

Pressing for progress: IITA celebrates Women's Day 2018

IITA celebrated International Women's Day (IWD) on 8 March with a seminar held at the IITA Conference Center in Ibadan. The event was attended by about 150 staff, with more than 100 connecting via webinar. The theme of the day was “#PressforProgress” and served as a call-to-action for all to push for gender parity and motivate and unite friends, colleagues, and whole communities to think and act in ways to encourage gender inclusiveness.

In his keynote address, IITA Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#) appreciated the women and highlighted their accomplishments and milestones in different fields and at various levels of their careers. He also reassured IITA women of his continuous support and commitment as they push for progress while celebrating their social, economic, cultural, and political achievements.



DDG, Corporate Services, Hilde Koper-Limbourg, speaking to the audience at the IWD celebration.

“We cannot address poverty, hunger, and malnutrition in Africa without putting into consideration the constraints

faced by women farmers who in most communities provide most of the agricultural labor on the family farm

Continued on page 2

Women in agriculture: The extra value we bring

The women of [IITA](#) joined millions around the world to celebrate International Women's Day (IWD) on 8 March. The theme of this year's celebration was “#PressforProgress” and here we highlight a few thoughts from some of our women.

“According to the FAO, women are responsible for more than 50% of agricultural food production in the world and in sub-Saharan Africa. Yet they still occupy the lowest rungs of the economic ladder and are considered the poorest of the poor,” says Adebola Adewole, a consultant working with the Communication Unit. She thus encourages everyone to [spare a thought for rural female farmers](#) in this

IWD piece. Her interviews with a few women scientists show that some of them feel that parity for women is still a long way off. However, there are also encouraging stories that show how the lives of some of our African sisters are being transformed because of the work that institutions like IITA and CGIAR do.

In [an interview](#), IITA Gender Specialist [Sounkoura Adetonah](#) talks about the progress of female farmers in sub-Saharan Africa. She also discusses the disparity of access to resources and what can be done to accelerate change and gender parity.

[Renee Bullock](#), Postdoctoral Fellow on Gender, and collaborator Bonaventure Munzunghirwa discuss [the resilience](#)

[of DRC women](#) in their blog post about a project that aims to strengthen livelihood strategies of vulnerable women.

Bullock collaborates with Rosalie Biaba and Kanigula Mubagwa, Professor from the [University of Leuven](#), on another post highlighting the [push for economic change by a DRC women's group](#).

In another piece, GREAT RTB Fellow Durodola Owoade, from IITA's Cassava Breeding unit, writes about [supporting cassava production using innovative and gender-responsive farming practices](#) to help unlock a positive future for women in agriculture.



IITA staff show support for “pushing for progress” for women’s parity during the IWD 2018 celebration.

Pressing for progress: IITA celebrates Women’s Day 2018... [Continued from page 1](#)

and process food for markets as well as family consumption. Concurring, [Hilde Koper-Limbourg](#), IITA Deputy Director General, Corporate Services, stated that women are the backbone of economic development, and as such, constitute over 75% of the labor force in agriculture. She said “We need to press for progress for a better IITA, better agriculture, and a better world.”

Five other speakers

In concluding the seminar, IITA Deputy Director General, Research for Development, [May-Guri Seathre](#), commended the organizing committee and the speakers for delivering inspiring, motivational, and informative

speeches. “From all that I have heard, mentorship is the keyword to accelerate progress at national and global levels,” she added.

The Human Resource Services organized the seminar in collaboration with the West Africa Hub Administration and Communication Unit. Selected colleagues gave motivational talks on: *Advancing women in science*, Robert Asiedu, Director, Western Africa Hub; *Where we were, where we are, and where we desire to be*, Hilde Koper-Limbourg; *Yes, we can*, Pelumi Eluwole, Financial Analyst; *Women in science*, Ana Garcia-Oliveira, Postdoctoral Fellow - Crop Genetics and Molecular

Breeding; *Supporting a dignifying work environment*, Joseph Uponi, Analytical Services Manager; and *Women in a male-dominated workplace*, Boluwatife Olateju, Planning Officer–Construction; all geared towards promoting gender mainstreaming, eradicating gender inequality, and appealing for parity.

