

Sustainable  
Development of  
Research  
Capacity  
*based on*



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Report on the

**MEDIA/COMMUNICATION SKILLS TRAINING WORKSHOP**



*ORGANISED BY*  
**Sustainable Development of Research Capacity based on the  
GLOWA Volta Project**  
*AT*  
MPLAZA Hotel, Accra Ghana  
*FROM*  
15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> November 2010

## Introduction

The SDRC-GLOWA-VOLTA project (GVP), Bonn and its partner institutions in Ghana and Burkina Faso, through its nine years of operation in the Volta River basin, has undertaken numerous research and training. To prepare scientists and managers communicate scientific results and products generated by SDRC-GVP to the general public through the media, the SDRC-GVP invited five (5) researchers and five (5) Executive Directors' of institutions to participate in the media skills workshop. The media skills workshop was held at MPLAZA Hotel, Accra from 15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> November 2010 and started at 9:30am daily. The workshop organized was in two parts, 15<sup>th</sup> November was for scientists while 16<sup>th</sup> November 2010 was for Executive Directors of Institutions. The workshop aimed at preparing participants on the steps to take and engage the media in a professional and competent manner. The general expectation for the workshop is that by the end of the training, participants will learn some skills in communicating their ideas through the media to the general public. The resource person for the training program is Mr. Guy Degen, a freelance journalist based in Bonn, Germany.

After a brief welcome address and self-introduction, the resource person Mr. Guy Degen, presented the general themes that would be covered during the workshop. He mentioned that the workshop emphasis would be placed on electronic media. The general themes covered during the workshop included:

- What are media skills
- Mission to Explain
- Differences between media
- Preparation to engage with the media
- Basic preparation - first steps
- Interview preparation
- During the interview
- After the interview



**A photograph of the group consisting of executive directors of**

The workshop was divided into two sessions (morning and afternoon). The morning session covered some theoretical issue with emphasis on:

- importance of media skills,
- process of producing news and current affairs,
- Differences between print and electronic media, and, the basic steps for best practice when engaging with the media at any level.

During the morning session, and as a quick way for everyone to have a feel of public speaking and presenting their policy or research findings, participants were paired to interview and present each other to the rest of the group.



### **Paired group that interviewed and presented each other**

After interviewing and presenting to each other, participants were taken through the following:

**What are media skills?** The resource person explained that with media skills one needs to be prepared to formulate a clear message to the audience. In communicating with your audience as a good talent, you should always define and refine any statement you make. As a researcher or a director of an institution when communicating any idea, you should have confidence in yourself. A point worthy of note is to explain all acronyms which might not be familiar to the audience.

### **Differences between media types were explained**

- **PRINT:** more likely to reflect deeper analysis of events.
- **RADIO:** fastest medium to distribute news and information widely.
- **TELEVISION:** relies heavily on 'good pictures'. Requires more time to produce but reaches large audiences.
- **ONLINE/SOCIAL MEDIA:** now beating all mediums for breaking news. Connected. Networks.

**The resource person explained to the participants the various steps which researchers and managers should adopt when they want to engage the media.** It was made clear to participants that when contacted by a reporter, be sure to get this name, publication or broadcast station and phone

number or e-mail. Ask some pertinent question, like what type of interview it is, what it is about. If you are not the appropriate person refer them to persons who have knowledge in that field.

The afternoon session was devoted to practical exercises. Participants took part in a live radio and television interview in a studio in the conference room. The resource person served as the interviewer. After each interview, participants reviewed the interview and offered their comments on their performance.



The first practical interview was for the radio. The resource person setup a studio in the training room. The resource person/interviewer hosted a weekly program and during the program participants were interviewed about their job and their career path. The second was a TV news interview. During the interview participants were asked about the issues relating to climate change within the Volta basin. During these exercise participants expressed their opinion on the causes and

effects of climate change. After the recording, the interviews were played and reviewed by the participants.

After every practical exercise the resource person gave some guidance for use to follow during an encounter with the media. Participants were advised to avoid tech-speak and jargon, and use simply, direct language as the surest way to ensure that their message is clear; be friendly, but not complacent. Assume everything you say, even in a social situation, may appear in print or on the air. And we should be brief and concise with TV and radio reporters; however, print reporters are able to devote more attention to detailed information.

Participants were also advised on some steps to take after an interview; backup your interview with additional information to reinforce understanding of complex issues; listen, watch and read the stories you have contributed to. Evaluate your performance; don't overreact to a minor error. Be sincere and honest. A frank "I don't know" is far more credible than a made-up answer. "No comment" implies you have something to hide.

At the closing stages of the training workshop participants discussed possible improvements of such a media skills training program in future. During the discussion, it was clear participants find it very difficult to understand media workers since they mostly misquote whatever a researcher or policy maker communicate to them. In this regards, they need some guidelines as to how to relate to journalists who are not experienced or competent in producing environment related stories.

Participants also suggested that the next workshop should be extended since a day's workshop makes it difficult to assimilate all that is been taught.

### List of Participants to the Media Skills Training Workshop

No	Name	Institution
1	Wilson Agyare	DAE, KNUST, Kumasi, Ghana
2	ANGELBERT BIAOU	2IE, Burkina Faso
3	ROGERCHH NEBIE	CNRST/IRSAT Burkina Faso
4	Benjamin Kofi Nyarko	University of Cape Coast, Ghana
5	OUEDRAOGO Rainatou	CONNECT, Burkina Faso
6	Charles Biney	Volta Basin Authority, Burkina Faso
7	Barnabas Amisigo	CSIR-WRI, Ghana
8	Enoch Asare	WRC, Ghana
9	Dominic Pokperlaar	Ghana Meteorology Agency, Accra Ghana
10	Gerald Forkuor	IWMI, Ghana
11	Guy Degen	Freelance Journalist