



The Seeds

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The Seeds is a bi-monthly compendium of stories and articles about STEP

How STEP began



Dr Nteranya Sanginga (L) and Noel Mulinganya (R) with members of NEWDAY Afrika during the 50th anniversary celebration of IITA in Kalambo, DR Congo

The inspiration to extend agribusiness development opportunities to young people in primary and secondary schools came from a young man, Prince Bobo Tangabanga who started a local organization engaging young people in agriculture in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Prince Bobo Tangabanga, an Agricultural Engineer, established the organization known as NEWDAY Afrika in April 2015 to promote agribusiness education among primary and secondary school pupils and contribute to Africa's agricultural transformation by providing the students with agricultural inputs through their schools and training them along different agricultural value chains.

The initial strategy of the organization, which started with 14 students, was to engage schools through their local authorities to reach out to the students, but this stalled as it was difficult to convince the local authorities to support the initiative. He was not discouraged and devised another means by directly engaging the students from schools in his vicinity. Speaking on what prompted his interest in

establishing the initiative, Prince Bobo stated that most schools lack qualified agricultural teachers and an enabling environment to facilitate learning for students. Most of the students saw agriculture as a normal way of life and never picked interest in creating a career path in it based on their experience and the perception being relayed to them by their teachers.

To change this perception and make the agricultural sector attractive to the pupils, Prince Bobo and his team organized conferences and field days for the students to talk about agriculture and share innovations and ideas and took them on tour, to agricultural institutes and firms to see different ways of being gainfully engaged in agriculture. The team also exposed them to improved technologies in crop and animal production and provided a few resources for them in schools to learn and practice.

The initiative of the NEWDAY Afrika, however, gained prominence during the 50th anniversary celebration of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) held in Kalambo in December 2017. As part of the celebration, IITA organized an

exhibition where all entrepreneurs and agribusinesses were given the opportunity to promote their business initiatives and technologies that have contributed to agricultural development for farmers and young people.

During the exhibition, the Director General of IITA, Dr Nteranya Sanginga was impressed by the proficiency and innovations displayed by the students trained by NEWDAY Afrika. They were given the opportunity to describe the process they went through; how their skills and mindset had changed towards making a business out of agriculture.

The NEWDAY Afrika initiative has shown clearly that introducing agribusiness at an early stage and integrating it into school curricula can contribute to the willingness of young people to pursue agriculture as a career. Yvette Ntabaza Mwinja, one of the pioneer members of the organization who started as a secondary student, has proceeded to the University where she is studying agriculture. According to her, NEWDAY Afrika exposed her to interesting opportunities she never thought existed in agriculture. She is now committed to developing her career in agriculture so she can grow more food and serve as an inspiration to many other young girls in the continent.

Since inception, NEWDAY Afrika has trained over 603 students across three schools, while 33 of them are now engaged in rabbit, poultry, pig, and vegetable production. Their knowledge and practical skills about agriculture have also improved as all the students involved in the training during the 2017-2018 school year succeeded in their National Country Exam, while two students amongst them recorded the best results.

STEP... In the beginning

In September 2018, the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture received the Africa Food Prize Award at the Africa Green Revolution Forum in Kigali, Rwanda. The DG-IITA, Dr Nteranya Sanginga in his speech while receiving the award on behalf of the Institute revealed that the next program IITA will be involved in will be to start changing the mindset of young people in primary and secondary schools about agriculture.

True to his words, Dr Sanginga established the Start Them Early Program (STEP) in 2018 with the aim of attracting and retaining the interest of primary and secondary school students in agriculture.

The STEP initiative is one of IITA's effort in ensuring that young people embrace agriculture as a career and business. Unlike the widely known youth in agribusiness program of IITA- the IITA Youth Agripreneurs (IYA) Program which focuses on changing the mindset of graduates towards embracing agriculture as a business, STEP intends to "catch them young" to ensure that they willingly embrace the sector as a career, establish youth-led agribusinesses, and create jobs for others. They are also expected to contribute their quota towards food production and safety. The project is being implemented in DR Congo, Kenya and Nigeria using three major approaches: use of coursework in a formal curricular setting, establishment of an extracurricular club and operations of pilot agribusiness enterprises committed to experiential learning. The STEP team in Nigeria will work with 4



Dr Sanginga receiving the award in Rwanda

schools to engage 250 students in its first phase. The team is also working closely with the IITA Women's Group to engage more students in Ibadan, Oyo State, in the program. Since the program commenced in Nigeria, the team has reached out to more than 100 students from 3 schools to educate them about the benefits of modern agriculture and different viable opportunities along its value chain.

