

**YOUTH AND WOMEN AS DIGITAL CONNECTORS: THE REMARKABLE JOURNEY OF KASAMBA SALIM!**

ICT is revolutionizing agricultural extension services, narrowing the knowledge-to-farmer divide, and empowering them with timely information to foster sustainable agricultural growth. In Uganda, there exists a stark contrast in the number of extension workers to farmers, with a ratio as low as 1:1500. This has given rise to a substantial service delivery deficit, most notably in Nankoma Sub-County, Bugiri District. This concerning imbalance significantly obstructs farmers' access to vital information, hindering their advancement and growth in the agricultural sector.

In Nankoma Sub-county, Bugiri District, the absence of sufficient extension services has resulted in farmers lacking proper packing techniques. Consequently, this deficiency has had a significant negative impact on their agricultural income, thereby affecting their household earnings and overall livelihoods.

Driven by his profound passion for agricultural livelihood development, Kasamba Salim embarked on a journey to design and manufacture packaging materials for agricultural produce. However, he encountered challenges due to limited financial resources and a lack of knowledge in online business management, hindering the development and sustainability of his enterprise.

Salim's journey towards success as a digital connector is attributed to the inception of the Strengthening Agricultural Knowledge & Innovation Ecosystem for Inclusive Rural Transformation & Livelihoods in Eastern Africa (AIRTEA) project implemented by the consortium consisting of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), the Association of Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA) and the Eastern Farmers Federation (EAFF) through the Uganda Forum Agricultural Advisory Services (UFAAS) as a third party,



*Salim takes a farmer through the process of accessing the packaging services*

Salim was one of the successful individuals selected to be part of the AIRTEA initiative after undergoing comprehensive business development training and receiving an electronic tablet that equipped him with the necessary skills and resources. Salim was then ready to kickstart the rebirth of his business. His dedication and efforts have made a tangible difference in the community, particularly in the production of packaging materials. This transformation in Salim's life and the community's progress were made possible by his participation in the AIRTEA project.

Salim's entrepreneurial journey has not only benefited the farmers in Nankoma Sub-county but has also extended its reach to distant-regions. He has successfully supplied packaging materials to 600 farmers and farmer groups and to Farmer Organizations/institutions like ZAABTA, BAIDA, Nabigingo SACCO LTD, Bugiri District Coffee Farmers Cooperative Society, Bugiri District Farmers Association etc

With an ambitious vision for expansion, Salim aims to establish partnerships with packaging material manufacturers across central and eastern Uganda. By forging these strategic alliances, his business can grow exponentially, ensuring a steady supply of packaging materials to farmers throughout the region. Salim's commitment to bridging the packaging gap in agriculture demonstrates his determination to create a sustainable and impactful enterprise that serves the needs of farmers and drives agricultural development on a broader scale.

**" I didn't know that i had so much potential, AIRTEA Project has opened my eye and given me greater heights in digital service provision"**



*Salim showcases some of his packaging materials*