

Junior Scientists Tandems

Final Report

Name of student: Consolata Nolega Musita

German Research Institution (GRI): Justus Liebig University, Giessen

Supervisor at German Research Institution (IARC): Prof. Dr. Gudrun Keding

National University (Country): University Nairobi (Kenya)

Supervisor at National University: Dr. Sophia Ngala

International Agricultural Research Center (Country): Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT

Supervisor at IARC: Dr. Céline Termote

Start and end date of stay at IARC/ GRI: 23/10/2024 – 30/3/2025

Title: Integrating nutrition education into food system interventions improves dietary diversity of women and children 6-23 months: a case of informal settlements in Kisumu, Kenya

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When I learnt about ATSAF's Junior Scientists Tandems (JST) Programme through Dr. Irmgard Jordan, my colleague at the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, I saw a great opportunity to improve my knowledge and skills in agricultural and nutritional research. I, therefore, began the application process which involved getting an enrolment letter from Justus Liebig University (JLU), getting a confirmation letter from my home university (University of Nairobi) and the CGIAR center (Alliance of Bioversity International CIAT), arranging my accommodation in Giessen, getting my health insurance and finally obtaining my visa to travel and stay in Germany. Once I got all the necessary documentation, I finally left my home country, Kenya, on 22nd October 2024 and landed in Germany the following day. This was the first time I was travelling to Germany and was excited about the new experiences that awaited.

In Germany, I was warmly welcomed by Prof. Dr. Gudrun Keding and her team at the Institute of International Food and Nutrition Security at JLU. I was made comfortable by being allocated an office which I shared with 2 other PhD students who are part of her working group. Prof. Dr. Gudrun especially ensured that her student assistant, Ms. Mubara, supported me closely on many things including helping with sorting issues such as getting my student chip card, getting to my accommodation place, registering at the municipal office and showing me around the city.



With colleagues at the Institute of International Food and Nutrition Security

I was at JLU for one semester and during my stay, I got the opportunity to network with professors and other students not only at the institute I was attached to but other institutes as well such as the Institute of Agricultural Policy and Market Research. In addition to networking I also actively participated in the following activities:

- 1. Participated in giving guest lectures for bachelors and masters students at the institute of International Food and Nutrition Security**

I was actively involved in presentation of case studies based on my work on nutrition education and food environment research in the HealthyFood Africa Project (<https://healthyfoodafrica.eu/>). Presenting these studies enabled me have great discussions with students on ongoing work and challenges from a developing world context. I presented 2 case studies titled '***The Food Environment in Urban Informal Settlements in Kisumu, Kenya***' and '***Empowering Consumers to make Healthy Food Choices through Nutrition Education: lessons learnt from HealthyFoodAfrica project in informal settlements of Kisumu, Kenya***'.

2. Enrolled for relevant courses and attended seminars to enhance my knowledge and skills

For the whole semester, I enrolled for an English taught course titled '**Empirical Research Methods**' coordinated by the Institute of Agricultural Policy and Market Research which equipped me with



Making a presentation in a seminar

knowledge on quantitative and qualitative research knowledge and skills that are important for my research work. I also was integrated in the International PhD Program in Agricultural Economics, Bioeconomy and Sustainable Food Systems (IPPAE) program which is a doctoral program organized by the Institute of Agricultural Policy and Market Research where doctoral students present their ongoing research work and get feedback

from peers and professors. At IPPAE, I got the opportunity to present my research work titled, '**Understanding how personal and food environment factors shape maternal and child diets in informal settlements of Kisumu, Kenya**' where I received constructive feedback on areas of improvement.

In addition, I actively attended seminars and workshops coordinated by the Giessen Graduate Centre for Social Sciences, Business, Economics and Law (GGG). The seminars and workshops I attended were:

a) **Writing an Academic Journal Article** and b) **Tactics for Success in English-Language Scholarly Journals: Navigating Peer Review, and Handling Reviewer Feedback**. Through these seminars, I gained more knowledge on writing journal articles and navigation the whole peer review process before publishing.

