

RECORD OF IITA ALUMNI REUNIONS (1999-2017)

IITA Alumni Association came into existence as an informal group of former international staff and met for the first time in May 1999 at the Winrock International, near Morrilton, Arkansas, in the United States. IITA Alumni Reunions have since taken place in Assisi, Italy, the birthplace of St. Francis of Assisi in May 2001, and the third was held in the United Kingdom in 2005 at Stratford-upon-Avon, the birthplace and burial place of Shakespeare. The next one was at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York in October 2008 and the fifth took place in Bali, Indonesia in 2011. The sixth Reunion took place at the IITA Headquarters in Ibadan in 2014, and the seventh was again held at the same venue in 2017 as part of the events to mark the 50th Anniversary of IITA's legal establishment.

Past Reunions at a Glance:

First	Winrock International, Morrilton, Arkansas, USA, May 21-24, 1999
Second	Assisi, Italy, May 9-13, 2001
Third	Stratford-upon-Avon, UK, June 1-5, 2005
Fourth	Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, October 2-5, 2008 (3-6 Oct?)
Fifth	Bali, Indonesia, March 11-14, 2011
Sixth	Ibadan, IITA, March 12-14, 2014
Seventh	Ibadan, IITA, July 24–29, 2017

THE FIRST REUNION

The first IITA Alumni Reunion was held at Winrock International near Morrilton, Arkansas, USA from May 21-24, 1999. The name 'Winrock' derives from Winthrop Rockefeller, a grandson of John D. Rockefeller, Patriarch of the Rockefeller family that established the Rockefeller Foundation, which collaborated with the Ford Foundation to establish IITA. Winthrop Rockefeller, who served two terms as Governor of Arkansas, owned a farm and livestock centre on a 927-acre (about 375 hectares) land on Petit Jean Mountain in Arkansas. After his death in 1973, his estate created the Winrock International Research and Training Center. His brother, John D. Rockefeller III, had also created the Agricultural Development Council based in New York to address the widespread problem of food shortages around the world. In 1985, the two organizations merged with the International Agricultural Research Service (founded by the Rockefeller Foundation) to form Winrock International that hosted the first Reunion of IITA's Alumni.

IITA had come of age; since its establishment in 1967, many staff members had left the Institute for further professional and personal endeavours in various parts of the world. The purposes of the reunion were to renew friendships, refresh memories, exchange present experiences and also obtain information on the state of IITA at that time.

A small group of pioneers had volunteered to serve on the organizing committee for the Reunion at Winrock International. The group included Carolyn Moomaw, Tony and Rosalind

Juo, Keith and Karen Moody, Henk and Carol Knipscheer, Stan and Jan Claassen, Chris and Betty Wien, Walt and Beverly Rockwood, Bill and Virginia Gamble, B.T. and Jeanette Kang, John and Evy Nickel, and Ed and Linda-Musso Sulzberger. Several former staff members were accompanied by their (now adult) children and their spouses and grandchildren. There were over 100 participants from all over the world, including several then current IITA staff members. Children who grew up at IITA enjoyed getting together and taking part in the activities of the Reunion.

Henk and Carol Knipscheer acted superbly as hosts and program co-chairs for the 4-day event (21-24 May). Henk Knipscheer was at that time on the staff of Winrock International, which he joined directly on leaving IITA. The Reunion program included an official welcome, presentations on IITA past and present and on Winrock in Africa, panel discussion, many recreational and social activities, a gala dinner and, of course, a group photograph.

Lukas Brader, then Director General, was unable to attend. But he prepared a presentation on "IITA Today", which was delivered by Ermond Hartmans, the Director General from 1980-1985; it was very well received and appreciated. The presentation was followed by a panel discussion, chaired by John Pendleton, a one-time Deputy Director General for Research. Panelists included four contemporary IITA staff members: Remi Enahoro, Quat Ng, Yong Ng, and David Sewell.

John L. Nickel, who was the second Deputy Director General of IITA, remembered the early days of IITA and remarked that he realized when he left 25 years ago (in 1974) how much time and effort would be needed before IITA research findings would benefit African farmers. Bill Gamble reflected on memories of the years of his tenure as IITA's Director General (1975-1980). He spoke especially of the loyal, dedicated and competent staff members and their supportive families as well as the 'happenings' during his period. Ermond Hartmans remembered IITA as one harmonious community of 45 nationalities and all members were all aware of the great potential of the African farmer.

Everyone had a great time at the Reunion, with socialising one of the most popular activities! Participants enjoyed the lush green premises of Winrock with all its hospitality and facilities, including a variety of sports and recreational activities such as tennis, volleyball, bridge, mah-jong, golf, 5-km run as well as quiet walks, hiking in the near-by beautiful Petit Jean State Park.

