



Background:

The REDD+ Academy concept was developed by UN-REDD in recognition of the fact that developing and implementing REDD+ goes beyond the forestry sector and requires input from a broad spectrum of informed stakeholders. The key term here is “informed”. Many stakeholders feel challenged and overwhelmed by unfamiliar concepts and terminology and often find it difficult to distinguish between facts and opinions. The demand for capacity building continues to increase.

The original concept anticipated that REDD+ Academy courses will be offered once a year for each region (Asia-Pacific, Africa, and Latin America / Caribbean), but it was quickly recognized that, while regional Academies offer value in terms of allowing participants from different countries to interact with each other, there are also constraints. This is particularly true in Asia/Pacific, where there is no *lingua franca*, with English being used as the language for regional exchange, but where English language capacities are highly variable.

This conclusion was reinforced by many of the participants in the first regional Academy. On returning to their home countries, many of them proposed that national “REDD+ Academies” would be valuable in addressing some of the constraints encountered in the regional Academy. Firstly, the training can be provided in the national language, thus increasing comprehension dramatically, especially for those countries with weak English language skills. Secondly, the course material can be more closely tailored to national circumstances. And finally, a much larger number of national stakeholders can be engaged.

National Academies in Asia/Pacific:

National REDD+ Academies aim to build capacity and understanding among key stakeholders on REDD+ implementation through a long-term and sustainable learning experience, adapted to the particular circumstances of each country.

National REDD+ Academies are structured around 12 “modules” covering all aspects of REDD+. By focusing on training-of-trainers, the REDD+ Academy provides the UN-REDD country partners with the necessary materials, resources and capacities to later be able deliver a wide range of training to diverse stakeholders in the national language. The contribution of the UN-REDD Programme is to produce and distribute materials in English in the form of “Learning Journals”, presentations, and group exercises for each module, supported by notes for facilitators. The Learning Journals and presentations can be translated into the national language (and, potentially, other languages) for subsequent training courses.

During the delivery of a national REDD+ Academy, all 12 modules are presented, to ensure that the national trainers who will be responsible for subsequent training have a comprehensive understanding of REDD+. The materials can subsequently be adapted for national circumstances, and the complete set of modules, or a subset can be included in training events to match the needs of the target audiences. While the on-going training programme is the responsibility of the main counterpart agency in-country, the UN-REDD Programme continues to provide support as required, including quality control and refresher events.

Lessons Learned:

In Asia/Pacific region, the countries, which received national REDD+ Academy training in 2015, were Vietnam (14th – 18th September), Bhutan (12th – 16th October), and Myanmar (22nd – 27th October).

Lessons learned were derived from feedback from presenters and participants over all three events. They are divided into organizational and substantive lessons.

