

The Home Where The Sun Never Sets



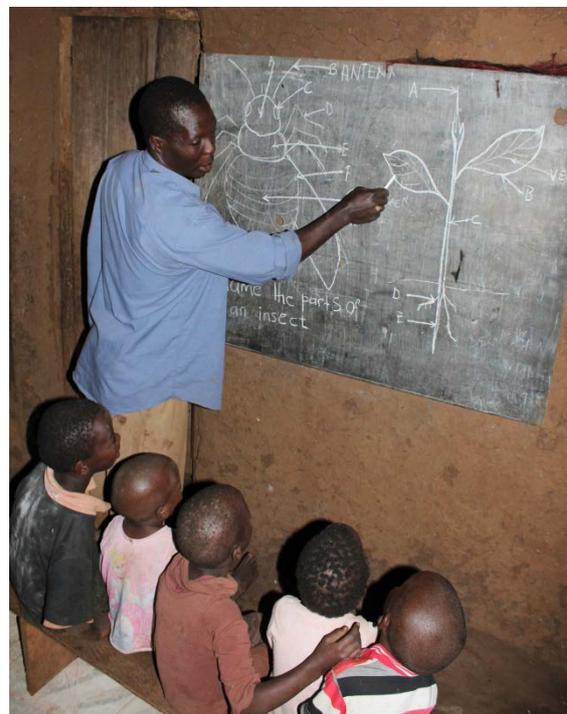
Vincent and Margaret Ssenyonjo live in a small, rural village called Luswa in Myanzi District, Central Uganda. They are involved in the Azuri Smartphone Trial to investigate the potential impact of having a smartphone in agriculture and have had their Indigo and smartphone for 1 month. Their long, mudbrick house surrounded by banana plants looks similar enough to most houses in the region, but the Ssenyonjo family are different. The Ssenyonjo family have a small, rectangular panel on their roof.

With 15% of the Ssenyonjo monthly income being spent on kerosene and mobile phone charging alone and 5 sets of school fees, uniforms, and books to buy, Margaret and Vincent were resigned to the fact they would never be able to save enough to buy a solar system. Whilst Vincent worked in the fields, Margaret faced a terrible choice:

“Each night I had to choose which 2 children could share the kerosene lamp and study for 20 minutes together – we couldn’t afford any more. They love to learn, but I hate seeing their sore, red eyes and hearing their soot triggered coughs”.

Vincent is a retired school teacher and, as a retirement gift to his 8 children, he bought a blackboard to help them with their school work. Vincent would return home ready to teach having finished working in the field around 6pm – in the dark. He used to dread reading test scores and teacher comments. “It’s embarrassing”, he said, “I was a teacher, and my children are clever, but they can never revise or prepare because of the light”. Life used to be a case of ‘school, home, sleep’ for the Ssenyonjo children, but things have changed.

“My children never made the top 10 of their classes because they could not work at home. Today, every single one is in the top 5! Now they can learn more, it’s all they want to do. They don’t have to stop when the sun does.”



“They love it! The older children show the little ones how to search the internet to check their homework answers and find the right spellings of words”. When Margaret and Vincent received



their smartphone Margaret was so elated she began dancing and clapping with excitement – her children came running out to see what was happening and instantly took interest. Alice Ssenyonjo, Margaret and Vincent’s 6 year old daughter, said Indigo helped her because she could revise with her siblings in the same room: “we used to lie on our stomachs with our faces by the lamp to see. Now, everyone sits in the same room and we can all revise together. I like it better this way.” Margaret loves the effect Indigo is having on her children, reporting that they wake up before sunrise to prepare for school:

“I am the only person in my village with a smartphone – everyone comes with their questions and I am so happy to be able to give answers and learn more everyday”

For Vincent, his social status has risen beyond recognition as farmers and villagers come to him as a source of knowledge and advice. When vegetable blight spread through the village, Vincent was approached by a farmer for help as the spray he had been using was not working. Vincent researched the blight and found a product which they could get from Myanzi town which had successful reviews online. After a successful test of the product the word spread and Vincent was thanked endlessly by the farmers who were affected – previously, the answer to their question could have taken weeks, by which time the damage would have been beyond repair.



“I charge my mobile at home, I have information instantly, and I don’t have to stop when the sun does. I don’t waste time anymore.”

The Ssenyonjo household is constantly lit. Margaret was afraid of the dark and, more so, what it might bring: snakes and thieves. In the evenings, both lights are on from sundown to 10pm and then one light is left on until morning. The Ssenyonjo family only ever buy kerosene for cooking and save 67% on their previous expenditure. With Margaret sleeping without worry, the children improving in class every day and a new social status, Vincent says there’s no way back:

“In our home, the sun never sets.”