LEVERAGING DIGITAL PLATFORMS TO BUILD FARMER CAPACITY

Edutainment: driving scale and impact through entertainment platforms

March 2020
Mercy Corps’ AgriFin programming (MCAF) represents **USD 35 million in innovation funding** from the Mastercard Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Swiss Development Corporation to support development, testing and scale of digitally-enabled services to more than **3 million smallholders by 2021**

Our objective is to develop sustainable services that **increase farmer income and productivity by 50%,** with **50% outreach to women and youth**

MCAF works as an innovation partner with **private sector** scale partners and such as banks, mobile network operators, agribusinesses, as well as **technology innovators and governments** committed to serving smallholders at scale

We help our partners develop, prototype and scale bundles of **digitally-enabled financial and non-financial services** supporting **partnership development** between market actors that leverage their strengths

We combine MCAF team expertise with strategic subsidy to jointly implement **iterative, fail-fast engagements** with partners on a cost-share basis, **sharing public learnings** to drive market ecosystem growth

Since 2012, we have completed more than **150 engagements with over 70 partners**

Currently, **our work reaches more than 3.2 million smallholders**
Mercy Corps’ AgriFin Accelerate Program (AFA) is a USD 25 million, six-year initiative supported by the Mastercard Foundation to support the delivery of digitally-enabled services to more than 1 million smallholder farmers across Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia.

Our objective is to support service development and scale that helps smallholder farmers (SHF) increase income and productivity by 50%, working to ensure 50% outreach to women.

AFA is leveraging the power, convenience, and prevalence of mobile phones to help smallholder farmers boost their harvests and incomes.

AFA employs a market facilitation model to drive scalable, commercial product innovation for SHF with agricultural ecosystem partners committed to serving smallholders at scale by driving product uptake and knowledge dissemination.

We help our partners develop, prototype and scale bundles of digitally-enabled financial and non-financial and information services.

Mediae is a social enterprise dedicated to improving livelihoods through educative and entertaining media (edutainment), developing and producing a range of content offered through various channels across Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

Over the past 4 years, AFA has supported Mediae in developing farmer-focused communication interventions through edutainment programmes, specifically Shamba Shape Up (SSU) and Don’t Lose the Plot (DLTP).

Mediae currently reaches 12 million users across three countries, with SSU alone reaching 5 million farmers (60% of whom are women and the majority of whom are youth), and DLTP reaching 4 million youth viewers.

This learning output focuses on the potential of digital agriculture-related edutainment in driving outreach and content engagement at scale, pushing knowledge dissemination and affecting perceptions of farming and achieving meaningful behavioural change. Social impact created through these channels justifies investment in digital edutainment vis-à-vis more traditional channels.
Executive Summary

Mediae is a social enterprise working to address the informational needs of East Africans through sustainable and research-based media productions. Mediae’s edutainment programmes range from educational reality shows for farmers (E.g. Shamba Shape Up – SSU – and Don’t Lose the Plot – DLTP), edutainment for families (e.g. Mpeke Town and Makutano Junction), mobile and online agricultural information and subscription message advice (iShamba) and financial planning tools (Budget Mkononi).

Key learnings:

• **Edutainment can drive affordable scale:** 12 million users in 3 countries are being reached through Mediae channels, with high content-based engagement shown by youth segments. Overall, pushing advice through digital edutainment channels is shown to be an effective and low-cost option.

• **Edutainment can have meaningful impact on farmer knowledge and attitudes:** On average, 2.4 million people report that they learn something new through each SSU season. DLTP users are more knowledgeable about farm practices than non-viewers.
  
  • Edutainment has the ability to change perceptions of farming, typically viewed as a loss-making activity. 84% of DLTP viewers indicate they would take up farming as a business, with 72% of viewers in Tanzania believing that farming is profitable, and 2.26 as many viewers than non-viewers attributing household income growth to watching SSU.
  
  • 47% and 49% of DLTP high-intensity viewers in Kenya and Tanzania reported farming to be associated with being a youthful activity, indicating an overall perception change of farming.
  
  • Wider impact of behavioural change triggered by edutainment content includes food security improvements, alongside self-reported improvements in overall well-being, self-confidence, social status and diversity in farm output.

• **Edutainment can trigger meaningful farmer behavioural change:** Overall conversion rates of knowledge translated into practise are high across categories. 56% of practices were influenced by SSU, with viewers more likely to be engaged in 10 out of 12 promoted practices.

• **Edutainment can drive uptake of financial services:** financial services are identified as leading insights farmers get from watching SSU and DLTP, with high intensity viewers very likely to implement learnings. 28% of viewers purchased insurance as a result of watching SSU.

• **Overall impact of digital channels justify cost investment, with positive socio-economic impact demonstrated for users vis-à-vis non-users.**
So, what is edutainment?

