

IUFRO-SPDC Training Workshop

“Working effectively at the Interface of Forest Science and Forest Policy”

Sabah, Malaysia

Final Report

June 2007



1. Introduction

IUFRO's Special Programme for Developing Countries (IUFRO-SPDC) in cooperation with the Asia Pacific Association of Forestry Research Institutions (APAFRI), the Malaysian-German Forestry Education Project (MG FEP University Malaysia Sabah and German Agency for Technical Cooperation), and the Sabah Foundation (YS) organized a training workshop on "Working effectively at the interface of forest science and forest policy."

Given the increasing demand for scientific information for policy formulation at local, national and international levels, this training event aimed at providing concepts and methods to researchers on how to plan, conduct, and organise research activities so that results can more quickly and easily be transformed into usable information for problem-solving and policy-making. Although not all research is specifically focused on policy-relevant questions, best practices in transforming research results into usable information can increase the impact of science on forest policy and improve the practice of forestry, thereby creating more value for society from forest and tree-related research. Towards this end, the training workshop specifically aimed at improving the understanding of policy processes and the roles scientists can play in informing such processes.

The training workshop was held in the Maliau Basin Field Studies Centre, located in Central Sabah, Malaysia, from 4 to 8 June 2007. Generous sponsorship for this initiative was provided by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the USDA Forest Service and the German Government through the German Agency for Technical Cooperation. The Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) through its Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, and the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE) contributed with technical expertise and provision of trainers and resource persons. The Sabah Foundation and the Malaysian-German Forestry Education Project at the University Malaysia Sabah provided local logistics and organisational support. In total, twenty-two forest scientists, practitioners and educators from eight countries in South and Southeast Asia (Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri-Lanka and Vietnam) attended the training workshop.

During the first two days of the workshop, participants heard and discussed international, national and local forest-related policy processes, facilitated by Dr. Michael Kleine (IUFRO-SPDC), Dr. Simmathiri Appanah (FAO), Dr. Moira Moeliono (CIFOR) and Mr. Bastiaan Louman (CATIE). Emphasis in the presentations and discussions was placed on the information needs of such policy processes as well as past and present efforts to mobilise policy-relevant information. The participants were also introduced to a "best practices guide" for working effectively at the interface of forest science and forest policy. These guidelines have been developed and published by the IUFRO Task Force on the subject (IUFRO Occasional Paper No. 17, 2005: <http://www.iufro.org/publications/series/occasional-papers/en/>) explaining ways and means to improve the work at the science-policy interface.

The third day of the workshop was dedicated to exploring the forest areas around the Field Studies Centre. The Maliau Basin Conservation Area is a 58.000 ha primary forest in the

heart of Borneo and considered one of the most diverse terrestrial ecosystems on earth. The area has been placed under full protection and today serves for nature tourism and scientific studies. Among the participants several groups were formed, each undertaking guided activities such as a canopy walk, trekking to the top of the Maliau Basin Rim, and wildlife watching.

The fourth and fifth days of the workshop were dedicated to the application of the best practices on science-policy and the participants discussed their experiences with forest policy processes in their own countries. Based on the presentations prepared by them prior to the workshop, they analyzed how well these experiences matched with the IUFRO Task Force's guidelines and where and how they could improve their own work to become more effective in the science – policy interface.

2. Policy Processes (Day 1 and 2)

The sessions commenced with an introductory presentation by M. Kleine on the IUFRO-SPDC Training initiative on science-policy. According to its new strategy, IUFRO has increased its efforts to strengthen communication and links with policy-makers and society at large. Towards this end, the various IUFRO units have embarked on activities in support of the science-policy interface. IUFRO-SPDC has initiated science-policy training in order to assist scientists in developing countries to enhance their contribution to local and regional policy-making and practical forest management.

The IUFRO Special Project on World Forests, Society and Environment (IUFRO-WFSE) - a network of over hundred social scientists and policy specialists – has analysed ongoing changes in the forestry sector worldwide and published a comprehensive scientific book and policy brief. Some of the results of this project were presented during the first session. A major change in paradigm is that forestry has evolved from a technology-focused subject to one that needs to take into account social, economic and ecological dimensions in order to be able to contribute to sustainable development and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Scientists need to follow this trend by pursuing more multidisciplinary and client-oriented research at different scales. In the Asian context the WFSE Project identified the following mayor policy issues:

- Forest policies should be based on a medium to long term vision.
- National policies and institutions should support the market environment, for e.g. fuel wood markets.
- Greater attention needs to be paid to forests' role on securing economic prosperity and social cohesion.
- Forest policies and institutions need to be more dynamic and responsive to changes in population, resource base, technology and values.
- International collaboration is necessary to eliminate illegal logging.

