

# WHATSAPP FOR BUSINESS FOR AGRICULTURE

## Use Cases for Serving Smallholder Farmers Across Africa

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AgriFin partnered with Turn.io along with nine other partners to discover best use cases in agriculture in the first of its kind WhatsApp for Business API (WA4B) sandbox in Africa. This case study proposes actionable insights for organizations pioneering the use of WA4B in agriculture in Africa. It is intended for organizations considering WA4B to scale digital services to farmers & other users in emerging markets. The goal is to offer actionable insights and potential roadmaps for sandboxes and applications to accelerate adoption in agriculture. Access the [full-length case study](#).

### INTRODUCTION

WhatsApp for Business (WA4B) API is a hugely promising platform to drive digital services for smallholder farmers. So far, the successful roll-out of solutions in the social impact space mainly revolves around user education in health, with limited, to no examples in smallholder agriculture until recently. WA4B application adoption cycle for both organizations and end-users is nascent in agriculture, with a small number of pioneer organizations iterating, testing and preparing for scale rapidly.

“ WhatsApp is a faster and more convenient way to communicate. It's much better than a mere call. For example, if you have a problem you can take a picture and send it directly so that others can see and give advice accordingly. ”  
**Simon, 34, Farmer, Makeni County\***

\*Source: Dalberg Design-Driven with Medias, July 2020

“ WhatsApp for Business is very promising in its ability to address agriculture crises of all types via citizen reporting combined with machine learning to use data analytics to address issues quickly and effectively. ”  
**David Hughes, University of Pennsylvania / PlantVillage**

### SHARED INSIGHTS

“ WhatsApp for Business allows us to serve 1000's of farmers at a time with videos, trainings, and information. ”  
**Martin Aketch, Product Manager, iShamba**

“ The WhatsApp Business API is a fast, secure, reliable way for medium to large businesses and organizations to reach customers and communities all over the world. ”

### FROM FARMERS & PARTNERS

*Above: Shared Insights from AgriFin's Farmers and Partners (see [full case study](#))*

WhatsApp for Business (WA4B) API is a tool for organizations to have guided personal conversations with their teams and uses it to drive conversations to improve lives at scale. It offers:

- **Fully interactive, rich media** learning journeys and services.
- Services can be **integrated and enhanced with Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML)** and/ or 1:1 customer care
- WA4B is **scalable and cost-effective when compared to other communications channels** and should be used as a compliment and replacement to optimize channel communications.
- WA4B is a **new and different user interface** that can be challenging to even proficient WhatsApp users. User adoption is a challenge that will require a commitment to training, support and awareness building.

## WHATSAPP APPLICATION FAMILY COMPARISON

WA4B is designed for enterprise applications, which can be complex to integrate but easy to manage with the right BSP Platform. This table compares various Whatsapp options and their features. This case study focuses solely on WA4B.

FEATURES	WHATSAPP	WHATSAPP BUSINESS	WHATSAPP FOR BUSINESS API (W4AB)
Target User	Consumer	Small businesses with local audiences	Small-Med-Large enterprises, with global audiences
Registration	User downloads app, adds phone and confirms by SMS	Business acquires SIM card and downloads app to sign and get started.	Requires Business Service Provider will assist in integration and set-up. Requires FB business account.
Costs	Free	Free	BSP hosting and integration, outbound messages
User Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two way and group communication</li> <li>• Rich media: text, audio, video</li> <li>• Low bandwidth requirements</li> <li>• Voice and video calls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Branded &amp; managed two-way and groups</li> <li>• 256 person limit in groups</li> <li>• Voice and video calls</li> <li>• Push notifications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Branded menu driven</li> <li>• Unlimited users</li> <li>• No video or audio calls</li> <li>• Asynchronous &amp; real time customer care</li> <li>• Push notifications</li> </ul>
Automation	None	Basic - quick replies for frequently asked questions	Automation to reply at scale API* integration with with AI, ML, CRM
Management Features	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Storefront management</li> <li>• Communication Tracking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drive complex user journeys</li> <li>• Access to user data interactions</li> <li>• Menu structures that are adaptable by non technical team members</li> </ul>

Above: Comparison of WhatsApp Application Family (see [full case study](#))