It was proposed that a second Reunion should be planned for the year 2001 in Europe; Ermond Hartmans volunteered to organise it together with others interested in serving on the committee. The Netherlands and Italy were among the possible choices of location. All IITA alumni were invited to express their preference. Those who were interested to serve on the Organizing Committee for the Second Reunion were to contact Ermond Hartmans. His address and e-mail were provided. The organizing committee for this first reunion would cease to exist by the end of June 1999.

During the gala dinner, gifts were exchanged and three short speeches were made. Everyone seemed to have had a great time at the Reunion and one of the most popular activities was socializing at the hospitality center.

(This is a revised version of the report prepared by Anthony S.R. Juo, who was IITA'S pioneer soil chemist. He was at the time of the Reunion a Professor in the Soil and Crop Sciences

Department, Texas A&M University, in College Station, Texas. He has, unfortunately, since passed away).

THE SECOND REUNION

The second Reunion took place in Italy in the medieval city of Assisi from May 9-13, 2001 and was favoured by the most beautiful Italian sunny sky. It was attended by over 100 participants from all over the world. Participants were accommodated in three hotels, all within short walking distance. The Commune of Assisi made a large meeting room available in its centuries-old Town Hall and also the medieval UN Tower Building, both in the central square.

Dr Ermond Hartmans, a former Director General (1980-1985), led the Organizing Committee. Dr Hartmans, a Dutch, had worked for the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome for many years and on leaving IITA chose to spend his retirement in Rome. Members of the organizing committee were responsible for enrolling participants from different regions. Stan and Jan Claassen and Bill and Virginia Gamble (Bill was the Director General during 1975-1980) had responsibility for the USA and Latin America, Ade and Anne Aderogba for the UK, NeBamby and Celine Lutaladio for Africa, Rony and Christine Swennen for Europe, George and Susy Thottapilly for Asia and the Far East, and Krishna and Fe Alluri for Canada. Gun Lundborg, who had been a resident of Italy for a long time, played a vital role in dealing with financial matters, contact with local authorities, and setting up the programme.

High officials welcomed the group to Assisi. David Sewell presented Director General Lukas Brader's summary of the recent activities and breakthroughs at IITA. Dr Alessandro Bozzini, former FAO Director for Europe, shared his views on European agriculture and the agricultural assistance of Europe to the developing world. Gun Lundborg highlighted the vital contribution of the region to the Renaissance and of Leonardo da Vinci's role as a great pioneer botanist and the many fundamental discoveries he made in that field. Rony Swennen described the memorial service held in Uganda for the three colleagues who died in an air crash off the coast of Abidjan in January 2000.

There were excellent walking tours of Assisi, including the Basilica of St. Francis which had recently reopened after the earthquake some years earlier and an all-day bus tour to the historic mountain towns of Contona and Panicale. A fantastic luncheon was served at the estate of the famous race car builder Lamborghini, and the golfers enjoyed the 9-hole golf course there. There was a Bridge tournament and a gala dinner with farewell speeches, and, of course, a group photograph.

The delights of Umbria and Assisi together with memories of visits with friends and colleagues, updates on families and remembrances of experiences shared were very much appreciated by all participants who agreed that a third Reunion should be held possibly at IITA headquarters or in Bangalore, India. David Sewell, together with Ayoka Lawani, V.T. John and George Thottapilly were to take this forward.

THE THIRD REUNION

The plan to hold the third reunion at IITA headquarters or in Bangalore, India did not materialize while in the meantime, David Sewell continued to receive many communications asking when and where the next reunion would be held. After much deliberation and taking into consideration the people who were prepared to organise the event, it was decided the

location would be the United Kingdom and the beautiful and historic town of Stratford-upon-Avon in the heart of England would be the headquarters.

A committee was formed with Alec Butler as Chairman, Ade Aderogba as Treasurer, Maureen Larkin as Secretary assisted by Brian and Uta Critchley, Dennis Greenland, Gilbert and Margaret Heys, and, of course, David Sewell. Stan and Jan Claassen were coordinators for North and South America, Krishna and Fe Alluri for Canada, Rony Swennen for Europe and Alice Flinn-Stillwell for Australia and New Zealand.

Thanks to the efforts of the Committee, the third reunion took place four years after the second one --- on June 1-5, 2005 in Stratford-upon-Avon. There were about 70 participants. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet old friends and renew acquaintances once more and to remember friends who were no longer with us.

Important Lessons Learned. From the experience of the key planners of the third reunion, some important lessons can be learnt. What made individual alumni attend was not only the prospect of meeting up with former colleagues and friends, but visiting an interesting place. So, whilst, the organizers originally identified a nice venue near Gatwick Airport, thinking it would mean ease of travel, etc., it turned out that was of no great importance and that a more ‘interesting’ place should be aimed for. London might have topped the list but would have been very expensive. They, therefore, agreed on Stratford-upon-Avon, i.e. Shakespeare Country! And the interest increased.

People liked the mixture of an interesting place in its own right, updates on current IITA and wider scientific as well as local issues. They appreciated going to Warwick Castle and seeing a Shakespeare play. As it turned out, the fourth reunion at Ithaca certainly worked well on a similar premise.

