

# **IPARD's External Review 2013**

*For a Content-Driven Agenda*

*December 2013*



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External Reviewers



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Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
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*This report is dedicated to Nelson Mandela (July 18, 1918 - December 5, 2013),  
the world leader who's mind and spirit always were, and will be,  
those of a younger among seniors.*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Young Professionals' Platform for Agricultural Research for Development (YPARD)** was first established in 2006. The first External Review took place in 2009, and during the last 4 years, YPARD's membership has increased by 400%, as there were 1350 registered members in 2009, and the number of registered members as of December 2013 is 6640. Geographic distribution data of members indicate that the vast majority are from Africa, followed by Asia; smaller percentages are in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and other regions.

This External Review observes that YPARD's membership is growing younger, given that in 2009 the average age of YPARD members was 28 years old, and the average age of members as of 2013 is 24 years old. It has been noted that female members are younger than their male counterparts. YPARD's membership continues to have a distinct gender gap (about 70% of the members are male). YPARD itself, however, is gender balanced in its executive bodies.

In reference to stakeholder representation, from all survey respondents, this review concludes that the least represented stakeholder groups are: farmers, private sector and multilateral (development) and non-governmental organisations, in that order of ranking. Now, a significant percentage of members (36%) are employed at universities or research institutions, and the top three professional backgrounds of members are 1) Livestock/Fisheries/Animal Sciences, 2) Social Sciences/Biodiversity/Environmental Sciences and 3) Agronomy/Plant Sciences/Horticulture. In addition, at the moment, about 20% of YPARD's members are students, and this percentage is not as high as it was 4 years ago, when about 55% of members were students.

In terms of efficiency and members' satisfaction, the web communications channels of YPARD are ranked as very valuable tools by members, specifically, the website, the e-newsletter, blogs, and social media platforms. Statistics reveal that social media is unquestionably a vital component of the engagement and momentum that YPARD has achieved during the past years; not only has social media contributed to reaching out to members worldwide, but also, to an increase in membership, to active engagement and to raising awareness about the important role of Young Professionals (YPs) in agriculture. Thus, it is recommended that the Global Coordination Unit (GCU) continues its committed work in social media, in order to reach out to underrepresented regions, and to gather the collective voice of members worldwide, especially, by incorporating its social media and communications strategy into a content-driven agenda.

Over the last years, YPARD's presence in the Agricultural Research for Development (ARD) community has been prominent and with positive outcomes. YPARD members have been present at various international events, and they strategically connect online and through social media activities with global meetings, and with other stakeholder organisations. YPARD has well succeeded in positioning itself in the ARD global community, but it is recommended that a stronger focus is now given to a content-driven agenda, and that participation in ARD policy debates is enhanced.

In relation to governance, the authors note the commitment and outstanding performance of YPARD's executive bodies, but it is recommended that -given the growth in membership during recent years, and as a result, the growth in work and responsibilities- a review of YPARD's Charter and governance structure should be performed.

The current hosting settings of YPARD's Global Coordination Unit (GCU) in GFAR/FAO have ensued positive results. This collaboration is of mutual benefit for YPARD and for GFAR/FAO. It is recommended that this collaborative hosting arrangement continues. Moreover, YPARD should continue to focus on partnership building and on strengthening its network, while tapping into potential partners in sectors where YPARD's stakeholders are underrepresented and where opportunities to establish thematic collaborations may arise. Similarly, YPARD is to consider that donor organisations are more drawn to support a more content-driven agenda approach to YPARD's forthcoming business plan and strategy. In relation to the priorities of international development organisations, the reviewers make specific recommendations about establishing a mentoring program, as one of YPARD services.

YPARD plays an important role in closing the youth and gender gap that persists in international and national debates, in reference to the issues pertaining to ARD, and to food security and agriculture in general. YPARD has achieved commendable milestones during the last years, but still, much remains to be addressed in the upcoming years, and the engagement from YPARD and its stakeholders is very much central to the international development agenda.

One of the main recommendations of this report is that YPARD should now shift from a process-driven agenda to a more content-driven agenda. YPARD members and stakeholders alike agree that a content-driven agenda would be a strategic and important approach in this new phase, supporting YPARD's development while successfully achieving its objectives and mission. It might also provide better inroads to new financial support sources. Lastly, it is recommended that YPARD seeks to access diverse sources of financial support to implement its activities in its next phase.

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

**ARD:** Agricultural Research for Development

**ASARECA:** Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa

**CAADP:** Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme

**CAAS:** Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences

**CGIAR:** Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research

**CIAT:** International Centre for Tropical Agriculture

**CORAF/WECARD:** West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research for Development

**CTA:** EU/ACP Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation

**DFID:** Department for International Development, UK

**DGIS:** The Netherlands' Directorate General for International Cooperation

**EAG:** External Advisory Group

**EFARD:** European Forum for Agricultural Research for Development

**EIARD:** European Initiative on Agricultural Research for Development

**EU/EC:** European Union/European Commission

**FANRPAN:** Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network

**FAO:** Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations

**FARA:** Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa

**FORAGRO:** Forum for the Americas on Agricultural Research and Technology Development

**GAP:** Gender and Agriculture Partnership

**GCARD:** Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development

**GCHERA:** Global Confederation for Higher Education in Agriculture

**GCU:** Global Coordination Unit

**GFAR:** Global Forum on Agricultural Research

**HAFL:** Bern University of Applied Sciences - School of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences - Switzerland

**IFAD:** International Fund for Agricultural Development

**JICA:** Japan International Cooperation Agency

**LAC:** Latin America and the Caribbean

**MDGs:** Millennium Development Goals

**SC:** Steering Committee

**SAG:** Senior Advisory Group

**SDC:** Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

**VIT:** Vellore Institute of Technology, VIT University, Tamil Nadu, India

**YP:** Young Professional

**YPARD:** Young Professionals' Platform for Agricultural Research for Development

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 YPARD: history and background

YPARD, the Young Professionals' Platform for Agricultural Research for Development, started in 2005 as a response to an observed relative absence of young professionals in the agricultural research for development debate at the global level, as well as at regional and national levels. With initial financial support from IFAD, a group of young professionals was able to engage key organisations in ARD into a dialogue that eventually led, in November 2006, to the formal launch of YPARD at the 3<sup>rd</sup> GFAR Conference in New Delhi, India.

In order to establish itself, and to implement its first strategic plan (2009-2013), YPARD obtained welcome financial support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and from the Netherlands' Directorate General for International Cooperation (DGIS). In-kind support –in the form of hosting arrangements for the Global, Regional or National Coordinating Units of YPARD- was, and is being provided by GFAR, FARA, CIAT, VIT University in India and HAFL. The Leibniz Universität in Germany provided support in hosting the first YPARD Coordinator until 2010. Other support –mostly on an ad hoc basis- has been given by CGIAR, by the EU/ACP Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development (CTA), the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Agropolis of France.

YPARD's vision is<sup>1</sup>:

*Sustainably improved livelihoods, worldwide, through dynamic agricultural research for development (ARD).*

YPARD's mission is:

*To serve as a global platform through which young professionals can express their ideas and realise their full potential towards a dynamic agricultural research for development.*

YPARD's objectives are to:

- Facilitate exchange of information and knowledge among young professionals across disciplines, professions, age and regions.
- Broaden opportunities for young professionals to contribute to strategic ARD policy debates.
- Promote agriculture among young people.
- Facilitate access to resources and capacity building opportunities.

YPARD is conceived and operates as a platform, not as a formalized institution. It aims to bring together young professional stakeholders in the broad agricultural sector: researchers, lecturers, farmers, agro-entrepreneurs, extension staff and other practitioners, staff of non-governmental and civil society organisations, and government employees. In this sense, YPARD operates along similar multi-stakeholder lines as the Global Forum for Agricultural Research (GFAR), which is hosting YPARD's Global Coordination Unit (GCU) at FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy. This Global Coordination Unit comprises of a full-time Director and a full-time Web and Communications Officer.

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<sup>1</sup> YPARD's vision, mission and objectives are presented in the YPARD Charter, 2008.

YPARD is governed by a Steering Committee (SC) of 6 members (December 2013), and it acts at regional level through Regional Coordinators for Africa (in Ghana), for Latin America and the Caribbean (in Colombia), for Asia (in India), and for Europe (in Switzerland). YPARD is rapidly expanding its representation at the national level, with currently 41 National Representatives that mostly work on a voluntary basis, in their own spare time. At its inception, YPARD installed a Senior Advisory Group (SAG) that offered ad-hoc advice on emerging issues where guidance was sought.

YPARD membership is open to Young Professionals (YPs) in ARD, under 40 years of age. YPARD's website has 6640 registered members (December, 2013), which is up by almost 400% from some 1350 in 2009. Members are those young professionals who registered to the YPARD website ([www.ypard.net](http://www.ypard.net)). All four of the YPARD regions have their own sub-sections in this website. As per December 2013, a total of 4688 people have signed up to receive newsletters: YPARD issues an e-Newsletter on a monthly basis, and a 'Funding News Bulletin' twice a month, while funding opportunities are posted on the website as well. YPARD is also very actively using social media channels as part of its web and communication strategy, currently running a LinkedIn group, a Facebook group and a Facebook page, a Twitter channel and a Google+ group. Also a Pinterest and YouTube channel have been created, but are not very active yet.

### 1.2 Approach of this review

This report reviews the performance of YPARD, and the progress and impacts achieved since the First External Review in 2009<sup>2</sup>. The present Review was conducted by Ms Lisa M Cespedes, from Costa Rica, and Mr Wim Andriesse, from The Netherlands, who teamed up as Junior and Senior Consultants respectively, echoing the YPARD spirit of (mutual) mentorship. The Terms of Reference for this External Review, and the summarized bio-data of the Reviewers are provided in Annexes 1 and 2 respectively.

The approach applied in this review includes:

- The scrutiny of relevant documents that were provided by the Global Coordination Unit (Annex 3),
- A 2-day face-to-face briefing meeting with the Global Coordination Team and with senior staff of the GFAR secretariat,
- Web-based surveys among YPARD members (in English and French) and among senior professionals in ARD,
- Interviews with several YPARD stakeholders, mostly through Skype, while some were written or telephone interviews. In this way, the reviewers interacted with all six members of YPARD's Steering Committee, all four YPARD Regional Coordinators, eleven of YPARD National Representatives, four former members of the Steering Committee and a number of selected other senior professionals that hold relevant positions in international organisations.

A full list of the names of the interviewees and their institutions is provided in Annex 4. The results of the two web-based surveys are summarized in Annex 5, whereas Annex 6 provides an anonymized summary of the Skype interviews.

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<sup>2</sup> Crole-Rees, A, and F. Kruijssen, 2009. Young Professionals' Platform for Agricultural Research for Development (YPARD). External Review 2009, Final Report. Lausanne, Switzerland and Nijmegen, the Netherlands. 27 p + Appendices.

## 2. YPARD: AGRICULTURE, YOUTH AND GENDER

According to UN statistics<sup>3</sup>, about 30% of the world's population is between 20 and 40 years old, which corresponds to the target age group of the YPARD constituency. World-wide, this age group continues to grow rapidly, particularly in developing countries. Next to the issue of the world having to feed its ever-growing population, these facts also call for urgent action in terms of providing employment and economic prospects for young people and, thus, for providing (higher) education for current and future generations in order to prepare new graduates to answer the challenges that emerge from societal needs, most of all in the agricultural sector.

However, planning for future generations in a world that is rapidly changing (globalization of trade, global climatic changes, finiteness of fossil energy sources, exponential growth of ICT and social media, growing apprehension and assertiveness among populations, mass migration and urbanization, to name just a few) is largely in the hands of senior politicians in close interaction with equally-senior policy makers, researchers, professors and practitioners. Moreover, where –logically- half of the world's population is female, (young) women are grossly under-represented in the various stakeholder groups that make up the agricultural landscape, with the notable exception among producers and traders in developing countries where women make up over 75% of the total.

As was stated by one of the YPARD members in the interviews and surveys that underlie the present review:

***“The debate on, and the planning for, the future of agriculture, food security and a sustainable environment is taking place largely without the involvement of those who will have to live in that future”.***

After years of relative neglect since the 1980's, agriculture is now back on the international development agenda. Pivotal in this change was the publication of the authoritative World Development Report 2008 'Agriculture for Development'<sup>4</sup>, in which the World Bank strongly argued that agriculture is critical for (economic) development and for realizing the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's). The World Bank report spurred many other international development organisations and national governments to revisit their development strategies and programs so as to include a strong focus on agriculture and food security. Many of these strategies side with the World Bank's view that women and youth play essential roles in agricultural development and that their voices need to be heard in the national and international debates. Six years later, even though strides have been made, this still applies.

