

ESPA Communications Strategy

Telling the ESPA Story



Challenge/Rationale

The ESPA communications strategy provides an opportunity for the ESPA Directorate and the ESPA community of stakeholders to add value to the Initiative's work in poverty alleviation through ecosystems services. The key challenges for the ESPA initiative are to ensure it can deliver robust, innovative and ground breaking scientific research and a body of new knowledge. It is as equally important to ensure that the findings from this research can be used to inform policy decisions and further research development as well as provide practical lessons for alleviating poverty across the globe and that this growing body of new knowledge remains accessible and can be built on. The ESPA Communications Strategy needs to support these challenges by telling the ESPA story and supporting ESPA beneficiaries to do the same.

The Communications Strategy adds value to the potential for impact by working with ESPA beneficiaries to strengthen their understanding of Pathways to Impact and how to maximise them. This Communications Strategy is a stand-alone 'living' iterative document which is both independent from, and integral to, the [ESPA Impact Strategy](#) and the [ESPA Research Into Use Strategy](#).

The highest priority for the Communications Strategy is to communicate the successes and lessons learned and to share new knowledge and understanding.

Communication Strategy Objectives

- To demonstrate where and how, or under what conditions, ecosystems services can help poverty alleviation amongst the global/national development decision making communities – telling the ESPA story
- To inform and influence policy makers on how to integrate relevant findings from ESPA research and new knowledge into policy frameworks and to ensure a healthy dialogue between academics and policy makers
- To connect the ESPA community of researchers and academic institutions across the world and to increase the number of people joining the forum of researchers and research organisations
- To provide support and advice to ESPA projects and beneficiaries on how to communicate their findings in a way that informs policy and adds value to the ESPA programme.
- To communicate effectively amongst the closer ESPA team – the Directorate, the key funders and beneficiaries, and to encourage sharing of ESPA knowledge with wider stakeholders – e.g. the general public, youth etc.

Strategy and Audience Segmentation

Strategy

The ESPA Communications Strategy is a *push and pull strategy* – pushing information out to target audiences and pulling people into the ESPA community and sharing ideas through engagement and involvement. Different approaches are used, determined by the kind of impact desired particularly recognising the need both to inform policy and to share new knowledge more widely.¹

The strategy will be driven by three top priorities:

1. To ensure that we communicate the story of ESPA – articulating the successes, the lessons learned and findings of ESPA research, emerging from [ESPA's Knowledge Strategy](#)². Capturing imagination, presenting case studies, giving examples, presenting evidence using the relevant channels of communication are the building blocks of this strategy. Not all stories will be successes and new evidence and research may lead to new conclusions – integrity in reporting these lessons will be part of the ESPA story.
2. Deepening the understanding of ecosystems services within the academic community and sharing the learning between hard scientists and social scientists is being achieved by mobilising stakeholders through the **ESPA Global Forum**. Informing and connecting the academic community with the policy community to bring evidence and understanding on how ESPA can inform policy to alleviate poverty.
3. Supporting beneficiaries of the research grants to communicate their results effectively by strengthening their understanding of pathways to impact and appropriate communication methodologies, e.g. networking, processes and intervention opportunities (**ESPA Impact**).

Audience Segmentation

The ESPA programme aims to ensure that robust evidence can support changing policy, at international, national and local levels. The ESPA Directorate is responsible for targeting international policy makers and opinion formers.

ESPA projects and beneficiaries will be targeting similar audiences at a national level as well as including more local actors. The ESPA Directorate Communications Team is not responsible for ensuring that these activities take place but can support projects to identify these audiences and strengthen their understanding of how to reach them through the ESPA Impact Strategy.

Many of the critical policy processes that will support a more sympathetic understanding of how ecosystems services can alleviate policy are formulated at the national level. However, to help create an enabling and supportive environment for national level policy change, there must be an enabling environment at international level that can support the key drivers and priorities that support this change. How we identify and influence these key individuals and processes will deepen the level of impact we are able to have.

¹ Making Communications Count: a Strategic Communications Framework – <http://pubs.iied.org/17096IIED.html>

² The ESPA programme is organised around three principle areas of work – ESPA Knowledge, ESPA Impact and the Global Forum

Key ESPA audiences can be broken down in the following ways³:

