

# ESPA-2012 PROJECTS: INCEPTION WORKSHOP REPORT



***Charles Darwin House, London***  
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## **Welcome, introductions, objectives of meeting and plans for the day – Paul van Gardingen, ESPA Director**

This workshop aims to welcome new projects to the programme and give projects the opportunity to network and learn from each other. ESPA is far more interactive than most other funding programmes; we stay in regular contact with projects which should be mutually beneficial. Existing and previous projects have expressed that it is useful to have regular interactions with the Directorate and other projects. Ideally, we would like each person in attendance to identify one thing that they will do differently as a result of this workshop – for example identifying a new link to another project or a different way of thinking about a particular problem.

## **Update on the ESPA programme – Paul van Gardingen, ESPA Director**

As a programme we have to believe that it is possible to manage ecosystem services to benefit the poor. Projects are tasked with identifying how this can be done in practice.

In the next few months another round of smaller projects will be funded. Finally, a funding round for small synthesis/gap-filling projects will be launched in 2014.

As of March 2013 ESPA had funded over 400 researchers, working in 175 institutions in 40 countries, with research being conducted in more than 20 countries. All of these statistics will be higher now that the ESPA-2012 projects have commenced. ESPA projects so far have produced over 60 journal papers, 11 datasets, 17 models and frameworks. There is a very large body of ESPA research going on around the world.

The ESPA programme needs to demonstrate academic impact through the usual outputs such as papers, models, datasets, and tools. The programme must also show development impact, demonstrating how ESPA's world-class research feeds into changing the lives of poor people in low-income countries.

It is essential for projects to think about multiple ecosystem services, mosaics of land-use both within and outside study areas, trade-offs and tipping points. Projects also need to look at multiple dimensions of poverty, issues of access and control, enabling environments and collective action. There are really good examples from existing ESPA projects about how to do this complex work.

There are lots of ESPA projects looking at Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) schemes. There are consistent messages coming through from these projects that demonstrate the usefulness of PES schemes, however it's also evident that they will only ever be one part of the solution looking at ecosystem services and poverty alleviation. Decision-makers are looking for better evidence, including examples of what

works and what doesn't. There is concern over the proliferation of decision support systems and tools – these are only ever as useful as the evidence which supports them. Researchers must consider how results are presented to end-users.

Emerging ESPA research questions include:

- How to value ecosystem services and use values to influence decisions and actions?
- How to ensure that the poor benefit from ecosystem services?
- Understanding how, when and why PES schemes are successful.
- The roles of tools and models in understanding trade-offs, integrating values and informing decisions.
- When to use specific tools.

Additional opportunities and needs for the programme:

- Synthesis of development and academic impact across multiple projects.
- Linking ESPA research to other related programmes.
- Ways of sharing knowledge between projects across countries and regions.
- Enhanced south-south collaboration and knowledge exchange.

### **ESPA Reporting Requirements – Sarah Harley, ESPA Data, Evidence and Partnership Co-ordinator**

ESPA has distinct reporting requirements which relate directly to the programme [Logframe](#). Information on projects' outputs are reported via ROS, which can be accessed at any time via Je-S. Projects should report new outputs when they are produced, and will need to report them only once. The ESPA Directorate can now instantly display new publications via the ESPA website.

ROS has a quick submit option for journal articles, which requires just the DOI, (other details are entered automatically).

Please use free text fields to tell us how your project's research links to the outcome, and any expected impacts.

Outcomes we need to know about for the Logframe:

- All publications
- New funding
- New methods, tools, etc.
- Evidence of impact on policy and practice – there is guidance available for specific outcome types
- Capacity strengthening – support for researchers and partners in developing countries

There is also some additional information which the Directorate cannot collect through ROS, such as additional research staff members who were not included in proposals, and the developing country authors on publications. For these details, the Directorate will supply the project PIs with a simple template.

