



IITA

Youth Agripreneurs

Agriculture is the future

March 2014

Youth unemployment: Solving a knotty problem

“When we returned to our village after being demobilized, we had nothing to do. Our families were poor, so I decided to join the militias in the bush with my friends again,” said Germain, 19.

This sad reality summarizes what young Congolese live with daily due to lack of jobs. The country faces a major challenge in youth unemployment. More than 70% of those aged 15 to 24 have no jobs, with urban areas particularly affected. The DR Congo like several other African countries does not yet have a real policy to get young people into work. The shortage of jobs increases the size of the informal sector and the weakness of supportive structures leads many young people into a life of crime.

To address this concern, IITA under the leadership of the DG, Dr Nteranya Sanginga, initiated a youth program as a model to address unemployment using agriculture as a tool. The pilot project which was initiated in IITA Ibadan encourages the youth to tap the many opportunities inherent in agriculture.

The project exposes young graduates to the different opportunities in agriculture and allows them to identify entry points in the agricultural value chains where they could play a role. At the core is capacity building for the young that propels independent thinking and engenders problem solving.



Dr Vanlauwe (second from left) with agripreneurs on the field

Following the successes recorded by IITA Youth Agripreneurs in Ibadan, the Central Africa Hub under the leadership of Dr Bernard Vanlauwe has replicated a similar pilot model known as IITA Kalambo Youth Agripreneurs (IKYA) in DR Congo.

During the visit to the IITA-Kalambo station, the DG was impressed by the move. In a speech to the youths, he encouraged the youngsters to venture into agribusiness since it is profitable and creates self employment.

Getting support from researchers

Since resuming duty in DR Congo, Dr Marie Yomeni has been a source of

encouragement to youths in Kalambo. Her lecture on: “Agriculture and Entrepreneurship” inspired the youths in Kalambo to action. Drawing from the experience of farmers in Nigeria, Yomeni



Dr Yomeni

shared the example of a young Nigerian man who specialized in the multiplication of healthy cassava stems and how he has developed his business to such an extent that he is now one of IITA's major partners. Real life stories such as this are helping youths to rethink and have a positive disposition to agriculture.

The Officer in Charge (OIC) of Kalambo Station, Dr Chris Okafor has also pledged to support the IKYA. Okafor who has a passion for youth empowerment/development urged the group to be focused and confident in tackling the multiple challenges faced by youth, emphasizing that the youths must be convinced of what they are doing to achieve their goals.



Dr Okafor

Addressing the youths on 24 January, Dr Okafor promised to engage more youths in agribusiness.



DG Sanginga with agripreneurs in DR Congo

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IYA trains 33 youths



Trained youths and IYA

In line with ongoing national and continental efforts to reorient youths towards more productive engagement in agriculture, a 10-day training program was conducted successfully at IITA, Ibadan from 20 to 31 January by the IITA Youth Agripreneurs (IYA). The program with the theme: "Unlocking the doors to youth unemployment in Africa through agriculture," was aimed at building the capacity of the participants in agribusiness to establish an agro-based initiative for self-employment and wealth creation for their sustainable livelihood.

The training program was the hallmark of a project organized by Honorable Nkoyo Toyo of the Calabar/Odukpani constituency in Cross Rivers State, to empower women and youth. The IITA Youth Agripreneurs were contracted by the Managing Consultant of Oases Consulting, Mr Femi Adeniji, to be the project executors.

The training combined both theoretical and practical sessions giving participants hands-on experience. A total of 33 participants attended the workshop —21 males and 12 females— and consisted of graduates as well as postgraduate degree holders and students of various disciplines namely: Agricultural Economics and Extension, Genetics and Biotechnology, Crop Science, Food and Industrial Microbiology, Animal Science, Atmospheric Physics, Educational Technology, Child and Adolescent Health, Marketing, and Computer Science/Statistics.

It was indeed a success story for IYA on their first maiden training program.

Participants' say

"I have been in IITA for two weeks to learn from the Youth Agripreneurs on how to make money in agriculture.

