

Youth and the GCARD2

Youth were in the spotlight at the *second Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD2)* (<http://www.egfar.org/gcard-2012>). YPARD held observer status on the GCARD2 Organising Committee and brought a strong youth focus to the conference including the issues of attracting and retaining youth in agricultural careers, youth input in agricultural curriculum reform and engaging youth in foresight. Fresh perspectives on the conference discussions were brought through youth attendees and the team of young social reporters which set the tone for action on youth and agricultural development. YPARD was recognized as the youth mechanism of GCARD2 and for future youth empowerment, in the conclusion of GCARD2 sessions.

Learning and the Empowerment of Youth and Women (C2.2)

These two traditionally marginalised groups in Agricultural Research for Development (ARD) were the focus of a discussion for their greater representation and engagement. This session was unique in that it involved youth in its design and selection of the youth speakers. It was practical, calling ARD players to take action where women and youth are concerned. Some calls to action include:

- Multiply the availability of high-quality opportunities for practical experience and career development of women and youth in ARD such as internships, fellowships, mentoring and professional secondment;
- Coordinate the monitoring and publication of statistics on the composition of ARD international and regional meetings, boards and leadership teams by age, gender and nationality;
- Take stock of regional efforts toward curriculum reform in agricultural education while advocating that those reforms support ARD that is transformative and that is fully inclusive of youth and women (The University of West Indies committed to including the voice of youth in their curriculum reform this year);
- Organisations must stop saying 'you should' and start saying 'I will' on action points;
- Invest in the full development of YPARD and GAP as mechanisms to support the implementation of the above.

Blog posts

- [Empowering youth in ARD through YPARD: a commitment by GCARD2 constituencies!](#)
- Are the youth and women speaking to themselves? : ["WHO's Listening? – Youth, Women, Empowerment"](#)

Article by YPARD in *World Farmers' Organisation Newsletter of November: YOUTH TAKING A SIGNIFICANT PART INTO GCARD2*, p.15

YPARD pre-conference session

YPARD brought together young professionals active in ARD from around the globe to discuss and formulate a joint statement for the GCARD2 capacity development discussions. These youths submitted applications of interest through the YPARD network, were shortlisted by region and put forward to the GFAR regional fora and social reporting team for sponsorship. Prior to the meeting, YPARD engaged its members in pre-consultations on the YPARD online forum from which reports were developed to set the basis for the interventions and

maximise the face-to-face interaction. Working with partners, notably through the EFARD/Agrinatura capacity development session, informed the YPARD discussions and experienced professionals provided additional input. The main points that emerged from the consultation were:

1. **Curriculum reform in agricultural education is needed.** Youth require a range of skills and competencies beyond their technical discipline. Reform of the agricultural curriculum must be a fully inclusive process which involves a wide range of stakeholders including youth.
2. **Greater youth input in decision making bodies.** Boards, steering and executive committees of organizations in ARD must include youth representatives to ensure work is relevant and inclusive for today's youth and tomorrow's leaders. To encourage the rapid uptake of youth representatives, they may begin as youth advisors, gradually moving to full status.
3. **Youth 'positive discrimination' in projects and funding.** Employment advertisements could include "Young Professionals are highly encouraged to apply and where skill sets are equal, opportunities are given to young professionals. Calls for proposals could also have particular funding tranches to be led by young professionals.
4. **Youth engagement in policymaking.** Organisations active in policy development must include youth as stakeholders in their policy recommendations. Youth also require capacity development to enable them to make their voice heard at the policy level.
5. **Internships, internships, internships!** Linking academic learning to the real world and gaining transversal skills are most effective through active learning. Universities, the private sector and ARD organisations must improve collaborative efforts and provide more support for worthwhile internship opportunities.
6. **Promotion of extra-curricular agricultural activities.** Extra-curricular activities and youth clubs in agriculture further develop needed soft skills and foster pride in agriculture. More support is needed for these organizations as well as more collaboration between ARD actors to inform youth of the opportunities available.
7. **Reward systems for future leaders.** Fellowships and scholarships must go beyond a technical focus, with comprehensive capacity development designed for leaders of a new, multifaceted agricultural development. To build young professionals that will truly make a difference, focus rewards on those who work to provide impact at the ground level.
8. **Promote agricultural career programs.** Lobby for greater agricultural focus on donor and government funded youth employment programs (JPOs for example). Scale up successful youth initiatives.
9. **Share success (and challenge) stories.** Youth testimonials in agricultural development can be used to share youth stories and influence others. New media tools can increase their impact.
10. **Link up with other marginalised groups.** Join forces to be heard! Where appropriate, youth interests may join other marginalized groups, to strengthen their call for a more inclusive ARD.