In addition to outcomes, the Directorate asks for light-touch 6-monthly reporting from projects. This generally consists of a short briefing with an update on your progress, and a meeting with the Directorate via videoconference. This should also serve as a useful

chance to identify opportunities, such as for enhancing impact, new funding opportunities or linking with regional processes.

Guidance on website: [www.espa.ac.uk/grant-holders/toolkit](http://www.espa.ac.uk/grant-holders/toolkit)

- [Reporting requirements](#)
- [ROS user guide](#)
- [Guidance on ROS outcome types](#)

### **Communications – Dave Stevens, ESPA Communications Officer**

Communication is a means to achieve impact. For detailed information, the [ESPA Communications Strategy](#) is available on the ESPA website.

Individual projects are best placed to communicate their research locally as they are already embedded in local scenarios. Programme-level communications are focused on international audiences and the potential for scaling up, such as transferring ideas from one project into other regions.

Programme communications rely on individual projects letting the Directorate know what they are doing. Projects are asked to share project news (research milestones, publications, events, media, new funding) as they happen or even in advance. A brief [email to Dave Stevens](#) is sufficient, and he will then be in contact if there is something that the Directorate can do with the news.

Reflective pieces are also useful, including fieldwork diaries, photos, videos, and testimonials from stakeholders.

The materials that the Directorate produces at a programme level should also be very useful to projects at a local level. The generic ESPA leaflet is available for distribution, as are other programme documents on the website. Each project has a page on the main ESPA website. The Directorate is keen to keep these pages updated with information.

The Directorate can produce a 2-page Impact Note for each project aimed at a policy/practice audience. They can also help projects to produce their own materials.

The Directorate is happy to use their communication channels to distribute information on behalf of projects, (e.g. advertising Post-Doc positions). These can be sent out via the ESPA website, ESPA's twitter account and the regular ESPA e-newsletter (with 1000+ subscribers). The ESPA Director is very well connected internationally, and as such the Directorate is able to facilitate new networks for ESPA projects.

The toolkit on the ESPA website is very useful for advice and guidance. The [ESPA Identity](#) section has clear information on how to refer to the programme and how to use the logo.

### **Project Presentation - ALTER: Alternative Carbon Investments in Ecosystems for Poverty Alleviation, PI Helaina Black**

There is considerable potential to invest in soil carbon to improve soil quality and enhance many ecosystem services. Many people are heavily reliant on soil for their well-being, but there are critical data and knowledge gaps. This project is building on a previous capacity-building project.

There is extreme soil degradation in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, with many areas becoming completely unproductive through land-use change and poor management over time. But there is often potential for providing better ecosystem services.

This project has two study areas – one in Ethiopia and one in Uganda – with very contrasting soils, but similar socioeconomic issues, such as heavy reliance on soil, severe degradation, and existing conservation efforts that the project can link to.

Four work packages will look at: socioeconomic relationships between people and soils; assessing soil capital; assessing the effectiveness of mechanisms to poverty alleviation through soil management; and, impact.

### **Key Discussion Points**

The focus on soil, while it may appear narrow, is a central point of the project which is looking at broader concepts of ecosystem services and poverty alleviation. The project recognises that soil is only one part of a solution. Historically, most soil science has looked only at agricultural production, but poverty alleviation requires a wider scope.

This project is using a range of valuation techniques. While working at catchment scales, there will be links to projects working at a national scale, but scalability will depend on data availability and reliability.

There are opportunities to work with the Ministry of Agriculture on national programmes in Ethiopia.

### **Project Presentation - P4GES: Can Paying for Global Ecosystem Services Reduce Poverty? PI Julia Jones**

Rainforests provide a good example of the varying scales of ecosystem service provision, providing global carbon sequestration and oxygen regulation; compared with local water regulation and agricultural provision. There are issues of equity and justice around the spread of markets for ecosystem services and PES schemes. This project aims to identify how PES schemes can be designed to produce real poverty alleviation, given biophysical, social and economic realities.

PES has two routes to influence welfare: through incentivising land-use change or conservation relative to a counterfactual, and through the provision of conditional incentives (whether cash or in-kind payments).

