

The Seeds

The Seeds is a bi-monthly compendium of stories and articles about the Start Them Early Program (STEP)

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STEP continues to inspire students

Grade five students at the Valencia Junior Academy in Ibadan made a study visit to IITA headquarters in Ibadan on June 29. The visit was to expose the students to modern facilities and technologies that exist in promoting food production in Africa, and also to give them the opportunity to interact with agriculture scientists and experts in agribusiness.

The students were hosted by the STEP team, together with IITA Women's Group and the Fishery Unit of IITA Youth Agripreneurs (IYA). Damola Adewole, STEP's Capacity Development and Advocacy Officer delivered a short interactive lecture on "Opportunities in Agribusiness", which was used to showcase to the students, the potentials in agriculture, particularly careers and viable enterprises along the value chains of different agricultural commodities.

The lecture created the opportunity to understand the basic concept of agribusiness and the career opportunities it offers.

After the lecture, the group made a tour to the hatchery facilities of IYA and the fish ponds, where they better understood the business opportunities in fish farming. They also visited the demonstration field of IITA Women's Group, where they got more knowledge about crop production, particularly on vegetables, from Mrs Gloria Oluwadare, who is the Farm Manager of the group. They were also taught how to plant plantain and pawpaw.

Mr Oluyemi who led the school on the visit lauded the IITA initiative to extend agribusiness development to primary and secondary schools. While commenting about the impact the visit has had on his students,

// as their class teacher in school, some of them told me that they wanted to be engineers and doctors. After the STEP training and the field tour today at IITA, they suddenly changed and they now tell me they want to become farmers! That means they did not know the potentials in farming. Farming is actually the bedrock of all occupations or professions which we have actually discovered. There's no kid who has not taken a meal today, and that shows they have all patronized a farmer. This means that farming is very essential, and it is very good that our young ones are catching the vision of going into it right from the early age", he said. //



The students planting pawpaw at IITA Women's Field



The students, with Mrs Gloria Oluwadare and Damola Adewole (far right) show excitement after learning how to plant pawpaw



The students learning how to feed catfish fingerlings at the hatchery facilities of IITA Youth Agripreneurs

Fasola Grammar School to get ultra-modern agribusiness training centre



Dr Nteranya Sanginga (3rd from right) with STEP team and IITA staff in Nigeria at inside the abandoned workshop at Fasola Grammar School

Fasola Grammar School (FGS) in Oyo town, Oyo state, has been identified as a training center for the Start Them Early Program (STEP) in Nigeria. The program, which is designed with the objective of erasing the negative perception about agriculture among secondary school students, aims to raise a generation of young leaders with education in agribusiness.

IITA Director General, Dr Nteranya Sanginga visited FGS with representatives from STEP, IITA Communication unit, and Facility Management Services (FMS) on the 2nd of August. "The intention

is to change the mindset of young people about agriculture; from being a punishment to being a business venture from which they can make a living," Dr Sanginga said. An abandoned building that was established for introductory technology in the school about 30 years ago has been set apart for this initiative. The building has been lying in ruins for many years due to lack of management.

According to Jimoh Adedeji, a security guard of the school who has lived in Fasola Community for over 50 years, "the building was

constructed about three decades ago as a workshop. Shortly after construction, it was abandoned and became dilapidated. After some years, a new Principal was transferred to the school; he renovated the building and it was back in use. However, this was short-lived because the building was deserted a short while after the Principal left."

Principal Officers of FGS have agreed that the abandoned building be renovated and transformed into a center for agribusiness education. "We appreciate IITA as an international body that cares about food security. Every reasonable mind ought to cooperate with IITA because the institute has the capacity and the best hands for the job. We are also happy to become part of the IITA family," M. A. Okunlola, FGS Vice-Principal, said.

Proposed training activities for the center include food processing, baking, juice making, and cassava processing, as well as Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The center will also have provision for a library.

The piece of land in front of the school would be used as a demonstration site for agribusiness. The STEP center would be solar-powered because there is no public electricity supply in the community.

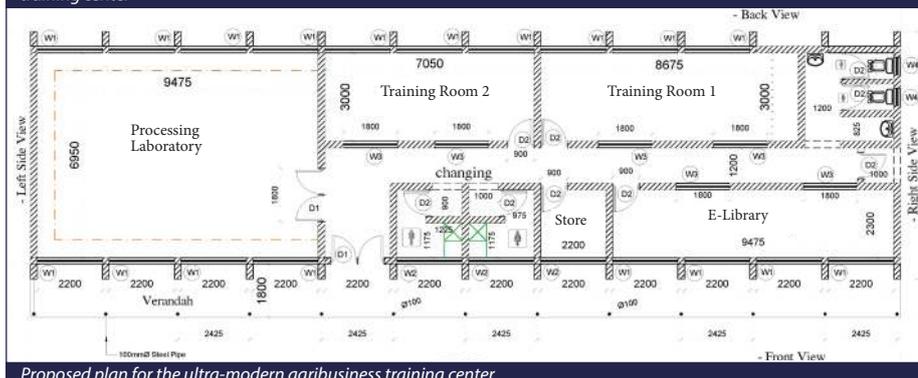
STEP currently carries out its activities in DR Congo, Kenya, and Nigeria. The training in agribusiness will be merged with the school curriculum. This initiative seeks to transform FGS into a model for other schools to include agribusiness in their curriculum.

