

IITA corps members organize maiden edition of Corpers' Week



NYSC Week group photo

IITA Corpers Association (ICA) has launched its first Corpers' Week at IITA. The event, with the theme "Becoming Assets, Building Capacity", took place on 18-20 September. ICA executives organized the event with the intention of preparing and positioning National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) members for future opportunities and empowering them for community development.

IITA has a long history of welcoming corps members to the Institute to help them gain industry experience, build their capacity, and form their character in preparation for future opportunities. Although ICA has been in existence since 2017, this was the first Corpers' Week to hold in IITA, initiating an empowerment program for all corps members in the institute with resource persons from the Institute.

The activities began with the NYSC Local Government Inspector (LGI) for Akinyele Local Government Area (LGA) of Oyo State, Oladeji Lakasi,

speaking on fostering the good relationship between NYSC and IITA. He highlighted NYSC's plan to maintain the solid relationship it has with IITA to ensure that corps members keep benefiting from IITA's vast experience. Lakasi acknowledged the mutual privilege of corps members learning with IITA and for IITA to have these corpers. "IITA is a reputable institution which takes the security of corpers seriously. The Institute's environment is influencing corpers positively, building them to be presentable," he said.

In the course of the event, ICA President Olawale Akinmoladun, enlightened his fellow corps members on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030, encouraging them to partner with organizations working to achieve these goals, as part of their community development. He recommended IITA as one of the best institutes to collaborate with as most of the Institute's projects are geared

towards achieving the SDGs. "IITA is the foremost organization working to achieve the SDGs and its activities cut across the 17 goals," he said.

Sougrynoma Zaïnatonu Soré, Head of IITA Capacity Development Office (CDO), attributed the credit of initiating and driving the idea of the Corpers' Week to the ICA Executives, stating that IITA only supported by providing resources to make the event a success.

On Friday was a panel session on the topic Gender Balance in Agriculture: A plus for improving livelihood. Speakers at the session were Kwesi Atta-Krah, Director, Advocacy and Country Alignment; Lilian Mendoza, Head of Human Resources represented by Helen Adeniji, Organizational Development Manager; Gueye Badara, Plant Tissue Culture and Conservation Scientist, Katherine Lopez, Head of Communication, and Sougrynoma Zainatou Soré, Head of CDO.

Takeaways from the interactive session were tips on how to succeed irrespective of one's gender, taking responsibility on choices made, creating an enabling environment to attract both genders in the workforce, providing platforms and capacity building for women, creating awareness and visibility to IITA's contributions to the 2030 SDGs No 1 Poverty, No 2 No Hunger, and No 5 Gender Equality.



Kwesi Atta-Krah inspiring the Corps members

IITA Uganda: Achieving Together!



IITA Uganda teambuilding group photo

It was another exciting time for the IITA Uganda team led by Regina Kapinga, IITA – Uganda Country representative, as they came together in a one-day teambuilding workshop facilitated by IITA-HR team builders, led by Lilian Mendoza, Head of Human Resources; Lade Oke, HR Manager – NRS; and Segun Ajao, HR Technician.

IITA Uganda team used the HR oversight visit by spending one day – 9 September on general meetings which covered brief highlights on IITA-Uganda followed by the presentation by the IITA-HQ HR team with special focus on IITA

policies regarding Gender in the Workplace; and Harassment and Discrimination. Thereafter, there was a tour of labs and on-campus field experiments at IITA-Sendus station.

There were also meetings with all staff followed by break-out sessions to address specific issues and matters pertaining to NRS and IRS respectively. This also included ad-hoc 1-on-1 meetings between individual staff and the HR team. On day two, all participants converged at Entebbe on various teambuilding activities.

According Regina, "Our carefully selected theme was and will continue to be "ACHIEVING TOGETHER".

Therefore, the teambuilding exercises designed for us—all of them aimed to accomplish this goal."

One of the activities was to demonstrate how team members should trust and carry each other's load so as to achieve together. This was an exciting exercise and all participants achieved it. In the course of the exercises, it was noted that several key aspects could make team members achieve together if practiced regularly. These include leadership, coordination, respect, integrity, collaboration, encouragement, embracing each other's strengths and weakness and seeing them as opportunities, having a clear vision on where you are heading and what you want to achieve, etc.

Finally, the Uganda team made some commitments on how to ensure that they "Achieve together" in an activity titled *Start doing, Keep doing, and Stop doing*.

The team building program served to reenergize the team and renew their commitment to what they tagged "Achieving together to transform African agriculture". Regina, the new Country Representative for Uganda, reiterated her commitment to building a vibrant IITA-Uganda team and sustaining the enthusiasm and team spirit demonstrated during the program.



IITA Uganda: Participants demonstrating trust

HR pays oversight visits to IITA Uganda and Southern Africa Hub



Oversight visit with Zambia staff

Insight on the fund constraints and other competing challenges led the Human Resources team headed by Lilian Mendoza and Lade Oke, HR Manager – NRS to pay a scheduled visit to the Eastern Africa Hub (Uganda) and Southern Africa Hub (Zambia). An awareness campaign on gender in the workplace, and

harassment and discrimination was discussed during the visits. Staff at the two locations were excited at the opportunity as many of them had not been able to connect effectively to webinars in the past due to hitches with Internet access.

It was a unique opportunity to address some concerns in the Southern Africa

Hub as the results of the 2017 staff engagement survey were further reviewed with the Hub Director. HR also used the occasion of the visit to present to the SAH leadership, managers, and supervisors in Zambia the Workplace Relations Model.

The occasion of the visit to Zambia also enabled HR to assess their people management practices and compliance. The availability of a dedicated HR Officer at the station was evidenced in the quality of record keeping and the management of people issues. The HR team handled effectively the communication with the staff regarding the changes in the labor law with enhanced benefits than the IITA HR policy provides.

HR is currently reviewing the implication of the changes in the employment law and will make a recommendation to Management.

Quotable quote

“Do what you can with all you have, wherever you are.”

– Theodore Roosevelt

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Oversight visit with Uganda staff