YPARD is one of the important platforms aiming to fill this gap. However, in spite of its considerable achievements in terms of 'getting the voice of young professionals being heard' and in 'providing a platform for information exchange among the agricultural youth' and, indeed, in 'empowering young professionals', much remains to be addressed and achieved. Most important, perhaps, is the fulfilment of the YPARD objective to promote agriculture (as an opportunity) among young people. In this respect, it is important to note that the World Development Report 2008 recognized the emerging dualism between modern agri-business and food retail systems on the one hand, and traditional and subsistence agriculture on the other. In addition, it is good to note that many donor organisations have since adapted their strategies to pro-actively include private-sector engagement in their (agricultural) development

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<sup>3</sup> UN/DESA, 2012. World Population Prospects, The 2012 Revision. [www.esa.un.org/wpp](http://www.esa.un.org/wpp)

<sup>4</sup> World Bank, 2007. World Development Report 2008 'Agriculture for Development', WB, Washington DC, USA. 365 pp.

strategies, both in the context of the respective partner countries as well as from the perspective of their own countries' private sectors. For YPARD this implies that it may have to focus on the underlying assumption that private sector engagement is an attractive niche for young professionals to pursue, or at least to start their careers in agriculture. Likewise, young graduates, researchers and teachers should be confident that their skills and expertise will be relevant and needed in the years to come, and beyond. Also in terms of providing young professionals' perspectives and young professionals' solutions to the on-going debate on issues like, for example, climate change, food and nutrition security, gender balance, landscape approaches to resilience, implementation of the (very) recent World Trade Treaty (Bali, 2013), and transformation of higher education systems and agricultural curricula, the contributions of YPARD and its stakeholders remain important, if not essential.

### 3. YPARD ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT 2009-2013

#### 3.1 Demographics of YPARD's Membership<sup>5</sup>

##### Membership

As per December 2013, YPARD counted 6640 registered members, i.e. persons who registered to have access to the website. This is an increase of almost 400%, from the External Review in 2009 when YPARD had 1350 registered members. **Figure 1**, below, illustrates membership growth since YPARD's inception in 2006. Some other specific dates worth noting are: August 2010, which was the recruitment date of YPARD's Director; March 2011, which corresponds to the recruitment of the Web and Communications Officer, and March 2012, the date when the YPARD platform migrated to a new Content Management System (Drupal) and the new website was launched.

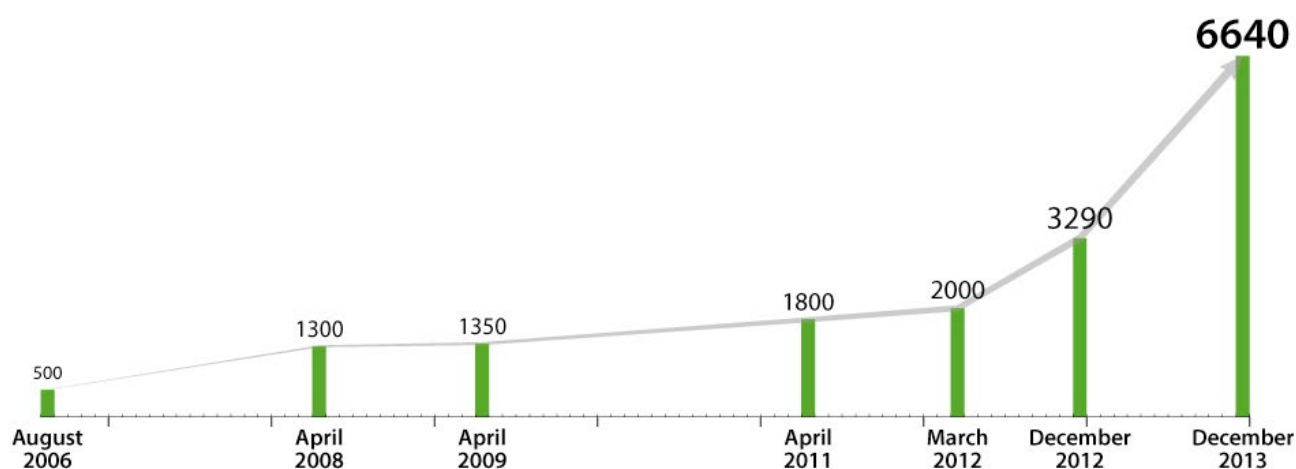


Figure 1: Membership growth from YPARD's inception

<sup>5</sup> Data in this Chapter was taken from web statistics, as presented in the annual Web and Statistics Reports of the Global Coordination Unit. See Annex 3

As for the age of YPARD's membership, over 90% of members are below the age of 40, which is the official age limit for membership, and under 10% of members seem to be over the age of 40, who are possibly the older members that have not yet withdrawn their membership. Experienced professionals over 40 years old are encouraged to remain part of the network and support different activities.

It appears that YPARD membership has grown younger during the last years. Four years ago, the average age of YPARD members was 28 years and presently it is 24. Members are now mostly between 25 and 29 years old (32%), or between 30 and 34 (27%). Some 18% of the survey respondents indicated being between 35 and 39, and 13% between 20 to 24.

Most female YPARD members (53%) are between 25 and 29, while their male counterparts are slightly older, prevailing in the age group of 35-39. While membership is growing younger, the year 2013 has also seen an increase in the number of members that are over the age of 40<sup>6</sup>. This could be explained by a growing number of young professionals approaching this age.

As for the age of online users (who are not necessarily registered members, but users who visit the YPARD website), web statistics show that about 28% of them are between 18 and 24 and 34% are between 25 and 34 years old, meaning that, there is a larger percentage of younger individuals browsing the YPARD website as opposed to those who are registered as a member of YPARD.

In terms of age and geographic distribution, members who are 30-34 years old (about 2/3 of them being men), are predominantly from an African country (68%), while only 23% are from Asia, and small percentages are from the other regions. This report deducts that members who are 30-34 years old, are primarily from Africa.

### **Gender**

Gender distribution among YPARD members is skewed: Some 70% of the registered members are male and about 30% are female (Web and Communications Report, 2013). At the time of the First External Review this was 67% and 33% respectively. This persistent gender gap reflects the general under-representation of women throughout all stakeholder groups in the agricultural sector, as previously mentioned. In their response, the External Reviewers of 2009 suggested that YPARD should mainstream its gender approach. YPARD has made commendable efforts since, to level this gap. In India for example -one of the countries with the highest membership numbers- YPARD specifically invited female members to apply for positions to set up a working group within YPARD-India, after an initial invitation yielded responses from male members only. Two female Young Professionals have now been selected.

In addition, during the last years, YPARD also:

- actively participated in the Gender in Agriculture Partnership (GAP), where the Web and Communications Officer is the focal point for linking with gender activities and youth,
- established a showcase feature on the website that makes a particular effort to showcase young women,
- strived to have 50% inclusion of young women in events or activities in which it participates,

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<sup>6</sup> Website statistics from the Mid-Year Monitoring and Evaluation Report of August, 2013.

- worked with the FARA Gender Focal Point for the 2013 Africa Agriculture Science Week to organise a gender and youth session. This session also looked at how youth movements can integrate with some of FARA's gender work.

Similar initiatives are suggested in order to continue to close the gender gap in YPARD's constituency. It is good to note that YPARD plans to place special emphasis on young women in its forthcoming mentoring program.

Moreover, the composition of YPARD's governance bodies, i.e. the Steering Committee, the global and regional coordination units and the national representation teams, are setting a positive example as, at the moment, almost half of the positions are taken by female YPARD members. It is worth noting that, although not by design, YPARD has more women country representatives than men.

In this respect, website traffic and online activities of the YPARD platform reveal interesting data as well. **Figure 2** below, displays the gender distribution of website visitors and here the male-female gap is much smaller than among registered members. This was also reflected in the Skype interviews, where it was observed that female YPARD members are generally more active in online activities than male members, and that women seem to prevail in blogs and social media activities – a trend observed in social media platforms worldwide.

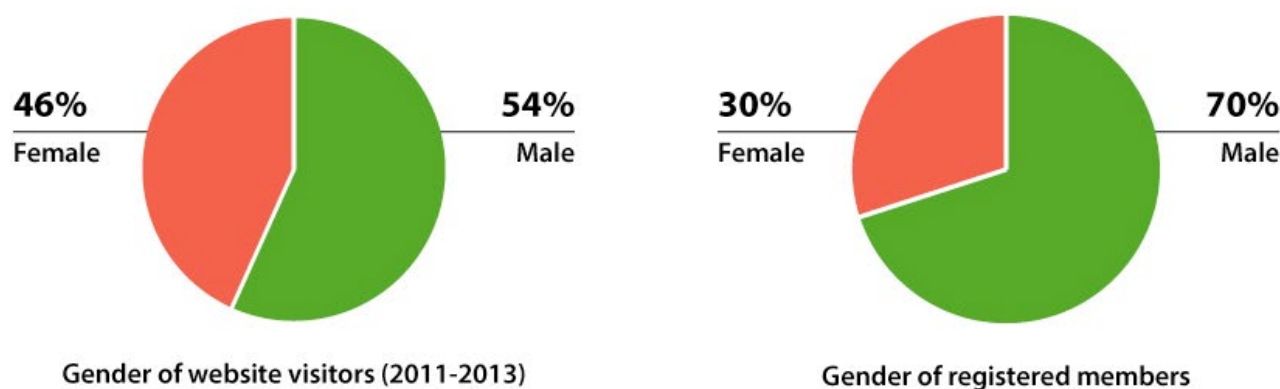


Figure 2: Gender of website visitors (2011-2013) vs Gender of registered members

### Geographic distribution

Membership distribution over the continents shows that most members are found in Sub-Sahara Africa (45%), followed by Asia (28), Europe (13), and Latin America (4). The remaining 10% is made up of members in countries in North America, the Middle-East and North Africa, Australia, Oceania and the Pacific<sup>7</sup>.

If compared with data from the previous review, the figures show a considerable growth of YPARD membership in Africa, both in absolute terms as well as relatively, and a distinct decrease of membership in Europe. In addition, YPARD members in 2009 came from 114 countries. By the end of 2013, members came from 136 countries, and most of the new countries are in Africa.

<sup>7</sup> Membership percentages are derived from 2013 Web Statistics, based on data from 4960 members. For the 1580 members that registered before 2006, details on country of origin are not available.

It is interesting to note that, on the online front, the website statistics reveal quite a different geographic picture. **Figure 4** (Section 3.2) shows that the top three most active countries (2011-2013) are India, Kenya and the U.S, in that order. This suggests that there are active online users that have not registered on the website as YPARD members, but that are browsing, reading and navigating the website anyway. In the case of the U.S. for instance, one of the countries with the lowest membership numbers, the statistics reveal that it ranks as third in online activities.

### **Professional background**

The top three professional backgrounds indicated by YPARD members who responded to the online survey were: 1) Livestock/Fisheries/Animal Sciences, 2) Social Sciences/Biodiversity/ Environmental Sciences and 3) Agronomy/Plant Sciences/Horticulture.

Within the first group, some 70% indicated being from Africa and 30% from Asia. In the second group 83% were from Africa and 17% from Asia, and in group three 32% were from Africa, 53% from Asia, 11% from Europe and 5% from Latin America.

Among female respondents the professional backgrounds rank differently: 1) agronomy/plant sciences/horticulture, 2) Social sciences/Economics/Development Issues, and 3) Livestock/ Fisheries/Animal sciences.

Information about the professional background of members was not accessible in 2009 when the previous External Review was carried out. That report however, revealed that about 55% of the members were students, while presently, only about 20% of the registered members are students. The shift toward higher representation of young professionals in the YPARD constituency is clearly notable.

### **Employment**

The highest percentage of YPARD members (36%) work at a University/Research Institution (national and international), or are still studying (20%), followed by those who are employed by non-governmental organisations (13%). The remaining percentage is divided in small groups of about 5% between Government (farmers' advisory/extension services), private sector and self-employment.

By region, members working in non-governmental organisations (national and international) were for the most part in Africa (about 70%) and in Asia (about 20%); about 10% are in the other regions.

The majority of the women who responded to the survey, are either still studying or unemployed, while men were either employed at Research Institutions/Universities, or are still pursuing an education (in that order).

Members who reported working in Universities or at Research Institutes (national or international), 48% are in Africa and 32% in Asia. In reference to the other, less represented regions, the data is not sufficient to provide reliable answers. It is evident and worth noting however, that from all respondents, the least represented stakeholder groups are: farmers, private sector and multilateral (development) and non-governmental organisations (in that order of ranking).

### 3.2. Web and Social Media communications outreach

#### Website and online services

YPARD has made remarkable strides during the last four years in reference to the development of its web and communications strategy. **Figure 3** graphs the satisfaction of members with YPARD services, and the website is considered at the moment one of the top services offered by YPARD. As a matter of fact, the top four ranking services are all web-based, including the website, the e-newsletter, the e-forums, and funding opportunities announced by YPARD.

