



DG Sanginga goes on Southern Africa Hub sortie; highlights importance of staff and infrastructure in IITA's work in the region

IITA Director General Nteranya Sanginga was on a sortie to the Southern Africa Hub, 26 to 29 January, visiting the [IITA](#) stations and offices in Nampula, Mozambique, and [Lusaka](#), Zambia.

The DG in Mozambique

From 26 to 28 January, DG Sanginga was in Nampula, Mozambique, to see firsthand the working conditions of IITA staff based at the station as well as to review and discuss plans for the construction of IITA's permanent office facilities there. The DG's visit was his first since assuming office in 2011. He was accompanied by Dr David Chikoye, Southern Africa Regional Director; Mr Rod Bishop, Head of the Facilities Management Services; and Ms Jacqueline Musiimenta, Chair of IITA's Construction Review Committee.

The DG highlighted the need to make IITA the "place" to deliver agricultural research and the important role that each member of staff plays. Dr Sanginga was particularly impressed

by the [gender balance](#) at the station. Of the 15 NRS based in Nampula, seven are female. He was also fascinated by the youthful staff, particularly the technicians and field staff.

"It's refreshing to see such young faces at the forefront of IITA's work in Mozambique. This is good! We need fresh ideas and young blood to move IITA's mission and vision forward. You guys exemplify what it means getting young people involved in agricultural research," he stressed.

The DG also emphasized the need to be free in sharing opportunities arising and collectively solving challenges. "We have to be as open as possible, talk about our expectations and achievements on individual as well as collective basis", said the DG. "We, the people, are IITA, not the buildings we put up," he added. "All staff members should embrace equity by working in functional harmony with one another, irrespective of position at IITA."

The DG in Zambia

From Mozambique, DG Sanginga proceeded to Lusaka, Zambia, for a one-day visit on 29 January, mainly to meet and update staff on current developments at IITA and to look at the progress of construction of facilities at the Southern Africa Research and Administration Hub (SARAH).

The DG visited the SARAH campus in Kabangwe, Lusaka, where construction of the buildings is ongoing. He was accompanied at the site by Dr Chikoye and Mr Bishop, as well as by Dr Phenas Ntawuruhunga, Cassava Breeder; Ms Suzan Katebalirwe, Southern Africa Regional Administrator; Ms Naomi Kamanga, Country Representative, and other staff from IITA-Zambia.

"...Once completed, these three buildings—the cassava equipment fabrication facility, the cassava processing facility, and the main research and administrative block—will form the backbone of our presence here in Zambia and in the region. When these are completed, we can finally move our scientists and staff—some of whom are currently scattered across different provinces and hosted at some of our partners' offices—and carry out our mandate more efficiently and effectively," Dr Chikoye explained.

The DG also toured other parts of the SARAH campus such as the recently established cassava demo plots and the cassava and soybean planting and harvesting equipment stored there. Viewing the cassava demo plots and the equipment, the DG indicated



DG Sanginga (with hat) conferring with David Chikoye (second from left), Rod Bishop (leftmost), and Pheneas Ntawuruhunga (rightmost) on the progress of construction of the cassava equipment fabrication facility (at the background) as looks on.

his vision of having an agripreneur program at the campus.

“What you have here is terrific,” he told Drs Chikoye and Ntawuruhunga. “You have the land, the facilities, and the expertise. I can already visualize young people here being trained on agronomy and the use of this equipment. I am very excited about the prospect and potential of this campus in involving the Zambian youth in agriculture. I encourage you

to maximize the use of this land and the facilities. I expect great things to come out from this campus.”

“...I believe that the work of the DG is just as important as that of the driver. Note that the driver is the first of the staff that a visitor—a donor—will interact with. Any impression that the driver gives will give a lasting general impression of the Institute. So if a driver goes to pick up a donor while drunk, for example,

just imagine the impact this would have on the donor that he is meeting. Eventually this impression will cascade all the way down to Management and might lead to a loss of funding.”

“What I am trying to say is that every one of you—of us—has an important role to play. Also remember that regardless of where you are based, you are working for IITA and not just that region or country. We are one,” the DG emphasized.

Youth in agriculture provides biggest potential for mass job creation in Africa

The creation of business opportunities for unemployed youth in the agricultural sector is at the center stage of an African-wide initiative led by IITA.

In his address at the opening session of a three-day business training for young entrepreneurs in agriculture, the Representative of the Honorable Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Dr Lekan Quadri, Regional Director, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD), developed his keynote on the links between [youth unemployment](#) and the opportunities of an agrarian economy, which would provide “[the biggest potential for mass job creation](#)”.

More than 80 youth participants from six countries across Africa attended the business training “Empowering Agripreneurs on Agripreneurial and Business Management” held on 3-6 February at IITA headquarters, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

The Representative of the Honorable Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development further acknowledged “the immense contribution of the Director General of IITA for the youth-in-agriculture initiative that started under his leadership”.