The DR Congo team has moved a step ahead as some of the trained youth under the program have developed independent agribusiness enterprises. In Kenya, the program is still at the preparatory stage. It will engage students in secondary schools between Form 1 (grade 9) and Form

4 (grade 12) through supplementary class learning and practical field work. This approach aims to give an all-round engagement to students through already existing agricultural clubs and societies in the schools. The program targets 1170 beneficiaries in its first phase, while the second phase will target 5850 beneficiaries. The students will be taught across various value chains, have practical experience on agribusiness and also benefit from mentorship sessions held by successful agripreneurs, these students also stand a chance of getting supported if they participate and show tendencies of owning an agribusiness; they will enjoy collaborations amongst themselves, field trips and excursions to various agro-industries and farms.



Youth undergoing training on how to use rototiller in DR Congo



Prince Bobo Tangabanga talking to a secondary student, Yvette Ntabaza, on the school farm

IITA commences agribusiness development at grassroots

Exactly six weeks after the IITA dedicated the Africa Food Prize Award received at the 2018 Africa Green Revolution Forum (AGRF) in Rwanda to the development of agribusiness in primary and secondary schools, the Director General of the Institute, Dr Nteranya Sanginga kicked off the implementation process of the initiative at the IITA International School. This new initiative known as the Start Them Early Program (STEP) is targeted at ensuring that children in primary and secondary schools have a change in perception about agriculture and willingly create a career path through agribusiness. Sharing the vision and dream of the initiative with the Grade V and VI students of IITA International School when he visited them on 12 October, Dr Sanginga reiterated his passion in developing



Dr Nteranya Sanginga sharing passion and vision for the youth with Grade V and VI students of IITA International School

Below are excerpts from his interaction with the students:

How long have you been in this profession?

You know... I was just trying to imagine when I was in the same class like you are and thinking about who I would be one day. I am sure I was not thinking about being a Director General. At that time, I didn't even know that such profession existed. Most young people these days think about being a medical doctor. I was just thinking about being a Pilot. But today, that dream didn't come through. And so I have been in this current profession, first, as a scientist for 25 years and as a Director General for 7 years now.

What made you take up this profession (Director General of IITA)?

I remember very well, in those days, my father had a small field where my mother most of the time used to go and plant beans and maize. During vacation, I would go and help her plant and harvest, and I believe it was during that time I was working and helping my mother that I developed interest in agriculture. So, when I finished my secondary school, I chose to go and study agriculture at the University. And to study agriculture in those days, you had to be good in Biology and Chemistry. So, doing agriculture was almost a continuation of the subject matter I chose when I was in secondary school.

agriculture from the grassroots. The young people who listened keenly to Dr Sanginga raised some questions

When I finished my first degree, I became a lecturer teaching Biology, Agriculture and Science. After a while, I decided to pursue my Doctorate degree in the same subject and then I became a scientist. Interestingly enough, IITA recruited me to be a scientist and I was leading the Soil Microbiology unit. So you see, I still had a relationship between what I chose in primary school, secondary school, and my profession.

As a scientist, I did all I could do but then, I realized that science alone was not enough. It was very important to have someone who could advocate; someone who could assume the leadership of convincing the government and convincing the farmers as well that we can produce better food. That's why I decided to become the Director General of IITA, because the DG has the possibility of taking decisions that can influence how food is produced and how people are engaged in agriculture.

Why did you decide to be a scientist?

I decided to be a scientist initially because of the subject matter, "Biology" that I chose. It was basically pushing me for discovery; discovering nature and trying to use it for public good. And, I chose to be a scientist in agriculture more than in medicine because I thought

about his passion and career in agriculture.

producing food was more important than producing medicine. For you to take medicine, you have to be alive, and for you to be alive, you have to eat. So producing food is a very important and noble activity. This is the reason why I chose to fight hunger by being a scientist in agriculture.

What personal qualities do you think one needs to be successful?

Let me tell you three qualities that are very important.

First of all, you have to dream. In other words, you need to have a vision. I had dreamt of becoming a Biologist. Some people dream to be a pilot, some people dream to be a musician, some people dream to be the President of a country.

Secondly, you need to have very strong passion about the dream you have. I have a passion for agriculture. When I see cassava, I want to look at it. When I see bread, I want to know where that bread is coming from. I want people to eat. But vision and passion are not just enough. You have to work hard. You work hard to ensure that your dream is realized. If you do all of those three things and you succeed, and you become a DG like me, then you have to add one more characteristic; Humility - "Being humble". This means that

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Dr Sanginga with STEP Ambassadors; Grade V and VI students of IITA International School

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you serve first before being served. You will have to be at the service of other people. Perhaps, you are a Captain in the school, then your role has to be serving others first before you serve yourself. As a leader, it is a very important characteristic.

Did you ever think you were going to be a DG at any time?

Yes! And I will tell you when I did that.

The first day I entered this campus was in 1981. I was a PhD student at that time. I saw the DG (Peter Hartman) when he participated in my first seminar. Then, he congratulated me because I did well, so I thought I should congratulate other people as a DG as well. That day, I dreamed about being a DG in 1981. But it took almost 31 years for me to be a DG. So, your dream can be accomplished either over a long or short time.