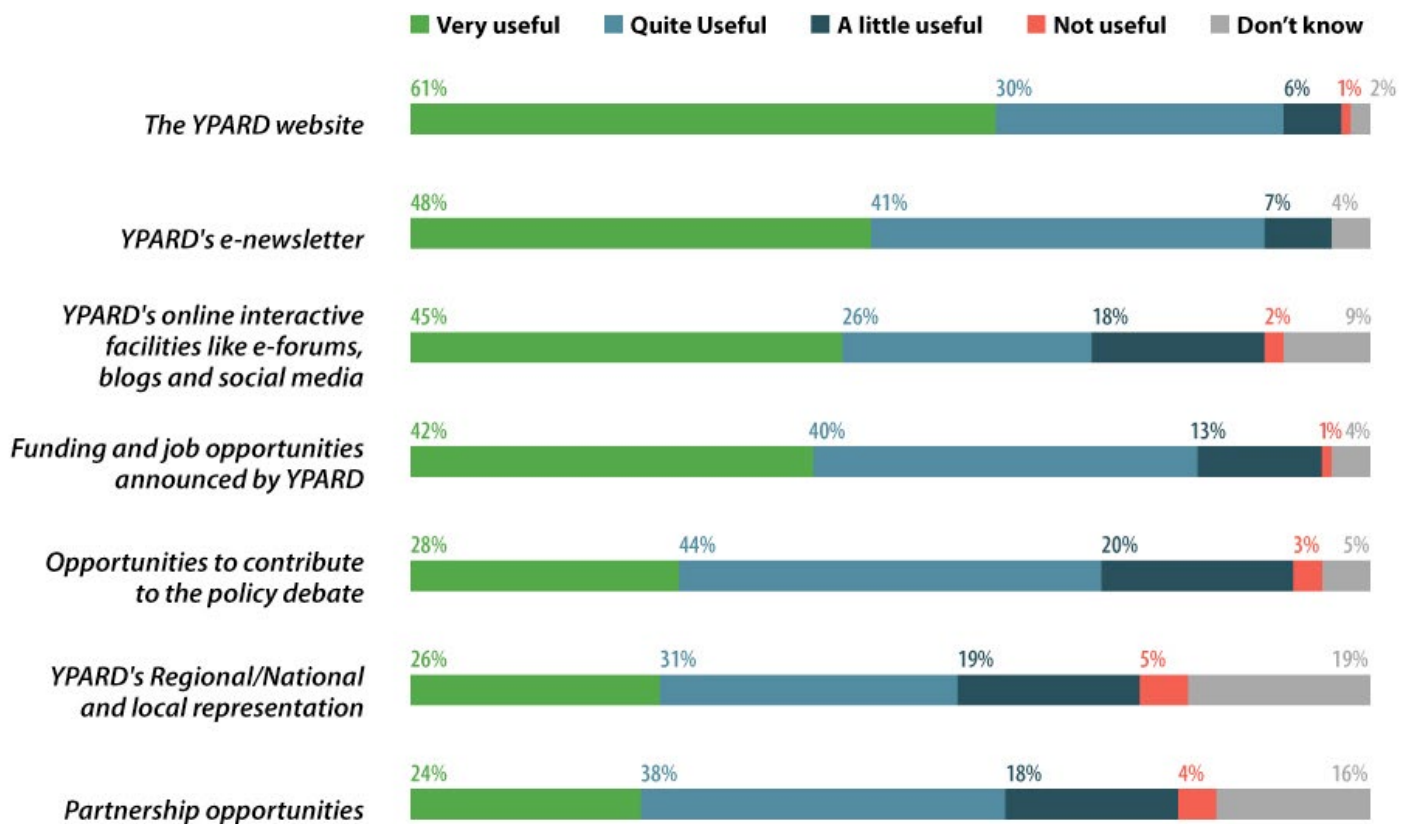


Figure 3: Members' satisfaction in reference to YPARD services

Former members of YPARD recall that throughout the first years of the development of the network, establishing a functional website was one of the main challenges. A major content migration took place in March, 2012, when all the online content along with members' profiles were moved to the new Content Management System (CMS) Drupal. This new CMS offers various interactive tools, enabling more communication and collaboration between the members and supporting functionalities for a global platform. Prior to the launch of the new website, certain identifiers such as "gender", "age" and "region", were not required fields of the online registration process. Thus, there are hundreds of profiles without this information. These fields were made required as from March, 2012.



Some of the main remarks of the monitoring and evaluation of website statistics performed by the GCU during 2013<sup>8</sup>, include:

- The number of website visits continues to grow significantly overtime.
- YPARD's membership has been growing at an average of 165 members per month, as of August 2013, and women represent about 30% of the registered members.
- Despite the remarkable efforts done during the last couple of years, there is still work needed in order to increase international awareness of YPARD, as a network, its scope, its objectives, etc. In other words, the 'YPARD brand' is still not well known in certain regions or within certain stakeholder groups.
- The region with the highest number of members is Africa, followed by Asia, Europe, the Middle-East and North Africa, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Australia. It was agreed throughout 2013 that additional efforts must be done to reach out to underrepresented regions like LAC, by investing efforts into increasing the online content in Spanish and the coverage at a national level throughout the region.

**Geographic coverage of online outreach:**

In reference to online activities in YPARD.net, in 2011 the number of countries covered was 159, while that figure increased to 201 countries/territories in 2012. At the moment (Dec. 2013), online visitors come from 214 countries/territories.

Web traffic statistics indicate that from 2011 to 2013, the majority of online users came from the twenty countries shown in **Figure 4**.



*Figure 4: Top 20 countries of YPARD web traffic*

It is worth noting that the majority of the countries in this list have an active National Representative, except for Germany, UK and the U.S. Italy hosts the GCU which might explain its high rank on the list,

<sup>8</sup> Mid-Year Monitoring and Evaluation Report of 2013

because of the frequent web visits of the GCU staff. The National Representatives work in collaboration with the Global Coordination Unit to feed content to the website, to produce blogs/news/events, and to promote YPARD in their respective countries.

The feedback that members give about the website is very positive for the most part. A recurring request for improvement of the website is to enable the possibility for users to contact other members directly, as well as the option to browse members' profiles by country, by region, by organisation, and so on. The GCU noted that this option is available, but that this doesn't seem to be clear among users. The reviewers recommend that the website's functionality is enhanced, in order for individuals to more easily browse a database and network with others, as well as the option for users to message other members directly. Thus, YPs could interact among themselves, by mapping other YPARD members worldwide, and the networking experience would be improved overall. In addition, there are certain technical limitations with the current server that need to be addressed to improve web performance.

### **Social Media**

At the time of the last review in 2009, YPARD did not have social media channels in place. However, in 2011, YPARD launched a Twitter channel, a Facebook page, a Facebook group and a LinkedIn group. Through these social media channels, the GCU shares information that is first posted on the YPARD website – mostly in English, and occasionally in French or Spanish- in order to reach out to new audiences, to potential members, and to increase engagement. In 2012, a meticulous approach was established for the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of social media on YPARD. A Google+ group was launched in Sept. 2013.

<b>Social Media Network</b>	<b>Members (Jan, 2011)</b>	<b>Members (Jan, 2012)</b>	<b>Members (2013)</b>
Facebook Group	51	900	2384 (August)
Facebook Page	134	N/A	1337 (August)
LinkedIn	N/A	279	1044 (February)
Twitter	N/A	182	1000 (February)
Google+	N/A	N/A	45 (December)

*Figure 5: Social Media Overview*

Website statistics indicate that at the moment, these social media channels are a main source of traffic sources<sup>9</sup>, meaning that a vast percentage of visits to the YPARD platform come from social media channels. Statistics show that while direct traffic<sup>10</sup> is also a main source of visits, social media is unquestionably a vital component of the engagement and momentum that YPARD has achieved during the last years. It is recommended that YPARD designs a formal social media strategy in which specific goals and objectives are outlined, in order to increase not only the number of followers but the engagement that takes place in social platforms as well, and to increase participation from under-represented regions and stakeholders.

<sup>9</sup> Traffic sources refer to the channels through which users visit YPARD.net, for instance, from another website, like the partner organisation's website, after performing a browser search, or by following a lead of interest from a social media channel.

<sup>10</sup> Users who visit YPARD.net by directly going to the website.

Some of our more-specific recommendations include:

- Re-assessing and strengthening the social media strategy plan with concrete goals and objectives, along with a formal monitoring and evaluation approach, including monthly statistics reports in addition to the annual reports; in depth analysis of the statistics and content, etc.
- An increase in multi-lingual updates (e.g. French and Spanish) of communications through social media channels.
- Organisation of online events, for instance, Twitter chats/Twitter hours in collaboration with partners in under-represented regions, countries, and stakeholder groups; online forums on specific thematic issues; Facebook polls about ongoing discussions in the field of ARD, etc.
- A broader coverage of time-zones: since the GCU is in Italy, it may be a challenge to disseminate content throughout the day to cover different time zones, but this is highly recommended. The current GCU initiative to recruit a social media team with members in different continents should be supported.

In addition, it was observed that original content created and published by YPARD members attracts more interest and generates more website traffic than content that is produced by other organisations/ individuals, and then disseminated by YPARD. Thus, it is recommended to stimulate the participation of members, with the specific aim to share their perspectives, concerns, or ideas, about ongoing issues, as this review notes that the YPARD community seeks to engage even more in meaningful and provocative discussions.

The effective ongoing facilitation of social media requires a significant amount of time. Supporting a collaborative social media team is recommended, as this would facilitate the dissemination of content in other languages, and it would also help to cover various time zones, targeting in this way global audiences.

### **3.3. Regional Coordination and National Representation**

During the last four years, YPARD has significantly strengthened Regional Coordination in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America:

- YPARD Asia is hosted by VIT University, Vellore, Tamil Nadu, India;
- YPARD Africa is hosted by FARA, Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa, Ghana;
- YPARD LAC is hosted by CIAT, International Center for Tropical Agriculture, Colombia, and
- YPARD Europe is hosted by HAFL, School of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences, Switzerland.

With the support of the GCU, YPARD has also established representation in 41 countries: Armenia, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, China, Croatia, Ethiopia, France, Georgia, Ghana, Guinea, India, Iran, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Mali, Moldova, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria, Peru, Russia, Rwanda, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

### **3.4. ARD Global Community: YPARD's international presence**

Over the past four years, YPARD has been prominently present at various important international ARD events. Most notable among these were the GCARD2 Conference in Uruguay in 2012, the Conference 'Engaging the Youth in the CAADP-KIS Agenda' in Ghana, in 2013, the CTA International Conference on Extension and Rural Advisory Services in Nairobi in 2011, the IFAD AgriKnowledge Share Fair in Italy in 2011, the RUFORUM Biennial Conference in Lusaka, in 2012, the FARA/Africa Science Week in Ghana 2013, the CGIAR Science Forum 2013, in Germany, and the CoP 19/Global Landscapes Forum in Warsaw, in 2013. At most of these conferences YPARD co-organised side sessions for young professionals as well as social media reporting platforms and e-discussions. In this respect, the YPARD Social Media Team (SMT) has become a strong entity in its own right. In many instances, YPARD representatives were formally invited to take part in the conferences' closing sessions and make their statements on behalf of the youth. At the CGIAR Dryland Systems Research Programme launch in Amman - YPARD was invited to mainstream youth involvement in the programme - selected YPARD regional focal points attended the regional workshops afterwards. In the case of CoP 19/Global Landscapes Platform, YPARD, jointly with CIFOR<sup>11</sup>, organised a youth session that eventually led to the inclusion of a youth statement in the final conference communiqué. YPARD is also the youth focal point for international initiatives such as the Gender and Agriculture Partnership (GAP), the Global Confederation for Higher Education in Agriculture (GCHERA) and the CGIAR Science Forum 2013. Financial support to participate in these events was partly from YPARD's own resources, but also from partners in the YPARD network. As for the Global Youth Forum meeting in Bali, 2012, the YPARD National Representative of Malawi secured his own financial support from local sources. Participation by YPARD members is solicited by the GCU through calls and announcements at the YPARD website.

Similarly, YPARD has been present at numerous such events at regional and national levels, including conferences (e.g. the Future Agriculture Conference 'Young People, Farming and Food' in Ghana in 2012), workshops and seminars. In addition, YPARD has seats in the Steering Committee of GFAR, and in that of the European Forum for Agricultural Research for Development. The latter SC is no longer in place, but there is another arrangement now to have the voice of Young Professionals heard in EFARD. YPARD is also representing youth in the Tropical Agricultural Platform, hosted by FAO in Rome. YPARD is active as well in posting announcements and articles at the websites and in journals of partner organisations.

The Review Team observes that YPARD has very well succeeded in positioning itself as a network/platform that matters, in terms of size of the membership and strength of the organisation, as well as in terms of its visibility in, and contributions to, international, regional and national conferences, events and media on agricultural development. Here, the GCU is carrying out remarkable work.