It should also be noted that for many retirees, cost is always a big factor; it is, therefore, important that the location for a Reunion be such as lends itself to building more of a trip/holiday around the few days of the Reunion.

Finally, it should be remarked that this and previous Reunions were organized successfully through the voluntary efforts of a relatively few but committed individuals. No formal or structured organization as such was required.

(This report on the Third Reunion was contributed by Uta and Brian Critchley).

THE FOURTH REUNION

The 4th Alumni Reunion was held in Ithaca, New York State, October 2-5, 2008. Activities were held at the Ramada Inn and at Cornell University. One of the organizers, Chris Wien, was at the time a Professor at Cornell University.

Ithaca, was chosen for many reasons, including: the well-known and highly reputable international agriculture programs offered by Cornell University; the tourist attraction of the area, which is known as the Finger Lakes Region; dazzling Fall (Autumn) foliage as well as points of historical interest.

Organizers included: Stan & Jan Claassen; Bill & Virginia Gamble; Rosalind Juo; Karen and Keith Moody; Walt Rockwood; Carolyn Moomaw Wilhelm; and Chris Wien.

Program:

On the first day, Thursday, October 2, a Welcome Reception was organized at the Ramada Inn from 2:00 pm to 9:00pm.

The following day, there was a trip to Taughannock Falls State Park and Sheldrake Point Winery in the morning. Participants toured the Sheldrake Point Vineyard, enjoyed wine tasting and had lunch there.

The afternoon program was at 101 Bradfield Hall, Cornell University. There was a briefing on Cornell's International Programs in Africa. This was followed by the IITA Alumni Association business meeting at the same venue. During the business meeting, possible venues for the next, the fifth Reunion, were discussed. They included Bali, Indonesia, suggested by Dr Dimyati Nangju; India; and the Netherlands. As it turned out, alumni in India and the Netherlands later decided they could not host it. The fifth reunion was, therefore, held in Bali, Indonesia.

The evening was left free of any formal activity.

On Saturday, October 4, the following activities were arranged for the morning: Golf at the Robert Trent Jones Golf Course, Cornell University beginning at 8:00 am; Visit to the Ithaca Farmers Market (starting at 9:30 am); and Brunch Cruise on the MVS Columbia on Cayuga Lake (from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm). In the afternoon, participants had the options of a bus tour of Cornell Plantations and Bridge playing at the Ramada Hotel. A Reception and Gala Banquet beginning at 5:00 pm took place at the Ramada Inn.

On Sunday, October 5, the last day of the Reunion, there was an informal Farewell breakfast.

(This report on the fourth Reunion was provided by Chris Wien)

THE FIFTH REUNION

The 5th Reunion for IITA Alumni and their families were held in Bali, Indonesia from 11 to 14 March, 2011. It was attended by 37 participants from 11 countries, including United States, Canada, Britain, Netherlands, Germany, Republic of Korea, Republic of China, Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia and Australia. Although the group was relatively small compared to the previous reunions held in the USA, Italy, and UK, it was compensated by an excellent program and a great opportunity to get to know each other. The low number of participants was probably due to the long distance of Bali from Africa, USA, and Europe where most of the IITA alumni live.

An organizing committee for the 5th IITA Reunion in Bali was formed as early as May 2009 and consisted of the following alumni:

- Dimyati Nangju from Indonesia, as Chairman
- Rob Dumsday from Australia, then living in Germany
- Jan ter Vrugt from Netherlands
- Fe Alluri from Canada
- Jeannette Kang from USA
- Ade Aderogba from the UK

Because Dimiyati Nangju lives in Jakarta, he decided to request Bali Discovery Tour, a well-known tour company based in Denpasar, Bali, to provide a local arrangement for organizing the reunion. This arrangement was one of the factors responsible for the success of the reunion in Bali. The other success factor is the fact that Bali is a famous tourist destination with low-cost hotels, food and drinks.

In February 2010, the committee sent out invitation to all the alumni and current professional staff at IITA to attend the reunion because the committee decided that to make the reunion different from the previous reunion, it is important to invite not only the IITA alumni but also IITA international staff to encourage a strong interaction between the two groups. However, although the committee worked hard to publicize the reunion, only 23 out of the estimated total of 400 IITA alumni accepted our invitation to attend the reunion. From IITA, only Dr Peter Hartmann (Director General of IITA, 2001-2011) attended the reunion.

In Bali, the participants stayed in Sanur Beach Hotel, an excellent five-star hotel located on the beach of Sanur District. During the four-day meeting, the participants had a full and lively program comprising the activities outlined below.