The school was selected because of its proximity to the government-owned Fasola Farms. The farm workers have agreed to provide their expertise once the STEP center opens. Along with the students, the entire Fasola community will have the opportunity to learn agribusiness.

Culled from IITA website



The abandoned introductory technology workshop abandoned 30 years ago, to be renovated into an agribusiness training center



Proposed plan for the ultra-modern agribusiness training center

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Changing the face of Weza Institute in DR Congo

IITA's plans to upgrade the learning facilities at the Weza Institute into an agribusiness learning center in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo) through the Start Them Early Program (STEP) is taking shape.

This was revealed when IITA Director General, Dr Nteranya Sanginga visited the school in July 2019, with the STEP team in DR Congo to inspect the level of work that has been carried out towards upgrading facilities of the school.

The upgrade started in November 2018 after the school was identified as one of the three schools to benefit from the pilot phase of STEP in DR Congo, the new agribusiness development initiative of IITA.

According to Dr Sanginga, "The plan is to make the school the first secondary school in DRC to have an agribusiness learning center, equipped with modern facilities, where students and other young people can acquire different knowledge and skills in agribusiness". He also said the learning center will attract to the school, agriculture scientists and young agripreneurs, who will train and inspire a new generation of agribusiness leaders in Africa.

The upgrades that have taken place include the renovation of four classrooms and a dilapidated building which has five rooms and will serve as the agribusiness learning center for the school. The learning center will have a library, equipped with books, shelves and chairs, and an e-library section, with computers and other modern facilities which will give both the students and teachers the opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills on ICT.

The centre will also have a food processing room, equipped with small processing machines. Students will have the opportunity to learn value addition and transform their produce harvested from school farms into different products which will be exhibited for other visiting students and guests.

Other rooms in the building will serve as STEP office, Tool room, where field equipment and other

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The newly renovated building with five rooms

IITA-DG awards tuition grants to students of Weza Institute



Dr Nteranya Sanginga addressing some of the students of Weza Institute

Some students of the Weza Institute had the opportunity to meet and interact with the Director General of IITA, Dr Nteranya Sanginga during one of his inspection visits to the school. The students, while interacting with Dr Sanginga, revealed that some of them find it very hard to pay for their school fees and which is why they engage in all sorts of "heavy jobs" during the long summer break in order to save money and pay for their tuition. They added that this means of sourcing for funds exposes them to great danger especially the girls

among them. Dr Sanginga later addressed them and promised to sponsor their studies for one year. He also encouraged them to participate in the beautification process of their school, instead of exposing themselves to danger.

A garden expert was hired for the school to facilitate the beautification exercise and to train the students on best techniques on lawn and garden construction and management. The exercise will engage the students over the holiday before the new academic session in September.



The school wearing a new look just before the new 2019/2020 academic session



The students taking part in the beautification of the school



The new school environment



Pictures taken on July 27: On-going construction which will be completed before September

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appliances will be kept in good condition, and a Conference room. The Conference room will have a capacity of 100 people, and will be used for trainings, workshops and seminars for students. The upgrade will be concluded by the end of

August, and the inauguration of the new look of the school has been scheduled for September 2nd, 2019. This new development will provide a great learning environment that will contribute to the students' overall academic excellence from

September when the new academic session begins.

STEP's agribusiness activities in the school will also commence in September when the school resumes.

STEP intensifies agribusiness training for students in Bukavu, DR Congo



A cross-section of students learning how to prepare fish feed



One of the students mixing the fish feed after being taught

The STEP team in DR Congo has concluded its first intensive agribusiness training workshop for high school students. STEP has received a growing interest from high school students since its introduction into schools' activities in the DRC.

Twenty-four students - 11 from Weza Institute and 13 from Nyamurebe Institute of Kaziba, who showed exceptional interest in acquiring more knowledge and skills in agricultural business during the 2018/2019 academic session were engaged by STEP on a one-month intensive agribusiness training at the IITA station in Kalambo.

The training program is part of the approaches of STEP, which seeks to introduce high school students into the field of agribusiness during the summer break after the normal school academic session. The major goal of the training is to equip students with agribusiness skills, which they can use to establish their own enterprises and train other young people. The training will give opportunities to students to understand the commercial value of different commodities.

