

Sudan launches ENABLE Youth Program

The Sudanese Government launched the ENABLE Youth Program in the country on 2 March, and joins the league of other African countries that are productively engaging youth in agriculture.

The program which was launched in Khartoum had the representatives of the African Development Bank (AfDB), IITA, IITA Youth Agripreneurs (IYA), the Government of Sudan, and other stakeholders in attendance.

Speaking on the importance of the program, the State Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Hon Sabri Al-Daw Bakhit said many developed countries of the world were able to attain a high level of economic stability because they paid a lot

of attention to their agricultural sector. He said Sudan is also on the verge of attaining economic stability and greatness because it would provide the necessary support for the ENABLE Youth Program to thrive in the country.

He appreciated AfDB for funding the program and also commended IITA for introducing the youth involvement in agriculture initiative—IYA.

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Manyong (second from left) with key AfDB executive officers during the launch.

IITA makes headway in structure revitalizing effort; recruits new DDG-R4D and directors

IITA Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#), this week, in an update to the Board of Trustees and staff, announced the recruitment of three key staff in the Institute: May-Guri Saethre, the new Deputy Director General (Research for Development), who takes over Ylva Hillbur, who left IITA in February; Director of Research Support [Tonny Omwansa](#), and Director of Delivery and Development [Alfred Dixon](#).



May-Guri Saethre, Deputy Director General (Research for Development).



Tonny Omwansa, Director of Research Support.



Alfred Dixon, Director of Delivery and Development.

Last year, IITA initiated an organizational reform process to better accommodate and deliver on the influx of projects, staff, and donor requests it was receiving. The move was marked with a decision to refocus the Institute's goal towards effective delivery of outputs as well as judicious management and use of donor funds all geared towards gaining donor confidence.

As a result, it became necessary to recategorize existing directorates and units within the Institute, hire a new Deputy Director General for Corporate Services, and rebrand IITA as a research and development institution, changing its tagline to *Transforming African Agriculture*.

[Sanginga](#) reported that the Institute has recorded more progress in the implementation of the decisions taken towards its revitalization.

Saethre, the new DDG for Research for Development, holds a PhD in Agricultural Entomology from the Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research (NIBIO), Norway.

Upon assumption on 1 May, she will focus on improving IITA's quality of science, strengthening IITA Benin. Cotonou and transforming it into an international center for plant health

and climate change, impacting the hubs, and promoting teamwork among scientists. Saethre will also be a member of the management team.

Omwansa joined IITA in January and will be taking care of four research support units: Communication, Data Information and Management, Monitoring & Evaluation, and Project Development and Administration.

Dixon, who used to head the Partnerships Coordination Office under P4D, takes on a bigger portfolio to ensure delivery and impact of IITA's research results.

Furthermore, Sanginga shared plans of the Institute to partner with the Federal Government of Nigeria to ameliorate the ongoing food crisis in Northern Nigeria.

"We are dubbing the initiative *Seeds of Renaissance* to drive home the message that we would like to help rebuild and help Borno State to become resilient in the face of insurgency and terrorism through agriculture."

IITA will be organizing donations of high quality seed of cowpea, soybean, maize, and cassava to the Federal Government of Nigeria through the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and

Rural Development (FMARD) for planting by farmers of Borno State in the upcoming cropping season. IITA will also contact sister centers in the CGIAR working in Nigeria who could provide seeds of other important crops, such as rice ([Africa Rice Center](#)), wheat ([ICARDA](#)), sorghum, millet, and groundnut ([ICRISAT](#)) during this emergency period.

IITA has taken the lead to ensure that this new way of working makes a meaningful contribution to the sustainable development goals overall and in sub-Saharan Africa," Sanginga stated.

Other developments include progress being made in preparation for the implementation of the mega projects Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT) and the Empowering Noble Agri-Business Led Employment (ENABLE Youth) Program funded by the African Development Bank.

The DG also revealed that the Institute is financially stable to implement all its projects—old and new, but that we need to take stock of our finances and spending so as to make an informed forecast of IITA's needs in the next five years (2017–2021).

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He said the initiative would help youth engage in agriculture on a business-oriented scale. He added that the country would however need the technical assistance of IITA in the implementation of the program.

