



The Seeds

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

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BENEFICIARIES ENGAGEMENT

NIHORT collaborates with STEP on capacity development in two schools

The National Horticultural Research Institute (NIHORT) and IITA's Start Them Early Program (STEP) recently collaborated to organize student engagement at Wesley College and Methodist High School with at least 300 students and 14 teachers trained in the fundamentals of food processing.

At Wesley College, Dr. Mrs. Aderibigbe, an associate director

at NIHORT, who coincidentally is a Wesley College alumnus, was the keynote speaker at the event. While Dr. Aderibigbe made a presentation on the fundamentals of food processing, another alumnus of the school, Dr. Mrs. Adegboyega, a senior lecturer of Food Technology at the University of Ibadan, gave a second presentation on her real-world experience as an

entrepreneur in the food processing industry.

There was a mini practical session to demonstrate how to use a sealing machine and a smoke gun in food processing. The NIHORT team also addressed STEP and the Old Students Association of the school on the possibility of organizing a boot camp for students to help them learn how to make and process food products.



The Speakers addressing the students at Wesley College

**Cassava and
fruit processing
business
training creates
excitement in DR
Congo**

A recent training of youth on processing cassava and fruits has left the beneficiaries yearning for more, requesting that such training be held more regularly and include other aspects of starting and running small businesses.

The excitement followed a training organized to encourage youth entrepreneurship through using cassava flour in baking, producing fruit juices, and preparing sausages. The training was held at Labotte, Bukavu.

The training was in two parts: the theoretical phase (conceptualization of the future, unemployment, and the difficulties that young people face in starting their own business); and the practical phase, where trainees produced waffles, cakes, and cookies from cassava flour, maracuja, pineapple, and ginger juices, as well as drippings.



Exhibition of products (waffles, cakes and biscuits made from bread-making cassava flour)

SUCCESS STORIES

Weza labs serve Bukavu and Nyangezi schools

Many schools in the Democratic Republic of the Congo only provide students with theoretical education. This is primarily because there are not enough appropriate teaching materials available to students, which prevents them from reconciling theory and practice. As a result, it has been observed that young people finish their education with many gaps.

Since Dr. Nteranya Sanginga, Director General-IITA, rehabilitated and equipped the Weza laboratory,

the STEP DRC team encourages other schools to send their students here to do practical work in biology, chemistry, and physics. This is so that the students can gain hands-on experience in these subjects. Ever since, this laboratory has developed into a very significant resource, and there are currently a significant number of educational institutions that regularly bring their students here to participate in practical sessions.

Weza has developed into a significant hub for the administration of tests

and examinations as a direct result of the numerous beneficial changes brought about by the interventions carried out by STEP. In order to sit for their practical examinations in the biology, chemistry, and physics laboratories, the students travel all the way from Bukavu and Nyangezi. This is an excellent outcome, and it also demonstrates that the reopening of this school was in the best interests of the people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in order to improve educational opportunities there.



A practical session in the Weza laboratory with students from a school in Bukavu

Ploughmen take the bull by the horn in Weza

After obtaining their Weza State diplomas, some young people lacked the financial resources to attend college. To find employment in the agricultural sector, these youths, led by Mr. Ruphin Mukaranyi, a former teacher in the school, established a small business called “Club of young ploughmen of Nyangezi”. They helped farmers in the community to plow their fields. The group used the Weza Institute’s tiller since they had no machine.

They deposited the funds collected after plowing in a savings account, being kept to support the education of other young people and to finance agricultural production activities including gardening, poultry, rabbitry, and piggery.

These “ploughmen” say they are determined to acquire a tiller and other agricultural equipment



Members of the Young Ploughmen Club of Nyangezi

to become self-sufficient. They also hope to gain access to IITA’s technical assistance through the IITA Youth Agripreneurs’ program to enhance their understanding of

agribusiness; participating in the various entrepreneurial training courses organized by IITA; and benefitting from financial aids and subsidies.