ESPA Directorate Priority Audiences	Breakdown of Audience Type	Individuals and Key Positions	Desired Impact
International Decision Makers	Multi-lateral agencies (e.g. World Bank, IMF, African Development Bank) Bi-lateral agencies and government departments (Ministries of Finance, Planning, Environment Private Foundations, Private Sector funds.	Sector specialists, department heads, key advisors, Ministers, researchers, project managers, heads of profession	Awareness of the implications of ecosystems services for poverty alleviation as evidenced by ESPA research programmes More integrated policy decisions across sectors that recognise learning from ESPA research
International Networks, Alliances, Partnerships and Processes	TEEB, WAVES, PEI, PEP, UNFCCC, IPC , Rio+20 Science and Innovation Network (SIN), Festival of Science	Individuals and organisations who are members of the partnerships, lead authors for key publications	ESPA research programmes, ESPA research findings and new knowledge will contribute to development of global processes
International Opinion Formers	International Media, International Academic and Research Community, Research Councils and funding bodies – e.g. ESRC, NERC, leading international think tanks	Chief scientists, leading academics in environment and development. Leading journalists – environment, development, finance, economics, in key publications. Sector specialists in key organisations	Will help to advocate the role of ecosystems services on poverty alleviation as evidenced by ESPA research and knowledge
National Decision Makers	Government departments, in-country offices for multi-laterals and bi-laterals. National and regional processes and alliances	Ministers, department heads, advisors, researchers, representatives of key processes, in-country staff for multi-lateral and bilateral organisations	Awareness of the implications of ecosystems services for poverty alleviation as evidenced by ESPA research projects More integrated policy decisions across sectors that recognise learning from ESPA research
National Opinion Formers	Private sector entrepreneurs, private sector bodies, national media. National academic bodies and research programmes	Editors of key media, journalists, influential academics, sector researchers, sector specialists, individuals in influential roles nationally and internationally	Will help to advocate the role of ecosystems services on poverty alleviation as evidenced by ESPA research and knowledge. Private sector actors will engage in new partnerships that reflect learning from ESPA projects and research programmes
Local Decision Makers	Regional and municipal government bodies, local community elders. Local NGOs and practitioners	Mayors, council officers and other officials, sector specialists, elders, local NGO staff	Awareness of what is possible for their communities from an understanding of the ESPA principles and push for new policies in support of evidence from ESPA
Local Opinion Formers	Local community elders, private sector and entrepreneurs, local federations of smallholders, farmers etc. Local media – radio	Key community groups and individual facilitating those groups	Understand the implications of what ecosystems services might contribute to better prosperity

³ See ESPA Communications Strategy Stakeholder Map

Tactics

A key communications challenge for ESPA – and initiatives such as these – is to build up enough awareness and trust to stimulate new thinking and action on ecosystem services, whilst remaining light touch as an institution or entity. The ESPA Directorate is not raising its own profile – it is raising the profile and understanding of an issue. The Communications Strategy therefore places, or aligns, the findings from ESPA projects with key processes, networks and stakeholder communities operating at different levels such as:

- Using the post Rio+20 processes such as framing new Sustainable Development Goals or the post MDGs processes to raise awareness of ESPA and to ensure the programme is able to get the key principles of ESPA research included in the policy debates and recommendations
- Demonstrating added value by prioritising the collection of ‘success stories’. Developing the style and nature of these stories is critical – they need good analysis, a good understanding of scale up potential and should be success stories in terms of good examples rather than a ‘PR job’.
- Forging strong links between the ESPA Knowledge Strategy and the ESPA Impact Strategy is critical so that the programme can communicate lessons learned throughout the life of ESPA and beyond.
- Identifying and strengthening communication between the local, national and international stakeholders
- Working with in-country and international networks to achieve scale up in making people aware of new knowledge and evidence coming from the ESPA research programmes (e.g. TEEB, PEI, PEP)

Alongside a strong focus on processes and networks the Communications Strategy employs a range of different tactics for each objective, briefly summarised below:

To demonstrate how ecosystems services can help poverty alleviation amongst the global/national development decision making communities – telling the ESPA story

Ecosystem services for poverty alleviation is gaining traction as a world concept although we are still lacking the evidence that demonstrates different ways in which ecosystem services can be used to achieve greater human well-being and greater economic prosperity. It is imperative that we are able to build understanding and confidence in ESPA as a key strategy for informing development policy. Telling the ESPA story means that the programme is sharing the emerging evidence and experience. This may not be all about ‘success’, it will include analysis of lessons learned, things that have not worked, as well as examples of initiatives that are working. What is important is finding ways to share this evidence and knowledge as soon as possible so that the programme can capitalise on success and learn from mistakes.

To inform and influence policy makers on how to integrate relevant findings from ESPA research into policy frameworks and to ensure a healthy dialogue between academics and policy makers

Telling the wider ESPA story is important to this group but achieving deeper impact for policy change also needs more nuanced tactics both at an international level and a national level. The importance of context and analysis from the findings across the projects provides increased opportunity for more targeted lobbying in specific policy arenas. This can involve tailored outputs for different Ministries or for different sectors. The Directorate’s own commissioned research adds value to the research and new knowledge coming from ESPA beneficiaries and is communicated in a way that strengthens evidence for policy change and invites a wider dialogue across the academic and policy communities.

