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# Moving beyond SMS to deliver agricultural information to farmers

**In Myanmar, 8villages built key partnerships to improve farmers' access to important market information.**



Photo source: 8villages

Screenshot of smartphone application

*The Mobiles for Development Award grant funds enabled 8villages to improve their platform so they can now deliver richer content and advanced features via smartphone applications, providing a better user experience for farmers.*

With the evergrowing expansion of mobile networks and the increasing affordability of mobile devices, a majority of farmers can now receive market prices, farming techniques and other key agricultural information via short message service (SMS, also referred to as text messages). Less common, however, are smartphone applications for farmers. With this in mind, 8villages developed The Farmer smartphone application to deliver richer content and improve the user experience for farmers receiving agricultural information via mobile technology in Myanmar.

8villages was awarded the 2014 Mobiles for Development in Asia Award, sponsored by USAID and FHI 360 through the mSTAR project, for LISA, a robust, cloud-based messaging platform that allows real-time communication between agribusinesses and their rural customers. 8villages used the grant funds to facilitate three key achievements:

1. Expansion into Myanmar, a new market for 8villages;
2. Development of a new agriculture software application for smartphones to help farmers; and
3. Cultivation of a direct relationship with Ooredoo, a key mobile network operator in Myanmar.

Leveraging the award, 8villages first partnered with Myanmar Awba, a company that manufactures and distributes agricultural inputs for farmers, for content specifically relevant for farmers in Myanmar. 8villages then approached Ooredoo, one of only 3 mobile network operators in Myanmar, to gain access to Ooredoo's network. Ooredoo agreed to allow 8villages to run its application on Ooredoo's network to both help build its brand and satisfy its commitment to the Government of Myanmar to support farmers. It's a win-win-win partnership.

Rather than use SMS to reach farmers, 8villages is developing a smartphone application from the start, expecting Myanmar's unique smartphone adoption profile to benefit companies who focus on content rich apps instead of basic SMS. 8villages intends to start a dialogue with Telenor, another mobile network operator in Myanmar, to further the reach of their application and ultimately provide service to a greater number of farmers. The Farmer application is expected to launch in May 2015.