This project's narrow geographical focus on specific rainforest areas in Madagascar will allow in-depth analysis of complex interactions of ecosystem services. It will evaluate realised land-use change and the magnitude/distribution of benefits and will investigate the likely impacts of different PES scenarios.

Benefit flows from different land-uses (relationships, timescales etc.) are poorly understood, and valuation techniques may not translate well to poorly developed markets or areas of low literacy. This project will adapt economic tools for developing country contexts.

### **Key Discussion Points**

The project is focusing on local markets. It is sensible not to wait for a global market to materialise, but to capitalise on existing local markets and maximise benefits for the poorest.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests is involved in the project and will use this research in multinational negotiations such as the CBD. Feedback is also coming from them on how to translate research messages to inform these.

There are significant knowledge gaps on the links between forests on slopes and agriculture: i.e. the hydrology research being conducted is critical. The project needs to fill that knowledge gap and ensure local communities have the tools to make decisions.

**Project Presentation - MOUNTAIN-EVO: Adaptive Governance of Mountain Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation Enabled by Environmental Virtual Observatories, PI Wouter Buytaert**

This project is focusing on mountain environments, which are very interesting from an ESPA viewpoint; with people depending on fragile ecosystems, data scarcity, large uncertainties and poverty, either in pockets or more widespread. In terms of ecosystem service management, mountains can be very difficult, with complex heterogenous processes.

This project is trying to generate locally relevant knowledge, using citizen science to conduct a comparative analysis in four sites in Peru, Nepal, Kyrgyzstan, and Ethiopia. The sites have similar ecosystem services and threats, data scarcity and complexity, but different socioeconomic contexts. The project is trying to find commonalities between the sites.

**Key Discussion Points**

This is the most geographically diverse project ESPA has ever funded. Commonalities being looked for at the lowest level include directly comparing how well citizen science works to collect data.

There will be useful information coming out of this project about the relationships between upstream and downstream change.

**Project Presentation - SPACES: Sustainable Poverty Alleviation from Coastal Ecosystem Services - Investigating Elasticities, Feedbacks and Tradeoffs, PI Tim Daw**

Increasing ecosystem services doesn't necessarily lead to poverty alleviation. The outcomes of changing ecosystem services have different impacts on different people. Access is often the most important issue in terms of utilising ecosystem services, whether through formal property rights, or other access mechanisms.

This project is building on the economic concept of elasticity to explore the relationships between ecosystem service change and well-being change. A low elasticity may suggest that a large change in ecosystem quality may have a small or a very delayed impact on well-being, which affects how people respond to them.

This project is hoping to trace ecosystem services from ecological stocks > flows > goods > value > sharing > well-being contribution, although it does recognise that systems do not work in a linear way like this.

At each point in the chain is a mediating factor/multiplier which determines who is able to benefit, with complex and dynamic relationships underpinning it.

The project has two sites – one in Kenya and one in Mozambique – which should provide generalizable findings.

Possible synergies already identified with other ESPA projects include forms of electronic data collection, communications platforms, workshops about models and scenarios, in-country/region impact activities, thematic synthesis.

### **Key Discussion Points**

The toy model is a very useful tool for supporting specific discussion about trade-offs, but it required a significant amount of work gathering information about drivers from stakeholders – making sure that it was not researchers imposing ideas from outside.

Using elasticity to explore relationships may overlook the behaviour of ecosystem services, which do not change in a linear way.

### **Project Presentation - ACES: Abrupt Changes in Ecosystem Services and Well-being in Mozambican Woodlands, PI Genevieve Patenaude**

This project is providing a first assessment of how changing land cover relates to well-being in Africa's dominant ecosystem. Mozambique typifies the challenges of managing woodlands for the poor – there is significant woodland cover, but high rates of deforestation. There is a relatively good governance framework for natural resources management, to allow for critical informed debate. This project is co-integrated with 7 other projects in Mozambique.

