



**COMMUNICATING RESEARCH TO STAKEHOLDERS**  
**A Crawford Fund Master Class**  
**Co-hosted by ICIPE**  
**Nairobi, Kenya**  
**16-20 March 2015**

**QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS' BLOGS**

The Master Class in Communication Research to Stakeholders will be very important for the project I work for. The skills I got on writing Proposals using the template based on the questionnaire was really interesting.

Phew!!! so many things to take home, but I will single out one; I like the fact the more time was invested in developing the communication plan.....

The event has been useful to me! the good thing which I like it most is the approach/style! It was very interactive between trainers and trainees and among the trainees themselves, and the feedback on each session was very useful. About the topics the one I like was the avenues of communication where we as scientists can deliver information to suit a specific audience I found it very interesting.

The course make me smart as the contents fits very well with my work regarding linking research with extension in vegetable research for development. In particular I liked most how to make and use posters to communicate research to various groups such as scientists, farmers, donors etc. I come to realise that poster themes if made well can communicate a lot of research information and relevant technologies to masses and this can be used during scientific presentation/meetings, field days, demonstration etc. Secondly if presentations are to be combined with posters or alone the five boxes (short and clear Introduction, three key points and conclusion) must be included for effective communications to take place. However; I wanted to make one poster as an example to my fellow colleagues back home but the time wasn't enough as I had to participate in other training sessions which were equality important.

Talent. A simple word associated with the natural ability to excel at something. Today, I learnt its other meaning - the quality of an expert's presentation on radio or TV programs. You're either Good Talent or Bad talent. Journalists judge from a talent's performance whether to use his or her story or to bin it. As part of the Crawford Fund Master Class in Communication, invited journalists shared what distinguishes good talent from bad talent, and together with Toss shared useful tips on how to run radio and TV interviews. I enjoyed this session the most, so much so that in a few minutes I was talking away to Jane, an Australian radio reporter, as if I had been doing this all my life! Thanks to the innovative story telling tips that we have received all week, I felt naturally confident testing out my 'talent quotient' for the first time. The interview went well, the reporter confirmed that she could use it for three stories and the adrenaline rush was priceless. Today, I had my 2.58 minutes of fame on radio. Good talent. Thanks Cathy, Jenni and Toss for this wonderful training opportunity!

This is a course I would recommend to all my fellow scientists. I feel empowered in communicating science not just to fellow researchers but to non-scientific community. Particularly i liked the proposal writing session; the trainers explained a very easy way of developing a proposal step by step. I always thought i

was a good presenter, but the trainers helped me to identify common mistakes that i always make when preparing and presenting my work, they also introduced new skills that will help me present science in a better way. I learnt how to write an article abstract using few words but delivering the message. However, i would have wished that the trainers take us through the rest of the sections on writing journal articles. I would recommend that the trainers allocate more time in writing proposals and journal article writing as these are important areas for the scientists. BIG THANKS TO THE TRAINERS!!!

I would like to thank the organizers of this class for taking time to share their knowledge on communication. I also would like to thank AGRA for making this possible. What I liked: Not coming from a communication background, I appreciated the information I have learned this week. I felt relieved in knowing that I can improve my communication skills. I liked the material and the order in which it was presented. The support material were great! The practicals/hands-on were very helpful. I learned a lot by doing it. It was great and kudos to the team!

One of the best take-aways from this workshop is that one has to be conscious about his or her accent to effectively communicate. Speaking slowly and taking a deep breath right from the gut before one takes to the stage are some of the useful tips I received. This will could come handy at international conferences.

I also found the communication strategy session very useful, especially focusing communication to a target audience. I was generally pleased with the feedback I received on the policy brief i worked on. The handouts are also written in a simple language and are easy to follow.

It has been a long exciting week where communication was presented in different light from what i have always known. I have particularly had the opportunity to learn a lot about communication strategies that i had not used before such as writing policy briefs, fact sheets, and media releases among others. I am now well equipped to develop a communication strategy and not shy away from proposing any form of communication channel. The training was well handled throughout the week with exemplary time management skills. I in particular found the invitation of the farmer, funding organization representative, scientist and media fantastic since it created realism to what recipients of what we communicate expect.

I thought the training was very engaging and full of practical exercises which were evaluated. The guidance and feedback provided by the instructors was also quite useful. I liked the way the instructors structured their talks. I was already aware of many of the things they talked about, but the way they framed it gave it a very refreshing touch. I actually learned quite a lot from this training.

I enjoyed the activities we did, especially that most of the work was done on an individual basis and everyone had to have outputs. In that way, I felt, no one overshadowed the other. Maybe next time, for the writing exercises, more time can be given for evaluation and feedback of what the individual has done.

This has been one of the best trainings I have attended...value has certainly been added to what I do and will do.

This was one of the best trainings I have had since my PhD. It was simple, practical and real. The trainers used simple and relevant examples from participants- making relating to these examples easy. I used my project example through and through all the exercises and somehow helped me build a better understanding of my communication plan at every stage. I am sure other participants know a lot of my

project- so publicity to my project. I realized that it is not enough to do scientific research and development , but more of communicating the results and impacts that will have targeted people adopt your work. I have acquired new skills, writing media release, policy briefs and many more. The networking was awesome- got to know about 20 new faces with different interests -communication networking I believe!

The master class has increased my capacity in how I can communicate research through different media. I liked the video interview and less interest in social media for it has less impact to African farmers. Practicals in writing proposals, policy briefs and graphs were good and important, however, had to do many things at a short time - consider adult learning principles in future.

