

IITA marks 25 years of transforming agriculture in Tanzania with staff and their families



Staff and their families during the 25th year celebration.

IITA celebrated 25 years of its dedication and efforts to seeking science-based solutions to the complex challenges facing the agriculture sector in Tanzania and the region. This milestone was marked at a fun day attended by the staff and family of IITA in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 8 December 2019.

The Hub Director, Victor Manyong, thanked all the staff for their hard work and dedication that had enabled the institute to grow and make a difference in the agriculture sector in the country.

“This is an important milestone for IITA here in Tanzania. We have grown tremendously from an organization of

only three people in 1994 when we started working in Tanzania on a regional effort to fight cassava diseases. Today we have over 120 people working for IITA in Tanzania in our offices in Dar es Salaam and Arusha, and we have one member of staff in Mbeya.

“Our research portfolio has increased, and we have seen the impact of our research on improving the lives of smallholder farmers not only in Tanzania but in the region. This could not have happened without the support and dedication of our staff and their families, our partners, and IITA management.”

He noted there were still many challenges facing the agriculture sector in the country and region and reiterated IITA’s commitment to work alongside its partners to find innovative solutions through cutting-edge research.

During the event, staff who had served the institute for over ten years were recognized with a long-service award.

The day’s program included team building, games for the staff and their family, and a general knowledge quiz on IITA followed by lunch.

IITA Forest Center

The maiden exercise, themed “Energizing for greater productivity,” was held at the Smokin Hills Golf Resort, Ilara-Mokin, Ondo State, from 15 to 17 January 2020. The aim was to enhance team productivity through the acquisition of organizational skills, bonding, and familiarization with work plans and focus for the year. These activities were facilitated by IITA HR, led by Helen Adeniji and Oluwole Amusa.

The technical session started at 2.30 pm on 15 January, and was led by Adewale Awoyemi, the Forest Center



IITA Forest Center Team Building.

Manager, who acquainted participants with the “Overview of the IITA Forest Center and expectations for the year.” Awoyemi remarked how the Center manages and utilizes forest resources for conservation, research, and education. After that, he highlighted the planned activities for 2020, asking each member of the team to pinpoint specific areas they could contribute to. This was followed by another interesting session, during which team members identified with each other. There were two groups, each of which was asked to compose a song to fit with the theme of the exercise; the songs were rated for originality and creativity. The lyrics of the winning

song are: Energizing for greater heights, IITA Forest Center, we explore, learn, and grow. We are for productivity, teamwork, and conservation!

After conducting bird watching on the evening of Day 1 and visiting the Olumirin Waterfall at Erin Ijesha on the morning of Day 2, the Keynote Address was delivered by Hilde Koper-Limbourg, the IITA DDG for Corporate Services. Koper-Limbourg commended the Forest Center for previous achievements and tasked them on what they could do to contribute to a “Greener IITA,” as highlighted in her work plan for the year.

To energize the team, HR Facilitators engaged participants in various activities, including keeping together, working together, understanding yourselves and the team, living the trust, and a pat on the back, all of which were geared towards togetherness, trust, interdependency, and teamwork. Members were later asked to highlight what the team should “start doing, keep doing, and stop doing”, which generated interest among participants. The wrap-up session was facilitated by Koper-Limbourg. The team departed for the IITA-Ibadan Campus at 12.00 pm on 17 January.

Cassava Breeding Unit organizes training for drivers

The cassava breeding unit of IITA has admonished its drivers to drive effectively as a means to save time, lives, and money. This charge was made during an indoor training titled “Effective Driving Techniques and Proper Management of Cassava Breeding Vehicles” organized by the unit on 5 January.

The training for drivers in the cassava breeding unit aimed to impact, encourage, and expose drivers to major highway signs within and outside the country.

In his speech, Dare Olusegun, IITA senior driver and technician in the cassava breeding unit, explained driving etiquette, and advised the participants to be cautious whether they have the right to the road or not. He said, “Part of the things you must check in vehicles is your emotional well-being. If you are driving the vehicle aggressively, you cannot concentrate on driving. Leave all your troubles behind before handling the steering, because by doing that, you will be saving time, lives, and money.”



Training session.

Andrew Smith, IITA senior research supervisor in the cassava breeding unit, commended the drivers for maintaining the vehicles in their care and applauded them for understanding the dual purpose of the vehicles—casual and executive. Moreover, he assured the drivers that the unit would provide the necessary equipment to ensure effective driving.

During the interactive session, some of the participants shared a few of their driving experiences and how they had

handled difficult situations. Also, the session allowed the participants to discuss some causes of crashes and how they can be averted. Some causes are: bad health of drivers, driving under the influence of alcohol, poor sight, mechanical error, bad road conditions, and weather conditions.

The training was coordinated by the senior maintenance staff of the cassava breeding unit with lectures, group discussions, and pictorial presentations.

