because its program has run continuously since the early 2000s.

## **Regional lens**

Mexico, Colombia, and Costa Rica show that durable programs reflect domestic institutional initiative.

# Introduction: why the region matters

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**Latin America combines high biodiversity, high climate exposure, and uneven SEEA implementation. This makes environmental-economic accounting a strategically important but institutionally uneven policy instrument.**

Biodiversity and climate vulnerability make environmental accounts urgent.

SEEA adoption has grown globally, but implementation remains concentrated.

The unresolved barrier is institutional use, not only technical compilation.

## Research question

**What conditions allow SEEA accounts in Latin America to move from statistical production toward policy relevance?**

# Method: a deep practitioner case

**Case selection**

Guatemala is treated as the central case because it has one of the region’s most complete and continuous developing-country SEEA trajectories.



**Comparators**

Colombia, Costa Rica, and Mexico are used as regional context to distinguish domestic institutional initiative from donor-centered explanations.

# Results: four institutional routes

| Country        | Host                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Route                                                                |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mexico         | INEGI                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Oldest continuous statistical-office route.                          |
| Colombia       | DANE                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Broad Central Framework portfolio and IDB-supported policy modeling. |
| Costa Rica     | BCCR                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Recent central-bank route, with first accounts released in 2024.     |
| Guatemala      | Banguat                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Two-decade trajectory now embedded as a permanent unit.              |
| Interpretation | The region does not fit a single donor-led template. Its durable programs reflect different domestic institutional choices, including statistics-office models, central-bank hosting, and public-academic capacity building. |                                                                      |

# Analysis: six institutional lessons

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Guatemala's record points to two cross-cutting conditions and four design conditions that explain why some programs scale while others stall.

## **Epistemic autonomy**

Own analytical judgment, not permanent dependence on external validation

## **Funding continuity**

Secure positions that allow learning by doing to accumulate

## **Institutional anchoring**

Stable, politically insulated host

## **Demand alignment**

Accounts tied to live policy instruments

## **Staged sequencing**

Central Framework credibility before ecosystem complexity

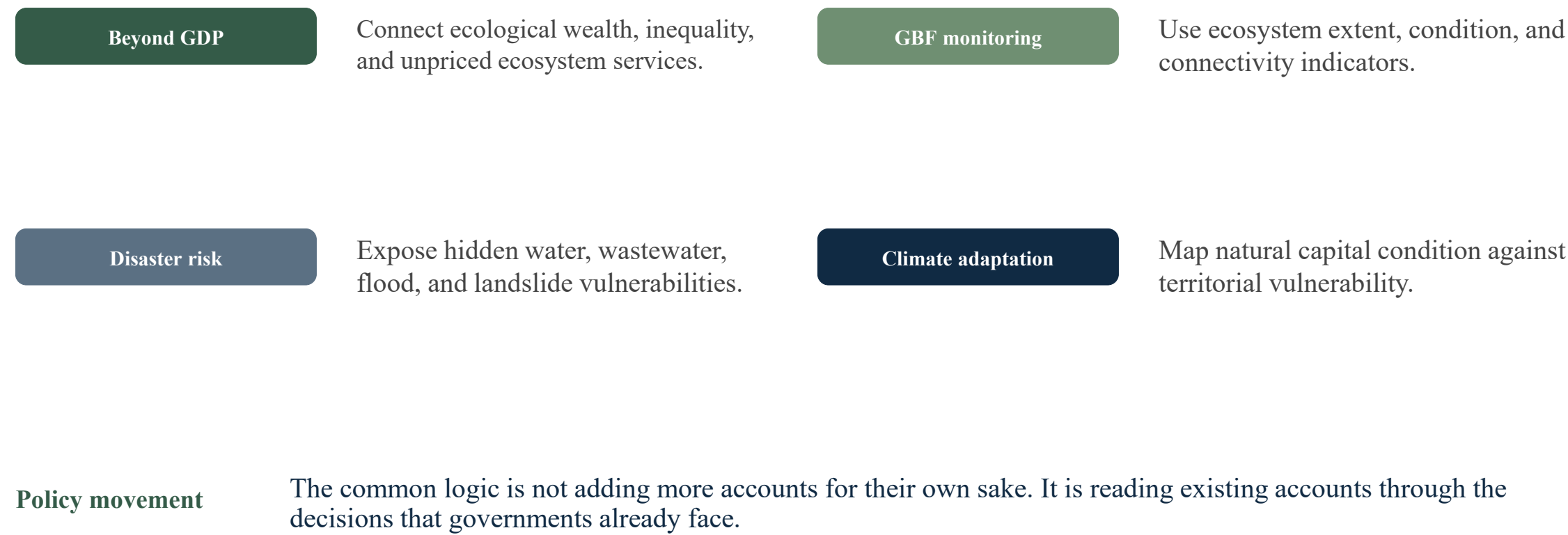
## **Embedded capacity**

Learning within production rather than separate training

# Applications: four promising policy domains

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The paper moves from account compilation to policy relevance by identifying four areas where SEEA outputs already speak to open decisions in Guatemala and similar economies.



# Discussion: what the case changes

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**Not mainly a methods gap**  
**The SEEA methods exist. The bottleneck is the institutional bridge between producers and policy users.**

Not simply donor diffusion  
Mexico and Guatemala predate the dominant global partnership narrative. Costa Rica and Guatemala chose central-bank hosting independently.

Not only national aggregates  
Sub-national ecosystem accounts can connect environmental services to territorial risk, municipal infrastructure, and adaptation investment.

## Main implication

**Environmental accounting becomes useful when it is treated as institutional infrastructure. It requires permanent staff, a stable host, credible links to macroeconomic statistics, and repeated use in live policy problems.**

This interpretation also suggests that central banks can be legitimate hosts for environmental-economic accounting in countries where they hold statistical credibility and macroeconomic authority.

# Recommendations for regional coordination

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- 1 Track institutional trajectory** Record program start dates and hosting histories in regional assessments.
- 2 Fund permanent positions** Use government-budget absorption as a durability milestone.
- 3 Recognize central-bank hosting** Reflect this institutional variant in international guidance.
- 4 Anchor peer learning regionally** Use Mexico, Colombia, and Guatemala as learning anchors.
- 5 Design for handover** Verify that government staff can produce and defend analysis independently.

*These recommendations treat ownership as an observable institutional condition rather than as a slogan.*

*Thank you!*

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