

Nobel Peace and Africa Food Prize winners support sexual violence victims in DR Congo

Two people from the same village—Prof Denis Mukwege, the co-recipient of the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize, and Dr Nteranya Sanginga, Director General of IITA—that received the 2018 Africa Food Prize, are dedicated to helping 6 million victims of sexual violence in DR Congo.



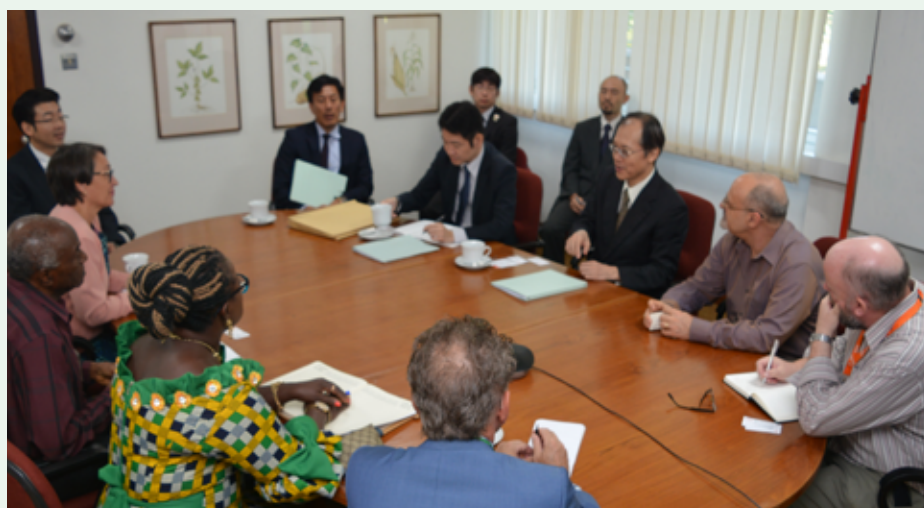
Dennis Mukwege, Winner of Nobel Peace Prize 2018 (in lab coat) in a discussion with IITA colleagues.

Victims are being treated medically by Prof Mukwege's team at the Panzi Foundation, and then with support from IITA are rebuilding their lives to have a livelihood that would make them financially independent, less vulnerable, and regain self-esteem. Supporting these brave women with agribusiness opportunities along value chains is the key.

The Panzi Foundation and IITA assert that they will continue to work together to make a difference in the lives of those victims and to dedicate time and resources to the betterment of women in general. Dr Sanginga, in his congratulatory letter to Prof Mukwege, wrote that "We, as a partner institution, are extremely proud of the excellent work that you have done, and are always ready to extend our hand in fellowship and friendship." The awards to both parties at the same time bring to light the urgent need for an integrated approach and concerted efforts to address the plight of vulnerable women, especially victims of sexual violence.

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Japanese Ambassador visits IITA; looks for further collaboration



Roundtable discussion with Japanese Ambassador and key IITA Staff.

The Ambassador of Japan to Nigeria, His Excellency Yutaka Kikuta, on 17 October paid a courtesy visit to the [IITA](http://www.iita.org) Headquarters in Ibadan, Nigeria to meet with senior IITA management.

He was accompanied by the First Secretary, Chief Security Officer Shinobu Okubo, and Head of Development Cooperation Mitsuhiro Inamura.

The delegation was received by senior IITA management staff including [Kenton Dashiell](#), Deputy Director General, Partnerships for Delivery (DDG-P4D) and [May-Guri Saethre](#), Deputy Director General, Research for Delivery (DDG-R4D).

In welcoming the Ambassador, Saethre expressed delight at the opportunity to have an exchange of scientists from diverse locations including Japan, noting that there are at least three Japanese scientists and one visiting staff from Taiyo Industry Africa (a Japanese private company) currently in IITA as well as a Japanese member of the IITA Board of Trustees, [Dr Shuichi Asanuma](#).

The Ambassador was visiting IITA for the first time and said he wanted to have a firsthand experience so he could personally report on the activities of the Institute. "I was quite impressed with all the people working here, including the Japanese staff. I had the opportunity to have discussions with the researchers and their story was fascinating," said the Ambassador.

