

## DG, Abuja staff, IITA women enjoy yam concoctions at festival

The yam-focused projects in Abuja station—AfricaYam, YIIFSWA-II, and CAY-Seed—recently organized an event named “The yam festival.”

The festival, which has become an annual event, brings together all scientists, staff, and friends of the projects to taste various yam preparations—roasted, pounded, fried, baked, porridge, salad, pastries, etc.

Unlike in previous editions, the presence of the DG, the IITA Women’s Group from Ibadan, and friends of the projects, including Prof Malachy Akoroda added pizzazz to the event.

According to Beatrice Aighewi, who coordinated the informal event, the yam festival was put together for the station staff to “better appreciate the crop we produce.” She spoke about the cultural significance of yam in Africa, where it is regarded as the “king of crops”.



*Participants at the Yam Festival in IITA-Abuja.*

Head of Abuja Station, Gbassey Tarawali, expressed delight about the growth of yam projects in the station and expressed optimism that more yam projects will come. Participants commended the yam projects for the step taken to showcase their activities

and the warm treat given to staff. In his vote of thanks, Patrick Adebola, AfricaYam Project Leader, thanked all who attended the event, particularly the IITA Women’s Group and DG Sanginga and wished them a safe return journey

## Training on Leading and Managing People for Results held in Ibadan

The Human Resources team facilitated the first 2018 “Leading and Managing People for Results,” held 24-26 April, in collaboration with the Capacity Development Office. The training was held in IITA-HQ with 21 participants from the various Directorates.

The opening remarks were given by Acting DG, Michael Abberton. He reminded the participants to key into every topic and not see it as any other training. He also emphasized the importance of having a good combination of both leadership and management competencies as team leaders and line managers. Abberton said: “Leadership is not about the position that you occupy, it’s about how you go about your work.” He emphasized that leadership can occur at any level. He further appreciated the inclusion of the topic Diversity and inclusion in the course content, echoing the words of DG Sanginga, that “diversity is good for IITA!”

The more diverse and inclusive IITA is, the more it encourages its staff to harness the talent and attributes that

can really contribute to the success of the Institute, he said. Finally, Abberton told the participants to think of the training as an opportunity to really get involved and make their contribution to the institute.

The Head of HR, Lilian Mendoza led her team of facilitators, Lucy Omidiran, Lade Oke, Wole Oladokun, and Helen Adeniji in conducting the course and was supported by other HR and CDO staff.

At the end of the program participants understood the critical concepts and techniques in people management, appreciated how effective people management contributed to effective project execution and the success of IITA, reinforced their knowledge as managers in ensuring continuous growth in IITA through promoting employee engagement and managers’ ability to effectively handle performance management, and how to build and lead productive teams.



*Human Resources team in a group photo with the training participants.*

# IITA celebrates World Day for Safety and Health in the Workplace



*IITA headquarters staff preparing to walk for a purpose.*

On 23 March, the DDG-CS, Ms Hilde Koper-Limbourg announced in her mail to all staff that “the serene environment of the Institute in Ibadan and in many other locations has made walking after a work day a culture among staff and campus residents in Ibadan. Further to the healthy walking culture already established in IITA, Human Resources wishes to take existing wellness programs to a higher level through a new walking arrangement tagged “Walk for a Purpose”.

Walk for a Purpose is a call to walk in celebration of international days, which are relevant to IITA’s vision and mission and/or days reinforcing management’s approved workplace agenda and policies.

The maiden walk happened on 27 April to mark “World Day for Safety and Health in the Workplace”, which is globally celebrated annually on 28 April. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) it is a day to create awareness and promote a safety and health culture that can help to reduce the number of work-related injuries, accidents, and/or deaths.

An online health and safety quiz was organized to alert IITA staff before the event proper. Prior to the walk, safety awareness posters were pasted in strategic locations in IITA, including the staff canteen, FMS, RFU, and the Conference Center.

At 4:30 pm. staff converged at the Conference Center where Michael Abberton, acting DG, gave a short speech, announced the result of the online quiz with an average of 93% success rate across the hubs and stations, depicting high safety consciousness at IITA.

Finally, Abberton flagged off the 2-km “walk for a purpose” that was well attended with 68 participants (male 45, female; 23).

IITA outstations were not left out of the Walk for a Purpose program as Kano Station Administrator Ado Rabo mobilized staff in the station to join in the walk.

Staff of the Central Africa Hub, specifically IITA Rwanda, organized its first Walk for a Purpose during its Country Strategy Development Retreat in April in Karongi with the theme “Work-life balance”.



*IITA Rwanda staff walking for a purpose.*



*IITA Abuja staff support the walk for a purpose.*

## Spotlight: Mr Ado Rabo

Mr Rabo Ado is the Station Administrator of IITA Kano Station. He was born in a small town called Dankanjiba in Kafur Local Govt Area of Katsina State in January 1964. He was raised in a polygamous home and is the first of 10 children of his father. Rabo (as he is fondly called) attended primary school there, which he completed in 1977. According to him, his father was a retired soldier and his childhood wasn’t rosy as his father left him as a toddler in the care of his grandmother, a cloth weaver, and grandfather while he left to serve the country in the Army. Unfortunately, he could not continue with his secondary education until 1982–1988 when he



joined his father in his duty station. There he attended the College of Arts and Islamic Studies, Minna, Niger State.

