

Women empowering women for sustainable development



The Convener, Dr Adepeju Aderogba Oti

The Global Youth Leadership and Girl-Child Foundation (GYLGF), in partnership with Lead City University, organized the 6th International Interdisciplinary Conference for Raising Girls Ambition (RAGA) 2020.

The conference, with the theme: "Advancing Women's Career for Sustainable Development" was held 13-17 October at the Lead City University Conference Hall.

RAGA, which aims to enlighten and empower the girl-child, has been in existence since 2015. However, this edition is significant, being the first conference to be held both virtually and in-person. The virtual aspect of the conference was a way of adapting to the new normal.

The conference usually brings together female students from various secondary schools for competitions such as debates, quizzes, and essay writing. The competitions encourage their

education as they provide an opportunity for these students to win prizes and gain scholarships. Women also have the chance to pitch incredible business ideas and get support from other women.

The IITA Women's Group (IWG) has been a major part of the success of RAGA since 2017. The team has financially supported and is still supporting young girls and women with ambitions so that they do not lose focus because of financial limitations. The Women's Group believes that women should prop each other up rather than compete with each other.

According to Dajie Odok, Radio IITA Producer, who represented Mrs Charlotte Sanginga in giving a goodwill message, the IWG is passionate about helping women and girls because they believe that if one woman is lifted, she can lift another, and the success of one woman could be an inspiration to others. "When women support each other, incredible things happen," she added.

The convener, Dr Adepeju Aderogba Oti, confirmed the impact of the IWG when she mentioned that the group has been giving out scholarships to secondary school girls through RAGA since 2017. Also acknowledging the contribution of Mrs Charlotte Sanginga to the success of RAGA, Dr Oti said, "Mrs Sanginga is a defender of the rights of the girl-child and has been a pillar behind this vision since she started attending RAGA in 2016. Her belief in this vision made her introduce IWG to RAGA in 2017."

During her presentation, Prof. Olapeju Aiyelaagbe, University of Ibadan Gender Mainstreaming Office, another defender of the rights of the girl-child, mentioned that women are heavily underrepresented in almost every area



Dajie Odok, Radio IITA Producer

of society. Prof. Aiyelaagbe mentioned that only 29.3% of researchers are female. Also, out of over 57 presidents in Africa, only one is a woman.

Encouraging young girls, she said that although women are being downplayed and neglected in society, women and girls still remain the drivers of sustainable development. Going on to show that success is achievable for every woman, Prof. Aiyelaagbe cited examples of women who have achieved great things in Africa, despite all odds. "If the idea is conceivable, it is doable," she said.

Clarifying the goal of RAGA, Dr Oti said, "Aside from building girls to become great women and lifting other women, we are also building boys to be men who will have respect for their female counterparts and see the female gender as partners in development."

Quarterly Health & Safety Seminars: Support your health through good nutrition

In continuation of the quarterly health awareness series in IITA Ibadan Campus, a virtual session was held in June with a talk on "How to support your health through good nutrition" by Busie Maziya-Dixon, Senior Food and Nutrition Scientist. The presentation featured explanations on key nutrition concepts, consequences of an inadequate diet, nutrition and the immune system, nutrients that may boost the immune system, factors that can depress the immune system, and healthy eating/healthy diet. She noted that six of the top 11 risk factors driving the global burden of disease are related to diet, noting that "every bite one takes is either fighting disease or



feeding it.” She highlighted the consequences of inadequate diet: obesity, chronic hunger, malnutrition and diet-related non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer, and respiratory diseases. It was noted that an individual's need for nutrients

and energy changes over his/her life span. It is during a body's growth periods that the need for nutrients is greatest. These occur during infancy, adolescence, and pregnancy. Therefore, consuming a healthy diet throughout life helps prevent malnutrition and

non-communicable diseases. She wrapped up her presentation with a recommended diet list for selected non-communicable diseases (high blood pressure, diabetes type 1 & 2, and cancer).

Quarterly Walkathon Competition

Further to the wellness programs developed to help staff work more productively and live healthier and considering the need to sustain non-contact sporting activities without compromising COVID-19 protocols, IITA Ibadan campus organized a Quarterly Walkathon Competition. The first edition was held on 25 September 2020. The event was keenly contested among all the six Sportsfest teams across units on IITA Ibadan campus. Winners were declared and rewarded as teams and individual participants representing teams.

The event witnessed a turnout of 73 participants (male and female) dressed in their respective team colors. In the male category, Yellow Team came 1st, 2nd, and 4th while the Red and Blue Teams came 3rd and 5th. In the female category,

White Team came 1st and 2nd while the Red and Yellow Teams took 3rd, and 4th, and 5th positions. Mr Wole Oladokun

(Employee Services Manager) expressed appreciation to all for being part of the event.



HR facilitates Dignity Advisor virtual workshop

The Human Resources Unit facilitated a 2-hour interactive workshop for Dignity Advisors across the Institute on 23 November 2020. The workshop facilitation was led by Lilian Mendoza, Head of Human Resources, Temilade Oke, Human Resources Manager-NRS, Helen Adeniji, Organizational Development Manager, and Wole Oladokun, Employee Services Manager.

