



The Seeds

A bi-monthly compendium of stories and articles about the Start Them Early Program (STEP)

Vol. 7 | April 2022

What's inside

- 02

STEP-Oyo Project Commences in 6 Schools as Year III Begins
- 04

DR Congo President, H.E. Tshisekedi, shows Interest in STEP, sends Special Envoy
- 08

STEP Organizes Expository Field Trips
- 10

STEP Beneficiaries run Viable Agribusiness Ventures in the Communities

Also inside

- P.02
▶ Students' Orientation and Enterprise Engagement
- P.05
▶ Madagascar's Ministry of Agriculture visits STEP Agribusiness Facility at Fasola Grammar School
- P.06
▶ JCI Odua, STEP-Oyo Empowers 100 Students Through Agribusiness Training
- P.09
▶ Bathi Students Visit Wambugu Farm
- P.11
▶ Oluponna's STEP Students Champion Fish Processing

BENEFICIARIES' ENGAGEMENT

STEP-Oyo Project Commences in 6 Schools as Year III Begins

Sequel to the success recorded in the first and second phases of the STEP-Oyo Project, the Oyo State Governor, Engr. Seyi Makinde has approved the sum of \$1.7million to expand the project to six more secondary schools across the geopolitical zones in the state. To this end, the implementing team paid a familiarization visit to nine schools in the state, namely: Irepo Grammar

School, Igboho, Apode High School, Eruwa, Obaseeku High School, Eruwa, Baptist Grammar School, Orita Eruwa, Ogbomosho Grammar School, Paku, Olivet Baptist High School, Oyo, Oranyan Grammar School, Oyo, Mount Olivet Grammar School, Bodija, and Wesley College of Science, Elekuro.

After scrutiny and evaluation of the schools, communities, facilities,

and state of security, the project selected the following schools for the implementation of STEP: Mount Olivet Grammar School, Bodija; Wesley College of Science, Elekuro; Irepo Grammar School, Igboho; Baptist Grammar School, Orita Eruwa; Olivet Baptist High School, Oyo; Ogbomosho Grammar School, Paku.

Students' Orientation and Enterprise Engagement

In February, STEP held an Orientation Program at the new schools; Mount Olivet Grammar School, Bodija, Wesley College of Science, Elekuro, and Christ High School, Oleyo, Ibadan. The program objectives included introducing the students to STEP, our origin and goal, the club engagement, and activities at the existing STEP Schools. At some schools, the students were shown videos to intimate them with the project, and they were fascinated by the success stories of STEP club members in other schools.

After the orientation, the students were eager to ask questions and share what they learned from the visuals. To this, the STEP team thoroughly answered, and students who indicated interest to join the club were evaluated and selected. Subsequently, selected students were grouped into their specific STEP enterprises in the respective schools. The workshop was well attended, with an average of 120 – 150 students at each school.

Currently, the students and some teachers have been engaged in modern agriculture and agribusiness through course work in Crop production and Mechanization, Livestock production, and Value addition. The training has involved the use of digital tools, visuals, participation in enterprise practical like urban farming and pastry production.

Also, there has been engagement in ICT and Science enterprises, and the students have been exposed to careers in the agricultural value chain, the different digital marketing tools, how they can be used, and the concept of digital agriculture. The students were receptive to the training(s), some of them even explained how they would use digital marketing to promote their products,



Orientation of Students on STEP Enterprises by a Trainer



Students being engaged across various enterprises

and eagerly make contributions to the discourse. Meanwhile, trainings included introduction to agribusiness and entrepreneurship, relating to how to start successful businesses,

the relevant entrepreneurial skills they should imbibe, and examples of successful Entrepreneurs.

There has also been an Expository Field Trip to state-of-the-art

Agribusiness Facilities to expose the students to modern agribusiness processes and facilities, while allowing them to interact with other STEP students.

Teachers' Workshop

STEP organized a Teachers' Workshop in February to orientate the teachers about STEP, the STEP-Oyo Project, and upcoming STEP Club activities at the respective schools, namely; Mount Olivet Grammar School, Bodija, Wesley College of Science, Elekuro, and Christ High School, Oleyo, Ibadan.