The Reviewers suggest improvements, not in terms of presence, but rather, in terms of content. In seeking to design a more content-driven agenda, YPARD needs to tackle more in-depth the strategic issues that are discussed in the international arena and in global, regional and national events. In doing so, YPARD members would also benefit from strategically engaging with the (inter-)national ARD community. The External Review performed 4 years ago, indicated that close to 90% of respondents thought that YP's participation into ARD policy debates had to be enhanced, and this perception remains imperative. Our own survey showed that 28% only of the respondents has been able to increase its network with senior professionals, thanks to YPARD (Ref: Fig 10).

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<sup>11</sup> Additional support for this side event was provided by CCAFS, CGIAR, GFAR, CTA and FANRPAN

## 4. GOVERNANCE AND ORGANISATION

### 4.1 Overview of internal governance

YPARD is governed by a Steering Committee, and it acts at a global level through the Global Coordination Unit (GCU), at a regional level through Regional Coordinators for Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Europe, and at a national level through 41 National Representatives. At its inception, YPARD installed a Senior Advisory Group (SAG) that offered ad-hoc advice on emerging issues where guidance was sought.



Figure 6: YPARD's governance structure<sup>12</sup>

#### Global Coordination Unit (GCU)

YPARD's Global Coordination Unit -based in Rome, Italy- consists of two full-time staff:

- Ms. Courtney Paisley, YPARD's Director since August 2010, and
- Ms. Marina Cherbonnier, Web and Communications Officer, since March, 2011.

There are several tasks and responsibilities performed by the GCU. Among them, some of the main duties include:

- Strategic development and planning, in collaboration with the SC,
- Promotion of YPARD and outreach engagement (online presence as well as presence at regional and national levels),
- Communications and social media engagement,
- Editorial assistance to members who submit blogs/articles

<sup>12</sup> Figure adjusted from the original in the YPARD Charter 2008, to include Regional Coordination Offices, and an External Advisory Group.

- Preparation of comprehensive reports throughout the year, to summarize activities and report to the Steering Committee and donors,
- Identifying opportunities for YPs, such as funding, jobs, courses, sponsoring, etc.
- Working with the regional coordinators in organizing national representative activities,
- Increasing YPARD's presence in underrepresented regions and countries,
- Administrative responsibilities such as budget/finances/legal,
- Fundraising mobilisation/Proposal writing,
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Developing new programs/services (e.g. design of a mentoring program)
- Networking and placing YPARD among ARD stakeholders discussions/events

As previously mentioned, YPARD's membership has increased by about 400% during the last 4 years; not only is this increase evident in the number of members, but also in the interaction among them and, understandably, directly with the Global Coordination Unit. The Reviewers observe that GCU staff is working hard, and highly effectively and efficiently. Both staff have established good working relationships with management and staff of GFAR and with staff of relevant support units of FAO (financial administration, technical support, and other services). We do note that communication with, and support by, the Steering Committee is up to improvements, in terms of timeliness and adequacy of actions and responses by Steering Committee members, when so requested by the GCU.

### **Steering Committee (SC)**

YPARD's Steering Committee is composed of 5 to 9 members, who serve for a 3 year period that can be renewed once. As per December, 2013 the Steering Committee Members are:

- Mr. Codrin Paveliuc-Olariu, Chair of the SC
- Ms. Froukje Kruijssen, Vice-chair of the SC
- Mr. Emmanuel Nzeyimana
- Ms. Nidhi Nagabhatla
- Ms. Danielle Nierenberg
- Ms. Femke Van Der Lee

The YPARD Director is ex-officio member of the Steering Committee and serves as the secretary. Steering Committee members are not remunerated: they work on voluntary terms. The YPARD Chair is elected from among the SC Committee members.

The roles and responsibilities of the Steering Committee include: (i) provide direction and oversee the implementation of YPARD strategies, programs and activities, (ii) approve annual work plans and budgets, (iii) nominate and approve national representatives, (iv) ensure that there is adequate monitoring, (v) review progress and make recommendations, (vi) consult members in various issues, (vii) create and maintain ownership among members, and (viii) constitute task forces or working groups<sup>13</sup>.

The SC meets -face to face- once or twice every year. Skype, video conferences and e-mail are other

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<sup>13</sup> YPARD Charter (2008).

communication channels that are being used somewhat regularly.

Our interviews with the members of the SC reveal some main challenges, including:

- Difficulties in having appropriate and frequent interaction (different time zones, poor connectivity and miscommunications),
- Lack of time, due to the members' tasks in their respective organisations,
- Varied interpretations of the mandate, roles and responsibilities, and
- Insufficient standardization of the selection and recruitment process.

With respect to the selection criteria and procedure for SC members, the Reviewers note, as the 2009 Reviewers did, that clear selection criteria for members of the SC are lacking: YPARD's Charter only mentions 'suitability and willingness' of candidates<sup>14</sup>. Also, there is no clear election procedure. YPARD's intention to develop and apply an election procedure involving members' support, has not yet materialized. In addition, guidelines on how to introduce new members into the SC, and how to monitor their work are lacking. Lastly, we recommend to perform exit interviews with member upon completion of their term.

### **Regional Coordinators**

There are 4 Regional Coordinators at the moment:

- Africa, Mr. Gbadebo Odularu, FARA, Ghana
- Asia, Mr. R. Seenivasan, VIT University, India
- Europe, Ms. Martina Graf, Bern University, Switzerland
- LAC, Ms. Andrea Carvajal, CIAT, Colombia

The work of the Regional Coordinators for YPARD has been supported through different agreements with their respective organisations, where these have agreed to designate 20 to 30% of their time to work on YPARD activities. The support received from the hosting institutions varies, but in most cases the Regional Coordinators work on YPARD activities independently. Regional Coordinators are the key contact point with the National Representatives of the countries in their region, offering guidance in reference to the organisation of platforms and advocacy activities in the respective countries, offering direction about YPARD's objectives, and feedback and administration on access to financial resources available for National Representatives to organise activities in their countries.

In the External Review of 2009, it was indicated that "Local Representatives (LRs) are replacing the Regional Focal Points (RFPs)... The roles and responsibilities of the LRs do not make a specific heading in the charter". The roles of Regional Coordinators has become more established during the last 4 years, achieving representation in 41 countries. Regional Coordinators play an important role in the coordination of activities of National Representatives within their region. All Regional Coordinators reported receiving proper support and guidance from the GCU on several matters, and having efficient communication channels.

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<sup>14</sup> Documentation from 2006 specifies that SC candidates should be a YPARD member, have supported YPARD actively, have a minimum of 4 years of professional experience in ARD, and a good knowledge of the ARD environment.

YPARD's charter does not provide information about the specific role of the Regional Coordinators in its governance, thus, it is recommended that YPARD's Charter is reviewed to include the role and responsibilities of Regional Coordinators.

One of the main challenges reported by Regional Coordinators is lack of time for YPARD activities exclusively. As YPARD continues to grow at regional level, allocating 20-30% of their time is not always enough to cover the variety of responsibilities and/or plans that they envision for the region. Regional coordination may be strengthened by establishing more formal agreements with hosting institutions, in which a more detailed hosting agreement is outlined, providing a more formalised commitment from the hosting institution. In addition, Regional Coordinators report needing more time to work on YPARD activities, thus, YPARD should seek to obtain an increase of the time that these institutions allocate for YPARD regional representation.

### **National Representatives**

As of December, 2013, YPARD has 41 National Representatives:

- 18 in Africa
- 7 in Asia
- 12 in Europe
- 3 in LAC and
- 1 in Canada

Their work for YPARD is not remunerated, thus, their positions are unpaid and voluntary. Most National Representatives report spending from 1.5 days per month, to as much as 4.5 days per month on YPARD matters. The tasks that each National Representative performs vary greatly, depending either on their availability, on events that may be linked with YPARD, or on interaction with members in their countries and region, among other factors. Some of the activities that National Representatives undertake include: (i) raising awareness of YPARD in their countries, (ii) organisation of presentations at events and/or universities, (iii) participation at workshops, conferences and events at national level, (iv) liaise with YPARD members in their countries, and (v) coordination and facilitation of communication channels between members. In reference to the last point, diverse activities are taking place among the countries for enabling communication between members. For instance, specific Facebook (and similar social networks) have been used to create groups for certain countries (e.g. YPARD-India, YPARD-Switzerland, YPARD-Russia, etc). In addition, some National Representatives report communicating with members via email, telephone or Skype.

Some of the main challenges reported by National Representatives for the facilitation of YPARD activities in their countries include:

- Lack of time to work on YPARD activities (as they are bound to various responsibilities).
- Lack of political influence to achieve strategic partnerships, collaborations or support in general from high profile actors throughout the stakeholder landscape in ARD (e.g. government, private sector and national and international non-governmental organisations).



- Difficulty in communicating convincingly the message from YPARD (the importance to involve YPs at the policy/level and in decision making processes throughout the various issues in the field of ARD and of agriculture in general).
- The general challenges that YPs encounter in a still quite hierarchical ARD environment.

Moreover, the Review Team has noted that in a number of countries, a language barrier exists for members at national level, to actively engage in global and regional discussions. Such problems were reported, for example, from Russia, China and Brazil. It is worth highlighting the enthusiastic commitment and innovative solutions with which National Representatives are tackling the issue of language barriers: some dedicate their time to the translation of YPARD documents from English into their mother tongue and vice-versa; in other instances they facilitate the publication of blogs on the YPARD website, by either translating or assisting with editing. Furthermore, in China, a team of active YPARD members have explored the possibility to launch an interface of the YPARD website in Chinese. The project, while requiring low financial resources, will mainly require investments of time from the team members, to translate documentation and to actively feed new content, in Chinese, into that interface.

Since YPARD National Representatives also report the lack of time being their main challenge, it is recommended that YPARD seeks to adopt the same approach used with hosting institutions for Regional Coordinators, in order to obtain a more formalized commitment from the hosting institutions/employers where the National Representatives are employed.

## 4.2 Hosting arrangements and partnerships

### Hosting by GFAR

YPARD was initially hosted by the Leibniz Universität, in Hannover, Germany which provided the kind support that allowed the first YPARD Coordinator -Dr Balasubramanian Ramani- to establish the Platform for Young Professionals and to successfully engage with partner organisations and donors. The current hosting arrangements of the GCU in Rome, Italy were decided in 2010, where it is hosted by the Global Forum for Agricultural Research for Development (GFAR), at FAO's Headquarters. GFAR is offering in kind support to YPARD in terms of office facilities for the Director and for the Web and Communications Officer, administrative support (financial administration –through FAO-, and human resources), partnership facilitation and general guidance in the global ARD arena. Nonetheless, YPARD is an independent movement, and GCU staff reports to the members of YPARD through the Steering Committee.

The current hosting arrangement is of mutual benefit for YPARD and GFAR/FAO. YPARD benefits from GFAR in terms of sharing experiences and highly relevant information exchange, and many (high-level) visitors of GFAR are introduced to GCU staff to acquaint themselves with YPARD and to explore areas of mutual interest. GFAR, in turn, benefits from YPARD as young professionals in ARD form an important stakeholder group. Moreover, YPARD is a formal member the GFAR Steering Committee. The benefits of this collaborative arrangement outweigh the conundrums that have occurred in the past

due to FAO's circumstantial administrative regulations and processes, and that have affected the timely implementation of some of YPARD's (and GFAR's) activities.

The Reviewers have noted that the hosting of YPARD at GFAR/FAO has been up for discussions in the Steering Committee. However understandable, we strongly recommend that YPARD continues to operate within the present arrangement. YPARD is currently facing pressing challenges that require prioritization over changes in the hosting institution.

### **Partnerships**

During the last years, YPARD has established mutually-beneficial partnerships or collaborations with organisations active in agricultural research for development, including GFAR (the host institute), FARA, CIAT, VIT, CAAS, HAFL, Agropolis (all hosting regional or national representative offices), and FAO, CTA, IFAD, EFARD, FORAGRO, CGIAR, JICA, FANRPAN and many others. In doing so, YPARD has achieved a well-recognized status in the ARD arena, and the interest of other partners to link with YPARD is growing. In the Reviewers' opinion, this is the right moment for YPARD to nurture the already-existing partnerships, to retake previous ones, and to establish strategic collaborations in under-represented regions and with under-represented stakeholder groups. IFAD for instance, has expressed interest in receiving proposals or work plans from national YPARD representatives, in order to reach out to IFAD's expanding network of country offices throughout the world. There is valid potential in tapping a similar approach with organisations that have large networks of regional and national offices. We recommend to specifically identify potential partners in sectors with which YPARD has not yet established connections (e.g. private sector/SME's, farmers' organisations including women associations, and non-governmental organisations).

## 5. RELEVANCE, EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY

### 5.1 YPARD Objectives

Members were asked to rank the effectiveness with which they believe YPARD is achieving its four objectives. The graph below indicates that 'Promotion of agriculture among YPs' and 'Information Exchange' are the two highest ranked objectives. Thus, members consider that YPARD could perform better in reference to the objectives 'Broaden opportunities to participate in policy debates' and 'Facilitate access to resources and capacity building'.