AfDB's Country Manager Abdul Kamara assured the Government of the Bank's continued support to Sudan's development agenda. He said the ENABLE Youth Program as introduced by the Bank will diversify the country's economy away from oil to agriculture. He added that ENABLE Youth Sudan Program is one of the Bank's Feed Africa Strategy (2016–2025) flagships aimed at bringing African youth into agriculture and agribusiness. The program according to him will provide the youth in the country an opportunity to create decent employment and wealth along the value chains in the agricultural sector.

Also speaking during the launching, IITA Regional Director for East Africa, [Victor Manyong](#), who represented IITA at the launching, thanked the Bank for funding the

program. He reaffirmed IITA's commitment to drive the success of ENABLE-Youth across Africa. He added that IITA has recorded a lot of success from its youth in agribusiness model—IYA, and is ready to share the experience with other African countries including Sudan.

He pointed out that the framework of the ENABLE Youth Sudan is based on the IITA Youth Agripreneurs model which started in Nigeria in 2012 and has since been piloted in several African countries. IITA will provide technical assistance and backstopping services to the program implementation team.

The AfDB Board approved the ENABLE Youth program on 28 November 2016 with a total cost estimated at US\$32.3 million.

ENABLE Youth Sudan Program is one of AfDB's ENABLE Youth Initiatives under the Bank's [Feed Africa Strategy \(2016–2025\)](#). The objective of the program is to create business opportunities and employment

for young women and men along priority agricultural value chains in Sudan. The program is expected to train and empower 2,000 Agricultural Entrepreneurs (Agripreneurs) in Youth Agribusiness Incubation Centers (YABICs) in five states in the country.

Each of these Agripreneurs is expected to employ five other support workers, generating 12,000 jobs (including 6,000 for young women) in total over the first 5 years of the program.

To kick-start the program, the team spent some time reviewing the work plans and getting acquainted with the management and implementation roles of each partner.

The team also paid courtesy visits to one of the proposed pilot sites of the program in Abu Halima, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MOAF), and the Ministry of Finance and Economic planning (MOFEP). A series of discussions was also held with the host institution—ICARDA Sudan Office.

Women's Day Special

Bearing burdens: Carrier women and creating opportunities for change in Bukavu, DR Congo

International Women's Day celebrates the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. Yet, women worldwide continue to be overrepresented in the informal sector, characterized by low skills and wages, poor rates of remuneration that disfavor women, and discrimination and violence against women. Women in Bukavu, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, face significant challenges to earning a living wage.



Lake Kivu and the town of Bukavu.

Bukavu is a rapidly growing and bustling town located along the shores of Lake Kivu. In spite of Bukavu's natural beauty, the town is more often featured in the media because of continued conflict and high rates of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Gender inequality, supported by social norms and practices, continues to undermine women's progress towards acquiring land, earning income, and securing agricultural livelihoods.

In Bukavu, many women work in the informal sector in agricultural markets as transporters. The so-called carrier women are a visible part of the informal workforce, seen bearing burdens of 100 kg or more of cassava, charcoal, or sand, for instance.

Over the last few weeks [Renee Bullock](#), IITA Gender specialist interviewed

17 women carriers who work at the Muhanzi Beach Market, a key port of entry for ships carrying goods from Idjwi Island. "I wanted to hear their stories. How did they get here? What are they doing? And, what possibilities might there be for IITA to support these women's transition out of these precarious and hazardous working conditions? Since arriving here in 2015, I'm surprised that few people are able to tell me about who these women are. They are visible on the roads from morning until dusk, yet their stories often go untold," Renee said

Many families fled from their home villages in rural areas during the Congo War, which officially ended in 2004. Among them were women who sought to earn a living. Today, carrier women often live in the outskirts of Bukavu and walk up to two hours to reach the market in the morning. Then

they wait for the boats to arrive with goods coming in from Idjwi Island. The women interviewed have, on average, been working as carriers for 14 years, some as many as 25 years. Working conditions are very difficult. Furah said, "Children in the neighborhood call me grandmother. I am only 53, but even a 60-year-old looks younger than me."

Women went on to complain of body aches, painful knees, even hair loss from the rubbing of the sack on the back of their head. Women also talked about changes in the market over the last decade. In earlier times, most of the carrying was done by women; it was easy to find customers who would hire them to carry goods to their homes or restaurants.