Welcome Dinner. On the first day (11 March 2011), the participants visited Uluwate Temple to see the sunset. Unfortunately, they could not see it clearly because of cloud cover. After this visit, they went to Jimbaran beach to enjoy a welcome dinner comprising fresh coconut drink and delicious seafood in an open sky restaurant. The participants were impressed by the large number of tourists having dinner on the beach together with them. Luckily, the weather was very good since it did not rain that night. At the dinner, the alumni were asked by Jan Ter Vrugt to introduce themselves one by one so that the others would know when they worked in IITA and what they did after leaving IITA. Rob Dumsday explained the program of the 5th IITA Reunion from 11 to 14 March 2011.

Field Visit and IITA Alumni Association Dinner. On the second day (12 March 2011), activity started with a trip to visit a famous irrigated rice system where Baliness (also Balinese) farmers practise “subak system” whereby they build, operate, maintain and manage their irrigated rice system using their own resources. The participants first visited the Subak museum where they saw a movie about the subak system, equipment used by the rice farmers, and a typical Baliness house. After that, the participants visited beautiful irrigated rice terraces in Jatiluwih Village. Finally, they visited Beratan Lake which is used by farmers as the main source of irrigation water.

In the evening, there was a formal dinner in a nice convention hall where Dr Hartmann, Director General of IITA, gave an interesting talk about the status of IITA. The participants were impressed by the ability of Dr Hartmann to adopt a sound financial management system even though the total contribution of CGIAR to IITA funding had continued to decline during the preceding 10 years. Dr Hartmann said that 70 percent of IITA funding came from bilateral donors. At the dinner, David Sewell introduced Dr Hartmann to the participants, Rob Dumsday moderated the question and answer session following the talk given by Dr Hartman, and Krishna Alluri gave the closing remark in which he thanked Dr Hartmann for coming all the way from Ibadan, Nigeria, to be with the participants for one whole day.

Field Visit and Farewell Dinner. On the third day (13 March 2011), the participants had a tour to visit a three strata forage system in the southern tip of Bali Island which is the driest

part of the island. The three strata forage system is a system whereby farmers on a dry upland area are able to obtain adequate animal feed for their animals (goats and cattle) from three sources: (i) from the soil where they grow improved grasses and legume species; (ii) from field crops such as maize and other crops, and perennial bush species grown along the boundary of the farms (e.g. *Leucaena* and *Gliricidia*); and (iii) from tall (perennial) trees which provide farmers animal feed during the peak of the dry season. After the visit of the three strata forage system, the participants visited a GWK (Garuda Wisnu Kencana) Park where the state government has developed a very impressive open theatre complete with huge garuda (a legendary bird) and Wisnu monuments, shops and restaurants.

In the evening, the participants attended the Farewell Dinner in Classic Center. They were met by dancers at the entrance of the Classic Center and then escorted to an exhibition hall and a beautiful dining hall which was built following Balinese design. During the dinner, the participants were entertained by Balinese Dancers who performed a number of Balinese dances. At the end of the show, the participants were asked to dance with the dancers. They also had an opportunity to take pictures with the dancers on the stage. The dinner was really memorable not only because the food was very delicious and the Balinese dances were very interesting, but also because the participants wore batik shirts (for men) or batik blouses (for women) which they purchased in Bali especially for the farewell dinner. Batik is a famous dress material from Indonesia.

One-day Cruise. On the last day (14 March 2011), the participants took a cruise with Bali Explorer Ship to visit Lembongan Island, about one hour from Bali Island. In this cruise, the participants had a lot of fun as they were able to undertake many activities, such as swimming around a pontoon facility attached to the ship, snorkelling to see the coral reefs and beautiful fish, riding a kayak, sliding into the sea, riding a banana boat, and sightseeing tour to villages in Lembongan Island. This was a perfect activity to end the IITA Reunion because the cruise provided for most of the participants a memorable experience.

All these activities were coordinated and managed very well by Bali Discovery Tours, which had considerable experience organizing group tours for international tourists.

The most important question discussed at the Farewell Dinner was “where do we go from here?” What is our plan for the future? Do we need another reunion after Bali? These issues were discussed by the participants and moderated by Jan ter Vrugt during the farewell dinner. Most participants expressed a strong interest to have another reunion which could be held three years from then. The venues suggested were (i) Ibadan, Nigeria, and (ii) Toronto or Vancouver, Canada. The existing committee, comprising Dimy Nangju as the Chairman, Rob Dumsday, Jan Ter Vrugt, Fe Alluri, Jeannette Kang and Ade Aderogba as members, was requested by the participants to carry out a survey among all the alumni to determine which of these venues would be selected as the preferred destination for the 6th IITA Reunion. The Committee subsequently decided on Ibadan, Nigeria.