How STEP is changing lives in Kenya through TAAT interventions

In the last one year, the Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT) has provided financial assistance to local farmers in Nakuru County through the Start Them Early Program (STEP). One of the beneficiaries is Mr. Ombese, who cultivates about an acre of land. TAAT supplied him with seeds to grow beans, cassava, maize, and wheat, which he has successfully cultivated. In addition, he cultivates his own potato and tobacco crops and local vegetables. He provides for his family and sends his kids to school with the money he makes.

Another beneficiary is Mr. Paul Munene, who cultivates maize, beans, cassava, and tomatoes on his small farm covering about 2 acres. Because of the assistance he received from



Mr. Munene in his high iron bean farm

TAAT, he has improved his life and the lives of his children and his family. Now they can attend school, and the family enjoys a better quality of life.

“I will keep embracing new technologies because of how much TAAT has impacted my life in such a short time”, Munene said.

STEP explores collaboration with Rwandan government and visits schools

The TAAT-STEP project team in DR Congo recently organized a four-day visit to neighboring Rwanda to explore the possibilities of knowledge transfer, and to

enhance the value of its youth through STEP projects in secondary schools. The goal is to expand STEP further and reach more young people.

To establish communication between the STEP/IITA program and Rwandan authorities, a group of four (Samuel Mugambi, Welissa Mulei, Bobo Tangabanga, and Kavunja Kusinza) met with the Vice Mayor in charge of social and economic affairs. The meeting resolved that the team would utilize IITA's existing presence in Rwanda to facilitate the collaboration.

The STEP team has also visited two schools in the Nyamasheke District: Saint Nicholas School, Nyamasheke, and EAV Ntendezi School, Nyamasheke. Consequently, a meeting was held between the TAAT-STEP team and the Rwandan country representative, during which several concerns were discussed. A strategy to get the initiative off to a strong start was discussed and supported by the country representative, who also presented and adopted some suggestions and methods. He also gave the team his total support so that the Rwandan collaboration could succeed.



The STEP team with Sister Marie Marguerite, the School Supervisor



The STEP team and the school administration

Home Agribusiness success stories from Kenya

Dennis Otieno

Dennis Otieno, 22, from Afraha Secondary School, started his home agribusiness in 2019. Apart from raising chickens and rabbits, he grows maize, high iron beans, cabbage, wheat, and onions on an acre of land. Otieno started with 20 chicks and expanded to 200. His family has been very supportive. While his farmer-father inspires him, his younger brother helps with farm



Dennis in his home farm, maize section (L), and bean section (R).

maintenance. The produce from the farm is sold, and the rest is consumed in their home.

Dennis joined the STEP club in 2019, and through his hard work on the farm, he has become a role model for his brothers and peers. In addition, he has gained agricultural skills through weekly training and wants to venture into modern large-scale production after high school.



Chicken Pen at Dennis's home



Rabbit hutch at Dennis's home

Daniel Muluka

Daniel Muluka, 19, from Afraha Secondary School, started his home agribusiness in 2020 after joining the STEP club. With STEP's help, he has a livestock business, where he raises chickens and California White rabbits. Currently, he has 10 chickens from his thriving poultry business, and the chickens are producing eggs with indications of expansion needs. Although his business is yet to start making significant profits, he is optimistic that the tide will change soon due to the strategies he is implementing. He intends to find a market for the in-demand eggs and rabbit urine.



Daniel's chicken coop at home (L) and rabbit hatch (R)



"My parents greatly appreciate the efforts that STEP has invested in my advancement, and they have also supported me tremendously because of my hard work," he said.

In addition, he has expanded his knowledge through weekly ICT in agriculture training and value-addition classes. STEP has also broadened his perspective on

agribusiness as a post-school source of income. Muluka declares that with all these benefits, "STEP has opened my eyes to the possibility of pursuing agribusiness after high school."