Nowadays, young men in search of money are also carrying heavy loads and the competition for customers is high. Young men's entry into the market has made it more challenging for women to find work. Furthermore, men often accept lower pay for the same tasks. Women once could be sure they would earn ~US\$4 per day; now they sometimes end the day with \$1.50, and worse, sometimes nothing.

"The women I interviewed are the main earners in the household, supporting an average of eight children. Four are widows. Others' husbands went off



Women carriers. (Photo credits: Boryana Dzhambazova for International Herald Tribune)



Road in Bukavu with Muhanzi Beach Market in the background.

to work in the mines or are jobless or ill. Women decide how to spend their money and purchase food and save the remainder to pay rent and school fees. Food is never enough and they



Furaha, aged 32, a carrier for 13 years.

often eat one meal in their households, dinner. It is difficult to cover the costs of school fees, yet these women's ambition is to see their children finish school," relates Renee. Collette explained, "I want my children to study and to one day help me. I don't want them to perform hard labor; school can help. They could be teachers or nurses."

These women bear their burdens, physical and emotional, with incredible strength and perseverance. They all expressed hope to start a small business, selling flour or vegetables, for example. These interviews are

a first step to learning about these women's lives, their challenges, and their aspirations. The stories provide a basis from which to develop business options to enable women to transition out of this type of work. Preliminary ideas for business models include engaging in value chain activities with IITA Kalambo Youth Agripreneurs and with Community Cassava Community Processing Centers (CCPCs) in South Kivu.

"International Women's Day calls upon all of us, women and men, old and young; to work together to achieve change to improve women's working conditions and opportunities worldwide. IITA's efforts support progress towards these achievements," concluded Renee.



Carrier women of Bukavu and Renee Bullock, IITA Gender Specialist.

US journal cites IITA as outstanding partner for progress

Foremost agricultural journal of American farmers—*The Progressive Farmer*—has said that IITA's partnership with the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Soybean Value Chain Research (SIL) is providing the needed technical support to improve agriculture and address African nutritional needs.

The innovation lab which is located at the University of Illinois also collaborates with researchers from several institutions to provide expertise and help African consumers and farmers get easy access to soybean and its products.

In an article entitled "A taste for Soy" published in the March 2017 edition of the journal, Peter Goldsmith, principal investigator for the Soybean Innovation Lab spoke extensively about how specialists

from various American universities are working with research and development organizations in Africa such as [IITA](#) and the National Agricultural Research System of Africa to show how soy can help enrich both livestock rations and human diets.

"SIL works with IITA, because they (IITA) have the expertise in tropical environments to identify and promote improved seed management practices and to increase soybean breeding capacity, develop adapted cultivars for the region, and introduce elite germplasm," Goldsmith says.

SIL also partners with IITA to find ways to manage seed quality and postharvest storage and loss in the tropical climate. Read full article [here](#).

Soybean Innovation Lab specialists want to show how soy can help enrich both livestock rations and human diets (below) in African rural settings.

The soybean Innovation Lab specialists from the University of Illinois, University of Missouri, Mississippi State University, University of Maryland Eastern Shore and the University of Georgia provide the expertise and work in partnership with researchers and development organizations in Africa. They include the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), based in Nigeria, and the National Agricultural Research System of Africa.

A TASTE FOR SOY
Innovation lab in the U.S. provides expertise and a helping hand to introduce soybeans to African farmers and consumers.

“Give a poor man a fish, you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime.” This is what IITA provides a helping hand in introducing soybeans to African farmers and consumers. Through the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Soybean Value Chain Research (SIL), at the University of Illinois, researchers have several initiatives to help African farmers and consumers by providing technical support to improve agriculture that [www.soybeaninnovationlab.org](#).

“The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) focuses on its key objective in helping reduce poverty and malnutrition worldwide,” says Peter Goldsmith, principal investigator for the Soybean Innovation Lab. “Our program was established three years ago with funding from USAID to offer technical support for the whole soy value chain in Africa.”