Dr Nteranya Sanginga, the Director General of IITA, had started the [IITA Youth Agripreneurs](#)—a landmark program that provides youth from diverse disciplines training and opportunities to engage in agricultural business or entrepreneurship. During the opening program, he invited participants to proactively seek synergies for answering needs in the development of youth and agriculture. “The African Development Bank has declared a big interest in partnership engagement for youth and agriculture, the reason why I call upon you for your ideas and support”, he said. He emphasized that he does not see a development in Africa without youth engaging in agriculture.

Sanginga further explained that inclusive growth of the continent could be achieved through the joint implementation of mechanisms in agribusiness which would work for both farmers and consumers. “A young ‘agripreneur’ coming from a communication background is working with fish now. First, you might think communication and fish—where is the link?... but when you start understanding how sales figures of fish products can increase throughout value chains by involving young people coming from different sectors,

such as communication or marketing, it might become an eye-opener for you in engaging in new partnership opportunities.”

Guests at the opening included representatives from the private sector, including Ekimiks Nigeria Limited, Durante Fish Industry, and Skretting Nutreco Company, the University of Ibadan (UI), and FMARD.

Mr Ekiyor Tope Miriki, the Chief Executive Officer of Ekimiks Nigeria Limited and sponsor of the workshop, said that the program was designed to not only create opportunities but to also help young people exit the unemployment cycle. With the business survival rate being less than 50%, a business in agriculture is even more demanding due to the economics involved in the process, he stated.

To respond to these challenges, the IITA-established Youth Agripreneurs scheme is [piloting](#) an approach that focuses on promoting agriculture among [young women and men](#) through training and demonstration on agricultural best practices and the value chain in Nigeria. The scheme also supports initiatives in Tanzania, DR Congo, Zambia, and Kenya.



Participants during the training at the conference center in Ibadan.

JIRCAS President visits IITA

The President of the Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences (JIRCAS) and former Board member and Director General of CIMMYT, Dr Masaru Iwanaga, visited IITA on 4 to 6 February. Dr Iwanaga wanted to get deeper insights into the impact of CGIAR reforms on IITA and to understand the working mechanisms between the systems-based CGIAR Research Program on

Humidtropics and IITA as a research institute. He was taken on a guided tour of IITA facilities, including the virology labs, the Genetic Resource Center, and the Business Incubation Platform, and he met the Youth Agripreneurs. Dr Iwanaga was highly impressed with the facilities, saying: "It looks as if there is a new way of life in IITA. People are much happier than in previous years; I think this is a



Dr Iwanaga (second from right) at the Genetic Resources Center.

Bean farmers in Tanzania are keen on using fertilizers to boost production

Smallholder farmers in Tanzania currently apply only organic fertilizers but they were impressed by the performance of bush beans grown with a mixture of organic and inorganic fertilizers when they attended a farmers' field day. They are now ready to invest in inorganic fertilizers to boost production of the crop.

The demonstrations, organized by the N2Africa project, compared the performance of beans grown under different treatments. These included those that had received nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium (NPK), and mono-potassium phosphate (PK) fertilizers applied either on their own or mixed with farmyard manure. Other treatments used manure only and there was a control without any fertilizers whatsoever.

The one-day event was held at Kwemashai Village, Lushoto district, Tanga region, on 21 January. It was attended by over 200 farmers—drawn from surrounding

villages—and the project research team and partners including local government officials, local politicians, and agricultural extension officers.

The N2Africa project is led by Wageningen University together with IITA and many other partners. The project is encouraging farmers to grow legumes for food security, to increase their incomes as well as to improve the soil through nitrogen fixation. The project is promoting improved technologies to smallholder legume farmers including the use of improved seeds, appropriate fertilizers, inoculants, and good agronomic practices to increase yield.

Farmer Fatuma Hamis said she was impressed with the combination of PK and manure, and with NPK alone. "The beans are growing very well and look very promising. In my farm, I apply only manure on beans and use inorganic fertilizers on other crops, mostly tomato

and pepper. I am excited to learn about using NPK and a combination of manure and PK for better results."

Prof Ken Giller from Wageningen University, the N2Africa Project Leader, noted that poor soils that lacked important minerals such as nitrogen, potassium, and phosphorus were a major constraint to farmers and one of the reasons for the low yield in their fields.

He said he was pleased with the enthusiasm and interest already shown by the farmers about the technologies being demonstrated. "Although the N2Africa project has been working in Tanzania for only one and a half years the farmers' interest makes it already look promising," he said. "We hope that they will now invest in these technologies and start to apply some of them".

Dr Frederick Baijukya, IITA agronomist and the country coordinator for N2Africa in Tanzania, assured the farmers that the project would work hand in hand with them to address the challenges they were facing in bean farming.

