

# Bernard's Cassava Experiment

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Bernard Bamwenda is a farmer in Myanzi district, Central Uganda, and lives with his wife and young daughter. Bernard is a group leader in the Myanzi Cooperative Alliance, working with local farmers and liaising with government representatives in supporting and enhancing the lives of local agriculturalists and smallholder farmers.

**“I am supposed to be a leader but I am so far behind”**

Bernard was attempting to stay at the forefront of agricultural knowledge with only a basic mobile phone. He would wait for the weekly report from the government about agricultural practices which would be limited to a few choice crops,

cycle for an hour to reach Myanzi town, arrange village meetings and disseminate information. As a central figure in the community, Bernard was selected as a candidate in the Azuri Smartphone Trial to investigate the potential impact of a smartphone in agriculture – he has now had his Indigo and smartphone for 1 month. His smartphone enables him to search the internet to answer questions immediately: with the latest market prices, agricultural techniques and product reviews, Bernard is instantly well informed and has information on demand.

**“Today, I am connected. From my house or my field, I’m connected to another farmer in his field kilometres away”**

Cassava farming is a family tradition for Bernard. As a child, he would watch his parents plant cassava in the fields surrounding his family home. He’d watch them dig a deep trough and plant the cassava vertically, then cover it back up. Exploring his smartphone, however, Bernard found a preloaded video which suggested a different technique: “the new technique requires a shallow trough, with the cassava planted horizontally”. By watching and re-watching the video, Bernard learned the technique and decided to try it out.

**“I have split my field: my old technique and the new technique I learned from the video. I’m excited for the harvest next month to compare and tell everyone the results”**

Bernard feels proud and says he’s felt a real shift in how people treat him professionally. Previously he could never guarantee his phone would have battery as the charging kiosk might be full, and meetings depended on him being able to get to the office. But now, he says, life has changed:



**“I don’t miss calls – my phone is always charged. I host meetings at home because I have light. I can answer any farmer’s question instantly. From now on, I am professional.”**