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Report on

Science communication training for participants of the first Wayamba International Conference (WINC) on “Sustainable Development through Equitable Sharing”

and

the conference report

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<td>WINC conference - Kuliyapitiya, Sri Lanka</td>
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<td><strong>Report date:</strong></td>
<td>June 2015</td>
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Executive summary

As a part of BOBLME’s efforts to uplift the science skills of 8 partner countries, several trainings have been conducted at regional and national level on science communication skills. These include typically a 3-4 day training on scientific writing and another training of the same duration on science presentation. This started as a regional training. Since the regional trainings are intended for trainees from the key governmental agencies participating in BOBLME activities, national trainings give the opportunity to train a wider range of young scientists who may or may not be currently employed. Understanding this potential, BOBLME has been supporting national professional organizations with their conferences, and these conferences give an opportunity to train an already selected set of conference presenters to be trained. In the past, BOBLME has worked with Sri Lanka Association for Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (SLAFAR) and Wayamba University of Sri Lanka to hold similar training in Sri Lanka. Following the success of the former trainings and considering the number of participants that can be trained effectively in such local trainings, WUSL requested the financial assistance to conduct an international workshop under the theme “Sustainable Development through Equitable Sharing” and to train some selected oral presenters on presentation skills. Wayamba International Conference (WINC) was a great success despite being the maiden international conference of the university. A total of 516 abstracts were received and of that after a review process 321 abstracts were selected as oral and poster presentations. The participants represented 12 countries. In addition, during the two days of the conference a key note address and 7 key note speeches were delivered. The conference was attended by 716 participants. The pre-conference activity of presentation skills workshop was held at Tamarind Tree Hotel in Katunayake from 25 to 28 August 2014. A total of 32 participants were trained on presentation skills. This workshop was facilitated by 8 facilitators.
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### Acronyms used

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<td>BOBLME</td>
<td>Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIAT</td>
<td>International Centre for Tropical Agriculture</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMFRI</td>
<td>Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute</td>
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<td>JRF</td>
<td>Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAQDA</td>
<td>National Aquaculture Development Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>NARA</td>
<td>National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>SLAFAR</td>
<td>Sri Lanka Association for Fisheries and Aquatic Resources</td>
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<td>WINC</td>
<td>Wayamba International Conference</td>
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<td>WUSL</td>
<td>Wayamba University of Sri Lanka</td>
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1. Background

1.1. Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

Wayamba University of Sri Lanka (http://www.wyb.ac.lk/) has taken the responsibility for the smooth integration of graduates she produces into professional life, and hence into society as a very young higher education institution since its inception. The Wayamba Campus of the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka was established in 1994, merging the affiliated university college of the North Western Province situated at Kuliapitiya and Makandura. Faculty of Agriculture & Plantation Management and Faculty of Applied Sciences were the first two faculties established in the Wayamba Campus. As an affiliated university college, Wayamba continued to produce graduates with minimal facilities as well as with a very young staff. Only a handful of senior staff was available but they too were mostly from government departments and other academic institutions without much experience on academic affairs.

In 1999, the Wayamba Campus was given the full-fledged University status and the Wayamba University of Sri Lanka (WUSL) was established with the addition of two new faculties, Faculty of Livestock, Fisheries and Nutrition at Makandura, and Faculty of Business Studies & Finance at Kuliapitiya. Kuliapitiya premises are located 0.5 km from the city of Kuliapitiya, whilst Makandura premises are 2.5 km west of Pannala town in Negombo-Kurunegala route. The split of premises resulted in the University being placed at two strategic locations with central administration being placed at Kuliapitiya premises. From the point of establishment, WUSL implemented the policy of medium of instructions for all study programs offered at WUSL as English. This policy resulted in WUSL being sought after by students of all communities of the country, a feature visible in our students’ ethnic composition at all times. Today, nearly 2000 students study in two campuses at Kuliapitiya and Makandura. The University has more than 100 academic staff and non-academic staff.

The day to day functions as well as long term activities of the university are focused by university vision and are guided by our mission statement.

University vision ©

“To achieve and be recognized as a centre of excellence in higher education, research and development of technologies whilst training and developing human resources to meet national and global needs”.

1.2. WINC conference

It was with great pleasure that the Wayamba University of Sri Lanka announced its first International Conference on “Sustainable Development through Equitable Sharing” and it was held on the 29 and 30 August 2014. The targeted audience was academics, researchers and all the other stakeholders who met, discussed and exchanged views on the issues pertaining to the desired theme/s in an academic and professional environment.