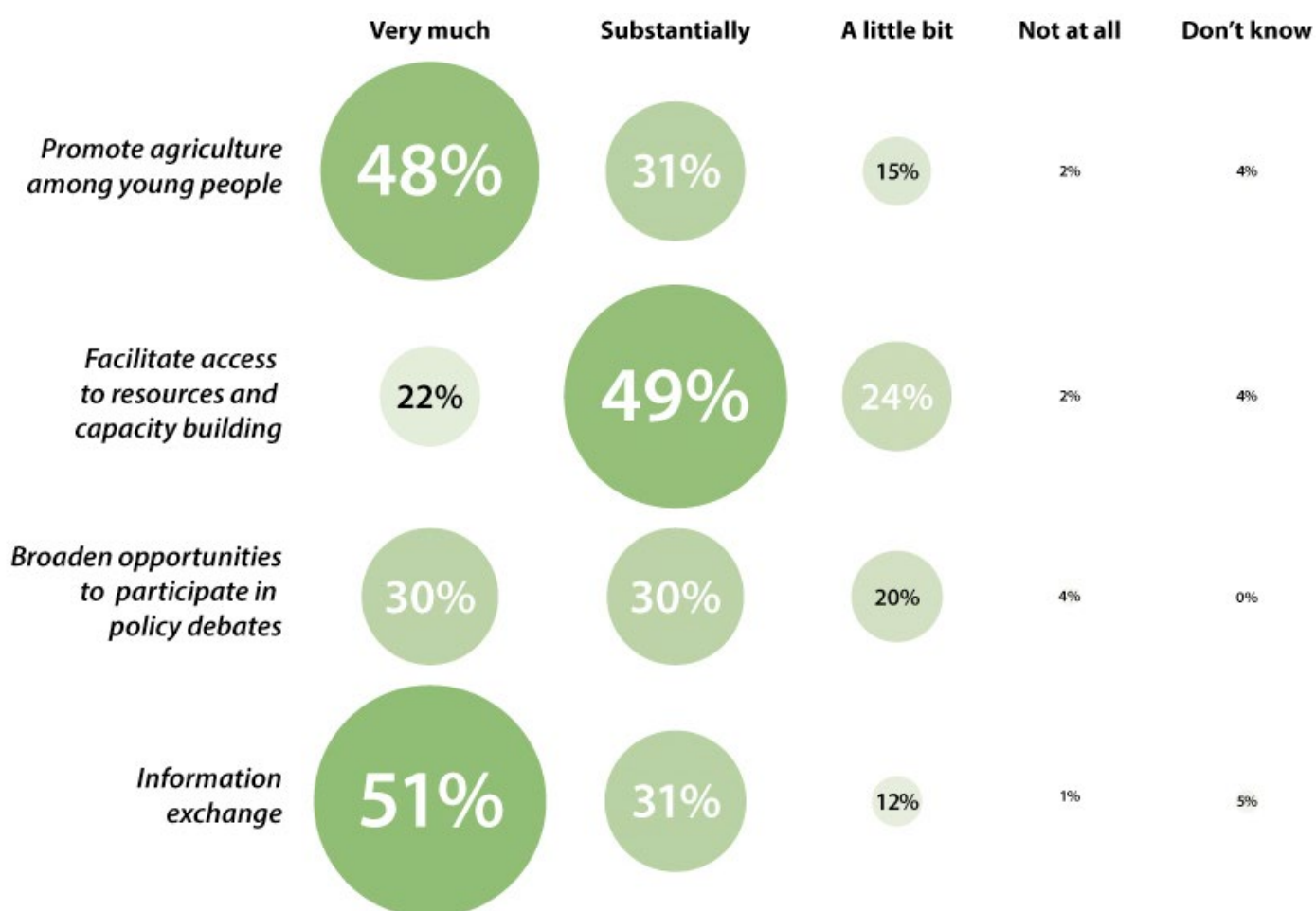


Figure 7: Achieving the YPARD objectives: Members' appreciation

YPARD members were also asked to rank the relative importance of these four YPARD objectives. Interestingly, here they placed the original Objective 3, 'Broaden opportunities to participate in policy debates' as number two (see **Figure 8** below). When asked whether YPARD should develop any additional objectives, most of the respondents replied in the positive. Among a plethora of suggestions, 'Capacity strengthening, mentoring and training', and 'Content-orientated activities' figured most.



Figure 8: Members' ranking of objectives

### 5.2 Service Provider to YPs in Agriculture

In our survey, members were asked to rank their reasons for having joined YPARD and the top two reasons were i) the promotion of youth engagement in ARD and ii) to expand their professional network (See **Figure 9**, below). As previously noted (**Figure 3**), YPARD members are highly satisfied with the services offered, specifically, with the services pertaining to access to information, communications and network creation.

The reasons for joining YPARD have changed during the last years, and respondents have indicated being more interested now in a YPARD agenda that tackles more-strategic issues in ARD, as opposed to the main areas of interest expressed by respondents four years ago.



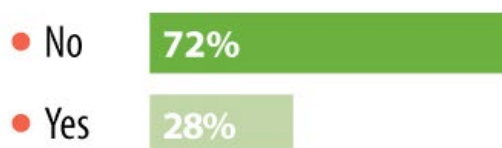
Figure 9: Reasons for joining YPARD

The opportunity for networking is a service highly valued by YPARD members. They seem to be satisfied with the level of networking opportunities offered by YPARD, but they would also value additional networking channels with individuals in different sectors, and from different backgrounds, as well as with more senior colleges in ARD. **Figure 10** below, illustrates the latter point clearly.

***Have you increased your network with other young professionals thanks to YPARD?***



***Have you increased your network with senior professionals thanks to YPARD?***



*Figure 10: Members' networking*

**5.3 Monitoring and Evaluation: Log frames and Gantt charts**

Two of the recommendations of the 2009 External Review addressed the need for more coherent and consistent logical framework planning, and the introduction of a structured approach to monitor progress and impact of YPARD activities.

The Global Coordination Unit has followed-up on these recommendations and developed a 'Results Based Logical Framework'<sup>15</sup> that provides an overview of YPARD's vision and objectives (or: 'targeted outcomes') against so-called objectively verifiable indicators, the means of the latter's verification, and the respective underlying assumptions.

For actual planning and monitoring purposes this Logical Framework may be usefully combined with a so-called Gantt Chart. Gantt Charts are planning tools that show project activities displayed against time. If properly designed and applied, they provide an evolving account to YPARD coordinators at global, regional and national levels to provide evidence of the timely fulfillment of planned activities –in their inter-dependence-, or not.

<sup>15</sup> GCU, 2013. YPARD Log Frame 2013 (draft). 11 p.

**Figure 11** below, provides a fictional example of such a Gantt Chart, using YPARD's vision, outputs and activities in a possible next project phase of 2014-2017. The Reviewers encourage YPARD coordinators to apply the two tools –Log Frame and Gantt Chart- in their daily coordination activities.

Act nr	Activity	Target/Milestone	Leading unit/person			Time frame																	
			GCU	Regional Coordinator	Country Representative	2014				2015				2016				2017					
						Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
Output 1: Exchange of information and knowledge among young professionals facilitated, across disciplines, professionals, age and regions																							
1a	At global level	Web site operational, interactive social media in place	Web & Comm Officer																				
		Website and members' registration database operational	Web & Comm Officer																				
1b	At regional level	Regional websites operational		All Regional Coordinators																			
1c	At national level	National websites and blogs operational			All National Representatives																		
1d	...	...																					
		...																					
Output 2: Opportunities for young professionals to contribute to strategic ARD policy debates broadened																							
2a	At global level	...	...	...	...																		
2b	...	...	...	...	...																		

Figure 11: Example of a Gantt Planning and Monitoring Chart.

## 6. PROSPECTS

### 6.1 Ongoing Need for YPARD

As stated in Chapter 3, YPARD has made great strides in getting the voice of Young Professionals being heard in the global, regional and national agricultural development arena. Examples abound, indeed. Moreover, YPARD has become an extremely vivid and active platform where young professionals share their ideas, exchange information and stimulate each other to pursue professional futures in agriculture. Partly as a result thereof, quite a number of development organisations and institutions (e.g. IFAD, FANRPAN, CGIAR, CTA) have now formulated their own youth strategies, programs or young employees initiatives, that aim to better include young workers in their institutional set-ups and to actively support them. Such initiatives focus on empowerment, mentoring and capacity strengthening of young employees, and on facilitating young colleagues in building (inter-)national experiences in attending conferences, workshops

and training courses. Many other organisations, however, still haven't developed such initiatives and representation of young professionals in the management boards and employees committees is not a standard operational procedure.

However, it should be noted that most of the members who responded to our online survey indicated that they have not been able to increase their networks with senior professionals (Ref. **Figure 10** above). At the same time, as we have discussed throughout this report, it is clear that for YPARD to have tangible impact in the ARD arena, it needs to develop a stronger content-driven approach in order to effectively engage in the global debate.

## **6.2 Changing Directions in Agricultural Development / New Development Paradigms**

Agriculture and agricultural development are driven by an alternating emergence and demise of paradigms which, in turn, lead to ever-changing new directions in development policies, strategies, programs and projects and their supporting financial instruments. Over the past 50 years for example, the world has witnessed a continuum of changing focus areas with respect to agriculture, moving from straightforward support, in the 1960's, to primary production of crops and livestock (fish followed much later), with an initial focus on small holder agriculture, through an emphasis on integrated (farming) system approaches that gradually and increasingly included issues of environmental sustainability and the safeguarding of the natural resource base (soil, water, vegetation and animal life); only to be superseded by process-driven sector approaches, global outsourcing of the production of food, feed, fiber and fuel-crops, (liberalization of) agricultural trade, climate change mitigation and adaption to, nowadays, value chain approaches to safeguard food and nutrition security, including large scale 'industrial' production systems and private sector engagement and innovation systems. Throughout, a number of cross-cutting issues have emerged as well: pro-poor policies, gender equality, participatory approaches to research, agenda-setting and implementation of development trajectories, youth engagement, etc.

Forthcoming issues and new development paradigms abound: genetic modification, nano-technology, invading species, zoonosis, interactive ICT technologies, evidence-based policy support, fore sighting, regional and global trade and regulatory frameworks, private sector engagement, entrepreneurship development, as well as the issue of marginalized people in marginal lands, that cannot link up with market driven agricultural development.

## **6.3 Donor interest, member contributions**

In our discussions with the current main donors of YPARD, SDC of Switzerland and DGIS of the Netherlands, both have expressed great, and continuing, interest in YPARD. Whether this translates into continued funding for a next phase of YPARD is not clear. In general, donor organisations nowadays are less interested than before in financing network- or platform-like initiatives such as YPARD is in its current ambitions. And SDC and DGIS form no exception to that trend. Moreover, national budgets for Development Cooperation are under pressure of economic recession and of changing policy strategies under increasing public discontent with a perceived low impact of development efforts. In the Netherlands for example, budget cuts for Development Cooperation have been in the order of 30-40%

over the last 3 years, from over 3.5 billion Euros in 2011.

Simultaneously, donor organisations adhere more-strictly than before to focus on a limited number of priority thematic areas and priority countries. On the other hand both SDC and DGIS appreciate the long-term aspects related to empowerment processes like those being implemented by YPARD. In any case, both SDC and DGIS have indicated that they would like to see YPARD broadening its resource base by attracting more donors and/or developing other income sources. In this respect it is encouraging to note that SDC and DGIS are willing to table a YPARD Business Plan for a next phase (2015-2019) in the Steering Committee of EIARD, the European Initiative on Agricultural Research for Development. EIARD groups the representatives of the Ministries of Development Cooperation of the EU member states. Both SDC and DGIS have also indicated that a more content-driven approach to YPARD's new strategy would possibly fit better with their policy priorities.

Next, as some of the interviewed senior professionals in ARD pointed out, YPARD might successfully engage in responding to the Calls for Proposals addressing agricultural development and agricultural research for development, as issued by many development institutions the world over. Examples are, the European Commission's European Development Fund, and the forthcoming European Framework Program for Research 'Horizon 2020' as well as calls from DGIS, DFID, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, IFAD, Sub-Regional Research Organisations including CORAF/WECARD and ASARECA, and many others. Subscribing to these calls would require financial engineering constructions as YPARD is not a legal entity by itself, yet. Partners in such collaborative research initiatives should then be invited to act on behalf of YPARD.

Repeatedly, YPARD members and the Steering Committee have been discussing the pros and cons of a membership fee for YPARD to help alleviate some of the financial burden. This time again, a question to that extent was included in the survey among members, and the result was rather inconclusive: 36% of the respondents were against a membership fee, 28% was for, and 36% 'didn't know', all without any regard to the height of the fee. On the other hand, quite a number of the respondents indicated to be ready to pay a certain fee for specific services rendered by YPARD, including, for example, a fee for subscribing to the mentorship program. The Reviewers support this idea, not only in order to cover (part of) the costs involved in developing and implementing such services, but also from the perspective that 'free services are worthless'. Paying a service fee, whatever the amount, increases the user's commitment to use the service optimally.