He spoke on a range of issues including women empowerment, sustainable research funding, and business collaboration between Japan and Nigeria. On gender balance, the Ambassador was happy about the increasing interest and involvement of women in the fields of science and technology including agriculture. "The Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is keen to bring about a society where women can shine. So as an embassy, we ourselves have to do a

bit more to increase the female staff at my embassy as well," he continued.

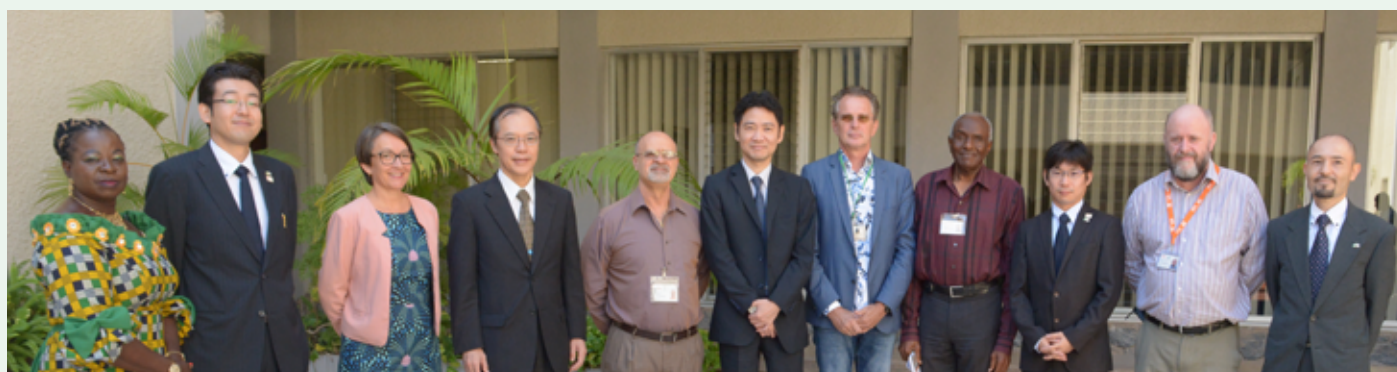
The Head of Development Cooperation, Mitsuhiro Inamura, highlighted the current downward trend of funding but noted that in spite of a reduced budget, the Japanese government has been supporting (MoFA and MAFF Japan projects) and will continue to support IITA's work. He also spoke of increasing the current level of collaboration, not just with IITA but also between Japan and Nigeria. He said, "Right now the trade between Japan and Nigeria is limited to very small products. From Nigeria to Japan, it is one product, sesame seed, and from Japan to Nigeria it is also one product, which is mackerel. So as the embassy we will like to expand, not only the items but also the area."

To combat the funding challenges, the Ambassador pointed out the importance of communication to let stakeholders, including tax payers and politicians, know of the actual impact of funds already spent on development research and projects. "In Japan, very few Japanese know about yam or cowpea. So we invested a lot of scientific knowledge and human resources on research on these but only a few Japanese are aware of that path," the Ambassador added.

Saethre acknowledged the increased demand for accountability and visible impact markers from highly educated stakeholders, noting that it is a challenge that needs to be taken on. "I think also as an institute here at IITA, we really need to focus more on communicating our own research and development results generally. I think that is a big challenge for all of us right now to be able to actually convince people that we are doing a lot of good things for the funds that we are receiving," she added.

The CEO of the [IITA Business Incubation Platform](#) (BIP), [Frederick Schreurs](#), spoke about combating the downward funding trend by engaging in commercial collaboration where all parties would recognize and enjoy the mutual benefit in the profitable outcomes. "Mechanization is a very important factor. In Japan there are many small-scale equipment which could be applicable here. It might be expensive but if it is set up in a way that various farmers can take advantage of it then more would benefit from mechanization. The more we do, the more people might be linked to fund research projects. It's a balance," he concluded.

At the end of the meeting, [Haruki Ishikawa](#) and [Ryo Matsumoto](#) conducted a field tour of the MAFF and MoFA Japan experimental fields and IITA facilities with the delegation.



