

Governing for ecosystem health and human wellbeing

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Aim and definition

- What is known about the nature and performance of governance arrangements, systems and processes at multiple levels for ecosystem health and poverty alleviation?

For the purpose of the synthesis, we consider natural resource governance to be

... the norms, institutions, and processes that determine how power and responsibilities over natural resources are exercised, how decisions are taken and how citizens – including women, men, youth, indigenous peoples and local communities – secure access to, participate in, and are impacted by the management of natural resources (Campese, 2016, p. 7)

Methods

- A systematic mapping of literature. Themes emerging from the coding of 872 papers included: institutions, instruments, power, and participation/community-based governance.
- Interviews with 23 projects funded by ESPA
- A workshop with partners from a range of government and non-government actors and sectors held in Ghana in September.

*Key messages and lessons for
science and policy-makers*

“No panacea”

- There is no one governance approach that can definitively deliver on improved ecosystem health and human wellbeing and, within any approach, it is not always possible to satisfy all stakeholders.

As Elinor Ostrom said, there are no panaceas!



Participation must be meaningful

Participation of resource users in governance systems must be meaningful.

This may mean that power relations and power dynamics across and within levels of governance have to be challenged.



Design for equity and poverty alleviation

- Deliberate effort and design of governance approaches are needed if ecosystems are to serve the poor and alleviate poverty.
- Market-based schemes may deliver on efficiency, but unless deliberate attempts are made to focus on equity and poverty alleviation they may reinforce inequalities.

It doesn't all happen at the local level

- Governance initiatives at local scale should be situated in an understanding of power and resource distribution across multiple scales.
- Ecosystem governance implies a holistic approach, with greater cooperation and coordination between actors involved, including between parts and levels of government.

Institutions: 'rules of the game'

- Informal institutions remain critical for ecosystem governance and new governance approaches should take existing systems into consideration.

What are these?

Customary rules; taboos; gender norms; power relations; kinship

Outstanding areas for research

1. How can meaningful and sustained participation of all stakeholder groups in ecosystem governance, particularly of more marginalised groups, be encouraged?
2. How can greater coordination of policy and practice within and between administrative levels be facilitated?
3. What are, or could be, the wider governance impacts from ecosystem governance?