### Case Study Title: Knowledge Stewarding for Agribusiness Development

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1. **What is/was the context and key challenge(s) in your K* case study?**
   - *When, where and how long did this initiative occur, or is it ongoing?*
   
   This case is based on ongoing work that began in 2010. Zimbabwe’s evolving agriculture sector is focusing on transforming smallholder farmers into viable commercial entrepreneurs. In all value chains, farmers are interacting with diverse stakeholders using mobile phones. On the other hand, NGOs such as SNV Zimbabwe have built the capacity of value chain actors to strengthen market-based solutions in agribusiness. Knowledge Transfer Africa is harnessing K* and mobile technology to stimulate purposeful conversations toward strengthening agricultural value chains. Rural areas have more mobile phones than bank accounts in Zimbabwe. Nationally, the three major mobile phone service providers have the following coverage: Econet Wireless Zimbabwe (5.4 million subscribers); Net One (1.3 million subscribers) and Telecel Zimbabwe (1.3 million subscribers).

2. **Who are/were the players and why did/do they need to come together?**
   - *What was/is the reach of the initiative?*
   
   Knowledge Transfer Africa has mobilised diverse actors in the agriculture value chain to meaningfully share knowledge. Main players include: Farmers, SNV Zimbabwe - an NGO promoting commercialization of smallholder agriculture through market-based solutions, Rural Agro – Dealer Associations, Farmer Organisations, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises, mobile phone service providers (Econet Wireless Zimbabwe, Net One and Telecel) as well as the Tobacco Industry and Marketing Board, among others. As a knowledge brokering organization focusing on matching the demand for and supply of knowledge as well as creating an interface between the various actors in the agriculture sector, Knowledge Transfer Africa created a mobile platform where all these actors collaborate and share knowledge. The platform is called eMkambo/eMusika. Musika refers to market in the Shona language spoken by the majority of people in Zimbabwe while Mkambo is the same in the Ndebele language. More than 12 000 agro-dealers and 100 000 farmers are participating in eMkambo through pulling and pushing knowledge using mobile phones. The majority of the agro-dealers have been organised into Communities of Practice (CoPs) or associations in all the eight rural provinces of Zimbabwe where they operate mainly at rural service centres and growth points.

3. **How did/does K* play a role in the story, i.e. tools/techniques/approaches.**
KTA has played a technology stewarding role. Technology stewarding is both a perspective and a practice. The perspective is a natural outcome of taking care of a community that is using technology to learn together. Adopting the perspective has meant becoming sensitive to many different social and technical issues and developing a language to give the perspective a voice and precision. We are gathering experience of the workings of agricultural value chains and agro-dealers to understand their technological needs, and enough experience with or interest in technology to take leadership in addressing those needs. Stewarding typically includes selecting and configuring technology, as well as supporting its use in the practice of the community.

Our knowledge stewardship has been based on the Sense Making approach. Sense Making is about how people co-create knowledge and interpret what they generate using narratives. We have anchored Sense Making on Ubuntu - an African Wisdom tradition which values relationships and the best way of being a human being. The process has revived and rebuilt farmers’ self-confidence, enabling them to value and leverage their own knowledge.

eMkambo/eMusika is a distributed platform based in Harare with small sub-units in districts throughout Zimbabwe. We have people working as information instigators in each of these districts and their role is to send information to the main hub through mobile phones as well as stimulating conversations. From the main hub in Harare, messages are sorted and re-routed to where there is demand – it could be wholesalers, suppliers, donors, private sector, policy makers or back to farmers. The whole set up ensures pulling and pushing of knowledge through mobile phones. Through sense making and active engagement, farmers are now able to make judgements based on specific business training provided through eMkambo/eMusika.

4. What was/is the intended impact/contribution of K* and, if you can, tell us whether K* had an impact and how.

The majority of agro-dealers and value chain actors have been built robust Communities of Practice (CoPs) in all the eight rural provinces of Zimbabwe. The intervention has started:

- Facilitating access to credit for intermediaries and farmers in the agriculture and food value chains;
- Improving knowledge sharing capacities of diverse actors in the agriculture and food value chains;
- Facilitating security in the value chains through promoting appropriate insurance products;
- Promoting output marketing of various agricultural and non-agricultural products (stone sculpture) and services (community theatre, etc.,);
- Improving smallholder farmer incomes from the sale of excess produce;
- Increasing economic activities and sustainable growth in rural areas through agribusiness;
- Improving employment opportunities in the agriculture value chain – wholesalers, agro-dealers, irrigation schemes and SMEs;
- Increasing agro-dealers’ capacity to grow their businesses with some diversifying into output marketing and becoming agents for mobile banking transactions and micro-lending institutions.

5. What are the lessons from this example that others should know about/could be transferred, in general and particularly in a resource-limited context?

Although more lessons are still to emerge, the intervention has started confirming that people are the natural state of knowledge. K* should endeavor to deeply understand people and build on their local knowledge. Development efforts through K* should build the capacity of people to retrieve their collective cultural memory which can be
blended with modern knowledge to enhance development and modernity. Totems and clan names are powerful brands in African communities.

6. Any other observations:

The future of thousands of rural dwellers in Africa depend on useful knowledge. A nucleus such as eMkambo/eMusika can enhance synergy for various activities from diverse actors in agriculture and rural development. Such a platform provides farmers, agro-dealers and rural communities a setting where they can argue using rich data pulled from a variety of sources and construct fresh frameworks of action – outcome linkages that include their multiple interpretations. It can also feed into localized knowledge, norms and values which are critical in crafting enduring solutions. K* can connect diverse knowledge pools toward sustainable development.