ESPA Impact Strategy

Introduction

This document forms ESPA's Impact Strategy, and describes how the ESPA Programme will ensure that its knowledge is used to deliver significant and sustainable development impact benefitting poor people in developing countries.

> ESPA is an international research programme providing evidence of how ecosystem services can alleviate poverty and enhance well-being for poor people in developing countries around the world. Projects are highly interdisciplinary, linking the social, natural and political sciences to address a series of focussed research questions and evidence challenges. ESPA's projects are delivered through collaborative partnerships linking the world's best researchers including specifically those in developing countries.
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> ESPA's **Knowledge Strategy**[1] describes how ESPA's research will implement world-class science addressing a set of key evidence challenges and research questions that were determined by ESPA's funders through an extensive process of engagement with international stakeholders.

ESPA is about impact. It's about research excellence, but only insofar as the research can be effectively used to improve the lives of the poor in developing countries. Knowledge gaps (the 'evidence challenges') are real constraints on the way that ecosystem services contribute to the poverty alleviation. ESPA will target and fill these gaps. ESPA's success will be measured by the way that the new knowledge generated by its research **improves the lives of the poor, especially those in low-income countries**. Therefore:

- New knowledge generated by ESPA will have the clear potential to lead to significant and sustainable *improvements in the lives* of many millions of poor people around the world;
- ESPA's long-term development impact will be *evidenced by alleviation of poverty*, improved health and well-being, and by creating opportunities for poor people to benefit through the growth of the global green economy.

ESPA's approach to achieve impact on people's lives is innovative and consists of four interlinked components, all of which are delivered working through people and partnerships, as shown in the Programme's Impact Framework (Figure 1).
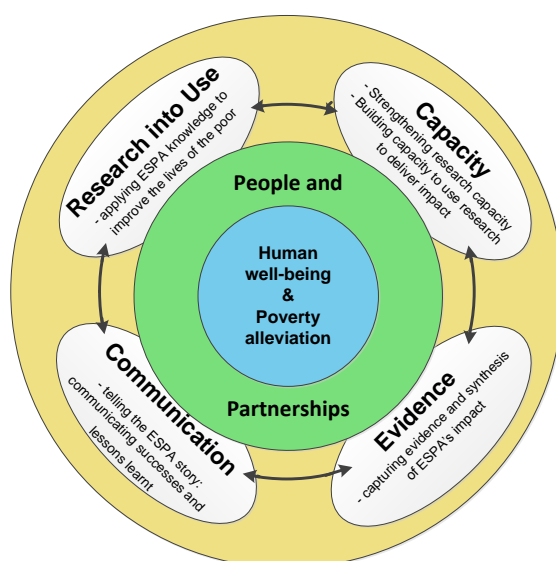

Figure 1   ESPA's Impact Framework

What do we mean by impact?

ESPA's Impact is about people. The knowledge generated by ESPA's research will respond to and target needs for change that lead to sustainable improvements in the lives of poor people. This can happen only if local people and their communities are actively involved in building impact throughout the lifetime of the project, starting from identification of the research need and design of the research, through to implementation both of research and of consequent impact activities using the research results.

ESPA's Impact is required sustainable management of ecosystems and the services they provide. Ecosystem services can only contribute to sustainable poverty alleviation when ecosystems are managed to provide sustainable delivery of ecosystem services and the associated flows of benefits to the poor.

> ESPA's research is about people and linking them with the benefits flowing from sustainable management of ecosystems and ecosystem services.

The ESPA programme, as a leading international research programme linking two of the UK's Research Councils and the Department for International Development (DFID), aims to deliver development impact through research excellence. ESPA's approach to impact explicitly connects components of academic and development impact.

Academic Impact: Research Excellence

ESPA's projects are selected on the basis of being likely to deliver world-class research, of direct relevance to ESPA's research agenda, and producing new knowledge which can improve the lives of the poor. Research publications will be the main way that the programme's academic impact will be demonstrated. Additional outputs will include the generation of new datasets and models, which form the basis of new global public goods.

The following measures are considered important in determining the impact of ESPA publications. Excellence will be seen to have been achieved when research and resulting publications are:

1. **relevant** to ESPA's research agenda;
2. **attributable** to activities undertaken through an ESPA project (in whole or in part, and with clear links to research or data generated by an ESPA project);
3. **including developing country authorship**[2];
4. **published in high-impact, peer-reviewed international journals**; and
5. **published in open access format.**

Development Impact

ESPA researchers are typically comfortable with understanding research excellence and academic impact. But they often face the question of how to define and plan for the impact of their research in the development context. In this case, impact is about people and real changes in their knowledge, behaviours and lives. Therefore, research results need to be targeted to real people's needs. At the programme level ESPA's impact will include:

- **Influencing policy** linking ecosystem services and poverty alleviation using new knowledge generated by ESPA.
- **Building the political economy required to enable poor people to benefit from ecosystem services.** ESPA projects and their impact partners working to use ESPA's research evidence to support the effective political economy (e.g. policies, institutions and processes) required for sustainable and equitable poverty alleviation.
- **Putting ESPA Research Into Use,** including demonstration activities.
- **Capacity strengthening of people and institutions**, to support both of the above.
- **Conceptual advances** contributing to understanding of how ecosystem services contribute to poverty alleviation.

