

YIIFSWA-II hosts 3rd Annual progress review and planning meeting in Accra

[IITA](#), lead implementer of the [Yam Improvement for Income and Food Security in West Africa Phase Two \(YIIFSWA-II\)](#), organized and hosted the project's third annual review and planning meeting from 25 to 28 February in Accra, Ghana.

The objective of the meeting was to review and discuss the project's achievements of the previous implementation year as well as plan activities and the budget for 2019.

The welcome remarks were made by the representative of the Ghanaian Minister of Food and Agriculture (MoFA), Dr Felicia Ansah-Amprofi, who is the Director of Plant Protection and Regulatory Services (PPRSD). She noted that the profile of yam is growing nationally in Ghana and as result of its socioeconomic importance, it was included in the transformative campaign "planting for food and jobs" in Ghana. She stated, "Yam was included in the priority



Dr Felicia Ansah-Amprofi of PPRSD addressing attendees.

crops of Ghana because of enormous potential and substantial foreign exchange to Ghana and improving the incomes of smallholders."

"I believe our gathering here forms part of our seed agenda to build a system that is resilient, competitive and sustainable," she concluded.

In his opening remarks, Deputy Director of IITA West Africa, [Michael Abberton](#) who represented the Director for West Africa, Robert Asiedu, applauded the effort and commitment put in by partners to ensure the sustainability of the project which will eventually translate to smallholder farmers.

Highlights of the meeting included an outline of project achievements in 2018. The advancement of the project into the next three years of implementation depended on IITA successfully demonstrating the feasibility of producing large volumes of seed using the high ratio propagation technologies (HRPTs) developed in the first phase of the project. IITA successfully produced 45,030 breeder plantlets, established 5.4 ha of land with single node vine cuttings, and harvested 73,742 basic seed tubers from 2.7 ha.

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Ooni of Ife plans to bestow award on IITA DG for his efforts in securing Africa's food security

A delegation from [IITA](#) paid a courtesy visit to the Ooni of Ife, His Imperial Majesty, Oba Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi, at his palace in Osun State, Nigeria on 9 April, as plans to recognize the Institute and Director General, [Dr Nteranya Sanginga](#) continue to gain momentum.

The team, comprising [Hildegarde Koper-Limbourg](#), IITA Deputy Director General, Corporate Services and Toyin Oke, Manager, Resource Mobilization, Protocol, and External Liaison

(RMPEL), was in the company of traditional rulers and facilitators, Asiwaju Yinka Fasuyi, and Oba (Dr) Odunayo Ajayi, both from Ijesa community and was received by his Imperial Majesty, Ooni Ogunwusi and his entourage.

Applauding IITA for its research efforts, Fasuyi, spoke of the Institute's impact on the lives of smallholder farmers within and outside Nigeria, emphasizing that DG Sanginga is the first African to be the Director General of IITA since

its existence. "IITA is one of the leading research institutes saddled with the responsibility of lifting millions out of poverty to ensure a food-secure future for all. We are privileged to have the headquarters domiciled in the South West of Nigeria," he said.

He noted that DG Sanginga not only occupied the position, but did so meritoriously to the extent he was reappointed for a second tenure, and this has reflected positively in the lives of

farmers and youth in Africa. "Today, IITA's effort to out-scale proven technologies have been felt in nearly all nooks and crannies of Nigeria including the State of Osun. As a result of his unique and unprecedented achievements that he has recorded over the years, we the friends of the DG felt it a good idea to bring our son home for appreciation and recognition in any way you deem fit," he added.

Speaking on behalf of IITA, Koper expressed how excited she was to speak on behalf of the number one citizen of IITA, DG Sanginga and to be in the palace of His Imperial Majesty. "For me I would say that DG Sanginga is a driving force for African transformation. As a result of his commitment, hard work, and passion for agriculture and securing the path to food security in Africa, IITA won the 2018 Africa Food Prize."

Echoing the need to award DG Sanginga, His Imperial Majesty Ooni Ogunwusi welcomed the team to his royal palace and expressed his sincere gratitude saying, "It is indeed a great privilege to have you all at the heartbeat of tropical agriculture, and the source of mankind where it all began. This is the center of tropical agriculture and I am happy that IITA's priority is on transforming tropical agriculture."

