

*For Immediate Release*

## **Science Communication Requires Collaboration**



*Cross-section of workshop participants*

**Accra, 5<sup>th</sup> May, 2017** – Effective science communication requires more collaboration between researchers, communications officers and journalists. This was one of the key messages in a 2-day science reporting workshop jointly organised by the United Nations University Institute for Natural Resources in Africa ([UNU-INRA](#)), the United Nations University Maastricht Economic and Social Research Institute on Innovation and Technology ([UNU-MERIT](#)), Netherlands and the United Nations Information Centre ([UNIC](#)), Accra. The workshop, dubbed “[Reach & Turn](#)” aimed to help bridge the gap between science communication and science journalism.

### ***Science Communication***

The first day of the workshop emphasised the need to communicate research findings not only to scientists but also to policy makers and the general public in a clear, compelling, non-technical and inclusive language. It encouraged researchers to consider policy makers and the general public as part of the target audience for their research activities and put research findings in formats that are easily accessible to these audience. The participants were urged to try and use different communication products such as policy briefs, factsheets, blogs and channels like social media platforms to communicate key research findings to non-experts.

To facilitate the communication efforts, Dr. Elias T. Ayuk, Director of UNU-INRA, in his welcome address, admonished researchers not to make communication an afterthought of research projects. He said “involving communication officers at the inception of research projects is very important as this will give them the opportunity to understand projects better and work with

researchers to share information on the project throughout the research cycle”. Presentations at the workshop highlighted how best to write, pitch and present research information to non-scientists.

### ***Science Journalism***

The discussions on the second day of the workshop focused on how communication officers and journalists can take advantage of the new media landscape to widely disseminate research findings to the benefit of the general public. The participants discussed the importance of citizen journalism, which has to do with reporting of issues or news events by members of the public using various media platforms. The workshop laid emphasis on how this concept of citizen journalism can be used especially by researchers to share information on research activities with journalists and the general public. The participants also discussed the principles of advocacy, with focus on environmental advocacy, where they identified the need to have media campaigns on environmental issues on continuous basis till there is a change in public attitudes.

For the participants, it was a great experience and the knowledge gained will impact positively on their work. “Now, I will start thinking about how to clearly communicate my research findings in simple terms to the benefit of the general public and I hope to share this experience with my colleagues at work, remarked Dr. Timothy Khan Aikins, a researcher from the University for Development Studies, Ghana and a participant.

The two-day workshop brought together 50 participants comprising researchers, communication officers and journalists from Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Rwanda and Togo. The aim of bringing these categories of participants together was to give them the opportunity to work with each other and to see science communication and science journalism from each other’s perspective.

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### **EDITOR’S NOTE**

#### ***About UNU-INRA***

UNU-INRA’s mandate is to contribute to the sustainable management of Africa’s natural resources through research, capacity development, policy advice and dissemination. The Institute is one of the 14 Research and Training Centres / Programmes (RTC/Ps) that constitute the United Nations University’s (UNU) worldwide network. UNU-INRA operates out of its main office at the University of Ghana campus, and also carries out some of its major activities through operating units (OUs) in five other African countries, namely Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Namibia, Senegal, and Zambia. Each of these OUs focuses on specific areas of natural resources management.