



DIGITAL CONNECTORS FOR FARMING COMMUNITIES



**FROM TRAINEE TO TRAINER IN
DIGITAL AGRICULTURE:
“MY COMMUNICATION SKILLS HAVE
IMPROVED” - ZALO MUTESI**

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Digital Connector:
Zalo Mutesi

Business model:
**DIFIT (Digital Farm
Inputs and Training)**

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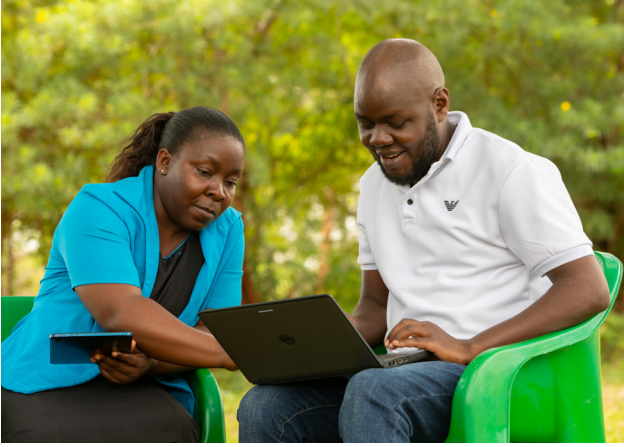
Zalo Mutesi, 39, is a Digital Connector and the Managing Director for DIFIT (Digital Farm Inputs and Training). A degree holder in agriculture based in Bugiri District, she got information to apply for the opportunity from her then District Production Officer, Dr Isiko. As a Digital Connector, she works in two sub-counties-Nankoma and Iwemba and has so far reached 781 farmers-women, men, and youth.

Zalo provides farmers with knowledge digitally on how to access genuine agro- inputs and timely advisory services to solve the problem of fake inputs on the market and delayed advisory services. Eager to learn, Zalo participated in all the scheduled trainings offered by the project partner AgConnectors about building businesses. Her work has helped farmers increase their production because they can now get genuine

inputs and timely advisory services.

Becoming a Digital Connector has helped Zalo to:

- Acquire a digital gadget and tools that helps her to profile and link with farmers
- Learn and master how to start and maintain a viable business
- Opening her own agro-input shop. Through this, she has so far realized UGX. 3,500,000 (~US\$972/ 873 Euros) out of commissions on inputs delivered digitally
- Improve her communication skills. Now a trainer and mentor as a result of the skills she gained from the Digital Connectors project, Zalo is now able to network and reach many farmers in Bugiri District and beyond.



Zalo and Nicholas , digital connectors working in the same district, offer complementary services to farmers

To facilitate the adoption and integration of digital technologies among farmers, Zalo continues to sensitize the farming communities to use digital platforms to access the services. She has: trained three (3) more digital connectors, and targets 15; set up a WhatsApp group for the digital connectors, where everyone can reach her and instantly act on the issue; and engaged other digital connectors within the district to develop a dashboard where farmers will be able to find all they need in relation to agricultural extension, which she hopes will be ready by the end of 2025.

HER SUCCESS STORY

Zalo helped a farmer who previously got low yields from her farm, largely due to poor soils and fake inputs. In collaboration with another Digital Connector in the area (Nic soils), they first tested her farm soil, got her the fertilizer that was required, got her improved maize seeds of Bazuka, and her yields greatly increased from 3 bags of maize to 28 bags from each of the 3 acres she had. She advised her to hoard it until prices go high, which she did. When the farmer sold off her produce when prices were higher, she got a lot of money which helped her roof her house that had stayed for five years.

“

My yields have greatly increased because I now get genuine inputs and timely advice from Zalo,”

Elizabeth Kulabako, Farmer, Nabyono village, Bugeso Parish, Iwemba Sub county, Bugiri district

Amidst many successes, Zalo has faced some challenges in the implementation of her business model;

- Some farmers don't have phones, and some of those who have do not know how to use them- especially the smart phones.
- Poor network in some areas which makes it difficult for farmers to access digital services.
- Some farmers take long to pay for the delivered orders. “The payments are usually delayed or do not come”, says Zalo.

With agricultural digitalization, Zalo sees the livelihood of farmers changing for the better, their yields will greatly increase, their incomes increase, and hence they will be able to cater for all their basic needs, thus improving livelihoods.

FUTURE PLANS:

Zalo has plans to open her own agro-input shop, train more digital connectors and finalise the dashboard for farmers to easily access her services. In the dashboard she is developing, she plans to integrate a pre-payment so that farmers can order and pay before the inputs and services are delivered.

She thanked the funders of the AIRTEA project and UFAAS in general for the Digital Connectors project which has elevated her in the society because she is now a better person.





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