

## IITA adopts a new medical policy

IITA Nigeria has adopted a new NRS medical policy effective 1 March, announced Mrs Lilian Mendoza, Head, Human Resources Service (HRS). A major shift is that the health management organization (HMO) will no longer have a role in the new policy.

The Head, Human Resource Service, Mrs Lilian Mendoza in her opening remarks, said that IITA management has decided to temporarily suspend the HMO medical policy and in the interim, let the IITA Clinic coordinate the medical care of NRS in IITA-Nigeria. The objective of the change is to achieve better health care for staff and their eligible dependents. Meanwhile, the IITA Clinic held an Institute-wide enlightenment program for staff members on the transition procedure to the new policy. The program was facilitated by Dr Adeleke Samson, Head, IITA Clinic. The names of accredited hospitals and medical services that

will offer services were listed. Modalities for registration and the operational details were also explained. HRS will coordinate the registration of staff and their eligible dependents.

In attendance were several NRS from all cadres. Staff were given the opportunity to ask questions on

health and the details of the new policy.

In his closing remarks, Employee Services Manager Wole Oladokun, encouraged staff to initiate the registration process for themselves and their dependents in good time. A similar exercise to enlighten NRS on the new medical policy was also



*Dr Samson Adeleke speaks on the new IITA medical policy*

## HRS Head interacts with Abuja Station staff



*Mrs Mendoza with Abuja station staff*

Lilian Mendoza, Head, Human Resources Service, paid a visit to the Abuja Station in February where she met the staff. She used the opportunity to announce that Management would introduce a new Medical Policy effective March 2013.

She also encouraged staff to freely express themselves regarding issues

that may be of concern to them. In response, the staff thanked the Management for this new initiative of direct engagement with staff and for the "fresh air that we are now breathing in Abuja." According to them, the staff felt that they were completely abandoned by the Headquarters in the past.

Attending the meeting were Dr Gbassey Tarawali, Mr Francis Adunoye, Mr Toye Olaniyan, Mr Akinola Oyedele, Mr Jonathan Ode, and Mr Paul Eke.

Mrs Mendoza is the first member of the management team to stay at the recently renovated Abuja Guest House.

## IITA women celebrate International Women’s Month

The IITA Women’s Group marked International Women’s Month by organizing a forum that celebrated womanhood. Organized by Mrs Charlotte Sanginga, the forum provided the women (and a few men) a platform for sharing experiences as wives, mothers, sisters, daughters, friends, mentors, leaders, and career women.

The forum was held at Cappa Bar, and opened up opportunities for developing new friendships and fostering camaraderie among the ladies of IITA that included spouses of staff.

“My husband has been working for IITA for many years now, but this

is the first time that I had been invited to a social event for women by women in IITA,” said one of the

spouses in grateful recognition of the efforts of Mrs Sanginga and the women of IITA.



*Mrs Sanginga (left) welcomes a participant to the forum.*

## Great fun at family day bonanza for IITA-Tanzania



*Family fun day and family fun day 4: Staff and family members do the shuffle*

The second Family Fun Day for IITA-Tanzania was held last month at the White Sands Hotel in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

It brought together nearly all the staff at the hub and their family for a day of fun, food, and plenty of dancing. In welcoming all the staff and their families, IITA Director Victor Manyong pointed out that the day was an opportunity to get to know the spouses and children of fellow staff members.

"We all work together year in, year out but we do not know each other's families. Our spouses and children do not know our colleagues at work. So it is important to hold such events every year to strengthen the IITA family in Tanzania," he said. The organizing committee consisted of IT Specialist Gerald Resulabeza, Finance officer Maria Changa, HR officer Edith Kazimoto, and Research Associate Rudolph Shirima.

