



NEWS RELEASE

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Results Show Technology Can Improve Agricultural Extension in Africa

CHICAGO, IL – February 7, 2019 – Opportunity International’s innovative, video-based farmer education pilot program, in collaboration with research partner [The Hanns R Neumann Stiftung \(HRNS\) Foundation](#), showed strong preliminary results in Uganda. The study took place between July and August 2018 and reported a 30 percentage point increase in knowledge retention in contrast to traditional face-to-face training approaches.

Opportunity’s Agriculture Finance Advisory Team, Opportunity Bank Uganda, and HRNS conducted the pilot study to assess how technology impacts training methods of good agricultural practices (GAP). The study, conducted in the Mityana district of Uganda, sought to compare the knowledge retention of traditional agriculture extension work versus similar messages delivered through video format. Eighty farmers, mixed in age and gender, were split into eight groups: half were given traditional face-to-face training, while the others received three hours of video-based education. The results showed that traditional methods scored a 52 percent retention rate, while the video-based approach achieved an 82 percent rate.

The GAP video pilot was introduced as an innovative way to address knowledge and adoption gaps, and to deliver training more cost-effectively than traditional extension models. Four 10-minute videos were produced in a local language by local farmer-trainers covering critical phases of the coffee production cycle. Traditional agricultural services rely on extension workers to deliver this knowledge directly, but in this case, the videos can be shared and re-visited independently, and even when no internet is available.

“Opportunity’s AgFinance Advisory Team is constantly looking for new and innovative ways to serve our clients better,” states Opportunity Regional AgFinance Partnerships Manager Tamsin Scurfield. “The GAP video training overcomes the lack of extension services in the communities where we work and allows us to reach more people with high-quality technical information. The videos are compressed, making them inexpensive to share, and they have proven more engaging in communicating key messages to our farmers. We believe this will help us to serve our clients and support our staff more effectively.”

A participant in the GAP video training group shared, “I saw and learned things that I have not been doing in my coffee garden, things I can do practically and implement easily.” Another was keen to get family members involved, saying “I wanted to call my father, so we could start implementing changes in the way we grow coffee.”

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ABOUT OPPORTUNITY INTERNATIONAL

Opportunity International is a global microfinance non-profit committed to ending extreme poverty and promoting quality education for families in need. Since 1971, Opportunity has helped millions of families work their way out of poverty by providing financial resources, training, and delivering ongoing support to start small businesses, earn living wages, and feed their families. The organization provides loans to families seeking tuition and educators who want to improve local schools. In 2017, Opportunity International issued nearly \$1.6 billion in loans, reaching nearly 9 million clients in 22 countries, and helped fund 1,800 schools serving more than 500,000 children. Discover more at opportunity.org or join the conversation on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

ABOUT HANNS R. NEUMANN STIFTUNG (HRNS)

The goal of [HRNS](#) is to improve the living and working conditions of smallholder farmers in coffee producing countries. One of the foundation's missions is to help young people in Mityana, where around 80 percent of the population work in agriculture, and to improve their economic situation. By providing agricultural, financial and entrepreneurial skills through HRNS Uganda, young people should be empowered to make informed decisions about making a living. Improved access to markets, resources, such as land, as well as financial services should help them to increase their income de facto. The Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) is also designed to give those who are unable to meet the requirements of official financial institutions the opportunity to obtain access to credit within their communities. HRNS will use its network of Producer Organizations, Depot Committees and the Uganda Coffee Farmers Alliance to represent the interests of youth at the country level as part of a national community of coffee growers.

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