



# WARDA under a New Program Structure

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**I**N 1997, WARDA proposed a restructured program in its 1998–2000 Medium-Term Plan (MTP). Under this new program structure, WARDA’s research and related activities were regrouped into a set of projects under four programs: 1. Rainfed Rice Program; 2. Irrigated Rice Program; 3. Policy Support Program; and, 4. Information and Technology Transfer Program, and assisted by Program Support Units covering Biometrics, Information and Documentation, Training and Fellowships, INGER-Africa, Quarantine/Biosafety, and Task Force Coordination. Thus, 1998 was the first year that program activities at WARDA were implemented based on this new structure.

Given the newness of the program structure, its implementation was closely monitored during 1998 from an internal viewpoint as well as from an external collaboration angle. The most important internal aspect was the balance in terms of project activities among the four Programs. An internal assessment of scope and size against the need for a dynamic research process along the research-to-development continuum, showed that the technology generation Programs 1 and 2 should not be expected, as perhaps thought originally, to accommodate the research required for evaluation and further development of promising technologies within the broader context of targeted production systems in the different agro-ecologies. At the same time, the scope of Program 4, as originally defined, proved to be narrow and needed to be widened to accommodate the future technology evaluation research for systems development to complement technology transfer activities. These issues were discussed by management and Board in June and November 1998, and during the initial phase of WARDA’s Annual Review and Planning Meeting in December 1998. As a result, it was proposed that for the MTP 2000–2002, the title of Program 4 should be changed to *Systems Development and Technology Transfer* and the project portfolio be expanded from three projects to five to accommodate technology evaluation research and technology transfer for irrigated, upland and inland valley systems. More information on this proposed revision to the program structure will be provided in the 1999 Annual Report.

The most important external aspects, based on the consultation with the member countries at the WARDA–National Experts Committee meeting in January 1998 and with CORAF in August 1998 were: the operationalization of the technology transfer activities of Program 4, and the future harmonization of WARDA Task Forces and CORAF Rice Network. Excellent progress was achieved in resolving these issues. For technology transfer, it was clearly recognized that while WARDA has no comparative advantage in becoming involved in direct extension activities, there is a need to link up with other stakeholders who have such an advantage. WARDA’s role would always be that of a “facilitator

of stakeholder coalitions” of various kinds when it came to the wider dissemination of technologies generated by WARDA and its partners.

Concerning the harmonization of the WARDA Task Forces with the CORAF Rice Network, an important milestone achieved in 1998 was the decision by CORAF and WARDA to merge these two entities to create a unified Regional Rice Network. After two joint meetings between CORAF and WARDA, it was agreed to harmonize the two mechanisms, and begin the implementation, under the Task Force mode, of a unified Regional Rice Research and Development Network in 1999, with a Network Secretariat hosted by WARDA. The potential benefits of this development in regional cooperation, in terms of technology evaluation and dissemination as well as strengthening regional rice research capacity, are immense.

The Inland Valley Consortium stakeholders, including WARDA and CORAF, devoted considerable energy during 1998 into formulating the Phase II strategic plan for the period 1999–2004. This was achieved through joint planning exercises involving the Consortium member countries and other partners. The two important changes which will feature during Phase II are the closer integration of the IVC into the overall WARDA program (through Program 4, and with linkages to other Programs); and the revised research agenda with a focus on: characterization of land use dynamics, development and evaluation of technologies to improve inland valley production systems and natural-resources management; socioeconomic and policy aspects of improvements in the inland valley land use systems; and technology dissemination processes and impact pathways for inland valley development.

An exciting development at WARDA’s main research farm was the creation of a watershed facility for interdisciplinary research to improve of lowland rice cultivation and land use management. Detailed baseline characterization of the biophysical environment during 1998 will form the basis for future research on natural- resources management, some of which will be long term. The watershed facility will also serve the needs of the Inland Valley Consortium.

The year also saw the launch of WARDA’s regional training program for NARS on participatory breeding and selection. In May 1998, WARDA organized a 10-day Participatory Rice Improvement and Gender/User Analysis (PRI & G/UA) training seminar for its member countries at WARDA Headquarters. A breeder and a social scientist from the national agricultural research institutes attended the training from each of 10 member countries. The purpose of the seminar was to introduce the scientists to participatory and gender/user analysis methods and tools, as well as to share the knowledge gained from WARDA’s PRI & G/UA work. As a follow-up to the 1998 seminar, WARDA scientists have visited most of the participants and provided backstopping for their PRI & G/UA activities. The partners from the 7 remaining member countries who were unable to attend the May 1998 training will receive training in 1999 to enable them to begin PRI & G/A work in their respective countries.

Beyond the above-mentioned accomplishments, and those that are featured in this Annual Report, there were a number of others that deserve mention. These include: the continuing remarkable on-farm performance of the ‘new African rices’ in marginal environments across several countries; the strengthening of our genetic enhancement activities especially in the areas of interspecific breeding and molecular biology, including the development of transgenic lines (in collaboration with partners in the UK) and marker-assisted breeding; the knowledge of the extent of the

serological variability of rice yellow mottle virus (RYMV) in West Africa, and the identification of resistant cultivars to replace popular but susceptible varieties; a scheme for screening durable resistance to blast; the study of the importance of nematodes in rice systems; the development of decision tools for integrated management of pests, nutrient and water; the successful introduction of postharvest machinery in the Sahel; the development of community-based seed multiplication schemes; successful facilitation of the formulation of country-specific biosafety regulations; and the strengthening of Program Support Units, particularly in the areas of genetic resources, information, and modeling.

The further evolution of WARDA's program structure and the accomplishments during 1998 provide ample evidence that WARDA continues to be a sound investment for the CGIAR and a vibrant research center of excellence on the African continent. Its program agenda, aimed at producing international public goods, is not only output driven and demand responsive, but also of high relevance to the farmers and development community in the region. WARDA's interspecific hybridization program, responsible for generating the 'new African rices,' and the associated participatory research and technology transfer approaches, are at the cutting edge of science and are impacting rural livelihoods, particularly those of women and children. WARDA's ecoregional activities are providing strong leadership in systems development and natural-resources management in inland valleys. WARDA's partnerships with NARS and other collaborators are inclusive and synergistic with direct benefits to all stakeholders. Some of these dimensions are captured in greater detail in the feature articles that follow. We remain confident that WARDA will continue to deliver a high level of performance next year and beyond.