

## Acting British High Commissioner visits IITA Ibadan

The Acting British High Commissioner, Her Excellency, Ms [Gill Atkinson](#), and her team visited [IITA](#) headquarters to familiarize themselves with the Institute's activities.

[Hilde Koper](#), IITA Deputy Director General, Corporate Services, welcomed the team during the 27 August visit and introduced IITA activities, including its [to page 3](#)



The Acting British High Commissioner and her team visiting the Germplasm Health, Virology and Diagnostics Unit.

## BEST cassava project supports cassava transformation in Handeni District



IITA Research Assistant, [Ally Ng'adoa](#) (left), [Kiddo Mtunda](#), BEST cassava researcher and [Hasaeli John](#) (right), MEDA field officer evaluating the performance of cassava in [Alamin's farm](#) in Handeni district. (IITA/G.Ndibalema)

With 70% of families in Handeni District, Tanga region, suffering from food insecurity and hunger for years, leading to poor performance and dropouts in schools, the leaders and agriculture department at the district level had to seek a solution for their community. Growing cassava as a food crop is an immediate option to fight hunger and malnutrition in schools because of its drought tolerance.

Four years after introducing cassava to the district, primary school pupils' retention improved from 18% in 2015 to 77% in 2019, while passing performance improved from 58% in 2015 to 88% in 2020. These positive impacts increased demand for more cassava within the community, and the district leaders had to find new ways to increase availability and access to cassava seed materials for increased cassava production; thus, the beginning of the Handeni Model.

The Handeni model is a collaborative approach used by the district leadership and other stakeholders to increase food security, improve nutrition, and provide income to families through cassava production in the Handeni district.

The district leadership invited the Building an Economically Sustainable seed system for Cassava in Tanzania (BEST Cassava) project to support increasing the availability of clean seeds of improved cassava varieties. BEST Cassava is implemented by MEDA, [IITA](#), and the Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute (TARI).

The BEST Cassava team linked the district to formal cassava seed system entrepreneurs to supply clean planting material to farmers. Moreover, the district partnered with banks and secured a bank loan worth 3 billion Tshs for Handeni farmers as capital for cassava production. They also provided a market linkage by partnering with cassava processors to purchase the cassava roots as dried chips once harvested. The district linked with markets, including cassava starch processors, who got an assured market supply for the product in and out of the country.

The stakeholders endorsed collaboration because they agreed about the underutilization of the crop in the district. The banks identified the opportunity to work with the small business sector because the district had invented a sustainable system that involved essential stakeholders along the value chain that assured minimal risks on returns from the loans they provide to farmers.

"Our initial objective was to grow cassava for food security, to save our community from hunger because the late president John Pombe Magufuli gave directives to stop providing food aid to regions affected by hunger," said Mary Missokia, the district's Cassava Coordinator.

"The model guarantees cassava supply from farmers for our industry; we also



*A beneficiary farmer of Handeni model, Alamin Baruti, giving a tour of his farm to show the performance of the cassava seeds distributed to him by the CSEs in Handeni district. (IITA/G.Ndibalema)*

expect to have good quality since farmers are closely working with experts," said Beneath Behutha, Operations Manager, Dar Canton Investment.

"Through the collective model, we are assured of a sustainable market of clean cassava seeds because the local government has offered us the tender of distributing the seeds to farmers in Handeni. This has challenged us on logistical arrangements to deliver in time and expand our seed farm sizes that will accommodate farmers' orders," explained Raymond Nziyajose, a member of Cassava Seed Entrepreneurs.

"On product market aspects, we are also guaranteed quality and enough cassava roots for starch processing for our export market because the district management has connected us directly with the farmers who produce cassava," added Beneath.

"This model is a good deal for us as bankers because there is risk-sharing of investments among stakeholders. The government acts as a middleman who supervises the farmers to follow the agronomy practices to get the products expected; it also acts as a sponsor to ensure loan returns," noted John Machunda, Manager, NMB bank.

"I am glad to have the opportunity to access a bank loan; also the access to clean seeds of improved varieties like Mkuranga," said Alamin Baruti, a farmer from Handeni.

Mary Missokia said that by working with experienced researchers from

IITA and MEDA, Handeni farmers and extension officers could learn about cassava agronomy practices. "Our district used to be a maize-growing area; many had little knowledge on cassava growing. Even our extension officers had forgotten about the practices. But through this model, farmers have learned about cassava; thus, there were misunderstandings between the farmers and seed distributors on the delay of providing seeds because farmers wanted to apply what they learned," she proudly noted.

Handeni model stakeholders noted that despite the initiative's good progress, some lessons are to be considered for improving the model and scaling up. The lessons include increasing availability and access of clean improved cassava seeds to farmers, increased investment in cassava seed production, intensive and proper vetting of farmers groups who are cassava agripreneurs, and increased awareness about the Handeni model and its procedures among farmers. Moreover, capacity building for farmers about agripreneur thinking in their cassava farming activities also came up.