## 7 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 7.1. For a Content-driven Agenda

The Reviewers side with the majority of the survey respondents, as well as with the interviewed YPARD members and senior ARD community members who indicated that a content-driven agenda would be a very important approach for YPARD, enabling new opportunities and a more-strategic direction towards creating impact. As it was provocatively formulated by one of the senior interviewees:

***“The voice of Young Professionals is now being heard all right, but what is their message?”.***

To develop and apply a content-driven approach, the Reviewers recommend for YPARD to facilitate thematic working groups (‘niche groups’) across its stakeholder constituency. These working groups could elaborate positions on specific thematic and topical issues such as climate change, genetic modification, nanotechnology, private-sector engagement, seed sector development, computer-based technologies and applications, world trade conventions and regulatory frameworks, pro-poor (agricultural) policies, marginalized people living on marginal lands, etc. The examples abound.

Our more-specific recommendations as to how to facilitate this approach include:

- The involvement of SC members as the leaders/facilitators of the working groups that address the specific thematic issues identified. This would not only build ownership among SC members of the processes within YPARD, but it would also take away some of the burden involved if the GCU were to provide this leadership role.
- Where reconciliation across different stakeholder groups, each possibly having their specific positions, might be difficult, YPARD could still frame its messages on behalf of various and varying groups of stakeholders
- Messages that are eventually formulated need to be communicated strongly and identifiably.

### 7.2 Stakeholder Representation

As was discussed in Section 3.1 of this report, most of the YPARD members (36%) are researchers or university lecturers, some 18% are students, and about 13% are working in non-governmental agencies. Young farmers, young entrepreneurs or young employees of governmental agencies are largely under-represented.

The Review Team sides with those young and senior professionals in ARD who, in the online surveys or in the Skype interviews, expressed that, where YPARD has successfully positioned itself as an active and effective platform that makes the voice of young professionals being heard in the ARD arena, it now needs to dedicate further efforts toward a wider and more-balanced representation of stakeholders. This would be a vital approach to effectively address YPARD’s mission ‘to serve as a global platform through which young professionals can express their ideas and realize their full potential towards a dynamic agricultural research for development’, to successfully develop a content-driven agenda and, in addition, to attract the support from new donors.

Potential new donors may be hesitant to support YPARD activities if these are presented as the activities of, and for, a platform by itself, and not as the activities of an organised, collective voice of young professionals in the agriculture for development arena. Therefore, ensuring that YPARD covers the continuum of regions and stakeholder groups uniformly, would be an asset that donor institutions will recognize as highly valuable, and as a viable opportunity for investment.

### **7.3 Mentoring Program: Implementation of Mentoring Approaches**

In agriculture, as in other economic sectors, mentoring of young professionals by more-senior colleagues is generally seen as an effective way to unlock the potential of young professionals and, hence, to contribute to improved performance of the sector at individual, institutional, national, regional or international level. Mentoring also forms an essential component of capacity development and institutional strengthening efforts, both of which are important priorities within the strategies of international development organisations.

In 2012, YPARD conducted a survey which indicated that over 90 per cent of its members were interested in joining a mentoring program. Results from an ensuing pilot study suggested that a 'traditional' mentor/mentee approach would be best and that using YPARD's global reach would enable a broad sharing of experiences gained.

In the framework of the External Review, our surveys amongst both, YPARD members and senior ARD community members, confirmed that mentoring of young professionals in their working environments is seen as an important niche for YPARD to act on and to effectively distinguish itself from other youth platforms and initiatives. As YPARD itself has already defined: 'Mentoring identifies and improves areas in one's profession that require development by providing access to guidance and support to continuous learning and skill development while enhancing productivity and team work'.

In the opinion of the reviewers, mentoring activities deserve pro-active attention by YPARD, and they may act at four levels, as follows:

- Database for online mentorship: Facilitating one-to-one mentorships by developing a database where potential mentors create a profile and submit their curriculums, highlighting their areas of expertise. Then, YPARD members may browse these profiles and decide on whether to apply for mentorship during an specific period (e.g. one to two years). The mentorship will use an internet-based approach where mentees share issues, questions, problems and experiences with the mentors through e-mail and Skype exchanges, the mentors' guidance and advice is received through online channels.
- Institutional level mentorship: Promoting and facilitating hands-on mentor/mentee approaches at institutional level, by providing guidance and advice to institutions and organisations that request such support. In fact, this is a mentoring system that is being applied in a growing number of organisations, but where many institutions and organisations do not have such mentorship programs in place yet, they may welcome the support from YPARD, either from the Central Coordination Unit, or from Regional or National Representatives.

- Capacity building activities: Including strong mentoring/capacity strengthening components in content-driven research or activity proposals that may be submitted in response to calls from (inter-)national donor organisations. Capacity strengthening, time and time again, is being identified as a priority in development strategies, including those aiming at institutional strengthening in agricultural research and (tertiary) education. Adding a specific mentoring component to such activities would help to strengthen individual as well as institutional capacities.
- Cluster mentoring groups: Developing and implementing a program of clustered coaching in which a number of mentees in a certain geographical area receive occasional coaching on specific skills or topics in dedicated sessions that are facilitated by a senior professional<sup>16</sup>. The facilitator will be identified by the mentees in the cluster, in conjunction with a YPARD mentoring facilitator.

### 7.4 YPARD funding

Between 2009 and 2014, YPARD has been receiving financial support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, at € 300.000/annum, and from The Netherlands' Directorate-General for International Cooperation, at € 70.000/annum. The latter allocation is an earmarked part of the overall Netherlands' support to GFAR.

If YPARD is to continue its activities beyond 2014 and, indeed, to expand them from a 'process-driven' approach to include a 'content-driven' approach, it is clear that new financial support for a next phase of YPARD needs to be secured. Moreover, YPARD is experiencing a fast increase of its membership and network, as well as a growing interest in YPARD activities and services, that all call for increased presence and which put extra burden on the organisation and its small coordination staff.

In the present situation, where the two donor organisations have indicated that (i) their budgets are under restrictions, (ii) their policies have changed away from outright support to (global and regional) platform-like activities toward the support of activities in selected priority areas such as food and nutrition security, health, water/natural resources, governance/fragile states, and private sector engagement, this puts a challenge on the sustainability of YPARD's income for the years to come. Moreover, donors nowadays seem to have a preference for joint, or shared, funding constructions. The latter imply that individual donors do not have to take the full burden of the financial support concerned. At the receiving end, such joint funding models, if achieved, have the advantage of a spread of vulnerability.

For all that, in their discussions with representatives of the current two donor organisations, the Reviewers were pleased to learn that both are willing to receive a Business Plan 2014-2018, covering a next phase of YPARD, for their consideration. Moreover, SDC and DGIS are willing to table such a Business Plan in a meeting of the EIARD Steering Committee<sup>17</sup>, to discuss a possible joint response. In addition, DGIS of the Netherlands offered to help putting YPARD in contact with Netherlands' Embassies in countries in which YPARD is active for their possible facilitative support, in particular where this might be on content-driven activities.

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<sup>16</sup> This approach has been elaborated by YPARD in a concept note/draft proposal 'YPARD Mentoring Programme' (2012) that was compiled by the Coordination Unit with valuable inputs from IFAD, CTA. The proposal was tentatively budgeted at some US\$ 500.000 over three years. Donor support has not been secured yet.

<sup>17</sup> EIARD is the European Initiative on Agricultural Research for Development, which brings representatives together from the Ministries or Departments for Development Cooperation, and Ministries of Agriculture of all European Members States.

Alternative ways of funding in a next phase of YPARD may be developed when YPARD initiates a content-driven agenda and activities that may be put-up for approval and funding in the context of 'Calls for Proposals' that are being issued by many development agencies and donor organisations. Examples are those under the European Development Fund or –as far as research proposals are concerned- the new Framework Program for Research 'Horizon 2020, of the European Union; Calls from individual European national donor agencies (e.g. the current calls of DGIS, SDC, DFID, etc); Calls from IFAD, USAID of the United States, CIDA/DFATD of Canada, or philanthropic agencies such as the B&M Gates Foundation, and many others. For lack of a legal status, YPARD will have to develop and submit such proposals through partner organisations.

### **7.5 YPARD's Management structure and organisation**

It is recommended that YPARD's Charter is reviewed, as well as the roles and responsibilities of YPARD's governance structure. In addition, YPARD would greatly benefit from designing a formal recruitment and selection process. Finally, to avoid losing institutional memory, a method for capturing knowledge and insights from members who leave their positions is recommended (SC Members, GCU, Regional Coordinators or National Representatives).

#### **Global coordination unit**

At the moment, YPARD's Global Coordination Unit (2 Full Time Equivalents) is struggling to meet the increasing demands of a successful and growing network. GCU staff commitment is certainly evident, as is also the efficiency and quality of their work. However, despite their willingness to address multiple tasks, a main challenge for GCU staff is to prioritize among a manifold of diverse and important tasks. YPARD's increasing membership and expanding network and outreach comes inevitably with a further increase in the workload and this is expected to continue in the coming years. It is therefore recommended that the staffing of the GCU is supported by at least one additional position, to work, along with the colleagues, on developing a content-driven agenda, fundraising/resources mobilisation, mentoring systems, and monitoring and evaluation.

#### **Steering Committee**

This review considers that, taken into consideration the significant increase in YPARD's membership, the successes achieved in most of the regions and in many countries, and the ongoing increase in the workload, specifically with GCU staff, it is imperative that the SC adopts measures to operate more proficiently. In our series of Skype interviews, many national representatives and regional coordinators reported not being informed sufficiently about the activities of the SC, nor on decisions taken and the grounds on which these were made. Also, we have taken note of sub-optimal responses by Steering Committee members to requests made by the GCU.

In the opinion of the Review Team this implies a need for revisiting the YPARD Chapter on the mandate, rules and regulations pertaining to Steering Committee and its members, as well as their lines of communication, both internal and external. In addition, the criteria and procedures for selection of new

SC members need to be further specified. As to the latter, it is not clear presently, whether SC members act on a personal title or whether they are supposed to represent specific regions or specific stakeholder groups. Also, feedback mechanisms of SC members to their 'constituencies' need to be concretized. Members of the SC should help identify potential partnerships and funding opportunities for YPARD, and constitute and lead working groups on different issues in ARD.

### **Regional Coordination Units**

In addition to the need to increase staff at GCU level, additional capacity is also needed at the level of the Regional Coordinators, who, like the GCU, also have to deal with expanding networks of national YPARD chapters, growing membership numbers and an increasing demand for services and (representation) activities. In the Reviewers' opinion, this could be done best by revisiting the hosting arrangements that apply to the four regional coordination offices. If required, these arrangements may need to be re-negotiated to provide concrete targets for the facilitation offered by the host institutions concerned. A particular item need to be the time allocation to the Regional Coordinators for their YPARD activities, and administrative and secretarial support.

The YPARD community and various stakeholders have expressed that National and Regional representation of YPARD has grown significantly during the last years, and consider it a remarkable achievement. Survey participants for this review, seem to agree that there is large potential and need for YPARD to continue to grow. Members are enthusiastic and eager to see YPARD escalate and cover more regions and countries.

### **National Representatives**

In the past years, YPARD's number of National Representatives has increased considerably and quite spontaneously. As the selection and recruitment processes have varied, this has resulted in differences between the countries. As a result too, the involvement and activity levels of the National Representatives varies as well, depending as they do on the time that each of them is able to dedicate to YPARD. In general, there are no hosting arrangements in place for the National Coordinators, meaning that they may work from their offices in their institutions, but the work that they do for YPARD is for the most part on their own time. Notable different situations are in Switzerland and China, where HAFL and CAAS respectively, provide in kind support to the YPARD National Coordinators.

This lack of institutional back-up reflects an unclear status of the representatives concerned, to the detriment of their messages when they approach local ministries, institutes or organisations either governmental or non-governmental. Our recommendation to address this situation is to establish agreements between the National Coordinators and their respective institutions or, better still, to have YPARD National Coordination Offices hosted in the various national offices of international organisations such as IFAD, or FAO. IFAD is presently expanding its network of such offices to some 150 worldwide, mainly in Africa.

The YPARD Charter does not include specific information about the recruitment, selection, role or responsibilities of the National Representatives, thus, it is recommended that it is revised to include

National Representation in the governance of YPARD.

