

## ***ESPA-2013 Town Meeting Report***

21 November 2012

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### **Executive Summary**

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The ESPA-2013 Town Meeting was organised by the ESPA programme as part of the process to launch the Announcement of Opportunity (AO) for ESPA-2013 projects. The main purpose of the meeting was to engage ESPA's research community in a discussion of two of the three themes that ESPA's Programme Executive Board (PEB) had approved with the aim of providing additional material to be used by PEB when producing the call.

An extract of the draft AO was published in conjunction with the Town Meeting describing the proposed themes and indicative process for the call. Participants were asked to provide feedback on the themes to PEB through a series of exercises that considered the types of research that might be funded and how this related to ESPA's objectives for knowledge and impact.

The three initial themes detailed in the draft AO provided to participants were:

- A) Sustainable, ecosystem-based pathways out of poverty/routes out of poverty;
- B) Ecosystem Services and the Urban Environment; and
- C) Building on ESPA Success.

The workshop concentrated on Themes A and B.

The material produced by and feedback received from workshop participants was used by the ESPA Directorate to revise the scope of the AO. The revised version was reviewed by PEB and approved for publication on 5 December 2012. Additional material that was produced by the workshop is reported here.

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## 1 Introduction

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- 1.1.1 The ESPA-2013 Town Meeting was organised by the ESPA Directorate on behalf of the ESPA programme as part of a process to develop the Announcement of Opportunity for ESPA-2013 projects. These projects represent the last major funding call in ESPA and will support a series of medium scale projects (£200-500k) running for up to 2.5 years from late 2013. Facilitation for the event was provided by Knowinnovation.
- 1.1.2 Participants were told that the main purpose of the meeting was to provide additional material and feedback that would be used to assist ESPA's Programme Executive Board in refining the call before its publication in early December 2012. Additional material produced by participants relevant to potential applicants is reported here.
- 1.1.3 Participants were engaged through a series of interactive exercises during the day. This started with a visioning exercise where participants were asked to think of newspaper headlines that could be linked to the impact of ESPA research in ten years' time (i.e. 2022). This exercise was then followed by others where groups were asked to consider what types of research would be required to deliver that vision before moving on to what would be required to make that research possible.
- 1.1.4 A series of feedback sessions during the day produced the material used by ESPA to refine the call. More detail of this feedback is reported below..

## 2 Feedback on the Indicative ESPA-2013 Themes

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### 2.1 Overview

2.1.1 During some sections of the day, participants were asked to work on one of the two indicative themes:

- A) Sustainable, ecosystem-based pathways out of poverty/routes out of poverty;
- B) Ecosystem Services and the Urban Environment;

2.1.2 During the day there were also some limited questions arising about Theme C, 'Building on ESPA Success', which are reported below.

2.1.3 The material reproduced here emerged from the group discussions and feedback sessions.

### 2.2 Theme A) Sustainable, ecosystem-based pathways out of poverty/routes out of poverty

2.2.1 The draft text provided to participants is presented in Box 1

This theme deals with the benefits from ecosystems that affect people, communities and institutions; it specifically addresses pathways out of poverty, based on the sustainable utilisation of ecosystem services.

Research to date has improved understanding of the links between ecosystem services and specific dimensions of poverty (e.g. food security and nutrition, income, health). However, less well understood is how sustainable benefits from ecosystem services can help to move people out of poverty – in particular how institutions, governance and management systems help or prevent this from happening.

This theme focuses attention on poverty dynamics (i.e. in terms of the pathways into and out of poverty) and environmental benefits that are reliable in terms of quantity, quality and access. The research focus is therefore on the role of enabling conditions and mediating factors in alleviating poverty through ecosystem services. Successful projects will address specific contexts where relevant disciplinary analysis of the ecosystem and environment, society and institutions are integrated in a manner that can provide understanding about how and when ecosystem services can provide sustainable pathways out of poverty.

Box 1 Draft text for Theme A) Sustainable, ecosystem-based pathways out of poverty/routes out of poverty.

2.2.2 Some of the key points that emerged from the group exercises discussing this theme were:

- **Previous work has reinforced the measurement of ES and PA, but the dynamic links between them are poorly understood**, This new knowledge will be crucial to identifying the pathways out of poverty
- The concept of **scale (spatial and temporal)** was recurrent. A question was raised of what scale and which cross-scale interactions (community, local, national, regional) are necessary for developing understanding of impacts and then for designing interventions to address them?
- It was stated that there is growing awareness that **social-ecological systems worldwide are approaching biophysical limits**.
  - Development and poverty alleviation needs to understand better the limits for effective policies.
  - the idea of research helping to define a just and safe operating space for development
- The potential links to **green growth and green economics** were discussed in detail.
  - How could economic valuation of ecosystem services and natural capital accounting be used to support and sustain the sustainable alleviation of poverty.
  - How is green growth defined in the context of sustainable use of ES and poverty alleviation??