The goals of this conference were to,

1. Gather all stakeholders to one common forum and open the issues of resource sharing challenges and the need for sustainable development
2. Empower stakeholders through better linkages
3. Improve the mind set of stakeholders to accept different views and norms
4. Highlight the importance of researched based evidence for decision making

Please find copy of the brochure in Figure 1.
Figure 1 Conference brochure
The WINC executive committee appointed for international collaborations for WINC planned four main activities to improve the science communication of the participants.

i. Presentation skills development workshop for authors of selected abstracts to be presented in WINC.

ii. Scientific writing workshop for selected presenters at WINC with abstracts qualified to develop into full papers.

iii. Scientific sessions with key note speech and plenary speeches and selected oral and poster presentations.

iv. Publication of manuscripts developed in the science writing workshop as a special compendium of selected papers of WINC.

Oral presentations and poster presentations

The conference was attended by participants from 12 countries. A total of 516 abstracts were received and after review 321 abstracts were selected for oral and poster presentations. For the first time in Sri Lanka posters were displayed as digital posters as a part of an on-going attempt to reduce the carbon footprint of the university.

The proceedings of the conference are annexed. (Appendix I)

1.3. WINC pre-conference training on science communication: effective presentation skills - Katunayake, Sri Lanka – 25–28 August 2014

Staff of Wayamba University (SLAFAR members) was the trainers and facilitators and BOBLME collaboratively organized, supported by the BOBLME Project, a workshop for the scientists. Selected staff members who had experience in delivering the module led the training workshop. Those who were selected to present their research findings in training workshops in previous years were mainly from fisheries and environmental sector, but WINC was open for all young scientists, regardless of sector, which was an advantage. It was a new experience for the researches as well as for facilitators and both parties were able to build up their self-confidence and improve the quality of the overall presentation. From the previous years, we have trained over 100 young scientists of the country and they mostly represented institutions like National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA), National Aquaculture Development Agency (NAQDA), and Universities where fisheries and aquaculture are taught. However, these workshops missed so many potential trainees from other sectors like, environment, socio economics and management, food production and processing sector who also work directly with resource users from aquatic environment. Accordingly, the organisers of WINC requested the facilitators of former workshops to provide them the opportunity to conduct the science presentation and writing workshops in association with Wayamba University. Hence the committee appointed for international relations and collaborations of WINC programme to organise this workshop from 26 to 28 August 2014 at Colombo as a three day residential workshop.

The pre-conference workshop was facilitated by 8 trainers. A total of 32 participants attended the workshop. This included three foreign participants from India and Pakistan. During the training adopting the same version of the science presentation skills workshop done regionally, participants were first given the theoretical knowledge on elements of a good speech. Participants then went on to make their 5 minute presentations which were presented on the last day. Each presenter was given time to present and also to get comments from the audience. Participants were also trained on handling audience.

From previous experience the facilitators had seen the improvements that have occurred to their presentations. We are also proud to say that trainees have set baselines for presentations in their respective organisations and are immediately recognised for their skills in presentation. Hence at the end of the BOBLME Project it will leave a legacy of having trained a large number of science
communicators in Asia, notably in Sri Lanka. This workshop also used the material developed by Prof. Peter Rothlisberg in training the participants.

2. Key outcomes

This conference can truly be declared as an international conference considering the number of international participants and papers. The benefits to the region were immense and at the same time students got a world class exposure to organising a conference. In addition to training the participants on science communication, there was another post conference activity on mathematics organised by the Department of Applied Sciences with the collaboration of Japanese participants.

2.1. Travel awards to participants

Travel awards for WinC 2014 were presented by BOBLME (The Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem) Project to cover their travel cost to pre-conference workshop and conference. These grants were specially offered to support the research development of foreign students and researchers. Following researchers were selected for travel awards.

2.1.1. Winners of travel awards

A total of 35 applications were received, and of that 02 participants were awarded with travel grants to workshop and conference by BOBLME.

1. Godbole Balasaheb Mukudrao, Mahatma Basweshwar College, Latur – 413512 (MS) India, presented “Studies in urban geography of Latur city of Maharashtra State of India with special reference to growth and morphology” on August 30, at 12.10 p.m. in Room 1-A (Session 58).