(This report on the Reunion in Bali was submitted by Dr Dimy Nangju)

THE SIXTH REUNION

The Sixth Reunion was held at the IITA Headquarters in Ibadan during March 12-14, 2014. The venue was in line with the decision of the participants at the fifth Reunion in Bali, Indonesia three

years earlier. Dr Kenton Dashiell was the principal contact person and his office coordinated the Reunion program. A Local Organizing Committee was formed with the following members:

Dr Olu Osiname, Chair

Dr Ken Dashiell

Dr Joseph Fajemisin

Mr Jibade Oyekan

Mr. Emmanuel Akintokun

Dr Stephen Lawani

Dr Christian Fatokun

Dr Ayo Abifarin

Mr. Godwin Atser (A staff in the Communications Unit)

Mr. Olayiwola Olatunji (A staff in Dr Dashiell's Office)

Mrs. Elizabeth Jegede (Committee Secretary based in Dr Dashiell's Office)

All the members of the Committee were resident in Ibadan except Dr Abifarin who lives in Abuja and interacted with the Committee by email.

More than 60 alumni from Asia, USA, Europe, and Africa registered for the 6th Reunion and housed on the IITA Campus. However, some Ibadan-based Alumni (Nationally Recruited Staff) participated only selectively in the Reunion Program; for example, many attended the social events. Attendance of the Reunion by Overseas Alumni was constrained by concern about security at a time the terrorist activities of Boko Haram were receiving considerable international attention.

Program Items

The Director General, Dr Nteranya Sanginga, assumed office in 2011 and became the first alumnus to be appointed DG. He gave an optimistic welcome address in which he outlined his vision, the challenges, and the need for alumni engagement with the Institute. Many of the participants were aware of the dire financial situation and low staff morale he inherited and were, therefore, pleasantly surprised at the condition in which they found IITA facilities and the high staff morale evident in all categories. Everyone was proud to be associated with IITA.

Dr Kenton Dashiell (also an alumnus), had become the Deputy Director General for Partnerships and Capacity Development. He gave a talk on the vision of IITA as enshrined in the revised strategy. According to him, by 2020 the Institute aims to contribute to lifting 11 million people out of poverty and also reclaiming and putting into sustainable use 7.5 million hectares of degraded land. He explained that efforts to eradicate hunger and poverty were being stymied on several fronts, and challenged the alumni to be actively involved in helping to tackle this menace. This session dovetailed into a bout of brainstorming that finally came with recommendations on how the alumni and IITA could jointly advance and make impact.

Tours

The program included extensive tours of the IITA campus showcasing the impressive physical and scientific developments as well as bus tours of the University of Ibadan and the city of Ibadan. Alumni, of course, had access to IITA's recreational facilities: the nine-hole Golf

Course, the Squash Court, Tennis Courts, the Swimming Pool, the Lake, and ample areas for jogging and walking.

Alumni visited several laboratories, the Genetic Resources Center, the Crop Utilization Unit, the new Biosciences Center, and the Learning Center (which includes Communications and the Library and housed in the extended Library building). Noteworthy was the fact that the Library had become completely digital, with all the shelves donated to other libraries and the physical books either donated or kept in remote storage. Other facilities visited included IITA Youth Agripreneurs and Seed Center, the Yam Barn, and the IITA Business Incubation Platform (BIP). Both the IITA Youth Agripreneurs and the IITA Business Incubation Platform were recent projects initiated by the new Director General, Dr Sanginga.

The Youth Agripreneurs are recent university graduates who having completed their one-year national service wish to go into agriculture as a business (regardless of the discipline in which they graduated). IITA prepares selected graduates for a variety of agricultural enterprises, including multiplication of crop varieties that are in high demand, seed production, fish production from ponds, crop processing, etc. Training includes how to prepare bankable business plans. The youths are in training for about a year. The vision is to create employment opportunities for the large number of unemployed youths in Africa. The idea has been publicized and well-received across Africa. It has received financial support from both the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the African Development Bank (AfDB).

At the Business incubation Platform, alumni were shown two pilot plants organized as technology start-ups to induce private sector production. One is a large pilot plant for the commercial production of “Aflasafe” that was developed by IITA scientists. Aflasafe (presumably a registered trade name) suppresses races of the fungus *Aspergillus* in maize and groundnuts. *Aspergillus* contamination in maize is said to be a major health problem in some countries, including Kenya, which had already indicated interest in Aflasafe and its commercial production. Another pilot plant is “Nodumax” for the production of *Rhizobium* inoculum. The concept and the construction of the BIP were well received and supported by the alumni.

On the social services front, there were the new IITA Wellness Center, the expanded IITA Clinic, and the International School. The stop at the International School was quite memorable. Alumni were entertained by a colorful display by the pupils, thanks to Ms Carole Inness-Palmer, Head of IITA School and her team. Alumni (some of whose children had attended the School and some who were staff of the School) appreciated the growth and transformation of the School.

It was an especially thrilling experience for Anna Flinn, who was one of the first students of the School (1972–1974) and was visiting after forty years. She had been a pupil during the time her *Late* father, John, was an Agricultural Economist and later Head of the Farming Systems Program at IITA. Anna and her mother (Alice Flinn-Stilwell) came for the Reunion from Australia, their home country. Equally excited and pleased to see the progress the School had made was Mrs Dele Abifarin, who was one of the earliest teachers at the School (1973-1976) and was Anna Flinn’s teacher; her husband, Dr Ayo Abifarin, was a Rice Breeder during the period.