The workshop featured presentations on the STEP Model, success stories and activities at the STEP Schools. Meanwhile, the participants were engaged through videos, STEP documentaries, and a breakdown of Agribusiness enterprises at the schools. Also, they were intrigued with components of our strategy and the flow of our activities at the existing schools.



A STEP Trainer educating Teachers on the program's strategy

At the schools, the teachers gave feedback and asked questions relating to STEP activities to understand the intent for their schools thoroughly. Meanwhile, interactions during the workshop made it apparent that the teachers were eager for their students and themselves to benefit from the

project. Afterwards, STEP and the schools made plans towards the upcoming students' and teachers' engagement, and there was selection of the days and timings for the STEP Club meetings and Enterprise Trainings. The workshop was well attended, with an average of 30 - 60 teachers at each school.

43 Young Youths Participate in the Installation of Modern Irrigation System

In Oluponna, STEP provided a 9-meter by 4-meter screenhouse, a 2000-litre water tank, and a drip irrigation system to ensure continuous cultivation and supply of agricultural produce in the community. Apart from serving as an innovation in the community and the surrounding communities, the project aims to make the students appreciate modern agriculture and introduce them to exciting ways of practicing agriculture.

A screenhouse was constructed at OFFER Centre Agriculture Institute, which serves as a training centre for the younger people engaged by STEP.

STEP conducted training with the young youths to explain the benefits of constructing a screen house and a practical session installing the drip irrigation system in the screen house and on the field. The training, which aimed at diffusing agricultural technology into the community, involved secondary school students, some students of the agriculture institute, and some community members.

The participants learned to set up a drip irrigation system, the most efficient water and nutrient delivery system for growing crops



The constructed screenhouse

in the screen house and open field. They also learned how the system increases crop yield and saves water by wetting only the root area. The

training captured easier ways of practicing agriculture instead of the laborious method they previously employed.



The youths installing drip irrigation system in the screenhouse



Open field after installation of the drip irrigation

EVENTS

DR Congo President, H.E. Tshisekedi, shows Interest in STEP, sends Special Envoy

Having initiated a partnership with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and the African Development Bank (AfDB) to transform agriculture in his country, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), H.E. Felix Tshisekedi sent a delegation to study the economics and business case of the IITA Start Them Early Program (STEP).

The special envoy from the DRC President, Mr Pacifique Kahasha Birindwa, accompanied by Mr Felix Karume Ntwali, visited Fasola



Mr Pacifique Kahasha Birindwa interacting with a STEP student

Grammar School in January 2022, as part of their tour of IITA's technologies and ongoing programs.

The delegates were accompanied by Dr Adebowale Akande (D.G. OYSADA, Senior Specialist & Head of Agribusiness and Mechanisation/ Youth, Oyo State Agribusiness Development Agency), the STEP team and members of the IITA Youth Agripreneurs Unit. The STEP Assistant Coordinator, Ms Bolanle Larinde, Principal Officers, and teachers at Fasola Grammar School, students, and other team members received the delegates at the STEP Agribusiness Facility in Fasola Grammar School.

The STEP team explained how the program and the STEP-Oyo partnership has impacted the students, schools, and community. The delegates toured the Processing Centre, ICT room, Training room, Broilers and Layers pen, the Screen house, School Hall, Classrooms, Offices, and Central Science

Laboratory. They observed modern agricultural equipment, small-scale farm machines, and the ICT and internet facilities.

STEP students put up agribusiness demonstrations in addition to the exhibition of branded products, confectionery, vegetables, eggs, broiler birds, graphic designs, slide presentation, sanitisers, and liquid soaps.

Mr Pacifique Kahasha Birindwa commended the STEP team, the teachers, and partners for the project's remarkable impact on the students, communities, and agricultural development. "We want DG Sanginga to replicate these programs not only in DRC but also in other countries of Africa," he said. "We want to train people who will train others so that we can take control of our economy."