Handeni is one among eight districts of Tanga region in the northern part of Tanzania. For many years Handeni community grew maize as their primary staple food until 2016, when maize productivity significantly dropped due to unfavorable climate conditions leading to food insecurity. The district leaders then decided to introduce the cassava crop.

hub and youth programs. The group visited the Germplasm Health, Virology and Diagnostics Unit and Genetic Resources Center, and took a campus tour.

Morenike Abu, Legal and Compliance Manager, Project Development and Administrative Unit, gave an overview of the various collaborative undertakings with UK organizations and the United Kingdom. She highlighted projects involving IITA, such as the two-year project on agricultural policy research in Africa with the Institute of Development Studies in the University of Sussex and the Banana resistance variety project with Tropics Bioscience Limited. "We have had a very good partnership with the United Kingdom over the years and we hope that we will sustain this relationship either by will or general support through projects," she said.

[Michael Abberton](#), Research for Development (R4D) Director, IITA-West Africa, spoke on the Institute's R4D activities in West Africa. He said that IITA focuses on different aspects of climate change and how it affects plants and animals. Moreover, IITA produces adaptive varieties and seed systems and focuses on climate-smart agricultural technology. He highlighted the IITA Business Incubation Platform (BIP) specializing in commercializing technologies or incubating technologies and handing them over to the private sector.

Representing [Frederick Schreurs](#), CEO of BIP, Victoria Ayeni briefly presented how BIP bridges the gap between research and dissemination. BIP



*Left: IITA Forest Center Manager Adewale Awoyemi highlighting different Forest Center projects and successes. Right: Ms Gill Atkinson responding to IITA Forest Center conservation efforts.*



focuses mainly on innovations such as crops and technologies developed by IITA. She highlighted the achievements and products BIP has upscaled to end-users through technology transfer, such as Aflasafe, Nodumax, GoSeed, and the current trade-up project with USAID.

Oluyemi Adunoye, Coordinator of Youth Employment in Agribusiness and Sustainable Agriculture (YEASA), presented on Youth in Agribusiness. She reported that YEASA ensures that young people find sustainable employment in modern agriculture and are empowered with technical, soft, and entrepreneurial skills. In addition, Dennis Mulenga, IITA Director of Finance, said they would be engaged in basic financial management training to manage their loans.

Wale Awoyemi, IITA Forest Center Manager, highlighted different Forest Center projects, including the ethnobotanical garden, botanical nursery, biodiversity monitoring, natural resource conservation, and the ongoing Olokemeji Forest Reserve reforestation project in Ogun State. He also spoke about their successes, including protecting the endemic Ibadan Malimbe bird and the over 450 native trees species reserved and documented by the Forest Center.

Responding to efforts being carried out to conserve native plants and trees by IITA Forest Center, Ms Atkinson agreed that trees being propagated in Nigeria need to be indigenous. She was assured of getting indigenous seedlings from IITA the next time she takes up replanting conservation work.

### Got a story to share?

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



### Take responsibility! Stop the spread of COVID-19!

Always clean your hands; practice physical and social distancing; wear face masks properly; avoid crowds and public places; keep a 2-meter distance from the next person; and practice general sanitation and hygiene.

# Importance of AKILIMO tools demonstrated at Sabasaba exhibition in Tanzania

[The African Cassava Agronomy Initiative \(ACAI\)](#) project scientists demonstrated the use of AKILIMO tools to cassava stakeholders during the Dar es Salaam International Trade Fair famously known as “Sabasaba exhibition” in Dar es Salaam Tanzania. The exhibition highlighted how farmers could increase cassava productivity using the AKILIMO tools.

Sabasaba, a Swahili word for “seven seven” is an annual national holiday occurring on 7 July and organized by the Tanzania Trade Development Authority (TANTRADE) to commemorate the founding of the Tanzanian political party TANU. The celebrations have become an important event for business in Eastern and Central Africa. Over 3,500 exhibitors showcase and sell their products for two weeks at the Mwalimu J.K.Nyerere Trade Fair Grounds, attracting around 700,000 tourists.

The ACAI team participated in the exhibitions to promote good agronomic

practices to cassava stakeholders by using AKILIMO tools and disseminate the knowledge to more farmers to maximize their productivity in the cassava value chain. They showcased the tools in different formats, including printable guides, the AKILIMO app, interactive voice response (VIAMO 321), and interactive SMS response (ARIFU).

AKILIMO offers a suite of tools and materials for cassava growers, extension workers, and organizations that promote improved cassava cultivation practices. The tools provide agronomic advice on fertilizer recommendations, appropriate spacing, weed management and best planting practices.

During the event, ACAI Agronomist Abubakari Mzanda highlighted the importance of fertilizer application in increasing cassava yields to the visitors who visited the booth.

