

# Building student and organizational capacity with the Horticulture Innovation Lab Trellis Fund

Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Collaborative Research on Horticulture  
University of California, Davis

## Introduction

The Trellis Fund provides small-scale, in-country development organizations access to U.S. graduate student expertise, providing benefit to both the student and the in-country institutions. With a focus on impact and expansion of locally proven ideas, the Trellis Fund matches the organizations with students and provides modest funds to support the organizations' farmer outreach programs.



A member of Sustaining Rwanda Youth Organization discusses mushroom cultivation with Bryan Sobel, a graduate student at Cornell University.

## Goals of the Trellis Fund

- Organizations extend new ideas, practices and technologies to their communities
- Graduate students use their knowledge and expertise on a real world project
- Graduate students gain experience in international development
- Organizations build capacity in research and extension, grant management and project administration, and can later apply for larger grants
- Organizations and students form a long-term connection



Carrie Teiken, a UC Davis Ph.D. student, collaborates with partners at Uganda Environmental Education Foundation to improve organic pest management in vegetables.

## Capacity Building

### Institutional Capacity

- Trellis builds research and extension capacity at small-scale developing world organizations
- Organizations gain experience managing USAID grants, including contract paperwork and reporting
- Projects are required to do monitoring and evaluation, with support from their graduate student



A graduate student from Tribhubhan University works with Rachel Suits, an entomology graduate student at North Carolina State University, to set up rows for an intercropping field trial with the Ecological Services Centre in Nepal.

### Quotes from Organizations

"The more different people we work with, the bigger our network becomes. The Trellis program linked us with the different staff and students of the University of California. Interaction with the student enhanced the capacity of the extension staff", -partner organization, Uganda

"The interaction of the staff with the U.S. student was beneficial, as was the flow of knowledge and experience from a U.S. institution of higher learning (i.e. UC Davis)", - partner organization, Kenya

"The best part was the communication with the U.S. graduate as they suggested innovative technologies, provided a lot of information and helped a lot in making the project successful", - partner organization, Nepal



Bob Johnson, a graduate student at UC Davis, works with El Doret Region Company/Christian Community Services on strengthening Irish potato production.

### Individual Capacity

- Training for farmer participants
- Practical experience in international development for U.S. graduate students
- Graduate students attend 6 trainings: topics include gender, monitoring and evaluation, working with farmer field schools, and diagnosis of problems in the field
- Students often generate materials (curricula, factsheets, etc.) for their organizations
- Trellis organizations are encouraged to involve local students, thereby building the capacity of future in-country researchers

### Quotes from Students

"It was a really positive experience for me as a graduate student, because I was surprised at how useful my expertise as a soil scientist could be... The way they have taught us to think here, in an American grad school ... was a very useful perspective, even when working with cropping systems and soils that I did not have a lot of personal experience with."

- Michael Wolff, Ph.D. student, UC Davis



Ephrem Rukundo, a UC Davis Ph.D. student, discusses postharvest with members of the Uganda Network for Community Empowerment.



Trellis projects have taken place in 15 Feed the Future countries.

## Trellis Fund Stats

- Currently in its 3rd year
- 38 projects in 15 countries
- 38 graduate students from 4 U.S. universities engaged

In the first two years, Trellis accomplishments include:

- 184 farmer trainings
- 3865 farmer participants (71% women)
- 116 demonstration plots
- 62 local undergraduate and graduate students engaged



Arun Jani, a graduate student at North Carolina State University, works with SADP-Nepal to improve soil fertility and increase yields of organic tomatoes.

## Acknowledgements

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