

IITA Bioscience Center prepares university students for better science careers

Research has shown that many university students in the science field across Africa lack practical experience using basic molecular biology techniques. This deficiency has limited their knowledge and challenges their future careers as scientists.

The [IITA-CGIAR](#) Bioscience Center has organized an annual workshop for hands-on training on basic molecular biology techniques to prepare students for a better science career. The week-long training, usually held at the IITA Ibadan campus, assembles master's and PhD students from various African



Ivorian PhD student, Ouattara Fatoumata (middle), in a practical session with other trainees.

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SWEAN concludes empowerment program for women in agriculture

The Support to Women Entrepreneurs in the Agrifood Sector in Nigeria (SWEAN) held its official project close-out ceremony on 19 July at IITA headquarters in Ibadan. [IITA-CGIAR](#) and partners implemented the two-year project in two states—Oyo and Kaduna—to empower women in agriculture.

The ceremony, moderated by SWEAN Project Coordinator [Zainatou Soré](#), started with a documentary showcasing community training carried out in Zaria, Kaduna State and Ibadan, Oyo State, during the project duration. Two



SWEAN Project Coordinator Zainatou Soré (leftmost) and IITA DDG-P4D Kenton Dashiell with (L-R) Kaduna State Ministry of Agriculture Permanent Secretary Mohammed Mainasibi, Kaduna State Commissioner for Education Hon. Hajia Halima Lawal, French Embassy Regional Agriculture Counsellor Sonia Darracq, Special Adviser to Oyo State Government on Agribusiness Adebowale Akande, and Oyo State Director of Agricultural Extension Ibukun Iroko.

beneficiaries of the training Eburn Feludu from Oyo State, and Aishatu Abdulkarim from Kaduna State, shared testimonies on how the training helped them set up and grow their businesses.

IITA Deputy Director General, Partnerships for Delivery [Kenton Dashiell](#), during the ceremony, said the SWEAN project has efficiently practiced partnership and delivery in the last two years. He also appreciated partners' involvement while emphasizing that partnership played a vital role in the project's success. "The project trained and empowered 1063 women who now have stronger businesses in Ibadan and Zaria. We should work more with our partners in the future," he said.

Oyo State Director of Agricultural Extension Ibukun Iroko, representing the Honorable Commissioner for Agriculture in Oyo State, appreciated IITA for involving the State's women in the SWEAN project. She noted that the training had empowered women to increase food supply, register new businesses, and reduce the bottlenecks affecting women in the State.

Representing the Honorable Commissioner for Agriculture, Kaduna State, Mohammed Mainasibi, Permanent Secretary to the Commissioner, also appreciated IITA and sponsors for choosing Kaduna as one of the locations to implement the project. He said that the Kaduna State government would not relent in its efforts toward



Dr Sonia Darracq of the French Embassy highlighting the achievements of SWEAN.

supporting women in agribusiness. The Honorable Commissioner for Education in Kaduna, Hon. Hajia Halima Lawal also emphasized that Kaduna State has significantly benefited from the SWEAN project, which is in line with the reform plans in the State. "We would like to be part of other IITA projects," she said.

At the ceremony, [Adebowale Akande](#), Special Adviser to Oyo State Government on Agribusiness and Head of Mechanization and Agribusiness at IITA, said SWEAN resonates with the goal of Oyo State to expand the economy through agribusiness. He added that sustainability in agribusiness is critical, and the project has undoubtedly proven that women can achieve this.

Sonia Darracq, Regional Agriculture Counsellor for the French Embassy in six West African countries, highlighted the project's achievements and next steps. A major achievement she noted was that the French Minister of Foreign Affairs selected SWEAN as one of the best in 2022, from over a hundred projects. Darracq added that a new two-year project proposal would be submitted in October to involve four countries: Benin Republic, Cameroon, Nigeria, and the Republic of Niger.

Closing the ceremony, Soré recognized and appreciated key collaborators of the project. She also lauded participants for their time and active engagement.
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A project beneficiary, Eburn Feludu, explaining how the SWEAN training has impacted her business.



Workshop participants with their trainers.

universities. The training is also open to organizations interested in training their staff in this area.

This year's workshop accommodated 16 students, trained by nine IITA Bioscience staff, including [Michael Abberton](#), Director of IITA West Africa Hub and Head of Bioscience Center, and Yemi Fajire, Bioscience Laboratory Manager.

In an interview, some students highlighted specific techniques they have learned, such as using the PCR machine, Sequencer, Ploidy Analyzer, and Lyophilizer. After the workshop, most students confirmed they can now perform DNA extraction, DNA sequencing, and many other things they could not do before.

To ascertain the effectiveness of the training, the organizers assessed the students before and after the training. The post-training scores underlined a marked improvement in students' comprehension of the practical concepts. At the end of the workshop,



University of Ibadan master's student, Muhammed Jimoh, receiving his certificate from Dr Melaku Gedil at the end of the training.

all participants were awarded certificates.

Ouattara Fatoumata, a PhD student from Côte d'Ivoire, said that the new knowledge she has gained would help her research and career as a researcher. Muhammed Jimoh, a master's student from the

University of Ibadan in Nigeria, said he joined the training to learn how to analyze data and gained experience beyond his expectation. "The knowledge gained will help in my research, while the certificate can serve as leverage for scholarships and job opportunities," he said.