A group photograph featuring the delegates, Dr Akande, and the students

Madagascar's Ministry of Agriculture visits STEP Agribusiness Facility at Fasola Grammar School

In February, a delegation from the Ministry of Agriculture, Madagascar visited Fasola Grammar School to understudy the activities of the Start Them Early Program (STEP) in partnership with the Oyo State Government,

and Oyo State Agribusiness Development Agency (OYSADA). The delegation was led by the General Secretary of the Madagascar Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Mrs Fanjaniaina Miharisoa.

In his remarks, IITA Deputy Director General (Partnerships for Delivery), Dr. Kenton Dashiell, intimated the delegates on the impact of STEP on students, schools, and communities. He also explained how the Oyo State government was financing the project



The delegation from Madagascar during student presentations at the STEP Processing Centre



A group photograph of the delegates with the STEP team, students, the school, and representatives from OYSADA).

and the extension of the project to eight schools in the state.

After touring the Agribusiness facilities in the school with her team, Mrs. Miharisoa commended the STEP team, the teachers, and the Oyo State Government for the

project's remarkable impact on the beneficiaries.

Also, on the Madagascar team were: Mrs. Herisoa M. Rkotoniana, Mrs. Vols L. Razafimanntsoa, Mr. David's S. Reason, Mr. Cheick A. Diarra, Mr. Serge P. Randrianaritiana, and a translator. The

visitors expressed awe at the display of branded products, like confectionery, vegetables, eggs, broiler birds, graphic designs, slide presentation, sanitizers, and liquid soaps. The visitors patronized the students and gave some exceptional students practicing home agribusiness cash token to encourage their efforts

JCI Odua, STEP-Oyo Empowers 100 Students through Agribusiness Training

Recently, the Junior Chamber International, Odua in conjunction with the IITA and Oyo State's STEP-Oyo Project organized an Agricultural Summit at Methodist High School, Ibadan, Oyo State. The Agribusiness Training was hinged on introducing the students to viable agricultural opportunities, to encourage participation and curb food insecurity. A hundred students from 10 Oyo State schools.

The 2022 JCI Odua president, JCIN Amb. Hammed Lateef in his remark restated the club's commitment to food security, which occurs because of disruption of farmlands by herdsmen. Hameed made it known that the JCI Odua organized the summit to address the issues and boost agricultural inputs, develop human capacity from early school years.

"That is why we focus on senior secondary school students", he



Ms. Edese Joy while presenting youth involvement in agriculture to the students.

said. "These students are exposed to different livestock farming tools, and crop production tools as well, with all these been done, we hope they would not remain the same, as agriculture itself is not the same as it was in the early days."

Ms Edese Joy from IITA STEP enlightened the students on the

fundamentals of Agribusiness. Her words: "You don't have to be a farmer to be in the Agribusiness. There are many ways to be a farmer. You can be a lawyer, doctor and at the same time farm for profit, selling farm produce and others". She also emphasized the need for technology in agribusinesses,



A section of the students listening to one of the Speakers



A student of the Livestock enterprise explaining poultry operations

using social media as a tool to sell farm produce.

Past president of JCI Odua, Tosin Aderibigbe in his lecture, titled 'Education a Key to Success in Life' stressed that agriculture was not just about planting and cultivating. Another guest lecturer, JCI Amb. Abdurashed Adewuyi, in his lecture titled, "Agriculture Investment, Opportunity for All", revealed that he studied mass communication, but turned out to be a proud farmer. "We need to know and open our eyes to agriculture which is our way of life, our fathers brainwashed us to the belief that agriculture is not the way then, but we need to remind us youngsters of

how important it is to us. The future of Africa will not come from oil or gas, but agriculture because nobody smoke gas, nobody drink gas, it can only be food," Adewuyi said.

The host principal, Mrs Margaret while giving her motivation speech appreciated the JCI ODU A for a wonderful workforce motivation and enterprise opportunity given to the students to enlighten them that there is more to life than education. "As you are serious with your education, there are many other things you can do to achieve greatness in Nigeria," she said.

