

Pro-poor Rewards for Environmental Services in Africa (PRESA)

Key activities and guiding principles for linking science and policy for PRESA



PRESA - Pro-poor Rewards for Environmental Services in Africa is working at sites in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Guinea to facilitate fair and effective agreements between stewards and beneficiaries of environmental services. Voluntary, conditional and negotiated agreements can reward poor farmers for good land use practices, while ensuring a clean and sustainable supply of environmental services for local and global communities.

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How can science be harnessed to generate pro-poor rewards for environmental services? How can boundary organizations involved in the PRESA project effectively link science with the actions of learning institutions? How should these boundary organizations operate to reconcile the supply of science and the demand for it? And how can poor communities in general, benefit from their work? This policy brief addresses these important questions.

Introduction

Boundary work is undertaken by individuals and organizations that are committed to fostering productive linkages among the worlds of science, practice and policy. It involves two-way communication, negotiation between and among stakeholders, and mediation, enabling multiple knowledges and values to be shared and co-produced among stakeholders without jeopardizing the legitimacy or integrity of anyone involved (1, 2). Successful boundary work is often attributed to boundary agents who straddle the multiple and varied boundaries between stakeholders, translating, communicating and facilitating linkages between knowledge and action (3). Such work can be professionally perilous for the individuals involved, since they are working at the frontiers between the very different worlds and reward systems of science, practice and politics. Effective boundary organizations support boundary agents by providing both training and "safe spaces" where politically or scientifically sensitive matters are pursued (4).





What is the work that boundary organizations are trying to accomplish?

There is a wealth of scientific knowledge regarding environmental services that needs to be linked with the knowledge and actions of policy makers and resource users. Boundary organizations exist to make this link and therefore must focus on strategies on how to do this best. In PRESA, the main role of boundary organizations is to carry out work that can generate pro-poor mechanisms for rewarding environmental services, so that society as a whole can benefit from such services. In practice, this role is broken down into smaller, specific boundary spanning activities that are linked to the project's outputs. In a real world setting, boundary organizations are also involved in project management and coordination, which are necessary to achieve the boundary work.

In PRESA, multiple boundary organizations are brought together to accomplish the boundary work of integrating science, practice and policy, and their interactions are diverse. Boundary organizations interact for different purposes, at different frequencies and at different geographic scales. On one hand, the diversity of boundary organizations in PRESA provides enormous opportunities as they bring with them their knowledge, experience, and resources, but on the other hand, there are challenges in leveling the knowledge field, in allocating the boundary functions, and in synchronizing their activities to effectively perform the boundary work that is linked to the objectives of PRESA. It is thus important that they agree on a common agenda that defines the boundary work that needs to be done, and the ways in which the work is to be carried out.

Objectives of the Pro-poor Rewards for Environmental Services in Africa (PRESA) Project

PRESA is generating and sharing knowledge to build capacity on Payments for Ecosystem Services in Africa and beyond. It has the following aims:

- 1. Landscape-level engagement:** Foster the development, implementation and assessment of workable environmental service agreements in four core landscapes and four associate landscapes in the highlands of East and West Africa.
- 2. Policy and private-sector engagement:** Catalyze policy support and private-sector participation in environmental service agreements in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Guinea.
- 3. PRESA Community of practice:** Provide proactive and responsive support to the dissemination and application of assessment tools, negotiation methodologies, prototype mechanisms and monitoring tools among a PRESA community of practice, including other IFAD projects, regional and national networks, NGOs and national organizations active in the innovation of new approaches to pro-poor rewards for environmental services in the highlands of East and West Africa.

Five key activities and guiding principles for boundary organizations in PRESA

In the PRESA project, boundary organizations agreed on 5 key activities and guiding principles for effective and coordinated boundary work:

I. Engaging different types of stakeholders

1. Identify various stakeholders at different levels; understand their “stake” and interests and positions in the landscape to gain a fair sense of how they might be committed to participate in PRESA activities.
2. Expect that stakeholders have different types and levels of knowledge, interests, ambitions, resources as well as limitations. Managing differences means managing “hybrids” or objects that contain technical, social and policy elements - identify strengths that can be built upon, and determine where support is most needed.
3. Help stakeholders quantify the benefits of participating, and gain an understanding of social or hidden costs and benefits of participation.
4. Ensure that stakeholders feel collective ownership and accountability of process and outcomes.

II. Capacity-building

5. Different types of stakeholders have different types and levels of knowledge, and therefore have different capacity building needs. Identify knowledge gaps and individual capacity building needs and use these as a basis for capacity building.
6. Build upon, and enhance capacities of existing local institutions that have boundary spanning functions - they can be well placed to performing site level boundary work.

III. Knowledge production and sharing

7. Differences in knowledge can lead to conflicts and may complicate situations/relationships; encourage healthy debate and ensure that all interests are taken under consideration; but at the same time, guard the permeability of the boundaries of knowledge systems.
8. Boundary objects reflect the knowledge, experiences, ambitions and aspirations of different stakeholders that create them. These are tangible objects created to facilitate knowledge sharing and understanding with others across boundaries; ensure that these are produced in a collaborative way.

9. Provide a safe space for sharing lessons and intellectual inquiry.

10. Translate and communicate technical knowledge in layman’s language so that it can be easily put into use by different actors e.g. policy makers, farmers, etc. Similarly, policy ideas should be translated and communicated to technical audiences and to local people.

11. Make “feed-backing” a routine task, and employ reflexive analysis to develop alternative solutions to problems.

IV. Communication, coordination and networking

12. Activities at the local and national level need effective coordination; assign and identify local level boundary agents that can provide a direct link with national level boundary organizations.

13. Use language that is neutral to all stakeholders; encourage use of local language when communicating with local people.

14. Create a knowledge-sharing culture among partners working around PRESA through an open and flexible communication system that responds directly to stakeholder needs. Encourage and enable collaborators to use the interactive PRESA website to learn about activities at other sites, access research and tools, and contribute their own experiences.

15. Build on existing networks of individuals and groups working around PRESA; link these networks with the broader PRESA network coordinated by ICRAF and partners.

V. Brokering ES sellers and buyers

16. Identify local resources and use these to leverage external support. Resources can be financial, technical, existing social networks, or policies.

17. Strengthen links between ES sellers with buyers from the public sector; aligning public sector knowledge and interest requires a different type of engagement that still allows free flow of ideas.

Boundary work in PRESA - helping local buyers and sellers seal the deal with the PES Transaction Guide

Partners within the PRESA network are working together to bridge local and technical knowledge to facilitate workable PES agreements. PRESA collaborators have produced a series of template contracts to help buyers and sellers of environmental services, and their intermediaries, set up fair and legal contracts. These templates, covering different types of environmental services and parties, are being collectively published as a 'PES Transaction Guide'. The guide will be especially useful for smaller organizations that may not have the legal expertise to design their own agreement. The templates were developed by partners from international NGOs, and researchers who have been working closely with local communities in Kenya, Tanzania and Malawi on PES. Most importantly, the templates are a living document and therefore meant to be adapted by local practitioners to suit local circumstances. As such, the final contract in each case is the product of collaboration between stakeholders representing a range of interests. The templates bridge technical managerial knowledge (MEK) of relevant laws and regulations with local ecological knowledge (LEK). They aim to create working and equitable PES deals in either the public or private domain. [note: the guides are in the process of being published, and will be released in late 2009]

Photo: © M. Makela (PRESA)

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PRESA sites in Africa

