

Crisis in Côte d'Ivoire: WARDA 'Under Fire'

The events of the second half of September 2002 caught most of the world by surprise, not least among them WARDA Headquarters staff and Management. Here we recount the events of those fateful days and WARDA's response to the unfolding Ivorian crisis.

Unfolding events

In the pre-dawn darkness of Thursday, 19 September there is a sudden feeling that something is going on *again* in Côte d'Ivoire. Telephones are ringing and there is eerie silence in the world outside, broken only by members of the local security company trying to get word to residents and watchmen alike.

Not that this is anything new for residents of Bouaké, including the majority of WARDA employees from Headquarters. Anyone who had been there for three years or more had already lived through the coup d'état of December 1999, the army mutiny of July 2000, post-election riots in October 2000, and increasing insecurity in the form of armed robberies. "Since 1998, WARDA itself had lost seven vehicles in the country, and several staff had been aggressed in armed robberies at homes, restaurants, clubs and in car-jackings," says WARDA Head of Human Resources and Administrative Services, Gabriel Dao. "The worst of these being when four gunmen took two new Nissan Terranos at WARDA's main gate, shooting a researcher in the process. That was back in April 2000."

"Being not unfamiliar with socio-political disturbances, we had certain contingency plans already in place," explains Director of Administration and

Finance Michel Dubé. "For one, staff had been encouraged over the past four years to keep a stock of at least a week's worth of food and water in their houses." Such precautions were to prove invaluable over the coming week, as the situation could change on an hourly basis and it was not considered safe for staff to be out on the streets.

Most of those who were there would tell you that the ensuing week was the most frightening experience of their lives, none moreso than the two battles for the residential area in which most senior staff lived. Just after dark on Monday 23 September, at about 7:15 p.m., heavy fighting broke out in the Kennedy area. At this point, most people found themselves somewhere within their houses out of sight and reach of windows. The feeling was that little could be done about a direct hit from a mortar-shell, but one near a window might well send glass flying inwards with unpleasant effects. In the morning, those bold enough to venture onto the streets said that government soldiers had taken control of the Kennedy area in that battle. However, this was not to last long, and even heavier fighting broke out at about 2:30 p.m. on Tuesday and lasted a lot longer. By the end of it, however, rebels were securely in control of Kennedy once again.

Obtaining news became problematic, as different sources started telling only parts of the story and it was a jigsaw puzzle to put the pieces together. WARDA staff were variously in contact with their own embassies, while Management was busy discussing details with the UN, the French Embassy and other international bodies.

At about 4 p.m. on Thursday, 26 September, the first vehicles of a WARDA convoy rolled away from WARDA's Bouaké Liaison Office on the journey south to government-held territory in Yamoussoukro. This exit route was made available by intense negotiations with the rebels on the part of French military forces, and WARDA's position in it was brokered through the UN and the then French Ministry of International Cooperation. "We are grateful to both groups—the French Government and UN officials—for our safe departure from Bouaké," says WARDA Director General, Kanayo F. Nwanze.

Once in Yamoussoukro, accommodation was at a premium, and most WARDA evacuees spent the night in the compound of one of the many missions in the city—seriously overcrowded. Not that many of them minded, of course, they were just thankful to be alive and out of the battle zone.

On Friday morning, 27 September, the WARDA convoy rolled on south towards the commercial capital Abidjan. "Even before we got to Abidjan, several senior staff had decided to evacuate the country with their families," says Nwanze. "So, it was an already reduced group that met for a senior staff meeting the following Monday. My main concern at that time was to emphasize the fact that WARDA had not evacuated from Côte d'Ivoire. Rather, it had temporarily relocated its headquarters from Bouaké to Abidjan."

Temporary accommodation in Abidjan

Nwanze continues the story: "Upon arrival in Abidjan, our main concerns were to find accommodation for displaced staff and to find some temporary office accommodation."

26 September 2002: Three days earlier, Bouaké was declared Type 4 Security Alert by the UN Security System; WARDA evacuated from Bouaké under the protection of French troops



Housing came in the form of apartment-hotels, in particular those in the district II Plateaux near WARDA's Abidjan Liaison Office. The Liaison Office itself was soon filled with displaced staff from Bouaké, but was clearly not big enough to accommodate everyone. The decision was made to retain Executive Management, Administration and Finance, and TILS in the Liaison Office and to look for more appropriate accommodation for those research staff who had faithfully stayed in Côte d'Ivoire. "Our first temporary set-up for research was in the offices of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), to whom we are extremely grateful for space to 'camp,' albeit in cramped conditions," says Nwanze.

