

Labour Pains:

Discovering the Financial Lives of
Zambian Mothers





The Zambian mothers research project was commissioned and designed by the UNCDF MM4P programme, in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation and conducted by Afriqinsights and Tyroler & Associates.



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Executive summary



Introduction

While some consider the birth of a child and the beginning of motherhood a precious gift and experience, it is often more complicated. Motherhood frequently begins with labour pains and the difficulties can extend over a lifetime, as women face complex financial decisions that are pivotal not only to their own lives but to their children's and family's. Despite the important roles that mothers play in households across geographies and income levels, Zambian women are largely excluded from the formal financial system—with only 40% of them having access to any type of formal financial service. Gender barriers are deeply rooted in social and cultural norms that dictate roles and relationships, power and decision-making dynamics within households, access to resources, inheritance of assets, educational attainment and economic potential. While not a panacea, it is well documented that enhancing access to and development of digital financial services (DFS)¹ plays an increasingly prominent part in smoothening gendered inequities² and aiding women to realize their economic potential.³

'Labour Pains: Discovering the Financial Lives of Zambian Mothers' summarizes research organized by the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF). Based on the hypothesis that Zambian mothers constitute a unique user group (similar to farmers, refugees or small-business owners) and the facts that almost 75% of Zambian women between 15 and 49 years old are mothers and 33% of Zambian women become mothers by age 18,⁴ UNCDF sought to learn more about this segment—across income levels, age groups and geographies—and to deepen its knowledge of and enhance the data on Zambian mothers' financial behaviours. The report pays particular attention to low-income mothers. This focus coincides with the mandate of UNCDF to improve access to financial services for low-income populations in its focal countries and addresses the reality in Zambia that, of the 59% of the population that is rural,⁵ 76% is considered low income.⁶ By better understanding Zambian mothers' specific financial and non-financial needs and challenges, providers can develop and refine DFS to better meet their unique requirements.

Key findings from the research highlighted discrepancies as well as commonalities in access, usage, behaviour, barriers and challenges between rural and urban users and among income levels and age groups. Most mothers involved in the research prioritized investments in education, used and understood simple budgets, had multiple means of income generation that were sporadic and changed over time, and aspired to improve their economic well-being. All mothers supplemented their salaried or unsalaried jobs with informal sector work like selling food or worked part-time in the formal sector. Teen pregnancy was common across all income levels, and all teen pregnancies were unplanned.

Table 1 summarizes the differences that exist in Zambian mothers' knowledge of and access to DFS as well as how usage differs among mothers of different incomes and geographies.

¹ DFS refer to a range of formal financial services accessible via digital channels, such as mobile money and agency banking, as opposed to traditional financial services accessible through a physical visit to a bank branch.

² Sarah Gammage and others, 'Gender and digital financial inclusion: What do we know and what do we need to know' (Washington DC, International Center for Research on Women, October 2017).

³ Kyle Holloway, Zahra Niazi and Rebecca Rouse, 'Women's Economic Empowerment Through Financial Inclusion: A Review of Existing Evidence and Remaining Knowledge Gaps' (n.p., Innovations for Poverty Action, March 2017); Alina Sorgner and Christiane Krieger-Boden, 'Empowering Women in the Digital Age' (n.p., G20 Insights, 5 July 2017).


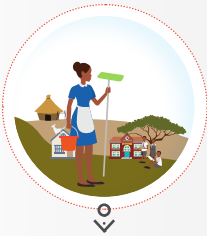


⁴ Zambia, Central Statistical Office and Ministry of Health, with ICF International, 'Zambia Demographic and Health Survey 2013-14' (Rockville, Maryland, 2014).

⁵ World Bank, *Zambia Poverty Assessment: Stagnant Poverty and Inequality in a Natural Resource-Based Economy*, No. 81001 – ZM (n.p., December 2012).

⁶ Ibid.