In reference to the challenges that National Representatives indicated, lack of time was widely expressed as the main concern. It is recommended that YPARD seeks ways to establish a more formalized agreement with the institutions and entities where the National Representatives work, or entities interested in hosting YPARD National Chapters, in order to establish synergies, to allocate specific time/support that can be sponsored from those organisations for National Representation of YPARD in their countries. In addition, it would be valuable for YPARD to link directly with the large organisations that have various country offices operating in different regions, and see how National Representation of YPARD may be extended in collaboration with those organisations.

### **7.6 Budgetary implications**

The Reviewers realize that the Recommendations formulated above, paired with an increasing workload as a result of YPARD's autonomously growing membership and expanding network, imply the need for an increased budget in its next phase.

Concretely we plea for (i) (at least) one additional position at the level of the Global Coordination Unit, (ii) formalization of the hosting arrangements at regional and national levels, (iii) coverage of the budgets for an increasing number of Regional Coordination Offices (North America, Oceania/the Pacific Region and, perhaps, Central Asia are still lacking) and of National Coordination Offices in many countries, (iv) facilitation of working groups on thematic development issues, (v) support to a collaborative social media team, and (vi) increased presence in relevant global and regional development conferences and events.

A rough estimate would be that YPARD, in order to continue implementing its process-driven agenda, while starting-up a much needed content-driven agenda, requires a budget that is at least two times higher than its present, and modest, one.

# ANNEXES

## Annex 1

### Terms of Reference External Review YPARD (Young Professionals' Platform for Agricultural Research for Development)

#### Background

The future of global food security is critical. It is being exacerbated by the dwindling engagement of rural based youth in farming as well as the declining interest among young professionals in pursuing agricultural development related careers. Despite the recognition of the importance of youth within the Agricultural Research for Development (ARD) community, a cohesive approach to engage youths in ARD has not yet been defined and efforts remain fragmented and piecemeal.

Young professionals still face numerous challenges making their voices heard and exerting influence in the field of ARD. Lack of youth involvement in ARD has negative implications for the sector, with regard to the potential for innovation, use of new communication technologies, inclusivity and future sustainability.

The Young Professionals' Platform for Agricultural Research for Development (YPARD) works to link efforts on engaging and mobilising youth, getting them involved in local, national and international dialogues. The mission of YPARD is to serve as a global platform through which young professionals (YPs) can express their ideas and realizes their full potential towards a dynamic agricultural research for development. It aims to:

1. Facilitate exchange of information and knowledge among YPs across disciplines, professions, age and regions;
2. Broaden opportunities for YPs to contribute to strategic ARD policy debates;
3. To promote agriculture among young people;
4. Facilitate access to resources and capacity building opportunities.

#### Objectives of the review

The objective of the review is to evaluate the progress of YPARD, with an emphasis on the last four years, since its most recent external review in April 2009. The review will look at what YPARD has achieved during this time, evaluate the organisational structure and outline YPARD's successes and challenges. The review will measure YPARD's progress against the 2010-2014 business plan which was created in response to the findings of the last external review.

The review is expected to collect information regarding previous trends in the development of the network and extrapolate these to provide insights regarding the future orientation of YPARD. This review comes at a time when YPARD is working to diversify funding sources, seek new hosting institutions and develop a more rigorous monitoring and evaluation strategy. The review shall serve as the basis for the new strategic plan and as a tool for improvement and fundraising.

The key questions are:

1. Member satisfaction: Do members find the services and information provided via YPARD platform useful? Is YPARD a platform they would refer to other young professionals?
2. Aims and structure of YPARD: Is the current set-up of the network and hosting arrangements the most suitable and effective for YPARD? Are its activities effective in reaching its objectives? Is its funding base sustainable in the long-term?
3. Perception of YPARD by ARD community: Has YPARD been successful in establishing itself as a recognized stakeholder in the ARD community?
4. Contributions of YPARD to the development of ARD discussions and youth engagement: Has YPARD been successful in influencing ARD discussions and been influential in promoting greater youth engagement in ARD?

### **Organisational structure**

Steering committee (SC): 6 members who provide direction in the development and oversee the implementation of YPARD strategies, programs and activities in coordination with the YPARD Global Coordination Unit.

Global coordination unit (GCU): which plans, coordinates and executes the activities of YPARD in consultation with the Steering Committee with feedback from regional coordinators. This is composed of a web and communication officer and a global director.

Regional coordinators: 4 individuals based in Africa, Asia, Europe and LAC, respectively, who develop regional plans in consultation with national representatives and the Global Coordination Unit. They coordinate the implementation of regional plans and activities in their respective regions.

National representatives: who promote and implement YPARD activities in their country in consultation with the regional coordinators and in some cases, the global coordination unit.

Members: who contribute online, on the ground and receive information from YPARD. There are 5124 registered members (3200 who receive regular information).

### **Hosting institutions**

The hosting institutions provide in-kind support to YPARD regional activities by providing office space and some of the time of the regional coordinator. The hosting institutions include:

- YPARD Global at the Global Forum for Agricultural Research (GFAR) in Rome, Italy
- YPARD Africa at the Forum for Agricultural Research for Africa (FARA) in Accra, Ghana
- YPARD Asia at VIT University in Vellore India
- YPARD Europe at HAFL in Bern, Switzerland
- YPARD LAC at CIAT in Cali, Colombia



Resources: YPARD's budget for 2010-2013 has included contributions from SDC, DGIS, JICA, Agropolis with substantial in-kind contributions from GFAR, FARA, VIT, HAFL, CAAS and the CGIAR.

### **Tasks**

The following dimensions shall be evaluated:

- Relevance
- Are the activities appropriate in reaching the objectives of YPARD?
- Are the activities relevant to members, to solve the challenges that face YPs in ARD?
- Are the activities relevant at the global, regional, national and local level?

### **Outcome**

- Which changes can be identified for YPs since YPARD was launched and what additional changes can be identified since 2009?
- Has more awareness been created among the main stakeholders in ARD on the importance of engaging with young professionals?
- Is YPARD in a position to influence the development of policy debates in ARD? Please provide examples.
- Is YPARD recognized as a stakeholder in the ARD community?

### **Effectiveness**

- Is YPARD achieving its four objectives: 1) Facilitate exchange of information and knowledge among YPs across disciplines, professions, age and regions; 2) Broaden opportunities for YPs to contribute to strategic ARD policy debates; 3) To promote agriculture among young people and 4) Facilitate access to resources and capacity building opportunities.
- Is activity planning done in a participatory way, reflecting local, national and regional priorities?
- Is there an established and effective monitoring and evaluation system in place?
- Does YPARD reach rural youth? If so, which activities or mechanisms are the most effective? If not, where are rural youth missing out?
- Is YPARD able to operate independently within its hosting arrangements? How are global and regional work plans and activities determined?

### **Efficiency**

- Is the best, most cost-effective performance being achieved with the input (personnel, ideas, know-how, material, time and finance)?
- How does YPARD compare to other networks/organisations in return on investment?
- How does decision making and management function? Does the SC fulfil their role? Is the selection process and composition of the SC adequate?
- Are the hosting and backstopping arrangements appropriate and efficient in supporting YPARD?

### **Cross-cutting theme: gender**

- How are gender issues addressed in the work programme of YPARD? Are gender specific activities developed?
- What's the ratio between female and male members of YPARD at the global and regional level? Is there a significant difference, and if yes, could any particular reason for this be identified?

### **Sustainability**

- Does the environment (international ARD community) enable the sustainability of YPARD?
- Do the hosting arrangements and funding situation ensure the sustainability of YPARD?
- Does YPARD has the "right" focus; of what is of concern to both youth as well as the wider ARD community?
- Does YPARD need to be registered as a separate body to appropriately establish its functions at global, regional or local level in order to foster collaborations and access funding opportunities?

### **Methodology**

The review team will be composed of a senior and junior consultant who may apply individually or as a team. The consultants should have experience in carrying out evaluations and be familiar with the ARD environment. The expressions of interest will include a 2-3 page proposal that includes capacities to undertake the work, suggested methods/approaches of how reviewer(s) would go about the review, proposed number of days, daily rates and CVs and will be submitted to the Global Coordination Unit (GCU) at [info@ypard.net](mailto:info@ypard.net), with a copy made to [Courtney.Paisley@fao.org](mailto:Courtney.Paisley@fao.org). The GCU will share completed applications with the Steering Committee. The selection of the candidates for the review will be made by the YPARD Steering Committee.

The review will be based on:

- Desk study of most relevant documents: YPARD Annual Reports, the 2010-2014 Business Plan, the Charter, financial reports and others. The documents will be made available by the director to the consultants.
- A visit to the GCU at FAO/GFAR in Rome for a planning meeting, interview with the director, the web and communications officer and selected GFAR Secretariat staff.
- Skype discussions with select steering committee members.
- Skype discussions and/or questionnaires with the regional coordinators and host institution staff, where relevant.
- Survey and some select discussions with national representatives
- Survey and some select discussions with YPARD members
- Survey and some select discussions with stakeholders of the ARD community

## **Timing**

The following timing is foreseen:

- Desk study: July 2013
- Visit to Rome: July or September 2013
- Discussions with individuals: September 2013
- Draft work plan and report outline: September 2013
- Survey: October 2013
- Draft report: November 2013
- Comments by YPARD SC: November 2013
- Finalizing Report: December 2013
- Debriefing: Online SC meeting December 2013

The duration of the review shall not exceed 20 days for the senior consultant and 30 days for the junior consultant.

## **Deliverables**

The report should consist of no more than 25 pages (excluding Annexes) and contain:

1. Summary of the final conclusions and recommendations
2. Methodology: information regarding methodology and procedures in order to explain how the results were reached
3. Analysis: specific analysis based on the terms of references
4. Findings and conclusions
5. Suggestions for the future orientation of YPARD
6. Recommendations for donors, the SC, GCU, regional coordinators and country representatives;
7. Annexes: Terms of References, list of abbreviations, list of persons met and interviewed, programme of work.

A draft work plan with the report outline, a list of documents for review and individuals to contact is expected to be submitted to the SC in September for approval.

The findings of the final review shall be summarized in a report in English with a translation of the summary only, in French. This report shall be provided to the Steering Committee for approval.

## Annex 2

### Summary Bio data of External Reviewers



**Senior Consultant: Wim Andriesse** (1947) is an expert in natural resources management/agro-ecology by training (MSc. Wageningen Agricultural University, 1973). His long-term work experiences include Watershed Management and Soil Conservation in Indonesia, Soil Survey and Land Evaluation in the Philippines (both with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations), and Rural Development/Land Use Planning in Jamaica (with the Netherlands' International Co-operation Programme) from 1973-1982.

From 1982 to 2000 he was employed by the Service for Agricultural Research (DLO) in the Netherlands, working primarily on agro-ecological characterization (West Africa) and on capacity development and institutional strengthening of soil research institutions (Jamaica, Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique) and on agro-ecological characterization of rice-growing environments in West Africa, in partnership with WARDA/Africa Rice and IITA, CIRAD of France, and National Agricultural Research Institutions in Guinée, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Mali, Ghana, Benin, Togo, Nigeria and Cameroon.

As from 2000 until his retirement in June 2012, Wim Andriesse held a dual position at Wageningen International, the international office for Wageningen University and Research Centre, as Manager International Relations for Africa and as Co-ordinator of the Research and Capacity Building Partnership Programme 'Globalisation and Sustainable Development' between the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Wageningen UR. As Manager International Relations/Africa, Andriesse was instrumental in developing and implementing the 'Africa Strategy' of Wageningen UR. Wim has been a member of the Steering Committee of the European Forum for Agricultural Research for Development (EFARD), and he was adviser to the European Alliance on Agricultural Knowledge for Development (AGRINATURA). As from its inception in 2005, Wim has been a strong supporter of the Young Professional's Platform for Agricultural research for Development (YPARD) and he served as a member of this Platform's Senior Advisory Group (SAG) from 2006-2012. Wim has been actively engaged in policy-level discussions on the role of agriculture for economic development in which he has advised both the Netherlands' Ministries of Agriculture and of Development Cooperation.

As from June 2012, Wim has retired from Wageningen University and Research Centre but he is still carrying out project evaluations (for the European Commission), support missions for the TEAM Africa initiative (for the World Bank) and in institutional transformation support activities (for the North-West University in South Africa). To this end, Wim has established his own consultancy firm 'Andriesse ARDConsult' that provides advisory services and process facilitation in agricultural research, (higher) agricultural education and institutional development.



**Junior Consultant: Lisa Cespedes** (1981) is an Independent Consultant working in the field of international development and non-profit management. She is from Costa Rica and lived in the United States during the second half of her life, where she completed a M.A. degree in Nonprofit Management from the University of Central Florida, in Orlando, FL. She has been working as an independent consultant during the last five years, and established her own consultancy a year and a half ago.

Her areas of expertise include project management, project analysis and evaluation, communications, knowledge management, and facilitation of online communities. She has also shared learned experiences and good practices to improve community management and knowledge sharing processes.

Working at the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations during the last years, Lisa developed and implemented communication plans, advocacy and promotional campaigns, and co-organised and facilitated global online discussion forums, participating actively in high level discussions about the use of ICTs for rural/agricultural development.