"UNOPS? Yes, I remember that," recalls Lowland Rice Breeder Howard Gridley, with a wry smile. "That was where we were squashed in a small space with one line for Internet. You got to spend one to two hours on-line, then one of your colleagues said



WARDA staff with Board Vice Chairman Richard Musangi (front center) at a get-together in Abidjan, December 2002

‘time’s up!’ and duly unplugged the cable from your machine!”

Later, a vacant apartment block was rented for the research staff, where conditions were less cramped, and a local computer network could be installed to facilitate access to the Internet and e-mail.

Planning for the future

Early in October, WARDA’s Executive Management put in place short-, medium- and long-term strategies for managing the Ivorian crisis. At the same time, a consolidated staffing plan was initiated for regionally recruited staff. Initially, all regular staff were placed on full pay. “We could not possibly hope to keep all support staff gainfully occupied in Abidjan,” explains Dubé, “so we divided them into three categories, which we called skeleton, essential and others.” ‘Skeleton’ staff initially comprised a few secretaries, drivers and IT staff—these were actually working. ‘Essential’ staff were those filling positions that Management considered essential to the continued viability of WARDA itself, but who were not (at that time) actually working—“these people were placed on technical leave at half salary for an initial period of three months,” explains Dubé. Remaining staff were placed on unpaid technical leave—“these people were unlikely to be recalled in the short, or even medium, term,” says Dubé. “However, by placing them on technical leave (rather than simply laying them off), we continue to maintain their health insurance cover, and they retain their rights as employees of an organization in Côte d’Ivoire.”

“Senior staff who evacuated with their families in September and early October were also initially placed on a form of technical leave,” says Nwanze—in this case on full pay.

As part of the medium-term strategy—to be implemented if it was not possible to return to Bouaké and M’bé before January 2003—discussions were held with another CG Center, ICRISAT, which has a station in Bamako, Mali. By 1 November, ICRISAT had agreed in principle to allocate offices, laboratories and

farmland at its Mali Station, and negotiations with the Malian Government commenced. In mid-December, a small team visited Bamako to evaluate the facilities and interact with the Malian authorities and ICRISAT staff. That visit resulted in the drafting of a temporary relocation plan.

“The vast majority of senior staff who had left the country returned to Abidjan during the first week of January,” Nwanze says. So, the first signs of full regrouping were visible in time for the implementation of the medium-term strategy.

On the weekend of 25–26 January, acting Director of Research James Sumberg led the first group of researchers to Bamako to establish a temporary research station at the ICRISAT facilities at Samanko, Bamako. Most of the remaining researchers, research-support staff and a cadre of administration and finance staff relocated over the coming weeks, so that a full ‘skeleton’ complement was in place by the end of April.

Land preparation for rice at ICRISAT’s Samanko Research Station, early 2003



In the meantime, the WARDA Board of Trustees met in Bamako from 24 to 28 February, where the decision was taken that research staff should remain in Bamako for up to two years, so as to allow them time to plan and implement their activities under the new climate. This signaled the triggering of the long-term strategy. A worst-case scenario of return to Bouaké becoming unforeseeable was mooted at one point; however, this “is not envisaged and is therefore not in our present framework,” Nwanze proclaims confidently.

“As we look to the future,” continues Nwanze, “I am confident. A joint team of WARDA staff and host-country tutelary Ministry of Scientific Research personnel will visit Bouaké and M’Bé for a thorough assessment of losses, damages and repairs to property and living conditions. This will be followed by a joint mission involving WARDA Management and high-level government officials to Headquarters. Media coverage will alert the public to the imminent return of WARDA personnel to Bouaké and M’Bé. A progressive return plan will be implemented with the first step being the return of a core team of maintenance staff led by a senior manager to Bouaké. Return of the first batch of other senior staff will be dependent on satisfactory developments thereafter.”

