

Uganda project puts focus on gender equality in agriculture

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Margaret Mangheni, left, of Makerere University in Uganda and Hale Tufan, Cornell adjunct professor, will lead a training course on “Gender Responsive Root, Tuber, and Banana Breeding,” September 12-21, in Kampala, Uganda. Credit: Cornell University

Gender matters to the 16 trainers and 11 teams of 33 researchers from four continents who will participate in a training course on "Gender Responsive Root, Tuber and Banana Breeding," Sept. 12-21 in Kampala, Uganda.

The first of seven courses on the theory and practice of gender-responsive research is organized by agricultural theme and offered in a joint Cornell University and Makerere University educational project called GREAT (Gender-responsive Researchers Equipped for Agricultural Transformation).

With GREAT, researchers who work in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) learn how to identify the needs of women and men when setting agricultural project priorities, implementing projects, and measuring and communicating outcomes.

"GREAT works to equitably extend the benefits of agricultural research to both women and men," said Hale Ann Tufan, adjunct professor with International Programs in Cornell's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, who leads the five-year project at Cornell. "Our goal is for agricultural researchers working across sub-Saharan Africa to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers by considering gender and prioritizing gender equality goals in their work."

In the "Gender Responsive Root, Tuber and Banana Breeding" (RTB) course, research teams are focused on challenges like banana bunchy top disease, banana xanthomonas wilt, cassava breeding and processing, potato production, banana breeding, micro-nutrient enhanced cassava and sweet potato improvement.

"In sub-Saharan Africa, the livelihood and food security of a majority of people, especially in rural areas, depends to some extent on roots, tubers and bananas," said Margaret Mangheni, an associate professor at

Makerere University who has more than 20 years' experience with gender-sensitive agricultural development projects in SSA and leads the project at Makerere. "GREAT training will improve the outcomes of [agricultural research](#) for smallholder women farmers, entrepreneurs and farmer organizations across sub-Saharan Africa."

Researchers in the RTB course represent a mix of projects and institutions: the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture in Cameroon, Bioversity International in Burundi, the Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique in France, HarvestPlus, NEXTGEN Cassava Breeding in Uganda and Nigeria, the Program for Emerging Agricultural Research Leaders in Ghana, the West Africa Center for Crop Improvement in Ghana, the International Potato Center in Colombia, and the Savanna Agricultural Research Institute in Ghana.

By 2020, GREAT expects to have trained eight cohorts with up to 10 research project teams each, or more than 200 researchers representing at least 30 national and international research institutions in SSA.

Subsequent training to create more inclusive and effective agricultural systems will be offered on the themes of grain and legume breeding; small ruminant breeding; dairy and legume value chains; nutrition and food systems; knowledge exchange (extension); and agricultural mechanization.

To help sustain the initiative, GREAT will create a center of excellence for gender-responsive agricultural training at Makerere. Over the life of the project, GREAT content will be integrated into spin-off short courses and current agricultural degree programs at Makerere.

Every course follows a similar agenda. First, researchers learn concepts and tools during the introductory week-long training in Kampala taught

by social scientists, breeders and gender experts. Then they undertake several months of practical field experience, collecting data from their ongoing projects, during which they receive support from mentors and e-learning modules through resources on the [GREAT course website](#). A concluding week-long training on data analysis, interpretation and advocacy is scheduled five months later in Kampala – Feb. 13-17, 2017, in the case of RTB.

Trainers have a wealth of expertise in gender-related issues, including data collection, value-chain development of staple crops, socioeconomic development challenges like gender equality, equity and development; transformative leadership; and understanding gender patterns in farmer decision-making strategies, among others.

Provided by Cornell University

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