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[2]   Developing country authorship is defined as authors who have developing country nationality *or* are working in an institution located in a developing country.

Components of ESPA's Impact Strategy

Our discussion on what impact means brings us to several key components of the Impact Strategy:

- **Understanding poverty and poverty alleviation;**

- **Beneficiaries**: understanding who will benefit from the research, so they can be targeted;

- **People and Partnerships**: ensuring the relevance of and demand for the research results;

- **Research into Use**: ensuring the usability of the research results;

- **Capacity Strengthening**: supporting abilities to deliver, use and act on the research results;

- **Communication**: sharing ESPA knowledge and lessons to ensure wider influence and impact; and

- **Evidence**: making the case for change.

Considering these components moves the ESPA programme and projects beyond stand-alone research activities and strengthens them to support development processes that can achieve significant, targeted impact through research excellence.

What Does ESPA Mean by Poverty and Poverty Alleviation?

ESPA's Poverty Framework aims to support projects through the provision of a simple and practical framework describing the meaning of poverty and poverty alleviation in the context of ESPA. The framework was developed for ESPA researchers, who are encouraged to use the ideas described in the framework as the basis for their understanding of poverty.

ESPA's approach in the broadest sense considers that poverty can generally be understood as the lack of, or inability to achieve, a socially acceptable standard of living, or the possession of insufficient resources to meet basic human needs. It is also noted that poverty is increasingly being recognised as multi-dimensional, distinguishing the numerous aspects of people's lives affected by poverty, including economic and non-economic dimensions, and recognising that poverty occurs within – and is affected by – the political, economic, social and cultural context.

ESPA's approach builds upon previous work including the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment which recognises five main elements of poverty relevant to ESPA research:

- the basic material needs for a good life – the ability to have secure and adequate livelihoods, including income and assets, enough food at all times, adequate shelter and access to goods;

- health – the ability of an individual to feel well and be strong, and have a healthy physical environment. This includes the ability to be adequately nourished and free from disease, to have access to adequate and clean drinking water and clean air, and to energy to keep warm and cool;

- good social relations – presence of social cohesion, mutual respect and the ability to help others and provide for children, equitable gender and family relations;

- security – safety of person and possessions, secure access to necessary (natural and other) resources, and security from natural and human-made disasters; and

- freedom of choice and action – ability of individuals to control what happens to them and to be able to achieve what they value doing or being. Freedom and choice cannot exist without the presence of the other elements of well-being.

Poverty is not a static characteristic of people, their poverty status will change with time, sometimes as a general trend increasing or decreasing (e.g. increased income, enhanced availability of food, improved heath or education), sometimes as cycles or fluctuations (e.g. seasonal effects on the availability of food) and occasionally rapid change, as may happen after shocks or extreme events such as floods or drought. Any person, family or community may

experience any combination of these dynamic aspects of poverty, for any dimension of poverty. It is also possible for individuals to experience improvements in one aspect of their lives, whilst others are either not improving or even getting worse.

Whilst it is extremely important for ESPA research to understand the characteristics and determinants of poverty, ESPA's research needs to focus in on poverty dynamics, and specifically on what contributes to processes leading to long-term sustainable reductions in poverty, through the sustainable management and utilisation of ecosystem services. These processes need also to enhance the resilience of people and communities to shocks and extreme events.

When describing the impact of ESPA's research on poverty, projects need to describe the following:

- What groups can potentially benefit if the research were applied?

- How many people can benefit both immediately, and over a longer term if the research results were more widely adopted?

- What is the poverty status of these target beneficiaries before the research commences or is applied? This needs to include describing the key dimensions of poverty and current trends?

- Which dimensions of poverty of the target beneficiaries are likely to change if the research were applied? How much change is likely, will the change be positive or negative and what time period will be required for people to see the differences in their lives?

- Are other groups of people or communities likely to be impacted, in what way and will these changes be generally positive or negative (winners and losers).

- What are likely to be the long-term impacts on ecosystems and their potential to provide benefits from ecosystem services in the future?

ESPA's beneficiaries

ESPA's impact is about people, so it is essential to consider who could benefit from the new knowledge generated by ESPA research and why they might be interested. Understanding the beneficiaries means that the research process, stakeholders and results can be targeted for impact. ESPA needs to be able to demonstrate how poor people in developing countries will benefit, as well as providing contextual information about their current poverty status and how this is expected to change through ESPA's impact. Beneficiary groups will include:

- **Ultimate beneficiaries**: These are the poor people, such as local villagers or households, whose lives should be improved through the application of the results of ESPA research. These groups and their poverty status (multi-dimensional) should be identified before research commences as part of a project's baseline or situational analysis. Researchers should recognise that many ultimate beneficiaries may be marginal to the decision-making processes that are important to their lives, despite having a major stake in the outcomes of specific research.

