

Beauty queen gets schools in agricultural race



Nyamon with students of Kiira College Butiki at the farm

By Conan Businge and Saudha Nakandha

As the sun rises, hundreds of students run to Maryhill High School farm, Mbarara district. But quite unique, amidst them is a woman who seems to draw the attention of the school girls.

She is one of the nation's beauty queens – Daisy Nyamon – who is on a mission to inspire children to get involved in modern agriculture.

She is an ambassador for agriculture, a title she earned after being one of the finalists in the last Miss Uganda contest.

The 24-year-old is using her position to team up with the National Crop Resources Research Institute (NaCRRI) to promote agriculture among the youth.

"Although I did not win the Miss Uganda top slot, I decided to use this as an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of young people," Nyamon explains.

She came up with the project dubbed Feed the Nation, supported by NaCRRI and Vision Group's Urban TV.

She believes that if the youth get involved in commercial agriculture, they will be job creators and not seekers in future.

TERMS FOR COMPETITION

- The school must have clubs, such as agriculture, environment or debate.
- Students must work together to ensure the growth of the seedlings.
- The school must have land to set up a demonstration farm.
- Students must follow instructions to achieve excellent growth of the seed.
- The students must be supervised and guided by an administrator or a club patron.

Feed the Nation project
The Feed the Nation project was born out of the need to disseminate information about improved farming technologies to the youth.

The project seeks to reach out to students in secondary schools and encourage them to embrace agriculture. The project is being implemented countrywide.

"The project is intended to increase awareness about malnutrition in schools, hunger and the importance of adopting improved crop technologies for food security in the era of climate change,"



Nyamon working with students of Saad Memorial Secondary School in Kasese district on their farm. They were preparing the land for the planting season

Who is Nyamon?

Born to Irene Busingye and Peter Bahimuka (now deceased) in Kabale, Daisy Nyamon has always desired to help the disadvantaged in society. Opportunity struck in 2014 when she contested for Miss Tourism, a step she says gave her the courage to contest for Miss Uganda 2016/2017. Even though she is a graduate of bachelor of arts in arts, Nyamon says her heart is in agriculture.

wakes up early every morning to dig and returns home at sunset. But Nyamon says this mindset must be changed.

The managing director of Victoria Seeds Ltd, Josephine Okot, says: "We want this project to fit within the style of the youth so that they are persuaded to carry out agriculture, not only for home consumption, but also commercially."

Barbara Zawedde, a coordinator at the Uganda Biosciences Information Centre at NaCRRI, says: "As a government body, we are entrusted with training those interested in agriculture."

NaCRRI provides technical assistance to the schools. "We have also been in a partnership with the Miss Uganda Foundation that has seen over 60 beauty pageants trained in agriculture," she says.

She adds that Nyamon is a committed young woman. "She is intelligent and hardworking. She never believes in failing. Nyamon wrote the most compelling proposal on involving schools in agriculture. We decided to support her," Zawedde reveals.

WHAT SCHOOLS SAY

Mariam Naleba, the farm teacher at Kiira College Butiki in Jinja, says Nyamon is a smart woman who has helped them transform the school farm.

"Nyamon supported us to plant maize and it is about time to harvest it, much as they were attacked by the armyworm," she says.

"But with or without the pests, this is an opportunity for the students to learn about agriculture."

Naleba says the students learnt how to weed and spray.

Mbarara High School's Hope Namara, says: "Nyamon has helped our students learn so many agronomic practices, such as watering, mulching and spraying."

"We have learnt that planting within the right season is important. The project has helped our students learn how to fight pests. It was a learning opportunity for us," Namara explains.

Juliet Muzoora from Bweranyangi Girls School in Bushenyi district, says: "Our maize germinated so well and we were so happy. However, it was attacked by the armyworm."

"This was a great learning point for the children. Teachers and students also had a chance to study this worm. We learnt a lot on good farming practices from Nyamon and her team," Muzoora explains.

Nyamon notes.

"Uganda has fertile soils that favour the growing of different kinds of food. However, it is ironical that we are faced with increasing cases of malnutrition, decreasing yields from farmers and negative effects of climate change," she adds.

Nyamon says in this project, students are helped to understand how crops are grown.

How does the project run?
A total of 12 schools are involved in the project.

During Nyamon's first visit to the schools in March, together with agronomists and the Urban TV crew, each school was given all the required information on maize growing. It was the selected crop that all schools had to plant.

On the second visit this month, a follow-up was

done to evaluate the work done on the different demonstration plots in the different schools.

The last phase of the school visits will include a harvest of the maize and teaching the students how they can make the most out of the produce, through sales.

The project activities will be televised in episodes on Urban TV, beginning this month. Judges will visit the farms to award marks.

Nyamon says the best five schools will walk away with prizes.

The projects director for Miss Uganda Foundation, Janet Nalugya, says the idea behind the project is to enable students learn the different methods of modern agriculture from school.

When one talks about agriculture or farming, in the minds of young people, they think of someone who



Daisy Nyamon, agriculture ambassador