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SUCCESS STORY

Engaging Youth for Food Security

USAID training graduate forwards Kenyan youth engagement in agriculture

In April 2011, Dr. Catherine Mutunga attended a five-day USAID-sponsored training about leading change related to the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP), an African-led initiative to reduce hunger and poverty through strategic investment in agriculture. Now she's implementing her Action Plan, developed as a part of the training, to engage a new generation of Kenyans in agriculture.



Students at Kenya High School receive a steer at the launch of the Mkulima Junior Steer Competition

As Sales & Marketing Officer of the Agricultural Development Corporation (ADC), Catherine recognized the importance of engaging youth in agriculture. In recent years, few secondary school students in Kenya have chosen to study Agriculture as an elective subject, and some schools have stopped offering these classes altogether. In fact, Kenya's Medium-Term Agriculture Investment Plan for 2010-2015 named youth empowerment and increased youth interest in agriculture as key enablers to achieving food security through CAADP.

"I was challenged to act, to be a Champion for Change in many ways, among them to be a champion in livestock value chains." During the training, Catherine came up with the idea for two innovative new programs. She returned to her organization and worked with colleagues to introduce and develop them.

Not six weeks later, the Honorable Minister for Agriculture Dr. Sally Kosgei and ADC launched the two school-based sponsorship programs – the Mkulima Junior Steer Competition and the Mkulima Junior Mentorship Programme. The Steer Competition aims to increase enrollment in elective agriculture courses by providing steers to schools, where students learn fattening techniques and compete for prizes at the Nairobi International Trade Fair. The Junior Mentorship Programme provides an alternate outlet for student interest in agriculture by placing students at active farms for internships over school holidays. Catherine and ADC will rapidly expand the scope of both programs to include 11 schools in the first phase.

"We realized that students choosing agriculture as an elective subject are alarmingly few. We felt the need to mentor and help them change their mind set, in our race to realizing the CAADP agenda."