Nigeria: New agripreneurs groomed in a short time

The primary objective of the Start Them Early Program is to redirect the aspirations of young people towards careers in modern agriculture by exposing them to a variety of viable opportunities along the agri-food value chain. This includes fostering the development of young agripreneurs who establish a variety of home agribusinesses as a result of training received during STEP engagement activities.

The STEP team has received positive feedback after three months of training for newly engaged STEP schools such as Christ High School, Oleyo, Apode High School, Eruwa, and Mount Olivet High School. The students now practice Home Agribusiness. Although these businesses are still in their infancy, the STEP team has put in place measures to support the students through business mentoring and technical assistance.

Below are testimonies from the beneficiaries

Akinloye Aliami: Before the intervention of STEP at Apode High School, Eruwa, Akinloye Aliami was a seasoned local maize farmer. He was intrigued by the STEP training program's Introduction of modern agriculture and farm equipment. The first time he learned how to use and apply a seed planter, he realized how

much he could plant in a short time. He was also confident that doing so would increase the profit margin.

As a result of this exposure, he has decided to invest the proceeds from his current harvest in a seed planter so that he can plant on a larger plot of land, thereby expanding his maize farming business and increasing its productivity. He also plans to transform his maize harvest into other consumable goods once his business reaches a sufficient level of development.

Adewusi Adeola: Adeola attends Mount Olivet Grammar School in Bodija. She became interested in agribusiness as a result of her school's ongoing STEP agribusiness training.

After the intensive training provided by the Crop and Mechanization enterprise of the STEP Program, Adeola persuaded her parents to let her farm on their piece of land (approximately a plot).

In addition to growing guinea corn, yam, maize, and beans, she now practices crop management. According to her, she has already made plans to market her first harvest, and soon carve a niche for herself in her community.

Alonge, Success Abigail: Success is a young, vibrant female student in the Senior Secondary Class 2 at Christ High School, Oleyo. Initially trained by the Crop and Mechanization enterprise, she has

always maintained an interest in other businesses. She participated in several Value Addition enterprise engagement activities, which yielded an outstanding outcome. She immediately began production, packaging, and sales of donuts in her neighbourhood and church following the Easter holiday, putting into practice what she had learned during the STEP training.

Also, she has received tremendous support from her parents and, thus far, has generated a substantial profit from her small business, which she plans to maintain alongside her schoolwork. She also intends to learn more about value-added products to grow her business.

EVENTS

CGIAR Board hails IITA STEP program

In May, members of the CGIAR board met with the IITA Youth Agripreneurs, the unit under which STEP operates. The board members included Dr. Marco Ferroni, CGIAR System Board Chair and Vice-Chair IITA Board; Dr. Christian Borgemeister, IITA Board Chair; Dr. Amos Namanga Ngongi, former

IITA Board Chair; and Dr. Nteranya Sanginga, IITA DG.

The coordinator of STEP activities in Oyo State, Ms. Bola Larinde, provided the visitors with information on STEP initiatives and other activities. In addition, testimonies were gathered from individuals who had benefited

from Methodist High School, including Mrs Oluwole, a teacher and STEP Liaison Officer, and Ayooluwa Adisa, a student who was enrolled in STEP.

The board members applauded the STEP team, expressing joy at the achievements and plans.



STEP presentation



A STEP student giving his testimony

STEP Hosts Delegates at IITA Kalambo Station

The IITA Kalambo station had the honour of hosting His Majesty King Philippe II and Queen Mathilde of the Kingdom of Belgium during their visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. While the dignitaries were at the station, two student representatives of the STEP DR Congo team, Bénédicte Muhindo and Josué Mputela, made a presentation to the royal couple on STEP's objectives and methods in DR Congo. They explained how STEP DR Congo was exposing young people to agriculture from an early age through livestock activities, crop production, and conversation of whole fruits to juice.

In the end, IITA DG, Dr. Nteranya Sanginga, announced scholarship awards to Muhindo and Mputela, for an outstanding presentation. The award will cover their school expenses in recognition of their courage and excellent work in the STEP mini-club.