Another interesting activity was the walk through the IITA Forest Trail. The Trail had been lengthened and improved under the leadership of Deni Bown. Alumni were appreciative of IITA Management’s efforts in conserving the forest and its biodiversity.

There was an off-campus tour that took alumni through the University of Ibadan campus, Mapo in the heart of Ibadan, Cocoa House area which now has a big shopping mall (housing Shoprite and several major shops). Alumni who had not been in Ibadan for many years were impressed by the improved road network (several major roads have been dualized) and the improved level of cleanliness. University of Ibadan has expanded considerably.

Social Program

There was a full and well-organized social program, starting with a Welcome Cocktail Party at the Cappa Bar (by the Squash Court). There were two dinner-dances, one of which was organized by the IITA Women's Group. An IITA Sports Fest was held on the occasion of the Reunion. The Sports Fest was preceded by a colourful staff parade starting from Building 500 (F.F. Hill Hall) and ending at the Sports Center.

Impressions of the Sixth Reunion

The overall impression of the Reunion was highly positive. One alumnus remarked that one could summarize the Reunion in six words: "We came, we saw, we marvelled." Some alumni recalled the remarkable improvement compared with the period of a few years before Dr Sanginga was appointed Director General. One person, who was a teacher at the IITA School from 1973-1976, remarked: "The last time I visited, the campus was very filthy but now that has changed. While coming this time, I said to myself, let me come and see how much worse it may be. But I am happy there has been improvement. As a former teacher, I must commend the Director General's keen attention to the crèche and I encourage all of us always to pray for him and his team." Alice Flinn-Stilwell who was at IITA in the early 70's and came all the way from Australia stated: "We so enjoyed being back in Nigeria and in seeing IITA forging ahead with new and exciting research."

As another illustration of the positive impressions of the Reunion, one might cite the following report submitted by Dr Les Everett to alumni resident in the United States and Canada. Les Everett was an IITA maize breeder from 1982-1992; seven of those years were with the NCRE project in Cameroon. He is presently at the University of Minnesota Water Resources Center, St. Paul. He wrote:

"The funding situation at IITA had improved. Nteranya Sanginga, the DG, overlapped many of the alumni in the 1980s first as a student and then as international staff before leading a program at CIAT. He was remembered as very engaging and energetic and that has not changed. As a new DG in 2011 he inherited a \$15 million deficit and in two years filled that gap and doubled the budget to over \$100 million. He has given presentations directly to Bill Gates and has the confidence of the African Development Bank. The mission and geographic scope of IITA have broadened; IITA now has staff and facilities in west, central, east, and southern Africa and has joint programs with other CGIAR centers in Africa.

The success in building programs and budgets as well as Sanginga's personable approach have created a very positive attitude among all levels of staff. I was impressed by how helpful and articulate the local staff were.

We had a great time at the reunion. It was well organized and included a tour of laboratories, a bus tour of downtown Ibadan, a football match complete with a parade to the football field, receptions, two dinner-dances, sessions with Ken Dashiell (Deputy Director General for

Partnerships and Capacity Development) and Sanginga, and time with current program staff. Representation was strong from African alumni but not strong enough from outside of Africa.

The alumni decided that since the 50th anniversary of IITA was in three years, that there should be another reunion on campus at that time. There would be an alumni office to keep in touch with alumni and to help organize the event.

Another reason to keep in touch with alumni is to keep us as part of the support network for IITA's work. Some alumni have already been of substantial assistance, and Sanginga and Ken Dashiell want to strengthen those ties.

If you haven't been back at IITA recently, I believe you would be as pleased as I was to see how well they are doing and visit with some great colleagues, both past and present."

Next Reunion

It was suggested that since IITA would be celebrating the 50th Anniversary of its establishment in 2017, it would be good to hold the next Reunion on that occasion at the IITA Headquarters in Ibadan. The suggestion was accepted unanimously. To that end, a working group was suggested to include: Kenton Dashiell, Ade Aderogba, Stephen Lawani, and Gabriel Okwor. As it turned out, Kwesi Atta-Krah was appointed the chair of the IITA@50 Committee; in that capacity and with the help of Ken Dashiell, Kwesi was to coordinate the Alumni events.

SEVENTH ALUMNI REUNION

As decided at the Sixth Reunion in 2014, the Seventh Reunion was held at IITA Headquarters in Ibadan during the week of the celebration of IITA's 50th Anniversary. The Reunion events were incorporated into the elaborate 50th Anniversary Program during the main celebration week of July 24-29, 2017. July 26 was specifically designated in the Program as "Alumni Day".

