

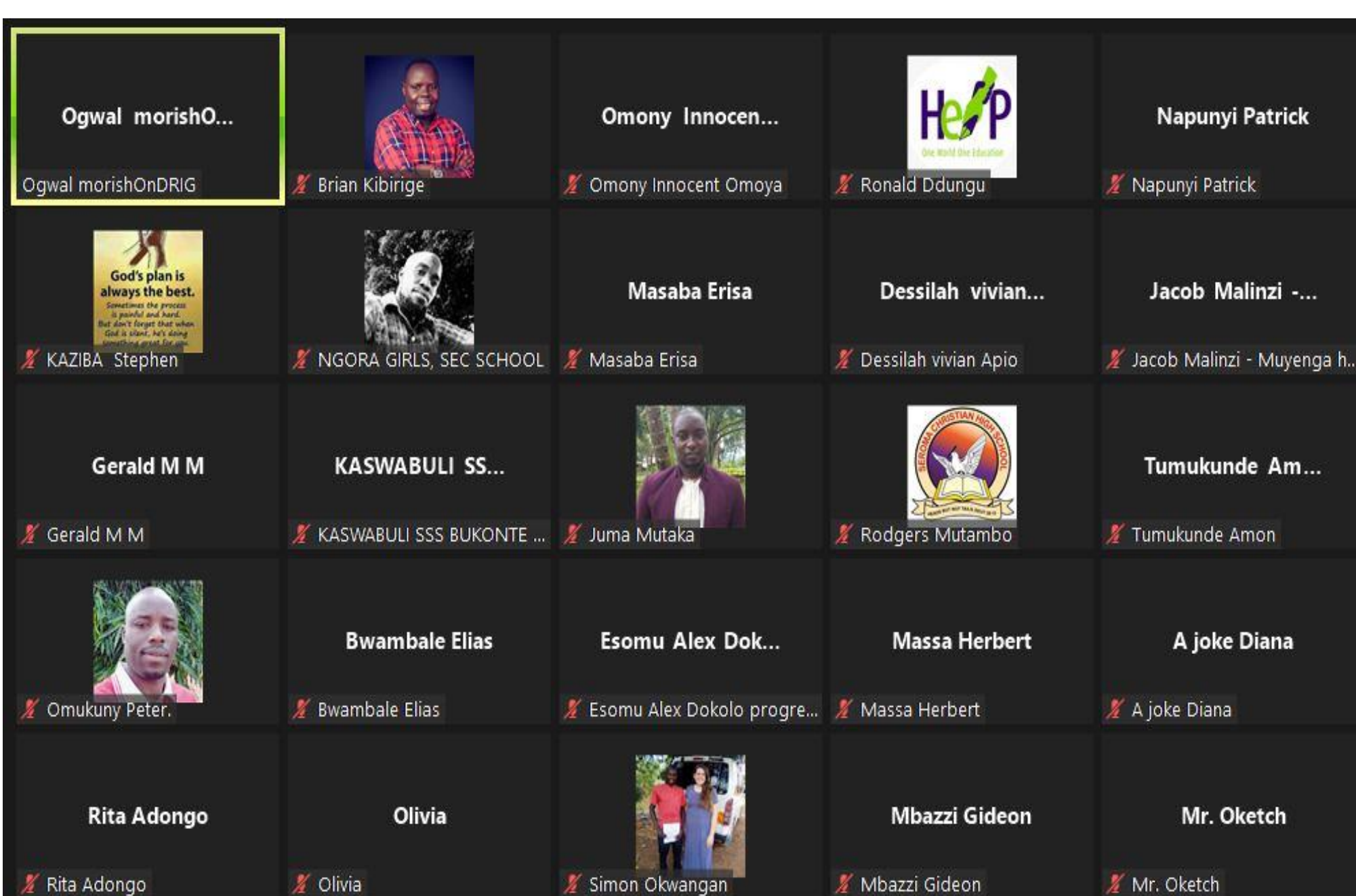
# Using School Gardens to Promote Experiential Learning in Uganda

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## Introduction & Need

More than five million students are currently enrolled in secondary schools across Uganda. Yet, the national secondary *school completion rate* is only 6%, with an even lower rate of 2.6% for students in rural areas. Past research shows that a *lack of food at school and at home* as one of the leading causes of high dropout rates and low academic achievement among students. The high rate of school dropouts, coupled with a *lack of employable skills and practical knowledge*, has created a cycle where youth are consistently forced to live in abject poverty. With a population that heavily relies on agriculture for household food supply and employment, it's important that agricultural education is given priority at all levels of education. To achieve this, Youth Future Farmers of Africa –Uganda *YoFFA* organization works with teachers and school leaders to create school-based chapters and supports educators to introduce experiential learning in their classroom. This year, YoFFA and its partners have created a **School Gardening Program SPG 2022** that initiated 100 gardens in 100 schools in Uganda. In this program, students can gain hands-on skills in vegetable growing, engage in purposeful agricultural instruction, participate in career and leadership development activities, and serve as change agents in their farming communities.



A screenshot taken during one of the virtual teacher meetings.



Students at St. Mary's College Kisubi (SMACK) pose with vegetable seeds for their gardening project.

## How it works

As Uganda prepared to re-open schools in January 2022 after two years of total school closures, YoFFA set out to assist Ag teachers offer the much-needed experiential learning opportunities to their students by creating the School Gardening Program SPG 2022, for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders in Uganda. At the beginning of the school year, agricultural educators were encouraged to register their schools for this program using the “*Ag Educators Platform*,” a WhatsApp group of over 200 Ugandan educators. After registration, educators completed a Google Form that collected their school information and vegetable seed preferences. During the implementation phase, educators participated in a series of virtual and in-person professional developments that focused on using gardens as learning laboratories, developing practical lesson plans, and creating programs of activities for their students using their gardens as a center of engagement.