“Entertainment (as by games, films, or shows) that is designed to be educational”

Source: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/edutainment
Table of Contents

SECTION I 7 – 9
Background and engagement overview

SECTION II 10 - 12
Edutainment can drive affordable scale

SECTION III 13 - 17
Edutainment can have meaningful impact on farmer knowledge and attitudes

SECTION IV 18 - 23
Edutainment can trigger meaningful farmer behavioural change

SECTION V 24 - 26
Edutainment can drive uptake of financial services

SECTION VI 27
Next steps
Mediae and AgriFin have worked together since 2016 to address farmer capability constraints using high-potential low-cost digital tools

Farmer capability has been identified as a key constraint to the adoption and usage of financial services and digital channels and also as a risk factor around farmer productivity and links to markets.

AgriFin has been supporting the development and roll-out of digital farmer capability tools through grants, technical assistance, research, piloting and experimentation.

Targeting rural youth has been a particular focus of AgriFin and Mediae’s engagement, with digital channels being identified as key tools affecting attitudes towards farming and behavioural change. Engagements have thus focused on developing targeted content covering AgriFin’s core areas of expertise, analyzing data and incubating new technology for impact tools.

### 2016

**Budget Mkononi**

- Phase 1: support creating the web-based budgeting tool
- Phase 2: prototyping and testing the integration with WhatsApp for Business

### 2017

**Don’t Lose The Plot**

- Support creating DLTP content related to financial services and the use of digital tools for young farmers
- Testing potential reach and impact rural youth using television and other digital channels

### 2018

**Data analytics**

- Supporting Mediae analyzing existing evidence data and identifying data gaps
- Findings to help shape the existing evidence for impact base and storyline going forward

### 2019

**Insurance content & WhatsApp for Business**

- Support revising Budget Mkononi WhatsApp for Business prototype
- Collaboration with Lloyds of London on insurance content creation
- Incubation of iShamba under larger WhatsApp for Business product adoption 6-month accelerator alongside other AgriFin partners
Mediae services range from reality TV shows to web-based budgeting tools and call centres.

**Example:** Don’t Lose the Plot (DLTP):
https://dontlosetheplot.tv/en/

**Example:** Shamba Shape Up:
Insurance Content:
Full clip here.

**Example:** Budget Mkononi:
https://budgetmkononi.com/

Source: ‘Mediae’s Learning Insights’ (June 2018), produced by Busara for Mediae on behalf of AgriFin.
Key learnings around edutainment are:

- Edutainment can drive affordable scale
- Edutainment can have meaningful impact on farmer knowledge and attitudes
- Edutainment can trigger meaningful farmer behavioural change
- Edutainment can drive uptake of financial services
1) Edutainment can drive affordable scale
Breadth of services and channels are key for scale: current reach covers 12 million users across 3 countries

Segmenting customer groups allows for targeted interventions. Cross-fertilization between channels has shown to increase visibility and outreach. Don’t Lose the Plot (DLTP), for example, a weekly television program that followed the lives of select youth farmers, aimed at increasing youth interest and participation in agriculture as a viable business. DLTP was complemented by the online budgeting tool ‘Budget Mkononi’.

Source: ‘Mediae’s Learning Insights’ (June 2018), produced by Busara for Mediae on behalf of AgriFin.
Cracking the scale problem: edutainment platforms driving viewership through digital channels

DLTP and SSU show high engagement with the content streamed through its channels, particularly of youth segments.

**Don’t Lose The Plot (DLTP):** an agricultural educational TV program targeting youth in Kenya and Tanzania; includes the online iShamba feature.

Estimated **4 million** viewers across Kenya, Tanzania.

12% (Kenya) and 16% (Tanzania) of all youth watched DLTP.

1.4 million viewers are high intensity viewers (watched more than seven episodes).

An average of **1,111 SMS** are received during the series. **68k** Facebook fans, **12k** Twitter followers, **7k** YouTube subscribers.

**Shamba Shape Up (SSU):** a reality make-over TV show educating smallholders on good agronomic practices broadcast in 3 countries.

**Viewership:** estimated **5 million** viewers across Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania. 60% of viewers are women; 60% are youth.

An average **26k SMS** are received per series.

**69k** Facebook fans, **300** Twitter followers, **2 million** YouTube subscribers.

Overall, SSU viewers are richer and more educated than non-viewers. They are also younger, less experienced and more likely to use extension agents.

A key SSU audience is thus new farmers looking for advice.

Source: ‘Mediae’s Learning Insights’ (June 2018), produced by Busara for Mediae on behalf of AgriFin.
2) Edutainment can have meaningful impact on farmer knowledge and attitudes
Using digital edutainment channels to disseminate ag-related knowledge yields positive impact results

Research shows that over a range of questions, Shamba Shape Up (SSU) viewers display more knowledge than non-viewers. On average, 2.4 million people report that they learn something new from SSU each season.

