



Another successful IITA Open Day!



Children of IITA staff enjoying themselves at the Sports Center during Open Day.

It was a memorable day last Saturday, 6 November, as staff and their families gathered together for a day of festivities during IITA's Open Day 2010 celebration. The day's events were kicked-off with a tree planting by selected members of staff and management at

the east bank of the IITA Lake (see related story below), in relation to the Open Day theme of "Unity in (Bio)Diversity".

It was day of color and fanfare as most staff and their families came in their best attires – some in their traditional garbs, others in formal

wears – happily chatting and clicking away with their cameras. People were first ushered to the Conference Center where attendees appreciated the various interactive exhibits put up by the Biosciences Center, Genetic Resources Center, Virology Unit, Banana and Plantain Unit, and the Leventis Project. The attendees were also treated to a video documentary of IITA's various projects and impacts.

After the exhibitions, the attendees were directed to the Sports Center where long-serving IITA staff of 10, 20, and 30 years were recognized and honored. A raffle draw was also held where lucky individuals won various prizes ranging from umbrellas and wall clocks to a refrigerator and a 26-inch LCD TV. The latter was won by Paul Sunday Eshi of FMS. Children, staff and dependents also competed in a dance contest that elicited more prize-giving and excitement. The best dressed individuals and couples were also chosen and given prizes.

IITA marks 2010 Open Day with symbolic tree planting to save biodiversity

Members of staff and management of IITA kicked-off Open Day 2010 with the planting of indigenous trees on the Ibadan campus in observance of the International Year of Biodiversity and in recognition of the importance of biodiversity in supporting life on this planet. This year's Open Day theme is "Unity in (Bio)Diversity".

John Peacock, manager of the IITA-Leventis Foundation Project, said that the planting of the trees comes at a time when Nigeria's deforestation rate has reached an alarming rate of 3.5% per year, translating to a loss of 350,000–400,000 ha of forests annually. In 1976, Nigeria had 23 million ha of forest; today only 9.6 million ha remain—less than 10% of its total land area.

He added that planting of trees is part of an initiative to restore rainforests in Nigeria. IITA is also contributing to the important UN-REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) initiative in the country.

Through the IITA-Leventis Project, the team, particularly Olukunle Oluşupó and Deni Bown, have raised over 15,000 seedlings of 33 different species since February 2010 in preparation for planting next year, with at least as many again hoped for during the coming dry season when most tree species produce seeds.



Members of IITA staff and management planting their respective trees at the kick-off to IITA Open Day 2010.

Another area of importance to the project is education, particularly of school children, says Deni Bown, project coordinator and medicinal plant expert with the project. "In this regard we are educating the young on the importance of reforestation and conservation," she said.

"We would like every family, represented by staff members in IITA, to plant an indigenous tree next year as part of IITA's

activities to increase the forest area," Peacock said, adding that "In 5, 10 or 20 years, we could come back here with our grandchildren, point to our trees, and proudly tell them that we have somehow contributed to making this earth a better place to live in for them".

Peacock and his team are hopeful that through reforestation and education, the rate of deforestation in Nigeria will be significantly reduced.

IITA bids farewell to Paul Ilona, Senior International Trials Manager

IITA held a farewell party in honor of Paul Ilona, former Senior International Trials Manager on Wednesday, 10 November. The event was in recognition of Ilona's contribution to IITA's mission and vision, according to the Deputy Director General (Research), Paula Bramel.

"Paul Ilona has been a very good ambassador for IITA," Bramel added.

Ilona joined IITA in 1989 as a volunteer in the cassava unit and rose through the ranks to become a Senior International Trials Manager.

Gbassey Tarawali, who read a 'citation' on Ilona described him as a man with several attributes: Ilona is thorough, resourceful, sound, cool-headed, tireless, an essential team mate, an asset and above all has a high capacity to persevere.