I have had a wonderful experience learning about agriculture being a business and not just for feeding, and I would like to take agriculture as a business being an entrepreneur.

I have been taught about soybean, cassava, maize, and plantain/banana, how to plant them in such a way that it gives me money not just for my home alone, but for the masses. I now know cassava is not just used for *gari*, *fufu*, starch, etc. I'm so happy to learn from the IITA Youth Agripreneurs that I can be independent, not just looking for money through white collar jobs when I already have what can give me money." — Ene Sylvia Edet, a female from Cross River State, and a graduate of Zoology and Environmental Biology from the University of Calabar.

"I have been exposed by IYA to modern agronomic practices in cassava, maize, soybean, and plantain/banana...I'm glad that I have acquired more knowledge about agriculture and will apply it when I go back.

I commend IYA for this program because agriculture is a vast area many of us have ignored, and even the marketing aspect of agriculture has been neglected, but coming to IYA, I realise I can be independent. I also thank God for the knowledge acquired from IYA. I advise IYA to please keep up the good work and extend their tentacles to others because many of us that have come for the training have never heard about IYA and her good work. I plead for the extension of IYA and her activities to other states so that other youths can learn from them and be motivated." — Ambo Ramzi, a male from Cross River State.



Ene Edet



Ambo Ramzi

Moving on...

Ms Kolo Juliana, a graduate of Biochemistry from the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, received employment with the Water Treatment Unit of IITA.

Ms Victoria Lawal, Operations Assistant, Business Incubation Plant

Mr Chidi Chilaka, an initial member of the group, is being sponsored through a higher institution.

IITA youth program excites Ondo governor



Governor Mimiko, FARA Board, and IYA

The Ondo State Governor, Dr Olusegun Mimiko accompanied by members of his cabinet, and the board and staff of the Forum for

Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) led by the chair, Dr Charity Kruger, and FARA Executive Director, Dr Yemi Akinbamiyo paid a visit to the office of

IYA on Saturday, 15 February.

After presentations by the young people, Governor Mimiko commended IITA for backstopping the youth project and that his state would replicate the model to drive the state's agricultural agenda and create jobs for the youths. He affirmed his willingness to engage the agripreneurs in developing the Ondo youths because of the passion exhibited by members of the IITA Youth Agripreneurs.

Equally in the visitors' logbook, he wrote, "This is the Future. It was another great experience for the Agripreneurs and we look forward to more collaborative visits."

Youths trained on cassava best-bet agronomic practices

Members of the IITA Kalambo Youth Agripreneurs (IKYA) have been trained on the best-bet agricultural practices for cassava production. The training which involved 10 members of the group was held in Kalambo from 23 to 25 September 2013. The training focused on three major themes: Best agronomic practices, Rapid multiplication of healthy cassava cuttings, and Pest and disease management.

The training which was conducted by SARD SC was meant for technical staff/partners of the AfDB-funded project but as the opportunity presented itself, the youths were also allowed to participate. The training involved both theoretical and practical sessions and was aimed at putting partners on the same page as SARD SC in seeking to increase the productivity of cassava in target countries.



IKYA on cassava field

Some areas touched on during the training include: The main steps for the establishment of a field of cassava, variety selection, site selection, land preparation, and pest and disease management. A main source of calories in the DR Congo, cassava accounts for

more than 70% of the annual crop area. However, its production is hampered by a number of constraints among which is the recent spread of the East African cassava mosaic virus, low soil fertility, poor access to fertilizers and improved varieties, and poor crop management.

Three hectares of healthy planting material of cassava established

Members of IKYA have cultivated 3 ha of cassava in Kashusha farm. Cassava varieties planted on the piece of land which belongs to the Evangelical University in Africa (UEA) are *Sawa sawa* (1.5 ha), *Obama* (1 ha), and the provitamin A cassava (0.5 ha). The youths plan not just to sell the leaves and stems but to also engage in value-addition activities such as processing to different products like cassava bread, *gari*, cassava doughnut, and cassava egg rolls. The sale of the cassava stems will facilitate the spread of the improved varieties in the region, and amplify the benefits of research in the country.