Table 1

Awareness and usage of digital financial services by different segments of Zambian mothers

			
Rural low-income	Urban low-income	Urban middle-income	Urban high-income
DFS knowledge			
<p>Are highly aware of services from mobile money and third-party providers, particularly MTN and Zoono, but have limited knowledge of traditional banks</p>	<p>Are aware of some formal financial institutions (notably MTN, Zanaco and Zoono) and informal services; recognize brands but do not exactly understand the services provided; have no knowledge of credit access</p>	<p>Have mid- to high-level awareness of DFS</p>	<p>Are highly aware of DFS</p>
Financial habits			
<p>Typically are unbanked; primarily use cash; often use MTN or Zoono to send/receive small amounts of money; have their own budgeting system, but it is often inconsistent and it is not formalized</p>	<p>Are unbanked; to borrow money, use family members or friends, a <i>chilimba</i> if they have a regular source of income, or a <i>kaloba</i> in worst-case scenarios;* to save money, may use MTN or Zoono intermittently; have their own budgeting system, but it is often inconsistent and it is not formalized</p>	<p>Tend to be money conscious; often have a budget for expenses; are aware that storing cash at home is unsafe and leads to impulse buying; usually have an account at a traditional financial institution (bank) in order to receive a monthly salary; typically are active in a <i>chilimba</i>; frequently use mobile money; are likely to use Shoprite or Zoono to send/receive money</p>	<p>Have a chequing and savings account at a financial institution; often also save informally in a <i>chilimba</i>; use mobile banking and debit cards; are likely to use Shoprite or Zoono to send money to relatives in rural areas</p>

* Note: *Chilimbas* are "informal indigenous savings clubs" while *kalobas* are "informal moneylenders".
 Source: Financial Sector Deepening Zambia, 'FinScope 2015: Top Line Findings,' p. vii (Lusaka, 2016).
 Acronyms: MTN, Mobile Telephone Networks; Zanaco, Zambia National Commercial Bank

While the percentage of adults with an active DFS account in Zambia has risen, from 18% in 2016 to 24% in 2017,⁷ customer dormancy remains a problem and DFS providers are coming to the realization that they are 'leaving money on the table' by activating customers but not creating a compelling reason for them to use their services. Developing products that focus on the dynamic needs of Zambian mothers not only has the potential to increase the empowerment of women in a number of ways but also could address one of the most pressing issues DFS providers in Zambia face today.

With better access to relevant financial products and services, mothers can improve the livelihoods of their households, contribute to improved financial management, direct resources towards their children's needs, including their education, and better plan for emergencies, cultural and religious obligations, and times of sporadic household income.

⁷ UNCDF, 'State of the Digital Financial Services Market 2017: Results from the UNCDF-MM4P Annual Provider Survey' (Lusaka, 2018).





Research methodology

To support DFS providers to develop and launch improved financial products and services that meet the needs of Zambian women, mothers and other underserved groups, UNCDF partnered with the research firm Afriqinsights to collect and analyse qualitative and quantitative data on Zambian mothers' financial behaviours, needs, challenges and aspirations as well as their awareness and usage of existing financial services. In January 2018, the firm completed 25 in-depth qualitative interviews in mothers' homes: 10 in Lusaka province (Chongwe, Kafue and Lusaka districts), 7 in Copperbelt province (Masaiti and Ndola districts as well as Twapia ward), 4 in Central province (Kabwe and Mumbwa districts) and 4 in Southern province (Livingstone and Kalomo districts). Following these interviews, in February 2018, Afriqinsights conducted 725 quantitative interviews in mothers' homes and workplaces, including 330 interviews in various parts of Lusaka city, 116 interviews in Mazabuka district, 117 interviews in Mumbwa district and 122 interviews in Ndola district. These face-to-face interviews involved mothers from different geographic, income and age brackets. Specifically, 56% of the mothers interviewed resided in a rural area and 42% were in the low-income bracket. Finally, quantitative and qualitative data were analysed to pull out key findings.

Following the analysis, UNCDF identified additional needs for the research design and analysis and for the overall understanding of Zambian mothers' use of, need for and inclusion in DFS. Subsequently, UNCDF contracted a consultant to complete comprehensive secondary data analysis, with support from a UNCDF data analyst, in order to identify insights and to optimize subsequent product redesign, using existing data on Zambian mothers as well as other sources of data. The analysis concentrated on rural and urban low-income mothers, in order to better understand their needs, challenges and opportunities for DFS inclusion.



Key findings

The financial lives of Zambian mothers are dynamic and multifaceted, requiring diverse types of financial services at various times in their lives. The following paragraphs highlight some of the key research findings across all income levels and geographies.

