



WHAT IF FIGHTING POVERTY AND
PROTECTING THE PLANET WERE ONE
AND THE SAME?

A photograph of two children wading in the ocean. The child on the left is wearing a light blue shirt and dark shorts, and the child on the right is wearing a yellow shirt and shorts. They are both bent over, looking down at something in the water. The sky is a deep blue with large, white, fluffy clouds. The water is a dark blue with gentle ripples. In the foreground, there are some dark, rocky objects in the water. The text "BECAUSE THEY COULD BE..." is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font across the middle of the image.

BECAUSE THEY COULD BE...

In developed countries the globalised economy has broken the link between human survival and local environments - yet in the world's poorest nations, many millions are still utterly reliant on their surroundings.

They provide life's essentials such as food, fuel and clean water, as well as offering the means to make a living through farming, forestry, hunting or fishing.

In addition, these local habitats often provide naturally life-saving protection from drought, disease, famine and flooding.

This close relationship is true for most of the vulnerable people of the world, and it is the connection between livelihoods and nature that offers us an unrivalled opportunity to combat poverty.

By managing ecosystems for the services they provide to people, many of the world's poorest could find ways out of poverty and onto sustainable pathways towards prosperity.

Such smarter conservation would also protect the future of the planet's vital natural functions - by safeguarding the major biodiversity hotspots and globally important carbon stocks that are found across the developing world.

To achieve this, however, requires understanding - real understanding - of how people use and value their surroundings, the conflicts that arise over natural resources, and the best policy and financial instruments for generating these win-win situations.



Recognising this need, the UK Government established the Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation (ESPA) research programme in 2010.

This seven year investment funds a variety of projects right across the global south. Between them they show how the suite of benefits accrued from the natural world could allow the poor the chance to lift themselves permanently out of poverty, and in ways that protect the future of the planet's vital natural functions.

Wherever it is based, each ESPA project shares a commitment to breaking down barriers, creating development impact and sharing its learning.

Projects start by assembling a team of experts from around the globe whose blend of skills - anything from accountancy to zoology - is perfectly suited to tackle the poverty challenge at hand.

Next, they create development impact by working closely with local communities, interest groups and policymakers so the evidence they generate feeds directly into decision making processes, and results in targeted action and on the ground solutions.

And they disseminate this knowledge widely, so it crosses national, academic and cultural boundaries - meaning the lessons learnt in one country can improve the wellbeing and livelihoods of further millions elsewhere.

To date ESPA has funded several hundred researchers working across 60 projects in over 20 countries.

- Research in Kenya which has led to the world's first community based carbon trading scheme for mangroves - a vitally important habitat for both local livelihoods and global climate change.
- Work in Asia that has created another first: an environmental health index - akin to the financial world's Dow Jones or FTSE 100 - that allows policymakers to monitor the various impacts unconstrained economic growth has had on beneficial natural services.
- In Ghana, ESPA has shown that the fledgling sugarcane biofuel industry - whilst increasing wealth short term - could permanently damage ecosystems and livelihoods through its unsustainable water demands.
- Working closely with the Bolivian government, ESPA researchers have shown the importance of linking social concerns to Payment for Ecosystem Services schemes, and in particular REDD+, which has stimulated debate on this issue throughout Latin America.
- Whilst in Zambia, unsuccessful attempts to grow *Jatropha* more widely as a biofuel crop have led to some unintended consequences - as its more traditional use in soap manufacture has been recognised by ESPA as improving health in the poor communities where it is grown.

Find out more at www.espa.ac.uk/projects

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Whether it's crop pollination or carbon markets, ecotourism or energy, flood prevention or food security, ESPA's research is helping alleviate poverty, empower communities and support sustainable ecosystems.

ESPA is funded through a partnership between the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), and is accredited as part of the Living with Environmental Change Programme (LWEC).

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