Others who spoke well about Ilona were David Annang, Bussie Maziya-Dixon, Chris Okonkwo, Ranajit Bandyopadhyay, David Watson, Norbert Maroya, and David Oluwadare, among others.

In his response, Ilona expressed gratitude to IITA for giving him the opportunity to serve humanity. He gave a brief account of his humble beginnings in the institute and how he later found his wife Katherine through IITA. He said that to him, IITA is home.

Ilona has picked up an appointment with HarvestPlus as a Crop Country Manager. He would still be based at IITA-Ibadan.



Paul Ilona with wife Katherine and IITA colleagues pose for a group photo during Ilona's farewell party held at the General Directorate Building lobby.

Adetunji, former IITA BoT member, passes away at 76



IITA regrets to announce the passing away of Sheriff A. Adetunji, a former IITA Board member, on 9 November 2010 at the University College Hospital. He was buried the next day in Abeokuta, his hometown. He was 76.

Before he became the Special Assistant to IITA Director General in March 1990, Adetunji, a Soil Scientist, was the representative of the Federal Ministry of Science and Technology on the IITA Board of Trustees from 1986 to 1989. He was Special Assistant and Consultant to the Director General from 1990 to 2007, before he retired from the services of the Institute in May 2007.

In a letter to the Adetunji family, DG Hartmann conveyed the sympathy of the IITA Board of Trustees, the management and staff, stating that Dr Adetunji will be sorely missed.

May his soul rest in peace

Move cassava from 'karakata' to bread and industries, Mozambique urged

Residents of Nampula province in Mozambique have been challenged to explore the wide range of uses and opportunities offered by cassava that go beyond making their staple food, 'karakata' – a paste made from its flour – and 'mathapa' – cassava leaves cooked in coconut – to fight poverty and develop the region.

Speaking on behalf of the governor of Nampula at Mozambique Cassava Day, the Provincial Director of Commerce and Industry, Ildio Marfes, said Nampula which is the country's number one producer and consumer of the crop, needed to move away from using cassava only for 'Karakata' or boiling it as a snack and onto other uses such as industrial starch production as other countries do.

He assured them that the government on its part would support their efforts by creating an enabling environment for the machine fabricators and small-scale entrepreneurs. He was happy to note that the province's strategic plan includes exploring the use of cassava as a source of raw material for the industries.

Richard Okechukwu, Deputy Project Manager of the UPoCA project, noted the great strides made in the province in one year following a series of training conducted on cassava processing by the project.

"We were here last year, at a time like this, to train on the various products that can be made from cassava. Today, we are impressed to see so many products as a result of it."

Also speaking at the forum, IITA's Agro-Enterprise Specialist, Melba Davis-Mussagy, said



Okechukwu, Marfes, and Davis-Mussagy admire foods prepared from HQCF and cassava starch.

cassava had the potential to get Mozambique and other sub-Saharan African countries out of poverty. Reiterating this, IITA's Food Technologist Specialist Bolanle Arowosafe, stressed the importance of fortifying cassava-based food products to make them more nutritious.

The cassava day, held on 2 November 2010, was organized by IITA's UPoCA project in collaboration with Mozambique's Center for Promotion of Agriculture (CEPAGRI), the Mozambican Agricultural Research Institute (IAM), and the Provincial Office of Agriculture in Nampula (DPA).

It brought together farmers, private sector representatives, nongovernmental organizations, and government organizations and aimed at creating awareness on cassava utilization and lobbying for much-needed government support.

A wide array of products made from cassava such as starch, high quality cassava flour, coarse flour (for 'karakata') and rale, were on display. The participants also sampled a wide variety of food items made from starch and cassava flour such as different kinds of cakes, cookies, biscuits, pastels, cassava cocktail titbits, cassava chinchin, 10% HQCF composite bread, doughnuts, egg rolls, meat balls, pancakes, croquettes, sausage rolls, meat pies, and cassava crisps, among others. Except for the bread, all the other food items were made from 100% cassava.



Guests sampling products displayed during the cassava day.