International Women’s Day is celebrated globally to recognize women for their achievements without regard to divisions, whether national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic, or political. IWD first emerged from the activities of labor movements at the turn of the twentieth century in North America and across Europe.

Got a story to share?

Please email it with photos and captions every Wednesday to iita-news@cgiar.org or Katherine Lopez (k.lopez@cgiar.org) and Uzoma Agha (u.gha@cgiar.org) for headquarters and Western Africa, Jeffrey T. Oliver (j.oliver@cgiar.org) for Southern Africa, Catherine Njuguna (c.njuguna@cgiar.org) for Eastern Africa, and David Ngome (d.ngome@cgiar.org) for Central Africa.

DG Sanginga sees P4D as the next driver of IITA growth

On 2 March, [IITA](#) Director General, [Dr Nteranya Sanginga](#) shared his vision for the Institute for the next 3 years, noting that the new drivers of IITA's growth are projects with development and delivery components. The meeting was attended by Ibadan-based staff of the Partnership for Delivery (P4D) directorate. Sanginga said the creation of the P4D directorate was not for show but in response to changing donor demands and the desire of IITA to catalyze and facilitate the process of agricultural transformation in Africa.

"Initially, most centers mocked us and some even said we were becoming more of an NGO and not a research institute, but today everyone is doing what we have done," he explained.

While confirming that IITA had made a lot of breakthroughs in terms of research, Dr Sanginga said it was high time we translate such outputs to massive and widespread impact at the farm level.

He underscored the need to create impact at scale, stressing that the days of reaching a few farmers and celebrating were over.

"We must create the necessary framework that will help us reach millions of farmers," he added.

While commending the efforts of the P4D directorate in driving the vision of IITA, Sanginga observed that the



DG Sanginga meeting with P4D directorate staff in the IITA Boardroom.

directorate needed to do more in creating increased visibility for its activities. He called for the creation and reinforcement of the P4D identity.

According to him, such an approach will attract more funding to the Institute and help in providing the necessary resources that will bring about African agricultural transformation.

IITA Deputy Director General, P4D, [Kenton Dashiell](#) commended the DG for his excellent leadership qualities and vision for agricultural transformation in Africa.

He pledged the commitment of the directorate to work towards the realization of the goals of the Institute as encapsulated in the 2020 strategy.

The Leader for the TAAT Clearinghouse, Dr Mpoko Bokanga, thanked the DG for sharing his vision and plans for transformation with members of the P4D directorate.

He called for aggressive communication of the Institute's research outputs and outcomes, noting that it was a criterion for adoption and the transformation of African agriculture.

AfricaYam Project holds annual meeting in Abidjan

The [AfricaYam Project](#) held its 4th annual progress review and planning meeting, 26 February to 1 March, at Hotel Tiama in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Fifty scientists, partners, and other stakeholders from eight countries; namely, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, France, Ghana, Japan, Nigeria, the United Kingdom, and the USA attended the four-day meeting to review the project's progress in 2017 and develop a work plan for 2018.

In his opening remarks, Dr Adiko Amoncho, Scientific Adviser for International Cooperation of le Centre

National de Recherche Agronomique (CNRA), who represented the Director General of the institution, emphasized the importance of yam in meeting the food needs of not only Ivorians but the people of the subregion. According to him, yam accounts for 31% of the country's 16 million tons of annual food production, which makes it the largest food crop in the country. He welcomed the participants to the city of Abidjan and wished them successful deliberations.

In his welcome address, [Robert Asiedu](#), IITA Director, Research and

Development, West Africa, represented by AfricaYam Project Leader, [Patrick Adebola](#), thanked the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#). "AfricaYam partners have grown as a team and gained more confidence in dealing with the obstacles and challenges in the path to our goals," he stated. He thanked the project advisory committee members for their dedication, consistency, and active advice outside the annual meetings.

The AfricaYam project is focused on breeding for high-yielding and robust varieties of white (*Dioscorea rotundata*)

and water yams (*D. alata*) that will be preferred by farmers and suited to market demands. The project is led by IITA and involves a network of research organizations in the four main producing countries of the yam belt; the National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI) and the Ebonyi State University (EBSU) in Nigeria; two research institutes under the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in Ghana (Crops Research Institute and Savannah Agricultural Research Institute); le Centre National de Recherche Agronomique (CNRA), Côte d'Ivoire; and Université d'Abomey-Calavi (UAC), Dassa Center, Benin.

