

Tropentag 2012 - Report

Resilience of Agricultural Systems Against Crises

Jointly organized by the Universities of Göttingen and Kassel/Witzenhausen

Founded by: Foundation fiat panis, Robert Bosch Foundation, Heinrich Böll Foundation and ATSAF e.V.

Authors:

Terry Ansah

Martha Ataa-Asantewaa

Manuel Hilscher

Minette Flora Mendoza
De Asis

Christine Atieno
Omuombo

Pamella Akoth Ogada

Vincent Archibald Schmitt

Hamid Reza Sharifan

Divya Rajeswari
Swaminathan

Raissa Ulbrich

Guuroh Reginald Tang



September 19 - 21, 2012, University of Göttingen, Germany



Content

Summary	3
Introduction and Context.....	4
The Student Reporters 2012	6
Application and Selection Process	6
The Team.....	6
Preparatory Workshop at the University of Göttingen.....	11
The Workshop Schedule.....	12
Student Reporting at the Tropentag 2012.....	14
The Interviews	16
Twitter “Tropentag 2012”	17
Student Reporter Evaluation and Future Prospects	19
Comparisons and Suggestions	19
Annex	21
Student Reporter Evaluation and Future Prospects	21
More Information on Twitter.....	22



Summary

Tropentag 2012, a development-oriented and interdisciplinary conference, was covered and broadcasted using various online social media websites, by a group of students reporters selected from various universities in Europe.

A two-day training workshop for the Student Reporters, and schedule planning was done at the University of Göttingen, preceding the three-day international conference. Through this workshop, students gained the needed knowledge to cover the conference adequately.

During the conference, 48 blog posts were generated and published by all the Student Reporters covering all the sessions of the conference. Pictures were also constantly taken to accompany the blogs and while most pictures were published on Flickr (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/tropentag>). Several videos were also shot and published on YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/user/tropentagmedia>).

Student Reporters work aims at increasing the publicity and visibility of the conference, while enabling scientific interactions through the publication of blog articles, pictures and videos. This was also promoted on other popular social media websites such as Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/tropentag?ref=ts>) and other websites of affiliated institutions.



I Student Reporters, Tropentag 2012



Introduction and Context

Tropentag is a development-oriented conference which is interdisciplinary in nature and brings together scientists from all over the world whose research focus on the tropics. It usually receives an attendance of over 700 participants from over 80 countries. It addresses issues of tropical and subtropical agricultural, and natural resource management, environment, forestry, fisheries, food, nutrition and related sciences in the context of rural development, sustainable resource use and poverty alleviation worldwide. Tropentag is an annual conference organized by German universities since 1997; the universities of Bonn, Göttingen, Hohenheim, Kassel-Witzenhausen, Hamburg, Zurich as well as by the Council for Tropical and Subtropical Research (ATSAF e.V) in co-operation with the GIZ Advisory Service on Agricultural Research for Development (BEAF). In 2012, the conference was held in Göttingen and was jointly organized by the Universities of Göttingen and Kassel/Witzenhausen.

To increase the outreach of the event, the Student Reporter concept was introduced following a successful trial at the 2010 Tropentag 2010 in Zurich, Switzerland and 2011 in Bonn, Germany. The Student Reporters are usually drawn from European Universities and are tasked with providing live reporting of the activities during the conference.

In Tropentag 2012, 12 international Student Reporters from diverse interdisciplinary backgrounds and experiences, representing eleven universities and seven countries were selected. Their study background ranged from agricultural sciences, to economics, geography, environmental engineering and forestry. All the students had some previous experience with various communication elements and web 2.0. Introductory workshop was held for 2 days (17th and 18th of September 2012), to equip the reporters with the necessary knowledge on how to use the various social media such as blogs, Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, YouTube as well as to some general information on journalism. The group also used this period to familiarize with each other and to distribute tasks.

The Student Reporters contributed to a multi-author blog with texts, pictures, and videos and visual content. In this blog, reporters covered all aspects of the conference, summarizing keynote discussions and reporting on current trends, hot topics, and or emerging issues, as well as engaging in interactive discussions with the public.