2.1 International Policies

M. Kleine explained the different international forest policy initiatives since their establishment through the United Nations in the early 1970s. Different international conventions exist such as those on climate change, desertification and biodiversity. Thus far, no such convention has been agreed upon for the sustainable development of forests but the United Nations Forum on Forests is currently discussing a non-legally binding instrument for the protection and sustainable management of all types of forests. M. Kleine further stressed how scientists, often coordinated by IUFRO, have contributed to these discussions through providing essential information on the status and trends of different components of the forest sector. As an example he mentioned IUFRO's participation in the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and the recently established joint initiative on science and technology. This initiative specifically aims at assessing available scientific information and producing state-of-knowledge reports on issues of high concern to international policy and decision-makers.

2.2 National Forest Programs

At the national level, the national forest programs (nfp, supported through the FAO facility) are considered to be the most current and relevant process aimed at the formulation and implementation of policies to foment sustainable forest management. S. Appanah introduced the subject, indicating that nfp is a generic term for a wide range of approaches to sustainable forest management within different countries, to be applied at national and sub-national levels based on the following principles:

- Broad intersectoral approach at all stages (formulation of policies, strategies, plans of action, implementation, monitoring and evaluation);
- Implemented in the context of each country's socio-economic, cultural, political and environmental situation;
- Integrated into wider programmes for sustainable land use, in accordance with chapters 10 to 15 of Agenda 21; and
- Long-term iterative processes taking into account activities of other sectors (e.g. agriculture, energy, industries).

S. Appanah illustrated the nfp concept by a discussion of strengths and remaining challenges of the Vietnam 5 Million Hectare Reforestation Program. Specific issues related to the consistency of the nfp with each country's national policies and international commitments and their research needs were later discussed in working groups. The main conclusion of these discussions can be summarized by saying that science can be used to improve policies and their implementation by:

- Definition of criteria for the implementation of policies;
- Monitoring and investigating impacts of policies on livelihoods and different forest management options/systems;
- Study alternative implementation tools (participatory management mechanisms, etc); and
- Study, document and present the issues (for example land and forest tenure, customary right issues need to be clarified).

2.3 Working at the Local Science-Policy Interface

M. Moeliono presented CIFOR's experiences in working with communities within the process of decentralization of forest management in Indonesia. One of the main challenges encountered by CIFOR was the instability of institutional arrangements and the increased conflicts occurring during the process of change. CIFOR's role is very much oriented towards facilitating different phases in the participative land use planning processes at district and village level. However, due to little positive response from local authorities and continued insecurity of land tenure, villagers were increasingly interested in receiving an income from unsustainable timber exploitation. The main lesson learned from these experiences is that relations and decisions cannot be steered in one single direction; rather, they are influenced by spontaneous reactions to often un-planned encounters. One of the scientists' roles, therefore, became that of facilitator of such un-planned encounters and identification of convergence of interests among stakeholder groups. This requires physical presence, flexibility, adequate learning opportunities, flexible facilitation strategies and a team that can maintain its motivation in spite of severe challenges.

M. Moeliono also showed that CIFOR, as a research organization, has been successful in influencing policy decisions at different scales and in different situations, but that there is no guarantee for success, nor is there one single approach. The traditional form of working in the science-policy interface (identify problem, study it, analyze it, write it up, [sometimes] give recommendations, and hope a policymaker will read them), was found to be too slow and ineffective. Successful experimental approaches included the following strategies:

- *Visible presence and engagement* with key audiences and processes at local, national, regional and international levels;
- *Building strategic links for dissemination* through training, communications, policy advocacy networks; and
- *Strategic partnerships* for conceptual development, redefinition and agenda setting.

The timing, attitude and pro-activity of partners as well as receptiveness of policy makers are also seen as essential elements for success.