The project also works in collaboration with other research institutions outside Africa including Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement (CIRAD), France; Iwate Biotechnology



Participants at the 4th AfricaYam project annual meeting in Abidjan.

Research Center (IBRC), Japan; Boyce Research Centre for Agriculture Thompson Institute (BTI), Cornell (JIRCAS), Japan; and James Hutton University, USA; Japan International Institute (JHI), UK.

DSSAT foundation trains IITA scientists on crop modeling

[Decision Support for Agrotechnology Transfer](#) (DSSAT) Team Leader and Facilitator, Gerrit Hoogenboom, led a team of DSSAT experts from the [University of Florida](#) on a 5-day international training program in [IITA](#), Ibadan. The training titled: "Assessing crop production, nutrient management, climatic risk and environmental sustainability with simulation models," was held from 26 February to 2 March. The workshop, initiated by [Julius Adewopo](#), IITA Postdoctoral Fellow and Geospatial Analyst for Maize-based Systems, was organized by the Capacity Development Office to advance engagement with scientists that are currently involved in crop modeling, familiarize participants with new advances in DSSAT, and develop in-house experts in the use of DSSAT within the Institute.

DSSAT is a software application that comprises a crop simulation model (CSM) used for a wide range of applications at different spatial and temporal scales. This includes on-farm and precision management, regional assessments of the impact of climate variability and climate change, gene-based modeling and breeding selection water use, greenhouse gas emissions, and long-time sustainability, through



Julius Adewopo, IITA Postdoctoral Fellow and Geospatial Analyst for Maize-based Systems, giving a presentation during the DSSAT training at IITA Ibadan.

the soil organic carbon and nitrogen balances. For applications, DSSAT combines crop, soil, and weather databases with crop models and application programs to stimulate multi-year outcomes of crop management strategies.

In her opening remarks, IITA Deputy Director General, Research for Development (R4D), [May-Guri Saethre](#), appreciated the team for their dedication and steadfastness in ensuring that techniques to advance agricultural technologies are transferred to the



DSSAT Team Leader, Gerrit Hoogenboom and his team, presenting certificates to the participants.

participants to enable them to solve research-based challenges. She urged all participants to: "Seize the opportunity to gain experiences that will help them achieve individually defined target outputs, and project-level needs, as well as improve the quality of their research."

Participants were able to apply the comprehensive DSSAT modeling to support the simulation of crop growth and yield, soil and plant water, nutrient and carbon dynamics and to address the personal needs of their research. The training was attended by scientists,

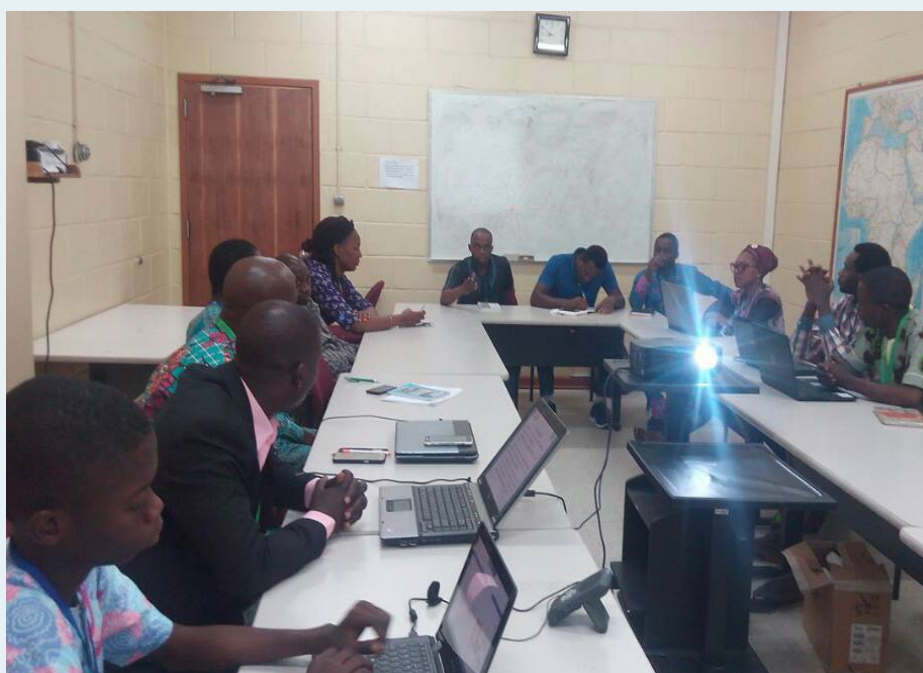
researchers, and students from various IITA locations.