The objectives of the student reporting include the following:

1. To increase the outreach of Tropentag conference and stimulate discussions on the various topics during and even after the conference. Allowing interactive discussions with people from various part of the globe.



2. To help improve the skills of the students in the fields of social media such as blogging, internet reporting, and writing of articles as well as to give them the opportunity to practically experience a journalist's work in the field of science.



The Student Reporters 2012

Application and Selection Process

For the third time in a row, the organizers of the Tropentag conference, ATSAF e.V., with the support of the Robert Bosch Foundation, the Foundation fiat panis and ZALF e.V., invited applications for Student Reporter jobs. Requirements for an applicant include:

- Affiliation to an European university
- Great interest in the Tropentag topics
- Fluency in English
- Basic experience in interviewing, writing techniques and/or knowledge in the use of Web 2.0 social networks

The deadline for applications which included submission of a CV and a short motivation letter was set on the 15. July 2012. From 85 applicants coming from around the world, 12 students were selected to fulfill the main purpose of student reporting.

In return for the work of the Student Reporters, ATSAF e.V. covered the travel to and from Göttingen (i.e. the place of the conference), accommodation and registration fee of the conference. In preparation of the work of being a Student Reporter, ATSAF e.V. further organized a two-day workshop (see next chapter).

The Team

The Student Reporters consisted of 12 students having diverse academic and personal backgrounds. Three members of the team already participated as Student Reporters in the previous year conference. This was useful in many ways as they could share their experience and could give practical information on the tasks ahead to the “new” Student Reporters.

The Student Reporters were not only managed but also strongly supported by Angela Schaffert and Dhusenti Manoharan, both from Hohenheim University which partly organized the Tropentag 2012.



A short introduction of the 2012 selected Student Reporters and their task:

Name: Birgit Zipf
Nationality: German
University: Durham University, UK
Study Programme: Master in Geography
Main Task as Reporter: Video



Name: Christine Atieno Omuombo
Nationality: Kenyan
University: University of Paris VI (UPMC)
Study Programme: PhD student in Quaternary Geology
Main Task as Reporter: Editor



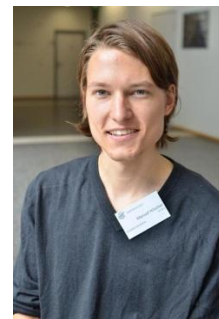
Name: Divya Rajeswari Swaminathan
Nationality: Indian
University: Center for Development Research, Bonn, Germany
Study Programme: PhD program student in Development Studies
Main Task as Reporter: Editor



Name: Hamid Reza Sharifan
Nationality: Iranian
University: University of Stuttgart, Germany
Study Programme: Master in Environmental Engineering
Main Task as Reporter: Video



Name: Manuel Hilscher
Nationality: German
University: University of Hohenheim, Germany
Position: Research assistant in Urban Green Infrastructure
Main Task as Reporter: Photography



Name: Martha Ataa-Asantewaa
Nationality: Ghanaian
University: Bangor University, UK
Study Programme: Master in Agroforestry and Plants Entomology
Main Task as Reporter: Photography



Name: Minette Flora Mendoza De Asis

Nationality: Philippine

University: Humboldt-University Berlin, Germany

Study Programme: PhD student in Agricultural Economics

Main Task as Reporter: Editor



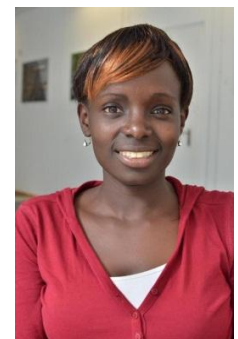
Name: Pamella Akoth Ogada

Nationality: Kenyan

University: Leibniz University Hannover, Germany

Position: PhD student in Plant Pathology and Entomology

Main Task as Reporter: Editor



Name: Raissa Ulbrich

Nationality: German

University: Brandenburg University of Technology, Cottbus, Germany

Study Programme: Bachelor in Environmental and Resource Management

Main Task as Reporter: Editor



Name: Reginald Tang Guuroh

Nationality: Ghanaian

University: Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität
Bonn, Germany

