

ANNOUNCEMENT OF OPPORTUNITY

ECOSYSTEM SERVICES & POVERTY ALLEVIATION RESEARCH PROGRAMME

SITUATION ANALYSES

(Date Issued: 16/01/2007, Closing Date: 30/03/2007 – **EXTENDED TO
10/04/2007**)

A. Background Document

1. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) showed that the loss of services from ecosystems is a significant barrier to reducing poverty, hunger and disease. Hilary Benn, Secretary of State for International Development, recognised that “biodiversity and the ecosystems it supports have a significant contribution to make towards poverty alleviation.”¹ DFID’s Third White Paper stated that “people in the poorest countries are most reliant on environmental resources for their livelihoods. These resources are already under pressure and likely to be degraded further by climate change.”

2. Tackling this set of problems requires (a) environmental science to understand why ecosystems are becoming degraded and how to reverse this (b) ecological economics to better value the services, and (c) political economy to ascertain what institutional changes are needed to be put in place so improvements in ecosystem management allow equitable distribution of costs and benefits to the poor.

3. Humans have made unprecedented changes to ecosystems in recent decades to meet growing demands for food, fresh water, fibre and energy. These changes have helped to improve the lives of billions, but at the same time they weakened nature’s ability to deliver other key services such as purification of air and water, protection from disasters, and the provision of medicines. Tension is now apparent between the objectives of human development and poverty reduction on the one hand, and environmental sustainability on the other. The MA has emphasised that the loss of services derived from ecosystems is a significant barrier to reducing poverty, hunger and disease.

4. The direct drivers of change that are causing a reduction in ecosystem services are: habitat change, climate change, invasive species, over exploitation and pollution (particularly accumulation of nitrogen and phosphorus). The major problems identified by the MA are:

- the intense vulnerability of the 2 billion people living in dry regions to the loss of ecosystem services, including water supply;
- the dire state of many of the world’s fish stocks;
- and, the growing threat to ecosystems from climate change and nutrient pollution.

5. Technology and knowledge can reduce considerably the human impact on ecosystems. However, the current rate of technological improvement from the perspective of environmental adequacy is too slow. The generation and deployment

¹ Written answer in Parliament 25th July to question [87476] by Andrew George MP (St Ives)

of solutions to allow the recovery of ecosystem services will only happen when such services cease to be perceived as free and limitless, and their full value is understood and taken into account.

6. NERC, ESRC and DFID have agreed to join forces to explore the potential for a multi-disciplinary research programme that will address how to achieve sustainably managed ecosystems contributing to poverty reduction and wellbeing improvements in developing countries. The new programme is intended to have an initial duration of five years and will be managed by a Programme Management Group, consisting of representatives from NERC, ESRC and DFID, with advice from a Programme Advisory Committee of academic experts.

7. It is proposed that the programme address major ecosystem services challenges that constrain poverty reduction measures in four regions. Examples of regional challenges include: adapting to monsoon variability in South Asia; equitable delivery of ecosystems services in China; reducing environmental vulnerability in semi-arid areas of Africa; and, securing bio-stability in the Amazon and Andes. Key drivers of these regional challenges are population and economic growth associated with large-scale land-use changes and climate change. The regional projects will be carried out by consortia of regional and international scientists.

8. The programme will be initiated by a series of concurrent situation analyses in the four regions mentioned. The purpose of the situation analyses is to inform the design of the ecosystem services and poverty alleviation programme. The outputs of this programme will be for policymakers who then change policy. Therefore a key requirement for the analysis work is the involvement of authoritative and influential constituencies engaged in the generation and/or communication of knowledge, in order to maximise the opportunities of exerting influence on policy makers.

9. The specification for the situation analyses follows this background document below. This is an open call for proposals to carry out the situation analyses. It is expected that the different situation analyses will be conducted by consortia of scientists from the region, the UK and elsewhere. Consortia will be led by organisations from the region where the situation analysis is taking place.

10. The situation analyses will be used by the programme management group in the design of the regional projects. The management of the regional projects will be put out for tender later in 2007. Eligibility to tender for the management of the regional projects will not be affected by participating in the regional analyses.

