

# WAVE/AWARD Workshop Boosts Women's Research Capacity

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*The recently held mentoring and scientific skills acquisition workshop in Abuja, aimed at improving the low level of participation by female plant virologists in the West African sub-region, had given participants a sense of direction, and boosted their skills and competency level in their areas of research interests, organisers have said.*

The West African Virus Epidemiology (WAVE) for root and tuber crops project in collaboration with the African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) had between Monday 5th to Friday 9th of March 2018 organised the workshop with the theme: *'Developing Transformational Leaders in an African Environment'*.



WAVE Project Director Dr. Justin Pita, making his presentation at the programme

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The WAVE Project Director, Dr. Justin Pita, who declared the workshop open, emphasised the importance of the workshop in bridging the observed gender gap in the availability of plant virologists in West Africa. He noted that the Team Leader of the Covenant University Hub of WAVE, Dr. Angela Eni, was the only female of the 10 WAVE Team Leaders, and therefore encouraged participants to make the most of the learning opportunity and strive towards becoming leading female scientists and researchers.



Covenant University mentors, mentees and other WAVE female students and staff

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Dr. Eni, who was the host of the workshop, noted that the WAVE project's gender initiative programme recognises the underrepresentation of females in various aspects of plant virology research. The AWARD Fellow and beneficiary of the life and career-transforming AWARD workshops appreciated AWARD for its continued commitment to the development of female research leaders in Africa. She added that AWARD did not only provide A-Team Trainers for the workshop, but had sponsored the trainers and provided relevant workshop materials towards making a success of the event.

Not less than 42 women drawn from across the 10 hubs of the WAVE Project sites in Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Togo, Benin Republic, Nigeria, and the Democratic Republic of Congo participated in the five-day workshop, with the first two days dedicated to helping participants learn about the roles and expectations of mentors and mentees in a formal mentoring relationship. Participants were tutored on how to build networks, develop capacity to work with different personalities, embrace cultural diversities, and how to manage conflicts.

The remaining days of the workshop featured the mentees participating in a Science Skills Workshop, which included training on gender-responsive research, gender situation analysis, biometrics and statistics for proposals and manuscripts,

reference management tools, pitching, and the act of undertaking policy influencing research. Participants also learnt effective communication skills and developed individual purpose road maps for their career.

While describing the WAVE mentoring and scientific skills acquisition workshop as a milestone for the WAVE project as it marked progress in raising African women scientists, Dr. Eni appreciated the Vice-Chancellor, Covenant University, Professor AAA. Atayero for proactively facilitating the participation of members of the University's female faculty in the workshop. Also, she thanked the Covenant Management for its continued support of WAVE project's activities.

Asides Dr. Angela Eni, seven other Covenant University female faculty members participated in the workshop either as mentors or mentees. These included the Heads of Departments of Mathematics and Biological Sciences, Dr. Grace Olasehinde and Dr. Sheila Bishop respectively. Both featured as mentors, while mentees were selected from various Departments across the Colleges of Science and Technology, Engineering, and Business and Social Sciences.

The workshop dates and theme coincided with the 2018 International Women's Day celebration tagged, 'Time is Now: Rural and Urban Activists Transforming Women's Lives'.

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