

The IITA logo is displayed in a stylized, white, hand-drawn font. It is positioned over a background image of a large, traditional African drum with a wooden frame and a light-colored, textured drumhead.

*Transforming African Agriculture*

# TALKING DRUMS

Special Issue

March 2018

## IITA celebrates International Women's Day



A large representation of IITA women in Ibadan

IITA women across the hubs joined millions of women all over the world to celebrate International Women's Day on 8 March with the theme: #PressforProgress. The day is a globally recognized day to celebrate the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women.

HR, in collaboration with the West Africa Hub Administration and the Communication Unit, organized a two-hour special seminar to mark the event.

The keynote address was given by Nteranya Sanginga, Director General, IITA. He lauded the capabilities and drive of the women in IITA and encouraged participants to harness their potentials in their various spheres of endeavor. There were also six motivational speakers, namely:



Dr. Nteranya Sanginga,

**Hilde Koper-Limbourg**, Deputy Director General, Corporate Services: *"Where we were, where we are, and where we desire to be: The journey so far"*



**Robert Asiedu**, Director, Western Africa Hub: *"Advancing women in science"*



**Pelumi Eluwole**, Financial Analyst: *"Yes, we can!"*



**Ana Garcia-Oliveira**, Postdoctoral Fellow, Crop Genetics and Molecular Breeding: *"Women in science"*



**Joseph Uponi**, Analytical Services Manager: *"Supporting a dignifying work environment"*



**Boluwatife Olateju**, Planning Officer, Construction: *"Women in a male-dominated workplace"*



Below are some photos from IITA women in some of its locations.



IITA women in Cameroon not celebrating the day with the usual pomp, but with a black scarf around their necks in their women's day attire, mourning the tragic death of the Station Administrator, Jean Bosco Fogang which sad event occurred on 4 March 2018



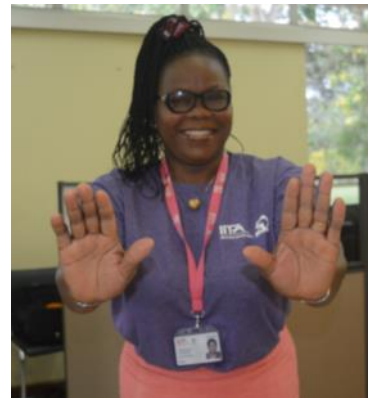
Aussop Haibeh of IITA-UK



The IITA-HR team in Ibadan, in a #pressforprogress posture.



Other IITA women in Ibadan in high spirits, joined in the celebration to #pressforprogress.



Christianah Okoruwa of IITA Knowledge Centre, Ibadan cheerfully presses for progress



IITA men celebrating with women in pressing for progress

## Quotable quote

*"Gender equality will only be reached if we are able to empower women."* - Michelle Bachelet

#PressForProgress

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# How to survive in a male-dominated workplace

How does it feel for a woman to work in a male-dominated environment? This is a germane question to ask on a day the world celebrates International Women's Day. Mrs Bolu Olateju, Facilities Planning Officer, FMS, in IITA, Ibadan, works in a male-dominated unit, and attempted to answer this question in her presentation titled "Women in a male-dominated workplace" during the IWD celebration in IITA Ibadan.

She started off by examining the challenges women faced working in a male-dominated workplace that may impede their performance and upward mobility. This was attributed to lesser representation of women in some professional fields. Olateju claimed



women are stereotyped as fragile and incompetent, so they may lack the voice and ability to tackle offensive jokes from male colleagues.

Lack of female mentors in the same field, gender bias, and sexual harassment are some of the other challenges women face which impinge on their progress in the workplace. She, however, enumerated ways to survive in such environments such as using effective communication and interpersonal skills, developing new skills to stay relevant on the job, being a voice of change, and having a sponsor.

While exploring ways men could help to provide a gender-balanced work atmosphere, Olateju emphasized the importance for a cultural mind shift towards equality and a work-life balance for the benefit of women.

## Women celebrated for their advances in science



Ana Louisa Garcia-Oliveira

The commemoration of International Women's Day (IWD) celebrated the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women all over the world. In IITA Ibadan, it was no different as one area of focus and interest was women's achievements in science during the IWD celebration held 8

March. Ana Louisa Garcia-Oliveira, put the subject on the front burner by emphasizing the need to push for progress in a male-dominated profession, through a presentation she delivered on women in science.

She took cognizance of the achievements of women in medicine, food technology (agriculture and microbiology), home design (geometry and mathematics), and other fields of human endeavor. Oliveira used the opportunity to acknowledge those women who had from "common things" accomplished great things in the world of science in the past centuries and presently. Such women scientists include Grace Hopper (1906–1992), computer scientist and Admiral, who was a pioneer computer programmer; Marie Curie (1867–1934) scientist and Nobel

Laureate, who discovered radium and polonium; and Wangari Maathai, Noble Laureate and environmental political activist from Kenya. She encouraged women colleagues "to take advantage of their disadvantaged position" socially to close the science gender gap. "Though the gap is narrowing in many countries, she argued, it is still a slow process" in such male-dominated professions like engineering, aerospace sciences, etc.

To get more women involved in science, she said that women in general need good mentors, encouragement and positive thinking, continuous access to better education, and know-how to protect themselves in all situations. To cap it all, Oliveira advocated affirmative action to have more women in science.

## Where we were, where we are and where we desire to be

### Where we were

In the past, women had an identified space as prescribed by the society in which they lived.

### Where we are

Times have changed with visible improvements in the role of women. Women are the backbone of rural and national economies. They comprise 43% of the world's agricultural labor force, which rises to 70% in some countries.

In Africa, 80% of agricultural production comes from farmers, who are mostly rural women. Women comprise the largest percentage of the workforce in the agricultural sector and make up 80% of food producers, and 10% of those who process basic food stuff. Globally, over 1.6 billion women rely on farming for their livelihood and produce more than 50% of the world's food.

The contribution of women to agriculture and food production is significant but could be more significant if not for the following challenges:

- Not much control or access to land and other resources.
- Women are over represented in unpaid, underpaid, seasonal, and part-time work.
- Women are often paid less than men for the same work.
- Cultural perceptions about women in agricultural job.

### Where we desire to be

To increase the contribution of women to agricultural and food production and therefore help in transforming African agriculture, women should:

- Be educated and trained.
  - Have adequate access to production resources.
  - Have adequate access to financing.
- and there should be:
- An equal number of women and men in the IITA workforce.
  - An equal number of women and men scientists.

- An equal number of women and men in IITA Management.
- An equal number of women and men on the IITA Board
- Equal pay for the same job/work.
- Zero harassment in IITA and both women and men in IITA should feel free to report harassment

### How to get there

- "Positive discrimination" / "Affirmative Action" in hiring women
- Facilitate professional advancement of women
- Work scheduling/flexible working
- Child care
- Cooperation of men

Research suggests that institutional performance is positively associated with gender balance. So, let's Press for the progress for equality of women and men for a better IITA, for a better agriculture and for a better world!