A. Organizational lessons:

Lesson 1: National academies are best organized away from capital cities

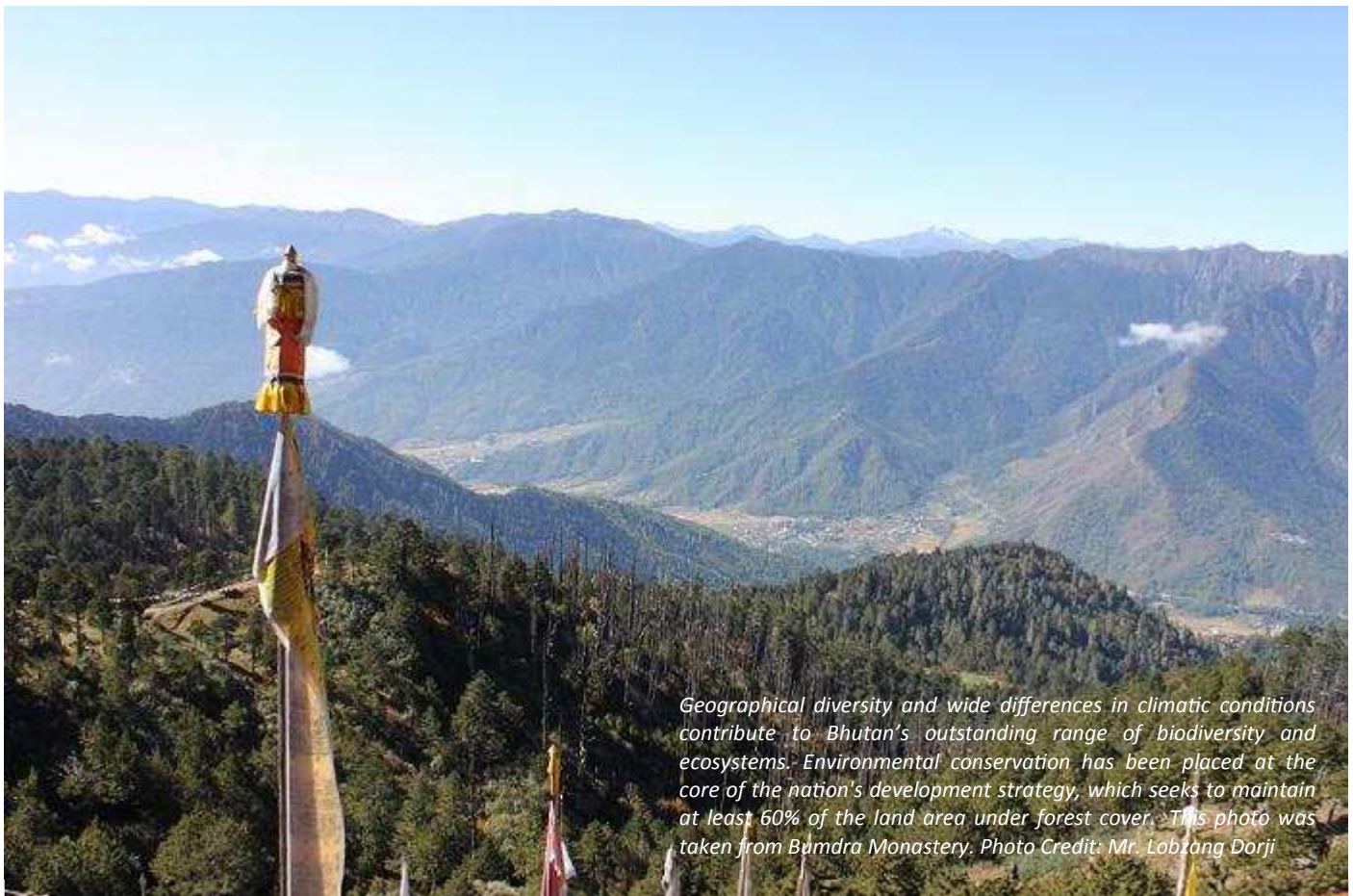
A problem in Viet Nam (academy held in Hanoi) was that a number of the participants found that they had other commitments during the five days of training and so some were often absent. In Bhutan, the training was held outside the capital, and virtually all participants were present throughout the entire academy. In Myanmar, the academy was held in the capital, and attendance was strong and consistent, so there may be countries where the location is less important, but in general, the academy should be held outside the capital.

Lesson 2: A strong and clearly defined national counterpart is essential

All three countries benefitted by having strong organizers – in Việt Nam and Myanmar, UN-REDD PMU staff, and in Bhutan, a government official. But initially, in Myanmar, responsibilities were not clear and planning was slow until an organizer was clearly identified.

Lesson 3: UN-REDD resources should include a coordinator and at least four resource people

Although, in theory, a national academy could be delivered by just a few resource people, delivering modules is stressful and tiring. It was also found to be beneficial to have a second resource person in the room during each module; this second person serving to ensure nothing is missed, but also serving to reinforce key messages. A UN-REDD coordinator is also needed for all of the organizational arrangements, including wrap-ups and plans for the coming days. This cannot realistically be a resource person.



Geographical diversity and wide differences in climatic conditions contribute to Bhutan's outstanding range of biodiversity and ecosystems. Environmental conservation has been placed at the core of the nation's development strategy, which seeks to maintain at least 60% of the land area under forest cover. This photo was taken from Bumdra Monastery. Photo Credit: Mr. Lobzang Dorji

Lesson 4: The ideal number of participants is around 20

Because the modules are highly participatory, almost all of them involving group work and discussion, to ensure active participation by all, the number of participants should be controlled. Having four groups of five for group exercises was found to be ideal. In Viet Nam the number was 13 (variable); in Bhutan, the two parallel sessions had 16 and about 26 participants, while in Myanmar the number was 20.

Lesson 5: Requesting participants to self-select a number of teams helps to promote engagement

In Bhutan and Myanmar, each day participants were asked to identify teams for various purposes:

- A feedback team, who provide interactive feedback each morning on the previous day's learning.
- A social mobilization team, who serve as time-keepers and organizers of "energizing activities".
- An operational support team, responsible for distributing materials, re-arranging the room as required, etc.

The first two teams were found to be essential; the last team has only a minor role if the academy is well run. The coordinator worked with the feedback team to design entertaining and interactive feedback exercises each morning (no slides allowed). The energizing activities were always popular, and serve to build a team spirit in the academy.

