

## IITA commemorates International Internal Auditing Awareness Month



*Takawira Fumhe, Head, Internal Audit Unit, during his presentation.*

For more than a decade, the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) has devoted significant resources to actively promote and build awareness of the value of internal auditing during the International Internal Audit awareness month, every May. On that premise, the Internal Audit Unit of IITA held a seminar on 28 May at IITA Conference Center, Ibadan to commemorate the event. This was an opportunity to acknowledge the profession and enhance the participants' knowledge of the essential role internal auditing plays in strong organizational

governance, internal control, and effective risk management.

With the theme, "Internal Audit Demystified", the seminar focused on dispelling misperceptions of the profession, and communicating its value to ensure its relevance in a rapidly changing world, while increasing its visibility.

In his presentation, Takawira Fumhe, Head of Internal Audit, gave an overview of what internal auditors do, emphasizing that they audit systems and operations;

and are not "police officers" as perceived. He further classified the services rendered by the unit under three categories: assurance, consulting/advisory, and ad hoc—all targeted towards adding value to the processes they audit.

Highlighting the steps undertaken by internal auditors to ensure effective management of their systems, Fumhe stated, "We identify risks, find better ways and best practices, partner with related professional bodies to find solutions, prevent problems, and ensure safe arrivals, audit systems, and lastly, achieve great strides."

Internal audit started as a checking function aimed at fraud prevention, but has now added such roles as evaluating risks, assessing controls, reviewing processes and procedures, providing insight and foresight, communicating results, and recommending action. The IIA has increased the profession's visibility and set the standard for the way internal auditing is practiced around the world.

In concluding the meeting, Fumhe said that they aim to make IITA a better institution. He also reassured the participants that the Auditing Unit is at the service of the Institute and has the staff's best interest at heart to ensure continuous improvement in all operations.

## DG Sanginga donates a motorcycle to GRC



*L-R GRC Head Michael Abberton, Peju Ademuluyi (motorbike recipient), and DG Nteranya Sanginga.*

As a follow-up on an earlier discussion between IITA Director General Nteranya Sanginga, and Olapeju Ademuluyi, Field Assistant in the Genetic Resources Center (GRC), DG Sanginga donated a motorcycle to GRC on 6 June, specifically for her use, in recognition for her hard work, dedication, and right attitude at work.

The donation brought delight to all the staff present especially Michael Abberton, Head, GRC, as he was excited that the DG acknowledged the effort of one of his staff. He encouraged other staff to be more focused and result oriented. "I believe this will be a source of inspiration to you all. I encourage you all to put in your best in all that you do to ensure efficient delivery of the unit's goals and vision," he added.

In commending the entire unit for their high level of professionalism, DG Sanginga said, "This will not be my first time I am rewarding a GRC member of staff. I have always known you all to be committed and determined. However, today I have come for Ademuluyi whom I met late last month walking down and almost running. When I approached her, she said her attention was needed at the screen house. From our conversation, I

observed that she has great passion for her work. On that note, I promised her a motorcycle to ease and facilitate her movement to various destinations within the campus." He further encouraged all staff to put in their best because he said "if they take care of IITA; IITA will take care of them."

Reacting to the development, Ademuluyi stated, "I am so overwhelmed. This came

as a surprise to me. I never knew that DG Sanginga was going to redeem his promise so quickly. I am really motivated, and for that, I will continue to carry out my responsibilities effectively." The only challenge now is inadequate driving skills. I have to learn to drive the motorcycle safely to fulfill the purpose for which it was given. I want to say a very big thank you to DG Sanginga for his kind gesture!"

## Ibadan holds first town hall meeting for 2018

To ensure the efficient flow of communication between the management and staff, Human Resources organized a town hall meeting at IITA Ibadan Conference Center, on 21 May. This gathering provided an opportunity to build better team spirit among staff and generate ideas on how to improve both working conditions and work relations.

