

## IITA Tree Heritage Park awarded the 500th Level II accreditation by ARBNET

The IITA Tree Heritage Park (THP), located within the [IITA](#) campus in Ibadan and managed by the [Forest Center](#), has been awarded a Level II Accreditation by The ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program and The Morton Arboretum. The award recognizes THP for meeting identified standards of professional practices deemed essential for arboreta and botanic gardens. [to page 3](#)



*The IITA Tree Heritage Park supports over 100 species of native trees, half of which are considered rare, endemic, or threatened.*

## New leadership to consolidate IITA's work in Abuja

The staff of [IITA](#) Abuja Station welcomed the new Head of Station, Professor Lateef Sanni, at a meet and chat session on 5 January. Several staff members attended the session, including the immediate past Head of Station [Beatrice Aighewi](#) (who joined virtually) and Gbassey Tarawali (another former Head of Abuja Station).

The past Station leaders used the opportunity to appreciate the staff and encourage all to support the new Head to consolidate the good plans of the station.

Speaking at the event, the new Head of Station thanked God for the opportunity to begin the new year meeting with all the Abuja staff in peace. He also appreciated his mentors at the Institute and the entire management team, most of whom he stated had taken IITA through the path of success from which future generations will benefit.



*Professor Lateef Sanni, addressing staff at the meet and chat session.*

While encouraging the staff to work harder to discharge their duties, Sanni noted that Abuja Station is a diplomatic station, considering its strategic location. He urged all staff always to conduct themselves as diplomats, striving to operate at an international standard and leveraging the opportunities available to rebrand the Station.

According to the new Head, advertising sellable IITA project activities and building capacity are among measures that can efficiently rebrand the Station. He called on all staff to work together to consolidate and exceed past achievements. Professor Sanni announced a personal periodic reward system for the first five staff who adhere to punctuality and regularity at work.

He acknowledged IITA's status as one of the best organizations to

work in and therefore charged staff to note critical assets of the organization, such as networking, humility, integrity, hard work, and commitment to work.

Staff at the session—physically and virtually present—welcomed the new Head of Station, commending the ideas and looking forward to a fruitful working relationship with Professor Sanni.



*Top: A cross section of IITA Abuja staff listening to Professor Sanni. Bottom: Professor Sanni with IITA Abuja staff after the session.*

## Take responsibility! Stop the spread of COVID-19!

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

### Got a story to share?

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



The ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program is the only global initiative to officially recognize botanical gardens at various development, capacity, and professional levels. The THP is also recognized as an accredited arboretum in the [Morton Register](#) of Arboreta, a database of the world's arboreta and gardens dedicated to woody plants. Though it is the 500<sup>th</sup> accredited arboretum globally, THP is the first in Nigeria and one of the only 11 arboreta to achieve this feat in Africa.

The THP was restored in 2015 for ex-situ conservation of rare and threatened native trees, such as *Cola nigerica*, *Entandrophragma cylindricum*, *Mansonia altissima*, and *Terminalia ivorensis*. It was initially established in the early 1990s as an agroforestry arboretum incorporating both native and non-native food and forest crops.

With sponsorship from committed donors, this critical conservation work involves using standard procedures for collecting propagation materials from forest patches in southern

Nigeria. These are later subjected to different experimental trials within the IITA Botanical Nursery to determine the best techniques for propagation before planting out in the THP.

The THP now covers about 10 ha, supporting over 100 species of native trees, half of which are considered rare, endemic, or threatened. In addition to serving as a repository of genetic resources, the THP provides opportunities for promoting environmental education. The park has facilities for hosting visiting tourists, schoolchildren, and family groups, including an adventure playground, forest classroom, hide and boardwalk, barbecue pavilion, natural history museum, and campsite.

The IITA Forest Center Manager Adewale Awoyemi commented on the achievement: "Although the IITA Forest Center works locally to conserve threatened native trees in the THP, it is more consolidating to adopt global best practices—an opportunity this accreditation would afford. We will now be able to brainstorm

with a pool of about 500 experts and institutions."