Typically there were two (sometimes three) members in each team, and at the end of each day the team members were responsible for identifying the members for the following day.



Lesson 6: Good time management is absolutely essential

Not only do frustrations build up if session run over-time, but because there is so much material to cover in 5 days, it is essential that presenters stick to their assigned time. The social mobilization team (see above) plays a role, but in some cultures interrupting the presenter is considered rude, so the presenter must take on the main responsibility him/herself.

Lesson 7: The afternoon of day 5 is needed for evaluation and "graduation"

Initially, module 12 was scheduled for the afternoon of day 5, but it was found that in order to allow sufficient time for evaluation (including an interactive "fishbowl" session) and for the graduating ceremony, the actual training needs to be concluded by lunch-time on day 5. Also, after 5 days of training, participants do not want a long 5th day, especially if they have to travel home.

Lesson 8: A break in the middle of the academy, possibly with a field trip where possible, is beneficial

Five days of training is quite long. In Myanmar, due to national holidays, the academy was organized for Thurs-Sat, with Sunday off, then Mon-Tues. The break was found to be beneficial for both participants and resource persons. A suggestion was made in Bhutan that there should be a one-day field trip to reinforce the classroom learning. Such a field trip has not yet been a feature of any of the national academies, but is certainly worth considering, where possible.

Lesson 9: Preparation of the participants

It was 1st Training of Trainers, this first ToT was for trainers with high English capacity. The training was conducted by experts including the UN-REDD staff. To attend the first training, the trainers with English speaking and who are willing to take a role to deliver and/or provide training subsequently to key relevant REDD+ stakeholder groups in Viet Nam were invited. For this training is not essential that the 12 modules needed to be translated into Vietnamese in time. However it is necessary to meet some minimum requirements/criteria when the trainers were selected/invited.

- 2nd Training of Trainers, this training will be carried out for non-English speaking trainers by the trained trainers from the first ToT.
- 3rd Feedback Training Event, this training event is targeted to have all trained trainers from the two ToTs to present and/or teach the experts/UN-REDD team for quality check before further trainings are organised. Simultaneous translation will be required for this step.

Use of different and dynamic group exercises, quizzes, and/or games helps to release some weariness and provides a break from presentations. By breaking participants into discussion groups it keeps them involved and gives them an opportunity to get to know one another. This photo was taken during the REDD+ Academy training in Myanmar. Photo Credit: Marta Baraibar



Bhutan took a slightly different approach. Two parallel sessions were organised:

- A classic “Training of Trainers” approach, trainers who have more background and knowledge about REDD+ and who are from academia and implementing REDD+ agencies/institutes.
- A “Direct Training” approach, the participants were invited from different line ministries, agencies, and stakeholder groups.

For the ToT, trainers and other resource persons who can be called upon to provide training subsequently, were provided with the necessary resources and training to deliver future courses on REDD+ to key relevant REDD+ stakeholder groups as required. However with regard to the selection of trainers, some minimum requirements/criteria were also set and one of which a high English capacity is necessary.

Myanmar took a single “Training of Trainers” approach. The training was conducted by experts including the UN-REDD staff, and external expert. Once this first training was conducted, more trainings can be carried out for key relevant stakeholder groups by the trained trainers and as required by the country’s and/or programme’s needs. Some minimum requirements were also set out to select the participants.

B. Substantive lessons

Lesson 1: Presentations

A consistent request was that presentations should include country examples, where possible.

In Viet Nam there were a lot of complaints about font size and clarity of the slides (this, despite the room being very small and with a large screen). There was a strong focus on improving font size and clarity in subsequent national academies.

For the Viet Nam academy, the resource persons made rather minor changes to the UNITAR slides. However, for both Bhutan and Myanmar, the changes became more significant, both to adapt to national circumstances, and to address shortcomings in the slides. The main shortcomings were:

- (Most often) The text on the original ppts was too small to be legible and/or the graphics too blurry, so we recreated the slide with larger text and clearer graphics.
- The information proved to be of little interest to the participants, so the slide was deleted.
- Information requested by the participants was not included, so a slide was added.
- The information on the slide was inaccurate.



Module 1 was most often found to be least popular (because much of the information was already known). For participants with an academic background, modules 5 and 6 were popular. For those more involved in actual forest management, module 12 was popular.

Lesson 2: Group exercises (also discussions and quizzes)

Group exercises were consistently the most popular part of each module. In terms of time management, extra time was most often requested for the exercises.