2.4 The Policy Processes

The above outlined experiences show the importance of understanding how policies work at the different levels. B. Louman presented a model of the policy processes, stressing the importance of looking beyond the formulation of policies, to supporting, monitoring and evaluating their implementation and suggest improvements. It is a continuous, circular process. Unfortunately, too often scientists have limited their inputs to preparation of policy formulation through provision of essential information. Based on a review of several publications on policies and their contribution to alleviation of rural poverty and reduction of the rate of deforestation in the tropics, he mentioned the following reasons for the inefficiency of many existing policies:

- Value of forest is not sufficiently recognized;
- Interest groups are not enough involved in planning and decision making processes;
- Flawed (or no) analysis of policy effects and impacts;

- Lack of capacity of public and private institutions to implement policies;
- Power abuse in different implementation phases; and
- Most policies concentrate on the forest sector only.

3. Application of Best Practices (Day 4 and 5)

The second part of the training workshop was dedicated to the analysis of the participant's own experiences with research, policy-making and the contribution of science to shaping and implementing forest policies. Groups of 4-5 participants were formed and given the task to apply some of the best practices (as outlined in the Task Force Guidelines) within the research and policy environment they are familiar with. To assist them in the analysis, B. Louman presented the guidelines using experiences from Latin America as examples of both good practices of working effectively at the science-policy interface as well as problems resulting from poor practices.

Two weeks prior to the workshop participants had been asked to prepare a presentation on one of the following specific topics:

- Discuss the most relevant forestry-related policy changes in your country during the last five years. Show how scientists can contribute to their implementation through concrete examples of what scientist have done or should be doing.
- Present a draft proposal for interdisciplinary forest related research relevant to local or national policy makers allowing for the involvement of local stakeholders. Show how you propose to realize the interactions between the different research participants and other actors.
- Present a strategy that allows you to show impact of research in the science policy interactions. Please use your own research or that of somebody else as an example.
- Present a communication strategy for a research proposal that addresses the implications of the use and production of Soya or oil palm based bio-fuels in your region.
- Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of your institution in the field of the science-policy interface. Propose a strategy to strengthen the capacities of your organization in this field.

Based on this preparatory work by individual scientists, the groups elaborated a concise case study using the best practices guide. More specifically, the groups selected those guidelines that they felt were most relevant for the topic of their group. They also showed which of these guidelines were adhered to or could be adhered to in the near future within the framework of the topic and experiences discussed in the case study. On the last day, the results of this group work were presented and discussed in a plenary session. The work of the five groups is presented in the following sections.

3.1 Science's Contribution to Recent Policy Changes (Group 1)

This group discussed their case studies from China, Vietnam and Nepal, identifying a number of common elements in these cases including that policy processes

- are not well planned,
- are biased in favour of policy makers,
- receive little priority within the forest sector, and
- and do not consider enough available scientific information.

Following the discussions, the group selected a recent policy adjustment exercise on the export of forest products from China as their theme for the case study to be presented in the plenary. They found that little scientific information had been used to define the policy re-adjustment and that the impacts on the sector and above all on the small- and medium-size enterprises and their employees had not been considered. They suggest that a study is needed for identifying the factors that influence rural livelihoods and the contribution of different forest enterprises to the national and local economies. This information would help to improve the policy adjustment in favour of sustainable rural development.

The group also emphasised that the scientists' role goes beyond data generation and that therefore it is important to promote the involvement of scientists in the science-policy interface through:

- Capacity building of research institutions in communication skills, above all oriented towards communication of science to policy makers; and
- Creation of an incentive structure that rewards researchers for effectively informing the policy processes.

In addition, they felt that in this case it was particularly important for scientists to

- Promote understanding of the value of science in guiding policy decisions;
- Serve policy processes by producing synthesized information; and
- Play a role as facilitator of relationships among stakeholders and policy makers.

3.2 Interdisciplinary forest-related Research (Group 2)

This group discussed case studies from Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Malaysia and decided to formulate a joint research proposal for the three countries with focus on "natural forest management for multiple-use." The challenge in this project is to coordinator not only the involvement of the various scientific specialisations such as botany, silviculture, forest engineering, economics etc. but also other stakeholders like private forest management companies, forest departments and environmental NGOS. The group designed a project which allows for involvement of stakeholders right from the planning phase of the project. As pointed out in the presentation, the best practices on the selection of relevant research topics (Guidelines 1) and those on understanding policy processes (Guidelines 2) were felt to be highly relevant. However, their proposal was very much oriented towards the establishment of international and local stakeholder networks, suggesting the importance of best practices on communicative and collaborative research (Guidelines 2) as well. In the plenary discussion, it was highlighted that a mayor draw back for interdisciplinary research and

international proposals was the time needed to coordinate between researchers of different organizations and nationalities, without generally having the funds available for joint meetings prior to project approval.

