The CEM Deputy Chair Madhav Karki (Asia Strategic Support) and CEM member, South Asia Mr. Jyotiraj Patra (Regional Evidence Advisor-South Asia) for the DFID funded Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation (ESPA) global research programme led and facilitated an ESPA-convened Research-Policy Dialogue on Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) in Nepal on 23 April 2017. The event was jointly organized by IUCN-Nepal, IWMI, ICIMOD, WWF-Nepal and other local NGOs partners. The dialogue was organised to facilitate collective learning and sharing of PES-related lessons among a cross-section of stakeholders, including the high level decision makers from different agencies in the Government of Nepal and identify opportunities for long-term research-policy-practice interface to support PES policy design and implementation in Nepal.

Dr. Madhav Karki, one of the conveners of the workshop highlighted the opportunities and scope for research- and practice-based evidence to engage with and inform the Government’s draft PES Policy and action plan and stressed the need for a collective research-policy engagement in the country to make effective use of evidence in policy. This can help develop long-term and meaningful coordination, collaboration and sharing among stakeholders engaged in PES and PES-related activities in Nepal leading to sustainable mainstreaming of PES in to larger environment and development policy challenges in Nepal, including the need to properly value and use ecosystem services in planning and implementing key infrastructure development plans such as hydro-power and other critical infrastructure such as urban water supply in Nepal.

Mr. Jyotiraj Patra, welcomed the dignitaries and participants and thanks everyone for their time and interest. In his opening remarks, he shared an overview of the ESPA programme, including the programme’s efforts to make research more policy-relevant and action-oriented in various contexts.
The high level policy oriented workshop was inaugurated by Hon Dr. Arzu Rana Deuba, Member of Parliament, Nepal who congratulated the organisers for organizing a timely dialogue coinciding with the on-going drafting process of the PES policy by the Govt. of Nepal. She also highlighted the need for more gender inclusive PES policy as women play big role in management of natural resources in Nepal. Dr. Prabhu Budhathoki, Member, Nepal Planning Commission, Govt. of Nepal underscored the need for robust evidence base on PES and its timely sharing with the government to help them better understand the pros and cons of PES and ways PES initiatives could be more inclusive and sustainable in Nepal. Dr. Maheswar Dhakal, head of the Environment and Biodiversity Division, Govt. of Nepal in his keynote presentation outlined the definitions and key characteristics of PES in the context of Nepal. He informed the audience that argued that Nepal offers some of the good cases in terms of PES instruments being part of infrastructure development such as a number of hydro power plant based indigenous PES modes and experiences and suggested to develop better understanding and documentation on the links between forests and the ecosystem services it provide putting more emphasis on the demand side, not the supply side. Mr. Kamal Jung Kunwar, Chief Conservation Officer, Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park (SNNP) Office shared his views on the urgent need to conserve the only major national park in the Kathmandu valley and source of water for its growing population by sustainably developing the mechanism for using and benefit sharing of the ecosystem services it generates by maintaining the ecological integrity of the Park for long term wellbeing including cultural preservation of Kathmandu city population that has many UNESCO designated World Heritage sites. The interactive workshop had a number of stakeholder discussion session that agreed on the following actions points:

1. Develop the most appropriate forum to carry forward the evidence-to-action initiative in Nepal.
2. Continue discussion with the relevant Govt. of Nepal agencies regarding the involvement of the most appropriate GoN agency to lead the PES policy development and mainstreaming initiative;
3. Establish an electronic, Google group on PES Discussion forum to initiate discussions, exchanges and learning among interested stakeholders in Nepal.
4. Initiate consultation with GoN/ADB funded Bagmati River Basin Improvement Project and Ministry of Urban Development based River Basin Organization for upper Bagmati River to discuss convening a complementary PES initiative in the Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park (SNNP) to address the critical ecosystem services security for the fast growing population of Kathmandu valley.