

YPARD meeting, Wageningen, 02-05 May 2006



Young Professionals' Platform for Agricultural Research for Development (YPARD)

Strategic Planning Workshop

Wageningen University and Research Centre (WUR) – Wageningen International
Lawickse Allee 11, Wageningen, The Netherlands
02 – 05 May 2006

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United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

European Forum on Agricultural Research for Development (EFARD)

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)



Young Professionals' Platform for Agricultural Research for Development



Planning Meeting

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Introduction

The first YPARD Planning Meeting was held at the Wageningen International Conference Center (WICC) on May 2-5, 2006. The main goals of the workshop were to define YPARD's Vision, Mission, Objectives and activities foreseen for the time period 2006-2008. With the facilitation of two young professionals, some twenty members of the YPARD Core Group from 14 countries in the South and North, belonging to different stakeholder groups, actively participated in the workshop and contributed to its outputs (the list of participants is attached).

Opening

The workshop was opened by Prof Rudy Rabbinge and Dr Niels Louwaars, from the University Wageningen. Letter greetings from Dr Judith Ann Francis from the Technical Center for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA) and Dr Birgit Barden from the University of Hannover were read. All the opening speakers highlighted the importance of YPARD initiative and encouraged the participants to think and deliberate out of the box and have a positive and forward-looking attitude to create opportunities and take over rather than wait for the handing-over process in the agriculture research and development.

An overview of the evolution of YPARD since the beginning in May 2005 was given, followed by a presentation on the results of the first YPARD event that took place in Marrakech, Morocco, in December 2005, during the CGIAR AGM 05. Moreover, all the participants introduced themselves and shared their expectations regarding the output of this workshop and their possible contribution to YPARD future activities.

An overview of 15 global youth organizations ranging from food and nutrition to natural resource management, IT for development, etc in the South and North was presented. This presentation was aimed at mapping the work and strength of existing youth organizations and see how YPARD can add value. There is apparently no organizations focussing on young professionals in agriculture research for development acting at global level, and thus YPARD can fill in this gap.

YPARD Vision, Mission and Objectives

Vision, mission and objectives were discussed in four working groups and the outcomes were shared, discussed and reviewed in plenary.

Vision

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

It was agreed that the vision reflects the most frequent mentioned key words from the working groups, such as poverty alleviation, environmental sustainability, improved food security and livelihood in line with the MDGs. The vision is that to attain these goals, we need a more dynamic agricultural research for development; "Dynamic" was circumscribed

by interdisciplinary, more participatory and linked to the needs of the beneficiaries, more action-oriented and development driven. It is believed that young professionals, supported by the experience of the seniors, can substantially contribute to this.

There was a controversy about the terminology ARD “agricultural research and development” versus “agricultural research for development”. It was decided to use the latter one as it includes the work done by the development agencies working for agricultural development and at the same time focuses on development-relevant agricultural research.

Mission

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.

The mission is to give young professionals in ARD a voice and a possibility to contribute to important decisions in ARD. The platform should serve as an instrument to empower the capacities and broaden opportunities for young professionals in ARD by facilitating communication and exchange of information, knowledge, experience and expertise among the young and between the young and the senior professionals.

Objectives

1. Facilitate exchange of information and knowledge among young professionals 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 (activities still under discussion)*
4. Facilitate access to resources and capacity building opportunities

During the workshop it was not possible to reach an agreement of the exact formulation of objective 3. The main discussion points were:

- whether farmers should be a direct target group of YPARD objective 3;
- whether YPARD should get directly involved in issues on the local level, or if it should work with local partners active in the concerned areas.

It was decided that this discussion points will be taken up during the first e-forum among YPARD members in the next months.

Guiding Principles

Multi-stakeholder, Transparency, Participatory, Global – local (subsidiarity), Equality, Inclusiveness, Representation, Accountability, Comparative advantage

The list of guiding principles was compiled throughout the workshop as elements that characterise the modus operandi to attain YPARD’s mission. The principles are fundamental to distinguish YPARD from the other platforms and movements already in place.

YPARD planned activities

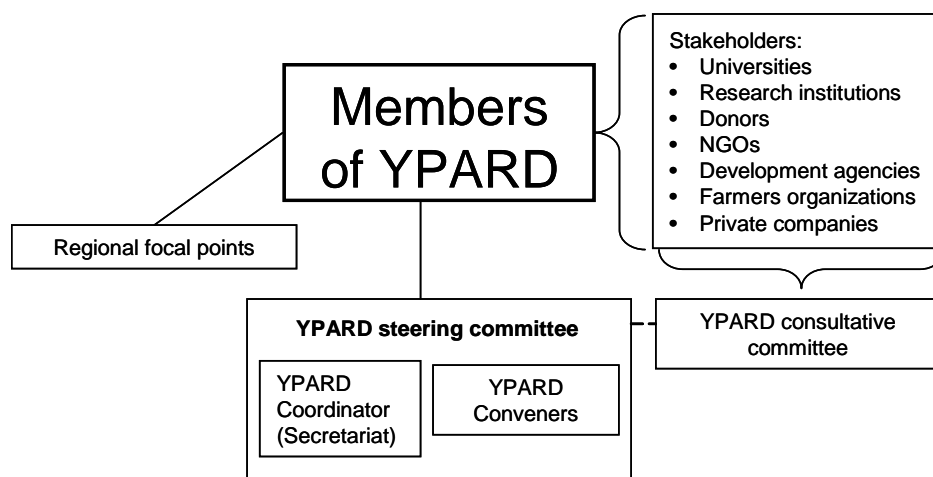
This part of the workshop was organised in two steps:

1. In an *open space technology using bar hopping system* (group discussion with people freely going from one group to the other), activities for each objective were formulated.
2. In working groups the listed activities were prioritized and put in a time frame 2006-2008.