Over the three national academies, an effort was made to link the exercises across modules where possible, responding to a comment from the first academy (Viet Nam) that exercises for all sessions should be linked. This is easiest done if the groups are kept the same over modules, but in Myanmar there was a request to shuffle group participants, so this is an issue that requires more thought.

In Viet Nam, some of the group exercises suffered from having unclear written instructions, so a lot of effort was spent on improving this issue. There were still some complaints in Bhutan, but by Myanmar this issue seemed to have been dealt with. Participants prefer to have written instructions for each person, rather than one or two copies per group.

For five modules, the group exercise focuses on a fictitious country, F.A.K.E. This is because, for many issues, there are few genuine country examples, and also to avoid appearing to criticise any country. However, in Bhutan, some participants commented that having a clearly fictitious country made the exercises seem less “serious”.

The two quizzes (module 3 and 9/10) were always popular.

Lesson 3: Learning Journals

Viet Nam:

- Information in the learning journals need to be revised and proof fact checking. Some figures and information are required to elaborate and/or include more references. Hence, in NFMS topic, there was a question in emission factors, what is BEF? Value of 1.8?

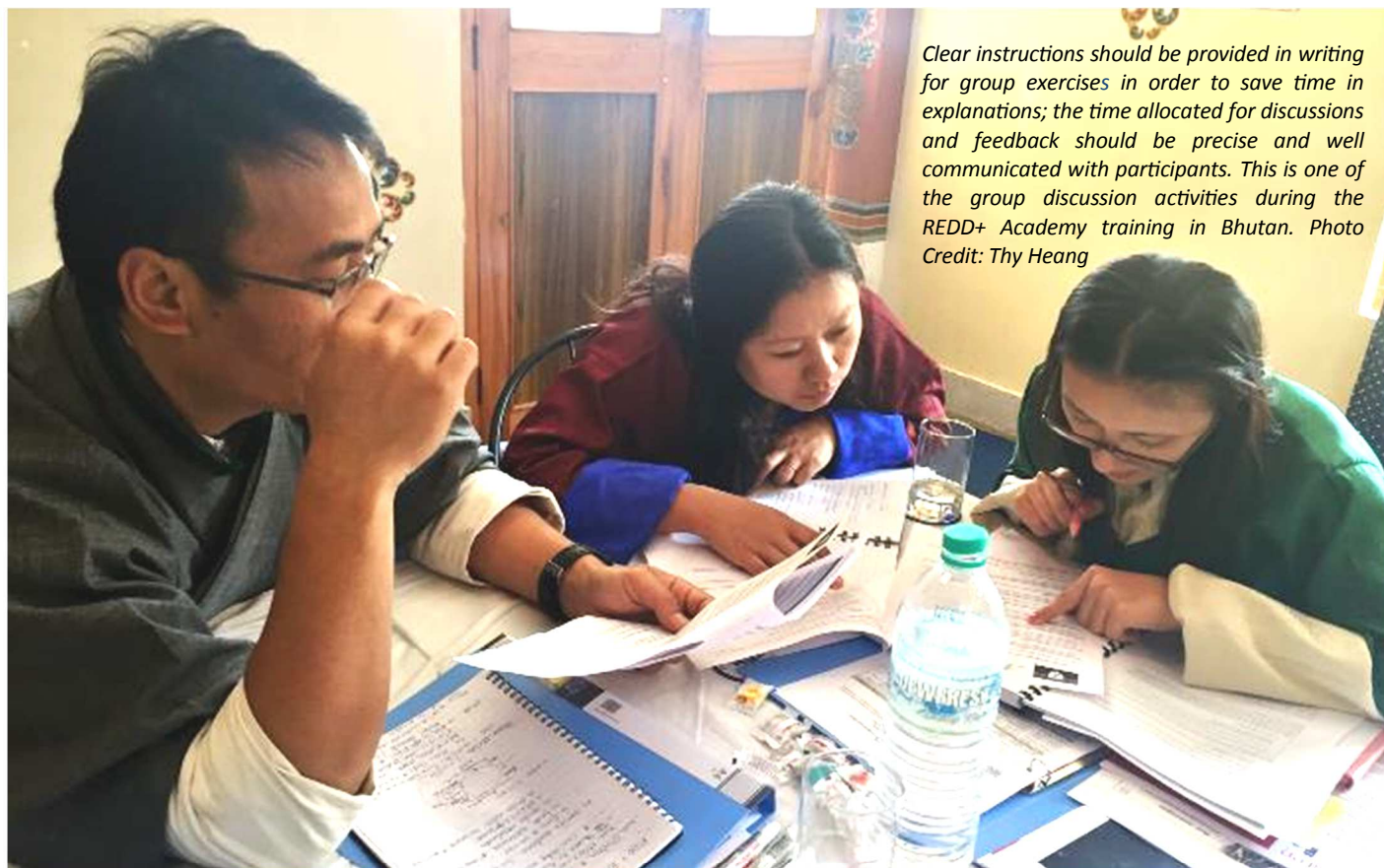
Lessons 4: Arrangements, Facilitations and Techniques of the Delivery of the Training

Myanmar:

- Learning methods on how to organize very good training – including integrating group exercise and energizer styles. Group work exercises are very attractive and effective.
- Training energizers are excellent and not just the experts/facilitators but also the participants and get us involved.

