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Researchers call for a gender-transformative approach to foster more inclusive and sustainable land use

In Africa and Asia, smallholder farm systems use about 83% of agricultural land. However, the livelihoods of these smallholder farmers depend majorly on effective land management and allocation.

Farmers in Duko Village, northern Ghana engaged in serious gaming simulation and negotiations. (photo credit: Mirja Michalscheck/Wageningen University & Research)

In rural areas, many household members often cultivate land, yet its allocation decisions depend heavily on a few dominant household members' interest and approval.

Researchers have carried out various studies on this subject. However, only a few focused on intra-household decision-making dynamics and systematically disentangled the interests and power positions of the various household members. A recent study, published in Land Use Policy (February 2020), was carried out in Northern Ghana to understand better how different interests, negotiation patterns, and power positions affect land allocation decisions and outcomes.

To make the research more engaging, study leader Dr Mirja Michalscheck, Natural and Social Systems Researcher, Wageningen University (WUR), used a gaming method to simulate a negotiation process among household members. They grouped the participants based on gender and household position, i.e., male household heads, wives, and eldest sons. Each group developed a plan for land use while a spokesperson from the group engaged in the negotiation process, representing the group's interest. Aside from the negotiation process, researchers

to page 2

Degradable waste: Soon to become an asset in Oyo State

IITA is looking at how to produce biogas from degradable waste. In line with this, DG Nteranya Sanginga called for a 3-day seminar for the youth biogas team on proposal writing, work plan drafting, and business plan writing. The seminar, which took place 16-18 September aimed to equip the team with the necessary skills for expanding the biogas project.

DG Sanginga, addressing the youths during the seminar.

The biogas team comprises some of the 2019 corps members that served in different units at IITA. Following the call of the DG for creative projects, the team came up with the idea of

producing biogas from degradable waste using biotechnology. The DG encouraged the team, led by Gregory Oluwole, to work with Engr Martins Akeredolu, Deputy Head of Facility Management Services (FMS), on the IITA Biogas project, to gain knowledge and expertise.

Under Akeredolu's tutelage, the youth biogas team was able to produce a portable digester. Akeredolu said that the team is working to increase the quality of their product, such that the quantity of gas produced will be able to serve the Institute's staff canteen for a start.

After the training on proposal and business writing for fund sourcing, the team went on a tour of a refuse dump site at the Akinyele Local Government Area of Oyo State. This was necessary to help them understand the necessities for expanding the project. The tour exposed the team to other possibilities, introducing more ideas for the project.

An interview with Mr Abiodun Amusan, Manager of the dumpsite, revealed that there are three other major dump sites in Ibadan, with the largest located in Apete. "This dumping site has been here for over 20 years," he explained.

The youths pitching the idea to Dr Debo Akande, for possible partnership with the Oyo State Government.

After the tour and discussion, the team resolved to partner with the Oyo State Government through the Ministry of Environment on waste management. This will help provide enough waste for recycling, not only to produce biogas for household cooking but also biofertilizer for farms and energy for electricity.

The DG had arranged a meeting for the youth with Dr Adebowale Akande, Executive Advisor to the Oyo State Governor on Agribusiness for potential investment. Seeing prospects in the idea, Akande advised the team to prepare an action plan and a pilot project. Akande also mentioned the health, social, and environmental impacts of poorly managed waste in Oyo State, and the adverse impacts on the climate. He also talked about the business aspects, stating how waste can be turned into wealth and serve as a source of employment in the State.

Researchers call for a gender-transformative approach to foster more inclusive and sustainable land use Continued from page 1

observed the spokesperson's body language, shares and sequence of speech, interruptions, and disagreements.

The study revealed that participants evaluated the male household head as the most influential on the land allocation decision, with 74% of the total power, followed by the wife having 14%, and the son, 12%. Though the head held the strongest position for decision making, he still gave considerable room to the wife and the son to bring forward their interests, possibly because of his dependency on their labor and financial support. The study also showed that the influence of the wife and the son rendered the decision-outcome more sustainable.