## Kano Station holds defensive driving seminar

A two-day defensive driving seminar was held for all staff who drive official vehicles in Kano station on 5 and 6 March. Mr Clement Agboola, Automotive Service Officer, explained what defensive driving is and showed illustrations to support his presentation. He said that according to the standard Safe Practices for Motor Vehicle Operations, defensive driving is defined as "driving to save lives, time, and money, in spite of the conditions around you and the actions of others." The aim of defensive driving is safety of lives and property. He also delved on vehicle maintenance strategies and their implication on defensive



*Mr Agboola stresses a point during the seminar on defensive driving..*

driving. A badly maintained vehicle is a safety risk on any road, he said. Mr Oluwadare David, Security Manager, did a review of traffic rules, regulations, and road signs for safe driving. He said that apart from knowing, identifying, and understanding what each of the

rules stand for, it is equally important to obey them. Traffic signs or road signs are placed strategically along the road to provide directions to drivers and pedestrians for the purpose of maintaining traffic safety, he explained. They serve as warnings

and guides to both road commuters and pedestrians. Participants were happy about the seminar and hoped that such training will be frequently held in Kano. Eighteen drivers took part in the seminar.

## Reminiscence

Not many may know or remember that IITA pioneered in using the Internet in Africa in the late 90s. According to the CGIAR News (August 1998), Jack Reeves, then Head of the Information Services Program, "sent a short message to the National Agriculture and Animal Research Institute (NAARI), Namulonge, Uganda, to test a recently installed high-frequency radio link with NAARI. The link connected NAARI to the national telephone system, in Kampala, and through an Internet service provider (ISP) to the Internet and thereby to the world." Because of this, "the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has called IITA a 'pioneer' for using the Internet in USAID's AfricaLink program to connect national agricultural researchers in Africa with the resources of the Institute's library and international staff." As a result, USAID subsequently funded the project

(US\$67,500) for Africa Link. The article continues: "A reply soon came from the NAARI: 'Thanks for the congratulatory message. Indeed, we have gone on E-mail. You are welcome aboard the information superhighway with NAARI,' Innocent Rugambwa, librarian." Jack said: "I was thrilled when I received the message. A line from 'Casablanca' came to mind: This looks like the beginning of a beautiful friendship," Reeves said. He immediately initiated a test to demonstrate AfricaLink's potential. "The first thing I did was to propose to Innocent that NAARI scientists, through her, could call upon the services and resources of IITA such as the library and international staff," he explained. Requests soon began traveling in. The most sophisticated test was transmitting NAARI texts and graphics from journal articles archived in IITA's library. A request came for copies of pages from seven

publications. "We knew that we would have to find solutions to file conversion and compression, to enable us to optimize file sizes to the absolute minimum, while retaining all relevant information. Tables, equations, and figures were our focus. Through experimentation with file formats, and acceptable reduction of quality, a document's file size can be reduced by 90 percent," explained Paul Philpot, IITA's Multimedia Consultant. Within 3 hours of receiving the request, the information was ready for sending as attachments to NAARI via CGNET. And the rest is history. Requests continue for information and expertise. "I hope that our success will spur use of the Internet and E-mail as connectivity becomes available to more national agricultural research systems in Africa. AfricaLink is potentially revolutionary," Reeves said.

## About Jack

At IITA, Jack had administered nine units, including the Training Program, overseeing a total of 65 staff, and promoted the Institute's activities through publications and international print and electronic media (radio) from 1997 to 1999. Twenty nine years before he pioneered the use of the Internet in Africa, he pioneered telemedicine. While in Nigeria, Jack was also instrumental in getting scholarships and funds for the following: neurosurgery education and training for one of the nurses at the IITA Medical Unit at Benjamin Franklin Medical School, Berlin, Germany (\$18,000); support for a Nigerian agriculturalist to go as a guide-educator for Disney World's Epcott Exhibit, with Disney World providing additional resources/

funds (\$10,000 CGIAR); and scholarship from Nunhems Foundation, the Netherlands, for a Nigerian to earn an MSc in crop science, University of Nottingham, UK. Jack had headed communication programs for CIAT, ILRI, AVRDC, IITA for 11 years, doing writing, editing, publications, public awareness; program and staff management. Since leaving IITA, Jack had been involved in journalism and agricultural research, writing personal newspaper columns (humor and inspiration) and working with the University of Vermont's Entomology Laboratory (proposal development for Ethiopia and Afghanistan). He now resides in Florida, USA.



Jack Reeves

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