Group photograph of the Japanese Ambassador (4th from left) and his staff with IITA Senior Management staff and Japanese scientists.

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Prof Mukwege has been a dependable partner of IITA for many years. He gave the keynote address at the Women in Agriculture (WIA) conference organized by IITA Kalambo in August 2015. Also, in 2015 IITA partnered with the Panzi Foundation and the International Center for Advanced Research and Training (ICART) to develop a proposal in response

to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's call on *Putting Women & Girls at the Center of Development*. The project is presently being implemented in Kinshasa due to security challenges in South Kivu.

In his response, Prof Mukwege expressed his appreciation to his "brother DG Sanginga," whom he also congratulated on

the 2018 Africa Food Prize Award to IITA. According to him the two awards constitute a challenge to the two institutions—IITA and Panzi Foundation—to increase their efforts towards improving the lot of over 6 million victims of civil war in DRC, especially the women who suffered sexual violence during the conflicts.

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IITA-led fall armyworm compact holds regional “plan to action” meeting to control pest in East Africa

An Africa-wide initiative of the [African Development Bank](#) (AfDB), in partnership with IITA to mobilize regional efforts to stop the spread of fall armyworm (FAW)—an invasive pest threatening food supply and incomes of millions of African smallholder farmers—has been launched in East Africa.

The launch was held at a two-day “From plan to action” meeting organized by the Bank, IITA, and the Kenya [Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock & Fisheries](#) in Nairobi, on 11 and 12 October as part of the Bank’s [Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation](#) (TAAT) agenda.

This is the third meeting under this initiative which seeks to identify ready-to-deploy technologies to tackle FAW in Africa. The others were held in Lusaka, Zambia for Southern Africa and in Yaoundé, Cameroon for West and Central Africa.

The meeting brought together ministerial level government representatives and FAW response coordinators from Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, the Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda, as well as experts from the [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) (FAO), the [United States Agency for International Development](#) (USAID), the [Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa](#) (AGRA), the [African Agricultural Technology Foundation](#) (AATF), [Syngenta Foundation](#), and IITA.

While officially opening the event, AfDB Regional Manager for Eastern Africa Joseph Compton noted that FAW was a highly damaging transboundary pest threatening Africa’s food and nutrition security.

“Reports have shown that, if no appropriate actions are taken, the fall armyworm could cause from 21 to 53% maize yield losses in just 12 African countries within five years.



Left: Joseph Compton, Regional Manager for Eastern Africa, African Development Bank. Right: Chris Akem, IITA TAAT Coordinator, giving the keynote speech.



These are valued at US\$2.48 billion to \$6.187 billion,” he said.

“This meeting is a clarion call in our quest to find lasting solutions to the fall armyworm menace and a first step in identifying robust, low-cost, and effective control solutions that are ready for immediate deployment,” he added.

David Mwangi, Head, Plant Protection Services, State Department for Crop Development, Ministry of Agriculture, while welcoming participants to the meeting, said Kenya had already incurred losses worth \$30 million to the pest.

“We are looking forward to leaving this meeting with technology options to deploy to farmers in the coming season,” he added.

Development partners, researchers, and private sector companies made presentations on ongoing initiatives and technologies for controlling FAW. Country focal points from the represented nations described the status of FAW in their countries and outlined ongoing control efforts. They also identified the most effective technologies from the presentation, and ways to scale them out to smallholder farmers.

One immediate option identified for scaling out was the Syngenta Foundation’s seed treatment pesticide known as Fortenza Dou, which is considered effective against FAW for the first 30 days after crop emergence.

The participants also identified options to finance the delivery of proven technology packages to farmers as well as the necessary policy and regulatory framework reforms to fast track registration of the identified technologies across the region.

“It is important for strengthening partnerships to ensure a coordinated regional approach for such a devastating pest,” said [Chris Akem](#), TAAT Coordinator at IITA.

