

CGIAR Genebank Initiative to prioritize farmer-preferred collections

During its annual general meeting in [IITA](#), Ibadan, from 11 to 15 October, the CGIAR Genebank Initiative agreed to engage more with farmers, understand their needs, and prioritize their preferences instead of imposing collections on them.

[to page 3](#)



Participants at the CGIAR Genebank Initiative AGM.

New WIRES initiatives to advance women's careers in science and research

The [CGIAR Women in Research and Science \(WIRES\)](#) employee-led resource group recently had a virtual engagement to discuss the progress and new happenings in the group. The meeting, themed "Connecting and Mentoring, What's new with WIRES!" was held on 24 October.

Giving the opening remarks, [The International Center for Tropical Agriculture \(CIAT\)](#) Knowledge Sharing Specialist Arwen Bailey stated that the group was launched in July 2020 to empower and increase the visibility of women research and science professionals across CGIAR.



IITA nutrition scientists perfecting a new recipe.

Bailey and other co-coordinators, [International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center \(CIMMYT\)](#) Technical Program Manager Aparna Das, [IITA HarvestPlus Cassava Breeder Elizabeth Parkes](#), and [International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas \(ICARDA\)](#) Communication Consultant Nada Abdelhamid, shared their reasons for volunteering in WIRES. Participants also highlighted their expectations for the meeting.

Explaining the vision and mission of the group, Das stated that WIRES aims to provide tools and knowledge that support professional development. She added that this would create visibility for CGIAR women in science and research so their voices are heard and their contributions recognized. “We are an open community that accommodates both men and women who are willing to support the vision of WIRES,” she said.

Discussing her reason for sponsoring WIRES, CGIAR Executive Managing Director [Claudia Sadoff](#) said she admires the efforts and engagement of the team in supporting women despite having other personal life activities. She added that the increase in the percentage of women scientists calls for more effort to train and empower these women. “Thanks for allowing me to be your sponsor,” she said. [International Livestock Research Institute \(ILRI\)](#) Director General [Jimmy Smith](#), also a sponsor, stated that his motivation to join the cause stems from his experience raising daughters.

Highlighting how intending volunteers can support WIRES, Das spoke on mentorship as a promising strategy to advance Gender, Diversity and Inclusion (GDI) in the workplace as it offers access and advocacy for women. Explaining the criteria for engagement, she stated that a mentor must be passionate about advancing GDI, while the mentee must be a middle to senior-level career woman researcher/scientist with an appetite to learn. “Registration for the program will begin in November, and the program will kick off in December. Interested mentors and mentees who meet the criteria can register and be trained,” she said.

Other new WIRES initiatives coming up before the end of 2022 include “Random coffee,” where members

can schedule to meet physically or virtually to build a vibrant relationship and network, and “Focus groups” for discussions that will ensure continuous improvement for WIRES.

Closing out the meeting, CGIAR Global Director of People and Culture, [Fiona Bourdin-Farrell](#), summarized ways volunteers can help to advance women in science and research in CGIAR. She mentioned that it starts with joining the WIRES team, being a part of the mentoring program, engaging in the random coffee pilot, and joining focus groups. “You can contribute to the information in the newsletter. You can also register as both mentor and mentee as long as you meet the criteria,” she concluded. *Contributed by Ochuwa Favour Daramola*



HarvestPlus Cassava Breeder Elizabeth Parkes is one of the WIRES coordinators.

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 or Katherine Lopez (k.lopez@cgiar.org) and Uzoma Agha (u.gha@cgiar.org).



The meeting, attended by CGIAR genebank managers, CGIAR partner initiatives, and partners from the National Agricultural Research systems (NARS), focused on strengthening cohesion among CGIAR centers and promoting accelerated breeding and other genetic innovation initiatives.

Global Director for Genetic Innovation Sonja Vermeulen highlighted recent updates, including the NARS-CGIAR breeding network for Africa, partnership with national genebanks, and the CGIAR-Crop Trust partnership meeting to be held later in the year.