To connect the ESPA community of researchers and academic institutions across the world and to increase the number of people joining the forum of researchers and research organisations

A key vision for the ESPA programme is bringing together hard scientists and social scientists to work together and across disciplines to find solutions for poverty alleviation. Through the regular publication of articles in peer review journals, the academics involved in the ESPA programme are fertilising a richer debate within their own community. The ESPA Directorate is able to catalyse further connections between different researchers and their institutions through the online forum which encourages debate, dialogue, and develops a directory of projects and interest areas. ESPA-run workshops provide an environment of exchange and dialogue and a chance to communicate ESPA success stories and to analyse lessons learned.

To provide support and advice to the ESPA projects and beneficiaries on how to communicate their findings in a way that informs policy and adds value to the ESPA initiative and their own work

Some researchers are naturally great communicators, many are connected to the most important policy arenas in their countries and internationally, but equally many researchers and research organisations have poor track records in communicating their results outside the academic arena. They are also poorly resourced in communications skills and finance for extra communications work. The ESPA Directorate – through the Impact Strategy, the RIU Strategy and the Communications strategy – supports beneficiaries by working with them to identify pathways to impact, change scenarios and change enablers, to help identify innovative ways to get research into use and provide communications guidelines, mentoring and events through which to discuss ways to present and disseminate findings.

To enhance communication amongst the closer ESPA team – the Directorate, the key funders and beneficiaries

Working together in multi-partnership projects can present a real challenge. Conflicting communication messages can undermine success. Well-coordinated, clear communications strategies, however, can benefit from multi-partner networks, increased opportunities and resources.

Specific Objectives for ESPA's Communication Activities

The ESPA Communications Strategy helps to provide clarity for the role in communicating for each of the partners.

Objectives	Key messages emerging from the ESPA Directorate	Key audiences to be targeted	Key methodologies to be used by the ESPA Directorate	External and Internal opportunities for intervention
<p>1. Telling the ESPA story</p>	<p>How ecosystems services alleviate poverty. Success stories, lessons learned from projects. New research and analysis</p>	<p>Primarily global/international influencers and decision makers in academia, media, international NGOs, inter-governmental institutions, governmental bodies – multilaterals, bilateral, opinion formers and potential donors, ESPA beneficiaries</p>	<p>Case studies, stories, interviews Press releases, profiles, features Think pieces, policy briefings Workshops, presentations Film, podcast</p>	<p>Climate Change COP in Doha, CBD process, and new processes aligned to framing new SDGs or post MDGs</p>
<p>2. Understanding the concept of ESPA to inform policy</p>	<p>What is ESPA? How ESPA principles can be integrated into policy and practice. What does an ESPA project look like, how can they be supported? What do we know about the key drivers of change?</p>	<p>Primarily global and national policy makers and private sector</p>	<p>Policy briefings ESPA Impact Strategy – sharing learning from analysis of Impact Pathways, Change Scenarios and Drivers ESPA Research Into Use Strategy – mobilising partnerships for scaling up learning and communication for change Working with ESPA projects on how to inform and target national policy audiences</p>	<p>Workshops on ESPA Knowledge Workshops on ESPA Impact Workshops on ESPA Research into Use Workshop on Envisaging a Sustainable Future ESPA Directorate in-country visits</p>
<p>3. Connecting and growing the ESPA community</p>	<p>What does an ESPA project look like? What are others in the ESPA community are doing? ESPA can provide access to other researchers working on key issues There is a chance for interesting challenge and debate and a chance to join the ESPA community</p>	<p>Primarily Global Academic Community</p>	<p>Global Forum on the ESPA website for a directory of researchers and projects Resources on web, opportunities to dialogue on the web Good visibility – at meetings, through networking, getting in touch with people and sharing success stories Regular, relevant new news on the website, through the newsletter etc.</p>	<p>Workshops on ESPA Knowledge Workshops on ESPA Impact Workshops on ESPA Research into Use Workshop on Envisaging a Sustainable Future ESPA Directorate in-country visits</p>

Objectives	Key messages emerging from the ESPA Directorate	Key audiences to be targeted	Key methodologies to be used by the ESPA Directorate	External and Internal opportunities for intervention
4. Support and advice on communicating	<p>Importance of impact pathways and their role in achieving impact</p> <p>How to use communications techniques and technologies to help achieve impact</p> <p>How we can work together to communicate findings and share resources</p>	Primarily ESPA projects and beneficiaries	<p>Sets of guidelines on impact pathways, change scenarios, communications skills and technologies</p> <p>Mentoring –virtual and online</p> <p>Sessions in workshops, write-shop</p>	
5. Communicating effectively across the ESPA Directorate and the PEB	<p>This is what we are doing</p> <p>This is how we are keeping to plan</p> <p>This is how we would like your support</p> <p>This is where we do not need support but can give good information</p>	All the stakeholders in the running and management of the ESPA initiative – PEB, IPAC, Directorate, ESPA beneficiaries	<p>Branding guidelines</p> <p>Communication Strategy</p> <p>Roles and Responsibilities for key actions E-newsletter</p> <p>Thematic newsletters, email list-serves</p> <p>Regular news and updates on the web</p>	<p>External publications in Funders newsletters,</p> <p>Media coverage and blog posts</p> <p>Telling the ESPA stories – impact and outcomes</p> <p>ESPA briefings</p> <p>ESPA website</p>