- **Users of research**: These are the stakeholders who will have the most immediate and direct interest in research, such as policy makers, owners of companies, managers of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), knowledge intermediaries and other researchers. Where possible they should be given the opportunity to be active participants in the research process or in impact activities (research into use, capacity strengthening, communication, evaluation). Most potential users of research should be easy to identify, have an organisational or institutional base, and are likely to be well-educated and informed. They are likely to be well versed in laws, regulations, customs and norms.

- **Wider society:** New ESPA knowledge is also likely to have more global benefits. The research will contribute to wider societal understanding and generation of common public goods and services. Shifts in societal understanding or public awareness about ESPA issues can support uptake of the research results and enhance the overall impact of ESPA projects and the programme. Being aware of opportunities to promote the benefits of ESPA

more widely, for example through opportunistic use of mass media or education, researchers can improve impact further.

Figure 2   Young people from a pastoralist community in northern Kenya collecting water for their livestock. ESPA's research needs to address the fundamental needs of groups of ultimate beneficiaries like this community, to ensure that ecosystems services make real and sustainable contributions to improving their well-being. (Photo: P. van Gardingen)

It is important to note that, in a development context, impact is unlikely to be positive for everyone – there will be winners and losers.

Whilst most research will consider the people who benefit from new knowledge (winners), it is easy to neglect the issue of potential losers. For instance, if research suggests that the development of a new policy or management practice might be good for certain elements of the target community in a developing country, it may be that, unintentionally, this is at the cost of increased poverty in another section of the community. It will be important to consider such risks, as well as how to manage or balance them.

People and Partnerships

ESPA's impact depends on the people and partnerships linked to its research projects and the wider ESPA global community. The concept of *co-production of impact* is central to ESPA's Impact Strategy, and is a logical extension of the now widely accepted approach of *co-production of research and knowledge*. ESPA projects and the ESPA Directorate will ensure that researchers actively engage an extended group of direct users of research, as well as ultimate (or potential) beneficiaries, throughout the lifetime of a project. This will enhance development impact by securing highly relevant and in-demand research products.

Figure 3   Members of the Huantas community in the Santa Cruz valley in Bolivia work with ESPA researchers during the early stages of implementation of their project looking at measuring the effectiveness of mechanisms for payments for ecosystem services. Early and active engagement with a range of local stakeholders will assist projects to enhance their impact through co-production of research and development impact. (Photo: P. van Gardingen). See http://www.espa.ac.uk/files/espa/impact_story_003.pdf

It is important for all stakeholders in a project to discuss the likely outcomes and impact of the research during the planning stages of a project and for these to be reviewed at regular intervals throughout the lifetime of a project. This will help to ensure that projects produce research that meets the needs both of research users and intended ultimate beneficiaries and that it can have impact. A set of simple questions can assist this process:

ESPA's Impact Questions

1. **Who** will use ESPA's research and new knowledge? Identifying and, wherever possible, involving the people likely to use ESPA's research at an early stage of the design and implementation of the research is essential for impact of the research. During later stages of projects it may be appropriate to also consider other groups who may act as knowledge intermediaries and those who can help to implement and put research into use.

2. **How** will ESPA's new knowledge be used? Determining, early in the research process, how different stakeholders are likely to use the research is important. Working with direct users of research and other beneficiaries ensures that research results can be presented in ways and formats that are tailored to meet their needs.

3. **What** will projects, the ESPA Directorate and development partners need to do to ensure that ESPA's knowledge is put into use to generate significant and sustainable impact benefitting the poor? Knowledge is rarely the only constraint, and other challenges will need to be addressed to build impact, otherwise it may be impossible to use the research effectively. This highlights the need for the ESPA community to have active engagement with potential users of research from the start of a project, as well as representative groups of ultimate beneficiaries where possible.

Theory of Change

ESPA projects will be asked to develop a "Theory of Change" linking their research with its intended impacts. Theory of Change can help research teams to map out the anticipated links between their research project, the issues and context they are seeking to influence, and the longer-term social, development and environmental outcomes that are the purpose of the overall ESPA programme. ESPA's Guide to working with Theory of Change is available, and has been designed to help researchers working with a Theory of Change approach. A key step in this process is the identification of stakeholders in the project, including potential beneficiaries, through an initial situational or baseline analysis. This will help projects to answer the above impact questions and will assist the Directorate to identify areas where additional assistance from the programme may be justified.