In her opening remarks, Head of HR, Lilian Mendoza welcomed the participants and assured them of the Unit's commitment to ensuring that staff enjoy a good work-life balance. "We have gathered here today to discuss what has been done so far, and the way forward to make sure that members of staff are updated with recent happenings within the Institute. We welcome new ideas from staff, as most of the innovations came from you!" she said.

Highlights of the gathering include feedback on issues from the 2017 town hall meetings, an update on the IITA@50 celebrations, a presentation on work health and safety compliance and trends, an update on work-life policy, and the implications of transforming into a project-based institution. Lade Oke, HR Manager-NRS emphasized that for IITA to become a project-based institution, a good organizational culture is required. She added "We must be equipped with project management skills while focusing on a mindset change, efficient delivery of results, team building, quality delivery, and a sense of urgency; all directed towards



Group photograph of staff who attended the town hall meeting.

making sure we attain and contribute to excellent project execution."

Lade Oke encouraged staff to live out the Institute's core values of originality, excellence, collaboration, respect, professionalism, integrity, inclusiveness, and equity, for us to collectively achieve our vision. Wole Oladokun, Employee Service Manager, gave a presentation on punctuality and attendance and the need to adhere strictly to the rules and regulations of the Institute because "Punctuality is the soul of a business." Questions, comments, and recommendations were raised by staff concerning the Cooperative Society, the child protection policy, and others; feedback and clarification were given.

The meeting ended with closing remarks by Lade Oke saying: "While carrying out your duties, we should bear in mind that

we are working towards transforming African agriculture and securing the path to food security. She encouraged all staff to invest in self-development and assured that the HR team will continue to work on HR policies towards improving working conditions and creating an enabling environment where talent is recognized for its valuable contribution and excellence is sustained and celebrated.

In the same manner, the HR team visited other IITA stations in Nigeria with a similar message to staff. Specifically, town hall meetings were held in Abuja on 15 May, Kano on 17 May, IGH on 18 May, and Onne on 6 June. Staff were very excited to have the HR team around with the sessions being highly interactive and impactful. The planned HR oversight on people management at the Stations was also carried out.

## PDAU: StrongER Together!

The Project Development and Administration Unit (PDAU) came together in a two-day team building workshop tagged "StrongER Together" on 11-12 June held at Ilesha, Osun State.

PDAU was formed from the merger between the Project Administration Office (PAO) and the Project Development Office (PDO). It was a welcome initiative by the PDAU team led by Allan Liavoga in collaboration with the planning committee led by Margot Bokanga, Muyiwa Peters, and Labake Apena.

The retreat aimed to help the team strategize and deliver on its mandate. The HR team was led by Lilian Mendoza (HR Head), Lade Oke (HRM-NRS), Helen Adeniji (Organizational



Group photograph of facilitators and participants.

Development Manager), and supported by Wole Oladokun (Employee Services Manager) and Adenike Sanusi (OD Assistant).

The team building was preceded by a site visit to Erin-Ilesha Water Falls to set the tone for the activity. Participants experienced nature at its finest by climbing

the hilly steps to view the beautiful water falls.

The HR team did not leave any stone unturned as each day's activities and presentations targeted the team's expectations. Some of the lessons learned were: Building and sustaining trust, pulling together as one united team by working together, understanding one's self and the team for effective performance, knowing one another personally to build relationships, demystifying perceptions, staying true to commitments through the PDAU team charter, the benefits of exercise,

managing and resolving conflict, team dynamics, strategy, and leveraging on team members' strengths.

At the end of the two-day program, the PDAU team committed to staying stronger together, communicate and listen to one another, appreciate that every member is a unique professional that has value to add to the team, and that leadership is a collective responsibility. Liavoga, on behalf of his team, expressed their heartfelt appreciation to the HR team for a job well done! Here are some of the PDAU team's comments:

"Every aspect of the training was delivered perfectly."