The meeting came to an end with the presentation of certificates to participants by Hoogenboom, for their active participation and cooperation.

IARSAF discusses global agricultural intensification during their journal club meeting

The International Association of Research Scholars and Fellows (IARSAF) held the February edition of its monthly journal review on 23 February at [IITA](#) HQ, to discuss and review research work carried out by research scholars and scientists in the Institute, and work towards incorporating some of the knowledge and ideas acquired into their ongoing research activities for better impact.

Tunde Opeyemi Osundare, a PhD research fellow from the Genetic Resources Center, Federal University of Technology Akure, Ondo State, presented a review of [Michael Abberton](#)'s work titled, "Global agricultural intensification during climate change: a role for genomics." Osundare noted that agriculture is now facing the "perfect storm" of climate change, increasing costs of fertilizer, and rising food demand from a larger



IARSAF Journal Club members in a discussion.

and wealthier population. These factors will lead to global food shortages unless crop production levels are increased. Thus, agricultural development should focus on improving production under enhanced conditions with significant agronomic inputs.

Welcoming members, the seminar coordinator, Moses Selumun Anzenge of IITA Weed Science, thanked and

encouraged members, saying: "Learning is a continuous process and the journal club meeting is an avenue for fellows to contribute and query different research carried out by scientists across the board and view how it relates to their various ongoing research work."

While making contributions after the presentation, members discussed

the various roles genomics has on the changing climatic situation. They believe that a new agricultural paradigm is required to reduce dependence on high inputs and increase crop diversity, yield stability, and environmental resilience. They concluded that more research needs to be done to breed crops that can adapt and be resistant to these environmental challenges.

Food security: The balance of quantity, nutrition, and safety

A reflection on [Food Safety Month](#)

"Our history of hunger and starvation on the African continent has given many of us a skewed perception of food security: our subconscious target is to fill every belly." This quote from IITA Research Scientist [Charity Mutegi](#) lays the foundation for her discourse on the important, but very often overlooked, matter of food safety.

Mutegi maintains that while high yielding crops are important, "What is the use of a plentiful harvest if eating it does us harm?"

Beyond quantity, even the most nutritious crop does not guarantee safety as it can become harmful in the absence of good agricultural and manufacturing practices. Using the example of aflatoxin she states: "Aflatoxin, routinely found in dangerous quantities in foods across sub-Saharan Africa, illustrates the



Charity Mutegi, Kenya Country Coordinator for the Aflasafe Project.

dilemma of plenty versus safe in the African context."

Mutegi currently works with the Aflasafe Project as Kenya Country Coordinator. She considers that raising awareness about safety concerns is paramount

and must go beyond our traditional focus on farmers.

Read Mutegi's full blog post in the Borlaug Blog on "[Hungry Bellies and Silent Killers: Why both Quantity and Quality Matter in Food Security.](#)"

Events

- YIIFSWA-II Annual Progress Review and Work Planning Meeting, 5–8 March, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria
- Science & Technology and Innovation Expo 2018, 5–9 March, Eagle Square, Lagos, Nigeria
- Nairobi Innovation Week, 5–9 March, The Great Court, University of Nairobi, Nairobi, Kenya
- International Women's Day, 8 March
- West Africa Transforming Breeding Workshop, 12–15 March, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria
- BASICS Annual Review and Planning Meeting, 14–16 March, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria
- 2018 Annual Review and Work Planning Meeting, Cassava Weed Management Project, 19–20 March, Conference Center, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria
- IITA Board Meeting, 24–26 April, [Center for Development Research of Bonn University](#) (ZEF), Bonn, Germany
- Special event on "African agricultural transformation: The IITA Agripreneur Approach to Job Creation", 26 April, ZEF, Bonn, Germany
- 7th International Food Legume Research Conference, 6–8 May, Palais des Congrès, Marrakech, Morocco