Profile:
Prof. Capt. Godbole B.M. is working as an Assistant Professor in Geography at Mahatma Basweshwar College since 1993. He has completed M.A. in Geography. He has published 15 research papers in national journals and 25 research papers in national level conferences. He is working as a reviewer of some international as well as national level journals.

2. Gaikwad Sunil Manikrao, Sanjeevani College Chapoli TQ. Chakur Dist. Latur (MS) India, presented “Effect of storage temperature on sensorial and microbial quality of standardized buffalo milk ‘Ujani Basundi’, a concentrated milk product of India”, on August 29, at 12.30 p.m. in Room G-B (Session 15).
Profile:
Dr Gaikwad S.M. is working as an Assistant Professor in Dairy science at Sanjeevani College since 2003. He has received Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship (JRF) during 2009-2011 from University Grants Commission, India to carry out his doctoral degree work. He was felicitated with Vidyabhushan Award by Indian NET/SET Association, Buldhana. He has completed M.Sc. in Dairy science. He pursued Ph.D. from Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University, Nanded in Dairy Science. He has published 19 research papers in international journals, 9 research papers in national journals and 6 research papers in national level conferences.

2.2. Key note and plenary speeches
All the abstracts of key note and plenary speeches are annexed with the programme book. (Appendix II)
Key note speech was delivered by Prof. Pascal Boeckx from Gent University of Belgium.

Plenary speeches:
Plenary one of the technical session was delivered by Prof. Mahesh Sooriyabandara from Toshiba Telecommunications Research Laboratory, Bristol, UK.
Plenary two of the technical session was delivered by Prof. E. Vivekanandan from Madras Research Centre of Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), India.

Plenary three of the technical session was delivered by Prof. Suichi Kawashima from Kyushu University, Japan.

Plenary four of the technical session was delivered by Prof. Pushparajah Thavarajah from North Dakota State University.
Plenary five of the technical session was delivered by Prof. Liam Sinclair from Harper Adams University.

Plenary six of the technical session was delivered by Dr Chris O’Brien from Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BOBLME) Project.

Plenary seven of the technical session was delivered by Dr Andrew Javis from International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), Colombia.
2.3. **Pre-conference workshop on science presentation**

In Sri Lanka unlike other Asian countries, women’s participation to science is high and this was very much reflected by the gender ratio of attendees to workshop. Of the 32 participants 17 were women.

In addition to this the participants were from universities of Sri Lanka, research institutions and all relevant government institutions. The 3 day workshop gave a life time opportunity for the participants to learn science presentation with hands on experience. The 8 facilitators drawn from different disciplines did an outstanding job of assisting the participants.

The 3 foreign participants from India and Pakistan valued the workshop very much and the outcomes of the final evaluation of the workshop by participant are as follows.

**Number of respondents to evaluations was 28.**

![Figure 2 Appropriateness of the workshop content](image_url)
2. All elements were covered with required level of details

![Figure 3 Coverage of all elements](chart)

3. Mode of conduct was satisfactory

![Figure 4 Mode of conduct](chart)
4. The duration of the workshop was satisfactory

![Bar chart showing participant responses to the duration of the workshop]

Figure 5 The duration of the workshop

5. Practical exposure was good

![Bar chart showing participant responses to practical exposure]

Figure 6 Practical exposure
The ranking of the elements of workshop was as follows. The graph shows the percentage of respondents that indicated the first rank to following elements of the workshop.
3. **Recommendations for future**

1. Supporting regional scientific gatherings promote dialogue and assist dissemination of knowledge.
2. Regionally arranged science presentation skills workshops provide scope to train more participants.
3. Strengthening the regional training pool can ensure that this workshop is further taken forward by individuals.
4. Coupling the training with conferences ensure that direct result of the training is observed.
5. Facilitating regional workshops will ensure key concerns of BOBLME Project are taken over.
6. Wayamba University of Sri Lanka has been working with BOBLME for a good number of years and now WUSL has emerged as a regional training body which can conduct training locally as well as regionally. Hence ensuring this relationship and enhancing the capacity will benefit the region.
Appendix I  Proceedings of the conference
Appendix II  Programme book

WinC programme bool
Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand are working together through the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BOBLME) Project to lay the foundations for a coordinated programme of action designed to better the lives of the coastal populations through improved regional management of the Bay of Bengal environment and its fisheries.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is the implementing agency for the BOBLME Project.

The Project is funded principally by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), Norway, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the FAO, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the USA.

For more information, please visit www.boblme.org