



AFRICAN RURAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

INAUGURAL WEBINAR EDITION

THEME:

Adopting Global Models for Rural Development:
African Realities, Solutions, and Cross-Border Learning



PROF. JANICE OLAWOYE
Rural Development
Consultant



DR. MARINA DENNY
Associate Vice Provost for Engagement,
Oregon State University, USA



DAMILOLA OLAJUBUTU
Principal Coordinator, ARDN;
Founder, Rural Nurture Initiative.



PROF. OLUSHOLA FADAIRO
Associate Professor
University of Ibadan, Nigeria.



JEREMIE BOUAFFO
President, Public Policy Analysis
Group, Cote d'Ivoire.



BEN RACHAD SANOUSSI
Founder and CTO,
Green Leaf AI, Benin



DR. THEOPHILUS NKANSAH
Regional Coordinator,
Socodevi, Ghana.

Attendance is free. Registration is compulsory.
Certificate of Attendance available to ARDN members.



THURSDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2025



4:30 PM WEST AFRICA TIME



ZOOM

PROFESSOR JANICE OLAWOYE

Professor Janice E. Olawoye, a distinguished rural development consultant and retired Professor of Rural Sociology at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, is widely recognized for her pioneering contributions to rural development scholarship and practice. Born in Hartley, Iowa, USA, she earned her Bachelor's and Master's degrees at Iowa State University and completed her Ph.D. in Sociology at the University of Ibadan, where she later became a Professor of Rural Sociology in 1998. She taught at the University for 38 years before voluntarily retiring in 2016.



During her academic career, Professor Olawoye held several leadership roles, including serving as the first female Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry (2004–2006) and as Coordinator of the Sustainable Integrated Rural Development in Africa (SIRDA) Programme. She taught and supervised generations of students, including 30 Ph.D. graduates, while advancing knowledge in rural sociology, social development, and agricultural extension.

Her research and consultancy work spans more than 60 assignments for national and international development organizations, with a particular focus on gender relations, the social inclusion of marginalized groups, participatory methodologies, sustainable rural livelihoods, and the socio-cultural dimensions of development interventions. She has also examined the social implications of environmental conditions across rural contexts.

With over 70 scholarly publications, more than 50 technical reports, and extensive field experience in Nigeria and Ghana, Professor Olawoye has been a sought-after resource person for training workshops, academic conferences, and policy forums. She has also contributed her expertise to the boards of several NGOs and charitable organizations, leaving a lasting impact on both academia and development practice.

DR. MARINA DENNY

Marina Denny serves as the Associate Vice Provost for the Division of Extension and Engagement at Oregon State University, where she leads university-wide efforts to institutionalize community engagement and engaged scholarship. In this role, she supports faculty development and fosters transdisciplinary research that drives innovation and collaboration across disciplines and communities.

Throughout her 25-year career as a learning and staff development professional, Dr. Denny practices servant leadership and mentoring, inspiring others to discover their strengths and reach their fullest potential through collaboration, coaching, and lifelong learning. She believes every employee should have the opportunity to be a leader and effect positive change.



Dr. Denny's success stems from her ability to build and sustain relationships with leaders at all levels, ask thought-provoking questions, and create opportunities for creativity, growth, and visioning. She approaches people leadership and talent management holistically, drawing on organizational development and engagement to foster change.

Her academic and professional training spans ecology and conservation, curriculum and instruction, and organizational leadership, with emphases on change management and volunteer management. She has served as an extension educator and state extension specialist, taught undergraduate and graduate courses in leadership, change theories, and extension program design and evaluation, and mentored graduate student research. Her scholarly contributions include publications on organizational mentoring and competency-based professional development, as well as service as an evaluator on numerous federal and state grants.

Through her leadership at Oregon State University, Dr. Marina Denny continues to advance a culture of innovation, inclusion, and engaged scholarship.

DAMILOLA OLAJUBUTU

Damilola Olajubutu is a distinguished rural development and public policy expert whose innovative approach has transformed outcomes for underserved communities. With an exceptional academic foundation, she earned both her first and second degrees in Agricultural Extension and Rural Development from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, graduating as the top student at each level. She is currently advancing her expertise through doctoral studies in Public Policy at Oregon State University.



Driven by a commitment to sustainable solutions for rural development challenges, Damilola founded the Rural Nurture Initiative (RNI), where she serves as Executive Director, and is the Principal Coordinator of the African Rural Development Network (ARDN). Her expertise and thought leadership have garnered international attention, including speaking engagements at the United Nations, academic institutions, and international conferences, with extensive coverage by major Nigerian media outlets including TVC News, Punch, Vanguard, Guardian, The Nation, Premium Times, Leadership News and Nigerian Tribune.

Damilola's expertise has been recognized through her appointment to the Benton County Environment and Natural Resources Advisory Committee (ENRAC) in Oregon, USA, and the second African Ambassador for Blue Community, Switzerland. Her previous role as a researcher with the USAID-funded Innovation Lab for Policy Leadership in Agriculture and Food Security demonstrates her collaborative approach to policy research in agriculture and food security.

Through her unique blend of academic rigor, practical experience, and visionary leadership, Damilola continues to bridge the gap between policy and practice, driving meaningful change for rural communities while inspiring the next generation of development professionals globally.