ESPA Communication Activities

Please refer to the [ESPA website](#) for more details on the ESPA Communication activities.

In order to communicate the ESPA approach, the Directorate has published [various guideline documents for the ESPA community on the ESPA website](#).

Monitoring and Evaluation of the Communication Activities

If the Communication Strategy has done its job success will look like this:

- International and national policy makers will understand better the contribution that ecosystem services can make to poverty alleviation. At best, this will be demonstrated by changes in policy that give more favourable conditions for supporting ecosystem services, governments will be demanding more research into ecosystem services in their own countries and further funding for ecosystems research will be continued after the life of the ESPA programme. It is more likely that success will simply mean a better understanding of the potential importance of ecosystems services and the incentives and barriers to new partnerships.
- Key stakeholders in international processes, such as Rio+20, will know of the ESPA programme and will be able to give a sound-bite of the key successes and challenges of an ESPA approach to their own work.
- ESPA beneficiaries will have demonstrated improved policy awareness of their own results and findings through improved communications. ESPA projects will have encouraged researchers and research organisations to find time to communicate well and to share findings with ESPA.
- The Global Forum on the ESPA website will have members from across the globe who are not just beneficiaries from the programme. There will be evidence that this community is engaging with each other with challenging new ideas and research partnerships.
- The international community will know more about the ideas behind the ESPA programme and the funding calls of the programme than about the Directorate itself.
- DFID, NERC and ESRC publications will have regularly published news from the ESPA projects and will have been able to share effectively the added value of the research programme through further initiatives, their policy development and continued funding for development research.
- More donors will be interested in finding out about ESPA and who have stayed in touch and even increased their funding for research on ecosystem services.

Monitoring progress towards these indicators will be achieved through a range of different feedback mechanisms including one-to-one meetings, phone calls, evaluation feedback from workshops and conferences, Google analytics and questionnaires. These are integrated with the monitoring and evaluation work of the rest of the ESPA programme. A monitoring and evaluation plan will be developed for the ESPA programme and its Communications Strategy during 2012–2103.

How ESPA projects will approach effective communication

	Actions	Detail and Benefits
Communication	Telling the ESPA Story	Projects will share their knowledge experience and learning with policy makers through their own policy briefings programme or through the ESPA series “Making an Impact”.
	Communicating the concept of ESPA	Projects will share their understanding of ESPA’s approach with key stakeholders with the potential to use ESPA’s new knowledge. A strengthened understanding of the ESPA concept will give them and projects greater capacity to build impact.
	Contributing to the ESPA Global Forum	Projects will share information with other ESPA researchers through the Global Forum. They will contribute to events and the ESPA website and newsletters. This will help them to form links with other projects and enhance the impact of individual projects and the overall programme.
	Adopting new approaches to communication	Projects will be encouraged to adopt new approaches to communication for change and influence.

How the ESPA Directorate will approach the programme’s overall communication

	Actions	Detail and Benefits
Communication	ESPA’s Communication Strategy describes the way that ESPA will “tell its story”	Projects and other stakeholders will be able to collaborate with the Directorate to tell ESPA’s story using a wide range of methods, media and events.
	ESPA Website & Knowledge Portal	The ESPA website is the main portal for the programme to communicate with internal and external stakeholders and is designed to significantly enhance the accessibility of ESPA’s research and knowledge.
	ESPA Events: The Directorate will organise and participate in a range of events to promote communication between stakeholders.	The Directorate’s events will be designed to complement those organised by projects and external stakeholders. They will provide a way of telling ESPA’s story across multiple projects or be designed to assist projects to enhance the quality of their research and development impact. There will also be events designed to strengthen capacity for effective communication for members of the ESPA community.
	ESPA Communication products and publications	The Directorate will produce a range of publications and other communication products. These will highlight ESPA’s research, knowledge and impact. The monthly ESPA newsletter is the main mode of communicating with internal stakeholders. Projects will be supported to contribute to externally facing products designed to tell ESPA’s story related to both research and impact.

ESPA Communications Strategy

Stakeholders / Key audiences

-  Primary Target Audience
-  Secondary Target Audience through ESPA projects



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