

ESPA Communication Strategy

Telling the ESPA Story



Challenge/Rationale

The key challenges for the ESPA programme are to ensure it can deliver robust, innovative and ground breaking scientific research and a body of new knowledge. It is equally important for the programme to ensure that the findings from ESPA research can be used to inform policy decisions and further research development, as well as to ensure that it provides practical lessons for alleviating poverty across the globe. The ESPA Communication Strategy needs to support these challenges by telling the ESPA story and by supporting ESPA beneficiaries to do the same. It must also ensure that the growing body of new knowledge remains accessible and can be built on. The Communication Strategy¹ adds value to the potential for impact by working with ESPA beneficiaries to strengthen their understanding of Pathways to Impact and Research Uptake, as well as how to maximise them.

Strategy

This is a *push and pull* strategy. It aims to *push* information out to target audiences and to *pull* people into the ESPA community and to share ideas through engagement and involvement. Different approaches are used for delivery and impact, determined by the need to both inform policy and to share new knowledge more widely.²

The strategy is driven by five 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](#)³. 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 natural 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 will 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/research uptake and appropriate communication methodologies, e.g. networking, processes and intervention opportunities ([ESPA Impact](#) and [Research Into Use](#)).
4. To learn from the synergies and challenges presented by some of the innovative interdisciplinary working that the ESPA programme has promoted and encouraged.
5. To ensure we can achieve maximum impact and engagement with ESPA knowledge through effective dissemination, advocacy and outreach to all the key priority audiences.

¹ 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](#)

² Making Communications Count: a Strategic Communications Framework – <http://pubs.iied.org/17096IIED.html>

³ The ESPA programme is organised around three principle areas of work – ESPA Knowledge, ESPA Impact and the Global Forum

Priority Audiences – those who will help maximise the impact of ESPA knowledge

Many of the critical policy processes that will support a more sympathetic understanding of how ecosystems services can alleviate poverty are formulated at the national level. However, to help create an enabling and supportive environment for national level policy change, there must be a corresponding understanding of the key issues at international level, and among different priority stakeholders to support this change.

Our stakeholder mapping exercise suggested that the priority audiences that will stimulate and support such an enabling environment are the academic community – doing ESPA-type research but not supported by ESPA – those that fund, support and implement projects which may use the findings from ESPA research, and those whose ideas and policy recommendations can carry the messages.

ESPA projects and beneficiaries will be targeting audiences at a national/local level. The ESPA Directorate is responsible for targeting international policy makers, opinion formers and key stakeholders shown in the Tables below.

Key Priority Audiences for Communicating ESPA Knowledge at a Global Level

Audience	Description and Role in Achieving Impact	Examples
ESPA-like research/researchers	Other academic projects that are doing similar work to ESPA but not funded by ESPA. Good for sharing information and building credibility if convinced by ESPA findings.	F17 (Edinburgh), Stanford NCP, Belmont, ASYNC, NSF-CNH, ICSU, ESP, TERI
Foundations/“Do Tanks”	Organisations funding new projects, or implementing projects that could build on the learning from ESPA findings.	FAS, WRI Rockefeller, Ford, Moore, Wellcome, MacArthur, Packard
NGOs/ Think Tanks	Organisations similar to the above but who also refer to, or develop, thinking and policy recommendations, and influence policy fora that could incorporate ESPA findings.	IIED, ODI, TERI, CI, WWF, IUCN, Major National NGOs like BCAS, ACTS, ATPS, CARE, OXFAM. Including the less obvious like The Adam Smith Institute
ESPA’s Funders	The organisations behind the ESPA research programme – looking to build a comprehensive body of research that can have a big impact on the ground – looking for accountability as well as supporting communication process.	DFID, NERC, ESRC, RCUK, LWEC

Key Priority Audiences for In-Country Communication of ESPA Knowledge

Audience	Description and Role in Achieving Impact	Examples
Southern Governments	In-country, a key audience. Good relationships need to be built to share findings and build strong research agendas.	Environment, Planning, Sustainable Development Ministries
Local Communities and Regional/Municipal Governance	In-country, a key audience. Good relationships need to be built to share findings and build strong research agendas – unlikely to be the role of the Directorate in building these relationships other than a regular check in by the ESPA Director.	
Private Sector	Not all private sector but companies where there is an interesting tie-in or opportunity for	

	engagement. Getting Research into Use is reliant on building relationships with private sector although this may not be done through the Directorate itself but more through in-country relationship building.	
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Secondary Audiences for Communicating ESPA Knowledge

Audience	Description and Role in Achieving Impact	Examples
Multi-lateral Initiatives	Agenda setting organisations engaged in various programmes, initiatives and processes. Need to be aware of what ESPA is doing and the key findings.	World Bank (WAVES), UNDP/UNEP (PEI), UNDP (Equator Initiative), World Bank UNDP/UNEP (TEEB) UNEP and Government of China
Other Science Funders and the more Technical Science Audience	Organisations with strong science backgrounds which know more about ESPA's science.	US: National Science Foundation, SA: Department of Science and Technology, Aus: CSIRO, China: NSFS Brazil: FAPESPA, EU:SIDA
Opinion Formers	Well-networked and well-connected individuals and organisations in the areas where ESPA knowledge could have great impact.	Development Alternatives in India, UNCSTD
The public (UK and In-Country)	Promoting research findings and impacts.	Press releases, blogs, events

Communication Strategy Objectives

Recognising the five key drivers and the audiences that will help ensure maximum impact in the adoption of ESPA findings and influencing policy change, the following objectives will determine the relevant communication channels and activities:

- To demonstrate to priority audiences where and how, or under what conditions, ecosystems services can help poverty alleviation – telling the ESPA story
- To inform and influence policy makers on how to integrate relevant findings from ESPA research and build new knowledge into policy frameworks
- To foster a healthy dialogue between academics and policy makers to ensure adoption of ESPA findings
- To connect the ESPA community of researchers and academic institutions across the world and 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, and to share analysis, possible synergies and lessons from working across disciplines
- To communicate effectively amongst the closer ESPA team – the Directorate, the key funders and beneficiaries – to encourage wider sharing of ESPA knowledge with different stakeholders – e.g. the general public, youth etc.

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 communication. 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 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. They will have stayed in touch with, 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 Communication Strategy during 2013–2014.

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