Heroism and getting behind the lines

As early as October, information reached Abidjan of local staff reporting for duty at M’Bé and at the key-sites of Danané and Gagnoa. “It is entirely due to the heroic acts of these staff that the 2002 experimental work was not lost in its entirety,” says Nwanze. “Not only were experiments maintained, but they were also harvested and the data recorded via telephone communication with scientists in Abidjan!”

“With data in hand, scientists were then able to continue some of their normal activities, such as analyzing the data, writing reports and preparing articles for publication,” says Yacouba Séré, who was acting Director of Research at that time. He added that the heroic acts of WARDA were possible because, “like in an army, with the General and most of his Colonels in place, the troops are encouraged to carry on their role.”

“Despite the open communication channels, we continued to fret about the condition and safety of our Bouaké campus,” says Nwanze. It was going to be two months after the crisis started before anyone could get to M’Bé from Abidjan.

“Since the start of hostilities, WARDA has maintained excellent relations with the Ivorian

Sahel Station highlights

While WARDA’s Headquarters and Main Research Center suffered under the Ivorian crisis, WARDA’s decentralized operational mode meant that for many it was ‘business as usual.’ This was particularly the case for staff based at the Sahel and Nigeria Stations.

Integrated crop management for irrigated-rice systems in the Sahel and savanna zones

After the initial success of encouraging farmers to adopt integrated crop management (ICM) options in the Senegal River valley in Mauritania and Senegal (see ‘Integrated Crop Management: Getting it Right on the Farm on a Wide Scale,’ *WARDA Annual Report 2000*, pages 9–19), and the workshop in 2001 on scaling up, activities in 2002 and early 2003 aimed to consolidate and expand the work. In Senegal, a first draft of a technical leaflet was being evaluated with farmers at two sites, where farmer discussion groups had been set up specifically to address the issue of ICM. Meanwhile, farmers and researchers at two sites in The Gambia were making preliminary evaluations of ICM options in the form of socio-economic and agronomic trials. Completion of the agronomic trials at the end of 2003 should pave the way for large-scale demonstrations in that country.

Sites for ICM work in Burkina Faso and Mali were identified during the Irrigated Rice Review and Planning Workshop in November 2002 (see page 62). Activities looking particularly at ICM of irrigated rice on problem soils will start during the wet season in the *Office du Niger*, Mali, in collaboration with *Institut d’économie rurale* (IER), and at the Sourou Valley, Burkina Faso, with *Institut de l’environnement et des recherches agricoles* (INERA). The options to be tested were identified in the recently completed DFID project on soil degradation in Burkina Faso and Mauritania (see ‘A Holistic Approach to Irrigated Rice Farming Problems Uncovers More Than Just Soil Degradation,’ *WARDA Annual Report 1999*, pages 30–37, and ‘Donor Country Profile: The Netherlands—Soil degradation in irrigated rice fields in the Sahel,’ *WARDA Annual Report 2001–2002*, pages 57–60).

National research and extension partners in Mauritania have recently asked WARDA to assist in impact and adoption studies at the sites where ICM has been encouraged over the past few years.

A mid-year rapid appraisal survey of the irrigated-rice sector in Nigeria in 2002 demonstrated enormous similarities in constraints facing irrigated-rice farmers in the northern Guinea and Sudan savannas of Nigeria with those common in the Sahel. It should, therefore, be possible to adapt and test ICM options in these areas of northern Nigeria.

Sahel Station highlights (cont'd)

Preliminary ICM testing in rainfed lowlands of Senegal

In 2002, WARDA was approached by the Fatick Regional Directorate of the *Agence nationale du conseil agricole et rural* (ANCAR) to establish variety and ICM trials in the region of Fatick, southwest Senegal. Trials were planned in collaboration with ANCAR agents and farmers groups in five sites in Fatick; however, poor rains intervened to annul the trials at four of the sites.

At the remaining site, Djilor, trials were established in the wet season of 2002 on a farm selected by the women-farmers' group for the valley. The trials themselves were jointly managed by WARDA, ANCAR and the farm-owner. For the first season, five varieties (WAS 47-B-B-194-4-2, WAS 63-22-5-9-10-1, WAS 63-22-1-1-3-3, WAS 164-B-5-2 and WAS 33-B-15-1-4-5) were tested for their adaptation to the ecology, and agronomic trials tested three varieties (Sahel 108, WAS 47-B-B-194-4-2 and one local variety) against three levels of fertilizer application and weed control. Farmers from the valley were invited to formal visits of the trials at crop maturity and post-harvest, in order to get their impressions of the varieties and treatments.