Babalola Ayoola a JSS 3 student of Methodist high school summarised

what was taught during the summit to others, he talked about fish farming, and what is needed for a successful fish farming process. Another student, Lukman Sunday talked about nursery farming, how it can be achieved, and he concluded by appreciating the STEP team for bringing to them the agribusiness knowledge.

Award recipients included: Abdurashed Adewuyi, Tosin Aderibigbe, host Principal Mrs Margaret and STEP.

Source: Nigerian Tribune, <https://tribuneonline.com/jci-odua-trains-100-students-on-agribusiness-in-oyo/>

STEP shares Agribusiness Insights with IITA

NYSC Members

At the IITA Corp Members Annual Symposium, representatives of the STEP team gave a talk on STEP in Africa, our operations across several communities. They participated in a panel discussion on agriculture, centred on enlightening participants at the symposium on agriculture and agribusiness participation.

The corp members under the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) took a tour of the STEP Agribusiness Facility at Fasola Grammar School and learnt about STEP-Oyo and the programs's impact on the students, schools, and community.



A representative of the STEP Team, Mr Atere Abdazeez, responding to questions about STEP.



The corp members at the Processing Centre



A group photograph of participants

STEP organizes Agriculture Open Day in Osun State

The Start Them Early Program (STEP) recently organized an outreach program to share knowledge of improved agricultural technologies with inhabitants of Oluponna community in Iwo, Osun State. This is in line with one of the objectives of the STEP initiative to enhance the knowledge and skills of young people, farmers,

and communities on the use and application of modern agriculture.

STEP youths who spoke at the event shared their experiences and made presentations on modern agriculture and new technologies that could increase agricultural productivity in the rural community. Members of the community, including community

leaders, farmers, students and market men and women, were exposed to contemporary farming methods and development skills.

The program had 253 people (156 youth and 97 adults) in attendance. Officials from the Ministry of Education in Osun State were also present.



Group photograph at the program



STEP Coordinator, Mr Adefioye delivering his speech

YOUTH OUTREACH

STEP organizes Expository Field Trips

In March, selected students from Christ High School, Mount Olivet Grammar School, and Wesley College of Science participated in expository field trips to STEP Agribusiness facilities at Methodist High School and Fasola Grammar School. The essence of the excursion was to expose the students to modern agribusiness processes and facilities while allowing them to interact with other STEP students. They reflected on the establishment of STEP Pilot Enterprises at their schools and engaged in recreational activities.

Students in Value addition and Livestock enterprises visited Methodist High School, while those

in the Crop and Mechanization enterprise visited Fasola Grammar School.

Representative teachers from the host schools welcomed the visiting schools. They gave a brief about the



One of the Host students intimating visiting students about the use of ICT in Agribusiness

STEP Club activities in their schools, and the students participated in various activities, including a tour of STEP agribusiness facilities, networking, games, enlightening talks, and exhibitions.

The visiting students and their teachers were taken on a tour by the host students and STEP Officers to the school farms, processing centres, training rooms, ICT rooms, biogas station, broiler pen, layers pens, screen house and the laboratory.

At the STEP Enterprises, they were explicitly exposed to experiential activities, and they were eager to participate.

They were also exposed to team building exercises which proved to be effective in improving their leadership and teamwork skills.

After that, students who were interviewed expressed their excitement to have been a part of the expository field trip and shared their

eagerness to participate in modern agriculture activities at their homes. Impressively, one of the students who shared her home garden experience and how she enjoys growing vegetables for her family's consumption, stated that she was now interested in studying agriculture rather than Medicine which was her initial career choice. The teachers were equally pleased to have participated in the trip and praised the host schools for exposing them to modern agricultural technologies.



A STEP Officer intimating the visiting students about the activities at the Screenhouse.



A group photograph of students, teachers, and the STEP Team

Bathi Students visit Wambugu Farm

In Kenya, Year 1 and 2 STEP students from Bathi Secondary School went on an excursion to Wambugu Agricultural Training Centre to boost the agriculture and agribusiness knowledge and interests.

The Wambugu Agricultural Training Centre, located in Nyeri County, is an agricultural training centres established in 1954. It plays a significant role in developing livestock and crop production in Kenya. The centre covers an area of 94 acres with a wide variety of demo farms on different crops and animal varieties.