Mr Yauto Abdish Mahongi, the village chairman, thanked the project for helping farmers to increase the production of beans. "Most bean farmers do not apply fertilizers. This project is helping to raise awareness among the majority of farmers and giving them the opportunity to see how fertilizers could improve yield. Therefore on behalf of Kwemashai village, I thank the project for supporting us. We are happy to be among the selected beneficiaries and we promise to support it all the way."



Dr Frederick Baijukya notes feedback from farmers on the various technologies for growing legumes being demonstrated during the farmers' field day.

Got a story to share? Please email it with photos and captions every Wednesday to Andrea Gros (a.gros@cgiar.org), Katherine Lopez (k.lopez@cgiar.org), Jeffrey T. Oliver (j.oliver@cgiar.org), Catherine Njuguna (c.njuguna@cgiar.org), or Adaobi Umeokoro (a.umeokoro@cgiar.org).

Welcome!

Jonathan Absalom Odhong

is a Kenyan citizen and has joined IITA-Ibadan team as Research Communication Specialist for the Africa RISING West Africa and East/Southern Africa (ESA) Projects. He is responsible for the coordination and implementation of the communication strategy for both projects.



Jonathan holds an MA in Communication Studies from the University of Nairobi, Kenya, and a BA in Communication and Media Technology with I.T. from Maseno University.

He is married to Dorsila Ng'uono Olweny and has a son, Christian. His address is Equatorial no. 6 Chalet, IITA campus. His e-mail address is j.odhong@cgiar.org and extension no. 2600.

Himanshu Saini, an Indian national, is



a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Yam Tissue Culture project under the supervision of Drs Robert Asiedu and Antonio Lopez-Montes. He obtained his PhD in Biotechnology (2010) from the

Department of Biotechnology, School of Life Sciences, HNB Garhwal University, Srinagar; M.Phil in Biotechnology (2007) from Alagappa University, Karaikudi; MSc in Biotechnology (2005) from HNB Garhwal University; and BSc in Industrial Microbiology (2003) from Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra.

Himanshu is based at the Genetic Resources Center, IITA-Ibadan. His address is D Block-305. His official e-mail address is h.saini@cgiar.org and his extension no. 2903.

Ondrej Flekal, a Czech national, is the Financial Controller in the Finance Directorate at IITA headquarters, Ibadan. He holds a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic

(1998). He is a Certified Accountant (CA) of the Czech Chamber of Chartered Accountants (1999). He was awarded the European MBA in Finance, Groupe Ecole supérieure de Commerce et de Management (ESCEM, France) in May 2002. He obtained his Six Sigma Green belt training in 2012. He has advanced IT skills, and experience with ERP systems, SAP, SUN, Oracle, Hyperion, and HFM.

His address is Apartment 1B on IITA Campus. His e-mail address is o.flekal@cgiar.org.



Flemming Nielsen, from Denmark, has joined the IITA team in Bukavu, DR Congo, as the System Agronomist/Farming System Analyst. He obtained his PhD in 1998, MSc in Agricultural Geography (1994), and BSc in Cultural Geography (1992), all at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

His office address is Central Africa Hub, IITA-Bukavu, Kalambo site, South Kivu Province, DR Congo. He can be contacted on his mobile number (DRC) [+243 \(0\)973 847 964](tel:+2430973847964), (Netherlands) [+31 \(0\)64 166 7461](tel:+310641667461) and through his official e-mail, f.nielsen@cgiar.org.



Leon Nsharwasi Nabahungu has joined IITA-Bukavu, DR Congo as a Postdoctoral Fellow – Soil Fertility Management. Dr Nabahungu,



from Rwanda, has a PhD in Environment Sciences, Land Degradation and Development (2012) from Wageningen University in the Netherlands, MSc in Soil Science and Land Management from Sokoine University of Agriculture in Tanzania (2002), and BSc (Ingenieur Agronome) in Agriculture, Soil Science (IFA- Yangambi, DR Congo) in 1993.

He can be reached by e-mail l.nabahungu@cgiar.org or telephone no.+243 (0) 991030529. His office address is Central Africa Hub, IITA-Bukavu, Kalambo Site, South Kivu Province, DR Congo.

Dr Hyeladi Gaya has joined the IITA-Ibadan team as a Postdoctoral Fellow (Gender Research Assistant). He is

a Nigerian. He obtained PhD, MSc (2004), BSc (1992) in Agricultural Economics from the University of Maiduguri, Nigeria.



His address on campus is Chalet 8 (ext. 2851) His official e-mail address is h.gaya@cgiar.org and his extension no. is 2685.

Baffour Asafo-Adjei has recently taken up a Senior Agronomist position at IITA-Ibadan, Nigeria.

He obtained his PhD in Plant Breeding at the University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota, USA in 1990, MSc in Plant Breeding from the University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada in 1982 and BSc (Hons) Agriculture (Crop Science Major) in 1976 at the University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana.

Baffour, a Ghanaian, is married to Juliana and they have three children. His e-mail address is B.Asafo-Adjei@cgiar.org. His office is in Building 401, extension no. 2990.