The research team, which also featured IITA Social Scientist and Gender Expert Gundula Fischer, therefore concluded that gender-transformative approaches and policies made to empower women and the youth through education or agricultural training would likely lead to more equitable decision-making. They also believe these would possibly lead to more profitable, diverse, and sustainable land-use decisions at household levels.

Here is a similar article from Africa RISING: https://africa-rising.net/serious-gaming-offers-insights-into-land-use-decision-dynamics-in-northern-ghana/.

Got a story to share?

Please send your story with photos and captions every Tuesday to iita-news@cgiar.org or Katherine Lopez (k.lopez@cgiar.org) and Uzoma Agha (u.agha@cgiar.org) for headquarters and Western Africa, Catherine Njuguna (c.njuguna@cgiar.org) for Eastern and Southern Africa, and David Ngome (d.ngome@cgiar.org) for Central Africa.

IITA and Ministry of Agriculture, DRC consolidate cooperation

The Ministry of Agriculture of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has signed an enhanced cooperation agreement with IITA regarding the development of DRC's agricultural sector for the next 5 years. The signing ceremony took place on 9 September in the capital city, Kinshasa.

IITA Country Representative in DR Congo, Zoumana Bamba said the agreement is merely a formalization of an existing collaboration between the two institutions and renewed proof of IITA's firm commitment to collaborate on project development in the agricultural sector in the DRC. The Institute is currently executing several projects in close partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture of the DRC. IITA is committed to giving its full support to the Ministry to increase awareness of prospects in agriculture.

His Excellency Joseph Kasonga Mukuta, Minister of Agriculture in DRC after MoU signature with IITA Country Representative Bamba Zoumana.

The partnership is enabling better private sector participation in different agricultural value chains and empowering women and youth by providing employment opportunities.

The Minister of Agriculture, His Excellency Joseph-Antoine Kasonga, firmly believes that the collaboration is bound to improve the living conditions of the Congolese people through the agricultural sector.

Vice-Chancellor of Uni of Abuja visits IITA Abuja Station

A 5-member delegation from the University of Abuja led by the Vice-Chancellor Professor Abdul-Rasheed Na'Allah visited IITA Abuja Station on 14 September. The objective of the visit was to explore the possibility of reviving a 2009 MoU between the University and IITA.

Head of IITA-Abuja, Gbassey Tarawali, and the IITA Yam Seed Systems Specialist and former University of Abuja lecturer, Beatrice Aighewi, received the delegation. Tarawali welcomed the visitors, saying "We are both a learning and research Institute and there is need for sharing knowledge as often as possible." He made a presentation on IITA's work in Abuja, Nigeria, and sub-Saharan Africa in the last 50 years.

Visitors at the yam screen house.

Presenting on the "Recent developments yam seed systems," Aighewi pinpointed the shift from using tubers to vines in yam propagation so that more tubers will be available for food. She also indicated that two students from the University of Abuja were carrying out their projects within the Yam Improvement for Income and Food Security in West Africa (YIIFSWA) project.

The Vice-Chancellor, during the visit said, "Agriculture is one of the thrusts of the university." He explained in detail, the structure, achievements, challenges, and the plan for the Faculty of Agriculture in the University, stressing that IITA has a lot to offer the University based on its track record over the years. He posited that "The MoU with IITA must work and fast too. For this reason, I brought the Dean and the most senior management staff in the Faculty on this visit to IITA today," emphasizing the importance of the visit to the University.

In his response, Tarawali welcomed the idea of working together and noted that "It will be a great opportunity for us to work actively together."

The visitors were taken on a tour of the Station afterwards.

Charismatic root and tuber champion passes on

Professor Felix Nweke, whose work on cassava and other tropical root and tuber crop like yam left a lasting impact on agricultural value chains in multiple African countries, passed away last month, August, in the US.

A forerunner of value chain research and transformation in Africa, former IITA senior economist, and Michigan State University professor, Nweke made significant contributions to root and tuber crop research and value chain development.

A charismatic colleague, Nweke joined IITA in 1987 and served as the project leader of COSCA (Collaborative Study of Cassava in Africa), a six-country survey of cassava in Africa financed by the Rockefeller Foundation and IITA from 1989 to 199.

