

2017-2018

Democratising forecasting workshops - Report 1



Sponsored by:



International Institute of Forecasters

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1 Democratising forecasting initiative

This project aims to ‘train the trainers’ in the form of university students, academics and professionals on the principles of forecasting using R software to support decision making. The workshop is designed for 3 days and it is free of charge. The ultimate goal of this project is to train 400 individuals, over 5 years in 20 countries in the world. Countries are selected according to the World Bank Data with focus on countries with lower and lower-middle income. The idea is to focus on less privileged regions of the planet such as Africa, Asia, Middle East and South-America.

2 Report of activities: 2017-2018

I submitted a proposal to IIF in July 2017, which aimed to deliver a series of workshops in developing countries. This initiative is named “Democratising forecasting”. IIF Board of Directors granted a financial support to sponsor it in August 2017. Although the initial plan intended at delivering four workshops in 2017-2018, we agreed to deliver two workshops during this period with a potential extension to reach the target of the project in 5 years. Following that, I created workshop materials that covered data analytics and a range of statistical forecasting methods. A description of the program and covered topics is available [here](#)¹. During the year, I communicated with 17 countries in Africa, Asia and Middle East to coordinate and organize the workshop according to IIF requirements². Given the fact that I had personal contacts in Tunisia and Senegal, it was a more prudent and efficient way to start the project. Despite having local coordinators, the coordination part was very challenging. We finally organized two workshops: *i*) Tunisia in 14-15-16 January 2018 and *ii*) Dakar in 23-24-25 May 2018. Table 1 provides a detail information about these two workshops.

Table 1: summary of activities in 2017-2018

Countries contacted	Organised in 2017-2018				No. of participants	Expenses
	Date	Country	City	University		
Cameroon, Kenya, Afghanistan, Tunisia, Senegal, Iraq, Turkey, Uganda, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Vietnam, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Tajikistan, Pakistan, Namibia, Georgia	16-17-18 January 2018	Tunisia	Tunis	ENSTAB Tunis	23	\$ 1046 ³
	23-24-25 May 2018	Senegal	Dakar	Dakar Ecole de Management	17	\$ 1855
					Total	\$ 2901

¹ <https://goo.gl/gAzvfv>

² Email received from Prof. Aris Syntetos

³ A local friend hosted me for the half of my trip and the flight was much more cheaper which explains why expenses are lower comparing to Dakar.

Please see Table 2 for the detail of expenses for each workshop.

Table 2: details of expenses for each workshop

Workshop in:	Link to expenses
Tunisia	https://goo.gl/b1o2ce
Senegal	https://goo.gl/3iHth6

Figure 1 shows the distribution of participants in the workshop that includes master students, PhD students, academic staff and professionals working in organisations.

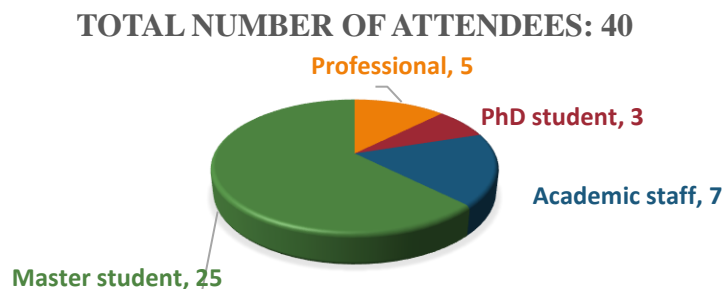


Figure 1: Distribution of participants

3 Feedbacks and reflection

Overall, I received excellent feedbacks from participants. Workshops are very well received, participants were very engaged and feedbacks are very positive and encouraging. Additionally, I received few individual emails in my inbox, which are very inspiring. Please see the detail of the feedback [here](#)⁴.

As a reflection on participants' feedbacks, I have taken the following actions to update the content of the workshop and the delivery style for the upcoming workshops. I introduce the following idea for the upcoming workshops:

- Priming activities to engage participants in advance such as organise a webinar one month before the workshop, send individual emails and create an introduction video
- A booklet contains “*Need to know*” and “*Good to know*” materials
- Less content, less lecturing time
- More practical examples and group engaging activities

⁴ <https://goo.gl/bXLvAj>

4 Challenges

This project involves travelling and coordination duties and I believe that the most challenging part of it is coordination. It becomes even more challenging when it comes to work with developing countries. I had to travel in advance to ensure everything is in place to achieve the desired outcome for learners. In one case, I had to buy stationaries, which is not estimated in the budget and would not be claimed. This project needs a capacity to handle travelling and coordination burdens.

Additionally, there are always unforeseen risks. On way back to Cardiff from Senegal, someone stole my documents and I spent four nights in a detention center in Paris CDG airport. Finally, I came back to Cardiff with 10 days delay due to the efforts of my colleagues and friends at Cardiff University.