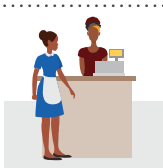


1. All mothers save but mostly at home.

Of those interviewed, 63% reported saving. Across all income levels, 20% were able to save between ZMW50 and ZMW200 (US\$4–US\$17) and 41% between ZMW220 and ZMW500 (US\$18–US\$42) each month in the past year.⁸ The average amount of monthly savings was ZMW150 (US\$13) for low-income mothers, ZMW424 (US\$35) for middle-income mothers and ZMW1229 (US\$103) for high-income mothers. The most common usage for DFS, at 29% of all respondents, was mobile money for sending, receiving, storing, saving and borrowing money; in comparison, 38% of respondents stored money at home. **Of those that primarily stored money at home, 69% were rural inhabitants.**

Living expenses, emergencies and school fees ranked as the top three savings motivators, indicating that savings products that help mothers reach these goals could serve as an important pathway for introducing financial services. Zambian mothers' aspirations to save, even small amounts for various expenses and emergencies, present an opportunity for DFS providers to help formally bank them by offering affordable, accessible and easy-to-use products that help them reach their goals.

⁸ Note: This document refers to the Zambian kwacha as ZMW based on guidance from the Bank of Zambia, the country's central bank, after a currency adjustment. Conversion rate: US\$1 = ZMW11.97. Source: <https://treasury.un.org/operationalrates/OperationalRates.php>, 1 December 2018.



2. Mothers are the original ‘gig economy’/short-term employment workers and rely on multiple income streams to meet the financial needs of the family.

Across all income levels, mothers indicated that they take on various part-time jobs in the formal or informal sector in order to meet household expenses and support their children. Of those interviewed in low-income households (urban and rural), 75% worked in the informal sector (agriculture, piecework or service industries). These mothers said they receive irregular income, which they spend the vast majority (95%) on food items, household basics, utilities and educational expenses. Notably, 65% of all respondents ran their own business, typically in an informal setting, as their primary income, while 27% of all respondents had an additional side business, with about 30% netting ZMW500–ZMW1000 (US\$42–US\$84) per month and some 70% earning up to ZMW1500 (US\$125) each month. Of those who reported having a side business, 85% were either low- or middle-income earners.

Zambian mothers need DFS that address the challenges associated with short-term employment, such as difficulty accessing more-productive markets and dealing with seasonal inconsistencies. They require products that allow flexibility in payments and that help them save and reduce risk. Mothers who work in agriculture have additional challenges and needs. Women constitute 64% of the rural population in Zambia, and approximately 80% of food produced in Zambia is by women.⁹ Depending on the crop or crops they grow, female farmers may rely on one major planting season or grow year-round. Whatever they grow and sell, their production, sales and income vary. Products and services that could assist low-income female farmers include savings products for smoothening times of low production and sales, crop insurance, access to affordable inputs/supplies in order to increase production yields, and affordable loan and credit products.



3. All mothers borrow but mostly from family members and friends.

While higher- and middle-income Zambian mothers may have greater access to formal financial institutions, they said they prefer, just as poorer mothers do, to borrow from friends or family members (31% across all income levels) or to use *chilimbas*.¹⁰ In the past year, 32% of low-income mothers who participated in the research had taken out a loan, compared to 25% of high- and middle-income mothers. Women reported that they trust *chilimbas* and find the social aspect enjoyable and access easy.

The fact that *chilimbas* are the preferred method for loans and savings across income levels highlights the importance that Zambian women place on peer groups, that their primary exposure to financial services is through social networks, and that these networks may be important pathways for DFS uptake. Developing relevant products that help women save towards their specific goals and needs throughout their lifetime and that are introduced through relevant social networks might convince Zambian mothers to use these services.



4. Mothers may be the key to unlocking education payments via DFS.

While education is valued as a means for improving socioeconomic status in Zambia, it has been difficult for financial service providers to find a bridge between the demand for better, more efficient education payment systems and the ability of educational institutions to operate such payment systems effectively for the benefit of parents who use them. Across all income levels and geographies, mothers indicated that they value education—both their own and that of their children—and saw it as a means to improve their family’s welfare. Even when women had to halt their education due to pregnancy or lack of finances, 31% of respondents stated that they aspire either to improve their education or to ensure their children are educated.

⁹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *National Gender Profile of Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods – Zambia*, Country Gender Assessment Series (Lusaka, 2018).