FOCUS AREAS: Work focused through the innovation lab falls into 12 research areas across four themes:

- 1) genetic improvement
- 2) crop productivity and quality
- 3) human and livestock nutrition
- 4) value chains and environmental research

On the genetic improvement and crop productivity research, IITA scientists since they began soybean introduction have been to grow soybeans. They are also establishing the largest soybean production research station in Africa, the Soybean Production Management with Agronomy Research and Technology, in Ghana. The team provides soybean farmers and others with guidance on suitable types including soil conditions, seed selection, sowing activities, pest management and soybean storage. Funding is available to help African grow soybean varieties.

“We bring in private industry representatives to work with farmers and other crop experts. We work

Sister projects come together for their beneficiaries

As the 2017 planting season in Nigeria draws to a close, stakeholders from two IITA projects being sponsored by the Bill & Melinda [Gates Foundation](#) came together in Kano to align plans and activities for their beneficiaries. This synergy is an example of how sister projects can work together to achieve greater impact and forestall duplicity of efforts. It also follows the new thinking of the Gates Foundation, which encourages sister projects to align their strategies and leverage on resources to create more impact.

The sister projects—Tropical Legumes III ([TL III](#)) and USAID Cowpea Upscaling project— during their annual in-country review and planning meeting on 14–15 February, aligned the projects' work plans with the national strategic mandate and detailed milestones, and discussed how they would address challenges, increase production and productivity of cowpea and groundnut, and improve the seed systems delivery for both crops this year.

"This meeting will expose key aspects of our impact on our targets in the last one year. From the lessons, we will get a better insight that will guide us in our plans for a better 2017 cropping season," said [Lucky Omoigui](#), TL III Seed System Specialist who facilitated the meeting on behalf of [Alpha Kamara](#), IITA systems agronomist and principal scientist.

Omoigui also noted that the presence of stakeholders at the meeting was a clear testimony of their commitment to improving the agricultural sector in Nigeria. He reinforced IITA's commitment to work with National Agricultural Research System (NARS) in research that will continue to improve food production and reduce hunger and poverty in Nigeria.



Group photo of the participants in Kano.

The two-day meeting was attended by 60 partners and stakeholders in the groundnut and cowpea value chains drawn from IITA, the Institute for Agricultural Research of the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria ([IAR/ABU](#)), the Center for Dry Land Agriculture of Bayero University Kano ([CDA/BUK](#)), the University of Agriculture, Makurdi ([UAM](#)) working in the focus states (Bauchi, Kano, Jigawa, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto), project desk officers from participating Agricultural Development Programs (ADPs), private seed companies, farmers, and the media.

In his remarks, Ibrahim Abubakar, Director IAR/ABU who was represented by Muhtar Mahmud - Deputy Director Extension of the Institute, acknowledged the support from the Gates Foundation and emphasized the research and development work of IAR as a major partner in the implementation of the two projects. Abubakar pledged IAR's commitment to give maximum support toward the success of the projects.

Highlighting the immense importance of cowpea and groundnut to the Nigerian economy, Ado Rabo, IITA Administrative Manager enjoined researchers to recognize the health benefits of legumes and promote them such that as people's incomes rise, consumption of legumes would also increase. He expressed hope that the joint efforts of the projects will bring about the needed improvement for the crops.

"This meeting is very unique as it brings together two sister projects to address legume seed delivery systems. We hope that this synergy would contribute greater impact in scaling-out the projects' goals," Rabo said.

The partners agreed at the end of the discussions to leverage resources between the two projects, improve the efficiency and effectiveness of seed delivery and scaling-out, implement joint capacity building of national partners, and align the Gates Foundation seed sector development activities to national priorities.

Announcements

13th International Symposium of the International Society for Tropical Root Crops - Africa Branch (ISTRC-AB) 6–10 March, White Sands Hotel, Dar es Salam, Tanzania

Nairobi Innovation Week, 6–10 March, Nairobi, Kenya

NextGen Cassava 2017 Annual Meeting 14–16 March, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria

AfricaYam annual meeting 20–24 March, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria

Project Advisory Committee and Steering Committee Meeting, BASICS project 23 March, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria

Annual Review & Planning Meeting of Cassava Weed Management Project 27–28 March, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria

Breeding conference to address the grand challenges facing sub-Saharan Africa 11 April, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria

West Africa Hub retreat 20–23 April, Cotonou, Benin Republic