

Women's day celebration in IITA Burundi Station

On 8 March, IITA-Burundi and its partners, Bioversity International, ILRI, WorldVeg, and Institut des Sciences Agronomiques du Burundi (ISABU), celebrated the 42nd edition of Women's Day.

The ceremonies started with talks by Emmanuel Njukwe and Beatrice Nahimana, respectively, Country Representative and Administrator of the IITA Burundi Station. This was followed by two presentations. The first one by Ms Beatrice Barikore, a female journalist with National Radio and Television of Burundi (RTNB), focused on the life of women in Burundian society. The second was by Ms. Alice Simbare of Bioversity International and focused on validating the differences in reasoning between women and men. The discussions on these two topics showed that women are not



IITA Burundi Balance for Better

adequately represented in all areas of life; that this situation is the result of cumulative inequalities which have been caused by several factors, especially socioeconomic and cultural factors; and that to succeed, the weaknesses of the woman should be complemented by the man and vice versa. The solution proposed to

change this situation is that all parents should treat boys and girls in the same way and that the education of children from an early age should be based on reality and not beliefs. The discussion ended with a cocktail that the station had prepared for the guests of honor.

IITA Research Farm Unit launches new mower

The Research Farm Unit of IITA launched a new mower on 18 March at the farm office. They celebrated the success of completely fabricating the mower from scratch, as this achievement is the first of its kind.

The farm office usually imports mowers but this time, they challenged themselves to make one, confident that they could do it. Farm Manager Igbaifua Wilson said "We didn't contract it to the FMS fabrication unit, because we decided to be creative and self-sufficient." According to Wilson, the mower is worth more than 2.5 million naira and even better than a similar mower IITA Kano planned to purchase for 1.2 million. "I am optimistic that this mower will last for many years before repairs will be needed," he added.

According to the Unit's Fabrication Foreman, Onaivi Cummy, who oversaw the mower fabrication project, the major challenge faced was the unavailability of a folding

machine for the mower plate. The folding was not such an easy task. Strong and quality material was used for the plate and wrong folding can alter the shape. "If the plate is not rightly shaped, it will affect the effectiveness of the mower," said Cummy. Wilson, however, said, "The folding was the only work contracted out; if we had the folding machine, we would have done it ourselves."

The mower, unlike others, has chains for trapping down stones and other objects from hitting the operator and other people around the field, while working. The Farm Office personnel noted that the new mower seems to be the best they have had and is something they are proud of.



Farm Office new mower

IITA commissions new equipment at the Moniya Area Command

Continuing a tradition of maintaining a cordial connection with host communities, an IITA delegation paid a courtesy visit to the newly instituted Moniya Area Command in Ibadan, Nigeria last December. During the visit, the Institute donated new office equipment and furniture to help facilitate the work of the Command. Deputy Director General, Corporate Services (DDG-CS) Hilde Koper-Limbourg, led the delegation, which was received by the Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) Folurunsho Ajao.

In his welcome address, the ACP commended IITA's responsiveness to the needs of the community in general and the Police Command in particular. He also maintained that the creation of the new area command was a demonstration of the responsiveness of the Inspector General of Police to the need for proximity in community policing. While there have been challenges in setting up the new area command, he appreciated IITA's gesture of providing some office equipment and promised to relay this to the Oyo State Commissioner of Police, Abiodun Odude.

In her response, Koper-Limbourg expressed appreciation at the establishment of the new area command. She highlighted IITA's history in Ibadan and acknowledged that the Institute has always received a



DDG-CS Hilder Koper Limbourg presents CSR project

lot of support from security operatives. She also underlined the push by the Director General, Dr Nteranya Sanginga, to ensure that the Institute's research actually makes a tangible impact in the host communities. This, she noted, led to the creation of one of the Institute's flagship programs, IITA Youth Agripreneurs, which has served as an outlet for dissemination of some research technologies as well as helping with the creation of employment for youth in the community.

The Institute's delegation also had members of the IITA Security Unit

including David Oluwadare, Head of Security Unit and James Adedayo, Security Superintendent. Oluwadare also pointed out that IITA has championed crop processing, leading to products such as high-quality cassava flour, while also reducing the stress of farming by helping with machine fabrication to remove the drudgery from farming.

The visit concluded with the official handover and commissioning of the new furniture and equipment, which included air conditioning units, chairs, a filing cabinet, and a water dispenser.

IITA DG motivates Communication Unit volunteers

IITA has developed a reputation as an organization that provides equal opportunities for every willing person to learn and grow. Apart from the regular staff, IITA has a training mandate that provides opportunities for young people to work as interns and volunteers. Volunteering at IITA allows a volunteer to interact with professionals from different backgrounds, both locally and internationally. It also helps in developing the prospects of the individual.

