

Student Name:



Benchmark
Assessments

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8th Grade Language Arts

Performance Task
(Informational—Nonfiction)

Mississippi

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"Kenyan Youth Lend Each Other a Helping Hand"

United States Agency for International Development

A Chicken Coop Creates Opportunities for Entrepreneurs¹

- 1 Each morning, Martin Mwenda picks up a fresh supply of eggs, stacks cartons on top of each other and fastens them to the motorcycle he rents. He sets off down bumpy roads through dust and debris, performing a delicate balancing act to safely deliver the eggs to restaurants, shops, and hotels.
- 2 Before becoming an egg distributor, Mwenda was unemployed for two years and struggled to make ends meet. Now he earns up to \$2 a day.
- 3 Securing a job isn't easy for young people living in Kenya's northern arid lands, a region known for its harsh climate and economic challenges. Thousands of young people like Mwenda lack opportunities because of poverty, low education levels, and high unemployment. But Lydia Kanyika, owner of the poultry production business Nkamathi Farm Products, saw a chance to change things and help people like Mwenda find meaningful work.
- 4 Kanyika is one of twenty-one entrepreneurs in Isiolo and Marsabit counties who received business development grants from a "Feed the Future" project. The project awarded these grants to select businesses based on their marketing plans and their abilities to create markets, generate employment opportunities, and increase productivity along the livestock value chain in Northern Kenya.
- 5 Kanyika owns a small business called Nkamathi Farm Products. She used her grant to upgrade her wooden chicken house to a modern coop. This change enabled her to increase the number of chickens she kept from 300 to 2,500 and grow her business' production by 243 percent. Kanyika has also mentored more than 50 young people and, through her business, provided them with employment opportunities to support their families. One of them is Martin Mwenda.
- 6 Kanyika's success has had a ripple effect. Mwenda earns a steady income distributing eggs from Kanyika's chickens. When he first started working with Kanyika, Mwenda only sold five cartons of eggs each day. He's since increased his customers and now sells 25 cartons of eggs a day. Mwenda dreams of sharing his success with others.
- 7 "I want to expand the egg business," Mwenda said. "I will then use the business to create employment opportunities for fellow youth, especially those who have migrated from rural areas to Isiolo town to make ends meet, like I did."

A Switch to Farming Helps Kenyan Youth Achieve Financial Success

- 8 Young people are helping each other create pathways out of poverty elsewhere in Kenya too.
- 9 While working as a health officer at the Busia County hospital, Evelyn Akisa met many young Kenyans who were starting out on their own and struggling to meet their health and living expenses.

¹Entrepreneurs—people who create, organize, and operate businesses

- 10 As the owner of an eight-acre piece of land, she saw an opportunity to earn money on her terms, help young people learn about agriculture, and prove to them that the lack of white collar employment prospects should not spell doom for them. So she quit her day job to become a farmer.
- 11 "I wanted change from living in uncertainty to being able to rely on my farm," Akisa said. "Our land can give us nourishment and earn us a livelihood."
- 12 When she began, Akisa struggled to learn how to farm. "Before, I planted anything that I could lay my hands on. I never put much consideration into the seed type, climate effects on the crop, and the correct farming methods," she said.
- 13 Like many first-time farmers, she tended to copy what other farmers were doing without a deep understanding of how agriculture works, leading to poor harvests.
- 14 Then, Akisa attended a farmer field day hosted by "Feed the Future," where she learned best practices at a county training center. At this event and others like it, she and more than 9,000 other farmers from surrounding areas learned how to best manage their small farm plots and grow the crops that interested them.
- 15 What Akisa learned changed everything. She now understands how to manage her farm and is passing on this knowledge by employing and teaching other young people on her sorghum and millet farm.
- 16 Each employee on Akisa's farm can earn up to \$4 per day, which is slightly above minimum wage in rural Busia County. In a country where youth unemployment is estimated to be more than 30%, Akisa is helping her employees develop critical job skills and become self-reliant. She also invites other interested young people to come to her farm and learn from her experience.
- 17 Through training, practical instruction and farmer-to-farmer mentorship, "Feed the Future" empowers mentors like Akisa and Kanyika to help young people take advantage of opportunities available in agriculture and livestock—all the while planting seeds for a successful future.

"Kenyan Youth Lend Each Other a Helping Hand" from the United States Agency for International Development. <https://feedthefuture.gov/article/kenyan-youth-lend-each-other-helping-hand> (4/12/18).

Performance Task

Based on what you read in the passage “Kenyan Youth Lend Each Other a Helping Hand,” write an essay explaining how young people are creating pathways out of poverty. Use evidence from the passage to support your response.

Your writing will be scored based on the development of ideas, organization of writing, and language conventions of grammar, usage, and mechanics.