"Despite the lack of rain, four of the five varieties tested were able to produce some grain (with yields ranging from 2 tonnes per hectare for WAS 47-B-B-194-4-2 to 3.7 tonnes per hectare for WAS 63-22-5-9-10-1)," says Research Assistant Soulayeman Gaye, "and these were appreciated by the farmers for their production under difficult conditions."

Meanwhile, Research Assistant Abdoulaye Sow was in charge of the agronomic trials. "We were quite surprised at the initial findings," he explains. "The two modern varieties not only substantially out-performed the local varieties, but they also produced as much grain with no fertilizer as they did with the full recommended fertilizer dose for that area!"

"Of course, no researcher is going to put too much weight on one season's results," says Irrigated Rice Program Leader Kouamé Miézan. "We have formed a partnership with ANCAR and the farmers of Djilor and elsewhere in Fatick region. If the rains are better in 2003, we will go ahead with a full round of trials in the five sites as originally planned. The main interest in reporting this now is that we have achieved a measure of success in an inland valley that is essentially rainfed, therefore somewhat outside our usual mandate of strictly irrigated rice. This begins to tie in with our evolving concept of the lowland intensification continuum."

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Government in Abidjan and cordial relations with the occupying force in Bouaké," says Nwanze. "This has meant frequent contacts and interactions at the highest levels of the military and civilian arms of government. The official missions that were made to Bouaké and M'Bé were completed with full authorization from the government and cooperation of the occupying forces. The UNDP facilitated these missions with the necessary paperwork."

The first official mission from Abidjan to Bouaké and M'Bé was run on 18–20 November. Head of Operations Nurdin Katuli was among those who went. "We were very pleased to see that all the installations, communications, electricity and water-works were functioning," he says. "The offices and labs were intact, and genebank operations were continuing uninterrupted." In fact, the only major let-down had been disruption of the anther-culture laboratory due to a localized power outage.

"An important aspect of the first mission for those of us in Abidjan was the computer equipment that we rescued," says Information and Communications Technology Manager Péféry Coulibaly. To be more precise, all the servers and 25 desktop computers were retrieved during that trip, along with important documents and some personal effects.

It was almost another month before the next mission could be organized. "We were beginning to get very concerned about the risks to our seed collection by that time," explains Head of Genetic Resources Unit Gouanteou Guei. "Failure of the cold-storage facilities, or theft, could easily have robbed us of priceless germplasm." The mission was a resounding success in this respect, as over 6000 accessions were retrieved, including the most recent material from collections in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea in 2000, and breeding lines. The rescued material constituted 80% of the total germplasm collection.

"In addition to collecting the seed, we also put in place some fire-prevention measures," adds Katuli.

