

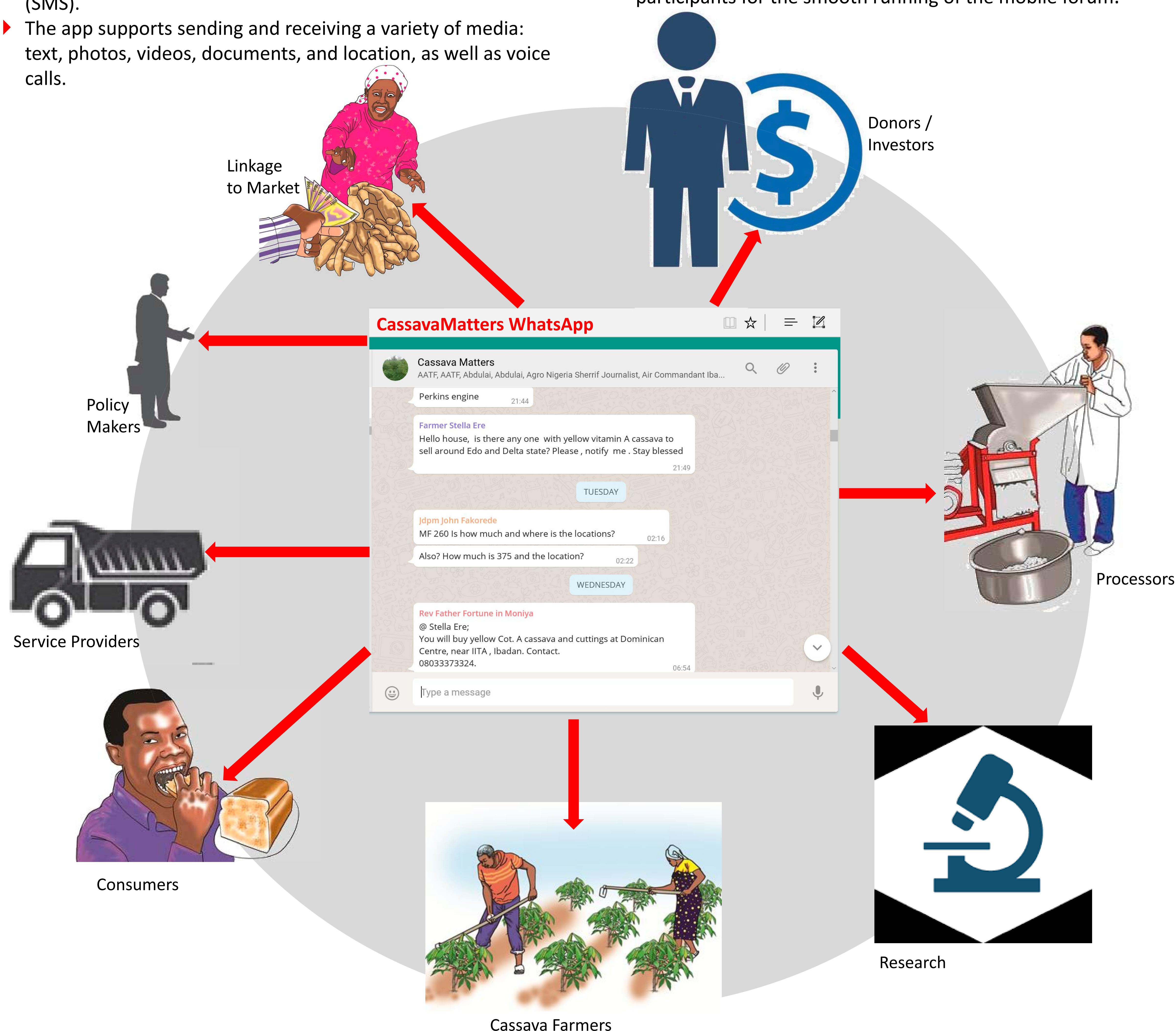
# Low cost approaches for technology transfer: The success story of CassavaMatters WhatsApp

## Introduction

- ▶ Mobile phones have the potential to improve the income of smallholder farmers in developing countries by 2020 in Africa, India, and Middle East (Spore, 2016).
- ▶ 67 per cent of Africa's population now has mobile phones, and most people including farmers use WhatsApp.
- ▶ WhatsApp is a mobile application connecting more than 1 billion people in over 180 countries.
- ▶ The app is free and offers simple, secure, reliable messaging, and calling, available on phones all over the world.
- ▶ WhatsApp started as an alternative to short message service (SMS).
- ▶ The app supports sending and receiving a variety of media: text, photos, videos, documents, and location, as well as voice calls.

## Approach

- ▶ This year (2016), cassava projects {Cassava Weed Management Project, African Cassava Agronomy Initiative, and Cassava Seeds System (BASICS)} set up a WhatsApp account known as CassavaMatters to disseminate innovations and to link farmers with other cassava actors and market.
- ▶ Stakeholders were invited to join the group from the donor community, policymakers, researchers, farmers, processors, input dealers, service providers (spray and tractor), extension agents, farmer associations, transporters etc.
- ▶ Rules of engagement were developed and shared with all participants for the smooth running of the mobile forum.



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Funding support from  
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## Results

- ▶ The CassavaMatters WhatsApp connected 256 farmers and actors in the cassava community and is fully subscribed today.
- ▶ The platform is helping in linking farmers to markets, input dealers, and policymakers etc. Cassava farmers are being connected directly to buyers of their products.
- ▶ The platform has helped in eliminating middlemen such that farmers now have better price for their products.
- ▶ Farmers, processors, etc receive real time answers to their request/questions on cassava.
- ▶ Based on this success story and popular demand from farmers and stakeholders, a new CassavaMatters WhatsApp group is being formed.

## Conclusion

- ▶ The CassavaMatters Whatsapp is a tool that should be replicated by other projects that have dissemination component.
- ▶ It is cheap and its ease of operation appeals to all stakeholders especially where internet services are poor.

## References

Spore (2016): The connected farmer: A new opportunity for the agricultural system <http://spore.cta.int/en/dossiers/facts-and-figures/the-impact-of-mobile-services-by-2020.html>  
Adeyemi Adepetun (2015): Africa's mobile phone penetration now 67% <http://guardian.ng/technology/africas-mobile-phone-penetration-now-67/>