YPARD answers this call and replaces the 'you should' with 'I will'.

YPARD will continue to share information on opportunities with youth and organizations in ARD and share success (and challenge) stories of youth in ARD.

YPARD has and will continue to advocate for and help to place strong youth on decision making bodies and advocate for a youth inclusive curriculum reform, contributing the input of the youth through the YPARD network.

YPARD will advocate for increased agricultural focus on youth employment programs, youth positive discrimination and more effective internships. YPARD will continue to call on the ARD community to act and work with it in ensuring that youth supportive actions are implemented.

Blog posts

- [GCARD2 Youth e-discussions kicking-off](#)
- [On our road to GCARD2: YPARD Youth involvement!](#)
- [Engaging with youth in Agriculture - YPARD GCARD2 Pre-conference meeting](#)
- ["Holy" Youth-friendly GCARD2](#)
- ["Young but Not Naïve"](#)

YPARD Call [Call for expressions of interest among Young Professionals to bring a youth voice to GCARD2](#)

Youth Social Reporters' programme

YPARD collaborated with the CGIAR communications team to bring thirty-five young social reporters to the GCARD. A global call was published on ypard.net and disseminated to more than 20 000 people in 3 languages, building the online group. The young reporters were prolific and committed, boosting the profile of the conference worldwide and interacting online with a global audience. They not only spread the word on what was discussed at the GCARD2 but also shared their own observations and comments, and invited online participants to contribute to the discussions. Some of the outputs¹ include:

136 social reporters from 44 countries (35 onsite and 101 offsite social reporters and supporters), 63 mainstream articles, 152 blogposts (visited 16,026 times from 149 countries), 1,500 daily Twitter updates, 300 Facebook updates read 20,127 times.

There was a capacity building component enabling trainees to use social media to boost their own work in ARD. Members used the skills obtained to create, for example, social media awareness for the NEPAD Fish node in Malawi, the "Cool to Farm" workshop in Nigeria and the #AllForest agriculture and Climate change discussions at COP18.

"YPARD was the glue, the mechanism to get YPs in place.", YPARD selected the trainees and provided logistical support for their attendance. The social reporters, which were joined by the YPARD delegates, chose to maintain an online group, the "YPARD-SR group", focusing on youth in agriculture advocating for SR as a key part of ARD events to ensure that youth and other marginalized stakeholders are represented in 2013 and beyond.

Blog posts

- [Social Reporting Geeks signing off](#)
- [GCARD2: Young professionals "Make Agriculture Cool Again"](#)
- [If agriculture is an aging profession, we need to make some changes!](#)

YPARD Call [Give a Youth voice at GCARD2 through Social Media!](#)

¹ Statistics compiled by the CGIAR Communications Team



Youth in Foresight

With some youth engagement in the foresight pre conference meetings, experienced professionals welcomed stronger youth involvement in foresight discussions. This is deemed a 'hot topic' for youth and one where they can play a leading role. YPARD will support increased engagement of youth in the global foresight academy.

Youth and the CGIAR

The CEO of the CGIAR Consortium, Frank Rijsberman, met with the young reporters to answer questions on youth engagement in the CGIAR. The youth asked questions such as: How does the CGIAR engage with youth in its work? Would the CGIAR consider a youth advisor on their boards? The CEO confirmed that future leaders are very important to the CGIAR and that they will commit to engaging with youth as they develop their capacity development programs.