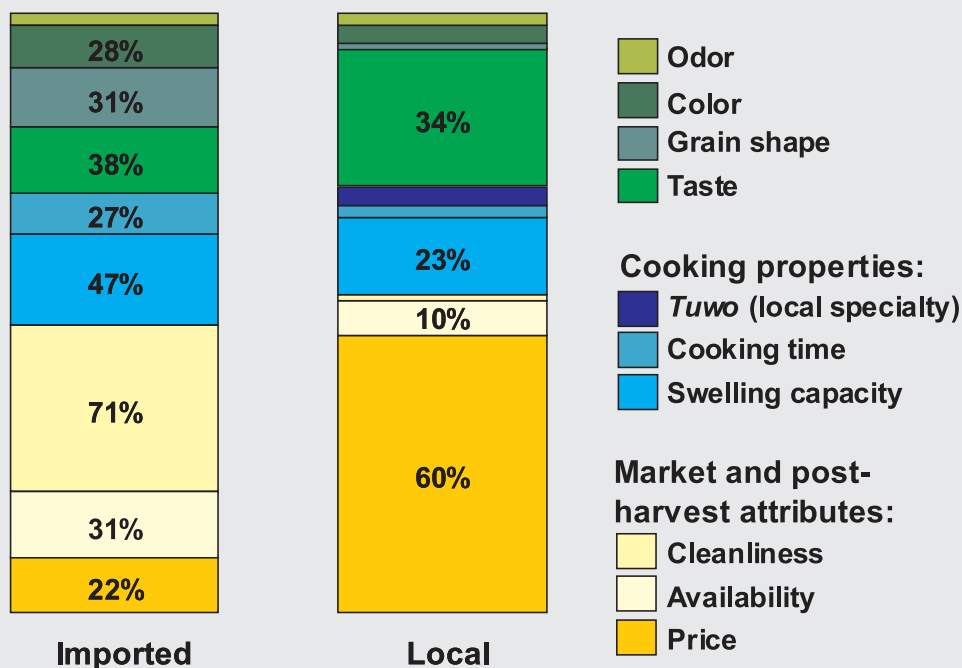
Rice sector strategy for Nigeria

Activities and preliminary results from the first year of the USAID-funded rice-sector study in Nigeria were reported last year (see Box 'Case study: Nigeria,' *WARDA Annual Report 2001–2002*, pages 44–45). The Ivorian crisis introduced some delays into the project, which is now set to be finalized mid-2003, rather than in December 2002 as initially planned.

"From the state-of-the-art paper and the stakeholder workshop in November 2001, we identified areas for further study," explains Production Economist Olaf Erenstein. "Thus, we conducted three surveys of rice producers, rice millers and rice consumers, and also a rapid appraisal survey of irrigated rice schemes in the country." The first survey covered 252 rice producers (farmers) in five rice-growing states—four (Benue, Kaduna, Niger and Taraba States) selected for their importance to national production and diversity of rice-cropping systems, and one (Ekiti State) specifically to include upland rice. The second survey addressed rice-processing in the same five states and two major rice-processing centers elsewhere in the country. Some 80 processors were selected with emphasis on millers, since milling had been identified as a key factor in the issue of rice quality. The third survey targeted 600 rice-consumers at 21 markets in eight state capitals (namely, those of the five states used in the earlier surveys, plus Abuja, Ibadan and Lagos). "The main questions in the consumer survey were why respondents chose to buy imported rice in preference to local rice, and whether they ever used local rice," Erenstein explains.

"The survey results are still in the process of being analyzed," says Erenstein, "but the important issues are already clear." For example, 80% of overall rice production is destined for sale; consequently, farmers are prepared to invest in inputs (such as fertilizer and herbicide) to improve their production. However, imported rice was available on the local market in two-thirds of the rural rice-producing areas studied, and is the rice of choice for many consumers because of its quality (whereas local rice is chosen for its price—see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Relative importance of consumers' criteria for selecting rice (Nigeria, 2002)



Percentages reported sum greater than 100% as most respondents cited more than one criterion. For imported rice, 954 consumers provided an average of 2.99 responses, while for local rice, 325 consumers provided an average of 1.43 responses.

Results from the four studies are being fed into a strategy for the development of the rice sector—the ultimate goal of the project. Preliminary propositions were presented to project collaborators in Nigeria in March 2003, and also to the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, represented by the Minister and Permanent Secretary.

In September 2002, President Obasanjo instituted a Presidential Committee on Increased Rice Production and Export to prepare a plan for the development of the rice sector in Nigeria. “WARDA was invited to join as a key member of this Standing Committee,” says WARDA Liaison Scientist in Nigeria Olu Osiname. “In particular, the Committee is relying on WARDA’s data on rice production in the country.” Some members of this committee were present at the presentation to the Ministry of Agriculture. “We viewed this meeting as a timely opportunity for input to the committee of a broader perspective on the rice sector than focusing purely on the irrigated sub-sector,” concludes Osiname.

“The feedback generated by the interactions with our collaborators and the Ministry is helping us to finalize the strategy,” says Erenstein. “The details will be discussed at a two-day technical workshop in Ibadan this summer [2003], and then there will be a half-day ceremony in Abuja, where the final document will be handed over to the Ministry of Agriculture.”

Elements of a strategy for revitalizing the rice sector in Nigeria

So much for the means, but what exactly is WARDA likely to be proposing to the Nigerian Government?

First, the strategy has two objectives:

- To increase the capacity of the rice sector to compete with imported rice in terms of quality and price;
- To enhance the market share of local rice in the national rice market.

“In formulating a strategy to reach these objectives, we are being guided by ‘strategic elements’,” explains Erenstein.