Ibadan Bird Club Meeting

The first meeting of the Ibadan Bird Club (IBC) in 2020 attracted 77 members (41 males and 36 females.). Among these were 25 children, known as the IBC Juniors, and 32 beginners. The meeting was held along the John Craig Dam, located within the campus of IITA-Ibadan from 4.00 to 5.30 pm on 25 January.

After members introduced themselves, IBC Coordinator Mr Adewale Awoyemi gave an overview of the club and introduced members to the basics of bird watching. According to him, the subscription is free and club members, which include professionals and non-professionals, meet at different habitats to observe birds, as a leisure activity, at 4.00 pm on the last Saturday of every month. Mr. Awoyemi said the IBC registered a total of 679 members



IITA-Ibadan Bird Club.

between February 2016 and November 2019. This total included 307 females (45%), 372 males (55%), and 128 IBC Juniors (19%). After that, Mr Awoyemi led the bird walk and was assisted by Mary Adeyinka, who coordinated the IBC Juniors.

The walk was rewarding as a total of 399 birds, distributed across 21 species, was recorded (See the table below). This provided an opportunity for members to share ideas on topical issues, ranging from climate change to plastic pollution, and from habitat

destruction (especially of migratory flyways) to mitigating measures, which focused on traditional practices of species protection and the quantification of ecosystem services in economic terms.

Bird species recorded during the IBC meeting, which follows the taxonomic order (25 January 2020).

Species	Number	Species	Number	Species	Number
PHALACROCORACIDAE		ACCIPITRIDAE		CHARADRIIDAE	
Long-tailed Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax africanus</i>	5	Yellow-billed Kite <i>Milvus aegyptius</i>	3	Spur-winged Lapwing <i>Vanellus spinosus</i>	10
ARDEIDAE		PHASIANIDAE		SCOLOPACIDAE	
Little Egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i>	1	Double-spurred Francolin <i>Francolinus bicalcaratus</i>	1	Common Sandpiper <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	2
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	3	RALLIDAE		BUCEROTIDAE	
Squacco Heron <i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	4	Black Crake <i>Amauromis flavirostra</i>	1	African Pied Hornbill <i>Tockus fasciatus</i>	1
Intermediate Egret <i>Egretta intermedia</i>	3	Common Moorhen <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	2	MOTACILLIDAE	
Cattle Egret <i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	1	JACANIDAE		Plain-backed Pipit <i>Anthus leucophrys</i>	
Purple Heron <i>Ardea purpurea</i>	2	African Jacana <i>Actophilornis africana</i>	15	CORVIDAE	
THRESKIORNITHIDAE		BURHINIDAE		Pied Crow <i>Corvus albus</i>	
Hadada Ibis <i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>	1	Senegal Thick-knee <i>Burhinus senegalensis</i>	30	PLOCEIDAE	
ANATIDAE				Village Weaver <i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>	
White-faced Whistling Duck <i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	300			Total	399

IITA Cameroon celebrate workers and family members

December 20, 2019 marked the day of the end-of-year feast celebrated in IITA Cameroon. This year's event, unlike the previous one, was full of fun and merry-making as workers and family members celebrated together. The ceremony took place at the buckaroo of the Nkolbisson Station in Yaoundé, under the chairmanship of IITA Cameroon Country Representative Dr Masso Cargele.

To balance work and social life, the Country Representative had officially announced that work should close by midday, granting workers the opportunity to make the final preparations to receive their guests. As an honor to the invitees, protocol members were put in place to received and guide them to the seats reserved for them at the Station's ceremonial ground.

To officially begin the ceremony, Dr Masso Cargele, appreciated the families of workers who turned out. He also used the opportunity to thank all who made the event possible, especially the administrative staff and the women's group of IITA Cameroon. He equally demanded that a minute's silence be observed in honor and solidarity of workers who had lost loved ones during 2019.

This was closely followed by a welcome song presented by the IITA women. All the children present were given Christmas gifts. Meanwhile workers, together with their spouses



Staff and their families.

and their children, all took part in the different game competitions; the chair dance for the little children, jumping sacs for students and adults, egg and spoon race, and the tug-of-war for children and adults. The games in general were entertaining, but the tug-of-war drew most applause as both teams held tightly to the cord and avoided been pulled out of their comfort zones. In the end, the jury, based on non-respect of certain rules by members of "Team B" led by Mr Nanga Nanga Samuel, Research Assistant of Entomology lab in Cameroon, declared "Team A" lead by Dr Masso Cargele victorious.

At the end of the competition, the winners received gifts. All present discussed freely and interacted. The ambiance of the feast was highly praised, and some workers pledged to join the organizing committee to

improve on the organization for the end-of-year 2020. The light meal that was served was also appreciated. The feast officially closed at 5.00 pm with a group photograph.

Quotable quote

"When we strive to become better than we are, everything around us becomes better too."

- Paulo Coelho

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