He continued, "Ever since I started following up with IITA's activities, I have been amazed at the advancement of technologies and research breakthroughs. I believe one of the things that has distinguished IITA from other reputable organizations is the high level of commitment among the staff. However, I congratulate DG Sanginga for doing tremendously well because

he has been a good model and has set the pace that his colleagues and staff are following. I am very proud of the entire IITA team!"

Commending DG Sanginga for his numerous achievements, especially in championing the delivery of technologies and innovation to nourish Africa, Ooni Ogunwusi said, "Right at the center of tropical Africa, we must honor him with the highest award that the throne of Oduduwa can give. It is going to be a very huge ceremony and sooner than he can imagine, we will be reaching to that effect. He must be celebrated in a big and cultural way that, forever, he will not be forgotten. This is our heritage, our tradition, and our culture, and because he has done so well for

tropical agriculture, we must blow his trumpet as our own little way of showing appreciation for the good work he has done for the State of Osun and Africa at large.

"Before the end of this month, I will lead a delegation, to IITA to see DG Sanginga and also discuss his grand award ceremony. This is going to be a legacy that no one can forget, including generations yet unborn. Do not give up on your struggle to make Africa a better continent," he added.

Lastly, Mrs Oke immensely appreciated Ooni Ogunwusi for hosting the team in a special way and presented some traditional gifts and confectionary made from cassava to him.



His Imperial Majesty, Oba Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi with delegation.

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The seed companies in Nigeria established 142 demonstration trials in 2018 to train out-growers on seed production using the adapted yam miniset technique for seed yam production with the support of IITA and Context/Sahel. Also, YIIFSWA-II, in collaboration with the seed sector regulatory agencies in Nigeria and Ghana, reviewed and updated yam quality standards and certification procedures that were established during the first phase of the project for implementation in 2019.

In the new project year, YIIFSWA-II will be focusing efforts towards establishing sustainable supply of early generation seeds (EGS) or planting materials to cater for the supply of certified seed tubers to contribute to farmers' increased use of quality seed of improved varieties. This will include the establishment of Temporary Immersion Bioreactor Systems (TIBS) to

boost the production of breeder seed yam plantlets in Nigeria and Ghana.

Among other commitments, the five established seed companies in Nigeria will embark on seed production research to enhance their capacity in using technologies for foundation and commercial seed yam production with the support from IITA and Context.

The meeting was attended by participants from IITA, Context, [Sahel Capital](#), the [National Root Crops Research Institute](#) (NRCRI), [National Agricultural Seeds Council](#) (NASC), National Centre for Genetic Resources and Biotechnology (NACGRAB), [Federal Ministry Agriculture and Rural Development](#) (FMARD), [Crop Research Institute](#) (CSIR-CRI), [Savannah Agricultural Research Institute](#) (CSIR-SARI), and [Plant Protection and Regulatory Services Directorate](#) (PPRSD). Nine seed companies also participated along with the National Association of Yam Farmers, Processors and Marketers (NAY-FPM).

Find more details on this [blog post](#) and watch out for the YIIFSWA-II newsletter on the 4-day meeting and excursion to the largest tissue culture laboratory in West Africa.



Deputy Director IITA West Africa, Michael Abberton, giving opening remarks.

Institute Board Chair visits IITA Cameroon Station

On 26 March, [IITA](#) Cameroon was happy to welcome [Dr Amos NamangaNgongji](#), Chair of the Board of Trustees (BoT), on an unofficial visit to the IITA Cameroon Station.

One of the goals of his visit was to get an overview of projects implemented by IITA in Cameroon.

Dr NamangaNgongji was received by Country Representative, [Cargele Masso](#); Station Administrator, Simila Boubakari; and scientists including Komi Fiaboe and Fotso Apollin.

The meeting was a move towards creating new partnerships and strengthening the relationships with national and international institutions. Some of the activities being carried out by the station were showcased to the BoT Chair. Some recommendations to mobilize existing partners and potential

partners around IITA's missions and research activities were also on the agenda.