The students received training on new farming methods and technologies that increase



Students receiving training on modern fish farming

productivity and boost profitability during the excursion. They were trained in; sweet potato farming, arrowroot farming, vertical farming, and vegetable farming.

SUCCESS STORIES

STEP-Oyo Project Empowers Outstanding Students with Starter Tool Kits

The STEP-Oyo Project has empowered 25 outstanding students in the STEP Club with Agribusiness starter tool kits across the enterprises. These students, from all STEP-Oyo Schools, were screened for their agribusiness knowledge, diligence, and hardwork during the period of training and engagement. Participating schools included;

Methodist High School, Bishop Philips Academy, Iresa-Adu High School, UMCA Secondary School, and Fasola Grammar School.

The empowerment encouraged the students to establish viable home agribusinesses. The recipients and their parents are currently implementing successful home

agribusinesses in their communities and competing remarkably with other business ventures around them.

It is expected that their efforts, diligence, and spontaneity would place them at the frontiers of intense agricultural productivity as they champion the cause of food security in the continent.



One of the dedicated students in the ICT enterprise being presented with a Starter Tool Kit at Fasola Grammar School



The recipient of the Crop production and Mechanization Starter Tool Kit from Methodist High School

STEP Beneficiaries run Viable Agribusiness Ventures in the Communities

Beneficiaries of the Start Them Early Program (STEP) are now vital parts of their communities' agricultural value chain, producing fresh agricultural products, antiseptics, and various value-added products through their participation

in schools' pilot enterprises and home agribusinesses. These items are marketed through their understanding of digital marketing, which provides them with a diverse clientele in their communities and other parts of Nigeria.

Their engagement in agribusiness spans from the supply of delightful products to school tuck shops and taking on bulk orders from external clients such as stores, organizations, and individuals across the country.. Their excellent delivery has boosted



Some of our Beneficiaries with their products

the number of referrals they get and a rise in the number of products sold out.

A few examples of these products include: fresh vegetables like spinach and cucumbers; catfish;

healthy eggs and broiler chickens; baked goods with added value; sanitizing agents and antiseptics.

Oluponna's STEP Students champion Fish Processing

STEP students in Oluponna in Iwo, Osun State, have taken the lead in the fish processing market in their community, becoming the major suppliers of processed catfish to consumers in the community and environs. At N1500 per pack, their smoked catfish is becoming the most sought-after in the area which could

be attributed to its cleanliness and tastiness.

Before developing the commodity, they learnt about the importance of processed and packaged fish in the agricultural value chain. They learned about the profitability of adding value to products and how it increases

shelf life and reduces wastage, emphasizing fish processing for both immediate and long-term use.

The young youths are now proficient in preparing table-sized catfish and using a smoking kiln. They are also skilled in preparing fish barbecue and fish pepper soup.



Students cleaning out fish for smoking



A Student putting cleaned out fish in the smoking kiln

Afraha Secondary School featured in Project 254

The STEP Club at Afraha Secondary School was featured in the Young Farmers Club Program on Project 254 for their work on rabbits and small-scale farming on the demonstration fields. The program highlights the success of the different initiatives introduced by President Uhuru Kenyatta.

On this feature, the show highlights the progress made after the revival of the 4-K clubs in primary schools and



Caretaker and student from Afraha during the television interview

the Young Farmer Clubs in secondary schools. Meanwhile, the program's broader objective is to attain food security and encourage youths in Kenya to embrace agriculture-based careers and take agriculture as an economic activity.

The video tagged Project 254, Episode 86 - Revival of 4-K Clubs and Young Farmers Clubs can be accessed by on Youtube by clicking the link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cMeT6ZGo0SU>

Some Products Produced and Packaged by STEP Students across different States in Nigeria

1



Cassava Chinchin

2



Cassava Chips

3



Peanuts

4



Tidbits

5



Air-Freshener

6



Liquid Soap

To order or for enquiries, call or reach out to 08039784389

This bulletin is a production of the IITA Start Them Early Program in Ibadan, Nigeria

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