3. Participated in academic excursions

I participated in 2 academic excursions outside of Giessen. The first excursion was the **17th Global Forum for Food and Agriculture, 15th – 18th 2025 in Berlin**. The forum's theme was "Farming a Sustainable Bioeconomy" and discussions were centred around topics such as sustainable biomass production, preserving biodiversity, protecting the climate and designing of a sustainable bioeconomy for global food security among other topics. While in Berlin, I also attended the **Green Week (Grüne Woche) 2025**, one of Germany's most traditional trade fairs and one of the world's leading events in the food, agriculture and horticulture sectors where I interacted with exhibitors from different countries across the world. The second excursion was an academic visit to the **Ferrero company in Stadtlendorf**, a chocolate confectionary company where I participated in discussing issues around sustainability aspects of the company with regard to food systems, livelihoods, social systems, and the environment. A factory tour gave me the opportunity to see and taste the different confectionary products produced at the factory.

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Excursion at Green Week in Berlin (left & center) and at Fererro company in Stadtlendorf (right)

4. Other academic-related activities

I participated in the following other academic related activities:

- **Attending bi-weekly team meetings** at the institute chaired by Prof. Dr. Gudrun where I gave updates on the progress of my work.
- **Data analysis and writing my first manuscript** titled, *'How do personal and food environment factors shape the diets of women and children? A case of informal settlements in Kisumu, Kenya.'*
- **Wrote and submitted an abstract to the 3rd IUNS-ICN International Congress of Nutrition** in Paris, France (IUNS-ICN 2025), scheduled from 24th - 29th August 2025. The abstract titled, *'Synergistic effects of a participatory nutrition education and home gardens intervention on dietary diversity of women and children in informal settlements'* was accepted for presentation at the conference.
- **Attended GIZ Outreach Event** in Bonn to learn more about GIZ's Global Programme 'Food and Nutrition Security, Enhanced Resilience' in terms of implementation approaches and achievements.
- **Visited Utrecht University in Netherlands to give a guest lecture** to students and staff titled *'Linking food system interventions to dietary outcomes'*.

5. Social activities I was involved in

Away from academics, I involved myself in social activities for my social and mental wellbeing. Apart



Enjoying some German dishes with colleagues

from making new friends from Germany, I also made friends from other countries such as Kenya, Benin, Uganda, Ethiopia and France who were studying at JLU. I had the chance to visit and explore tourist sites in other beautiful cities such as Frankfurt, Marburg, Hannover, Göttingen and Berlin. I got to taste a few new foods in Germany such as Fondue, Frankfurter Würstchen, deer

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meat, Christmas cookies, mulled wine and langos. I visited the beautiful Christmas markets in Giessen, Marburg and Frankfurt and enjoyed the different foods, mulled wine/Glühwein and music. In the spirit of Christmas, the JLU President invited all international students to the Glühwein reception, an event for all international scholars staying at JLU. As the international community at JLU, we had the opportunity to get together over a glass of mulled wine, a hearty snack and Christmas cookies accompanied by the Vocal Ensemble of JLU's Department of Music and Music Education.

Since it was winter season and coming from Kenya which lies in the tropics, I had the opportunity to experience winter and snow for the first time! Although it was cold and grey, I still enjoyed the season by visiting areas with snow to see and play in snow, giving me an unforgettable snow experience.



Enjoying snow in Hoherodskopf and visiting the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin

My stay at JLU in Giessen came to an end on 30th March 2025. My colleagues at the Institute of International Food and Nutrition Security held a farewell lunch to bid me goodbye and where we reminisced on my experience in Germany and what I had gained from the 6 months stay. As much as I was sad to leave my new friends, colleagues and the nice things I had got used to in Germany, I was happy and excited at the same time to go back home to my family whom I had missed a lot. Finally, on 30th March, I packed my bags ready to go back home in Kenya full of insights and knowledge gained from Germany. I am grateful to ATSAF for giving me this wonderful opportunity to not only enhance my knowledge and skills but also to experience a new culture and view the world from a different international perspective altogether. I am also grateful to Dr. Celine Termote (my supervisor at the Alliance of Bioversity and CIAT), Dr. Irmgard Jordan (who informed me about ATSAF JST Programme), Dr. Sophia Ngala (my supervisor at the University of Nairobi) and Prof. Dr. Gudrun Keding (my supervisor at Justus Liebig University's Institute of International Food and Nutrition Security) for the immense support they granted me which made it possible for me to be part of ATSAF Junior Scientists Tandems Programme.