As SSU began heavily promoting soil testing, the proportion of people who could explain what a soil test is spiked.

Overall, across seasons, SSU viewers are:
- 55% more likely to know what a soil test is
- 35% more likely to have heard of Unga chicken feed.

Source: “Assessing Mediae: Data Analysis for Impact (DAI)” (June 2018), produced by Busara for Mediae on behalf of AgriFin.
Engagement with digital edutainment platforms closely relates to better knowledge uptake

High intensity Don’t Lose The Plot (DLTP) viewers had a 3.2 out of 5 knowledge score against 2.9 for non-viewers in Kenya.¹

¹ Questions on self-reported knowledge were summarized into a single score ranging from 1 to 5, with 5 representing the highest level of knowledge.

“I like the program because it teaches about new technology in farming. I did not know about soil testing, but I got to learn about it there. How to prepare your land and how to prepare the nursery.”

- Adopter of farming activities

Source: ‘Mediae’s Learning Insights’ (June 2018), produced by Busara for Mediae on behalf of AgriFin.
Agriculture and its ‘image problem’: edutainment changing perceptions of farming

84% of DLTP viewers in Kenya and 90% of high intensity viewers in Tanzania indicated they would take up farming as a business.

**Farming is profitable**

72% of high intensity viewers of DLTP in Tanzania believe farming is profitable over 56% of non-viewers

2.26 as many viewers in series 6 can attribute household income growth to SSU influence on farming relative to series 1

Source: 'Mediae’s Learning Insights' (June 2018), produced by Busara for Mediae on behalf of AgriFin.
Tackling a critical bottleneck for youth viewers: farming as a viable business

Perceptions of farming as a second rate / loss making venture have been identified as a key barrier preventing youth from seeking employment in the agriculture field. With the majority of East African smallholders being over the age of 60, this is projected to have severe food security implications over the coming years, and negatively affect employment prospects for new job-seekers.¹

Perceptions of farming are changing

47% and 49% of DLTP high-intensity viewers in Kenya and Tanzania reported farming to be associated as a youthful activity

Self Report: DLTP Viewers on Farming not being for "older" people

¹ See AgriFin Rural Jobs Landscape Study (January 2020).

SSU: Shamba Shape Up; DLTP: Don’t Lose The Plot
Source: ‘Mediae’s Learning Insights’ (June 2018), produced by Busara for Mediae on behalf of AgriFin.
3) Edutainment can trigger meaningful farmer behavioural change
Edutainment’s effect on practices: behavioural change of SSU and DLTP viewers

Evidence shows that greater knowledge can lead to behavioural change, with overall conversion rates (knowledge into practice) being high.

Overall, 56% of promoted practices among farmers were influenced by SSU (self-reported). Viewers of SSU are more likely to be engaged in 10 of the 12 promoted practices, such as ‘planted desmodium as an inter-crop’.

SSU viewers are more likely to report an improvement in their record keeping activities, such as expenses, sales and harvest management.

57% of viewers (against 40% of non-viewers) in Kenya and 54% of viewers (against 36% of non-viewers) in Tanzania reported keeping better records.

DLTP viewers were 10% more likely to improve their budget keeping practices than non-viewers.

50% of DLTP viewers have farm budgets (top of head and written).

Budget related clips on YouTube were the most viewed on the DTLP channel.

SSU: Shamba Shape Up; DLTP: Don’t Lose The Plot
Source: ‘Mediae’s Learning Insights’ (June 2018), produced by Busara for Mediae on behalf of AgriFin.
Evidence shows that viewers seek more information, particularly around market choice.

Opportunities for Digital Information Services (DIS) to plug in, pick up and leverage strides made by edutainment to help covert information provision into meaningful partner linkage.

CONDUCTING MARKET RESEARCH

High intensity viewers on average are significantly more likely to conduct crop research in Kenya and Tanzania.

Self Report: Do they conduct market research

Ongoing integration with WhatsApp for Business to further engagement rates and customer interaction.

Source: ‘Mediae’s Learning Insights’ (June 2018), produced by Busara for Mediae on behalf of AgriFin; https://ishamba.com/
Pushing agronomy advice through digital edutainment channels proving to be an effective and low-cost option

Peer-to-peer learning promoted through Mediae channels demonstrate behavioural change impact comparable to more traditional in-field, face-to-face training of farmers on agronomy. Watching other farmers apply new knowledge, technology and practices seems to positively influence trust levels and acceptance.

An average of 77% of SSU viewers reported the show having had a major influence on their use of fertilizer.

Additionally, soil testing awareness and knowledge gained from SSU increased from 74% in series 1 to 82% in series 6.