¹⁰ “The word *Chilimba* means strengthening. *Chilimba* is an informal rotating savings scheme—a group of individuals come[s] together at regular intervals to pool an agreed upon amount of money, which is then paid out (i.e., the full sum of money pooled) to *Chilimba* members in turn. In Zambia, 12.4% of adults use *Chilimba* services—the main driver of usage being access to lump sum of money.” Source: Financial Sector Deepening Zambia, ‘FinScope 2015: Top Line Findings,’ p. 30 (Lusaka, 2016).

The desire to learn and be educated could offer another pathway for financial service providers to reach women and to help them become more financially literate and save towards education goals. This motivation, coupled with the time-poverty of mothers (e.g., they lose substantial amounts of time traveling to schools to settle education payments¹¹), make them potentially very good champions and providers-of-feedback for education-focused products.

→ **5. Mothers are insurance ‘naturals’ but do not use insurance products.**







Zambian mothers, by necessity, use informal mechanisms—largely through saving and lending—to deal with financial shocks when they occur (e.g., bad crop seasons, health problems, death). While the research found that, across income levels, most mothers had heard of insurance, the majority did not have any form of insurance. Though 44% of high-income mothers involved in the study had previously used an insurance product, less than 5% of middle-income mothers, less than 6% of urban low-income mothers and less than 10% of rural low-income mothers had ever done so. The most common insurance held by high-income respondents was vehicle insurance. Most insurance products in the country are ‘cookie-cutter’ (e.g., vehicle or life) that mothers may deem irrelevant to their actual needs.



Financial journey maps of Zambian mothers

Based on the research results, UNCDF generated snapshots of Zambian mothers across rural and urban locations and high-, middle- and low-income levels (see table 2).

Table 2
Zambian mother customer segments’ snapshots

	 Rural low-/middle-income	 Urban low-income	 Urban middle-income	 Urban high-income
Average monthly household income	US\$121	US\$121	US\$418	US\$689
Percentage that completed primary education	53%	52%	60%	68%
Percentage that completed secondary education	16%	29%	38%	52%
Average number of children	5.4	5.4	4.2	3.1
Percentage that had a teen pregnancy (first child before age 17)	30%	22%	24%	24%
Percentage with access to electricity	35.2%	75.7%	84.2%	97.5%
Percentage with access to water	36.7%	49.5%	66.2%	78.5%
Top expenditures across all income levels post-pregnancy	Baby clothes, food items, medical/health services, school fees			

¹¹ David Lawson, ‘A Gendered Analysis of ‘Time Poverty’—The Importance of Infrastructure,’ No. GPRG-WPS-078 (Oxford, Global Poverty Research Group, n.d.).



UNCDF expanded the snapshots into detailed financial journey maps of Zambian mothers (see tables 3–6). Such financial journey maps are critical tools to use when developing more useful financial products that meet Zambian mothers’ diverse and changing needs as they enter different life stages.