The workshop was designed to ensure continuous fostering of dignity, respect, equity, and cultural sensitivity in IITA. The objectives of the workshop were to create more awareness on harassment and discrimination through networking and shared experiences of the Dignity Advisors; understanding in detail other forms of harassment in the workplace; a practical



case study on third party discrimination; and understanding the harassment and discrimination

process. IITA has 15 appointed Dignity Advisors in Ibadan/HQ, and the stations across the hubs.

Spotlight: Bernard Vanlauwe



Bernard Vanlauwe

Bernard Vanlauwe was born in a village in Belgium, not as a farmer's son but surrounded by farms. He said he remembers very well how during certain times of the year, everywhere one looks, one would see dark green maize, all having the same height and color, quite different from what one can see in many African farming environments. His only early experience with farming was assisting his grandfather in planting potatoes, leek, etc, but he could not remember if he really enjoyed it. Bernard grew up in a very "standard" family, and though his parents had not

studied beyond lower or secondary school themselves, they understood the value of studying and supported him and his sisters by providing for all their studies. According to him, with his own three children following postgraduate studies, he now understands the huge effort of his parents. As for his studies, he wanted to study sciences but could not decide which area and decided to study bioengineering, an area where all sciences were taught.

Briefly share with us your work experience and greatest accomplishments.

Over time, I have been engaged in a number of really satisfying initiatives, including the Balanced Nutrient Management Systems (BNMS) project in West Africa in the 1990s, the CIALCA initiative, which started in 2005 and is still active up to today, and, more recently, the African Cassava Agronomy Initiative (ACAI), now being transformed to the Excellence in Agronomy 2030 initiative. What attracted me most when I joined IITA was the opportunity to start a new program focusing on Central Africa, a region where I had been working for over 5 years while at the Tropical Soil Biology and Fertility Program, and the opportunity to advance the science and scaling of Integrated Soil Fertility Management, an approach that I strongly believe in up to today. Outside my job environment, I am very passionate about music. I often wish I would have been forced to

study music from a very young age. Instead of being forced to study music, I was forced to follow typewriter courses. Over the years, I have consistently tried to stick to commitments made and deliver these with the necessary rigor and quality.

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

One of the greatest challenges while working in IITA is retaining effective and performing staff. IITA's science and delivery results are totally related to all its staff and ensuring that performing staff are retained is one of the challenges that keeps me awake at night.

Share with us something (favorite pastime) only your close family/friends know about you that we may never know.

Some colleagues may remember that during my earlier years at IITA, I was part of a local music band. For about half a year, I have picked up my bass guitar again and started exercising again. One of my other favorite pastimes is spending time with friends, drinking a few beers, and talking about all kinds of things besides work.

Tell us your favorite slogan!

One of my mentors used to say: 'In the end, it has to be fun'. I try to respect this principle in the various decisions I am taking regarding engagement in proposals and partnerships.

Gender, diversity and inclusion (GDI) awareness at IITA



In pursuit of the new initiative of advancing gender, diversity and inclusion (GDI) in CGIAR workplaces, IITA-HR organized an institute-wide awareness program on 3 November to draw attention to, and solicit buy-in for, the cross-system GDI initiative.

The IITA senior management team (SMT) demonstrated its strong backing for the initiative with the presence of the DG, Nteranya Sanginga and DDG-Corporate Services, Hilde Koper-Limbourg attending the virtual awareness program. DG Sanginga, while acknowledging that the Institute still has a gap to fill in achieving gender equality, expressed Management's commitment to addressing existing deficiencies and disparities to make IITA a more diverse and inclusive workplace. He added that the SMT is working with Human Resources to leverage on the Institute's strengths while strategically bridging the diversity gap. DG Sanginga also seized the opportunity to thank staff for the sacrifices they had made individually and collectively during the financial/social crisis experienced by the Institute during the year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. He also commended Corporate Services and Human Resources for handling the impact of the pandemic professionally. DDG Koper emphasized that "our diversity powers our innovation." She added that inclusion is very important and expressed commitment to making everyone feel welcome at IITA so that "we can together achieve our objectives."

The virtual awareness program was delivered by the Head of Human Resources, Lilian Mendoza, and the three other GDI focal points at the Institute: Elizabeth Parkes, Lade



Gender, Diversity and Inclusion
in CGIAR's Workplaces

**Advancing GDI in IITA:
Awareness Webinar**
3 November 2020

Oke, and Steven Cole. The presentation provided enlightenment on the CGIAR GDI vision, GDI principles to which IITA committed, and the case for GDI in the workplace, backed with data and a report on GDI activities undertaken before the awareness program. The webinar discussed how to advance gender, diversity and inclusion at IITA, and closed with a question-and-answer session.

Please visit the GDI portal regularly for knowledge and updates: <https://www.cgiar.org/how-we-work/accountability/gender-diversity-and-inclusion/>

Quotable quote

"The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing."

- Walt Disney

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