Research into Use

Thinking about putting ESPA's research into use moves consideration of impact onto a more proactive and practical footing, with a focus on ensuring the relevance and usability of the research. Experience derived from other research programmes has identified a number of factors that help to enhance and maximise impact of research. These include:

- **Contextual understanding** of the situation in which research outcomes may be utilised to benefit poor people. This is part of the Theory of Change that each ESPA project will be required to develop.

- **Co-production of knowledge** with potential research users and beneficiaries involved in all stages of the research process. Early engagement with potential users of research means that they will have the opportunity to help define the types of research outcomes to be produced by projects and how they will be presented.

- **Identifying champions for change.** To put research into use requires champions who are able to navigate complex political and institutional landscapes, building networks of practitioners and policy actors willing to advocate and promote the approach. This is unlikely to be the originator of the research and needs to be an 'insider'.

- **Knowledge translation** to provide research outputs in a range of formats recognising that academic research papers are unlikely to provide end-users of research with knowledge in a form that they can use in practice.

- **Working with other projects and programmes.** Research projects often provide only part of a wider package of knowledge, skills and investment required to put research into use. ESPA projects will be encouraged to identify synergies with potential partners (e.g. other researchers, development practitioners and the private sector) to put research into use.

- **Strategic timing** in putting research into use. Projects need to identify when there are opportunities (e.g. policy development processes, events, reviews, milestones) to put research into use and also who is best placed to assist this process. Impact activities sometimes fail at the first attempt if the timing is not optimal, but can be more effective with a subsequent attempt later in the lifetime of a project, or even after its completion.

The ESPA Directorate's Research Into Use Strategy provides a vision for how activities will contribute to building development impact and identifying what projects will need to do and how they will be supported by the Directorate. Many opportunities to put research into use will not be anticipated at the start of a project or may occur after a project has completed. In these cases, ESPA has dedicated resources available to help projects build impact opportunities.

Figure 4   ESPA's Swahili Seas project is working with local communities near Mombasa in Kenya to put existing research on mangrove restoration into use. The project is exploring how a voluntary carbon fund can be used to generate income and environmental benefits for local communities. Part of the project remit is to understand what is required to put research into use for this context so that lessons can be learnt to help extend this to other locations. (Photo: Mark Huxham). See ESPA Impact story 004: Mangroves to Market (http://www.espa.ac.uk/files/espa/Impact_story_004.pdf)

Evidence

Evidence for change

For the benefits of ESPA's research to reach large numbers of poor people, it is essential that research evidence informs and influences decisions about large-scale development activities (it is not expected that ESPA projects will carry out those activities – projects do not have the resources or the remit for this). Achieving impact through research use in this way is about securing a change in 'normal practice', which requires investment of human and financial resources. To justify this investment, ESPA needs to provide a compelling case for change, supported by evidence from research.

Such change decisions are more likely to be made if the evidence:

- robustly and objectively (based on research excellence) describes the way sustainable management and use of ecosystem services contributes to poverty alleviation;
- clearly addresses the counterfactual "question", showing why and how a proposed new approach linking ecosystem services and poverty alleviation is likely to be significantly better than business as usual;
- is linked to economic analysis so that the cost-effectiveness of alternative policy options or investments can be compared; and
- is targeted to the behaviour and needs of the stakeholder in question.

Monitoring change

When generating this evidence, stakeholders in ESPA projects will need to consider how they will identify and document success or failure of it to achieve its purpose – has the research had any impact? This is a crucial component in any impact strategy, but also one that is often ignored. It stresses the importance of being able to describe and document how and why impact has or has not been achieved. For each impact activity implemented under ESPA, it should be possible to say how change might happen and how that change could or will be monitored and who will do this.
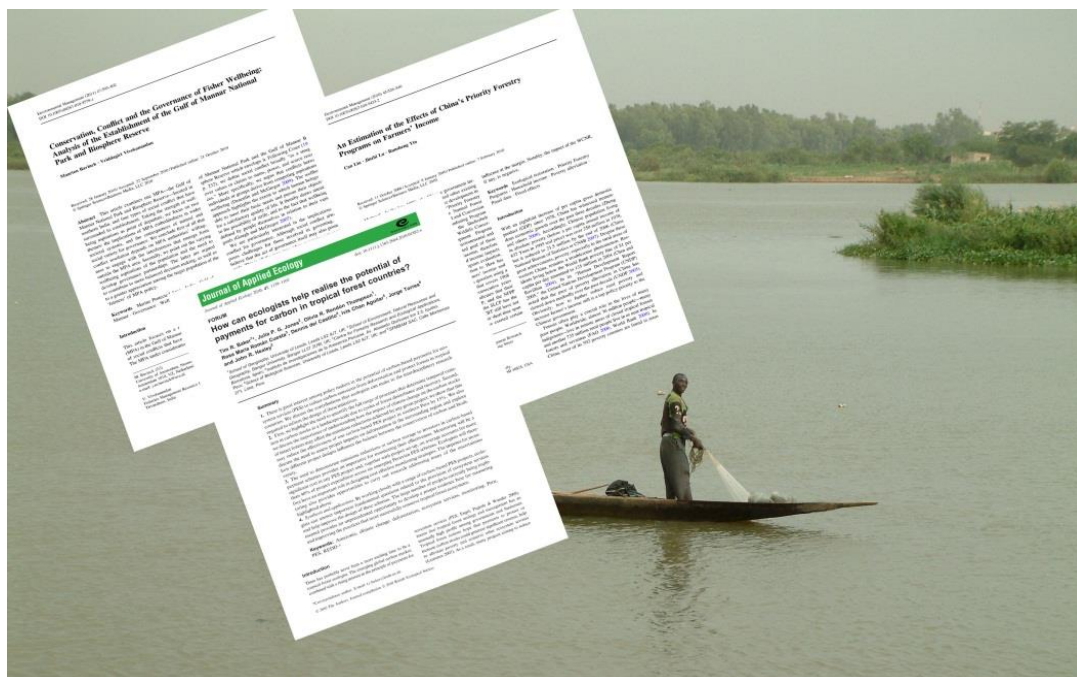