Table 3
Financial journey map of rural low- and middle-income Zambian mothers

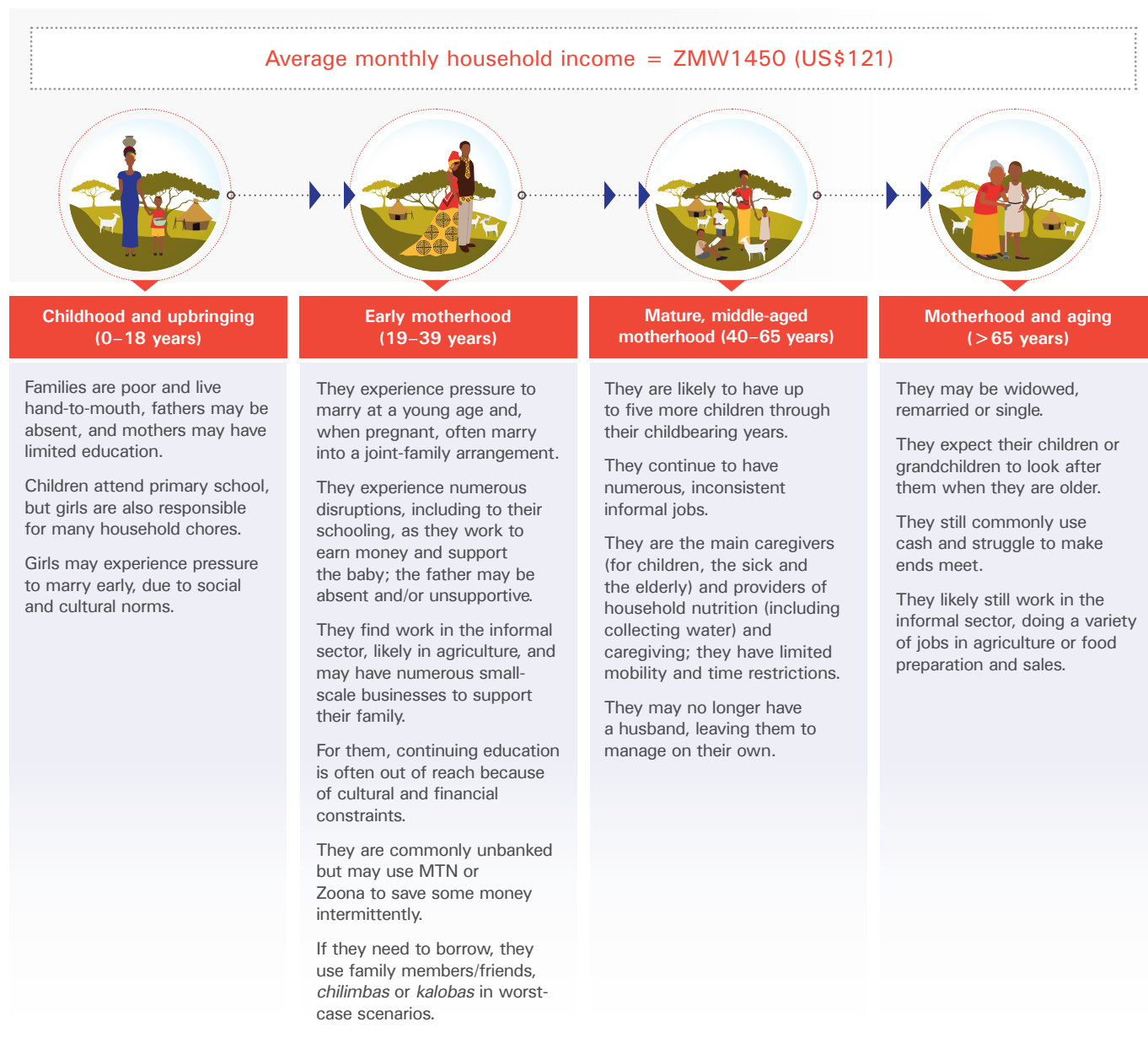
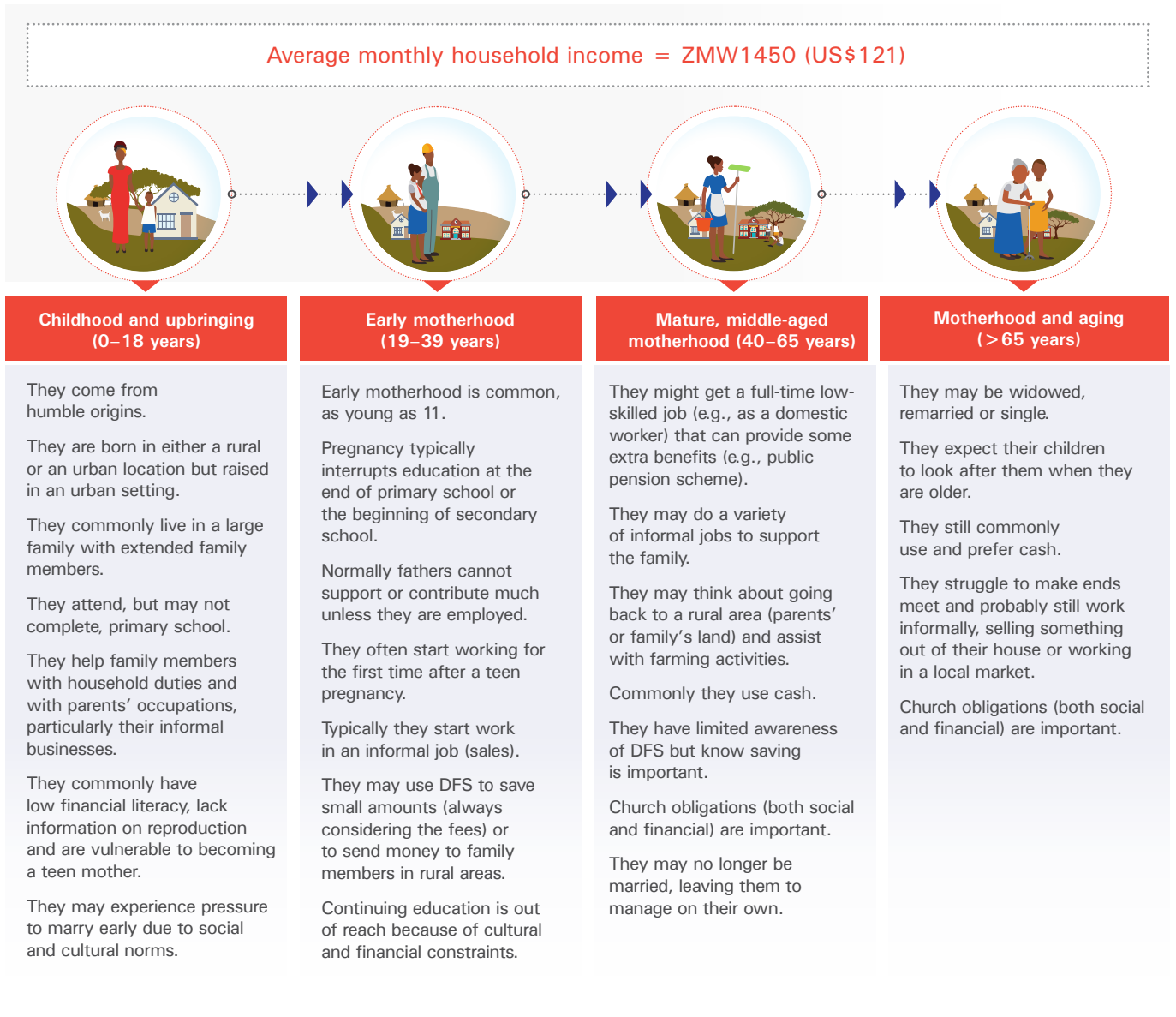