Study Programme: PhD student in Vegetation Geography
(WASCAL project)

Main Task as Reporter: Editor



Name: Terry Ansah

Nationality: Ghanaian

University: Harper Adams University, UK

Study Programme: PhD student in Animal Nutrition

Main Task as Reporter: Photography



Name: Vincent Archibald Schmitt

Nationality: Switzerland

University: Universities of Kassel-Witzenhausen and
Göttingen, Germany

Study Programme: Master in Sustainable International Agriculture

Main Task as Reporter: Editor



Preparatory Workshop at the University of Göttingen

Prior to the conference, ATSAF e.V. organized a two-day workshop (17th and 18th of September 2012) which took place in Göttingen University. The aim was to introduce the Student Reporters to the various communication tools the World Wide Web and prepare them for their work as reporters for the Tropentag 2012 conference. Moreover, this workshop was useful for the Student Reporters to get



to know each other as well as for team building purposes.

The workshop leaders were very competent in delivering knowledge as they were professionals in journalism. The students received preliminary training on the rationale for using different communication media, photography, videography, responsible

journalism and a brief orientation to the conference venue.

Besides theoretical training, small practical exercises with the use of the different equipment helped the students to develop and improve their skills for efficient coverage reporting of the conference. Students also took the opportunity to interact with the workshop leaders and talked about possible ways to get involved into professional journalism.

The information and experiences of the three students who took part in the previous year's Tropentag as Student Reporters was very valuable, too. They shared their knowledge with the new and inexperienced Student Reporters and made good suggestions in preparation for the conference.





II The Tropentag Student Reporters and their mentors

The Workshop Schedule

Day 1-- Sunday, 16. September 2012

- Arrival in Göttingen
- Social event in the evening

Day 2-- Monday, 17. September 2012

Workshop leader: Andreas Riechel, Hochschulkommunikation, University of Göttingen

Manuel Hilscher, University of Hohenheim Göttingen

Topics:

- General information
- Technical introduction
- Introduction to equipment (cameras)
- Introduction to social media and blogging



Day 3-- Tuesday, 18. September 2012

Workshop leader: Florian Klebs and Hannes Weik, Press Office, University of Hohenheim

- Topics:
- Journalism ethics and standards
 - How to catch attention / News Values
 - Structure, Style and Exercise
 - Interviews



Student Reporting at the Tropentag 2012

At the end of the workshop, the Student Reporters established themselves in their given work room. A brief self-organized meeting was held to assign among each other the different tasks to be accomplished during the conference. The following was agreed:

- i) Seven reporters to communicate on the scientific sessions of the conference. Their output was made visible via the Tropentag blog, Facebook and Twitter.
- ii) Three reporters to take, edit, and publish pictures. Those were made visible on Flickr.
- iii) Two reporters to take care of video shootings of the conference participants, editing, and releasing them on YouTube.



The Student reporters covered the entire conference from the 19th to the 21st of September (3 days). A lot of work was accomplished, with reporters covering sessions, taking pictures, shooting interview videos, blogging, tweeting. This was done simultaneously.

Participants were in general very enthusiastic about the work of the Student Reporters. Key note speakers of the conference and other participants were eager for interviews. Others were asking about the web addresses to see our work, and many people were reading our blog soon after posting on the web.

