

Risk Awareness Training: Fire outbreak and preventions



Participants at the Risk awareness training on fire outbreak and prevention: Mr. Ado Rabo flanked by Deputy Director, Kano State Fire Station

As part of risk awareness activities, the IITA Kano station organized a Fire Fighting Training on Wednesday, 4 November 2020, at the station's conference room in the early hours of the day.

The training was anchored by a team under the Deputy Director's leadership, Kano State Fire Service. This was to enlighten the staff on the dangers and harm that a fire outbreak can cause and how to fight fire incidents.

According to Mr Ado Rabo, the Admin Manager, the training is vital because a fire incident can happen to anyone. Therefore, staff need to be sensitized about the dangers of a fire outbreak, the way out of such situations, and how to help a neighbor or even yourself when such situations arise.

"Fire kills, fire injures, and fire destroys," said Mr Isa Auwalu, the Deputy Director, Kano State Fire Service. Fire outbreaks are a common phenomenon in our surroundings; they kill people, injure, and equally destroy property. But the important thing is to know how to control or stop a fire.

For a fire to start, it needs a source of ignition, a source of fuel, and a source of oxygen. For example, if a smoker falls asleep with a cigarette still lit and sets fire to the sofa, the cigarette is the source of ignition, the material on the sofa is the source of fuel, and the air is the source of oxygen.

Mr Auwalu mentioned that the root causes of fire are ignorance, carelessness, and providential trust, while the common causes of fire are smoking in a prohibited area, children playing with matches in the kitchen, using a multi-adaptor, leaving a fire unattended to, and poor storage.

Mr Auwalu stated that there are different types of fire extinguishers for different types of fire.

Red cylinder water extinguishers.

Yellow cylinder foam extinguishers, most suited to extinguishing liquid fires such as diesel and petrol.

The Black cylinder CO₂ extinguishers are ideal for places with a lot of

electrical equipment or those involving flammable liquids, such as paraffin or petrol.

The Blue cylinder powder extinguishers are excellent multipurpose fire extinguishers because they can be used on most fires.

According to Mr Auwalu, in the absence of a fire extinguisher, one can use a blanket soaked in water or a combination of water and detergent (to be whisked until foamy).

After the lectures, the staff were taught how to use the fire extinguishers in the open.



Spotlight: Dr Manuele Tamò



Manuele Tamò, Head of the IITA-Benin station

Manuele Tamò is the Head of the IITA-Benin station. He is the second child; his elder sister lives in Switzerland. He is married to his lovely wife, Linda Ayele, and lives in Cotonou. He has four sons: Giorgio, Stefano, and Giovanni live in Switzerland, and Toni lives in the UK.

He grew up in a small village in southern Switzerland and had one school friend with whom he explored “wild” places to find “strange” plants and animals, with a lot of adventures in the nearby woods. Collecting edible mushrooms and chestnuts was part of the fun. A major life-changing challenge came when it was discovered that he was shortsighted, which happened quite early in primary school as he could not read the blackboard from the middle row. Hence, he still wears corrective glasses to date.

Manuele’s parents are both late. His father was the head of a local bank agency in the neighboring village (where he grew up) but had to stop working because of his heart condition; he died at the age of 74. His mother had a community shop before she got married to his father. However, she stopped working to take care of the household and died at 85.

According to him, his parents have always supported him in his early developments and never attempted to influence his choices. He said that he could remember his mother would have preferred if he had chosen medicine instead of agronomy when he started university, but she did not try hard to change his mind. Unfortunately, his father had a serious heart problem while he was about to finish his MSc thesis, and had to spend a couple of months in the hospital. So, it was not an easy decision for him to leave his parents back in Switzerland while pursuing his PhD in Africa, but he still remembered how his parents asked him to go and follow his path.

Briefly share with us your work experience, greatest accomplishments, and work philosophy

I started my career as a Junior Professional Officer seconded by the Swiss Development Cooperation, with no real plan what to do after my PhD. Then one of our Benin post-docs decided to quit the job for personal reasons, so I was quickly offered that position. One of the major milestones in my early career in IITA was the PEDUNE/PRONAF project, with a global budget of more than US\$9,000,000, which financed most of my research activities until the late ‘90s.

You might be surprised to know that I came to IITA by “accident”, in fact, I was slated to work as a JPO on an IPM project in Madagascar, but at the last minute, the project manager decided to change course and consolidate the results without the need for further PhD students. At that point, my PhD advisor Prof. Delucchi at ETHZ told me: “no problem, you will do your PhD in Benin.”

