Pre-Congress Training Course

"Communicating forest research –
Making science work for policy and management"

Gympie Training Centre, Australia
02– 05 August 2005

Final Report
Background

Across the world, approaches to public affairs and technology sharing differ widely. But common to these approaches is the desire to develop awareness and understanding. Towards this end one needs to ask “What is the use of research if the results are not communicated properly to the people who need them?” Communicating properly involves more than sending out a publication or a thesis. Communicating properly involves matching information needs with supply and transforming research results into tailor-made information; information that the target group understands and is interested in.

Many organizations in developing countries working in the forest sector recognize the importance of science communication, but lack experience or capacity. Many forest researchers do not have extensive practical experience in public affairs and technology sharing. Other researchers have developed unique and highly successful approaches but do not have the opportunity to share what they have developed and learned. In order to address this issue, the IUFRO Task Force on PR in Forest Science has compiled a manual providing a toolbox and case studies of successful PR and communication efforts. This manual, published in June 2005 with the assistance of IUFRO-SPDC, provides the core content for a new IUFRO-SPDC course on communicating forest research aiming to promote the application of a wide range of PR and communication tools and to present experiences with PR work from around the world.

Against this background, a course on “Communicating forest research – making science work for policy and management” was held as a pre-congress training event at the Gympie Conference Centre, Australia, from 2 to 5 August, 2005. The course received basic funding from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland and in-kind contributions from Tropenbos International, the International Foundation for Science and the USDA Forest Service through provision of trainers and expertise, training material and assistance in course implementation.

Course objectives

Forest scientists are familiar with the concepts of basic communication and public relation tools and their practical application in forestry.

Resource persons

- Anneke Wieman, Communication officer TBI-Ghana
- Cynthia L. Miner, Communications director, USDA Forest Service
- Peter Wood, Consultant, IFS

Participants

In total, 10 participants took part in the communication training. The target group consisted of early- and mid-career scientists and practitioners from developing countries of Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America-Caribbean who are involved in forest-related research, educational programmes, and/or extension activities for forest policy and management. A detailed participants list is provided in Appendix 2.

Approach

The training was designed to be as participatory and interactive as possible. This resulted in many exercises, role-plays, participant presentations and group discussion in addition to the resource persons’ (PowerPoint) presentations. Each day the participants were asked to provide feedback. For that purpose a personal logbook was created in which the participants could write down their views on the sessions of that day and the eye-openers they had. The reflection sessions also provided valuable input (as examples and cases) for other sessions of the course. The participants were given the IUFRO Taskforce manual on PR and commu-
nication, the Proposal writing manual, hand outs and a CD including additional background material, all PowerPoint presentations, participants list, pictures taken during the course and media coverage on the Australian Television.

Programme
Due to the late arrival of one of the resource persons due to a strike at the airport in Johannesburg there had been a slight change in the programme. The final programme was as follows:

Monday 1 August
09.00-17.00 Arrival of participants at Gympie Training Centre

Tuesday 2 August
08.30-10.00 Introduction of participants
10.30-11.00 Why a training in communication?
11.00-12.30 External communication
Lunch
14.00-14.30 Welcome address
14.30-15.30 Media communication
16.00-17.00 Media communication continued
17.00-18.00 Preparations for the next day: select one success story and prepare a 5-minute presentation for the session on Wednesday afternoon

Wednesday 3 August
08.30-08.45 Reflection of the day before
08.45-10.00 Communication model, tools and planning
10.30-12.30 Popular writing
Lunch
14.00-14.30 Presentation skills
14.30-17.30 Presenting and commenting
17.30-18.00 Discussion success stories

Thursday 4 August
08.30-08.45 Reflection of the day before
08.45-10.00 Corporate communication
10.30-12.30 Intercultural and interpersonal communication
Lunch
14.00-15.30 Communication strategy
16.00-17.00 Communication evaluation
17.00-18.00 Continue development of communication strategy
**Friday 5 August**

08.30-08.45  Reflection on the day before  
08.45-10.00  Proposal writing 1: Presentation of IUFRO Handbook for Proposal writing  
10.30-12.30  Proposal writing 2: Content and writing the plan  
Lunch  
14.00-15.30  Proposal writing 3: Logical framework and follow-up  
16.00-17.00  Proposal writing continued  
17.00-18.00  Handing over certificates and closing remarks