So yes! I dreamed about being a DG. You know I am the first African DG here, so, it was also an ambition to be the first African to lead this institution. So you have to dream and have the right passion and work hard.

Can you achieve more in your line of work?

So I want to tell you some of the exciting things we've done here at IITA. One of the programs I am so proud of has been about education. Education is about building the capability of young people. And this time around, it is that of the young

people who have finished their first degree programs and when they graduate they go on usually for three years without a job.

And the mentality of most young people in Africa when they graduate is to start looking for jobs, but often they spend three or four years without a job.

So we teach the young graduates to create their own jobs, to be entrepreneurs in agriculture; so we call them "Agripreneurs". So we make these graduates Agripreneurs and ensure that they add value to food products and start making money.

So my next program is to extend that notion to primary and secondary schools and that is why I am proud to be here. Meaning what? Start teaching children that agriculture is important and it is a business. Just to give you a story of one man in the US who is a billionaire today just because of making cornflakes. Cornflakes is as simple as maize, but he transformed it and he then became a billionaire. So we want young people like you to start learning about agribusiness and how to make a lot of money from agriculture.

Do you have any regrets or were there some missed opportunities?

Regrets? No.

I don't have any because I have always wanted this profession and also for what I have been able to do. I feel fulfilled that we've been able to help a lot of people. Not just because we have increased agriculture's output

but also because we've been able to change the mindset of a lot of people especially the young people about agriculture.

The only thing I will say is that I wish I could do more. Here at IITA, we've been limited by resources to do much more than we have done.

So yes! I wish I had more resources.

What have been your greatest achievements here at IITA?

I still have three years, probably, the day I will be able to convince you and the Continent that agriculture is the future and I see young people become like "Dangote" in agriculture. That is what I am going to say is my greatest achievement in three years' time. In three years' time, I would like people to introduce a curriculum of agribusiness to schools across the Continent. That will be a major achievement.

Remember, we (IITA) got an award; the Africa Food Prize Award. IITA is the first institution to get that on the Continent and that is a major achievement because it summarizes everything we've been able to do in the past seven years.

When I accepted the Africa Food Prize Award, I promised the whole world that the next program IITA will be involved in will be to start changing the mind-set of young people in primary and secondary schools about agriculture and I am so honored that the first speech I am making is in this classroom (IITA International School).

IITA Women's Group hosts young students at the demonstration farm



Mrs Gloria Oluwadare showing the pupils the vitamin A-fortified cassava tuber



Adedamola Adewole training the students of IITA International School on agribusiness

In a continuous effort to extend agribusiness education and development to the younger generation in Africa, the IITA Women's Group hosted the pupils of Sow the Seed Nursery, Primary and Secondary Schools from Ibadan on 23 October.

Fifty eight students were hosted at the group's demonstration field where they learned about the basic agricultural practices in growing "food" such as maize, soybean, cassava, plantain, banana, and some vegetables.

While addressing the students, Mrs Gloria Oluwadare, who is the Farm Manager of the Group, explained the nutritional benefits people can get

from these crops. She also explained to them that it is not only about planting the crops, but also ensuring they are well taken care of to ensure good yield at the end.

The team is working closely with the IITA Women's Group to engage more students in Ibadan, Oyo State, in the program. Since the program commenced in Nigeria, the STEP team has reached out to more than 100 students from 3 schools to educate them about the benefits of modern agriculture and different viable opportunities along its value chain. The IITA Women's Group supports young people by providing scholarships to students who exhibit exceptional academic excellence but do not have the means to further

their education. They have also established viable farms to grow IITA's mandate crops, including vegetables to showcase to students the basic techniques of planting and managing fields effectively for income generation. In order to reach more students, especially in the rural communities, the team will partner with farm settlement and incubation facilities such as Fashola Farms and OFFER Centre in Oyo and Osun states in Nigeria, to serve as training centers for students training intensively on agribusiness, particularly on value addition, and crop and livestock production. Students whose schools are near these incubation centers will be given the opportunities to practically learn agribusiness management.

Some success stories from DR Congo



Ange is one of the trained pupils in fourth grade who was influenced by the conferences organized by NEW DAY Afrika. During the conferences, Ange was able to meet and interact with entrepreneurs who motivated her to start a small poultry business where she now rears 80 birds. She intends to study Agronomy at the university and her vision is to be one of the biggest supplier of eggs in her locality.



Elie Mushagalusa is in third grade at Bwindi Secondary School. His mindset changed during one of the field trips with NEWDAY Afrika and he realized that agriculture is big business. He currently produces cabbage at home and sells them at the local market. "I am going to study agronomy at the University, and when I finish, I am going to establish a vegetable company where I can produce and sell in large quantities", he said.



Agnes Buherwa on her part was groomed on breeding techniques. She is utilizing the skills as she has also established an enterprise on goat farming. She currently has 8 goats. Her vision is to study Agronomy at the University and own a large farm to provide meat to the entire city of Bukavu.