



DIGITAL CONNECTORS FOR FARMING COMMUNITIES



BRIDGING THE EXTENSION-TO-FARMER GAP WITH UNIQUE DIGITAL TOOLS: “MORE FARMERS HELPED, MORE MONEY,” ANDREW MUNYOLE

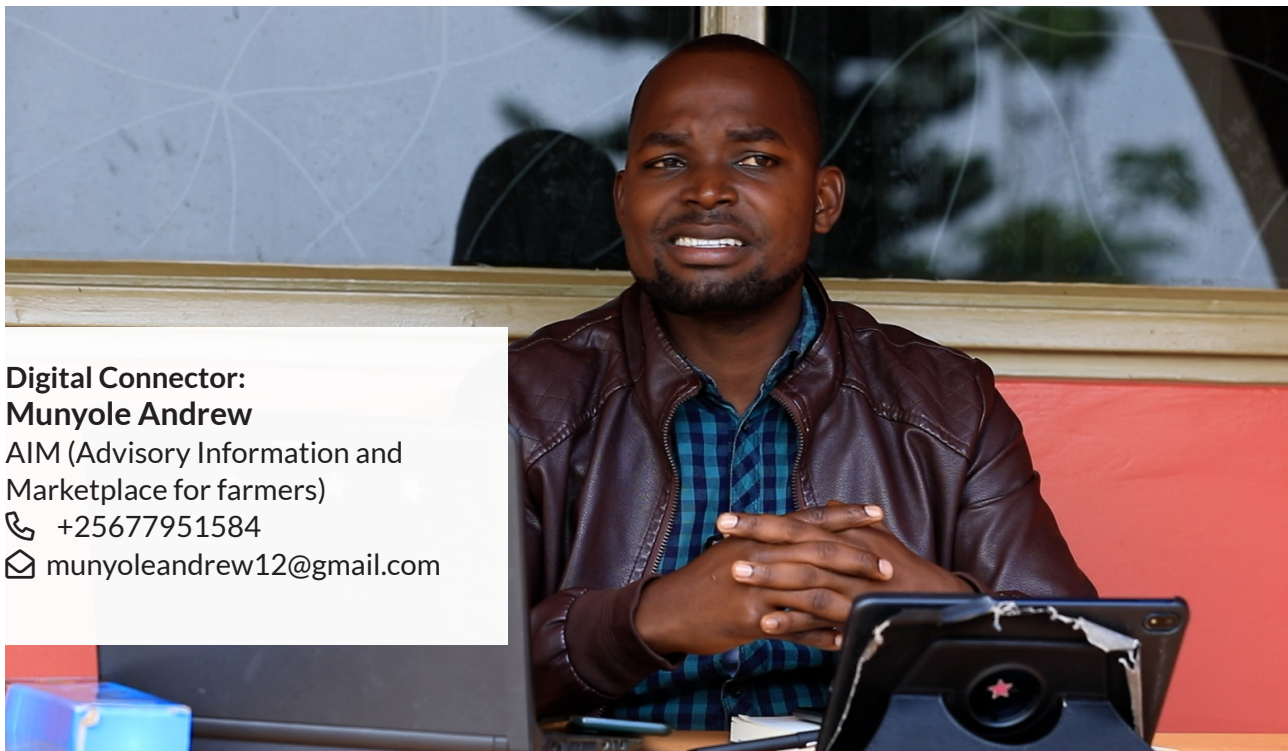


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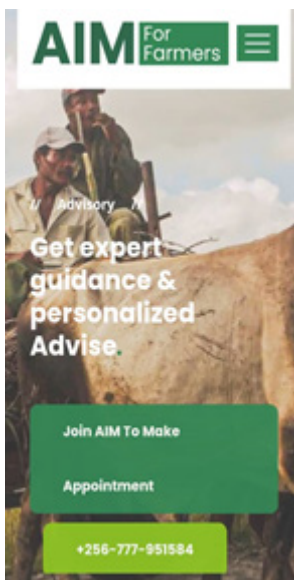
Digital Connector: Munyole Andrew

AIM (Advisory Information and Marketplace for farmers)

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Munyole Andrew, 26, is a Digital Connector for Luweero District under ZAABTA Innovation Platform. With a degree in agriculture, Andrew's business model is AIM (Advisory Information and Marketplace for farmers). AIM provides a unique holistic package to farmers along the whole value chain from production up to market through a digital format.