Table 4
Financial journey map of urban low-income Zambian mothers





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Table 5
Financial journey map of urban middle-income Zambian mothers

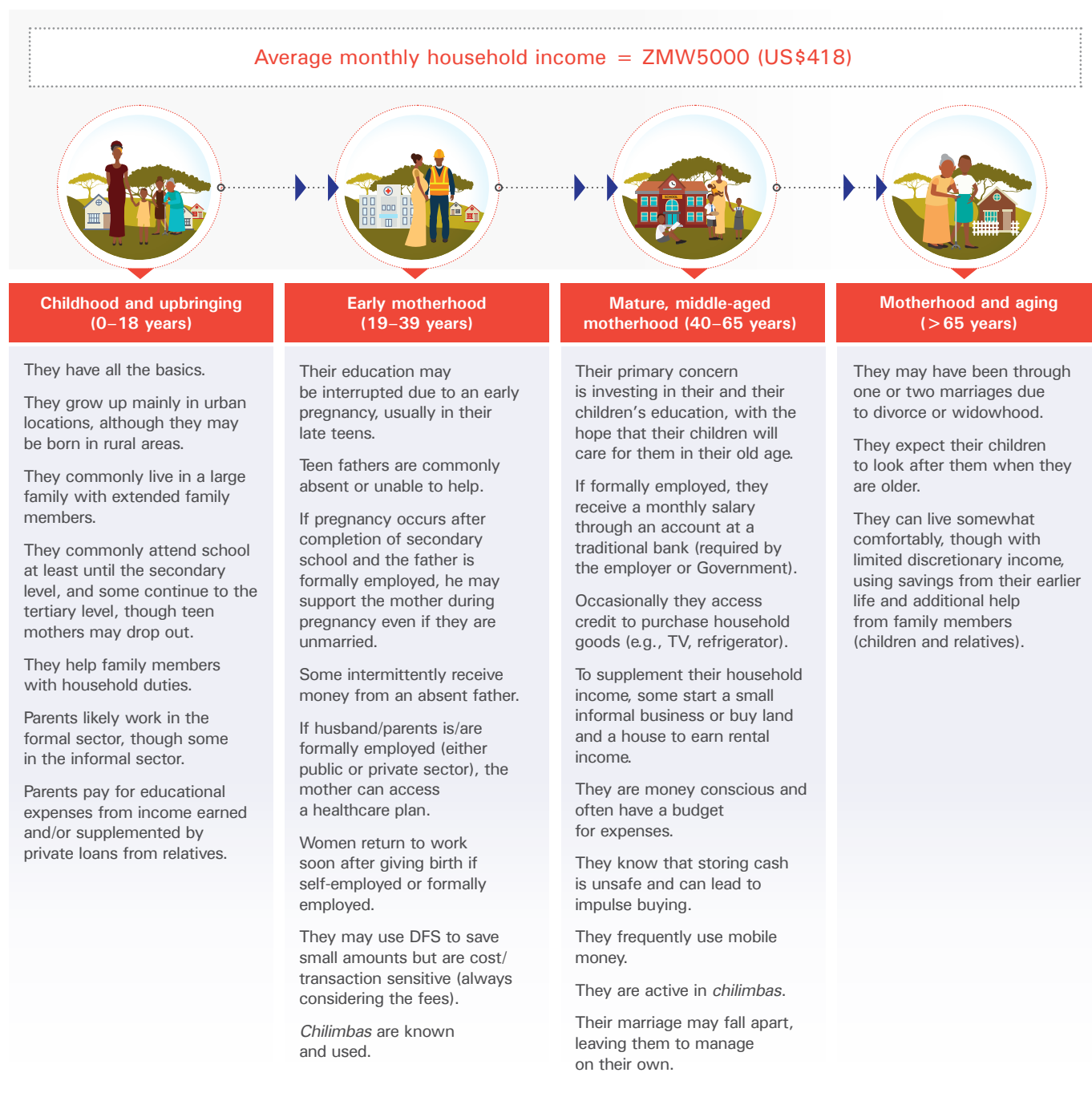
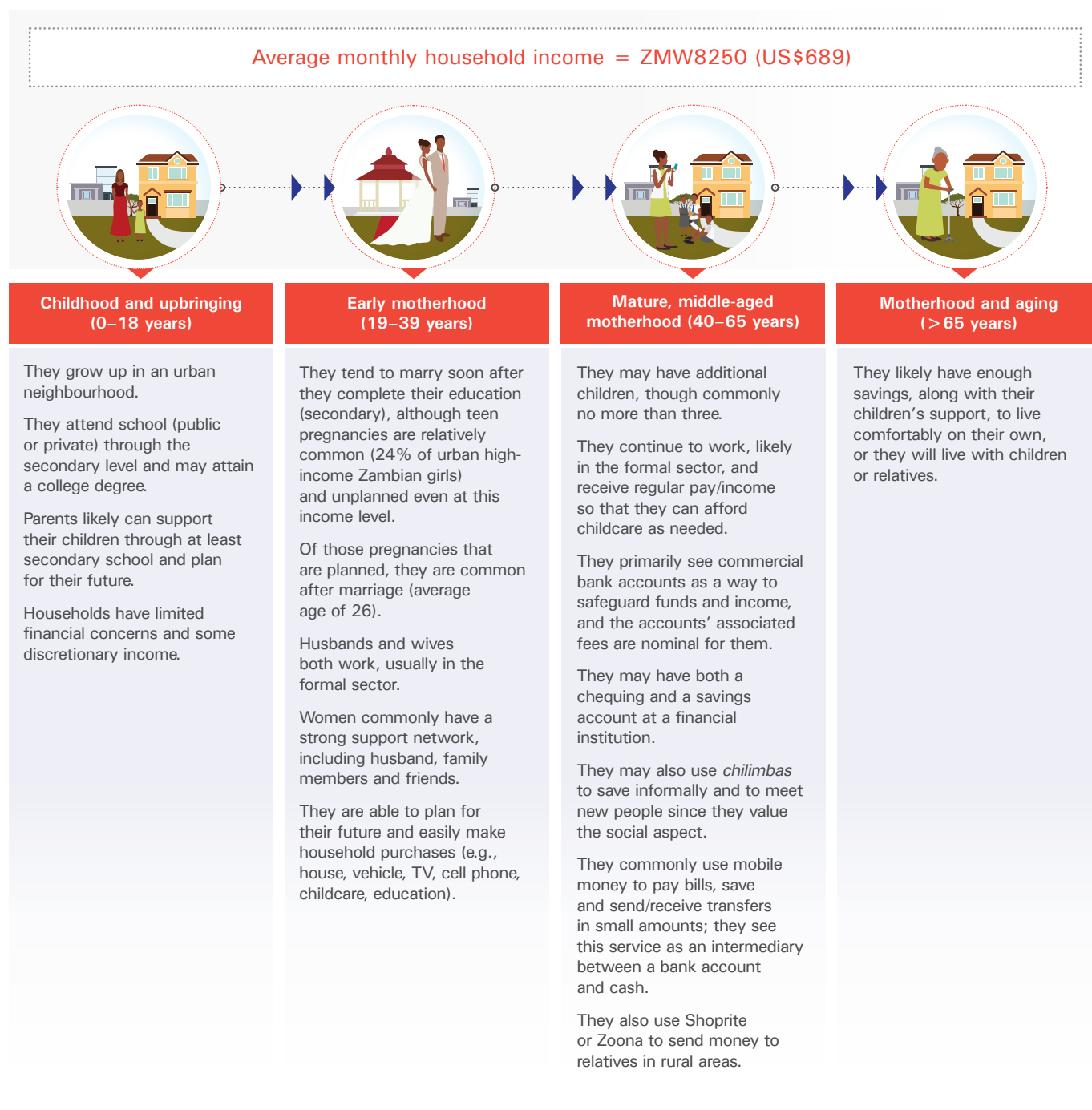