The company employs 90 full-time staff and produces more than 100 tons of flour per day. Their target is to produce more than 200 tons. The company supports small-scale farms, providing a readily available market for cassava roots.



Agripreneurs at their 3-hectare farm, Kashusha

Stakeholders want more participation of youths in agric value chains

Involving the youths in agricultural value chains could generate employment, improve food security, and help provide a decent society, says Dr Gbasse Tarawali, at a seminar organized by the Centre for Rural Development and Community Transformation (CERUDECT). Representing the Deputy Director General for Partnership and Capacity Building at the seminar, Dr Tarawali said that the current challenge of youth joblessness could be best tackled by using agriculture in light of the numerous agric resources in Africa. With about 70 percent of the unemployed in Nigeria being youths, Dr Tarawali said addressing the challenges faced by this group is not only necessary but also important. Several other speakers including the Executive Director of CERUDECT spoke in the same vein and stressed the



Dr Tarawali (5th from right) with participants at the CERUDECT-organized seminar

need for bringing the youths back to agriculture. Among those who attended the seminar were Senator Adebenga Kaka of Ogun East, Prince Gbolahan

Lawal, Commissioner for Lagos State Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Hon. Tajudeen Ajide, Executive Chairman, Surulere Local Government, IYA, and 20 youth corps members.

IITA Kalambo Youth Agripreneurs (IKYA)



Liliane BAHATI, a graduate in Agronomy from the Catholic University of Bukavu, and an MSc student in Integrated Soil Fertility Management

at Kenyatta University. I joined the IKYA because of its goal of empowering youth in agribusiness. My vision is to see youths at the heart of agribusiness.

Christelle RWEZANGABO KINJA, a student of Crop Production at the Catholic University of Bukavu. In November 2013, I came to Kalambo to participate in a



workshop on rapid multiplication of cassava cuttings at IITA and at this time, I learned there was a group of young agronomists at Kalambo. One of the group members encouraged me to join. I understood the various cultural practices and benefits they earn through training, and since then I also became a member of IITA Kalambo Youth Agripreneurs while having in mind the idea of developing agriculture in the world and changing lives through agriculture.



Samuel AMANI KABOBYA, a graduate from the Crop Production Department of the Catholic University of Bukavu. I joined IKYA because of its goal of encouraging young agronomists like

me to promote agricultural research and tackle food insecurity, thereby improving the socioeconomic conditions of the people of DR Congo in particular and that of Africa in general.

Balezi Espoir KITUMAINI, a graduate in Agronomy from the Evangelical University in Africa (UEA). After completing my internship in the N2Africa project, I



participated in a meeting organized by Dr Marie for the purpose of creating the group of young agronomists of Kalambo. I joined the group because of its goals. I am sure this initiative will expand my knowledge on food production and improve the quality of lives through agricultural products.



Christophe KONGOLO MSAMBYA, a graduate of Crop Production from the Evangelical University in Africa (UEA). I found it good to join the

group in order to increase my knowledge about the production, processing, and sale of agricultural products especially when the Director General of IITA Dr Sanginga announced the installation of a cassava processing plant in Kalambo during the training of trainers workshop on good agricultural practices of cassava. I think that with the knowledge I gained, I will be able to transmit it to young agriculturists.

The group's activities reinforced the concepts learned in class and helped me to apply them in my professional life.

Eric SIKA I graduated from Catholic University of Bukavu (DRC) in Crop Production and am currently taking my Masters degree at Kenyatta University (Kenya)



in Sustainable Crop Production and Protection. I joined the IITA Kalambo Youth Agripreneurs (IKYA), and I have the dream of a young person walking into a bank to make a farming business argument, using a cash-flow analysis to demonstrate profitability of his farm enterprises. The IKYA will soon take youths to that level where farming business activities will become economically rewarding.