



## Apps for Statistical Literacy in Africa

David Stern\*

Statistical Services Centre, University of Reading, Reading, UK – [d.a.stern@reading.ac.uk](mailto:d.a.stern@reading.ac.uk)

The rapid expansion of mobile phone technologies in Africa has the potential to substantially influence the continent's development. Signs come from innovations in mobile banking which is revolutionising micro banking tools and services. There are already attempts to tap into mobile phones for maths education in Africa but nothing has yet really taken off. Cheap smart phones and tablets have started to become available across the continent creating the possibility for apps. This paper discusses why apps could make a big difference and what the implications could be for statistical literacy. Two contrasting contexts, in which the author is involved, will be explored. The first is the use of apps as a tool for extra-curricular schools clubs and the second is their potential use to engage farmers through data and statistics.

For subsistence farmers in Africa it may not be obvious that there is a need for statistical literacy, however recent projects have shown that discussing simple climatic risk with farmers can be a very powerful tool in their decision making. The process involves basic understanding of graphs and simple notions of probability which farmers grasp easily irrespective of their level of literacy. Given the value of these simple statistical tools it is time for statistics to play a larger role in African curriculum. However extra-curricular clubs are common at many African schools and there is a hope that these could provide an environment conducive to integrating statistics into schools to help with student understanding and motivation. Apps could potentially provide students and schools with access to appropriate engaging content.

**Keywords:** Technology, Kenya, Statistics Education.