

Young Ugandan wins entrepreneurship award for her organic fertilizer



When Susan Nassolo (22) joined [TeamUp](#) three years ago, she didn't expect to become an award-winning entrepreneur through the program. Now she is on the pathway to change the organic fertilizer business in Uganda, with promises of a more sustainable future.

Susan grew up in Mityana where her parents were avid farmers. She was 18 when she began accompanying her mother to agricultural training offered by [Hanns R. Neumann Stiftung \(HRNS\)](#). Over the years, her interest grew, and she was promoted to become a youth extensionist for TeamUp. As part of her training curriculum, Susan warned farmers about the risks involved with the unsafe use of agrochemicals. Learning about how agrochemicals can bring harm to useful living creatures in the environment because they contaminate the surrounding soil, air, and water bodies also alarmed Susan. So, to minimize the risks associated with the misuse of artificial chemicals in farming, Susan decided to make an organic alternative.

Using the little resources she had, Susan intelligently created an organic fertilizer from rotting fruits and vegetables she collected from the farmers in her community. When this proved to be effective as fertilizer, Susan's parents and the TeamUp Project Coordinator, Farouk Ssemwanga encouraged her to turn the idea into a marketable product.

Empowerment through TeamUp

Ssemwanga nominated Susan and other TeamUp project participants to receive scholarships for an entrepreneurship certificate offered by the [Social Innovation Academy \(SINA\)](#). This was made possible under TeamUp's innovation fund. TeamUp is co-financed by German partners: Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ), Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung (DSW), Siemens Stiftung and HRNS. The objective of TeamUp is to improve the lives of Ugandan youth by uniting the expertise of three Ugandan organizations; HRNS, [Action 4 Health Uganda \(A4HU\)](#) and [Whave Solutions](#) who are working in the sectors of Agriculture, Health, and Water. A4HU played a large role in linking the youth from TeamUp to the SINA Scholar Program.

At SINA, Susan was empowered to further develop her product and make her idea a business. They helped her package, and market her organic fertilizer, and eventually, Susan emerged as one of the best performing students at SINA. She was even awarded an entrepreneurship award and received a cash prize of 1 million Ugandan Shillings (\$350) at SINA's annual graduate competition. With the money, she trademarked the name of her product – Evergrow Organics – and applied for the official registration of her business.



Susan's product, Evergrow Organics



Susan after receiving her award at SINA's annual graduate competition

Evergrow Organics

Although Susan has big competition and is struggling with marketing costs – her product stands firm as a highly effective and harmless alternative to agrochemicals. It improves soil fertility by increasing water retention and boosting the formation of useful microorganisms in the soil. It can also be used to convert freshly cut grass into composite manure within three weeks. It poses no risks to farmers, can be applied any time in the season, and is cheaper than agrochemicals.

So far, Susan has sold over 76 liters of Evergrow Organics and is currently testing an organic pesticide for the Black Coffee Trig Borer. In the future, she plans on developing an organic herbicide.

“I have started earning money and contributing to my community because the farmers can improve their productivity. I’m now a confident person and I feel highly respected in my community.” – Susan Nassolo

Youth as the hope of our future

As a youth facilitator, Susan continues to train youth on good agricultural practices in her community, and is an inspiration to many. Her goal is to help other youth become self-sufficient and resolve their problems without relying on their parents. However, Susan acknowledges the importance and need to scale up the support of youth through programs like TeamUp and SINA. After all, it was through these programs that she was skilled in agriculture and entrepreneurship and educated on the importance of protecting the environment.

“Education is the key. My advice to young people is to take any opportunity for skilling and to start small businesses using resources around them. They should try to not only be a job seeker but also a job creator because they will have more than one source of income and can solve other problems in the community.” – Susan Nassolo

Susan’s story proves that young people have untapped potential, and it is critical to invest in youth within the agricultural sector – especially around conservation and climate change mitigation. That is why, one of the mandates of TeamUp Uganda is skill youth in entrepreneurship, business development, agronomy, and key life skills. Not only for the future of young people – but for the future of Uganda.