

The IITA logo is displayed in a stylized, white, blocky font. It is positioned over a background image of several large, round, light-brown drums, likely traditional African drums, with wooden frames and visible lacing.

*Transforming African Agriculture*

# TALKING DRUMS

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## IITA hosts Beatrice Langwa, a PhD student from war-torn South Sudan studying viruses spreading sweet potato diseases

Beatrice Langwa from South Sudan is undertaking her PhD with a scholarship from the Norwegian Programme for Capacity Development in Higher Education and Research for Development (NORHED) project at the University of Juba in South Sudan.

She is studying sweet potato viruses in three states in South Sudan, under the supervision of James Legg, IITA Plant Health Specialist based in Tanzania. Recently, she was at IITA Tanzania to conduct her experiments and analyses as the long years of conflict has left her country without research facilities.

Sweet potato is the second most important crop after cassava in South Sudan and therefore, according to Beatrice, the study is significant because the findings will contribute towards finding a solution to control and limit the spread of the diseases.

“It is important to identify the viruses that are spreading diseases and causing a lot of damage and destruction to sweet potato and understanding how they are spread to find ways to control them. This is the first such study in my country”, she said.

She also pointed out that her studies have not been easy due to the prolonged war in South Sudan.

“The war has really affected my research, especially in the first year when I used to go to the field to collect information from



*Beatrice Langwa in the lab at IITA-Tanzania.*

farmers and samples for testing in the laboratory. Due to the conflict, we now have no laboratories, therefore I had to transport my sample from Juba to Norway which was challenging.

Beatrice is also very appreciative of the support received from the Institute and especially from her co-supervisor, Dr James Legg.

“IITA has been very supportive. The staff here are very good, cooperative, and ready to help. I have been learning a lot from them,” she said.

She said was grateful to IITA for allowing her to conduct the experiments at the laboratories in Tanzania as she cannot conduct the studies in her country. “I cannot do anything there at the moment,” she said.

She says she has now managed to collect most of the data needed to write her thesis, but she also needs to collect whiteflies, the vectors of the viruses, to study their diversity in South Sudan. “This is my worry as it will be difficult to access the farmers’ fields easily because of the war.”

## Finance Directorate: Winning Together!

The Finance Directorate team came together in a two-day strategic retreat and team building workshop with the theme, “Winning Together” from 29 September to 1 October 2018 held at Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria, with a total of 48 participants.

Adorned in their colorful IITA@50 Ankara, the Finance Directorate team spiced up the workshop by making a site visit to the Resorts wildlife park. The Director of Finance, Shalewa Sholola formally welcomed his team and HR facilitators (Lilian Mendoza, Lade Oke, Helen Adeniji, and Adenike Sanusi). On



*Finance Directorate and HR facilitators.*



Group photograph.

behalf of his team, he shared his thoughts on the expectations of the team building and he encouraged his team to imbibe a collective winning mindset by adopting a winning formula which he shared: Communication + Flexibility + Trust = Winning Together!

Sholola invited the Project Finance Manager, Francis Popoola for the first technical session titled: IITA as a Project-Based Institution. The session was interactive and thought-provoking revealing comments, questions, and recommendations on how the Finance Directorate's strategic role could be enhanced to ensure effective and efficient service delivery. At the end of the presentation, the Finance Directorate team committed to aligning the Institute's new direction through the automation process in delivering prompt and accurate services.

The evening of the first day was also exciting as prior to event, the FD team

had been grouped into four color teams namely: Blue, Green, Red and Yellow. Each color's team leader was given a group assignment to be presented on the evening of the first day. It was spectacular to watch as each team made their presentation with so much passion, creativity, and a winning team spirit! Certainly, the Finance Directorate team is talented as they unanimously agreed to a song composed to commemorate the event.

The second day started with a fitness exercise and being a Sunday, the FD team organized themselves to observe their religious quiet time. The second technical session was made by the Financial Controller, Dennis Mulenga on: Finance Directorate Initiatives. It was another excellent interactive session as the entire FD team were brought up to speed on all FD initiatives from 2017 to 2018.

The HR team of facilitators anchored the team building workshop by setting the tone

through fun singing individual name introduction and other fabulous outdoor and indoor activities that reinforced the theme of the program "Winning Together". The lessons learnt in the first day's activities focused on innovation, leadership and followership, communication, strategy, attention to instruction, trust, and effective customer service.

All members of the FD team took turns to pledge their commitment to the growth, strength, and continued strategic role of the Finance Directorate in IITA.

The success of the 2018 Finance Directorate could not have been possible without the deep sense of commitment of Sholola, members of the planning committee: Napoleon Okoronkwo, Moruff Kareem, Oluwapelumi Eluwole and Femi Adesokan and the entire FD team, especially Solomon Ogunade and Francis Popoola who took charge the IT and technical side of things and the HR team of facilitators.

The icing on the cake was the "Pat on the back" by Sholola as the Planning Committee members were each awarded a plaque for a job well done. Also, the HR team, for the second time, were given a plaque for their exceptional facilitation skills.

Team building enhances team bonding, lasting friendship, communication and high work performance. Kudos to Sholola and his team. FD! ...Winning Together!

## Zambia adapts NRS HR Policy Manual



Zambia Town hall meeting.

In September 2018, the DDG-Corporate Services approved the adapted NRS policy manual for IITA-Zambia. Subsequently a town hall meeting for all NRS regular staff was held at the station on 25 September 2018. The meeting was attended by the Regional Hub Administrator (Ali Adeleke) who encouraged staff to fully participate in sharing ideas, raising concerns, and giving feedback on how to improve working conditions.