During the visit, Dr NamangaNgongji also visited the ongoing ENABLE Youth Program where he met the National Coordinator of the Agricultural Value Chain Development Project (AVCDP), in a capacity building workshop. More importantly, the BoT Chair spent more than an hour with aspiring agripreneurs being trained in the Youth Agri-Business Incubation Center (YABIC) hosted by the station. He arrived when the aspiring agripreneurs were discussing the importance of leadership for agribusiness success and was impressed by the commitment of the interns and their interest in the Program.

"I am very flattered to know that you have accepted to be trained by this Program, which is one of the best investments of IITA. As I have seen, your intellectual level is quite high, but despite that, you have accepted to be trained by ENABLE Youth Cameroon, you have accepted to acquire skills that will help you contribute to Africa's development by creating jobs for you and other youth," Dr NamangaNgongji said.

During the discussion, the Chair of the Board also drilled the young interns on the importance of agribusiness for the development of Africa, and the key role they can play for the growth of African economies. Also, he emphasized the necessity for all the aspiring agripreneurs to actively contribute to the success of this important initiative, which was initiated back in 2012 by the IITA Director General, [Dr Nteranya Sanginga](#), in Ibadan, Nigeria. Under his leadership, this has now been scaled up across Africa, with support from various partners including the [African Development Bank](#) (AfDB).



Top: National Coordinator of AVCDP and the Country Representative, and Bottom: Dr NamangaNgongji (1st on left), being briefed by Cargele Masso (2nd from left), Simila Boubakari (1st on right), and some scientists.

Got a story to share?

Please send your story with photos and captions every Tuesday to iita-news@cgiar.org or Katherine Lopez (k.lopez@cgiar.org) and Uzoma Agha (u.gha@cgiar.org) for headquarters and Western Africa, Catherine Njuguna (c.njuguna@cgiar.org) for Eastern and Southern Africa, and David Ngome (d.ngome@cgiar.org) for Central Africa.

IITA-Onne hosts graduation of Ogoni youth after machine fabrication training

A training organized for 15 Ogoni youth, which kicked off on 14 January, was concluded successfully on 29 March. The training was in line with the [United Nations Environment Programme](#) (UNEP) recommendation to provide an alternative source of livelihood for oil-impacted communities of Ogoniland in Southern Nigeria.

The [Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project](#) (HYPREP), in a tripartite collaboration with the [Stakeholder Democracy Network](#) (SDN) and [IITA](#), developed the template for the training aimed to empower these Ogoni youth.

IITA-Onne organized a closing cum graduation ceremony to celebrate the youth who successfully participated in the training on fabrication of cassava processing machines. The ceremony was attended by representatives from HYPREP and SDN, as well as members of the press.



One of the fabricated cassava processing machines.



During the Graduation ceremony.

In his opening remarks, Head of IITA-Onne Station, [Richardson Okechukwu](#) noted that the graduands were taught how to fabricate basic processing machines such as roasters, graters, presses, burr mill, sifter, peeling, and cabinet dryer as well as postharvest processing. He encouraged the graduands to take the lessons to heart by working towards the purpose of achieving sustainable livelihoods through this program.

In his speech, Dr Marvin Dekil, Project Coordinator of HYPREP-Ministry of Environment, represented by HYPREP's Head of Legal services Mrs Ekanem Grace, stated that HYPREP will ensure that the skills gained by the 15 graduands are put to good use. This will be achieved with the setting-up of a cassava processing center that would generate income and create an economic hub for the communities.

"It has been a long journey for the trainees, who have had previous trainings on machine fabrication. The trainees are the first batch of the program," he said. He urged the trainees to leverage on the opportunities provided by this training to change their lives and become good ambassadors of their communities. He commended IITA and SDN for supporting the program and assured the FG's commitment to full implementation of the Ogoni clean-up exercise.

In his own remarks, SDN Senior Project Officer, Jesse-Martin Manufor noted the importance of the training as cassava is a staple food for many Nigerians as well as important cash crop that produces garri, starch, and flour.

The graduands were issued certificates of participation.



The graduating youth (back row) with some of the organizers and other stakeholders.