The International Center for Agriculture in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) Genebank Manager in Lebanon and Initiative lead



for the genebanks, Dr Mariana Yazbek, introduced the structure and priority of the genebank initiative to national partners and stated that the annual general meeting aimed to connect CGIAR with stakeholders and national partners.

“We opted to have this meeting in Nigeria to communicate closely and strengthen collaboration with our national partners from Africa. We will have presentations from other initiatives within the CGIAR and our national partners and discuss our plans,” she said.

The five-day meeting featured presentations from breeders and national partners from Mauritius, Nigeria, Togo, Zambia, and Zimbabwe on their activities, priorities, needs, and areas of possible collaboration with the Initiative.

Executive Director of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), Dr Yemi Akinbami, presenting on African Food Systems, stated that the network between research institutions like CGIAR and FARA and national partners is crucial for Africa’s food systems and the world at large.

There were also in-depth presentations and discussions around the Initiative’s work packages—operations, capacity building, cryo-preservation, research, and optimization.

Some participants expressed delight at the first post-COVID convergence, as the AGM allowed them to liaise and share ideas around the Initiative’s current and subsequent work plans.

“It has been good hearing from the other initiatives, and it will be really good for concrete areas of collaboration with some of the partners present to be identified. It will be a great output,” said Aarhus University Senior Scientist and Work Package 2 co-Lead, Dr Fiona Hay.

According to Charlotte Lusty, Senior Director, CGIAR Genebanks, the meeting will further strengthen the network of genebank managers alongside the focus on partnership with national genebanks and national agricultural research programs.

“We really want to be able to reach out and make sure people know what is available in the genebanks, how they can ask for it, and how we can help them,” she said.

IITA West Africa Hub Director and Head of IITA Genetic Resources Center, [Michael Abberton](#), who also co-leads the Initiative, explained that the team is working with the Accelerated Breeding Initiative. “There are active collaborations within the genebanks and the Accelerated Breeding Initiative. We hope to develop those further so that the appropriate deployment of germplasm from the genebanks within breeding is enhanced,” he stated.

The AGM also focused on updates, challenges facing the genebanks, and discussions on incorporating inputs and feedback from the national partners.

Participants also visited the genebank facility of the National Center for Genetic Resources and Biotechnology (NACGRAB), Moor Plantation, in Ibadan. The visit, influenced by the collaboration of NACGRAB and Crop Trust, involved a detailed tour of the facility and its accessions, allowing for further discussions between the collaborators on the support required to improve the productivity of the genebank. *Contributed by Tolulope Akinola*

Theme: Genebanks

Keywords: Breeding, Genetics, Initiatives, Food systems



Top: Aarhus University Senior Scientist and Work Package 2 co-Lead, Dr Fiona Hay, addressing the AGM. **Bottom:** Some of the AGM participants during a tour of the IITA Genebank.

IITA boosts TARI seed multiplication efficiency by providing a generator

[IITA](#) Tanzania recently provided a power generator to the Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute (TARI), Mikocheni center, to increase the efficiency of seed multiplication for smallholder farmers in Tanzania. A brief handover ceremony took place at the TARI office, a close neighbor of the IITA Eastern Africa hub office in Dar es Salaam.

The provision is part of a supportive solution to the power outage affecting the tissue culture laboratory efficiency in clean seed production and multiplication, causing delays in delivering the materials to farmers and the private sector.

In his remarks, TARI Center Manager Fred Tairo noted that TARI has been receiving seed multiplication tenders from IITA but has experienced delivery delays due to frequent power

cuts and failure to have a backup power source. “We have been in partnership in multiplying clean cassava seeds. With this power generator support, we assure to increase efficiency and deliver the planting materials on time,” Tairo said joyfully.

Tairo also lauded the continuous technical support provided by IITA in the cassava seed system and other crop research activities.

Moreover, the head of the tissue culture laboratory at TARI Mikocheni, Magreth Lupembe, noted that the generator would help them deliver the partners’ outputs on time. “Currently, we have a project that needs us to produce cassava varieties; this generator will help increase production,” she added.