3.3 Comparison of different Community Forestry Strategies (Group 3)

This group, dominated by participants from Sabah, Malaysia worked on a research proposal dealing with community forestry models partially prepared earlier by two of the group members. The research project was intended to assist in identifying and field-testing of improved community forestry programmes in Sabah. The need for such research is based on the fact that there is widespread encroachment into forest reserves in Sabah and the State Government has no effective policy in place with regard to the involvement of local communities in forest management. Several approaches to community-based forest management have been tested and their viability analysed in respect of the socio-economic benefit for the people; sustainability in terms of environment and forestry as well as acceptability by local people and likelihood for replication in other areas in Sabah. The group went on and outlined nine distinct phases within the research process and discussed which of the best practices guidelines would be most relevant to each of the research phases. Following that, the group evaluated the proposal in the light of these guidelines and indicated where the proposal needed further strengthening. This approach turned out to be a very useful tool to enhance the understanding of the best practices guide among the participants.

3.4 Communication Strategy for Use and Production of Oil Palm Fuels (Group 4)

This group was given the task of evaluating a research undertaking dealing with a very important emerging issue of land management in Southeast Asia. It is expected that the increasing global demand for bio-fuels will put tremendous pressure on forest resources for conversion into oil palm plantations. Negative effects on the livelihood of local communities and environmental quality will be a challenge for policy making and implementation. In their evaluation of research in support of policy making on bio-fuels, Group 4 used a similar approach compared to Group 3 proposing a useful sub-division of the best practices guidelines into those of relevance in research planning (i.e. taking place before the commencement of the actual research), during the research work, and after the research project has been completed. As was to be expected based on their topic that this group identified the guidelines on communicative and collaborative research as the most relevant for their project. Moreover, the group also correctly indicated that some aspects of the guidelines on the selection of relevant research topics (Guidelines 1) and the guidelines on the understanding policy processes (Guidelines 3) are very relevant too. In the discussion following their presentation, it was noted that some rules need further explanation and that it is worthwhile to translate the guidelines into simpler language. Above all, rules 2.5, 2.7, 3.5 and 3.6 appear to be open to different interpretations. In addition, the role of scientists as facilitators, rather than intermediaries, needs to be further explained.

3.5 Strengths and Weaknesses of Research Institutions in the Science-Policy Interface (Group 5)

This group started an analysis of research institutions from Vietnam, Malaysia and Pakistan and then selected the Pakistan case for further development. The group analyzed the performance of the Pakistan Forest Institute (PFI) in Peshawar against specific rules of the best practices guide (i.e. Rule 1.5; 2.1; 3.1; 4.1; 4.2; and 4.4), considering these rules to be the most relevant ones for the work in their institutions. Above all, Rule 4.1 (Research institutions should invest in building capacity to deliver/communicate science or science messages) appeared to be difficult to comply with for a research organization in developing country such as PFI, above all due to deficient funding.

4. Discussions and Lessons Learned

In general, the participants of the workshop expressed the view that the training workshop had fulfilled its objective in providing approaches to improve the scientist's work at the interface of forest science and forest policy. Most of the participants were excited about the idea of applying some of the guidelines immediately to improve the effectiveness of their own research work and strengthen the influence on policy makers as well as other potential users of research results.

The inclusion of sessions on policy processes was very useful to identify the scope of the workshop, although initially it may have contributed to some confusion on what exactly the guidelines stand for and how they should be applied. It needs to be stressed that the guidelines are meant to facilitate the interaction between researchers and policy makers, but not necessarily all need to be applied in the same case, nor are they a guarantee for success. In particular the **discussion on national forest programmes offered much scope to relate science to policy-making.**

While not all participants responded with equal enthusiasm to the **group tasks** sent to them two weeks prior to the workshop, it turned out to be a very **useful tool to support the analysis and understanding of the guidelines.** This analysis was done during the workshop and the presentation of examples on the use of the guidelines by the facilitator was an essential tool. Including these, and new Asian examples in a training document that can be sent to the participants prior to future workshops may make it possible to have the participants arrive better prepared, so that workshop discussions can concentrate on how guidelines have been applied in different case studies. This is felt to be more useful than the current theoretical application of guidelines to existing policy or research case studies. Thus, the **current draft of the training document should also include examples from other regions of the world** (not just from Latin America), or, preferably, different versions of the document with specific regional focus should be produced.