Figure 5   The ESPA programme and projects need to make links between world-class research and publications (the programme's academic impact) and the sustainable improvements in the lives of poor people (development impact). ESPA's research needs to be able to provide benefits for people like this member of a fisher community in Mali. (Photo: P. van Gardingen)

Communication

Effective communication processes are a key factor in building impact. "Telling the ESPA Story" is the rationale behind the ESPA Communications Strategy. The Directorate will share ESPA knowledge and what has been learnt across all audiences and through ESPA projects to a wider network of contacts.

ESPA's Communication strategy has five principal objectives. These are to:

- **demonstrate** where and how, or under what conditions, ecosystems services can help poverty alleviation amongst the international/national development decision-making communities;

- **inform and influence** policy makers on how to integrate relevant findings from ESPA research and new knowledge into policy frameworks;

- **connect** the ESPA community of researchers and academic institutions across the world;

- **support and advise ESPA projects** and beneficiaries on how to communicate their findings; and

- **enhance communication** amongst the ESPA community of researchers, the Directorate and funders, and encourage sharing ESPA knowledge with wider stakeholders.

An effective impact strategy will involve choosing the most appropriate communication channels and engagement activities to connect research users with research outcomes. The ESPA programme will adopt a portfolio of communication activities such as events, conferences and workshops, networking, a lively web platform and use of interactive media (e.g. short films) as useful and accessible ways to communicate new ideas. In order to provide continuing support, the Directorate will work with projects to publish short policy briefings and impact stories, an annual review of progress and other types of publications.

The media can be an important influence on policy-makers and on wider society. International and national media will be kept informed of new ideas and progress. The Directorate and projects will work with partners to strengthen capacity for media engagement – through print, radio, television and online. Telling the ESPA story will be important and every opportunity will be taken to raise the profile of ESPA's ideas, new knowledge within the policy and public affairs environment.

Figure 6   The ESPA programme will need to use a range of methods to communicate with stakeholders. These will include traditional approaches such as workshops and academic publications, but will also involve more targeted activities including ESPA impact stories, the website and online portal, and engagement with local stakeholders through village meetings.
(Clockwise from top: ESPA Workshop in Botswana, academic publication, Impact story, ESPA website, a meeting with organic cotton growers in Mali). (Photos: P. van Gardingen)

Capacity Strengthening

ESPA's Capacity Strengthening Strategy is designed to assist projects and the ESPA Directorate to enhance project's and the programme's overall impact. It is important to recognise that ESPA is fundamentally a research programme and that there are numerous other initiatives that have been specifically designed to support capacity strengthening for development research.

ESPA's capacity strengthening activities are intended to complement these other initiatives. ESPA's Strategy focuses on three areas:

- **Strengthening capacity to design and implement ESPA research**. ESPA's research requires the application of interdisciplinary approaches that can be challenging for many researchers. The ESPA Directorate and individual projects will provide support to individual researchers to enhance their contribution to ESPA's research to help them learn these new ways of working. Projects will do this as part of the implementation of their research. The Directorate's main mode of support will be through a set of ESPA Fellowships.

- **Strengthening capacity build impact from ESPA's research**. This links back to addressing the constraints to turning knowledge into development impact. Other institutions and individuals, beyond ESPA, may be best placed to put ESPA's research into use. The ESPA projects and the Directorate will work individually and in partnership to identify, engage and support them. In addition to traditional approaches such as briefing notes and workshops, activities such as staff exchanges or secondments between organisations are known to be effective and will be supported by the programme. The ESPA Directorate will support activities through their Regional Opportunities Fund and Regional Evidence Brokers.

- **Strengthening capacity to design and write research proposals.** This support is provided by the Directorate and ESPA funders linked to each ESPA call.