Bhutan:

- Interesting set-up of the whole training. The training provided a good platform for raising awareness of diverse stakeholders.
- Training participants should be given on country exposure trip REDD+ implementation area (pilot site) for field staff for familiarizing REDD+ activities.
- Overall it was interactive and effective information sharing.



Clear instructions should be provided in writing for group exercises in order to save time in explanations; the time allocated for discussions and feedback should be precise and well communicated with participants. This is one of the group discussion activities during the REDD+ Academy training in Bhutan. Photo Credit: Thy Heang



Make one point at a time, and make sure the group doesn't stray from that point until it has been dealt with; don't let the same people take on all the work – it can lead to tension and informal hierarchies within the group. Encourage everyone to feel able to volunteer for tasks and roles. These photos were taken during the REDD+ Academy trainings in Bhutan, Myanmar, and Viet Nam. Photo Credit: Marta Baraibar and Thy Heang

Challenges:

- Since the level of understanding of each participant was varied, it is important that the experts need to be aware of this issue and therefore they should arrange and/or manage their sessions well.
- A high risk that the participants might less participate if the training organized nearer to their office and so to ensure full participation of all participants, the training should take place somewhere that a possibility of returning to their office is less likely to happen.
- Time management was scored lower due to some random presentations which experts took a bit longer the time and which there were also more questions to the subjects.
- Training is one part of the process of REDD+. However, it is suggested that it is better to bring the policy makers or decision makers to attend the ToT and it would be even better to send the messages directly to higher level officers about the process. So how this work, a great effort needs from the influential and closer people to advise and provide the right and accurate information to the right people at the right time.
- It is quite a challenge to ensure that the participants would read the learning journals ahead of time. Therefore one way to ensure, a friendly online platform should be established and get all participants to go through the lessons before the training will be provided.
- The language barrier/difficulty is still an issue for some countries. They couldn't understand much in English and which caused them some problems to understand the lessons and/lectures better.
- The duration of the training should be shorten depending on the participation and level understanding of participants. Therefore, an assessment of participants' knowledge should be conducted before the training is delivered.
- A consideration of each country to encourage more women participation is another challenge and that needs decision and inviting process of the country focal point to ensure that more women will be invited to the training.

Conclusion:

Overall, the delivery of the training went very well in all the three countries. From the results of the evaluation, it was rated good scores overall, though time management would require some attention depending on the subject and interest of the majority of the participants. It was agreed that all modules are very informative and important for them to understand and learn more about implementation and requirements of the REDD+ process. The participants could not only gain more knowledge and understanding about REDD+, they also learned a lot from other participants the experience involving in REDD+ and requirements that each REDD+ country needs to fulfill to receive results based payments. Hence, from the evaluation Viet Nam the trainees said that many specific concepts were clarified. The presentations were systemically presented with up-to-date information and information that they obtained is at a great value for their current involvement in the REDD+ process in the country. They had a great opportunity to discuss and clarify with experts and especially also enjoyed being involved in the exercises.

- Many of the issues are applicable beyond REDD+.
- Different topic are of interest to each individual trainee.
- Learning is a continuous process and they need similar trainings and workshops to enhance our REDD+ understanding in the future. Therefore, engagement and continual participation are important to keep the group up-to-date information and process.
- There should be more fun exercises/games, interactive discussion/modules.
- Don't take everything looks very serious and the participants need more fun!

Last but not least, all the countries that were provided the training have also outlined their next plan to be carried in 2016 – which most of the activities will involve training and translation of the modules to be carried out in their national language and adjusted into their country's context. An on-going support from the UN-REDD regional team will be provided.



It is important to monitor energy levels. Additional interactive games or exercises can help in re-energizing the group. These photos were from the REDD+ Academy trainings in three countries, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Viet Nam. Photos Credit: Marta Baraibar and Thy Heang



UN-REDD
PROGRAMME



For more information, please contact:
The UN-REDD Programme, Asia/Pacific Region
E-mail: ap.unredd@un-redd.org