



# David Opio

Ensibuuko



Growing up in a rural Ugandan farming community, David, 26, witnessed first-hand the challenges farmers face when it comes to accessing markets and finance to boost production. He observed farmers with access to land that were unable to serve existing markets due to lack of finances. If they were able to serve local markets they lacked access to further reliable markets. The result was many smallholder farmers only earning just enough to meet their household's needs and rarely enough to commercialise their operations.

Established in May 2012, Ensibuuko, the Luganda word for 'germinate', started out by partnering with farmers cooperatives; introducing farmers to buyers and facilitating their interaction through an SMS platform. As the service developed it became clear to David and his co-founder Gerald Otim

that, farmers needed to sell more and that helping provide access to finance was an important part of the value their business could deliver.

Today, the enterprise helps rural smallholder farmers, who make up 80% of Uganda's population, to access financial services using a mobile and web application that integrates SMS and mobile money services. They do this by partnering with existing savings and credit cooperatives (SACCOs), organisations that farmers have traditionally turned to for saving and borrowing. Until now, the majority of SACCOs have lacked the means to track their members' financial history efficiently and struggled with information management inefficiencies, leaving loopholes for fraud and mismanagement that have resulted in a loss of public confidence.

Ensibuuko's flagship technology, MOBIS (Mobile Banking and Information System) helps SACCOs to reduce costs and operate with increased transparency, whilst improving opportunities for smallholder farmers to access financial services. Farmers are able to view their balance and apply for loans through an e-wallet and to receive and repay them using mobile money. The solution sends users an SMS whenever a transaction occurs on the account.

The result is a simpler and safer way for people in rural communities to control their savings and credit. Through a network of 20 active SACCOs, Ensibuuko has enabled more than 1000 smallholder farmers to access a \$150,000 commodity market and helped 550 farmers to access \$50,000 in agricultural financing. They plan to grow to 100 SACCOs by end of 2015 and to 1000 by 2017.