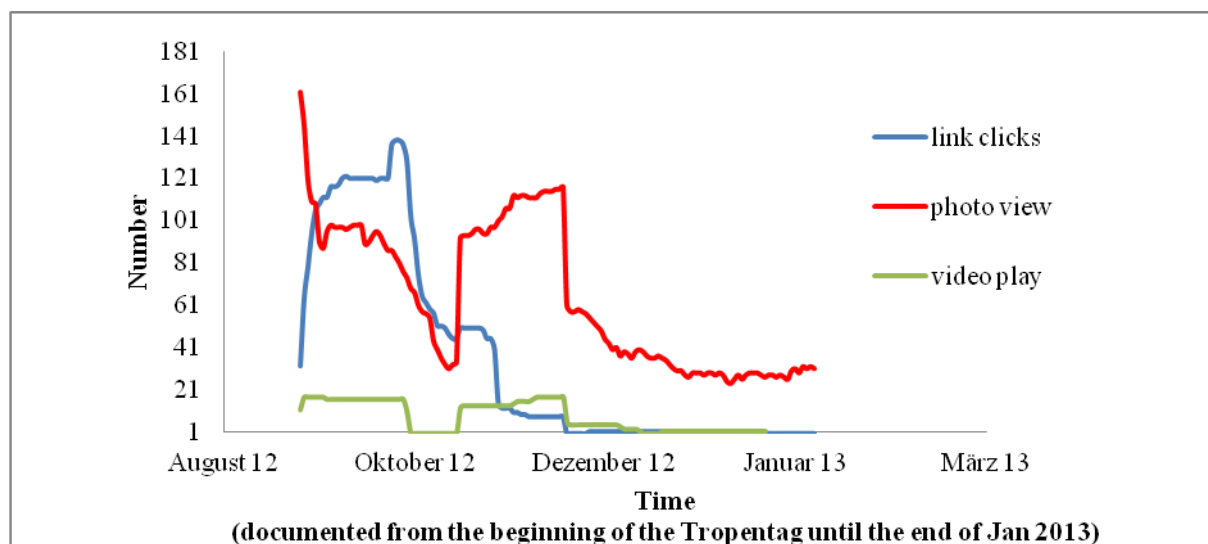
The output of the Student Reporters included the production of 30 videos, 48 posts on the blog, many posts and likes on Facebook, Tweets, and many, many pictures. Their accomplishment has with no doubt a greater boost to the broadcasting of the conference and thus creating and awareness by covering broader audience which was global.



III Total and average number of people who encountered the Student Reporters' stories (extracted and computed from Facebook):

Parameter	Total (18 th September to 30 th January, 2013)	Daily average (18 th September to 30 th January, 2013)
The total number of people who have liked your Page	89267	671
The number of people who have seen any content associated with your Page	12154	91
The number of people who saw your Page posts in News Feed or ticker, or on your Page's Timeline	4087	31

IV Statistics on the outreach of the various activities of the Student Reporters represented by the attention it received on the internet (documented from the beginning of the Tropentag until the end of Jan 2013)





V The Team from left to right: Dhusenti Manoharan, Raissa Ulbrich, Angela Schaffert, Hamid Reza Sharifan, Reginald Tang Guuroh, Christian Hülsebusch (Tropentag 2012 organizing committee), Manuel Hilscher, Folkard Asch (Tropentag 2012 organizing committee)

The Interviews

While a blog entry for each session was mandatory, the Student Reporters could choose whether they wanted to interview participants of the conference or not, who to interview or how many interviews they wanted to do. The interviewees had different backgrounds and different roles in the conference – some gave a talk, some presented a poster, scientists, non-scientists etc.

The aim of the interviews was to provide an opportunity for the participants of the conference to offer their personal insights and to convey their message as well as to give an overall impression of the general atmosphere to the people not attending the conference. Though some interviews were transcribed, most often, the interviews were recorded with a camera. The editing of the interviews was the task of two Student Reporters. Once the videos were finished and uploaded on YouTube, the other Student Reporters could link or add the video on the different social media platforms.

Since the videos were to be uploaded during the conference, the preparation of the interviews, as well as the actual process, and the following editing of the video as well as other management under time pressure and simultaneous to the other tasks with the rest of the Reporters proved to be a demanding job. Nevertheless it was a great opportunity for the Student Reporters to work from a journalist's perspective.