- What **benefit transfer mechanisms** are there (or could be developed) to improve the chances of the poor getting out of poverty through the flow of ecosystem services?
  - conditional vs. non-conditional payments,
  - cash vs. non-cash,
  - individual vs. community.
- **Natural resource management situations are often subject to elite capture**, meaning that poorer stakeholders fail to benefit from ecosystem services, or from compensation payments to support ecosystem services, as much as they should. Mechanisms exist in other sectors, e.g. cash transfers for social protection, which are direct and prevent opportunities for elite capture.
  - How can information on ecosystem functions and economic values of ecosystem services feed into the design of such mechanisms?
- Recognition of the **complexity and non-linearity of ES- for PA linkages** (especially among non-ecologists). This lead to discussion of:
  - How to communicate complexity to decision and policy makers
  - The need for new visualization and modelling tools that embrace complexity ideas (e.g. tipping points); tackle real world problems in an interdisciplinary framework
  - A question of how to embed complex systems thinking in policies for new pathways out of poverty?

## 2.3 Theme B: Ecosystem services and the urban environment

2.3.1 Participants welcomed the addition of Theme B, suggesting that it would produce research that would be valuable as part of the wider ESPA portfolio. It was noted that many of the comments from Theme A could also apply to research conducted on Theme B.

2.3.2 The draft text provided to participants is presented as Box 2.

Rates of urbanisation have been rapid in recent decades and this trend is expected to increase in the future. Many people moving to urban areas have not been able to escape poverty – slums are the obvious indicator of this widespread and mass-scale deprivation.

The urban poor may appear to be less dependent than the rural poor on the provision of ecosystem services. However, they remain heavily affected by the presence and absence of ecosystem services (e.g. food production, clean air, clean water, hazard regulation, etc.), though these dependencies are poorly studied and understood. Projects in this theme will investigate the roles of ecosystem services affecting the urban poor.

This theme recognises the many different types of urban context (e.g. formal and informal settlements, mega-cities, large and small cities and towns, city centres, suburban and peri-urban fringes). Successful projects will address the linkages between ecosystem services and poverty in urban populations, focussing on multiple ecosystem services that relate to poverty, as well as causal factors affecting the ecosystems that affect the benefits that these people can derive, both inside and outside the urban area.

In addition, cities around the world are now very significant importers of ecosystem services which may significantly influence the lives and livelihoods of poor people living in rural environments in developing countries. ESPA may also consider proposals that make the link between the consumption of ecosystem services in cities and the poverty and livelihoods of the rural poor.

Box 2 Draft Text for Theme B: Ecosystem services and the urban environment.

2.3.3 Comments emerging from the group exercises were as follows::

- It was considered appropriate for the theme to create the opportunity for researchers to select their own context, which could include any combination of the urban poor, peri-urban environments and linkages between the urban and rural environments.
- Research could consider mapping the flows of ecosystem services affecting the urban and rural poor (positively and negatively), and how these depend on policies and

decisions in urban and rural areas, i.e. focus on flows of costs and benefits across the urban–rural divide.

- Focus on urban–rural linkages.
- Research could contribute to the development of a conceptual framework for where cities fit into the linkage between ecosystem services and poverty alleviation.
- There was discussion about the way that cities have an effect downstream on ecosystem services.
- There was discussion about social differentiation and the different ways that poor and elite groups in cities use and benefit from ecosystem services (and their impact on ecosystems and sustainability)
- There was discussion about the way that urban populations (poor and non-poor) impact on ecosystems in cities and outside of cities;
  - the ways in which urbanisation processes effect ecosystems through their conversation;
  - The need to consider downstream impacts through waste and pollution;
- The need to consider the urban elite and how they effect, through their demand for ecosystem services, the rural poor; consider how important distributional issues are.

## 2.4 Theme C; Building on ESPA Success

2.4.1 There was limited discussion about the third theme, which is designed to provide the opportunity to design research that builds on the success of previous projects

A number of ESPA projects funded under previous calls have produced significant results that have helped to advance global understanding on the processes that can link ecosystem services and poverty alleviation. The third theme for the ESPA-2013 call will provide an opportunity to build upon research funded under previous ESPA calls, specifically, the 2010 calls for Programme Framework Grants (PFG), Partnership and Project Development Grants (PPD) and the 2011 ESPA Evidence and Impact Research Grants (EIRG).

To be eligible for funding under this theme, proposals will need to demonstrate how they will deliver significant additional results that go beyond the objectives of the original grant **and** must have clear links to ESPA goals for excellent science and sustainable Poverty alleviation as detailed in the ESPA Knowledge Strategy.

Box 3 Draft text for Theme C: Building on ESPA Success.

2.4.2 The discussion about this theme largely surrounded administrative issues. It was noted that this Theme exists because there are already some great ideas in already funded ESPA research. Proposals in this theme could also link to one or both of Themes A and B, if it's appropriate.

2.4.3 The ESPA Secretariat responded to some of the administrative questions noting that the call is completely open (i.e. not restricted to people involved in earlier projects), stating that it is the quality of the scientific proposal that will determine success. It was noted that there is no "ring fencing" of funding between the three research themes.

2.4.4 It was noted that the Research Councils have a policy of open access to data and other research outcomes from the earlier projects and that these would be available to all applicants.

2.4.5 Potential applicants were encouraged to consider collaborating with participants from previous projects.

## List of Participants

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Andrea	Young	Kings College London
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Clare	Fitzsimmons	Newcastle University
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Essam	Mohammed	International Institute for Environment and Development
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Jodie	Clarke	NERC
John	Dearing	University of Southampton
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Katrina	Charles	University of Surrey
Lene	Poulsen	International Consultant
Liz	Ogilvie	Knowinnovation Ltd
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