11. At this stage the three partners organisations (NERC, ESRC and DFID) are developing the concept of the programme. Final approval of the programme by DFID Ministers is pending. Financial support for the launch of the full programme, following the regional situation analyses, is dependent upon DFID Ministerial approval and the outcome of the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review

B. SPECIFICATION

Challenges to the sustainable management of ecosystems to maximise poverty alleviation in Amazonia/Andes, Semi-arid Africa, India & the Hindu Khush and China: four regional situation analyses

1. The Ecosystem Services and Poverty Alleviation programme will be initiated by a series of concurrent situation analyses in the four regions of Amazonia/Andean zones of Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia; semi-arid and arid zones of sub-Saharan Africa; India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan; and China. The analyses must consider the entire regions identified and not parts of the region.

2. The total funds expected to be available to fund all the situation analyses is £1,000,000

Objectives

3. The analyses will address the following objectives:

- a) to collect and analyse evidence on i. the ecosystem services most important to the wellbeing of the poor; ii. the main challenges to the ecosystems that provide these services; iii. the key ecosystem management functions for maximising poverty alleviation;
- b) identify how these challenges can best be addressed through research to provide poverty alleviation outcomes;
- c) to conduct an information and knowledge needs assessment with policy-makers and other stakeholders involved in ecosystem management;
- d) assess the need for skills and knowledge exchanges to strengthen the capacity of regional research providers and research output users;
- e) present the analysis to a regional peer group and develop findings based on feedback and collective reflection.

Tasks

4. The situation analysis team will address all the objectives above by collecting and analysing evidence from regional stakeholders and elsewhere, and from reputable literature sources.

5. A thorough process of peer review will be used to develop the findings and the mechanisms to ensure this should be outlined in the application.

Outputs

6. The team will have discussions initially with members of the Programme Management Group and the Programme Advisory Committee. The situation analysis team will report in writing to NERC on a monthly basis to report on progress.

7. The findings of the situation analyses will have a strong environmental science basis and a pro-poor and equity focus.

8. Anticipated outputs from the situation analyses will include:

- A coherent body of high quality information and analysis that identifies the key regional ecosystem services challenges;
- A proposal as to how these challenges can best be addressed through research to provide poverty alleviation outcomes;

- Identification of innovative and effective dissemination strategies for research outputs to be aimed at a range of target audiences;
 - Proof of the information and new knowledge required by developing country policy makers and international organisations to inform policy change and enable better ecosystem management;
 - Strategies for skills and knowledge exchanges to strengthen the capacity of developing country partners resulting in the development of a 'critical mass' of research expertise.
9. Milestones for the work against which payments will be made include:
- Initial report setting out main data/information sources and main contacts and collaborations will be submitted six weeks after the start of the contract (30 percent of total payment);
 - Draft report sent out for peer review six months after the start of the contract (50 percent of total payment);
 - Final report by 7 months after the start of the contract (20 percent of total payment).
10. A final report will be submitted that will not exceed 50 pages (not including annexes). An executive summary of no more than 2 pages will accompany the report. The draft final report should be submitted to NERC 7 months after the start of the contract. Comments will be fed back within 15 working days for inclusion in the document.

Situation analysis team

11. The team will have expertise in environmental science, socio-economics and political economy. The team will be led by researchers from the region and may include specialists based in countries outside of the region, including the UK (not excluding NGOs and civil society groups).
12. The work should involve genuine collaboration with local partners and adopt a suitably interdisciplinary focus. Whilst one institution will be in the lead, the key collaborating partners in the consortium should be involved throughout, starting with design, and including implementation, outreach and synthesis.
13. The consortia will have the following key features:
- Led and coordinated by a single organisation from the region;
 - Typically comprise between 4 to 6 partner organisations;
 - Approximately half of the consortium partners should be located in region of the analysis;
 - Consortium members should possess expertise in environmental science, and appropriate social science disciplines;
 - Led by an effective coordinator with demonstrable research management expertise.
14. One organisation will be responsible for the delivery of the situation analysis contract, so consortia must clearly identify the lead organisation.
15. The Consortium Director will be hosted by the lead organisation and expected to fulfil the following roles:
- Co-ordinating and monitoring the performance of the various activities of the Consortium, taking action to strengthen any weak elements of the work and reinforce strong ones;

- Liaising between different components of the Consortium, particularly about strategic and directional issues, and trouble-shooting when required;
- Reporting to NERC;
- Providing intellectual leadership to enhance the quality and direction of the analysis;
- Engaging stakeholders and policy-makers with the situation analysis, and representing the Consortium in public debate and other media.

C. GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

1. NERC invites proposals for situation analyses of the challenges to the sustainable management of ecosystems to maximise poverty alleviation in Amazonia/Andes, Semi-arid Africa, India & the Hindu Kush and China.
2. The Announcement of Opportunity is open to researchers employed in recognised higher education institutions, research organisations or organisations with a credible research capacity. The lead organisation hosting the research programme will be awarded funding in the form of a contract, which will be subject to Natural Environment Research Council Terms & Conditions, available on the website.
3. Proposals for conducting the situation analyses should be submitted in English in the form of a capability statement (of no more than 4 pages), a technical proposal (of no more than 8 pages) indicating how the work will be done, and detailed financial information in the tables provided:
 - The capability statement should include details on the organisations in the consortium and their experience, and a short CV of the Consortia Director;
 - The technical proposal should include elements of the situation analysis work programme and how the consortium will deliver required outputs, including a timeline with milestones. Justification of the requested resources should also be included.
 - Financial information must be detailed and summarised in tables, which can be downloaded from the website.

Financial Information

4. The total funds expected to be available to fund all the situation analyses is £1,000,000. Applications must be made in pounds sterling at a firm price with fully costed deliverables and outputs
5. The proposal should include the full Economic Cost (fEC) of delivering the programme activities as identified and specified in the written application. NERC's contribution to the programme will be 80% of fEC for UK-HEIs and NERC Centres; UK-HEIs and NERC Centres are required to provide a signed letter confirming the funding arrangements for the balance of 20%. NERC's contribution to the programme will be 100% for non-HEIs and non-UK organisations. Please include details of rates used in your calculations.
6. Research conducted by eligible bodies within the UK, such as universities, may be classified as "UK Exempt" for the purposes of VAT. Research contracts conducted by non-eligible UK bodies or overseas organisations may either be subject to VAT at "standard" rate or be classified as "outside scope with credit". It is the responsibility of applicants to ensure the appropriate treatment of VAT within research proposals submitted to NERC.

Assessment Criteria

7. The principal selection criteria for proposals will be:
 - Qualities of proposed organisations, researchers and Director;
 - Quality of approach;
 - Adequacy of collaborative arrangements.

Applicants may be invited to give a presentation to the selection panel.

Submission

8. The submission should include one hard copy and one electronic copy on CD of:
- The proposal;
 - The Excel financial tables;
 - If a UK-HEI or NERC Centre, a signed letter regarding funding arrangements for the 20% FEC not contributed by NERC
 - If a non UK-HEI or international organisation, a copy of the most recently audited company report/accounts must be provided.

This documentation should be submitted unbound within one envelope to:

Dr Caroline Culshaw
Natural Environment Research Council
Polaris House
North Star Avenue
Swindon
SN2 1EU
UK

The new closing date falls directly after the UK Easter holiday. To ensure that postal delays do not affect submissions, NERC will accept proposals received by email until 16.00 GMT on 10 April 2007, providing they are accompanied by a hard copy postmarked before 10 April 2007. Please send email submissions to Caroline Culshaw at ccul@nerc.ac.uk.

Timeframe

Call for proposals	16 January '07
Deadline for receipt of proposals	30 March '07 16:00 hours (GMT) EXTENDED TO 10 APRIL '07
Successful applicants notified	30 April '07
Date contract expected to commence	1 June '07
Duration	7 months

The contact point for queries is Caroline Culshaw (ccul@nerc.ac.uk), +44 (0)1793 442597).