



GROW YOUR GARDEN

One student's journey to improve her family's garden.



"I decided to join a garden club so that I could gain knowledge about gardening activities. After receiving some training in vegetable production, I went back home and asked my father to buy me some vegetable seeds so I could start my garden."

Agnes Gumari, School Garden Club Member

Overview

This is the story of Agnes Gumari, a 12-year-old girl from Busegwe Village in Mara Region, Tanzania. In 2014, when Agnes first joined Grade 1 at Busegwe Primary School, meals were not provided, and the school did not have a garden. This lack of food at school and its repercussions on student learning is a common challenge faced by many pupils in the region.

However, starting in 2018, PCI and the Butiama District Council selected Busegwe Primary School as one of the 16 beneficiary schools to receive support from the USDA-funded Local and Regional Food Aid Procurement (LRP) program, called Chakula Chetu (meaning "our food" in Swahili). Through Chakula Chetu, Agnes and her fellow classmates began receiving daily school meals comprised of program-funded, locally purchased food commodities, as well as commodities donated by the community. In addition, the Chakula Chetu program supported the establishment of school gardens to grow a variety of fruits and vegetables to supplement school meals and teach students how to grow their own gardens. By utilizing and sharing valuable skills learned from the Chakula Chetu program, Agnes has remarkably contributed to positive changes for her family that have also rippled out into her wider community.

In 2018, with the support of Chakula Chetu inputs and training, Busegwe Primary School established their school's garden. A club of 40 students was created to help maintain the garden, as well as to learn gardening skills and about the benefits of eating vegetables and fruits in one's diet.



Agnes Gumari receiving her certificate of recognition from Tanzania's former Prime Minister and Judge Mr. Joseph Warioba. This was held during Hon. Julius Kambarage Nyerere Memorial Day at Butiama District. Photo taken by Emmanuel Shukia, PCI staff.

With the help of her father, who purchased her first packet of kale seeds – about 3,000 Tanzanian shillings (TSH) (approximately USD \$1.30) – Agnes was able to start her home garden and teach her father, mother, and younger brother how

week. These activities make her an average income of TZS 30,000 (about \$12.95) per week. With her money, she has been able to buy herself school supplies, chickens to add eggs to her family's diet and has even been able to support her father in his construction of a better house by

visitors from the Government of Tanzania's Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) and the President's Office-Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG) to observe the impact of the school garden on pupils' awareness and welfare.

"Agnes is a good example, and our youth generation should learn from her and adapt good practices that they learn from the school gardens. This can help them at school, as well as out of school, and can bring change to their communities."

AnnaRose Nyamubi, Butiama Commissioner, during certificate handover at Mwalimu Nyerere Day Memorial in Butiama District

to establish and manage a garden. In her first harvest, Agnes not only harvested kale to for her and her family to eat, but also saved some seeds to plant again and expand her production.

Today, Agnes supplies vegetables to schools outside of her own, including Busegwe Girl's High School, and she sells any remaining surplus she has to local markets during the weekends, while her mother helps sell for Agnes during the school

buying him five bags of cement. Following Agnes' success, her neighbors are now learning from her garden techniques and are increasing their own consumption of fruits and vegetables within their households. For example, one of Agnes' neighbors mentioned "I have also established my garden at home where I get vegetables for home consumption and excess for sale."

In recognition of her impressive performance, Agnes received

To celebrate Agnes' efforts in changing the livelihoods of her family, and for being an active ambassador of change in her community, the Butiama District Council gave Agnes a certificate of recognition to congratulate and encourage her to continue the good work, and to motivate more pupils and community members to do the same.

Agnes is not the only one transferring her skills back to the community. Up to 217 students (170 boys and 47 girls, or 34% of 640 students) involved in the program-supported school garden club have established home gardens. The Chakula Chetu program is implementing a 'Grow your Garden' campaign in an effort to scale up Agnes's example.