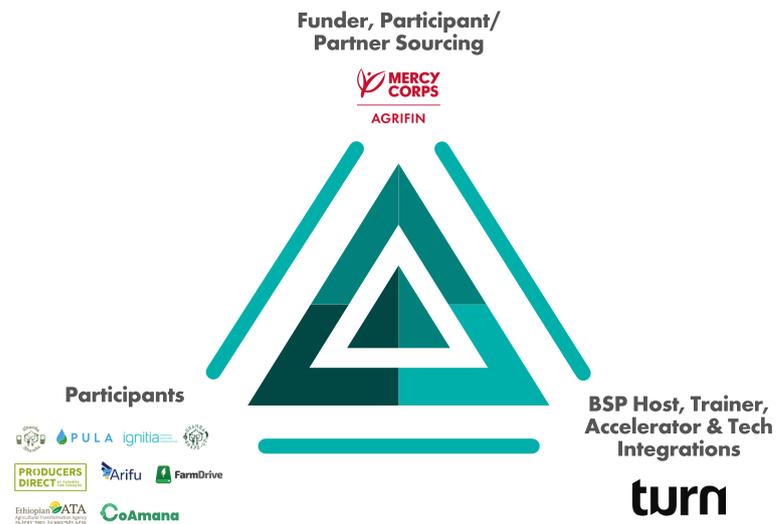
### THE SANDBOX

Increased use of WA4B in the education and health sectors piqued AgriFin’s interest in replicating these models in the agricultural sector. AgriFin designed the Sandbox to accelerate WA4B adoption via intense training, peer-to-peer learning and technical support.

AgriFin engaged Turn.io, a public benefit corporation with vast experience in working with social impact organizations as the business service provider to design an environment (Sandbox) where select partners through rapid prototyping could create a minimum viable product and share their learning experiences. We worked with a diverse group of agri-innovators across sub-Saharan Africa. While there was no minimal cost, the sandbox program required partner commitment to identify and experiment with agricultural cases, document and share learnings to catalyze WA4B use.

As of April 2021, there were 9 Active partners, 2,377 users and 57,709 messages. As the first of its kind, The Turn.io/AgriFin Sandbox has been extended into 2021 and it has inspired Turn.io to launch in Mumbai, India, London, (United Kingdom) and virtually to expand opportunities to accelerate agricultural applications globally. (continued on next page)

# SANDBOX ACTORS



*Above: Mercy Corps AgriFin Actors Sandbox Actors (see [full case study](#))*

## MINI CASE STUDIES OF WA4B IN ACTION

### Mediae (Shamba Shape-Up and iShamba)

Mediae uses the platform as an information and training platform for iShamba registered farmers in Kenya. The outbreak of desert locusts in January 2020 required AgriFin and its partners to rapidly pivot to digital channels. Mediae's WhatsApp hotline allowed farmers to identify locusts and document their sightings, send photos for verification by Plant Village and Penn State University as well as alert the Kenyan government authorities to implement management techniques. The Locust Hotline was also adapted to include the COVID-19 messaging which exemplifies the platform's flexibility. Going forward, Mediae plans to use the iShamba hotline to monitor and address other pest emergencies.

### Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency (Ethiopian ATA)

The Ethiopian ATA is a government agency charged with identifying systemic bottlenecks and challenges in the Ethiopian agricultural sector. ATA developed and launched the 8028 farmer hotline, a toll-free IVR/SMS system to disseminate best practices and extension information to smallholder farmers. With the desert locusts and COVID-19 pandemic threatening Ethiopia's food security, ATA proposed to the Ministry of Agriculture to incorporate WA4B reporting capability. This was supported by AgriFin's learnings in Kenya in partnership with Plant Village.

With the help of Mercy Corps Ethiopia, they registered the line and tailored content from Plant Village developed for Mediae in Kenya. The content was also translated into 5 local languages (Amharic, Afan Oromo, Wolitigna, Sidaminia & Tigrigna) with an additional COVID19 information line. The training was held in the most adversely affected regions to extension offices and experienced, reliable 8028 farmer users.