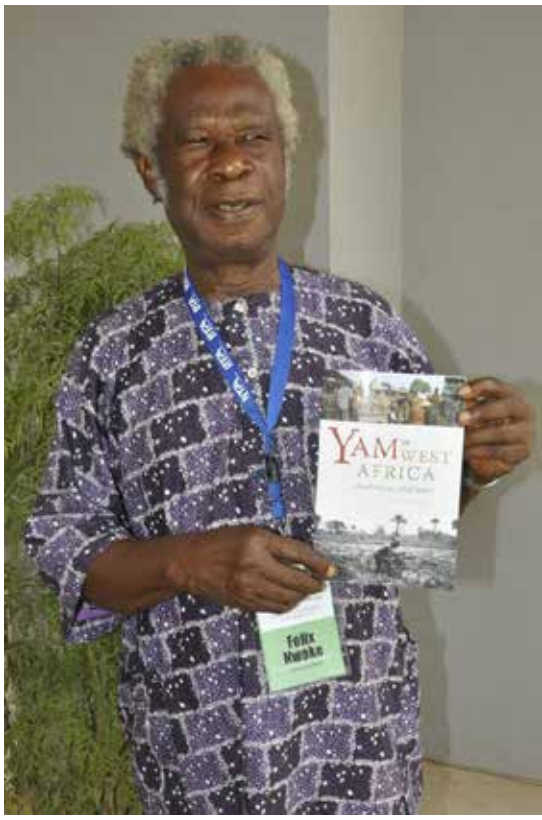
COSCA aimed to improve the relevance and impact of agricultural research on cassava to take full advantage of its potential in increasing food production and incomes in Africa. The study was conducted in Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zaire (now DR Congo). The project produced over 23 working papers outlining findings that still influence numerous cassava research and development activities in IITA and the world, i.e., The contribution of IITA improved cassava to food security in sub-Saharan Africa: An impact study. The results of the project also formed the basis for a well-known book for which he was the lead author: 'The Cassava Transformation: Africa's Best-Kept Secret' which was published by Michigan State University Press in November 2001.

Because of his work on COSCA, in 1995, he was given the Distinguished Service Award by the International Society for Tropical Root Crops-African Branch (ISTRC-AB) for outstanding leadership in the COSCA study. In 2013, ISTRC-AB recognized him with the Lifetime Achievement in research on root and tuber crops.

Unknown to many, Prof, as he liked to be called, was first recruited as a yam economist in IITA in the 1970s. His impact can also be felt in his contributions to the Yam Improvement for Income and Food Security in West Africa (YIIFSWA) project, where he championed the need for a study on the economic importance of yam and contributed to the publication of a working paper titled Yam: A Cash Crop in West Africa. In 2016 he published a book titled Yam in West Africa: Food, Money, and More, promoting the research contributions of IITA through YIIFSWA for expanding yam production, increasing sales, helping farmers, and bringing more of this staple food to those who need it.

Nweke has also consulted for numerous African governments, the Scientific and Technical Research Committee of the Organization of African Unity (STRC-OAU), the Ford Foundation, and FAO (Food and Agriculture of the United Nations) on the problems of the root and tuber food systems in Africa.

In one speaking engagement Nweke said "Cassava and yam are interesting to me because they are rooted in my blood; if you cut me, I shall bleed cassava and yam. I could have migrated to the US and worked on wheat or corn, but that would have been a betrayal; by working on yam and cassava, I am staying true to the course; I am giving back to what made me what I am, and I feel good doing that". For many scientists and development workers who had the priviledge to work with Prof. Nweke, this total commitment to the cause of African development and the key role of root and tuber crops in it was evident at all times and he will always be remembered for it.



Late Professor Felix Nweke.

Prof is survived by his children.

Take responsibility!
Stop the spread of COVID-19!

Always clean your hands; practice physical and social distancing; wear face masks;
avoid crowds and public places; keep a 2-meter distance from the next person;
practice general sanitation and hygiene.

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