

## Cassava gives farmers a lifeline ...US lauds initiative



*Tongea women display use of gari frying bay*

Cassava value addition in Africa has offered women farmers another income stream, improving livelihoods and food security, and making them smile, thanks to the United States Agency for International Development-funded project tagged Unleashing the Power of Cassava (UPoCA).

Implemented in seven African countries--Nigeria, DR Congo, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Sierra Leone--by IITA, the project has benefited thousands of farmers in these countries.

Today, the Tongea women farmers in Sandeyalu community are filled with joy. Located 486 km from Freetown, Sierra Leone, Sandeyalu was once overrun by rebels. The entire population of nearly 4,000 people took refuge in camps in Kenema in the early 90s where they lived for over 10 years as internally displaced persons (IDPs) until the war was declared over in 2002.

Interactions in the camp brought the Sandeyalu people together to form a formidable association called Tongea women's development association, comprised of 54 women and four men. It was named after one of the three mountain peaks overlooking their home township called Tongea.

The group initially raised funds through "coping mechanisms," such as cutting and selling firewood and soap making as IDPs in Kenema.

With the advent of the IITA-UPoCA project and subsequent inauguration of a microprocessing center (MPC), cassava has provided an added financial opportunity to farmers. Incomes from USAID projects such as UPoCA have helped the people of Sandeyalu in rebuilding their community.

Marie Borbor, a member of the Tongea women's development association,

described the IITA-UPoCA intervention and the microprocessing center as a "living bank" in Sandeyalu community.

"Now we can fulfill our financial obligations to educate our children and improve our livelihoods. We will do all within our power to sustain the MPC as a viable asset. Long live the American people," she said.

The United States Ambassador to Sierra Leone, Michael S. Owen, described the transformation at Sandeyalu and the resilience of the Tongea Women as "wonderful."

"We are very happy to partner with you in all you have accomplished in these years. We are very happy to be your partner. Not too many years ago, this town was in ruins but, now, look at what you have accomplished. We are very proud to work with you," Owen said while handing over the keys of the IITA-UPoCA-built cassava microprocessing center to the Tongea women farmers.

Since 2009, IITA-UPoCA scientists have backstopped the Tongea women farmers, opening up more than 5 ha of land for cultivation and distributing over 2,500 bundles of improved cassava varieties to more than 500 cassava farmers.

Braima James, Program Manager, IITA-UPoCA, explained that in March this year, 60 women and 8 men received hands-on training in cassava processing, product development, and packaging in Sandeyalu town.



*US Ambassador Michael Owen addresses Tongea women*

# Fighting hunger and poverty: US urged to give more roles to African-based institutions

The United States of America has been urged to give more role and support to African-based institutions in its fight against global hunger and poverty.

IITA Director General Hartmann made the call during a courtesy visit by the US Consul General to Nigeria, Joseph Stafford, in Ibadan Thursday this week.

In a short talk on efforts to tackle global hunger and the role research could play, Hartmann commended the US for its commitment to global food security but he argued that African-based institutions had a better understanding of the problems facing the continent and would be in a better position to proffer and implement solutions. The US Consul General, who was accompanied by the US consulate's Political Officer, Samantha Smith, commended IITA for its efforts in fighting poverty.

The director general also discussed the institute's plans to make IITA-Ibadan a research park for Africa.

The park is already attracting the interest of some global private sector players, according to Hartmann, and will strengthen the institute's research-for-development model.



Hartmann (left) meets US Consul General Joseph Stafford

Hartmann explained that the institute's R4D model ensures that research gets to the ultimate beneficiaries, farmers, and consumers. Stafford expressed delight at IITA's plan to establish a research park in Africa. He promised to convey the message to the US government as opportunities arise.

## Online performance appraisal system now adopted for all staff



Personnel Manager Olu Babasanya

As part of efforts to cut waste and improve efficiency, IITA has embarked on an online performance appraisal (PAR) system for staff of all categories in Ibadan.

Before, the online PAR was used by staff only in the senior category and above. Now staff in the general

category will also use the service.

During the 2010 PAR seminar on 30 November involving supervisors, Personnel Manager Olu Babasanya and Kenneth Oraegbunam from the Software Development Services, demonstrated how staff could fill out the online appraisal form.

Babasanya also gave tips on how to conduct PARS, stressing that supervisors should be fair, open, and show integrity in the process.

He emphasized the need for feedback and commendation for a job well done by staff as a means of boosting their morale and guaranteeing improved productivity.

Speaking on disagreements between supervisors and their subordinates, Babasanya explained the need for openness between both parties and urged supervisors to always refer to Human Resources when things go out of hand. Questions were asked by participants regarding how to handle peculiar appraisal issues, while suggestions such as quarterly appraisals were made by others.

The seminar provided a forum for good discussions on methods of appreciating or reprimanding staff, and ensuring enhanced productivity and better work relations.

## IITA welcomes new Employee Services Manager, Wole Oladokun

Wole Oladokun has been appointed as Employee Services Manager. He takes over from John Ogunbayo, who has since retired from the institute.

Prior to his appointment, Oladokun worked with Leventis Snacks Industries Ltd., a division of A.G. Leventis Plc, as the Head of Human Resources. He also held a similar position while working for Bemil Nigeria Ltd and Biztrack Ltd.

He holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from the Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife, Osun State, and a Master's in Business Administration from the Lagos State University, Ojoo. Lagos.

He can be reached by email at [w.oladokun@cgiar.org](mailto:w.oladokun@cgiar.org) or by telephone at ext 2916.



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- (1) Powered off all unnecessary electrical office/lab equipment;
- (2) Turned off air conditioners; and
- (3) Switched off all lights.