"The training met my expectation and I strongly believe this will help PDAU a lot."

"HR is doing a great job. There is need to follow up on the impact of this training on PDAU at set times."

"May consider stretching to a 2½–3-day program."

"I am highly impressed with the whole program as it was tailored to meet the needs of PDAU."

"It was a great time of eye opening. I appreciate the effort of the team."

Indeed, the PDAU is stronger together!

## Spotlight: Ana Luísa Garcia-Oliveira

Ana Oliveira was the first in her family to be an Engineer with a PhD. Her career journey was not without its challenges, but she learned early in life that there was no hard feeling that would last forever, and that studying was the only way to become what she is today. Thus, she drew from her innate strength to pull through all her challenges. Her childhood was surrounded by nature as she was exposed to crops and livestock at an early age by her grandparents. Ana got the support of her family and the Portuguese Government to accomplish her ambition.

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

I'm so thankful to all the people that allowed me to grow as a person and as a professional. I had great coaches who gave me the right advice at the right time. The decision to take my MSc in CAU, Beijing, China changed my life. The change led me back to Portugal and try to do things a bit differently! I ended up working in five different laboratories across Portugal and Spain. Till date, my greatest accomplishment was the discovery of the functional marker TaMATE1 for aluminum tolerance in bread wheat during my PhD. This work culminated in being an award recipient of the Early Career prize in 2014 from the IGWSC (International Wheat Genome Sequencing Consortium) presented by Dr Kelye Eversole (Eversole Associates, USA). This award has made me realize the meaning and importance of this achievement. I'm sure that the positive multiplier effect of this is what made me cross paths with IITA.

It was a great opportunity to come to IITA and a big achievement for me. I had finalized the signing of the extension of my first-year Post-Doc at UTAD, Portugal when I had an opportunity to be interviewed for a postdoctoral position to work on cassava in Kenya. I decided to apply and was lucky to be accepted. Despite



the challenge to change from cereals (rice and wheat) to cassava, it was a great growth opportunity. Currently, I'm at IITA HQ, in Nigeria, working as a Molecular Geneticist.

I'm passionate about transposing my own knowledge. I had always believed that if we can be and do better by being better, we serve others healthier. Hence, I try to be correct and fair as much as I can, taking into consideration that the lens from which we all see life can be quite different. I do believe that honesty and hard work is the path to stamp our mark in this world and make a positive impact for the coming generation. We can be a genius, but without hard work the geniality becomes loose. A hardworking person without honesty is not trustworthy. Trust is the worthiest feeling you may have about somebody or some event, and the most sensitive feeling living beings can have. The moment you fail to trust, you lose in knowledge.

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

I do believe that for early career scientists, either staying at IITA or any other Institute, we face the challenge to cross the barrier of I'm here to I AM here. Science, particularly these days, is quite demanding. The rate of success in project proposals is currently challenging. If donors do not give a real and engaging

chance to the young generation in Plant Sciences, especially agriculture, there will be a great gap in Science with the loss of at least two generations in the field. Science should continue to be of a high standard and that takes time and money. Most great discoveries in the world happened because people were passionate about the topic they were working, and passion doesn't have anything to do with money.

We are compromising the future of the next generations by not giving due attention to getting solutions for the long term regarding the depletion of soil fertility and how to use plant genetic diversity to overcome it. Plant diseases and pests will always evolve, despite the efforts to breed for them; it's their nature. But water, soil and air will evolve if we disappear from this planet, so it's our responsibility to take care of them.

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

I do not consider drawing and painting a pastime. I came to research because that allows me to do both of my passions: science and art, otherwise my path would be in painting.

### **Tell us your favorite slogan!**

See your failure as your biggest opportunity! Beat yourself in what you do every day! Never give up. I never forget to say thank you for waking up every morning and for each opportunity I had!

## Quotable quote

*"A dream does not become reality through magic; it takes sweat, determination, and hard work."* – Colin Powell

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