### **Annex 3**

#### **Reports and Documents Consulted for External Review**

- Crole-Rees, A, and F. Kruijssen, 2009. Young Professionals' Platform for Agricultural Research for Development (YPARD). External Review 2009, Final Report. Lausanne, Switzerland and Nijmegen, the Netherlands. 27 p + Appendices.
- GCU, 2013. YPARD. 2012 Activity Report. YPARD, Rome, Italy. 35 p.
- GCU, 2013. YPARD On-line presence. Mid-year M&E report 2013. YPARD, Rome, Italy. 21 p.
- GCU, 2013. Linking YPARD and the CGIAR. Minutes of a Skype Meeting (April 11, 2013). YPARD, Rome, Italy. 2 p.
- GCU, 2013. Concept Note: YPARD External Review and Strategic Planning Meeting. YPARD, Rome, Italy. 1 p.
- GCU, 2013. YPARD Log Frame 2013 (draft). YPARD, Rome, Italy. 11 p
- GCU, 2012. YPARD Annual Report 2011. Prepared for the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). YPARD, Rome, Italy. 25 p.
- GCU, 2012. YPARD WEB & Online Communications. M&E Report 2012. YPARD, Rome, Italy. 17 p.
- GCU, 2012. YPARD Mentoring Programme. A draft proposal. YPARD, Rome, Italy. 6 p.
- YPARD, 2009. Business Plan 2010-2014. Young Professionals' Platform for Agricultural Research for Development. YPARD, Rome, Italy. 21 p.
- YPARD, 2007-2013. YPARD Newsletter. Various monthly issues. YPARD, Rome, Italy.
- YPARD, 2008. Charter of the Young Professionals' Platform for Agricultural Research for Development. YPARD, Rome, Italy. 10 p.
- YPARD Africa Office, 2012. YPARD – Africa Progress Report Jan 2011-May 2012. FARA, Accra, Ghana. 7 p.
- YPARD Asia Office, 2013. YPARD Asia Activities 2012. VIT University, Tamil Nadu, India. Point 15 slides.

**Annex 4**

**Individuals Interviewed throughout External Review 2013**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position/Institution</b>
Global Coordination Unit	
Courtney Paisley	YPARD Director
Marina Cherbonnier	YPARD Web and Communications Officer
Steering Committee	
Codrin Paveliuc-Olariu	SC Chair
Froukje Kruijssen	SC Vice Chair
Emmanuel Nzeyimana	SC member
Nidhi Nagabhatla	SC member
Femke Van DerLee	SC member
Danielle Nierenberg	SC member
Regional Coordinators	
Gbadebo Odularu	YPARD Africa regional coordinator
Martina Graf	YPARD Europe regional coordinator
Andrea Carvajal	YPARD LAC regional coordinator
Dr. R Seenivasan	YPARD Asia regional coordinator
National Representatives	
Bi Jieying	YPARD China representative
Olawale Ojo	YPARD Nigeria representative
Yana Perevoshchikiva	YPARD Russia representative
Rebecca Souza	YPARD Brazil representative
Sridhar Gutam	YPARD India representative
Dinesh Panday	YPARD Nepal representative
Frejus Thoto	YPARD Benin representative
Rachel Wyss	YPARD Switzerland representative
Myriam Perez Diaz	YPARD France representative
Obert Mathivha	YPARD South Africa representative
Sokhna Rokhaya Gaye	YPARD Senegal representative
ARD Community Members/ Stakeholders	
Corrine Abbas	DGIS
Markus Burli	SDC
Elcio Guimaraes	CIAT
Marlene Heeb	SDC
Anne-Laure Roy	IFAD
Simone Staiger	CIAT
Mark Holderness	GFAR
Harry Palmier	GFAR
Balasubramanian Ramani	Former YPARD Coordinator
Ken Lohento	CTA – Ardyis, youth and ICTs
Alessandra Giuliani	HAFL
Sithembile Ndema	FANRPAN project officer
Christian Hoste	Agreenium
Oliver Oliveros	Agropolis
Mariana Wongtschowskj	Royal Tropical Institute

## **Annex 5**

### **Results of Web-based Surveys**

For this External Review, two online surveys were performed:

- one for the YPARD community members, with 31 questions, in:
  - English: with 114 responses received, and
  - French: with 27 responses received
- one for ARD community members (in English), with 21 questions, which received a total of 35 responses.

These surveys<sup>18</sup> were opened for a period of two weeks. An announcement<sup>19</sup> was published in YPARD's website, and continuously promoted through YPARD's social media channels; in addition, an email announcement was sent to registered members of YPARD, but due to long-term problems with YPARD's server, a significant percentage of members didn't receive the notification about the survey.

The reviewers consider the number of responses a low return (less than 2.5%), and this may be to certain level attributed to the server issues, which limited the possibilities to reach out to all YPARD members. Nevertheless, the responses collected were used as a general indication of users' perspective of YPARD, and when combined with statistics about website performance, with data about members from previous annual and semi-annual reports, and with the feedback received throughout Skype interviews, the findings corresponded, and the conclusions summarized in this report were gathered.

#### **The questions asked in the survey for YPARD members were:**

- Q1** Your age
- Q2** Your gender
- Q3** Your region of origin
- Q4** Your region of residence:
- Q5** Your highest level of education:
- Q6** Your agricultural background is in:
- Q7** Where are you currently employed?
- Q8** What is your professional experience?
- Q9** Are you a member of any professional association other than YPARD?
- Q10** Year you joined YPARD
- Q11** How did you find out about YPARD?
- Q12** Your reason for joining YPARD:Q12 Your reason for joining YPARD:



- Q13** Which information from YPARD do you find most valuable?
- Q14** How do you receive information from YPARD? (Select all that apply)
- Q15** Frequency of information: The information that you receive from YPARD is:
- Q16** Have you participated in an event organised or co-organised by YPARD either at national, regional or global level?
- Q17** Have you obtained a job or funding/sponsorship through opportunities promoted by YPARD?
- Q18** Have you increased your network with other young professionals thanks to YPARD?
- Q19** Have you increased your network with senior professionals thanks to YPARD?
- Q20** What are some examples of opportunities that YPARD provides to you?
- Q21** In your opinion, to what extent does YPARD contribute to:
- Q22** Have you been in contact with YPARD's regional, national or local representatives?
- Q23** What is your opinion about the quality of the following services offered by YPARD:
- Q24** Please rank YPARD's objectives in order of importance based on your opinion (1 being the least relevant, and 4 being the most relevant)
- Q25** In your opinion, are there any other objectives that YPARD should include?
- Q26** YPARD's agenda and its objectives (see 24 above) are largely process-driven. In your opinion, should YPARD develop a content-driven agenda, for instance, with a stronger focus on climate change, entrepreneurship development, or other topical development issues?
- Q27** Do you consider that YPARD's management structure (Steering Committee, Coordination Unit, Regional, National and Local Representative) is appropriate to address its current objectives and implement its strategy?
- Q28** In your opinion, is YPARD integrating the gender issue sufficiently into its general strategy and programme?
- Q29** Are there any additional services that you believe YPARD should offer?
- Q30** Would you be willing to pay a membership fee to YPARD?
- Q31** Thank you very much for taking part in this survey, we value your feedback and any additional comments.

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<sup>18</sup> The online surveys were created with a SurveyMonkey account, which included advanced features.

<sup>19</sup> <http://ypard.net/2013-october-23/you-ypard-how-are-things-going>

**The questions asked in the survey for ARD community members were:**

- Q1** Your age
- Q2** Your gender
- Q3** Your region of origin
- Q4** Your region of residence:
- Q5** Your highest level of education:
- Q6** Where are you currently employed?
- Q7** What is your current position (level)?
- Q8** Have you ever heard of the Young Professional's Platform for Agricultural Research for Development (YPARD)? (If not, please proceed to Question 11)
- Q9** Are you a member of YPARD, or have you been?
- Q10** How did you first hear about YPARD?
- Q11** In your opinion, is there a need for such a global young professional's platform in the area of agricultural research for development?
- Q12** Is your organisation a donor or host of YPARD (in cash or in kind)?
- Q13** In your opinion, is YPARD on the right track to reach its four main objectives?
- Q14** In your opinion, are there any other objectives that YPARD should include?
- Q15** Based on the YPARD objectives as given above, who should, in your opinion, be the target groups of the Young Professionals' platform?
- Q16** In your opinion, should the participation of young professionals in policy debates on agricultural research for development be enhanced?
- Q17** In your opinion, has YPARD had any role in ARD policy debates so far?
- Q18** In your opinion, how relevant are each of the current activities / services that YPARD offers?
- Q19** Does the organisation that you work for have a youth policy or strategy?
- Q20** In your opinion, should the participation of young professionals in the decision making process of your organisation be enhanced?
- Q21** Any last comments about YPARD, young professionals in ARD or the survey you can enter here.

## **Annex 6**

### **Anonymized Summary of Interviews**

Throughout a period of 2 1/2 months (from October to December 2013) the reviewers interviewed 36 individuals (see Annex 4):

- 2 Global Coordination Unit staff members
- 6 Steering Committee members
- 4 Regional Coordinators
- 11 National Representatives
- 13 ARD Community Members/Stakeholders

#### **Discussions with GCU and GFAR**

During a two-day face to face meeting, the GCU met with the Reviewers and thoroughly briefed them about YPARD's status quo, and offered a comprehensive background of the activities organised, the milestones achieved, and the challenges that YPARD has faced throughout the last four years. The GCU facilitated a compilation of documentation related to YPARD's background, governance, recent activities, statistics and annual reports, etc. (see Annex 3). In addition, the Reviewers met with GFAR's Secretariat and discussed the current hosting arrangements of YPARD, ongoing issues in ARD, overall expectations of the External Review, and prospects for YPARD and YPs in agriculture.

#### **Discussions with Regional Coordinators and National Representatives**

The Reviewers organised Skype interviews with all 4 Regional Coordinators and with 11 National Representatives. An announcement was posted on YPARD's website informing members that the External Review was to take place, and with a general invitation to share feedback with the External Reviewers. The discussions with Regional Coordinators and National Representatives covered the following main questions, among various other topics:

- How did you learn about YPARD/How did you become Coordinator/Representative?
- How much time in general do you spend on YPARD activities?
- What are some of the main activities that you do in your role with YPARD?
- What are some of the main challenges/difficulties that you encounter in the facilitation of YPARD activities in your region/country?
- Is there institutional support available, or recognition received?
- How many countries are there represented in your region?/ How many members at a national level?
- How do you communicate/interact with other members?/What communication channels are preferred?
- How is the interaction with the GCU and with other Regional Coordinators/National Coordinators?
- Insights about stakeholder representation in the constituency of your region/country
- Insights about engagement with other youth initiatives

The interviews were open discussions, thus, in addition to the questions listed above, the National Representatives and Regional Coordinators were asked to share feedback in general about their experiences working with YPARD, their opinion about opportunities and/or challenges for YPARD, and suggestions overall. The input received varied greatly, and it was very valuable for this External Review. After each interview, the Reviewers prepared a summary of the key points discussed, and share it with the interviewed, who then had the opportunity to review the conclusions and add additional points.

### **Discussions with Steering Committee Members**

The Reviewers also arranged for individual Skype meetings with the 6 members of the Steering Committee, which were also open discussions to learn about their role, their experiences and to obtain general feedback. Some of the key questions covered were:

- How did you learn about YPARD, how did you become a SC member?
- On average, how much time do you spend on YPARD's activities?
- Is there any institutional support available/recognition offered?
- Are there any main challenges/difficulties, or opportunities that YPARD is yet to approach?
- How is the interaction with the GCU and with Regional Coordinators and National Coordinators?

After the individual discussions, a summary of key points was also sent to SC Members, allowing the opportunity to review the conclusions and include further feedback.

### **Discussions with Senior ARD Colleagues**

Moreover, the Reviewers arranged for meetings with 13 Senior Professionals in ARD, who have been involved with YPARD either through partnerships or as donors, or who have been former members or followed YPARD's development throughout the years. As with other members of YPARD, the approach was an open discussion, to learn about their involvement with YPARD, their opinion about YPARD's direction, and to receive general feedback and advise about prospects in ARD. Some of the main questions covered included:

- How did you learn about YPARD?
- How have you been involved with YPARD?
- How do you perceive YPARD's performance/progress made until now?
- What are YPARD's main challenges/Which directions do you think YPARD should approach?
- What weaknesses do you observe/what strengths?

The individuals interviewed were from different regions, sectors and organisations. The general consensus is that YPARD has made remarkable progress during the last years, and that it has positioned itself in a recognised position within the ARD global community. In addition, interviewed stakeholders agree that YPARD has achieved a phase in which is now prepared to tackle certain policy issues with a more strategic approach. This, interviewees agree, would positively impact YPARD's direction.