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IITA collaborates with Waste Museum in Cycle Waste Management Memoranda

On 22 July, [IITA-CGIAR](#) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the first Waste Museum in Africa, situated in Ibadan, in line with IITA's mandate to conserve natural resources. The partnership will harness various wastes in a circular economy and drive advocacy and outreach programs on waste management and environmental sustainability.

The Creative Director of the Waste Museum, Jumoke Olowookere, and her team were delighted to receive the IITA team at her fully maximized piece of land, hosting the Waste Museum. IITA Deputy Director General, Corporate Services, Hilde Koper, led the IITA delegation comprising Head of Project Development and Administration Unit (PDAU), Kayode Awobajo; Legal officer PDAU, Precious Adebajo; Risk Management personnel, Rasheed Fagbenro; IITA Forest Center personnel, Adewale Awoyemi and Olukunle Olasupo; and Y-SWEP representatives. Olowookere's mentor and founder of EZ37 Solutions, Adaora Ayoade, also graced the occasion.

In a brief tour of the facility, both teams viewed the different species of indigenous plants raised in the museum – ornamentals, air purifiers, spices, and herbs. Dorcas Ibukun, a member of the team, noted that “the plant section of the museum has 155 species of indigenous plants in four different categories: ornamentals to beautify the environment, air purifiers to sanitize the environment, spices for foods, and herbs, which we use as medicines.” The museum explored waste materials from broken plates, bottles, tires, and bamboo to construct different sections of its walkway using upcycling techniques for waste conversion to wealth.

Their protein for animal feed and plant fertilizer is from waste recycled using the Black Soldier Fly (BSF) technology, one of the waste recycling technologies in which IITA is experienced. IITA has explored projects in waste management over the years, such as the BSF technology and biogas generation from biodegradable wastes, through the Youth in Sustainable Waste Eco-Recycling Program, Y-SWEP.



L-R: Hilde Koper, Jumoke Olowookere, and Kayode Awobajo expressing their delight at the signing of the agreement.



Team IITA and Team Waste Museum happy to begin a shared course of turning waste to wealth.

Koper said, “This museum is unique. It has a lot going on all at once. We have gained considerable ground in natural resource and environmental conservation in about 11 to 12 years since the Forest project started. The youth are also doing a lot to make IITA greener. Waste management and conservation are everyone’s business, and we should do all we can to save our environment. Our collaboration will go a long way to bring that about.”

Olowookere said her love for gardening was birthed in IITA during a widow-empowerment training for sustainable livelihoods. She added, “The waste itself inspires how it should be used. Tailors’

waste can be repurposed as door mats, tires for walkways, corn husks as mirror frames, and plastic bottles and abandoned tires as stools. Styrofoam, nylon, and bottle covers could be used as jewelry and artwork.

She highlighted a no-weed-pulling culture that had preserved an unidentified plant. IITA Forest Center Supervisor, Kunle Olasupo, identified the plant as the rare Bombax silk tree. The day witnessed the first dividend of collaboration as the Waste Museum donated the rare Bombax silk tree to the Forest Center, where it would have enough space to grow and contribute to biodiversity conservation.

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Partner organizations benefit from IITA-PDAU capacity building activities

As learning is tailored to interest, experience, and exploration, the [IITA-CGIAR](#) Project Development and Administrative Unit (PDAU) organized a three-day training at the Institute's headquarters on "Effective proposal budgeting, grants management, and administration". It was held from 18 to 20 July.

The workshop focused on developing the capacities and confidence of the participants via training and sharing experiences. Participants from IITA and other partner organizations, including Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti (ABUAD), Sasakawa Africa Association, Crops Research Institute (CSIR), and Bayero University, Kano (BUK), attended the workshop.

In his welcome address, IITA Deputy Director General, Partnerships for Delivery [Kenton Dashiell](#) explained the importance of knowledge sharing to the participants and how it has improved IITA's productivity. Thus, he encouraged the participants to look forward to gaining more knowledge from the workshop, which will lead to the better development of agriculture."

The workshop's specific objectives were to prepare the participants to manage international grants, including non-IITA grants, and close gaps in skill and stakeholder management. Likewise, the workshop stressed other areas such as fundamentals of grants proposal budgeting, partners' financial reporting, invoicing, justification, and fund disbursement, understanding contract financial management, and stakeholders and time management in grants administration.

The participants shared their various experiences with budgets, grants, and proposals. Head of IITA-PDAU, [Kayode Awobajo](#), urged donors and collaborators to develop personal relationships during the workshop. In contrast, Samuel Olowoyeye, IITA Project's Finance Accountant, expounded on the importance of timeliness and acknowledged stakeholders. IITA-PDAU Budget Development Officer Moruff Kareem encouraged partners to have a "PDAU" in their various organizations.



IITA DDG-P4D Kenton Dashiell encouraging the participants to maximize the knowledge available at the workshop.



Moruff Kareem explaining the fundamentals of grants proposal budgeting to the participants.



IITA DDG-CS Hilde Koper (right) presenting a certificate of participation to a participant.



Participants engaging in a team exercise.

The workshop featured multiple sessions with activities to highlight the practicality of the knowledge acquired and how it would be used. In addition, the participants went on a tour of the Institute's facilities.

Wrapping up the workshop, [Hilde Koper](#), IITA Deputy Director General, Corporate Services, celebrated the participants for their newly acquired knowledge to improve agriculture.

Contributed by Anita Akinyomade