### Arifu

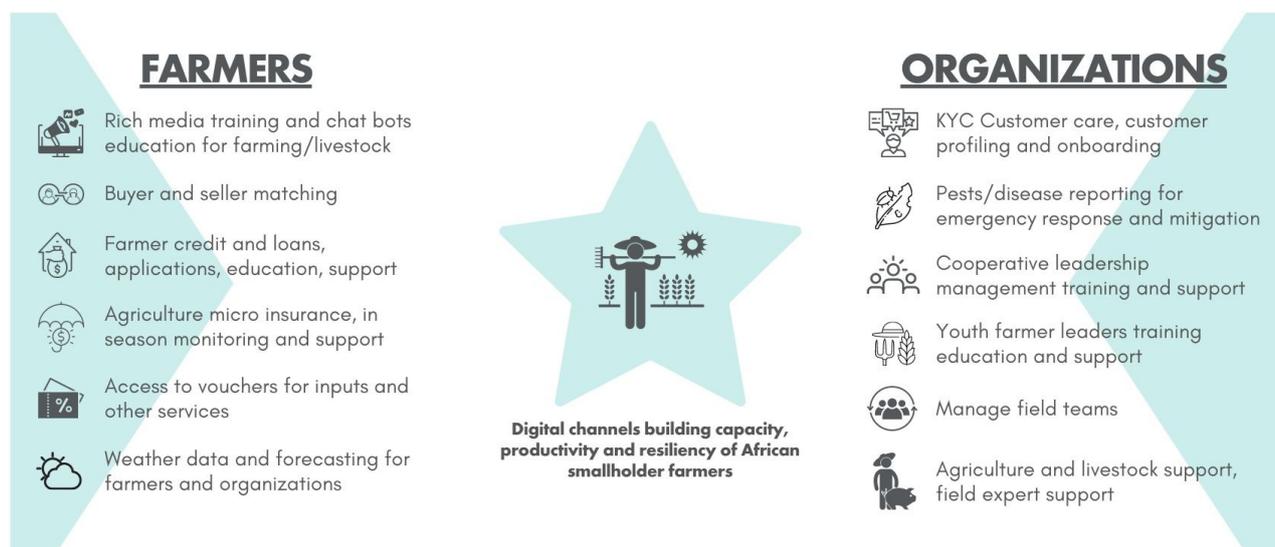
Arifu provides end-to-end solutions in content design in creating contextualized chatbot learning experiences to deliver over SMS, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, and Telegram as well as performance analytics to measure impact. Given the limitations of personal WhatsApp lines and groups, Arifu upgraded to WA4B API to reach the masses. The decision was validated by WHO's move to disseminate COVID19 information globally through WhatsApp. (continued on next page)

Arifu launched in Nigeria in September 2020 and their WhatsApp channel is giving learners access to their expanding content library. Content includes good agricultural practices for several value chains, business, finance, and COVID-19 support. Arifu is now seeking to expand to other countries starting with Kenya and is seeking partnerships.

## Pula Advisors

Pula provides agricultural insurance to smallholder farmers in Kenya, Nigeria, Malawi, and Zambia by working with financial and government institutions. They provide insurance bundles with farm inputs and advisory services to help increase their yields & boost their income. Originally, Pula used WhatsApp as a value-added service for their B2B customers and content was provided to farmers via USSD. Upon studying their farmer data, they found that 20-33% of farmers in the 4 countries use WhatsApp. They opted for WA4B to deliver enhanced content at a lower cost than USSD. By partnering with the Kenya Agronomy Academy, Pula developed enriched content via a program dubbed Farming Academy. The test platform was launched in Q2 2020 in Kenya, Malawi and Zambia with an engagement rate of 11-14% for outbound messages. However, due to strategic realignment, this project was put on hold and will be restarted in 2021.

# POTENTIAL USE CASES WERE IDENTIFIED



*Above: Identified Potential Use Cases for WhatsApp for Business (API) in Agriculture (see full case study)*

## KEY LESSONS

- **Organizational Readiness:** Taking on both the Sandbox and/or WA4B requires commitment from the implementing organization.
- **WA4B is not a standalone solution:** It's a platform geared towards smartphone users and farmers are still in the adoption curve for smartphones and new digital services. Therefore, it should be combined with other channels like IVR. SMS and direct training to optimize communication.
- **Channel and Features:** WA4B is ideal for digitally-savvy smartphone users.
- **Use Case Ideation and Development:** Simplicity remained one of the key learnings. Once the MVP was launched, user feedback and new opportunities are driving more complex feature roadmaps but in some instances, design experts were brought in to assist in the initial process *(continued on next page)*

- **User Adoption and Active Use:** It is still quite early in the WA4B adoption cycle to identify best practices for adoption. Nonetheless, initial evidence can be gleaned for the Locust hotlines in Kenya and Ethiopia. While it is difficult to compare the two different situations, it can be concluded that this tool can address fairly complex citations by better targeting as an extension agent rather than for mass citizen reporting. Also, training, support, and recurring organizational awareness drove increased adoption.

Employing WAA4B in the social impact space in agriculture is new, with use cases nascent yet rapidly emerging. Pioneers have shown the potential of the solution in responding to a multitude of use cases, though work remains to fully match the potential of WAA4B with agricultural realities. AgriFin will continue to invest in the WhatsApp for Business Sandbox in 2021 to widen both the bespoke solutions offered whilst working towards our vision of an open content platform for agriculture.

This case study showcases what we have learned over the last year of working in this rapidly changing field; as the year progresses, we expect to publish follow-up pieces to this case study highlighting the evolution of our work.

**If you want to find out more about our work, or are interested in collaborating, please get in touch!**



**AGRIFIN**

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