The result of this exercise is reported in the attached file “YPARD Strategic Plan”. However, the activities in 2007-2008 will depend on the availability of funds and resources.

Governance Structure

The structure was discussed in working groups and in plenary, and it was based on thoughts developed during on-line discussion in the last months and can be pictured as follow. The Governance structure should be considered a draft until the adoption of a finalized structure at the launch of YPARD at GFAR (Global Forum on Agricultural Research) triennial conference in Delhi, November 2006.



Members of YPARD are individuals -ARD professionals from different stakeholders- or representative of farmers’ organizations under the age of 40 which forms the primary target group. Other beneficiaries will be less experienced ARD professionals over the age of 40 and pre-university students forming the secondary target group. For the moment, no membership fees will be charged. There will be members acting as Regional and Country focal points.

The Steering Committee will be formed by 5-9 members elected for 2-3 years by the members, in order to overlap and have continuity. The Steering Committee will manage the activities of YPARD and distribute the tasks among the concerned members (at this time, called Core Members). A Coordinator (Secretariat) is part of the Steering Committee and acts as Executive body ex-officio (1 member for 3 years). Two Conveners (President and Vice-President) will be members of the Steering Committee in charge for 3 years.

A Consultative committee made of 5-9 Senior ARD professionals will be consulted by the steering committee for YPARD’s activities and decisions.

General discussion points leading to the decisions were:

- YPARD will be a platform and not an organisation, meaning having a very simple and flexible governance structure.
- The positions in the steering committee are attached to the person that is filling the position and not to the organisation this person works for (nominal function, not representative)
- Feed back from senior professionals, who are involved and interesting in the YPARD process will be sought on the above decisions taken at this meeting on governance structure, strategic plan and activities before a final choice will be made.

An Interim Steering Committee was formed by Enrico Baccioni, Alessandra Giuliani, Balasubramanian Ramani, Martine Ngobo, Andres Tschannen, Kristina Röing. YPARD's first coordinator is Balasubramanian Ramani.

Presentation from IFAD on curricula changes

Alessandro Meschinelli started his talk emphasising some fundamental characteristics of young people, such as informality, intuitiveness, hope for changes, playfulness, directness, sincerity, and flexibility. He presented an IFAD project aiming at curricula change in universities in the South and in the North, getting them closer to the field and making them directly accountable by the farmers. In this project Masters Students directly serve the end beneficiaries (farmers), taking up their initiatives and in cooperation with them developing them further. Some goals of this project are to reduce the inequality between the thinkers and the doers, increase the respect between disciplines and change the criteria of evaluation of good science. Some challenges faced were: need for new science originated in the South; need for new incentive structure for the partners in the field; difficulties in building relationships between completely different parties, with completely different views; and the closed mode of sharing knowledge generated by science.

Administration of YPARD

The following topics were discussed in three working groups:

1. YPARD official launch at the triennial conference of GFAR in November 2006
2. YPARD Communication and feedback strategy
3. Publicity and fundraising

YPARD launch at the triennial conference of GFAR in November 2006

The following decisions still depend on the GFAR meeting agenda that has still to be finalized. The official launch of YPARD will be held on Nov 8th. Other foreseen activities that will have to be organized according GFAR's agenda are: a field visit with an focus on issues related to local reality and discussion session; a short presentation on YPARD launch by YPARD members during a GFAR meeting session, introduced possibly by GFAR president; a YPARD workshop with 3 or more seminars ((i) technical issue relevant for Indian young professionals in ARD given by a senior professional, (ii) technical issue by a junior professional, and (iii) career advice issue by a senior professional); and the participation of YPARD-members in the GFAR field visit and other sessions.

Communication and feedback strategy

The most important communication tools for YPARD will be: a periodical newsletter, the website, electronic discussion fora, and chat rooms. Feedback to the members on what has been decided and what has been done will be included in the newsletter by the SC. The SC will also be responsible for the feedback to the donors and will therefore prepare an annual report.

Publicity and fundraising

Publicity will be organised on one hand on a mouth to mouth basis (all the core group members are asked to compile a list of contacts) and on the other hand through the Website-www.ypard.org hosted by FAO through GFAR and ready to be set-up and open for comments by the end of May. Furthermore, this summary of the results of the Wageningen meeting will serve as the basic document that will be commonly agreed by the whole core group, edited and commented by senior professionals in ARD. Brochures and poster will be prepared for the YPARD launch in November 2006.

Fundraising will be the responsibility of all the members of the SC. Until now a proposal for funding has been submitted to the Swiss agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) to enable the participation of YPARD-members at the YPARD launch at the GFAR 2006 triennial meeting and the creation of some e-tools. Furthermore, the Hanover University supports an interim secretariat and GFAR will decide on funding possibilities for YPARD during the following weeks.

Evaluation of the workshop

It was agreed that most of the workshop expectation were reached. The presence of a very interesting diversity of people interacting in a constructive way to reach a common goal resulted in a highly motivating learning experience. Improvement should made in order to pay attention to the people new to the group and to strike a compromises with more effort In general it was agreed that the outcomes are very relevant and based on wide consensus, though there is still a feeling that clear decisions on YPARD activities are still to be taken.

Closing remarks

Prof. Arnold van Huiz (Entomologist at Wageningen University) addressed the participants with the closing remarks. He gave an overview of the different research approaches that have been used during his professional life and emphasised on the major need of institutional change and the important role that young professionals in ARD can play in the changing process.



YPARD Planning meeting group discussion



YPARD Planning meeting participants