Awoyemi noted that this distinction is a significant feat for the THP and biodiversity of the West African sub-region. "I am particularly keen on harnessing this synergy to raise greater awareness and funding opportunities for the conservation of threatened and rare West African trees and promote capacity building among Forest Center staff," he continued.

IITA Deputy Director General for Corporate Services, [Hilde Koper](#), lauded past and current Forest Center staff for their effort over the last decade in collaboration with their conservation partners, volunteers, promoters, and donors near and far. "It is a great honor for the THP to be accredited and even feels more special for it to be the 500<sup>th</sup> accredited arboretum in the ArbNet Network. I feel immensely proud of our staff and supporters to have reached this, and I hope this will inspire others to see the value of growing indigenous trees for research, education, and awareness creation," she said.



Nursery plants in the shade of the medicinal *Zanthoxylum lepriurii* trees, which are found in Tropical Africa.

# IITA Gender Network to create more visibility for gender research in 2022

The [IITA](#) Gender Science Network (GSN) held its last quarterly meeting for the year on 8 December. The Network, which comprises social and biophysical scientists, communications staff, and project managers, meets quarterly to monitor its activities, measure progress, identify challenges, and discuss the way forward. The meeting featured highlights of the gender research activities that the Network members did in the third and fourth quarters. Discussions also focused on the new activities proposed during the second quarterly meeting and progress made.



GSN Coordinator Steven Cole.

[Steven Cole](#), IITA Senior Scientist and Gender Specialist, and the Coordinator of GSN, welcomed old and new members of the Network from across units and projects. He also recapped the quarter two meeting, where he emphasized the impressive gender-focused research efforts by colleagues around the different IITA research stations. He also highlighted the initial brainstorming efforts by Network members during the meeting on how to implement a gender research webinar series at IITA.

Following the recap, several Network members shared their gender-focused work at IITA. [Titilayo Falade](#) (IITA, Nigeria) spoke about her work on food safety issues in northern Nigeria and the focus on creating awareness for women in this aspect. [Regina Kapinga](#) (IITA, Tanzania) talked about

the upcoming work of BASICS II, which aims to target 50% of women as cassava seed entrepreneurs (CSEs) in Nigeria and Tanzania. Olamide Olaosebikan (IITA, Nigeria) mentioned the new GREAT (Gender-responsive Researchers Equipped for Agricultural Transformation) funded project in Nigeria that will identify resilience traits in cassava breeding. [Béla Teeken](#) (IITA, Nigeria) and [Pheneas Ntawuruhunga](#) (IITA, Malawi) discussed collaborating to develop a workshop in 2022 that will kick-start the process of helping other breeding efforts outside Nigeria to integrate gender into their work through the development/sharing of tools, manuals, and guidelines.

For webinars and round table discussions in 2022 that will promote knowledge on gender research and its importance, Network members

volunteered to participate and showcase their gender-focused research at IITA. Still, on opportunities to promote the Network, Favour Eleta, from the Communication Office, explained that IITA has a YouTube channel that could be a good option if presenters agree to make live videos of their presentations for viewing within and outside IITA.

Giving an update on the CGIAR GENDER Platform, the One CGIAR 'Gender' Initiative, and gender integration in One CGIAR Initiative proposals submitted in 2021, Cole highlighted the progress made. He spoke about IITA's participation at the recent Equality Conference of the GENDER Platform, where Devis Mwakanyamale (IITA, Tanzania) received the "best poster" award for his poster pitch on gender barriers in the cassava seed system in Tanzania. He also mentioned a grant that IITA recently received from the GENDER Platform for over US\$100k to implement research on gender and climate change. Cole added that the HER+ Initiative proposal of the One CGIAR was submitted at the end of November and IITA is positioned to lead one Work Package on gender transformative approaches with a projected 2022 budget of around US\$1.4m.

In conclusion, Cole mentioned the efforts by other One CGIAR Initiative Design Teams to integrate gender into their proposals and added that the result is something to build on in the future.



Devis Mwakanyamale (top right) and Martina Cavicchioli (bottom right), sharing about their gender-related activities.