USE OF IRRIGATION

45% and 30% of DLTP high intensity viewers reported an increase in the use of irrigation in Tanzania and Kenya, respectively.

FERTILISER APPLICATION

SSU: Shamba Shape Up; DLTP: Don’t Lose The Plot
Source: ‘Mediae’s Learning Insights’ (June 2018), produced by Busara for Mediae on behalf of AgriFin.
Demonstrating value: impact of digital channels seem to show positive returns

Surveys show that SSU-influenced viewers milked 1.5 litres more per cow per day than non-viewers, resulting in an estimated USD 888 more per year in revenue on average. SSU-influenced viewers had approximately USD 6 more in maize yield.¹

SSU viewers are also 100%, 40% and 63% more likely to give cows salt, employ anti-tick measures and deworm cows, respectively.

Dairy farmers from 27,157 households who were SSU viewers benefited by $24,139,863.

Maize farmers from 97,446 households who were SSU viewers benefited by $578,785.

¹'Mediae’s Learning Insights’ (June 2018), produced by Busara for Mediae on behalf of AgriFin.
Wider impact of behavioural change triggered by edutainment content includes food security improvements

Across several measures of food insecurity, SSU viewers reported that their food consumption was more stable than that of their peers:

1. 75% less likely to be worried about being able to eat
2. 50% less likely to be “unable to eat healthy food”
3. 35% and 40% less likely to report skipping a meal or going a day without food, respectively

In 2014, SSU viewers and non-viewers were asked to compare their lives now to 2012 (before the airing of the show). Viewers were significantly more likely to report increases in:

- Confidence in implementing new practices
- Social status
- Diversity of farm output
- Overall well-being

SSU: Shamba Shape Up; DLTP: Don’t Lose The Plot

‘Mediae’s Learning Insights’ (June 2018), produced by Busara for Mediae on behalf of AgriFin.
4) Edutainment can drive uptake of financial services
Financial practices identified as leading insights farmers gained from watching SSU / DLTP

Knowledge gained ranges from rolling budget techniques, record keeping, exploring finance options, generating financial reports, insurance of livestock and mobile money use, and is supplemented by new knowledge in market research, including contract arrangements and seeking sources of information, and crop maintenance.

DLTP high intensity viewers were more likely to implement learnings on financial literacy

SSU: Shamba Shape Up; DLTP: Don’t Lose The Plot

Source: ‘Mediae’s Learning Insights’ (June 2018), produced by Busara for Mediae on behalf of AgriFin.
Agricultural insurance promotion on SSU led to spike in uptake from low baseline and little prior knowledge

Prior to watching SSU, only 2% and 3% of respondents had crop or livestock insurance, respectively.

While only 12.5% of viewers recall watching an insurance programme, **28% of these purchased insurance as a result of SSU**. Compared to typical conversion rates for insurance uptake, this is significantly higher.¹

While these results are positive for a first time broadcast, three areas require intervention: (i) understanding low content recall rates; (iii) increasing recall rates; (ii) further increasing conversion rates.

Despite agricultural insurance being relatively new to smallholders in Kenya, **nearly one tenth of respondents (7%)** stated that they would **like to see more on insurance** in the programme, showing high interest in the topic amongst viewers.

¹ Comparative conversion rates of commercial insurers show a 0.4% update of the 33.4% of farmers aware of insurance products (see [here](#)). SSU: Shamba Shape Up; DLTP: Don’t Lose The Plot

Edutainment has the potential to effectively disseminate smallholder-relevant knowledge, changing attitudes and spreading best farming practices, demonstrating positive overall social and economic impact.

- In enhancing farmer capability, a variety of separate yet interconnected channels form an attractive value proposition for farmers, with peer-to-peer learning generating positive behavioural change outcomes (e.g. DLTP and Budget Mkononi).

- Going forward, integrating existing edutainment channels into high social impact technology solutions holds great potential in fostering and tracking behavioural change at scale. The incubation of iShamba and Budget Mkononi under AgriFin’s 6-month WhatsApp for Business Sandbox with six other AgriFin partners will allow for more deliberate strides in customer engagement and automated behavioural change tracking.

- Digital channels can either be standalone knowledge dissemination tools to reaching scale or used to supplement existing non-digital tools.

- Cross-fertilization of learning outcomes between and within partners in the AgriFin ecosystem is to be encouraged going forward. Findings of this report can be benchmarked against those of other AgriFin edutainment partners.
Thank You!

Christabell Makokha
Director Strategic Learning
AgriFin Accelerate Program

Elena Holtkotte
Strategic Learning Consultant
AgriFin Accelerate Program

Patricia Gichinga
Head of Productions
The Mediae Company

In collaboration with:

Supported by: The Mastercard Foundation