The ESPA programme will not be able to fund all the capacity strengthening activities that would help in building the impact of ESPA's research investments. For this reason, projects and the ESPA Directorate will look for ways to work in partnership with other stakeholders to deliver other capacity strengthening opportunities for researchers and their development partners.

Figure 7   An ESPA project in Bolivia explaining how degradation of forest ecosystems and soil can affect water quality and quantity to a community in the Santa Cruz valley. (Photo: P. van Gardingen) See "Making an Impact" on the ESPA website: (http://www.espa.ac.uk/impact/making-impact)

Building Development Impact in ESPA projects

The ESPA programme recognises two key issues that influence the processes of building development impacts:

- ESPA projects will *focus on delivering research* that contributes to the delivery of effective development interventions, but not the delivery itself. To deliver broader development impact requires ESPA's researchers to work in partnership with potential end users of research to ensure it leads to significant and sustainable development impact.

- While research projects are linear processes, the process of building development impact is not – impact can happen throughout the process, and sometimes in unpredictable ways. It is worth, where possible, to strategically identify the *opportunities for enhancing impact* that may occur at different stages in the research process in different ways.
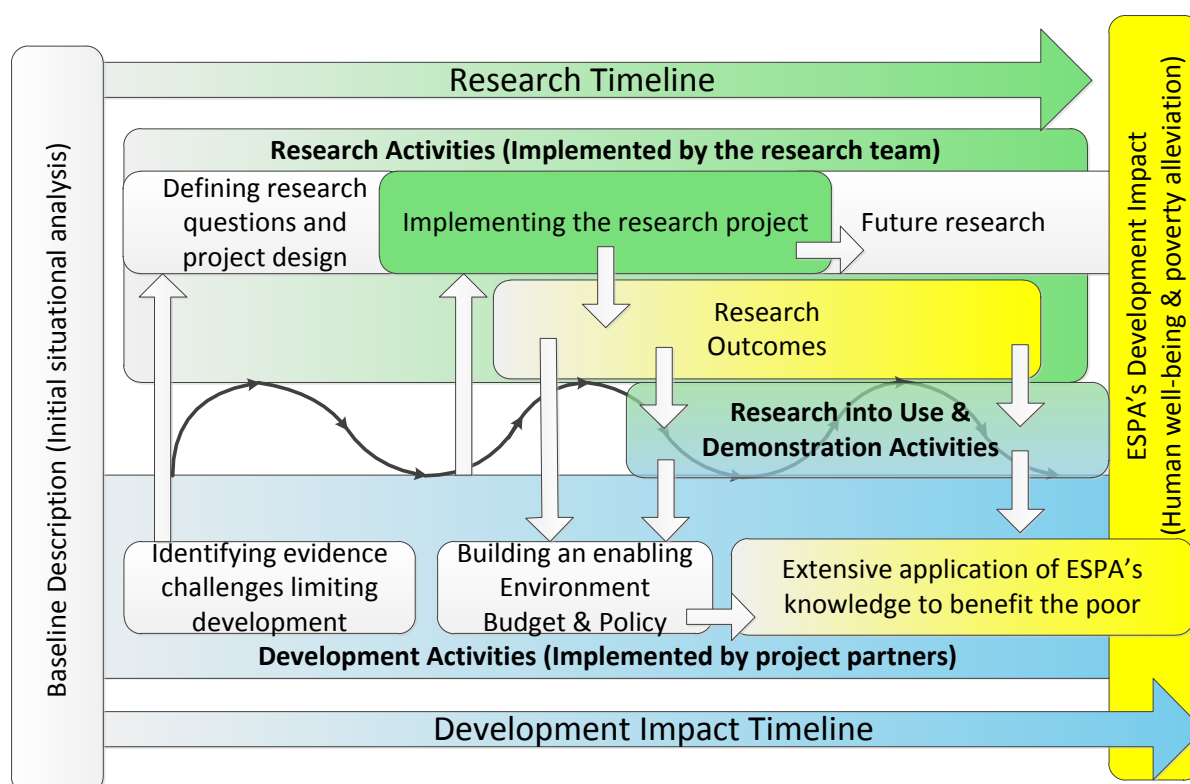

Figure 8   Timelines for research and development impact in a generic ESPA project

For this reason, guidance is given here (Figure 8) on what ESPA projects should do at different stages of implementation, and how they can interact with development project partners, to enhance the impact of their research.

Lessons for ESPA projects that emerge from this understanding include:

- **Focus on research**. While ESPA is a research programme, and as such the **majority of project activity will relate to undertaking research to generate new knowledge** and other research outcomes, planning of the research project must include planning for activities to build development impact. Figure 8 maps out the timeline for projects, and can help project staff to plan impact activities, identifying what they can do and when, and, critically, what activities lie outside the remit of a project and need to be supported by other stakeholders. This timeline includes the **following** elements:

- **Identifying evidence challenges**. ESPA's research should be designed to address one or more important evidence challenges that are identified by potential users of research in the development community (shown in blue).