In January, IITA Director General Nteranya Sanginga visited the Communication Unit in IITA Ibadan, during which he interacted with volunteers at the unit. He commended the two young people for their selfless contribution to IITA.

During the interaction, he asked questions pertaining to study background and experience so far in IITA. He encouraged the volunteers to seize chances that present themselves by discussing points relating to professionalism and advancement in career. DG Sanginga described the importance of volunteering as a way to create opportunities for a person whose career is budding.

An important point highlighted by DG Sanginga is the need to be proactive. He said that professionalism requires being



DG Sanginga and Communication Unit Volunteers

in control of situations, causing something to happen rather than waiting to respond to it after it happens. In addition to that, it is necessary to monitor and evaluate the impact of output. This, for the media section, is achieved by reaching out to participants in the project/event to find out if related news stories met their expectations, whether it was shared with other group members, and how far-reaching the published story was. According to DG Sanginga, not only is this an approach towards ascertaining the value or worth of work done, it is also a

way of assessing opportunities and building relationships.

Head of Communication Katherine Lopez noted that "we have a good team of young people working here" and corroborated the view of DG Sanginga regarding self-motivation and seizing opportunities.

Upcoming projects requiring the participation of the unit were discussed.

Corporate Services organizes gender awareness program for FMS unit

An excerpt from Dr AmareTegbaru's gender report (2015) said: "Although IITA has made great progress in integrating gender in its workplace and research, there is still a lot that needs to be done" to transform the mindset of staff to be more gender conscious in all its operations and interactions. This is because gender awareness plays an important role in informing women and men about gender equality, the benefits of a more gender-equal society, and the consequences of gender inequality.

The DDG-Corporate Services, Hilde Koper-Limbourg organized a half-day gender awareness refresher program for FMS managers and supervisors on 29 March with a total of 45 participants. The IITA-HR team of facilitators was led by Head of HR, Lilian Mendoza, Lade Oke, Wole Oladokun, and Helen Adeniji.

The FMS unit is predominantly male dominated and consists of 11 sections (Building and grounds, Construction, Electrical and gas, Heavy equipment and Fabrication, Power House, Refrigeration, Scientific equipment, Transport pool, Transport and auto, Water treatment, and General admin.) with just a pocket of females owing to several factors, one of which is the nature of the activities that may have contributed to why females do not apply for advertised roles.

In her welcome address, Koper-Limbourg emphasized the importance of the gender awareness program and the need to always ensure that staff members in FMS are sensitive as the concept of gender refers to both male and female in any given environment. She also reiterated that IITA is committed to providing a workplace that



FMS participants at the gender awareness seminar

is respectful, gender diverse, and equitable for all staff.

The program highlighted talking points on the concept of gender, gender dynamics, and using gender inclusive language; harassment and discrimination; and what to do and where to get help (for victims of any form of harassment and discrimination). The key take-aways from the program was that FMS managers and supervisors should:

- Embrace gender diversity and inclusion and demonstrate it in every day workplace relations, decisions, and practices.
- Leverage on diversity for corporate strength, growth, and success.
- Consciously mainstream gender perspectives in operations.
- Maintain respectful relationships with all categories of staff

regardless of position, gender, nationality, and cultural background, and any other personal dispositions.

- Avoid gender jokes, side talk, and comments that appear disrespectful, discriminatory, or biased whether in formal or informal communication.
- Avoid actions and statements that are discriminatory or that are deemed intimidating by colleagues.
- Avoid sexual harassment and quid pro quo sexual harassment, especially given positions as leaders and managers/supervisors.
- Be gender conscious in advancing the cause of men and women alike and avoid stereotyping men and women.

FMS...everyone counts!

Obituary: Charles Bisimwa

On 12 February, Charles Bisimwa, our colleague from Bukavu, passed away after a brief illness. This news came as a great shock to us since Charles had been actively involved in a project implementation meeting until 8 February. He was going to take on the critical role of partnership management in a multi-stakeholder initiative focusing on the value chain in East DR Congo.

I had worked with Charles for over 10 years, first through his engagement in starting up CIALCA activities in East DR Congo and later through various other initiatives. His knowledge on "who is who" in agriculture in that region was formidable and his commitment to deliver even more so. Charles had a very accommodating personality and was always ready to assist whoever needed help. He will be dearly missed. The Central Hub



colleagues and I would like his family and friends to accept our sincere condolences.— *Bernard Vanlauwe, Director, Central Africa Hub*

Quotable quote

"A successful man is one who can lay a firm foundation with the bricks others have thrown at him."

- David Brinkley

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