The fall armyworm adult is dispersed by wind; its later caterpillar stages feed inside maize whorls and cobs where they are inaccessible to chemical sprays. In its short lifespan of about 10 days, a single mated, adult female moth can lay between 1,500 and 2,000 eggs. Therefore, if not properly controlled, many more countries could be at risk, as well as the food and income security of over 300 million resource-poor people in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in those regions where maize, sorghum, and millet are staple food crops.



Participants at the FAW “plan to action” meeting.

IITA Women's Group sensitizes participants to embrace STEM

As part of efforts to inspire and expand the horizons of students, the [Global Youth Leadership and Girl-child Foundation](#) (GYLGF) held its 4th [Raising Girls' Ambition](#) (RAGA) international interdisciplinary conference at Lead City University (LCU), Ibadan, on 10–12 October. To commemorate the event, a team from [IITA Women's Group](#) (WG) participated and contributed to ensuring that the girl-child rises above the social and psychological limitations that surround them.



Dr Kolade Olufisayo, Postdoctoral Fellow, giving the participants an overview of work in the Virology lab.

The RAGA conference titled “Equipping girls for involvement in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) for sustainable development” aimed to expose, empower, inform, educate, and train youth to be self-reliant, economically independent, and able to manage themselves. This provided participants with the opportunity to establish mentoring relationships with successful career women in IITA. The event was attended by IITA management staff, lecturers from Nigerian universities and students of Qibla Secondary School, Bashorun Ojo High school, Lead City International School, Command Secondary School Mokola, Command Children School, all in Ibadan.

Speaking on behalf of IITA WG, [Charlotte Sanginga](#) emphasized their involvement in RAGA, through offering of scholarships and girl-child education. She further encouraged the stakeholders to make an impact on the girls especially in STEM, by adopting the children as mentees, and providing resources for female

children. To boost the morale of the students, [Ranjana Bhattacharjee](#), IITA Molecular Geneticist, gave a presentation on the topic “Why are there so few women in STEM? (Stereotypes and threats),” where she highlighted the uniqueness of a female child and her abilities. “We need to identify our strengths and work at improving ourselves and the society irrespective of the discipline because in every science, there is art, and in every art, there is science; invariably they are interlocked,” she added.

During the visits to the Bioscience, Genetic Resource Center, Virology, Soil Microbiology and Food and Nutrition Science laboratories, female scientists, laboratory technicians, and assistants gave presentations on their work in the laboratory and science field. Felix Ero, Lecturer at LCU, applauded IITA WG and the entire IITA, saying, “I am certain that with what the students have seen, they will understand the need to make an impact and also have an inquisitive mind to question

the ‘Why’, ‘What’, and ‘How’ of things around them, irrespective of their field of study. This is indeed a revealing and enlightening experience,” he added.

At the IITA WG farm, farm managers Gloria Oluwadare and Kazembe Mulenga talked about their activities on the farm from inception to date, and also showed some of their farm produce which included different varieties of fruits and vegetables.

The visit ended with an interaction with six IITA female scientists working in the STEM fields, who served as role models. The girls were given the opportunity to discuss and ask questions. According to Mary Joseph, IITA WG/RAGA Scholarship recipient 2017/18 academic session, “From the discussions we had and from what we saw, we promise you our mothers, teachers, and friends that we will continue to follow the path of science and will make you proud of our achievements as young women.”

In his address, IITA Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#) commended the organizers for the opportunity it presented to him to answer a challenge posed to IITA at the awarding ceremony for the Africa Food Prize 2018, which IITA won. He indicated that IITA had developed a program to make agriculture interesting for young graduates, but there was a need to address the younger ones and change their perceptions on farming. He spoke of his plans to implement a version of IYA for younger children in various secondary and primary schools that could help stimulate their passion for agriculture and change their perceptions on the 3 P's--poverty, penury, and pain connected to agriculture.

[Dr Adepeju Oti](#), Founder of GYLGF and initiator of the RAGA Conference, commended IITA WG for its support from the first conference to date. She said, “IITA has been of great support towards the achievement of our goals and has also made great strides in ensuring that youth and the girl-child develop powerful leadership skills. This has further translated to the reason why I said this conference will not be complete until I bring the students to meet and learn from accomplished women and world leaders from IITA. I am convinced that they are at the right place and with the right people.”