**Participants’ evaluation**

An overall evaluation took place at the end of the course week, which basically followed the format of evaluation form as used in the other IUFRO-SPDC courses. In general the training course was very well received; it met the expectations of people to 80%-100%. They appreciated the interactive approach and the two manuals that were given out. A suggestion made was to give hand outs one-day prior to the session, which was implemented after the suggestion was done. Some participants mentioned that the time was too short for the course and one pointed to the differences in background knowledge as a constraint. Suggestions given for further SPDC trainings were: a course in Management of Research Stations and Research Facilities; a full week on proposal writing; more attention to presentations skills; and a training in using search engines. See Appendix 1 for more details on the participants’ evaluation.
APPENDIX 1 EVALUATION FORMS

Expectations

The participants indicated that their expectations were met by 80% - 100%.

My expectations are met by

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Workshop evaluation

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* The numbers indicate the number of people that ticked the concerning box.
What did you learn?

1. Many PR tools to choose for various communication needs
   Know the target group and the key message
   Popular writing – very important to me
   Logical framework – in proposal writing

2. To plan strategically, to think things through and always put the mutually planned programs on paper for common ownership and agreement on the plans

3. Log frame for Management & Monitoring;
   Writing is removing;
   Careful planning for dissemination of information during and beyond;
   Corporate Communication, communication strategy and tools;
   PR instruments – very useful.

4. 2-3 key messages, compelling lead;
   Posture and gestures (non-verbal communication) – realization of importance
   Logical framework for applying for funding
   Writing press release, popular writing

5. Non-verbal communication
   Presentation skills
   Proposal writing

6. I learned many things more that I expected. Those are:
   - Skill of presentation / communication
   - Writing a popular publication
   - Making communication strategy
   - Writing research proposal

7. Tools, methods for communications, needs of communication

8. The importance of developing a method for any kind of communication;
   Different tools for communication;
   A method for research proposals

9. I have learned about communication related to forestry research

10. I learned a lot from this course such as: communication external media, model etc. All sessions are very interesting and useful to apply to my current job when I will be back to my country.
WHAT DID YOU LIKE?

1. Almost all! This is a subject that I seldom think about but now is aware of and will be more alert in choosing the right PR tool.

2. The two manuals provided, the CD, as well as the interactive, non-boundary approach of the facilitators. The group dynamic exercises were good eye-openers.

3. Group interactions / participant involvement; good contents

4. Sharing by experienced reporter
   Presentation
   Game on ‘throwing and catching’ realizing others’ capacity!!
   Role play

5. Discussion and active work

6. What I liked from the training are:
   - making communication strategy
   - writing research proposal
   Both themes are very relevant with my present activity

7. Exercises: for me they were very interesting and I learned

8. The exercises help to get the knowledge
   The quality of the facilitators

9. I like doing exercise that made me more understand about what the facilitator explained

10. All the sessions

WHAT DID YOU DISLIKE?

1. I guess is too much food

2. Course materials should always be provided at least one day before so that the participants can study the contents prior to the class.

3. -

4. Long lectures without exercises or breaks
   Unprepared presentation

5. -

6. -

7. Different level of participants; in some cases the information was basic.

8. That I have not the same level of technology in my roomclass(?)

9. -

10. Time is short
Which subjects would you recommend for future SPDC trainings?

1. The course is already very pact with this time frame I guess all areas of communication are covered.

2. In a 4 day course at least a half-day field trip should be included. A course in Management of Research Stations and Research Facilities would be highly appreciated.

3. -

4. Role play, proposal writing, media communication

5. Presentation skills;
   Proposal writing skills

6. Writing research proposal (in 1 theme of course)

7. More emphasis in presentation skills and proposal writing. Tips for scientific publications.

8. Include training in using search engines

9. -

10. For project proposals we need much more time

What else would you recommend for future trainings?

1. Maybe extract the time a little maybe to 5 days.

2. Hopefully, trainings can also be conducted in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

3. -

4. Writing and presentation of proposal / research findings

5. More time for the course. I think 4 days are not enough for such important tasks

6. In my opinion, it is better to continue the same course with more improving subject with almost the same members. Thus, the result / impact of SPDC training can be evaluated.

7. -

8. -

9. More exercises during the class

10. More exercises during the class