

International
FORESTRY
STUDENTS'
ASSOCIATION



Global Landscapes Forum

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IFSA delegate report

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Background

The International Forestry Students' Association (IFSA) is a global, student run network connecting tertiary level students in forest sciences. Along with promoting forestry education, one of IFSA's key roles is to facilitate student attendance at forestry events, and student involvement with international forestry processes.

As part of CIFOR's efforts to involve youth in the Global Landscapes Forum, IFSA was invited to send a formal delegation of students, and to contribute to the 'Youth: the Future of Sustainable Landscapes' forum.

This brief report gives an overview of our involvement with these events, and provides a summary of delegate feedback with the aim of contributing to the development of future youth processes.

Contribution and attendance

In the lead up to COP19, IFSA worked with CIFOR's communications team to promote the Global Landscapes Forum and associated youth forum through our own social media and global network. There was a high level of interest in this event, with IFSA students contributing via discussion forums, speaker applications, and a featured blog post on the landscapes.org site.

Thirteen forestry students - eight of whom formed an official IFSA delegation to COP19 - represented IFSA at the Global Landscapes Forum. These students, representing IFSA member associations from Brazil, Finland, France, Germany, Indonesia, and the Philippines, represented a wide variety of backgrounds and interests in forest and landscape management. Each of the eight official IFSA COP19 delegates submitted a report based on their attendance at the GLF, which this summary report is based upon.

General feedback

Reflections on the 'landscapes approach'

"I am glad that the forum was in terms of the landscapes approach, in that it incorporated other land uses, not only forests. I feel that this is a much more reasonable and practical discussion to have in terms of climate change, food security, and sustaining our future generations". Sander Denham, University of Helsinki

Overwhelmingly, there was extremely positive feedback from delegates regarding the 'landscapes approach' of the GLF. Delegates recognised the importance of working across sectors, land uses, and tenures, to sustainably manage land and natural resources for climate change mitigation and food security, and saw the approach taken by the GLF as very promising. However many highlighted what they see as key challenges, in particular a lack of communication and coordination between sectors, and a lack of commitment by government or policy makers to this coordinated approach. Abel Marcarini, IFSA UNFCCC Head of Commission, acknowledged that bringing different sectors together is not an easy task, and getting them to agree on goals, priorities and actions even harder. However he saw the increasing recognition of forests' multiple social and environmental values as encouraging a shift to this integrated landscape management approach, and supported this approach for framing future policy discussions.

Sessions and forums

Delegates chose to attend a wide range of technical and networking sessions, discussion forums, and thematic sessions based on their personal and academic interests. Details of sessions attended can be seen on the registration forms submitted directly to CIFOR, however a few comments and points of feedback are worth mentioning here.

Overall, the sessions that students found most interesting and valuable were those that presented specific case studies and examples of best practice (particularly when these could be related to delegates' home countries and contexts), and those that proposed concrete solutions or action statements for future research or policy directions. For example, a number of Indonesian students attended the session *'Managing landscapes for food, fuel, fiber, and forest: Innovative approaches in a time of food insecurity and climate change'*, and all commented on how they felt the Brazil case studies presented, and the issues drawn from these, could be particularly relevant for the Indonesian context.

Three students attended the *'Knowledge for impact: how to bridge the gap between science, policy and action to achieve complex climate and sustainable development goals'* technical and networking session. This was highlighted by all three as a highly dynamic and inspiring session. While one student commented that she didn't feel confident sharing her views in a small group consisting largely of academics, government officials and policy makers (she highlighted the need for strong facilitators to create 'safe' spaces for all participants to express their views), overall there was extremely positive feedback on the interactive and participatory nature of these discussions.

On the other hand, there was also feedback that a number of sessions were far too general - more of a 'talk fest'. Five students attended the *'REDD+ performance in the landscape'* discussion forum. While a number of students commented on the case studies or country perspectives discussed, the general feeling was that this session was far too general and did not present anything 'new'. This feedback was given for a number of other sessions; while delegates acknowledged that many of these issues are complex, and that there are no easy solutions, comments suggested that they would rather hear new perspectives and ideas for practical action, rather than a summary or comments on the status or complexity of the issue.

Youth: the Future of Sustainable Landscapes

All thirteen IFSA students attended the youth forum at the GLF. In the lead up to the forum, IFSA President Kutelani Tshivhase issued the following statement, reflecting IFSA's stand point on the need to involve and support the capacity of youth in forest and landscape management:

"The importance of youth participation in natural resource management cannot be overstated. This is a good platform for us as youth and youth organisations to stand up and ask for support in building youth capacity in policy, governance and the management of landscapes".

This sentiment was echoed in the feedback from delegates, many of whom stated that the youth forum was their highlight from the GLF. Delegates spoke of being inspired by the youth speakers, and commented that this forum was great not only for sharing success stories, and motivating young people to take action in their local environments, but also for bringing youth together to build trust and support, and to build networks and a 'movement'. Adhitya Wisnu Pradhana, IFSA representative from the Universitas Gadjah Madah (Indonesia) said *"two thumbs up for the youth forum. It was a great way to develop and promote young people who are restoring and taking care of the environment to achieve a sustainable future"*.

There were a number of key messages that IFSA students took away from this forum:

- Decisions have to be made *with* young people, not *for* them
- We need strong political leadership, and to somehow motivate people in 'power' to engage with youth
- Young people need mentors, and access to information
- Young people have the interest and capacities to combine the social and biophysical aspects of landscape management, but this needs to be mainstreamed into curricula, and supported at a policy level

Overall the feedback was extremely positive for this forum, and for the social media and general communications strategies in the lead up to the event. IFSA commends CIFOR for its commitment to involving and promoting youth in these international events and processes.

Recommendations for future youth involvement

One comment heard in the majority of reports was that our students would have liked to have seen IFSA having a greater presence or involvement in the youth forum, and that they themselves would have liked the opportunity to somehow contribute and share their stories or opinions. The panel question and answer structure of the forum was seen by many as either too intimidating a setting to voice their views, or not an appropriate space for engaging in deeper discussions. We recommend that future youth events are designed in a way so as to better facilitate this form of active participation of the youth present in the audience, and to provide opportunities for further discussions.

A number of students highlighted the informal networking opportunities that this event provided them with, for example during the cocktail reception, or in visiting booths. As one of the key messages from the youth forum - the need to connect youth with mentors and professional organisations in order to build capacity and promote funding and employment opportunities - suggests, the importance of facilitating these connections cannot be overstated. Any attempt to overcome the challenges facing youth in landscape management needs to involve and target not only youth, but also 'senior' academics, policy makers, and professionals in this field. We recommend that future events aim to identify individuals and institutions willing to work with and support youth, and facilitate connections through organised networking sessions or through providing a physical meeting space where these connections can be made.