**Youth Masterclass at the Global Landscapes Forum, December 2014**

The second run of the Global Landscapes Forum, an event on the sidelines of the UNFCCC COP20, was held over the weekend in Lima, Peru. This year, youth participants at the Global Landscapes Forum were invited to attend a dedicated Masterclass on a selection of three topics: Pitching an idea, Facilitating a discussion, and Critical Thinking and Understanding Landscapes. Siang Yu attended the Masterclass on Critical Thinking and Understanding Landscapes while I attended the Pitching Masterclass. We both had a very good experience at the Masterclass as we found it useful to young people navigating the complex world of environmental advocacy.

Dr Andy Jarvis from the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) led the Pitching Masterclass. Dr Jarvis presented an overview of the importance of effective pitching, and introduced the essential aspects of a successful pitch:

First, understanding your audience is crucial. An effective pitcher should have a keen sense of the main problem on the audience’s mind. Your pitch should speak to this problem and address how you can help.

Second, total clarity on the ASK (i.e. what you are asking for). Make it clear what it is you want from your audience.

Third, be clear on what you want to achieve. Knowing what you can realistically achieve from your pitch is important.

Fourth, play to personal biases. Engage people on their biases. Everybody likes being flattered.

Fifth, simplify the message. Keep your pitch simple. Avoid inundating your audience with information.

Sixth, use numbers to buttress your arguments (where appropriate). The strategic use of numbers/statistics makes a stronger and more convincing pitch.

Seventh, be confident.

Besides the aspects listed above, we also learnt the importance of figuring out “power networks” – knowing the entry points to an organisation, where to start, and who to speak to in order to accomplish your goal. In addition, preparation for a meeting is key. It really helps to prepare by doing research beforehand on specific individuals we want to meet.

Siang Yu attended the stream on critical thinking and understanding landscapes. Participants were assigned several tasks throughout the master class, which were to be carried out as speakers Bruce Campbell and Cora van Oosten spoke about climate smart agriculture and landscape approaches respectively. The tasks include practising active listening to presentations by the speakers, identifying the main arguments or key points made and providing critical feedback on the presentations given. Participants worked in pairs and groups, and were asked to give each other feedback as well.

On understanding landscapes, it was demonstrated that discussion on landscapes goes beyond the spatial aspect. Instead, a landscape is an integrated system within which different actors such as the forest, smallholders, communities, biodiversity, investors and government interact with one another. The landscape approach therefore involves bringing together different discourses, which are connected by the landscape they share. It was further discussed that in order for landscape approaches to be sustainable, big changes to our institutional frameworks, governance, businesses, investment methods and citizens will be required. This includes considering the value of nature returns such as social and environmental improvements in addition to solely financial returns.