Director General, Dr Nteranya Sanginga with Bénédicte Muhindo and Josué Mputela (STEP mini-club members)

Visits by Delegates to STEP Schools

In May, the STEP Nigeria team members received Agricultural Technical Vocational Education and Training (ATVET) delegates conducting a reconnaissance visit at Fasola Grammar School (FGS). The delegates, accompanied by members of the Oyo State Agribusiness Development Agency (OYSADA), were given a tour of the infrastructure and STEP facilities at Fasola Grammar School.

The teachers and students of the school who were present

enthusiastically shared their experiences and knowledge gained from the STEP training, emphasizing how the program had significantly changed their lives.

The visitors also interacted with the STEP beneficiaries on what they had gained from the program. Dr. Mohammed, who led the ATVET team, praised STEP's efforts at Fasola Grammar School.

The STEP team also received delegates from the communication

team of the Oyo State Agribusiness Development Agency (OYSADA). The visit was scheduled a year after STEP was introduced at Methodist High School and Bishop Philips Academy to film STEP engagement activities as part of an effort to produce a documentary. The students who benefited from the project highlighted STEP's positive impact on their academics, family, and colleagues and how it spurred their own home-based agricultural enterprises.



ATVET Delegates at Fasola Grammar school

STEP Kenya Exhibition at the TAAT Mechanization Fair

In July, members of STEP Kenya had the opportunity to showcase their products, materials, and activities at the Kibwezi Mechanization Fair. The fair was organized by the African Development Bank (AfDB)-funded Technologies for African Agriculture Transformation (TAAT) project.

STEP was represented at the fair by patrons of the STEP Kisayani Young Farmers Club, Mr. Nicholas Muangeo and Mrs. Ruth Charles who utilized the exhibition to network with attendees. Through this, the team established significant relationships, including one with Mr. Emmanuel Mwangata of FarmTech Consultants. Mr. Mwangata had

prior knowledge of our activities and expressed interest in STEP at the fair. In addition, he offered to provide professional farm training for the young farmers in the STEP club on his farm, where he tests and trains farming equipment.

The STEP Patrons met Mr. Shadrack Mwololu of Eden Tech/ Huruma Group Kibwezi and Mr. Pius Maundu, a journalist with Nation Media Group. The meeting produced a partnership where Mr. Mwololu, who provides training on food processing and value addition to community members, will train STEP Young Farmers on value addition processes. Mr Maundu would give media coverage to



STEP exhibition at the Mechanization fair.

STEP's activities in the various Young Farmers Clubs in Kenya.

STEP Kenya participates at the Nakuru National Agricultural Show

After a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the annual Nakuru National Agricultural Show returned in July. The event was held at its traditional location, the Show Grounds in Nakuru, from Wednesday, June 29 to Sunday, July 3.

The show, themed "Promoting Innovation and Technology in Agriculture and Trade," drew residents of Nakuru County, its neighbors, and the entire country. The exhibition section drew up to 500,000 attendees, including farmers, students, the general public, entrepreneurs, and regional exhibitors from Uganda and Tanzania.

The STEP Afraha Secondary Young Farmers Club was present at the show to network with professional farmers and acquire more agricultural knowledge that they can apply to

expand their agricultural enterprises. Most of them were captivated by the displays of agricultural products and machinery. In addition, they had the opportunity to display their activities and products for four days at an

agricultural exhibition. The exhibition coordinated by STEP students Daniel Ochieng, Maxwell Henry, David Elvis, and Wycliffe Muthomi served as a platform for showcasing their leading enterprise, rabbitry.



Start Them Early Program (STEP) Afraha Young Farmers Club Members



Visitors at the STEP Afraha YFC display station



STEP Afraha YFC trainer and members at a machinery display

Their exhibition attracted participants, including groups of students and teachers from other schools, students from higher institutes like Egerton University, Njoro, Kenya and others. The show exposed attendees to STEP's activities, products, enterprises, and achievements.