- **Defining the research questions**. Research projects and their activities (shown in green) start with the design of a project which itself commences with the definition of specific research questions.

- **Understanding the context**. Research projects funded by ESPA will be expected to build up a Theory of Change that links research with impact. Part of this will be to document the baseline or initial situational analysis before the research commences. A critical aspect of the baseline situational analysis will be the identification of potential ultimate beneficiaries and their poverty status, so that it is possible to describe changes and the eventual development impact that can be attributed to the project.

- **Clarifying impact expectations with partners.** Researchers are expected to work with partners from the development community throughout the lifetime of a project to identify opportunities to enhance both the quality of research and its development impact. The research timeline helps to illustrate what is expected from projects and what they can deliver (yellow boxes) either from within the project (research outcomes) or in partnership with other stakeholders (development impact through application of new knowledge).

- **Identify opportunities for impact**. Projects are asked to identify the pathways to development impact and the main stakeholders they will work with to make this happen. It is recognised that development processes often work over timescales that are longer than most research projects and hence ESPA's projects are not expected to demonstrate large-scale development impact during the lifetime of a project. Instead, it is typically more useful to work with local stakeholders from the development community to put ESPA's research into use, often as a demonstration activity to provide better understanding of how and why the new knowledge leads to improvements in people's lives. The evidence from these demonstration activities can then further influence policy and practice leading to much more extensive application of ESPA's knowledge to benefit the poor.

Three common pathways within the remit of projects are illustrated in Figure 8. These are:

- **Informing policy and the enabling environment for development activities**. Much of the new knowledge generated from ESPA's research should be effective in influencing policy budget allocations.

- **Research into use and demonstration.** It is often necessary to demonstrate how new knowledge can benefit people. Research into use activities provide the opportunity to demonstrate the value of research and are normally conducted in partnership with other stakeholders from the development community.

- **Influencing future research.** Some research projects will identify additional knowledge gaps that require additional research.

> **Projects need to ensure that planning and managing for impact is given appropriate priority, running alongside the processes for planning and managing research.**

Impact work plans

The ESPA Directorate and projects will generate programmes of work designed to build impact. For projects, this will have been described as their Pathway to Impact statement in the application for funding. The Directorate will assist projects to use their Pathway to Impact statement to develop a Theory of Change for each project. The Theory of Change documents will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis. The Directorate's own Impact activities and Theory of Change will be designed to support and enhance projects and will also be reviewed on an annual basis.

Projects should seek early and effective engagement with key stakeholders to build impact partnerships. Wherever possible, this should be at the earliest stage during the design and implementation of projects or activities.

> **Projects will be expected to ensure that appropriate resources (financial and staff time) are reserved for impact-related activities.**

How ESPA projects will build and document impact

	Actions	Detail and Benefits
People & Partnerships	**Building and supporting partnerships** to plan and implement ESPA research	Projects will need to establish and support broad-based international and interdisciplinary partnerships in order to deliver research that responds to the challenges in ESPA's Knowledge Framework. Projects should involve potential users of research and knowledge intermediaries from the earliest phases of research planning and practice.
	Capacity Strengthening for ESPA research and to build impact	Projects will need to invest resources to strengthen the capacity of researchers, knowledge users and their institutions to produce new knowledge and then put it to use. In this context, capacity strengthening assists key stakeholders to (a) conduct ESPA research and (b) use ESPA knowledge to improve the lives of the poor.
	Theory of Change	Projects will develop a Theory of Change to assist in conceptualising and delivering impact. Starting with a situational analysis, projects will identify stakeholders *who* have an interest in the application of ESPA research, then *how* they will use new ESPA knowledge and *what* projects will need to do to make this happen. Each project's Theory of Change will be updated at least on an annual basis.
Research into Use	**Research into Use**	Projects will be expected to work with the key stakeholders identified in their **Impact Stakeholder Map** to build impact, putting their research and new knowledge into use. This process will feed into the documented change scenarios for each project.
	Research into Use planning and extension	Projects will be required to identify additional pathways to impact external to those funded as part of their project. Whilst some may be funded by the Directorate, it is recognised that projects will need to work with a range of stakeholders to identify *who* has the remit and opportunity to take this forward and *what* projects need to do to make it happen.
Capacity Strengthening	**Strengthening capacity for ESPA research**	Projects will need to build individual capacity for researchers to support interdisciplinary research linking ecosystem services and poverty alleviation. Providing researchers with appropriate skills and experience will contribute to their professional development and enhance the quality and relevance of research produced by ESPA projects. Projects may also host ESPA Fellows.
	Strengthening capacity to put ESPA's research into use	Projects will need to work in partnership with potential users of ESPA research to enhance the uptake of research. ESPA researchers will need to produce non-academic outputs which are adapted to the needs of users, whilst development stakeholders will need to incorporate new knowledge from ESPA into policy and practice. Projects can apply for additional funding for putting research into use from ESPA's Regional Opportunity Fund.
	Working with other stakeholders to fill additional capacity strengthening needs	Projects are likely to identify capacity strengthening needs that lie outside the remit of ESPA research projects. They can work with the ESPA Directorate and other development actors to find ways of meeting these needs.
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.
Evidence	**Evidence products and events**	Projects will be expected to produce a range of evidence products and events intended to inform key stakeholders and assist them in building development impact through the application of ESPA research and knowledge.
	Monitoring and evaluation by projects	Internal monitoring and evaluation will assist researchers to understand how well their projects are progressing and to identify opportunities to enhance their research and development impact. These lessons will be discussed with the ESPA Directorate as part of the regular reporting cycle for projects.
	Data and Evidence generated by projects will be deposited with the Data, Evidence and Partnership portal	Projects will need to report and provide evidence only once. The Directorate will ensure that information is linked to project pages and used to meet all the reporting requirements of funders. This approach will simplify reporting for projects, enhance the visibility and quality of evidence, and provide a more comprehensive story of ESPA's overall impact.