The students were the first set to participate in the training, which allowed them to learn across the value chains of various commodities such as cassava, fish and poultry. They also received training on how to establish and appropriately manage vegetable fields. A special session was set aside to enable them learn about Semi-Autotrophic Hydroponic (SAH) on cassava, which is a new propagation system that was introduced by IITA researchers two years ago.

The latter part of the training focused on food processing, where participants learned how to produce different secondary products such as flour, bread, biscuits and soy products from cassava and soybean.

The training, which started on July 1st, was concluded with lessons on agricultural entrepreneurship and an internship period of one week with the IITA Kalambo Youth Agripreneurs (IKYA) at one of their sales outlets to understand sales and marketing strategies.

The students are expected to extend the knowledge and skills to other young people in their communities and schools.

STEP trains the pupils of SOS Primary School on agribusiness in DR Congo

The STEP team in DR Congo organized a seminar for the pupils of SOS Primary School in Bukavu, DR Congo on June 21. The seminar sensitized the pupils on agribusiness and to teach them the value chains that exist in various agricultural commodities.

The pupils were taught with some educational materials designed by Newday Afrika, a youth organization working in Bukavu to empower young people in primary and secondary schools through agribusiness.

The materials made it easy for the young people to understand how agricultural commodities are transformed as they move along the value chains, and how this value addition process contributes to increased income for people and food security for the Continent.



Bobo Tangabanga teaching the pupils with the didactic materials designed by a member of Newday Afrika

It was during the program that many of them also discovered that farming is just one of the several parts of agribusiness.

STEP-trained students excel in final exam

The following **students of Weza Institute** in Bukavu, DR Congo, have expressed their delight over the impact the Start Them Early Program has had on their studies, particularly on their final 2018-2019 State exam, which now gives them the opportunity to further their studies.

 Ayagirwe Chamwa Germaine 68%	 Bahati Mugisho Caroline 68%	 Bashige Muderwa Alexis 61%	 Nshokano Namegabe Meshack 69%
 Bulonza Cihasha Pascaline 67%	 Bora Wabenga Esperance 67%	 Cuma Shabani Roland 72%	 Mugisho Kagayo Christian 70%
 Iragi Baguma Josias 74%	 Habamungu Shindano Charack 68%	 Musharhamina Balemba Michel 66%	 Kujirakwinja Musharhamina Amos 66%

STEP-Kenya participates in AWAN-Afrika Continental Conference



A group photograph of delegates at the end of the trade fair

Advocacy is a major component in the creation of an enabling environment for any development project and it takes many forms, such as participation, presentation and exhibitions in a series of youth fora. The aim of the African Women Agribusiness Network (AWAN-Afrika) Continental Conference and B2B fair was to connect women and youth in agribusiness to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the global market.

It offered a platform for business-to-business deal making for African women and youth in agribusiness with producers, aggregators, brokers, processors, exporters, agri-tech companies, investors and other value chain actors.

The event took place on 12th and 13th June in Nairobi, and women and youth from more than 27 African countries attended. Lorraine Mutinda, a representative of IITA's Youth in Agribusiness projects

acquainted those interested in the STEP and ENABLE TAAT activities using relevant literature and visuals.

The officer also networked with participants and delegates from the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Co-operation (CTA) where she further advocated for the STEP. This was well received, and as a result she was referred to a similar project that CTA supports dubbed "Youth Economic Empowerment through Agribusiness in Kenya" (VijaBiz). Subsequently, a meeting was arranged with Ustad Foundation, the managing entity for the VijaBiz project, to explore areas of collaboration between the two projects.

The following areas of interest were identified for collaboration: (i) Agribusiness incubation, (ii) Training, (iii) Development of training materials, (iv) Strategy development and partnership agreement, (v) Linkage to similar initiatives, and (vi) Mentorship (assistance in taking

beneficiaries' agribusiness ideas to market). A collaborative agreement is being drawn up to formalize the agreement between STEP and VijaBiz project.

Other partners relevant to the project are under consideration in accordance with the set selection criteria. These are drawn from other initiatives similar to STEP within and outside of IITA, local universities, Masters' students, mentors, secondary schools, and local youth in agribusiness groups. The project's partnership process will follow IITA's established phases and steps.

STEP in Kenya is in its planning phase, unlike its counterparts in Nigeria and DR Congo who are well under implementation. During this quarter (July, August, September), STEP-Kenya will undertake capacity evaluation, selection of partners, review and finalize its implementation strategy, and launch the project.

Start Them Early Program (STEP)

1st Project Planning Workshop

IITA Ibadan, Nigeria.

10 - 12 September, 2019

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