The Human Resources Officer (Patrick Banda) made a presentation to all staff focusing on the key changes in the

adapted NRS policy manual which has been adapted in line with the Zambian labor laws. He also presented on IITA code of conduct (promoting IITA's values) and a few other topics including dress code, staff loans & advances, and zero tolerance for harassment and discrimination.

The meeting provided an opportunity for staff to seek clarification on matters of concern, promote inclusiveness, improve staff engagement, and build a better team spirit. NRS staff were delighted that Management has approved the adapted the HR policy manual because now they can benefit from certain working conditions

which conflicted with the country's labor law.

During the same meeting, the Internal Audit unit through the Regional Internal Auditor (Hlezipi K. Mukuma) also made a presentation to staff. The internal audit unit focuses on adding value and ensuring that risks are managed to ensure achievement of organizational objectives. The unit also dispelled the view that it is a policing function by explaining that they are there to make IITA a better place.

### Quotable quote

"The achievements of an organization are the results of the combined effort of each individual. - Vince Lombardi

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## Out of Africa—From Nigeria to St. Mary’s: What a Difference

Head Chef Funmilayo Joe-Oka applied for and was awarded a talent grant which she is using to get 5 weeks’ experience in Canada by following courses at Conestoga College, St Mary’s, Ontario, Canada.

**The following is an excerpt from the local media:**

St. Mary’s resident Andrew Middleton spent the past year in Nigeria on Professional Development leave from his position as Professor in the School of Hospitality and Culinary Arts at Conestoga College.

Andrew worked at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Ibadan. IITA is a global leader in Agricultural Research and has stations in 11 countries throughout Sub-Saharan Africa.

The hospitality and travel services unit (HOSTRAS) has a 150-bedroom hotel and serves up to 2,000 meals a day. It also organizes travel for the 300 international scientists who travel throughout the world focusing on fulfilling on the Institute’s mandate.

Funmi arrived in St. Marys last week and you may have seen her around town. As



*Funmi Joe-Oka with Andrew Middleton.*

Funmi has never left Africa before, you can imagine that the experience of Ontario is quite a shock. Going to the grocery store, cutting the grass, helping at the Community Suppers, attending classes at Conestoga, and especially the colder temperatures are all new to her.

During her stay, Funmi will help raise funds for an art project in Ibadan. The project gets children involved by collecting empty plastic

bottles and old used tires and painting them and putting them up on walls to make murals.

To raise funds, Funmi will cook a Nigerian dinner at the United Church on Saturday, 27 October. Funmi is known for her Jollof Rice, a popular dish throughout West Africa, and it will be served with Nigerian style chicken and some accompaniments from Nigeria.

## IITA Tanzania hosts 11 undergraduate students for their field practical training

Eleven undergraduate students from Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA), Tanzania, spent five weeks at the IITA Eastern Africa hub office in Dar es Salaam, as part of their field practical experience, working alongside and learning from IITA researchers.

Sharing their experiences at the end of their stay, the students appreciated the time spent at IITA, which they said had enabled them to put into practice the theory they had learned in school.

Sesanyi Sesanyi, an Agronomy student, said he was attached to the IITA pathology laboratory and had benefited from working with the IITA aflatoxin research team.

“We learned how to prepare samples for mycotoxin and microbiological analysis, identification, enumeration, and quantification of the *Aspergillus flavus*—the fungi that produces aflatoxin, and screening for aflatoxin. We also learned the principles of biocontrol and how Aflasafe works,” he said.

Judith Mmasa, also studying Agronomy, worked with the soil laboratory team and said she had learned how to analyze soils for organic carbon, nitrogen, texture, phosphorus, and pH, and to use agronomic tools for data collection.

Victor Manyong, IITA-Eastern African Hub Director, while bidding the team goodbye, congratulated them for completing their practical field learning at the Institute. He also appreciated the effort made by their supervisors at IITA in sharing their skills and knowledge.

“One of IITA’s mandate for Africa, as we work with partners to transform Africa’s

agriculture, is to build the capacity of researchers in the continent. Solutions for the challenges facing the agriculture sector should come from within,” he said as he urged them to share the knowledge gained with others.

### Interns talks about their practical field experience at IITA

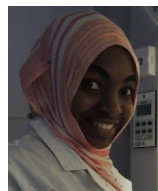


#### Albert Henerico, BSc Agriculture General

“My stay at IITA allowed me to spend time in the laboratories where I learned how to conduct various experiments. The laboratories and the facilities here are very modern, I have never seen many of the equipment before. I also learned a lot of things, but the most interesting was how to control aflatoxins.”

#### Hassan Ally, BSc Agriculture General

“I learned a lot during my stay here at IITA. I was happy to learn about aflatoxin and how it can be controlled. I did not know about aflatoxins before. I would like to pass on the knowledge on aflatoxins to the community starting with my family since my mother grows groundnut and cashew nut.”



#### Jasmin Ramadhan, BSc Food Science and Technology

“I was exposed to different

analyses, such as how to analyze beta-carotene from orange-fleshed cassava, and how to determine starch in cassava as well as moisture content in maize and cassava flour and maize flour.

“The staff at IITA were helpful and cooperative and the working environment was conducive for studying and accessing learning resources such as the Internet,” she said.



#### Jumanne Justus, BSc Agronomy

“I did not know about aflatoxin and its effects. I was impressed with the process of quantification of aflatoxin contamination in maize and groundnut from the field and how to prepare Aflasafe.

This knowledge will help me to educate others on the importance of good agronomic practices from harvesting to storage and on factors which can expose their crops to aflatoxins and how they can protect their crops from aflatoxin.”



#### Cathbert Leonard, BSc Horticulture

“Being at IITA enabled me to learn more about the Institute and its research activities. I did not know much about IITA before.

I also learned about aflatoxins and mycotoxins in general and their impact on health and about Aflasafe, which is able to control aflatoxin contamination. I will now work to raise awareness among many