Rabo graduated with a very good result as a Teacher College grade II (TC II) holder but could not proceed to a tertiary institution due to financial constraints. He started work with his Ordinary Level (O level) certificate at Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Zaria as a Library Assistant in January 1990.

Despite the financial constraints, Rabo was determined and furthered his education on a part-time basis where he enrolled for a Diploma program in ABU Zaria in 1992. He later obtained an Advanced Diploma in

BUK, Kano, an HND in Kano Polytechnic, a PGD, and a Masters' degree, which he completed in 2002 from Bayero University, Kano where he studied Public Policy and Administration.

**Briefly share with us your work experience, accomplishments, and work philosophy**

I started work with the Institute for Agricultural Research of Ahmadu Bello University as a Library Assistant, and later changed to Administration. I also worked with Save the Children UK as a Project Support Manager in Bridging the Gap (Health) Project in Niger State.

I was lucky to be in IITA Ibadan in 1997 for a one-month training on Computer applications for Library operations. The campus environment looked marvelous and aroused my desire to work with IITA. I also love new challenges, which I discovered abound in IITA, so I kept looking for opportunities until I succeeded in 2008.

I joined IITA in September 2008 as Station Administrator, Kano. I am proud to have successfully organized a good team in Kano Station working cooperatively for the accomplishment of IITA goals.

I have observed over the years that I am a proactive and results-driven team player with relevant and adequate knowledge of office administration, human resource management, asset management, logistics, finance and with the capacity to achieve results and add value to businesses. I thrive on challenges and seek continuous improvement built on the tenets of commitment, diligence, and integrity. I have a burning passion for research, to explore experiences, and submit to tutelage.

I am passionate about peaceful co-existence and love for one another and my work values and philosophy include honesty and perseverance.

**What would you consider your greatest challenge in your career with IITA?**

Managing diverse staff from different cultures, religions, and nationalities. It is commonly said you need only one stick to control 100 cows, but you may need 100 sticks to control one human being. Financial management is challenging to me since I do not have an accounting background. However, I have adjusted well over the years.

**Share with us something (favorite pastime) only your close family/friends know about you.**

My marriage to a senior health professional after three failed courtships; this really pleased my mother as the senior son of the family. I was under intense pressure from my mother to get married for 3 years. Glory be to God I am now happily married with 6 children.

**Tell us your favorite slogan!**

Delay is dangerous! Do unto others as you want others to do unto you.

## IITA Abuja Women's Group inaugurated; gets pioneer chair



Members of IITA Women's Group with some staff of the IITA Abuja Station.

Beatrice Aighewi, a yam seed system specialist under the YIIFSWA-II project, has been appointed the pioneer chair of the IITA Abuja Women's Group, which was inaugurated on 13 April 2018. With the inauguration, IITA Abuja chapter became the first out-of-headquarters chapter in Nigeria. It comprises spouses of IRS staff and female IRS staff. The pioneer members of the Abuja Group include Beatrice Aighewi, Gloria Nwafor, Funmi Akande, Mercy Baars, Rachela Ouambi, Njeri Okono, and Kumnegerayalewm Asrat.

The inauguration ceremony took place at the old conference center of the Abuja station, and was attended by the Head of Station, Gbassey Tarawali, scientists, and management staff, as well as the visiting IITA Women's Group from Ibadan.

Leading the inauguration, Charlotte Sanginga, who is the Patron of the IITA Women's Group, expressed hope that the Abuja chapter will be very vibrant and respond to the needs of the less

privileged. Similarly, Mrs Sanginga spoke briefly about the IITA Women's Group which was founded in 1982, their primary mission, and activities, which focus on support for women, girls, and children not only of IITA but also of its partner groups, and vulnerable communities.

Tarawali thanked the Women's Group for their visit and for considering the daughter of one of the Abuja staff, Faith Chinyere Paul (who was present at the event) based on her performance in the interview, for a scholarship to support her secondary education.

The Chairperson of the IITA Women's Group Ibadan Chapter, Edith Badu-Apraku, also assured the women that they will give all the necessary support to ensure the smooth take-off and running of the Abuja group. Other women from the Ibadan Group included Esme Stuart, Luciane Borges, Faviola Lira, Dorsila Olweny, Vaishali Nitturkar, and Lorraine Dzapata.

The newly inaugurated chairperson thanked the IITA Women's Group for the confidence placed in her, and said she will do her best to ensure that the chapter delivers on its mandate. She explained that the need for the Group cannot be overemphasized as it fosters interaction and support for each other. The Group would also help to ease the stress of settling down for incoming staff to Abuja. Aighewi is expected to announce the members of her executive committee in due course.

While in Abuja, the Women's Group visited some historic places such as the Wuse Market, Arts & Craft Village Jabi, Jabi Lake Mall, and Ushafa Pottery Bwari. They also toured IITA Abuja, and the newly constructed ATASP-1 Youth Training Center. During the tour, they met with the DG who coincidentally was at the Station.

### Quotable quote

*"To make democracy work, we must be a nation of participants, not simply observers. One who does not vote has no right to complain."*

- Louis L'Amour

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