Five work packages to: co-design a research framework and identify pathways to impact; understand links between woodland loss and well-being; understand impacts of commercial agriculture; test system scale hypotheses; examine scenarios for the future

### **Key Discussion Points**

Ecosystem services' response can be drawn out over decades. This project will use space-for-time substitution for short-term observations. In the longer term, there are plausible scenarios, but the rate of land-use change is so fast that longer-term change isn't terribly relevant for decision-making.

The project will contribute to improving access for the poorest by working with communities of practice who are active in those areas. There will be an impact Fellow based in Mozambique for the duration of the project. They will be linking with practitioners.

### **Impact and Theory of Change – Paul van Gardingen, ESPA Director**

The ESPA website has details of the programme's [Theory of Change](#) and [Impact Strategy](#). The [Logframe](#) shows what indicators we need to report against at the programme level, and is populated using the outputs reported by projects to ROS.

Examples of impacts from early ESPA projects (interest from external stakeholders):

- [ESPA-BEST](#) – working with the Government of Kenya to support biodiversity and rangeland management.
- [Swahili Seas](#) – helping 3500 people in Gazi Bay area to use carbon credits to restore mangroves and enhance local livelihoods.
- [Jatropha](#) – useful lessons taken forward on how to maximise returns from this crop, now that biofuel market has collapsed.

The challenge for the Directorate is to build a portfolio of great examples of how ESPA is building the pathway to significant impact. Projects need to think about the following and communicate to us:

- Who are your key impact partners?
- How can you work with other projects and the Directorate?
- How will your project communicate the difference it makes?

The Directorate is now recruiting an Impact Manager. They will be the first point of contact for projects in working on impact. The Directorate plans to appoint Evidence Brokers in South Asia and East/Southern Africa to maximise the impact of the clusters of projects working in those regions. There is also a small grants scheme for impact called the Regional Opportunities Fund.

The Directorate will be providing some capacity strengthening, primarily in the form of two funding streams:

- Future Research Leaders Fellowships: to support promising young researchers (up to 10y post-PhD) who are nationals of a low-income country.
- Early Career Research Grants: open call (no nationality restrictions).

Details of staff appointments and any calls will be highlighted on the ESPA [website](#) and in the ESPA [newsletter](#).

## **Discussion**

Can the Directorate share information on programme stakeholders, to make it easier for projects to form relationships with new institutions?

Unfortunately it is not possible to publicise a list due to data protection, but if projects are going to start a new relationship with an organisation, they should in the first instance contact the Directorate and they will let them know if there are existing ESPA links there.

## **Project Presentation - Exploring the Ecosystem Limits to Poverty Alleviation in African Forest-Agriculture Landscapes, PI Ken Norris**

We rarely look at all the different aspects/goods/benefits of a system at once (e.g. biodiversity, carbon, soil etc.). There are also social and cultural issues in shaping land-use change. Examples of trade-offs in different land uses include that heterogeneous landscapes can be poor for charismatic species, but may be much better for local ecosystem services. Protected areas are often better for charismatic species, but may not support local people and the ecosystem services they need.

This project focuses on forest-agriculture systems in Ghana and Ethiopia. It's looking at cacao/cocoa and coffee. Ghana is a good example of a landscape which has been modified intensively for past 100 years or so. Reducing yields suggest that ecosystem

services may have passed a tipping point. The Ethiopian landscape is pushing in that direction but may not have reached that point.

Key research questions include: what are the local and global limits to ecosystem services provided by the forest-agriculture interface? What are the key social processes that maintain forest-agriculture ecosystems?

The project will combine ground-based observational data with satellite data to scale up. It would be useful to harmonise data collection with other projects.

### **Key Discussion Points**

Food security in developed countries is often framed as a biotechnology problem, but ultimately comes from ecosystem services.

Some statistical methods for networks offer an approach to unpicking the relationships between agricultural intensity and productivity (highlighted as graphs in the presentation slides). This project is looking at space-for-time, rather than point samples to look at changes in the system.



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