Twitter “Tropentag 2012”

The use of Twitter, a “microblogging” website, was adapted on a trial basis during the conference. The use of “hashtags” (#) in Twitter was at first assigned to identify the event “#tropentag2012” was suggested as one of the key words to the event. “#”s are important to members of a group talking about the same issue and is useful to evaluate how many people are reached in a search, for research, for meeting people with shared interests, and for gathering communities with common interests. During the conference the “#”s were developed to identify key personalities, issues, topics, sessions and invite the “tweeps” to join in the discussions. The “#” attracted several key institutions in tropical agriculture associated with the topics, issues and personalities at the conference who were able to “tweet” and “retweet” the event.

Some of the earlier tweets on the agenda and people can be seen below.



[tropentag @tropentag #foodsecurity #naturalresources #rural development #tropentag2012](#)



[tropentag @tropentag](#) Keynote speech by [#Bossio #CIAT](#) soils and resilience, much more than a slow variable [#tropentag2012](#)



[tropentag @tropentag #Stresses #shocks & #crises](#) in agriculture systems focus of [#tropentag2012](#)



[tropentag @tropentag @cgiarclimate](#) join the discussions [#tropentag2012](#)

CGIAR climate and Donor platform were some of our key organization “tweeps” that managed to engage, “retweet” and update through this forum through posting updates from other organizations on the event, articles in the web and even videos from the event. For information see the annex.



Twitter statistics from <http://foller.me/tropentag>**Statistics**

“More followers is good, but watch out for the follower-to-following ratio. A high ratio means that more people are following @tropentag out of good will, not follow-back.”

Tweets	411
Followers	123
Following	182
Followers ratio	0.68 followers per following
Listed	7

Observations

Linking Twitter to Facebook was found to be an effective strategy the one line key points attracted to more viewers to the Facebook page.

During the event, there was no internet access in the rooms and this made the tool ineffective as the tool relies heavily on the real-time update and reaction to statements and comments/responses of those who did not get an opportunity to speak in a session.

The promotion of the Hashtags (#) in future should be aggressive as Twitter is one way to reach many people fast. Furthermore its utilization should be more thoroughly communicated upfront and across the media in order to exploit its potential more effectively.



Student Reporter Evaluation and Future Prospects

Comparisons and Suggestions

In order to get more awareness about the conference and about the student reporter activities, it is important to have more promotion before the conference about the respective options to get involved with the reporters' work over social media. Since the timeframe during the conference to attract people who have not heard about the option to participate (e. g. by using Twitter) even without actually attending it is comparably short and the capacity to do so is very limited, it is important to spread the information in advance. Here it should also be highlighted that people by participating can share their knowledge and insights to a greater audience by interacting with the student reporters.

Video Interviews

Concerning the interviews taped on video, compared to the previous years, their number could be strongly increased: More than 20 videos about Tropentag 2012 can be now watched on YouTube. Though it was tried to get interviewees from around world, it was felt that it was not diverse enough and, thus, not really representing the participants of the Tropentag. The cause might be that some student reporters were more eager in interviewing than others and, therefore, the interviewers' research interest (i.e. topic, geographical area) became visible. An improvement of the quality of the interviews, the camera angle, the voice recording and the overall quality of the video could be improved, too. This might be related to a better/different preparation of the student reporters during the workshop compared to the last few years. Another cause could be that one of the students of the video team already brought with him some experience and knowledge about using the equipment and software.

It was a time intensive task to record and edit the videos. A timely publication of the video was aimed but could not always be achieved due to the number of interviews taken. In the future, this could be improved by reducing the length of the interviews. Moreover, giving more time during the workshop to prepare the basics (e.g. music, intro slide) could reduce the time needed to edit the videos during the conference.

The time management and coordination of taking the interviews worked quite well as the interviewers told in advance at what time they needed the video team to record their interview. However, the place of the interview was not the most suitable one as it was in the same room where the Student Reporters were all working and, thus, making unavoidable noises. Thus, for the next time, it is suggested to use a separate room for video recording the interview in order to set the best conditions for a good quality video.