IITA Eastern Africa Hub Director [Leena Tripathi](#) noted that the strong partnership between IITA and TARI focuses on cassava and other crops. The partnership led to the release of the first new, improved cooking banana variety, “TARIBAN,” launched early this year for commercialization. She stated that banana also needs a tissue culture lab for multiplication, and the lab would support seed multiplication for scaling to meet farmers’ access and demand.

“Seed multiplication of the tissue culture plants needs much care. Thus IITA, through the BASICS-II project, is supporting the tissue culture lab with this backup power source so that it can work efficiently on many other crops to increase productivity,” Leena stressed.

IITA partners with TARI on several projects, including the Building an Economically Sustainable and Integrated Cassava Seed System (BASICS-II) project, to provide farmers with access to affordable, quality-assured seed of in-demand cassava varieties. They are achieving this by establishing a commercially viable seed value chain across breeder, foundation, and commercial seed levels. *Contributed by Hadi Rashid*



Top left: IITA East African Hub Director Leena Tripathi commissioning the power generator with TARI Mikocheni Center Director Dr Fred Tairo. Photo: IITA/Hadi Rashid. Right: Switching on the generator. Bottom: The IITA team with the TARI team. Photo: IITA/Hadi Rashid.

IITA joins the world to keep the planet green at Green IITA Week

With the world doing everything to save people and the planet from human activities contributing to environmental degradation and climate change, [IITA](#) organized its first-ever Green IITA Week (#GreenIITAWeek) with activities and lectures propelling people to “think and live green.” The event, which took place from 26 to 30 September, was anchored and driven by IITA Corporate Services, including the Forest Center, Facilities Management Services, HOSTRAS, IITA School, and the Waste Museum, Ibadan.

The event took off with awareness raising at the IITA gate. Colorful models modeling fashion attire made from waste made impressionable sights to everyone arriving at the campus. Placard-raising staff members displayed environmental conservation messages to inspire the green initiative in people. Seminars during the week challenged everyone

to consider the impact of their daily choices on environmental protection and sanity. The Head of IITA Facilities Management Services, Waheed Quader, enjoined everyone to explore alternative energy sources that reduce power consumption. His insightful presentation highlighted IITA's current energy consumption and why everyone should think and go green.

IITA Agricultural Economist and Circular economy expert Feleke Shiferaw said the World Economic Forum (2021) estimates that more than 100 billion tons of resources enter the global economy every year (metals, minerals, fossil fuels, and biomass). He proposed the development of new value chains that fit biological materials into the industrial value chain to minimize the volume of raw materials and energy used per economic activity. I-House Food and Beverage Manager Funmi Joe-Oka vividly depicted the effect of food waste on the hungry and less privileged, urging drastic measures to curb food waste and repurpose leftovers to save food.

Waste Museum Founder Jumoke Olowookere, whose mission is to create a sustainable world without waste, engaged school children from IITA International School and Forest Center's School Conservation Clubs (SCC) in waste-to-wealth creation



The Waste Museum Founder Jumoke Olowookere speaking on how to turn waste into wealth.

activities. Cartons, nylon, paper, tins, fabric, and other waste collected in selected portions of the IITA campus in 2 to 3 weeks, were reused by the school children to create beautiful artwork, jute bags, fashion wreaths,

carnival attire, and wreath medals, among others.

To wrap up the week's activities, IITA school children preached the conservation message through

captivating songs to save Mother Earth. Afterward, participants participated in a campus-wide carnival procession, displaying colorful art pieces, fashion wreaths, and other wares created from waste amid music and dancing. The week inaugurated 12 IITA Green Ambassadors, who have contributed immensely to keeping our earth greener for healthy living. Winners of the daily quiz also received pleasant rewards for their efforts.

The first #GreenIITAWeek recorded participation from green lovers. The organizers anticipate increased engagement from the IITA community in subsequent celebrations, with more ingenious ways to get all hands on deck to keep our earth cleaner, greener, and livelier. *Contributed by Folake Oduntan and Victoria Adabale*

Keywords: #GreenIITAWeek
#Climateaction #Waste2wealth
#Gogreen.



*Top: An Ibadan Waste Museum team member teaching the children how to turn waste bottles into fashion items.
Bottom: A campus-wide carnival procession.*