

Synopsis of the GCARD3 Regional Consultation for the Asia-Pacific (High Level Policy Dialogue: HLPD) Social Media Project

As part of HLPD meeting, GFAR and APAARI agreed to run a social media training and social reporting project. Successfully, as it turned out...

The Purpose

Our goals were to:

- Provide a social media training to the interested HLPD participants, YPARD youth, GFAR/APAARI partners and other interested organisations as part of our larger capacity building projects;
- Provide live updates via blogs, Twitter and other social media tools from the meeting, allowing us to reach out to the larger online APAARI/GFAR community beyond merely those present at the meeting.

The social media team participants

Our project was [announced on the GFAR blog](#), one month before the meeting. We also sent out invitations to all HLPD participants. YPARD selected five youth from Asia/Pacific to participate, funded by GFAR.

The announcement blogpost was also circulated to the online communities from CGIAR, the Asian and FAO forestry networks, members of the Global Landscapes Forum etc.

Within two weeks, we reached our maximum capacity with 21 trainees:

- 7 original HLPD participants (of which one was also a YPARD member)
- 5 sponsored YPARD members
- 9 trainees from other interested organisations (ILRI, IWMI, WLE, RECOFTC, ASFN, Crops for the Future, WWF)

The trainees made an excellent mixture of professional communicators, scientists, practitioners and academici. The participants mixed “young” and “experienced” with ages ranging from 23 to 72. We had both social media novices and advanced users.

The training and social reporting setup:

Our training targeted both novices and advanced social media users, interested in learning more about the use of social media within a professional environment.

Our training consisted of two parts:

- Classroom training of one day with an overview of all social media tools, as used in a professional environment. We covered two key tools more in-depth: Twitter and blogging;
- Practical training (the social reporting project): The trainees used their social media skills to report live from the High Level Policy Dialogue. During this social reporting exercise, our social media trainer intensively mentored the trainees.

As part of the social reporting project, all blogs were published on [the GFAR blog](#), while participants used their own Twitter accounts for live tweeting.

The cost of the training was covered by GFAR, with significant logistics support by APAARI.

The training and social reporters' mentoring was coordinated by Peter Casier, the GFAR Social Media Coordinator.

The theoretical training:

Limited to one day, the theoretical training had an intensive induction program:

09:00-12:00: Social Media Plethora: Overview of all tools, and their use for nonprofit causes including practical examples of social media strategies.

13:00-15:30: The art of blogging: How to write good blogposts. What makes a good blog? – Including a practical exercise.

15:30-17:00: The art of tweeting: How to use Twitter efficiently? – Including a practical exercise

17:00-18:00: Preparation of the social reporting at the HLPD

The trainees were very engaged in the exercises and examples. There was an enthused interaction between all participants.

The practical training – The social reporting project:

All trainees were encouraged to engage on Twitter and live blogging, to report live from the two days' HLPD meeting, and to fully engage in the onsite program either as part of the panels or in the Q&A sessions/panel discussions.

This was a tall order for all trainees, particularly in a two days' meeting, which is shorter than the "typical social reporting projects" where efforts could be spread over a longer period.

It was very encouraging to see all participants actively engage, both onsite and online. A particular thanks should go to all social reporters who worked through the night to submit their live blog posts.

GFAR had set up a remote support team: All submitted blog posts were screened during the night by the onsite social media coordinator, and then forwarded to the GFAR editor in Rome. The latter edited the blog posts, sent feedback to the author, as part of the mentoring program, and forwarded the blog to the blog publisher (also in Rome). The latter published the blog post without delay. This workflow ensured all blogposts were written, edited and published during the night after the meeting day.

The results (covering Dec 1-13):

- Twitter: In the 7 days around the meeting, 1,085 tweets were sent out with the #GCARD3 tag, by 99 different contributors. The tweets were delivered to 426,000 different twitter accounts. All #GCARD3 tweets: <https://twitter.com/search?f=tweets&vertical=default&q=%23GCARD3&src=typd>
- Blog: The team published 22 blogposts during the conference: <http://blog.gfar.net/category/gcard3/> -- Thus far, the posts were viewed about 2,500 times by 896 people.
- Slideshare: The team did an extra effort of collecting all the presentations given at the conference, and uploaded them in real time, as the sessions were happening - about 26 in total (check them out on <http://www.slideshare.net/gcard/>). These presentations were viewed 4,100 times thus far.

With thanks to:

- APAARI and GFAR for their support in the conceptualization and realization of this project;
- Particularly Fiona Chandler, Tanya St George, Charles Plummer for their support either at the onset and during the project;
- The APAARI administration and logistics team for a flawless organisation and practical support on travel, visa, training room arrangements and overall logistics,...
- YPARD for their support in selecting top notch trainees and team members;
- All social media trainees and social reporters.

Peter Casier
GFAR Social Media Coordinator.