Quite early after completing my PhD, I became involved with program management at IITA, first heading the Habitat Management Program, then coordinating the legume IPM project in its different versions, and ultimately the whole plant health management project (project ‘B’) before the CRPs were invented. Until today I am the focal point for the CRP on Grain Legume and Dryland Cereals.

My major research accomplishment in the last 10+ years was the development and deployment of biocontrol and biopesticide approaches in cowpea, particularly targeting the legume pod borer *Maruca vitrata*. Together with colleagues at WorldVeg, we have imported several adapted natural enemies from Asia, the putative area of origin of the pest, and released them in West Africa. As I speak today, they are being released in Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Nigeria. Preliminary observations at pilot sites indicate an encouraging reduction of the pod borer population by up to 86%.

I am certainly passionate about my work, encompassing field ecology, biodiversity, chemical ecology, and behavior of target insect pests and their associated natural enemies, to provide farming communities with safe and sustainable alternatives to chemical pesticides. I enjoy the collaboration of a solid network of colleagues in various African countries and outside Africa. I am happy when I can leave my office once in a while to be in the field and talk to farmers.

My values are integrity, determination, courage, solidarity, and compassion, be it in my social, family, or work environment. These are also the values I hope I was able to

transfer to my kids, and so far, I seem to have been quite successful.

My work philosophy: It evolved from an idealistic vision of discovery science with the naïve assumption “you do the good work, we will provide the funds for it”, to a more realistic approach where I say to myself that I will continue to do what I think will ultimately have an impact on farming livelihoods, but at the same time making sure I can leverage enough funds through special projects to make this happen.

What would you consider the greatest challenge in your career with IITA?

I would consider my greatest challenge as taking over the responsibility of heading the Cotonou Station during its most difficult times when we were under AfricaRice administration and our own past management had abandoned the station to its own fate, driven by presumed economic speculations—which were never discussed with us—and completely disregarding the science that was still going on in plant health.

For more than four years, the few “Cotonou rebels” were able to keep the station research activities afloat with scarce project funds and limited financial support from CRPs, but the station itself was operating at “zero budget” until the change in management in late 2011. I cannot be grateful enough to Dr Sanginga for his personal engagement to rescue the station. I will always remember that his first travel outside Nigeria when he was appointed DG was to come to Cotonou and meet with Ministers and partners to assure the Government of Benin that IITA will continue to support the activities in the country. This support has continued till today, and we are very proud of the new chemical ecology laboratory, which is currently being established and entirely financed by IITA.

Share with us something (favorite pastime) only your close family/friends know about you?

Before moving to Africa, I was a passionate hobby astronomer. At the age of 15 I discovered a nova explosion, Nova Cigni 1975a, which was actually reported a few hours earlier by another hobby astronomer in Japan because of the time difference. My old telescope is still in Switzerland and is being used by my youngest son.

Tell us your favorite slogan!

On est ensemble ! (We are together!)

Spotlight: Dr Mercy Diebiru-Ojo



Mercy Diebiru-Ojo, IITA's Cassava seed systems specialist.

Mercy Diebiru-Ojo is IITA's Cassava seed systems specialist. She has seven siblings, and she is the seventh child. Mercy is married to her sweetheart, Olayinka Ojo, and the marriage is blessed with a daughter and a son (Tamilore and Semilore). She had a normal childhood, although she was a very quiet and shy child. As a little girl, she used to fantasize a lot and preferred staying all by herself. One major challenge with this behavior was that she was never brave to speak out, and thus, she lost out on opportunities like being selected to lead events or even represent groups in school. She completely overcame this challenge when she got to university, although her first year at university was rough as she was constantly bullied because of her nature. She realized that

to survive her university years, she had to come out of my shell. Hence, she made friends with more outspoken people and gradually switched to being a bold, outspoken lady.

According to Mercy, her parents were amazing. She had a very strict mum who would go out of her way to ensure that her children got the best of what she could not have and a Dad who was soft and caring, likely to be the one to pamper and spoil the children. Concerning her chosen career, her parents were very supportive, and as a matter of fact, her Mum was very instrumental in her studying Agriculture, so she did not have to make extra effort to convince them. She said that her parents just asked her to be the best

at whatever she found herself doing. Her Dad is retired, while her Mum is late.