The selection of participants is important for the success of the workshop. While initially not so intended, the **current mix of persons with much and others with little practical research or decision-making experiences turned out to be a very interesting one:** most of the enthusiasm for the preparation of case studies originated from the younger scientists,

setting the groundwork for the discussions; and opening the path for interesting discussions in which the more seasoned scientists and policy makers contributed their experiences. Thus, all could learn from each other, rather than only from the facilitators. Care should be taken that participants are selected with a genuine interest in the content of the workshop and with potential to disseminate the lessons learned to their colleagues.

The Maliau Basin Field Studies Centre provided an excellent service in terms of lodging and food as well as opportunities to get to know the surrounding forest landscape. One drawback experienced was the travel distance between Kota Kinabalu and the Centre (12 hours on the way out due to heavy rainfall and road works). This will be reduced once the road construction project has been completed.

Michael Kleine
Bastiaan Louman

ANNEX 1: WORKSHOP PROGRAM

Date	Topic	Content	Instructor
Monday June 4th 8.30-9.00	Registration and handout of materials		
9.00	Opening	Welcome by local host and coordinators Presentation participants	Waidi Sinun M. Kleine, M. Trockenbrodt
9.30	Introduction to the workshop	IUFRO-SPDC Training on Science-Policy Interface Objectives of the Workshop and Programme	M. Kleine B. Louman
10-10.30	Coffee break		
10.30-12.30	International policies	Challenges and issues facing forestry globally and in the Asian Region International policy frameworks and agreements	M. Kleine
12.30- 14.00	Lunch		
14.00-15.00	The policy process	How the policy process works and how scientists have been involved in it	B. Louman
15.00-16.00	National Forest Programmes	Presentation of NFP development in the region; how actively are scientists involved? Could they do more to improve NFP and policy formulation?	S. Appanah
16.00-16.30	Coffee break		
16.30-18.00	National Forest Programmes	Afternoon continued	
Tuesday June 5th 8.30-10.00	Research needs for national forest programmes	45 minutes of group work during which the group analyse a component of a national forest programme and prioritise the research needs; 45 minutes of presentations in the plenary	B. Louman M. Moeliono S. Appanah
10.00-10.30	Coffee break		
10.30-12.30	Stakeholder influence on policies	Based on case studies, it will be shown how multistakeholder processes can influence local government policies.	M. Moeliono
12.30-14.00	Lunch		
14.00-15.00	Stakeholder influence cont'd		M. Moeliono
15.00-16.00	Introduction to science-policy guidelines	Presentation of principal guidelines with some examples from Latin America	B. Louman
16.00-16.30	Coffee break		
16.30-18.30	Simultaneous topic sessions	This first parallel session is meant for the presentations, each of 15 minutes with 5 minutes for discussion (5 per group).	B. Louman M. Moeliono S. Appanah
Wednesday June 6th	Fieldtrip to Maliau Conservation Area		Local organizers

Date	Topic	Content	Instructor
Thursday June 7th 8.30-9.30	CIFOR's approach to influence policies	Presentation	M. Moeliono
9.30-10.00	Science-policy guidelines	Presentations on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selecting relevant research themes • Communicative and collaborative research • Understand serve and commit to policies 	B. Louman
10.00-10.30	Coffee break		
10.30-12.30	Working groups	Each group discusses the presentation of Tuesday within the framework of the IUFRO guidelines. Linking the guidelines to the presentations, the groups prepare a summary to be presented in the plenary session on Friday.	
12.30-14.00	Lunch		
14.00-14.30	Science-policy guidelines	Create organisational capacity	B. Louman
14.30-16.00	Working groups	Continuation of second working group session	
16.00-16.30	Coffee break		
16.30-18.30	Working groups	Continuation of second working group session	
Friday June 8th 8.30-10.30	Presentation working group results	Presentation and discussions	Working group
10.30-11.00	Coffee break		
11.00-12.30	Discussions	Create organizational capacity and culture: our role in improving the science-policy interface: training, information flow; implementation of policies.	B. Louman
12.30-14.00	Lunch		
14.00-15.00	Synthesis Workshop	Discussion of presentations and integration of experiences: lessons to be learned	B. Louman, M. Moeliono and M. Kleine
15.00-15.30	Closing of Workshop	Handing over of Certificates	M. Kleine, M.Trockenbrodt

ANNEX 2: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Training Workshop “Working Effectively at the Interface of Forest Science and Forest Policy”		
Maliau Basin Studies Centre, Sabah, Malaysia, 4-8 June 2007		
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