“Most of the farmers have not been using fertilizers in cassava production,

therefore the productivity has substantially decreased. But through proper use of fertilizer, taking into account the right type of fertilizer, the right amount of fertilizer, the right time of application, and the right method of application, one would be in better position to improve cassava productivity,” explained Mzanda.

Many cassava growers face the challenge of poor motivation to cassava production. The ACAI team has been promoting cassava cultivation, encouraging farmers to grow cassava to increase their incomes and improve livelihoods.

The ACAI project is a five-year project funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, implemented in five countries in Africa (DRC, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and Tanzania), aiming to increase the availability of appropriate and affordable technologies to sustainably improve short and long-term agricultural productivity in cassava in the target countries.



ACAI Agronomist Abubakari Mzanda speaking with visitors at the exhibition.

# Agribusiness engagement key to poverty reduction among youth

With the increasing unemployment rate among youth in Nigeria, development stakeholders believe that agriculture can serve as a source of alleviating poverty and unemployment, both of which are closely linked. According to a study carried out by Romanus Osabohien, under the [IFAD](#)-sponsored [IITA-CARE](#) project, youth engagement in agribusiness can significantly contribute to increasing per capita income and reducing poverty in Nigeria.

The study showed that, among other things, marital status, secondary occupation, land ownership, the monetary value of productive assets, access to market, and determination to stay in agriculture are significant factors influencing youth engagement in agribusiness as a primary occupation.

While unemployment is considered one of the major causes of poverty in a country with about 86.9 million people living in poverty, a 60% representation of its estimated 200 million population, encouraging youth to participate in agriculture plays a vital role in tackling the problems of unemployment and poverty, the study reveals.

According to Osabohien, besides youth participating in agriculture as a primary occupation, their involvement in other non-farm activities as a secondary occupation is needed in achieving an improved livelihood. This serves as a supplement to the households' income, especially during the farming off-season.

The study, carried out in Ekiti and Kwara states, reveals that the increasing rate of unemployment and poverty is directly related to an increase among youths venturing into crimes or risking their lives to migrate illegally to developed countries in search of better opportunities. Yet, growth in agriculture is linked closely to reducing

poverty and unemployment more than growth in other sectors of the economy.

While it is imperative to initiate youth-friendly programs and create awareness around opportunities throughout the agriculture value chains, any policy that will increase income for youth in agriculture should also promote non-farm activities, says Osabohien.

For a study aimed at determining the factors influencing youth agribusiness engagement and the impact of youth engagement in agribusiness on poverty reduction, results show that many youth ventured into agribusiness due to lack of job opportunities, while some are engaged in agribusiness as their sole source of income.

The IITA-CARE project is working with 80 awardees across Africa researching factors influencing youth engagement in agribusiness to enhance the understanding of the poverty reduction and employment impact and the factors affecting youth engagement in agribusiness and rural farm and non-farm economies.



*Youth engagement in agriculture can alleviate poverty and unemployment.*

# University of Nigeria Alumni Association seeks to strengthen collaboration with IITA

On 20 August, the University of Nigeria (UNN) Alumni Association visited the IITA headquarters to strengthen its partnership with IITA to ensure food security in the country.

Hilde Koper-Limbourg, Deputy Director General Corporate Services; Michael Abberton, IITA's Director for West Africa Hub; and Toyin Oke, Head of Resource Mobilization, Protocol, and External Liaison Office, welcomed the team. Koper familiarized the Alumni representatives with the IITA mandate of transforming agriculture in Africa, including the youth programs. A short video introduced them to the research activities at the Institute.

Abberton introduced them to the different IITA stations and hubs, their locations, and the research activities being carried out in West Africa.

Reverend Fr. Francis Chiadi, Chairman of the Alumni's local organizing committee, acknowledged IITA's research efforts, contribution to food security, and youth empowerment. He said IITA is viewed as a major stakeholder in the university's current 106<sup>th</sup> conference of



*Left: Reverend Fr. Francis Chiadi highlighting IITA's stakeholder role to the University constituents.  
Right: Prof Onyimonyi speaking on the existing relationship and prospective collaboration with IITA.*



National Executive Council-Delegates meeting themed 'University and Nigeria: A critical survey'. "We would be part of what IITA is doing as the need arises," he stated.

Prof Anselm Onyimonyi, Zonal Vice President, South East, UNN Alumni Association, Department of Animal Science, UNN, said the university has partnered with IITA in training young graduates over the years and expressed appreciation for the existing collaboration between IITA and the university.

He added that the university looks forward to strengthening the synergy that already exists.

In response, Koper highlighted the possible crops that both institutes can work on while encouraging the delegation to explore opportunities with the IITA Business Incubation Platform.

She added that IITA is still growing into other areas of research and agriculture, which gives more avenues for further collaboration.

In his closing remarks, Reverend Fr. Chiadi expressed appreciation for IITA's warm reception and the great research carried out across Africa to ensure food security and better livelihoods for smallholder farmers.



*Members of UNN Alumni Association with IITA management staff.*