Willy Karuma, a student from Rift Valley Institute, enjoyed interacting with the STEP Afraha Young Farmers at the exhibition, which was his first contact with the project. He said, "I became interested in STEP

when I learned that they help small agricultural businesses reach their full growth potential," he said. "This is a good way to improve the perspective of young people on agriculture, particularly through agricultural enterprises."

Another participant, Mrs. Hellen Ratemo from Nakuru West Secondary School, said: "I became interested in STEP after learning how the program encourages young students to participate in agricultural activities and shapes the minds of young students to appreciate

agriculture as a business." She went on to request the presence of STEP in her school through the creation of a Young Farm Farmers Club and participation in various agricultural enterprises.

Aside from the exhibition, STEP students had the chance to learn from other exhibitors and interact with professional farmers and trainers, thereby gaining knowledge they would implement in their agricultural enterprises. The show got more schools interested in having STEP in their schools.

CGIAR Global Director visits STEP Agribusiness facility at Fasola

In July, Mr. Andre Zandstra, Global Director, Innovative Finance and Resource Mobilization at the CGIAR System Management Office, visited

the STEP Agribusiness Facility in Fasola, Oyo State. He was received by the students, STEP teachers, school administration, and members

of the STEP team at Fasola Grammar School, Oyo.

The guest was given a tour of the facilities, including the Processing



Mr Zandstra at the facility processing centre



Mr Zandstra at the facility poultry with STEP Trainers

Centre, ICT room, Training room, Broilers and Layers pen, the Screen house, School Hall, Classrooms, and Central Science Laboratory. A STEP representative described the impact of the program on the students, schools, and community and the birth of the STEP-Oyo partnership, which operates in 10 schools. The school principal, Mr. Lamidi Abolaji described how the project has increased enrollment in the school,

saying that “Fasola as developing into a “semi-urban” environment due to the intervention of STEP and IITA.”

Mr. Zandstra was pleasantly surprised by the impact the modern agricultural equipment, small-scale farm machines, and digital tools had on the students and other beneficiaries. He also expressed gladness at the new student enrollment generated by the program.

His words: “The STEP activities, model, and technologies are an incredible opportunity for students, and it’s wonderful to see the project’s impact in secondary schools. it’s amazing!”

After his visit, Mr. Zandstra remarked, “One of the many highlights was the visit to the Start Them Early Program and Oyo Youth Agribusiness Park – a model for other CGIAR Centers!”

Graduation ceremony for trained students in Fasola Grammar School

The Start Them Early Program in Oyo State (STEP-Oyo) recently organized a graduation ceremony for 31 members of the STEP club in Fasola Grammar School, Fasola, Oyo State. With the assistance of the school administration and the STEP team, the STEP teachers presented certificates of completion to students who had completed the STEP Agribusiness Training modules.

Those present at the colorful event were parents, the PTA chairman, representatives from the school’s Old Students Association, and representatives from the Oyo State Agribusiness Development Agency (OYSADA).

The event featured awards, an exhibition of all STEP-Oyo products, and a tour of the STEP facilities



Students during the demonstrations/presentation session

for invited guests. Also, there were student demonstrations and presentations. The proud parents expressed joy at what they witnessed and promised to support their children’s agribusiness endeavors. Furthermore, the invited guests praised the teachers and the STEP team for their unwavering commitment to the cause.

The feat was made possible by the STEP teachers, who benefited from

STEP’s training in modern agriculture and agribusiness, thus indicating the extent to which STEP’s mission has advanced in the school. The teachers organized the agribusiness training and reinforced experiential learning in the pilot enterprises with little supervision from the STEP team.

A new training cycle for additional students will begin in September. Non-students are even preparing for the selection activity.



Students during the demonstrations/presentation session.



Mr Ajetunmobi, from OYSADA giving a speech

STEP Products produced and packaged by students in STEP schools across Africa



Cassava Chinchin



Tidbits



Cassava Chips



Liquid Soap



Air-Freshener



Peanuts



Sorghum Cake



Pumpkin Chapatis



Potato Jam

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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