Blog post

[How many people in positions of power are youth?: "Agriculture's potential for solving youth unemployment"](#)

Key Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The presence of a **youth representative on the GCARD2 organising committee** gave youth greater prominence in the event and helped to clarify the role of youth in the conference from the outset. Thus, youth were not added as an afterthought, but were integrated into the discussions with identified outcomes and with the aim of generating commitments to actions from partners. YPARD contributed not only to the recruitment of key people but to the design of the youth programme, the background paper and actively provided feedback on the session.

The support of YPARD, with its extensive youth network, provided the **mechanism to reach a wide range of youth active in ARD**. YPARD identified key youth speakers, solicited a call for expressions of interest from active youth to participate from different regions, globally, and identified active social reporters for sponsorship.

The YPARD booth at the GCARD2 Marketplace gave youth participants a place to convene, compare accounts of the day's events and speak to interested GCARD attendees on the youth session, YPARD and other hot topics at the conference.

The **e-consultations** on the YPARD website, which was further developed during the **youth pre-conference session** provided a solid foundation from which to submit the ideas and views of the youth into the plenary. These calls to action reflect a true consultative process, the outcomes of which are those calls for change voiced by the youth.

Youth & ARD: some additional GCARD2 Youth perspectives

- ["Young Professionals Rule!"](#)
- ["I want to be president"](#),
- ["North-South and South-South collective actions: Where is the place of youth?"](#)
- [GCARD2: YPARD Paved the Way for Me....You could be next!](#)
- [From getting a Youth voice to committing to action in ARD strategic arena!](#)
- [Youth in ARD: We're getting there...](#)

YPARD Video: [Why did you get involved in agriculture?](#)

Youth as social reporters was a successful way to integrate a wider demographic who were not able to attend the conference, to get a fresh outlook on the stories and to build the capacity for more reporting on ARD issues by young professionals.

Youth are often not given the chance to attend these events, as older, more experienced professionals are often selected. YPARD is keen to shift these events in line with the GCARD as a 'process' rather than a one-time event and commits to advocating for youth inclusion in the process. As the ARD community pushes for greater commitment to action, the involvement of youth as the drivers of these actions and the future leaders who will act on these commitments is essential.

Learning from the GCARD experience, YPARD calls on conference organisers to:

1. Integrate youth on conference organising committees;
2. Plan on youth sessions and engagement from the planning stages;
3. Give young professionals special consideration for sponsorship to attend;
4. Mainstream youth into all sessions, in the topics and as panel discussants;
5. For strong, consultative and well thought through interventions from young professionals into the proceedings consider preparative e-consultations and pre-sessions or side meetings;
6. Include young professionals as social reporters to increase the numbers of 'virtual' attendees and engage a wider range of people and provide capacity development at the same time;
7. Ensure the buy-in from youth into common future initiatives, as it is they who will be implementing these plans.

What is YPARD? The Young Professionals' Platform for Agricultural Research for Development ([YPARD](http://ypard.net)) is a global platform of young professionals under 40 years of age active in Agricultural Research for Development (ARD). YPARD serves as a medium for young professionals in ARD to voice their views, exchange perspectives and to contribute to sustainably improved livelihoods, worldwide, through a dynamic agricultural research for development.

YPARD was created in response to the young generations' increasing lack of interest in agriculture, insufficient participation of young professionals in dialogues addressing critical development issues and inadequate access to resources to address these problems. YPs bring innovation, fresh perspectives, new skills and knowledge to the sector. The movement intends to create a positive wind of change in ARD. Thus, YPARD's mission is to serve as a global platform through which young professionals can express their ideas and realise their full potential towards dynamic agricultural research for development.

The founders of YPARD are convinced that a responsible agriculture, able to meet global needs without depleting its resources, can only become a reality if young professionals are actively engaged in shaping the sector's future.

Join or read more at: www.ypard.net , Contact us at info@ypard.net