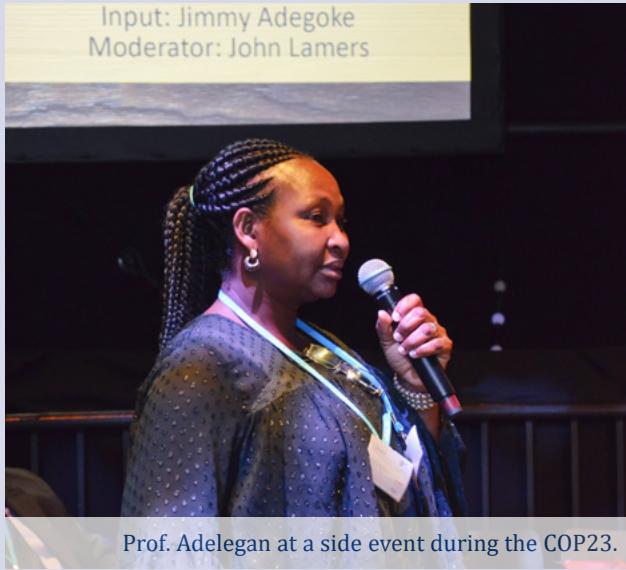


Viewpoint

INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR JANET OLATUNDUN ADELEGAN, WASCAL'S DIRECTOR OF CAPACITY BUILDING
WASCAL WILL TRAIN AND EDUCATE 3,000 AFRICAN CLIMATE EXPERTS BY 2020



Janet Olatundun Adelegan has a broad professional background in development economics and work experience spanning from African and international universities to international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund and the Climate Investment Fund, in addition to consultancies to the African and the European Union. She took over as director of capacity building of the **West African Science Service Center on Climate Change and Adapted Land Use** (WASCAL, see wascal.org) in September 2015.

When you started as director, WASCAL's initial doctoral program was to be restructured into a broader capacity building program with training on the job. What progress has been achieved so far?

We started the on-the-job training, the "in-service program" only last year. We had participants from relevant government ministries such as the Ministry of Water Resources and the Ministry of Environment in Ghana as well as representatives from other ministries from West African countries. This has helped us to strengthen the capacity of people working with government ministries and those who are making decisions and advising policymakers on a day-to-day basis. So we train people to obtain their PhDs but also to inform policy so they can advise policymakers on how to mainstream some of the findings in combating climate change in West Africa.

So what are the unique features of WASCAL and its capacity building program?

Compared to other programs in West Africa in the area of climate change, WASCAL is unique in terms of set-up: We have three platforms on which we operate: capac-

ity building; research; and climate services. In addition to providing scholarships for the graduate students for pursuing their doctoral studies, we have also been able to introduce what is called the Thesis grant, bringing in students who are working on climate change, supporting their research so that we can broaden the base of climate scientists in West Africa. Our program is also unique because we strengthen the capacity of those working with ministries through in-service training. They can use the data, research and policy recommendations generated by WASCAL to inform and advise policymakers and planners about climate change in their day-to-day work.

One of your goals is to have 3,000 African climate experts by 2020. Is this feasible and enough for bridging the gap between too few African scientists for too many climate-related issues on the continent?

Three-thousand African climate scientists by 2020 is a feasible and tangible number when we look at the target set by the Association of African universities, which is to have additional 10,000 African PhDs by 2020. I think WASCAL is doing well in contributing to that target. With beneficiaries from all our different programs together and supported by the multiplier effect of those we have trained already we will be able to achieve that figure. Some of the people we have trained, now work with Universities and they are actually supervising and training PhD students.

Academic brain drain remains an issue in Africa. How can African academics and scientists be motivated and attracted to stay and work in Africa?

This is possible by creating an enabling environment and also by providing scholarships like WASCAL has done. These scholarships encourage and motivate young Africans to study within their region, to conduct research in their countries and to bring solutions to the table on how to combat climate change effects in West Africa. More than 90 percent of the WASCAL graduates actually stay in the region and are helping and working in West Africa, so it is actually a brain gain.

One of WASCAL's initial goals was to increase the number of African experts who represent their countries in international organizations and policymaking bodies. Can you tell us something about this issue?

There has been improvement because five years ago there were very few climate scientists from West Africa. We have been able to build a lot of capacity and Africans are now actually taking the right place at the decision-making tables with information and data from Africa. They inform policy and have influence on how things are done in Africa. So the gap is closing.