At the beginning of formal meeting of the Alumni, IITA Director General Nteranya Sanginga, welcomed Alumni to IITA's campus in Ibadan and to the Institute's 50th Anniversary. He also urged them to support IITA. They also watched and listened to a song and dance performance by students of the IITA International School, and then went on a tour around the IITA facilities. These included research laboratories, the Knowledge Center, the genetic resources conservation rooms, some screen houses for hydroponic experiments, the food processing centers, the Business Incubation Platform (BIP) and facilities housing the activities of the Youth Agripreneurs. Several new developments were evident.

On the Alumni Day, there was a ceremony to change Equatorial Crescent, a major residential street, to Golden Jubilee Crescent. On the occasion, the replanting of the street was initiated. Ms Deni Bown, Head of the Forest Unit, explained that the renamed street was being replanted with African nutmeg/Làkòsin (*Monodora tenuifolia*) to celebrate the gathering of alumni for the 50th Anniversary. African nutmeg, a small tree found in the IITA forest, was chosen because it bears beautiful golden-yellow flowers followed by orange-like fruits, making it the perfect tree to celebrate a Golden Jubilee. Being a native tree, the African nutmeg is good for biodiversity. The seeds are ground as a spice and used for medicinal purposes. But why replant Equatorial Crescent? The reason is that the lovely pink cassias – planted by the Physical Plant Services (PPS) under the guidance of Alec Butler almost 50 years ago – have sadly reached the end of their days. Deni Bown acknowledged the presence of Alec Butler, who was responsible for planting the fine avenues of trees along the residential roads of the IITA campus. Alec planted one of the first 50 African nutmeg plantlets planted that day.

General Discussion of the IITA Research and Development Program

There was general appreciation of the enhanced breadth and depth of the research agenda, which now incorporates significant elements of development and delivery.

The developments in Business Incubation (e.g. Aflasafe) and Youth Entrepreneurship were highlighted as exciting new developments with potential to enhance out-scaling.

The establishment of two principal directorates, Research for Development (R4D) and Partnerships for Delivery (P4D) was also seen as innovative, and with potential to enhance overall impact of the institute if well integrated and managed in a holistic manner.

Specific Questions and Suggestions

While a number of questions and suggestions were raised and discussed, there was an overall recognition of the fact that the institute has evolved over time, and indeed circumstances have also changed compared to what existed in earlier years. Consequently a number of key objectives and targets may have changed as a result of new realities, challenges and opportunities. This needs to be taken into consideration in the analysis of the issues raised. Brief summaries of the responses and discussion are indicated for the various issues raised:

What happened to the research on “Promiscuous Varieties” of soybean, which used to be a principal research goal of IITA in the past? A lot of emphasis and visibility during the field trip was given to production of inoculants through NoduMax, etc., but with no mention of the promiscuous varieties, which were in the past, being bred to by-pass the need for inoculation for smallholder farmers.

- **Brief response:** *This work is still active, particularly targeted for smallholder farmers who might not have access to inoculum. However we have found that for farmers who already purchase inputs such as fertilizer and consider farming as a business, inoculation is desirable and products such as NoduMax produce significant yield gains.*

What happened to the work on yam miniset technique for production of planting materials? Is it now discontinued in favour of the new approaches (aeroponics, hydroponics, etc.)?

- **Brief response:** *The miniset technique remains important in the production of yam planting materials at the farmer level. It has been widely promoted over the past decade together with refinements to raise its efficiency and ensure the health of the seed yams produced. The new approaches (bioreactors, aeroponics, semi-autotrophic hydroponics) are intended for use by specialist seed producers and seed companies, aiming to further raise the efficiency and quantity of annual seed yam production in West Africa that would lower the cost of yam production.*

A lot of the research seen was commodity specific or commodity-oriented. What happened to all the work in Farming Systems Research, including long term soil management studies, alley cropping, cover cropping, integrated systems research as was done through the FSP and RCMD. Why have these been discontinued?

- **Brief response:** *Indeed FSR and RCMD have been discontinued as Programs or Divisions in our management structure. This has been due to changes in donor funding scenarios. However the work of systems research and agronomy have not been discontinued. These are now integrated into the respective commodity programs in the sense of agri-food systems programs. Examples of specific projects in this regard are ACAI (African Cassava Agronomy Initiative); Sustainable Weed Management Technologies for Cassava Systems in Nigeria; and TAMASA (Transformation of Agronomic Research and Delivery Services in Maize-based Systems in sub-Saharan Africa) all supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Research on Alley cropping is largely discontinued but elements of the system exist in various farming systems.*

Has the work of the institute relating to fundamental research – such as in Virology, Pathology, Striga control, etc., decreased in favour of crop breeding and value chain research?

- **Brief response:** *Work in fundamental and scientific research is still active in the institute. These relate to virology, pathology, molecular biology, etc. These are carried out in world-class laboratories and also within particular commodity value chain and seed systems research.*

With regard to the Youth Agripreneur initiative, it is very much needed for transformation of agriculture. However, it is important to be more precise on what the model is that IITA is advancing for use outside of IITA, for countries and other institutions. Also, some reporting needs to be done on the effectiveness of the IYA program in releasing incubatees, and what has been the success rate in establishing businesses following incubation? The 18 months incubation period was also questioned. It was felt this may not be realistic for countries and for large number of youths.