“In order to be viable, the strategy should respond to consumer needs and, therefore, the strategy should give priority to quality enhancement of local rice rather than simply increasing domestic production.”

The following strategic priorities have been set.

- *Improving quality management along the commodity chain* comprising sensitization of stakeholders on quality issues; improvement of rice-processing technology for parboiling, destoning, milling and packaging; and, improvement of the quality and homogeneity of paddy at farm level by reducing mixing of varieties and improving threshing and cleaning.
- *Increasing market efficiency* by supporting local rice retailing and trade expansion through access to working capital, which should enable larger operations, improve regularity of supply, and help new operators to enter the market and thereby increase competition; and, reducing transaction costs by promoting standardization of units, quality grades and terminology, and disseminating information on prices and the price premium on quality rice to farmers and traders.
- *Increasing efficiency at the producer level* through improved varieties, external input use and its efficiency, crop management practices, and mechanization; priority to be given to improved efficiency of existing operational irrigation infrastructure before rehabilitating or building new structures.

“As we look into implementing the strategy, we want to be sure that the development is sustainable,” explains former Policy Economist Frédéric Lançon. “For this reason, we believe that it is important to work with an institutional set-up of four entities. First, we do not want to establish new institutions, but rather strengthen existing ones. Second, we foresee a continued role for stakeholder platforms as established within the project framework. Third, we believe that a coordination body should be established independent of those actually conducting activities related to the strategy. Fourth, a monitoring system is needed to provide feedback on the effects of the development, to support the policy debate of the coordinating body, and to measure the impact of sector development.”

Furthermore, the WARDA team prefers a ‘softly-softly’ approach to implementation rather than a ‘big bang’ version. “We think there is more chance of success if we opt for phased implementation,” says Erenstein. “We should expand gradually both in terms of locations and number of interventions. The development process is incredibly complex and will need on-going fine-tuning and a learning period for all the stakeholders.” The team will propose that implementation start with certain rice-sector-specific interventions (e.g. quality). They fear that focus on non-rice specific interventions may distract attention away from the rice focus. Rather, they see a role for the coordinating body in lobbying for non-rice interventions within the framework of general agricultural policy development.

“As with so many potentially big programs, we feel a need to run pilot studies at a number of sites, in order to test the feasibility of the recommendations and fine-tune them,” explains Erenstein. “Pilot ‘projects’ would also enable those involved in the implementation to gain experience and ‘learn by doing’ ready for the scaling up stage.” The team is most likely to suggest pilot phases in Abuja, Benue, Kaduna and Niger States, because of their role in overall rice production and their relative proximity to each other.

A third mission was run near the end of February to retrieve yet more data and personal effects, then a fourth mission went at the end of March to retrieve harvested seed, data and personal effects. “At least now that we have the last season’s seed, we can move forward,” says Lowland Breeder Gridley. “Before that found its way to Bamako, I was merely looking at repeating all of last year’s trials at new locations.”

More on germplasm

WARDA’s long-term storage of its rice germplasm has traditionally been maintained at IITA under a long-standing agreement between the two centers. Consequently, it was the material not duplicated at IITA that was the focus of the second Bouaké–M’Bé mission in December. However, the achievement was even greater, with the complete recovery of all of WARDA’s germplasm by the end of the fourth mission.

The material is being held in deep freezers in Abidjan, but further security measures have also been taken. “At the end of February,” says Guei, “we sent a shipment of recovered germplasm to IITA to add to what is already there. This is a duplicate set of what we are holding in Abidjan.”

Head of Genetic
Resources Unit
Gouanteou Guei
overseeing packaging
of seed shipment bound
for IITA, Nigeria



For some years, some duplicates of WARDA’s material have also been held at IRRI in The Philippines. “We were moving along with a process to establish long-term storage at M’Bé,” muses Guei. “This was being funded by the Japanese Government, with a contribution from the World Bank.”

Subsequent to the Ivorian crisis and the fragility of germplasm collections being highlighted, WARDA is

Sahel Station highlights (cont’d)

Refining the intensified lowland – irrigated continuum concept

The ‘intensified lowland continuum’ was mentioned in last year’s report (‘Breeding Rice for the High-Potential Irrigated Systems—Looking south’ and Figure 3, *WARDA Annual Report 2001–2002*, pages 24 and 26). As mentioned last year, the concept arises from the fact that outside of the Sahel, farmers in ‘irrigated’ systems may or may not be able to maintain full water control, either from one season to the next or even within a season. In addition to this, however, there are a number of other factors that support coordination and integration of research and technology-transfer efforts for both rainfed and irrigated lowlands outside of the Sahel.