Overall Experience

The Student Reporters did not only gain and improve their skills and practical experiences in interviewing and reporting work as journalists, but the interviews and the different sessions provided the students with greater knowledge with regard to the world of science, as well as a chance to personally interact and get contact with various interviewees. This offered a great platform for networking.



Annex

Student Reporter Evaluation and Future Prospects

What went wrong?

How can we improve?

Logistic / Infrastructure

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distraction among Student Reporters when there are video interviews held in the Student Reporter room - Laptop provided for video editors does not have the newest (better) version of video editing software - Assigned laptops does not have a card reader - There is only one computer with a photo editor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allocate a separate room to hold video interviews |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Period for training on photo editing was too short. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allocate laptop with newest version of video editing software (Windows Movie Maker 6.0) - Provide laptop with card reader - Install photo editor |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is only one laptop that is able to edit videos. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At least two people could be selected (one for video and the other for photo) and given a full days training with practical's. This people should be exempted from covering presentations and I think the quality of their work might improve. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited camera provided | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide laptop to video editors with installed video editor - Allocate at least 3-4 (easy to handle) professional camera |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No clear strategy on how to use the different social media (e.g. Facebook mainly promotes pictures and blog, nothing else). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a coordinated and proper strategy for the use of the different media - Allocate time for students to develop their working action plan during preliminary workshop |

Blog Content

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Blogs are not linked to tweeter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student Reporters should remember to always link |
|---|--|



the blogs to the tweeter account with a separate heading capacity is needed

- Blogs that relates to the content of another blog is not linked
- To link blogs that overlaps/relates to each other capacity is needed, someone who is primarily responsible for thorough connection of all the media
- Video interviews are sometimes biased on the nationality of the Student Reporter
- Cover diverse nationalities on the video interviews (e.g welcome of participant videos)

Manpower Requirement

- Photographers are often overloaded with work when there are simultaneous sessions, as a result, there are often no pictures to attach to blogs written by editors
- Assign at least 2 photographers to quickly take photos at the presenters in all sessions
- Too much time and effort needed for videographers to upload videos
- Assign 2 video editors to share the work load

More Information on Twitter

Topics, Hashtags & Mentions: “Things that really matter”

Topics

The topics section shows the overall words usage on Twitter in form of a tag cloud. The more a certain word is used, the larger it is in the cloud.

What This is All About:

[use](#) [check](#) [keynote](#) [tropentag](#) [sessions](#) [modelling](#) [fertilizer](#) [shares](#) [reporter](#) [question](#) [address](#)
[global](#) [putting](#) [future](#) [slow](#) [reporters](#) [discussion](#) [ways](#) [ready](#) [reporting](#) [asia](#)
[consumption](#) [development](#) [universities](#) [join](#) [follow](#) [sustainable](#) [arriving](#) [seed](#) [farmers](#)
[environment](#) [incentive](#) [pastoralism](#) [diet](#) [missed](#) [experience](#) [agenda](#) [reflected](#) [agriculture](#)
[discussions](#) [2012](#) [resilience](#) [africa](#) [changes](#) [rapid](#) [dobermann](#) [change](#) [click](#) [industry](#) [quests](#)
[technology](#) [soils](#) [highlight](#) [vibrant](#) [systems](#) [rice](#) [multinationals](#) [gottigen](#) [farming](#) [land](#)
[student](#)



Hashtags

Tagging is not essential to Twitter, but can definitely grow your reach.

Popular Hashtags:

[#tropentag2012](#) [#dobermann](#) [#bossio](#) [#mmrice](#) [#plantsandsoils](#) [#animals](#) [#forestry](#)
[#welcome](#) [#engineering](#) [#developementcooperation](#) [#modelling](#) [#rural](#) [#socioeconomics](#)
[#crises](#) [#tropentag](#) [#capacitybuilding](#) [#ciat](#) [#decreaseinfarmsizes](#) [#stresses](#)
[#foodsecurity](#)

@ Mentions

This section shows the user profiles that @tropentag has interacted with.



**Selection made of organizations who frequently interact with @tropentag on Twitter*