PROFESSOR OLUSHOLA FADAIRO

Professor Olushola Fadairo is a university lecturer, researcher and consultant in sustainable rural development, agricultural extension, climate finance, governance and policy in rural communities and agriculture, with over 12 years of experience. In recent years, he has provided consultancy services to two World Bank-assisted projects on process documentation study and beneficiary impact assessment of their micro-projects in Nigeria and for IITA, on its Cassava and Maize Value Chain projects.

Academically, Professor Fadairo holds a Bachelor's degree in Agriculture from the University of Ilorin, Nigeria; master's and PhD in Agricultural Extension and Rural Development from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. He was a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Cape Town, South Africa in 2016 where he researched Climate finance flows and the REDD+ project in beneficiary (forest) communities of Nigeria. Also, as a fellow of the United Nations University (UNU-ESDA) knowledge exchange programme, he has been researching climate change adaptation and livelihood impacts in various forest ecologies of Nigeria for the last seven years.



Having previously worked as a programme officer and later as a training manager with private establishments in Nigeria; Professor Fadairo now works as an Associate Professor in the Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development, University of Ibadan (UI). He also serves as a board/faculty member at the UI Centre for Sustainable Development.

Professor Olushola Fadairo is a member of the Agricultural Extension Society of Nigeria (AESON), Rural Sociological Association of Nigeria (RuSAN), Society for Climate Action in Nigeria (SCAN) and International Society for Development and Sustainability, Japan. He has published widely in refereed academic journals and conference proceedings including blog articles and opinion editorials (Op-Eds) for his non-research audience.

THEOPHILUS NKANSAH (PHD)

Dr Theophilus Nkansah is a seasoned community development practitioner and cooperative enterprise specialist with over 30 years of experience in driving sustainable community development initiatives, project management, and adult education.

He has worked with several international and local NGOs and companies including: World Vision International, Compassion International, the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV), CARE International, Cadbury PLC, the Anglican Diocesan Development and Relief Organization, Read for Wealth, the Asante Akyem Community Organization, and Optimal Change Partnership (a local Ghana-based NGO he co-founded and led as Executive Director).



As a trusted advisor and facilitator, Dr Nkansah has successfully supported multi-stakeholder partnerships, and mentored leaders within cooperatives and social enterprises. His expertise combines academic rigor with practical field experience, enabling him to translate complex development concepts into actionable strategies that deliver measurable impact.

Dr Nkansah's professional journey reflects a strong commitment to empowering communities, advancing social solidarity, and building sustainable economic models that create long-term value for individuals and societies.

His research focuses on the role of adult literacy in community development, emphasizing literacy as a social practice rather than merely a technical skill. His work includes a study titled "The Role of Adult Literacy in Community Development in Ghana: Perceptions and Experiences of Two Rural Communities," in which explores how literacy practices (e.g., commercial, religious, and funeral literacy, among others) contribute to community development. He advocates for people-centred development, arguing that adult literacy alone may not lead to community development without self-reliant, community-led initiatives.

He holds a PhD in Education(with specialization in adult literacy and community development), awarded by the University of Cape Town, South Africa (2016), a Master's degree in Adult Education, awarded by the University of Ghana, Legon (2002), and a Bachelor's degree in French and Spanish (1990), from the University of Ghana, Legon.

BENDJEDID RACHAD SANOUSSI

Bendjedid Rachad Sanoussi is an ICT specialist with an infectious enthusiasm for agriculture and environmental protection. He is the Founder and CTO of Green Leaf AI, an AgriTech startup that applies machine learning and open data to detect and prevent diseases in date palm trees, a vital crop for food security and livelihoods across Africa.

Rachad's journey into agriculture began in Pobé, his hometown in Benin, where his father, an agricultural engineer, introduced him to farming early on. From cutting dry wood in his father's palm grove to sell during school holidays, to later advocating for climate-smart agriculture, his roots in farming have shaped his drive for innovation and entrepreneurship.



Over the years, he has taken part in programs such as the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning's training on digital transformation and agri-entrepreneurship, served as an ICTforAg Youth Ambassador, and contributed to digital transformation projects with UNDP and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). He is also engaged in global AI policy dialogues through networks such as the Internet Society, Digital Grassroots, and CAIDP. Recognized as a Young Digital Champion by the mEducation Alliance, Rachad combines technical expertise with a deep commitment to empowering farmers and communities to adapt to climate change.

Jérémie BOUAFFO

Jérémie BOUAFFO is the President of the Public Policy Analysis Group of Côte d'Ivoire (GAPP-CI) and a specialist in local and village development policy. For several years, he has been deeply involved in designing and implementing innovative initiatives that support the sustainable development of villages in Côte d'Ivoire and across Africa.

He is the creator of the ToD-BoU (Top-down/Bottom-up) approach, a hybrid governance model that establishes shared responsibility between the state, local authorities, and communities. His projects also focus on advancing territorial justice, promoting inclusion, strengthening local governance, and combating rural poverty.



Guided by the conviction that national development is achieved through the intelligent transformation of local territories, Jérémie advocates for a strong synergy between the state, collectivities, populations, and partners. His expertise and areas for strategic collaborations includes advisory missions, institutional partnerships, and interventions in the areas of rural public policy, territorial performance evaluation, and local governance with strategic planning.