One on one: Regina Kapinga: IITA's Queen of Roots and Tubers

As we continue to celebrate women in science, we interviewed Regina Kapinga, IITA's first Head of Advocacy and Resource Mobilization, also known as the Queen of Roots and Tubers. Her years of working on cassava and sweet potato earned her an "Appreciation award for outstanding leadership and contribution to the development of Root and Tuber crops in Africa" from the International Symposium for the International Society for Tropical Root Crops-Africa Branch (ISTRC-AB), held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in 2018.

In this interview, Kapinga talks about her successful career spanning science, grants and project management, and now fundraising.

IN: Tell us about yourself

RK: I am a Tanzanian, born and raised on the shores of Lake Victoria in Bukoba District in the North-Western Zone of Tanzania. I started my career with the Ministry of Agriculture as an agricultural researcher for 15 years up to 2000. Thereafter, I joined the Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology as the Director of Research Coordination and Promotion Directorate and worked there until August 2001. My new post was good but had a lot of governance and policy coordination tasks which, at that time, as a scientist didn't motivate me.

So I moved to Uganda to work for [International Potato Center](#) (CIP) as a sweet potato breeder for the

sub-Saharan Africa and country liaison office until early 2009 when I joined the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in Seattle as a Senior Program Officer. My responsibilities there were to make and manage grants in the Roots and Tubers portfolio until early 2015 when I joined IITA as the Head of Advocacy and Resource Mobilization Unit under the General Directorate. From January, this year, I am also the Country Representative for Uganda.

I have a PhD in Agronomy (1994) and an MSc in Crop Science (1988) from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, and a BSc (major in Botany and Chemistry) from the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

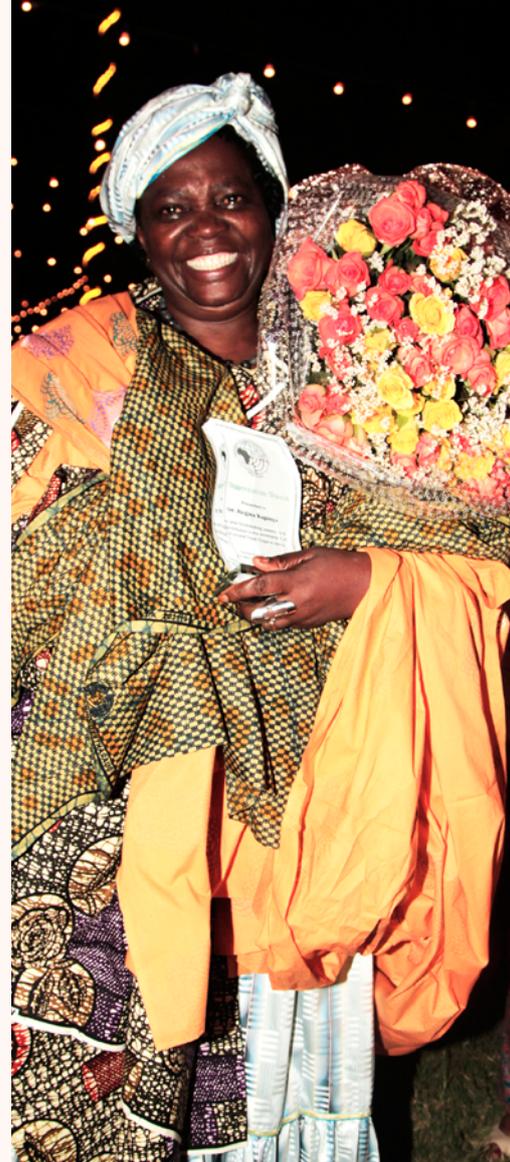
I did both my MSc and PhD degrees at IITA-Ibadan so joining IITA long after studentship was like coming back home. I am married to Emil and we're blessed with three children, but our first son recently passed away leaving us with four beautiful grandchildren (Baraka, Helen, and the twins Esther & Elijah).

IN: What have been some of the major challenges in your new post at IITA and how have you turned them into opportunities?

RK: When I joined in 2015, this was a new unit with one member of staff—me. The only thing provided was my salary and a limited budget for operations. Therefore, although I was hired to support all regional hubs, this wasn't easy, so the first projects I developed with the research teams in Nigeria, Tanzania and the P4D colleagues, innovatively, I included my staff time, advocacy, and mainstreaming activities, which generated some funds to hire staff and run the unit.