- Dominant weed species in lowland rice cropping with partial water control are similar along the whole (water-control) gradient (though different between agro-ecological zones), and markedly different from those in rainfed uplands.
- The same applies to soil types, and consequently soil fertility and soil-based constraints.
- The reduced production risk in lowlands with partial water control (compared to purely rainfed systems) makes the use of inputs a profitable option, giving a market orientation to formerly subsistence farming.
- Varieties developed for irrigated systems have been shown to perform well in rainfed lowlands with partial water control, although a wider diversity of characteristics is needed to address such stresses as flooding and drought (absent from purely irrigated systems).

“This continuum concept opens up more options for lowland development,” says Miézan. “Technologies developed for the Sahel and strictly irrigated systems now have the potential for adaptation to the non-Sahelian lowlands.”

“Thus, the door is now wide open for increased assistance to rice farmers throughout the lowlands of Sub-Saharan Africa,” concludes Miézan.

exploring with Fort Collins, Colorado, USA to store a duplicate set of material there under a ‘black box’ arrangement; this will be done during 2003 and 2004.

“For this season [2003], we are multiplying material at WARDA’s Sahel Station in Senegal,” says Guei. “Thus, we hope to have at least some material available for distribution to our partners within the International Network on Genetic Evaluation of Rice for Africa.”

“We sounded alarm-bells across the world in October,” says Nwanze, “by issuing a press release highlighting the plight of the valuable seed at M’Bé. We are delighted that it has all been rescued and our fears of a worst-case scenario alleviated!”

Moral and material support from many quarters

“During this whole period, we have received messages of support from around the world,” says Nwanze. “We are very grateful for all such support that is helping us through this difficult time.”

“We also received material support in the form of an emergency grant from the CGIAR and World Bank,” says Dubé. “Without that, we could have been in serious financial trouble.”

In mid-December, Board of Trustees Vice Chairman Richard Musangi visited Abidjan on behalf of the Board’s Executive and Finance Committee. “Other Board members were prevented from coming by travel restrictions imposed upon them by their home countries,” says Musangi. “However, we felt that it was vitally important to show solidarity with staff and Management, and to endeavor to boost morale with a visit. I was the one with the opportunity.”

Along with newly-appointed Ivorian Board Member Bamba Gué, Musangi reviewed Management decisions on crisis management, recommended decisions and actions to be taken, met with government authorities and the diplomatic community, and held a televised press conference.

In February, the full Board met in Bamako and saw first-hand how things had been arranged and how staff were settling. During the Board meetings, the Director of the CGIAR Francisco Reifschneider also visited Bamako and Samanko. He had planned to visit WARDA before the crisis, and then Abidjan in late 2002, but had been one of those affected by the World Bank moratorium on travel to Côte d’Ivoire. He took the opportunity to address the staff and congratulated WARDA personnel on their fortitude under stress.

Consolidated and brighter future

“WARDA is unique among the CG centers,” says Nwanze, “in that it is first an association of member states.” As such, WARDA was born in 1971 out of a desire of governments to collaborate for the greater good. “Partnership remains our *modus operandi*,” continues Nwanze. “In fact, without it WARDA may well have disappeared as a result of the Ivorian crisis.”

“The crisis has given us a unique opportunity,” says Sumberg. “I would never want to lessen anyone’s understanding of how traumatic this has all been for all of the individuals concerned, but for WARDA as a whole, the situation may yet have positive results.” Sumberg arrived in Abidjan in November 2002 to take up the position of Program Leader for Rice Policy and Development; in January, he was made acting Director of Research. “WARDA now has to consolidate. We have the key staff working again and we have currently little access to our principal research station. We are now looking at even more ways of networking—seeing how we can work with our partners to produce even more synergies than before.”

“It has been a difficult seven months,” says Nwanze, “but we have survived, we have regrouped, and WARDA is moving on. The sustaining power of the personal moral support from a host of individuals cannot be fully or adequately documented!”