Briefly share with us your work experience, greatest accomplishments, and work philosophy

My work experience at IITA started from the Genetic Resources Center as a National Youth Service Corp member and continued to advance in my career as a crop conservationist and extended to breeding and now seed systems. In all the areas I have ventured into, I can say I have achieved some feat. At GRC, some of the work I did led to the standard protocol for cryopreservation of cassava and yam. In cassava breeding, my PhD work in flowering contributed to the ongoing shortening process of the cassava breeding cycle. In seed systems, I have been able to drive the commercialization of cassava and yam in the structured system.

As a child who fantasized a lot, working in IITA was one of my fantasies come true. Knowing about IITA was inevitable as a student studying agriculture at university. Hearing about it from my lecturers with a few researchers here and there, I knew it was one place to fulfill my potentials as an agricultural scientist. My attraction to my current position as a cassava seed systems specialist is the dynamics of the job and interesting interactions with external partners and farmers. I am passionate about building and working a team of young minds to take on leadership roles, and my values are simple, honesty and everything that comes with it. For work philosophy, I will choose teamwork and resourcefulness.

What would you consider the greatest challenge in your career with IITA?

Most of the challenges I have had in IITA have made me a better person. I cannot really say one is greater than the other. Having to work with difficult staff member, who would not agree to cooperate with other colleagues, but thankfully, she had to leave to further her studies.

Share with us something (favorite pastime) only your close family/friends know about you?

I have always been the smallest in all my classes from nursery, primary, secondary school, and even university,

Tell us your favorite slogan!

Strive to be the best at whatever you find yourself doing.

Contract Reviews: June–October 2020

Name: **Mr Marimagne Tchamba**

Designation: Database Manager, Genetic Resources Center.

Location: Ibadan, Nigeria

Seminar title: **Genebank data management for enhancing conservation and use**

Date: 11 June 2020



Name: **Mr Jonathan Odhong**

Designation: Communication and Knowledge

Sharing Coordinator - Africa RISING

Location: Ibadan, Nigeria

Seminar title: **Communication and knowledge management as facilitative essentials for success in agricultural research and delivery**

Date: 18 September 2020



Name: **Dr Shiferaw Feleke**

Designation: Agricultural Economist

Location: Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania

Seminar title: **Advancing a policy of food self-sufficiency in Post-COVID-19 Africa**

Date: 18 June 2020



Name: **Dr Frederick Baijukya**

Designation: N2Africa Country Coordinator for Tanzania

Location: Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Seminar title: **Breaking ground: IITA's agronomy research on innovating smallholder farming systems for greater impact**

Date: 22 September 2020



Name: **Dr Lieven Claessens**

Designation: Farming Systems Specialist for Africa RISING ESA

Location: Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania

Seminar title: **Systems research for agriculture – unravelling complexity for sustainable intensification.**

Date: 23 June 2020



Name: **Dr Georg Goergen**

Designation: Entomologist/Biocontrol Specialist

Location: Cotonou, Benin

Seminar title: **Hamessing insect biodiversity for sustainable plant health in tropical Africa**

Date: 5 October 2020



Name: **Dr Morag Ferguson**

Designation: Molecular Geneticist/Project Coordinator

Location: Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania

Seminar title: **Cassava gemplasm management and molecular breeding in East, South and Central Africa.**

Date: 8 September 2020



Name: **Dr Ranjana Bhattacharjee**

Designation: Molecular Geneticist

Location: Ibadan, Nigeria

Seminar title: **Genomic Resources in yam and cocoa: Strengthening the foundation for accelerated breeding applications**

Date: 12 October 2020



Name: **Dr Manoj Kaushal**

Designation: Associate Scientist, Systems Agronomist

Location: Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania

Seminar title: **Microbes in cahoots with plants: A way forward to blossom sub-Saharan agriculture**

Date: 9 September 2020



Name: **Dr Wende Mengesha**

Designation: Maize Breeder

Location: Ibadan, Nigeria

Seminar title: **Enhancing nutritional quality and stress resilience in maize**

Date: 16 October 2020



Name: **Dr James Legg**

Designation: Plant Health Scientist

Location: Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Seminar title: **Teams, Whiteflies, Viruses and more**

Date: 17 September 2020



Quotable quote: *"It's not how much we give but how much love we put into giving."*
— Mother Theresa

Newsletter staff

Editor: Helen Adeniji; **Assistant editor:** Tolu Olabode; **Contributors:** HR & Communication; **Design and Layout:** Ibukun Shodeinde, Adegboyega Juba & Omolola Atunu; **Editing:** Katherine Lopez; **Distribution:** Ibukun Shodeinde & Dayo Oyewole; **Advisers:** Lillian Mendoza & Katherine Lopez. Contact: h.adeniji@cgiar.org