The SPG-2022 program was supported by Victoria Seeds Ltd, HeLP Uganda, and YoFFA

## Results to Date & Future plans

100 gardens were created in 100 schools. Harvested vegetables are sold while some vegetables are used by schools to supplement their school meals. YoFFA conducted 4 virtual professional development trainings for Ag educators. Lastly, we created a YoFFA website, a repository of School-Based Agricultural Education SBAE in Uganda.

In 2023, we plan to establish 100 new school gardens while maintaining those gardens created in 2022. Establish collaborations between YoFFA chapters and local FFA chapters in the United States, conducting more professional development workshops, developing school gardening resources, and mobilizing our school chapters to participate in in-school youth focused leadership and career development events.



A demonstration for the preparation of a raised seedbed



Iganga Girls' Secondary School students' harvesting their kale produce.

## Costs/Resources

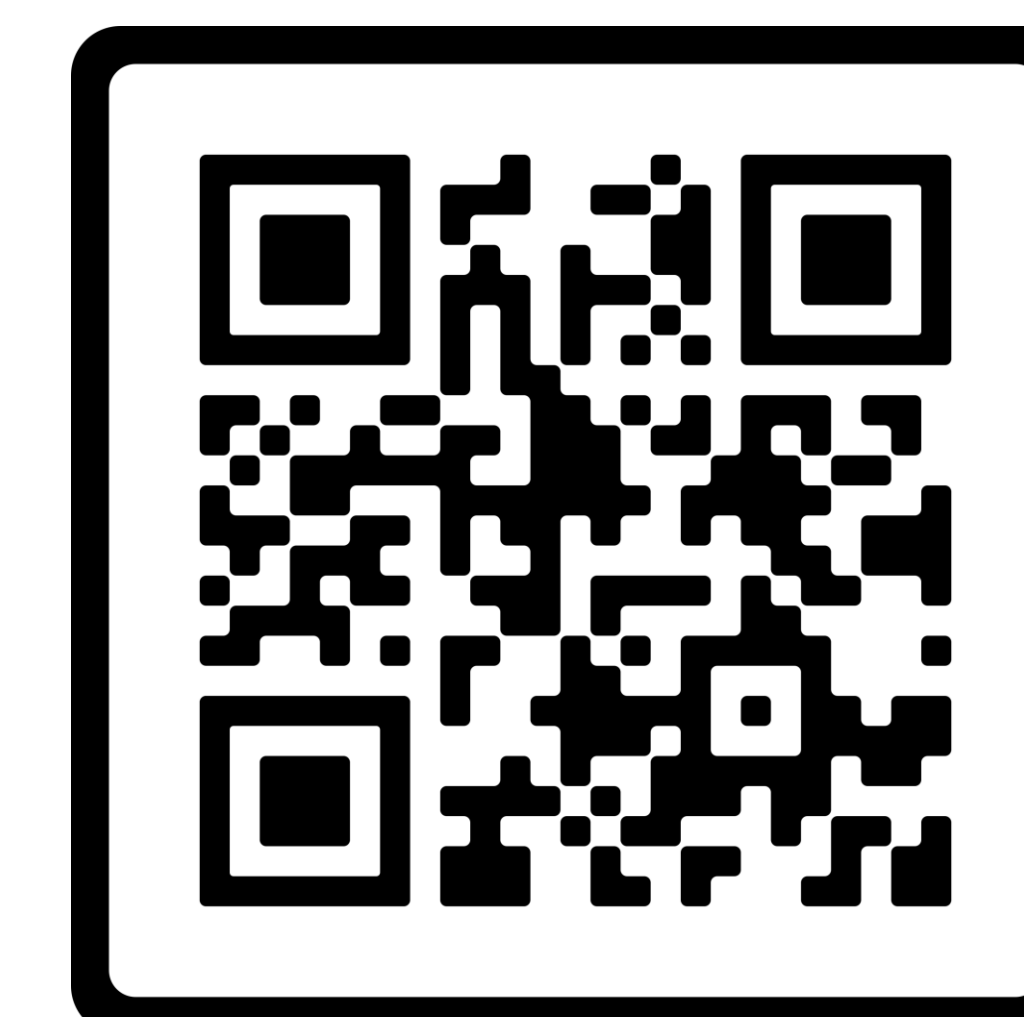
YoFFA obtained in-kind funding for the School Garden Program from Victoria Seeds (U) Limited and Holistic eLearning Platform (HeLP). Victoria Seeds provided schools with seeds and gardening tools worth \$2000 while HeLP hosted the four virtual teacher professional development workshops via Zoom, this costed \$300.



Zana Christian High School YoFFA chapter members pose with their teacher after harvesting their produce.

## Advice to Others

The government of Uganda, Not-for-profit agencies, and private businesses need to provide funding opportunities in form of donations and grants to teachers & schools in Uganda. We also recommend that teachers join professional bodies for their continued professional development and start Ag clubs or chapters in their schools. Having an active YoFFA chapter is one of the key criteria for being selected to participate in the School Gardening Program.



Are you interested in *global collaboration* for agricultural education, partner with YoFFA in 2023

To support the SPG 2023 program, kindly *scan this QR code* and donate.

Thank you!