- **Brief response:** *The IITA Youth Agripreneur program has made major advances in the definition of a model, in the development of capacity among the pioneer youth group, and in the setting up of Agripreneur groups in other countries and locations. The model is being adapted for different country situations. In partnership with AfDB, a new initiative called ENABLE Youth is now developed to fast-track scaling out to countries.*

It was clarified that the 18 months incubation was at the initial phase which has now been shortened and should no longer exceed 12 months. The Borno Youths were also used as examples to illustrate the spin-offs likewise the grant provided by IITA to the start-ups for 3 enterprises. The Agripreneur initiative continues to be “work in progress” and in this regard, the views of alumni are considered most pertinent and helpful.

IITA in the past made great efforts on Capacity Building of African scientists, through various channels. This appears to be reduced. The institute is encouraged to revisit this area and get back to the old emphasis.

- **Brief response:** *Capacity development is still being done at the institute, though at a lower degree compared to earlier years. Current capacity development is done largely through the respective projects. Student attachments for MSC and PhD*

research studies is however still very active, and is hosted within the R4D directorate.

Francophone country representation in IITA is weak. The elimination of the French language translation and interpretation unit that existed in the past, may have contributed to this. The institute is called upon to revisit this issue.

- **Brief response:** *This point is noted and will be further discussed within management*

The IITA website does not contain useful information on the diversity of products and instruments available from the institute's research, and that is of potential use for countries and partners. It should be easier to get information on what IITA is doing in particular countries and what opportunities exist, etc.

- **Brief response:** *Point well taken. There are ongoing efforts to strengthen the website. Alumni suggestions will be addressed in that context.*

Alumni Business and Major Decisions

Alumni participants at the Seventh Reunion agreed to put the Alumni Association on a formal basis. The intent is to ensure sustainability of the Association and to put it in a position to better support the Institute through advocacy, resource mobilization and other means. Some specific decisions and suggestions were made as follows:

- The Association should take on a more formal nature with an approved Governance Structure. It should become a formal body that deliberates and acts on initiatives to support the institute.
- The Alumni Association should play a role in advocacy and resource mobilization for the institute.
- The Alumni functions should be better coordinated and an active database kept. To support this, an Alumni Office needs to be established within IITA, as the fulcrum for the overall alumni operations. The cost of such an office would need to be met through alumni contributions. The Office could be placed in the Partnership for Development Directorate under the direct supervision of the Deputy Director General in charge of that Directorate.
- Alumni Association should be a dues-paying association.
- An Interim Steering Committee for the Alumni Association should be established to drive forward the recommendations of the 7th Alumni Reunion. This Committee should work very closely with the senior management of IITA to define the way forward and priority actions, etc.
- The Interim Steering Committee was given the following Terms of Reference:
 - (i) Define the goals and principal objectives of the IITA Alumni Association;
 - (ii) Propose a Governance Structure for the association;
 - (iii) Propose mechanisms for advocacy and resource mobilization. Such mechanisms might include (a) identification of potential donor sources (traditional or non-traditional); (b) establishment of alumni-initiated fund

raising for specific IITA projects; and (c) establishment of an Endowment Fund for IITA.

The Interim Steering Committee was formed and consisted of the following members: Ade Aderogba, Kwesi Atta-Krah, Ken Dashiell, Leslie Everett, Ayoka Lawani, Stephen Lawani, Jo Mulongoy, Kanayo Nwanze, Gabriel Orkwor, Binta Sall, and Eugene Terry. Stephen Lawani and Eugene Terry were to be the Chair and Vice Chair respectively. Ken Dashiell and Kwesi Atta-Krah will serve as the IITA Management Focal Points. It was understood that the Committee could co-opt additional members.

Reunion Frequency and Venue

It was agreed at a meeting of the Interim Steering Committee that the frequency of Reunion Meetings shall be 2 years. The Venue for the meetings will be determined based on the IITA Hubs, strategic reasons such as strong alumni presence and preference, interaction with donors, etc. In every case the final decision will be determined by the formal Alumni Committee when established.

Next Reunion

The 8th Alumni Reunion will be held in 2019 at Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, at the East Africa Hub of IITA. The Interim Committee, following consultation with IITA Management and East Africa Hub Director, will announce the exact date for the next reunion.

Follow-up Actions

It was decided that the following actions be taken.

The 7th Reunion Meeting report should be prepared and shared with all alumni.

Database of alumni contacts to be organized by region and shared with the region focal points as identified in the 2014 Reunion (Action: Ken and Kwesi).

Operational plan for the Interim SC to be developed and shared with IITA Management, and with Alumni (Action: Steve Lawani and Eugene Terry).