Crawford Fund Master Class in Communication Research to Stakeholders 16th - 20th March, 2015 - Nairobi, Kenya was a wonderful training in terms of its contents, feedback mechanisms, hands-on assignment and exercises, as well as post-training follow-ups.

I think this is a very useful training program. It is most interesting to me because it has enriched my skills in Communications. I discovered many more angles to Communications. Above all, the training in Presentation Skills was wonderful.

The fact sheet advising farmers in British Columbia about how to conserve irrigation water lingers in my mind. Very strange. In my research career I have, like all my other colleagues, written and read mountains of documents related to my work. But few come close to what I seemed to notice about the power of that fact sheet, in conveying so important a message in such a simple way. Actually it dawned on me that fact sheets are perhaps what I enjoy reading most when preparing presentations for stakeholders. They truly help in steadying my nerves. As for media releases, Cathy did a great job of guiding those in my group about starting with a catchy title and lead sentence. Admittedly, I have heard this tip before. But there is something about hearing it during the structured Crawford Fund's Master Class that was simply powerful in helping to put this aspect in context, among the other methods of communication. Hearing it from Cathy made it stick. This was embarrassingly evident when during a different working group session in the afternoon I gladly let Toss glance at my laptop, to see how I was faring drafting a policy brief. Toss did not hesitate in letting me know that my draft policy brief looked like a media release. I absolutely agreed with him. This turned into an excellent opportunity for discussing the style of policy briefs in more detail. Which reminds me, I no longer take the tried and tested lightly. For instance, Jenni and Toss clearly demonstrated the importance of style on the first day of the training course. I couldn't agree more; not thinking about style nearly ruined my presentation to an important audience earlier in the year. In my overconfidence I had talked and answered questions while seated. It wasn't all my fault though as there was no podium in the room where I could place my laptop. But, I should have taken a bit of time earlier to find out more about the meeting venue. And so it goes. Suffice it to say that the Crawford Fund's Master Class training will be invaluable in helping me get rid of quite a few bad presentation habits I have picked along the way in the course of my chequered research career. Need I say more?

### **Master Class to learn and share experiences in communicating research to stakeholders (by Elise Crabb)**

Each year, the [Crawford Fund hosts Master Classes](#) across a variety of topics. This past week, I was lucky enough to attend the Master Class in Communicating Research to Stakeholders, held at the [International](#)

[Centre for Insect Physiology and Ecology \(ICIPE\)](#) in Nairobi and run by Jenni Metcalfe from [Econnect](#) and Toss Gascoigne from [Toss Gascoigne and Associates](#).

I was excited about the opportunity to attend to:

- Meet fellow agricultural researchers and science communicators from the Africa region
- Learn about ACIAR stakeholders located in Africa and the best way to communicate with them and how this differs from stakeholders in Australia
- Learn how to improve my own communication style with stakeholders – both external and internal, using a variety of channels

After leaving Canberra, I boarded three flights, crossed eight time zones and landed 30 hours later. After my first sleep under a mosquito net (with an ominous buzzing noise that I could hear but not see), I was ready to take on the five day workshop.

Twenty-three participants from 11 countries came together to learn about communicating research to stakeholders, to teach each other about their experiences, and to share knowledge on agricultural research.

Each day of the workshop was divided into various sessions, but the broad structure was:

- Day 1 – communications planning and a stakeholder panel
- Day 2 – social media
- Day 3 – presentation skills
- Day 4 – communication planning and writing skills
- Day 5 – media skills with a journalist panel

Each of us took something different away from the workshop – myself, I had to get over my fear of being filmed. Each of us were filmed presenting, which was then played back to the whole audience with (constructive) feedback. Daunting to say the least! As much as I disliked this part of the workshop, it really was effective. Being able to watch yourself speak gives you great insight into what you do well, and what you don't do so well.

What was great though, was as the week went on, you could see everyone gaining confidence and taking on board the suggestions given earlier in the week. Needless to say, by Day 5, I was convinced of everyone's projects!

On Friday, we had a stakeholder panel consisting of agricultural science journalists from Nairobi who provided useful insight into what journalists want in a story and what they seek from the researchers who are sharing their projects. The key take-away from this – MAKE YOUR KEY POINT FIRST. Engage people straight away by telling them about the great work you are doing and how it will benefit them, then go in to more details of the project itself. True advice, as too often a key message gets lost in details.

What I found revitalising was the positive vibe of the whole group – there was encouragement of peers, constructive feedback, and well-deserved congratulations for great presentations and discussions. We had a lovely awards ceremony to receive our certificates of completion from the [Australian High Commissioner of Kenya, John Feakes](#) and [Director General of ICIPE, Dr Segenet Kelemu](#).

At the end of the workshop, I walked away feeling a sense of accomplishment, it was an intense week with early starts, but I felt I learnt new things about myself, particularly how I actually communicate with others and not just how I think I communicate. In particular, I have found I need to be more concise with my

audience, and remember to speak more slowly (as sometimes I get a bit too enthusiastic and talk too fast!).

I learnt about the best ways to communicate with farmers, who are often the key beneficiaries of research, yet, often mis-informed or don't have the time to find out about new agricultural techniques and technologies that could provide them many benefits including time and resource savings. Far too often, we don't think about our target audience for our brochures, newsletters, fact sheets and pamphlets – if we are trying to teach farmers about our work, we have to make sure it is accessible to them, otherwise – what is the point in doing great research in the lab if it doesn't lead to practical implementation?! We tackled this throughout the week as we all had to develop a communications plan, which identified key stakeholders, communications messages and channels. This plan will provide the groundwork for ensuring we are sharing our fantastic research to the right people, in the right way. At the end of the day, isn't that what communications is all about?

By Elise Crabb, External Engagement and Media Presence Officer, ACIAR