Before, farmers had limited access to quality inputs in the form of feeds, good breeds, quality

equipment, seeds, and also market for their produce after production was low, possibly due to lack of advice. Aware of this gap, Andrew took the challenge to bridge this gap digitally with AIM for instant advice and a marketplace for farm inputs and outputs.

Andrew recounts how profiling of farmers was for them to test how the business would operate. This involved providing services for free, training farmers in groups about the new way of receiving advisory and information, creation of motivation scenes.

“We had very few farmers in early adoption ordering for services and actively engaged in service delivery. Later on with continuous mentoring and coaching from the AgConnectors, WhatsApp links and catalogs were created, and with this, farmers trusted me” said Andrew. Andrew works with both small-holder and large scale farmers and because of the demand, he diversified beyond animal to include crops advisory. “I had to adjust and support farmers too in crop sector as I couldn't focus only on animals because farmers have diverse enterprises,” says Andrew.

To him, becoming a Digital Connector was a big opportunity in a number of ways;

- His business model has expanded from animals to also crops advisory.

- His income has increased through the commissions and salary he gets from some farmers and the agribusiness suppliers. “You can’t spend a week without getting some money on the phone either for animal advisory/equipment or crop advisory and from market linkage”, remarked the youthful Andrew.
- Has developed skills of partnership, collaboration, and research.

Having been empowered by the project, Andrew is also paying forward to empower other extension workers in Buikwe District through training. He



collaborates with experts with whom he shares IT patterns to develop a better application. His projections are 1200 farmers reached and annual revenue of UGX 24,000,000 by 2025 (~US\$ 6500/ 6,000 Euros). “The ratio of extension to farmers is very low at 1:1800. We have to bridge this with digital tools,” says Andrew.

Leaving no one behind; to ensure the inclusivity of farmers without smartphones, Andrew is collaborating with his IT partners to develop instant messaging on feature phones about weather and other useful information.

Andrew shared a case where his services have helped a farmer. He met a farmer who usually travels out of the country and leaves the farm in the hands of the farm manager. When they talked about digitalisation, the farmer picked interest and introduced Andrew to his farm manager with whom they are managing the activities of

the farm (farm management, season planning, pasture establishments, market sourcing for farm products) digitally. Through his AIM model, Andrew coordinates with the Farm Manager, gives him all the required advice, and links him to ready markets for the farm products. Digitalisation has facilitated linkage to inputs and markets, and for this particular farmer, he earns a salary and commission on selling farm produce.

Andrew currently collaborates with sellers of genuine inputs. He plans to start up his own agro-input shop, register his company, and get a platform to train more people in digital extension services for faster adoption of the business. He seeks funding to help him fully develop his application and make it more user-friendly and easily accessible by farmers even without the internet.

While Andrew faced some challenges in implementing his business model, he has found ways to address them; For poor internet connectivity to farmers in remote villages, farmers are given an option to call as they are getting used to the application, profiling of farmers was not easy but through the continuous support and funds he would get from the business, he re-invested to profile more farmers. “The more farmers helped, the more the business, thus more money”, said Andrew.

In his conclusion, he greatly appreciated the AIRTEA project, UFAAS and all other implementers of agricultural digitalisation and the Digital Connectors program for giving them the opportunity to run the project as pioneers.

“ Before engaging with Andrew, my work was so hectic. I used to move long distances looking for good seeds, fertilizers, veterinary services for the animals and birds and to sell farm products. [...] now I use the phone to call, send messages and pictures of the crops, birds and I get instant feedback”

Tumwebaze Moses,
Farm manager, Bwetyaba village, Namuyenje parish, Nakisunga sub county, Mukono District



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