How the ESPA Directorate will enhance the programme's overall impact

	Actions	Detail and Benefits
People & Partnerships	**Global Forum**	The Global Forum will provide opportunities for stakeholders to interact and share their knowledge and experience which is relevant to ESPA. It will be used to make links between projects and other stakeholders to enhance the overall impact of projects and the programme.
	The ESPA Director will have regular meetings with the PIs of all ESPA projects	The six monthly meetings are to review progress and identify opportunities to enhance the research conducted by projects and opportunities for impact. The ESPA Director will provide feedback on progress, and help projects to identify synergies with other projects and processes, and make links with other stakeholders who could use their research and knowledge to enhance impact.
	Regional Evidence Brokers	The ESPA Directorate will appoint Regional Evidence Brokers in South Asia and South and Eastern Africa working with projects and potential users of research to build ESPA's impact.
Research into Use	**ESPA's Research into Use Strategy** will provide guidelines to ESPA projects	Projects will have access to methods known to work within ESPA's context and be able to benefit from the experience generated by the Directorate and other projects. A strategic approach to putting research into use will create opportunities for lesson learning to further enhance impact.
	Regional Opportunity Fund grants provided by the ESPA Directorate	Projects will be able to obtain additional resources to capture unexpected opportunities to enhance impact. The Directorate's funds will mainly be used to promote engagement with new stakeholders, including promoting links between ESPA projects.
	Theory of Change and Story of Change will be documented by projects with support from the Directorate	Projects will be assisted in documenting the process of building impact. The resulting "Story of Change" will describe how their research and new knowledge is being put to use, and lessons learnt will be extended to other stakeholders and processes.
Capacity Strengthening	**Strengthening capacity for ESPA research**	The ESPA Directorate will administer a group of ESPA Fellowships which will be linked to existing ESPA projects.
	Strengthening capacity to put ESPA research into use	The Directorate's support for research into use activities will include capacity strengthening components to assist projects and other stakeholders to make better use of new knowledge generated by ESPA.
	Working with other stakeholders to fill additional capacity strengthening needs	The Directorate will identify other sources of support for capacity strengthening and make these known to ESPA projects as a way of meeting additional demand that cannot be met within the project.
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.
Evidence	**Generating evidence of ESPA's impact** through research and synthesis activities	The Directorate will provide support to projects to generate evidence of the value of ESPA's research and its impact. Small Evidence and Impact Research Grants (EIRGs) will be funded. Additional evidence will be generated by the Directorate's dedicated Impact and Knowledge researchers.
	Capturing and securing evidence through the ESPA Knowledge Portal.	The ESPA website will be used to provide projects with a portal for reporting and capturing evidence of research and impact. Projects will only need to report once and the systems will be designed to enhance the quality of evidence and its visibility and accessibility. The Data Evidence and Partnership Coordinator will assist projects in this process.

Visit www.espa.ac.uk/impact for additional resources in support of this Impact Strategy.

ESPA Impact Resources currently available include:
- ESPA Knowledge Strategy
- ESPA Communication Strategy
- ESPA Vision Statement
- ESPA Capacity Strengthening Information Note
- ESPA Research Into Use Strategy

Other resources are available from ESPA's funders:
- ESRC Impact Toolkit: http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/tools-and-resources/impact-toolkit
- NERC Pathways to Impact guidance: http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/application/pathwaystoimpact.asp
- DFID Research into Action: http://www.researchtoaction.org/
- RCUK Impact Framework: http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/framework/framework.pdf
- RCUK "What do we mean by impact": http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/kei/impacts/Pages/meanbyimpact.aspx

Additional resources:
- Theory of Change   http://www.theoryofchange.org/

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