So now at least I have some support staff who work with me and in some regions where I can't reach on a regular basis, I have supported them with funds to hire a consultant and work with the teams to write proposals.

For Tanzania and neighboring countries, I work closely with the team to identify funding opportunities. As I move to Uganda, I have big hopes that



Regina Kapinga.

through linkages with the team and other key stakeholders, we will raise funds especially in the areas prioritized by the Government, for instance combating aflatoxin in maize and groundnut, industrializing cassava, and strengthening youth in agribusiness.

IN: What have been some of the defining moments in your career?

RK: My prior work for eight years at CIP where we worked with more than 20 organizations to promote Vitamin A sweet potato in the SSA region targeting children under five and women of reproductive ages. As one of the pioneers, in 2016, I was overjoyed when the work on biofortification was internationally recognized by receiving the World Food Prize in Des Moines, Iowa, United States. This is an international award recognizing the achievements of individuals who have advanced human development by improving the quality, quantity, or availability of food in the world. So seeing myself to have contributed to this journey,

it indeed defined my moment in the professional world.

IN: What are some of the challenges you have encountered as a woman in science and how have you overcome them?

RK: As a married woman, there hasn't been much flexibility in taking up international jobs which entail relocating from my home country without my family members. A good example is in the USA where I successfully worked at

the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. My family couldn't stay with me there, so I had to prioritize and make a hard choice. I gave up my prestigious job and came back home—thanks to IITA which absorbed me immediately.

IN: Advice to young women working in science and who would like to advance in their career

RK: This can't be different from what others will advise them and that is:

To be determined and focused. They should focus less on the job they have and more on knowing who they are so that they can become more adaptable, confident, and resourceful in their jobs and lives in general. They should be critical thinkers, take risks, and be innovative. They should spend their time exploring their strengths, interests, and skills to find jobs that fit them best. They should use where they are now to get them to their next job.

IITA BIP management outlines future path for the unit

Management staff of the [IITA Business Incubation Platform](#) (BIP) held a meeting on 20 March at the [IITA](#) headquarters in Ibadan. The meeting themed, "When Science meets Business," was organized to discuss ways to develop a scouting system in which marketable IITA products and services will be promoted through the BIP.

IITA BIP takes innovations and accelerates them into commercial enterprises for public benefit. The goal of the unit is to help the funding of IITA's groundbreaking research to transform African agriculture. The Head of BIP, [Frederick Schreurs](#), stressed that there is a need for research to support business, and BIP can create a good image between donors and other partners outside IITA. BIP aims to create jobs with the support of new technologies, as well as make IITA's technologies known, disseminate them, and generate income to make BIP sustainable.

Speaking on the creation of BIP, IITA Director General, [Nteranya Sanginga](#) mentioned that BIP was birthed in 2011, facing lots of criticism from all CG centers at the onset. Now however, it has become an obligation to invest 30% of their funds in development



Frederick Schreurs giving a presentation at the meeting.

and interactions with the private sector." He advised that everyone work together to bring breeders and BIP together to ensure commercialization of technologies with cooperation and interaction. "We need to be more active, more engaged, and do more of product display," he added.

In developing the system for promoting IITA's products, a committee of five that would advise the BIP was formed. The target

is to create integration and move things forward between BIP and IITA research. Ideas were proposed in line with the goal of the system. The first was that business incubation platforms should have a clear focus on youth entrepreneurship as well as women, in combination with technology dissemination and impact creation. Also, the outcome of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) should be communicated to donors to demonstrate the sustainable impact of BIP and IITA science interaction.

Furthermore, there is need for full engagement of breeders and more advocacy in terms of benefits they stand to gain if they work with BIP. The importance of maintaining a close connection with the breeder, in learning exercises, was also established. It is also necessary to create interactions with local and international universities and other CGIAR centers for new products, services, and ideas, which can be channeled through the business incubation platforms.

Schreurs noted that BIP does not intend to take over resources and technologies; BIP is about cooperation and collaboration.



BIP management staff and other stakeholders during the meeting.