Table 6
Financial journey map of urban high-income Zambian mothers







Insights for financial service providers

It is clear from the research that, across income levels and geographies, similarities and differences among Zambian mothers' financial needs exist. Providers need to design products and services to address their nuanced needs, challenges, barriers and opportunities during pregnancy, as young mothers, as more mature mothers and as older mothers. They must keep these factors in mind not only for a designed product's overall purpose but also for its cost, ease-of-use, accessibility, marketing and communication with target groups, and support services.

Table 7 lists specific DFS concepts based on the research findings that may be of interest to Zambian mothers and that providers should consider, while the subsections that follow describe the proposed DFS concepts in detail and recommend appropriate design and marketing strategies. The suggested strategies may help improve financial inclusion and DFS uptake of low-income Zambian mothers. It is important to note that the products and product types proposed will be attractive to a variety of customer segments. UNCDF does not recommend the creation of 'pink products' for only women or only mothers. Rather, the products and product types described are inspired by behaviours and incentives revealed by the research. Some of these products already exist in the market but perhaps are not marketed in a way that is compelling for women and mothers.

Table 7

Potential digital financial service concepts for providers based on research findings

	Research finding	DFS concept	
	All mothers save but mostly at home		Savings and investment products, aimed at rural mothers, that can make their savings work for them and help them cope with financial shocks
	Mothers are the original 'gig economy' / short-term employment workers and rely on multiple income streams to meet the financial needs of the family		Income-smoothing products (including savings, credit and investment components) for mothers as 'gig economy' workers
	All mothers borrow but mostly from family members and friends		Digital borrowing circles that leverage social networks of mothers
	Mothers may be the key to unlocking education payments via DFS because they value education, both their own and that of their children, and see it as a means for improving their family's welfare		Digital education payments using mothers as champions
	Mothers are insurance 'naturals' but do not use insurance products		Insurance products (including hospital cash, family/funeral and weather index insurance) that serve as a plan B for mothers

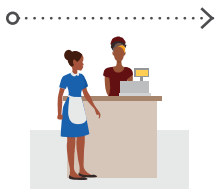


Financial products of interest to Zambian mothers



1. Aim savings and investment products at rural mothers to make their savings work for them and help them cope with shocks.

These savings products already exist in the market. Between 2017 and 2018, the number of formal savings products available to Zambians through DFS increased. For example, Zoono has launched a savings product with FINCA that offers a savings rate, as has MTN in partnership with Barclay. These savings products offer up to 10% in interest. Other DFS providers in the Zambian market are considering launching savings products as well, and existing banks and MFIs offer attractive savings account. Just by putting their money in a mobile money account, mothers a) gain significant savings compared to just leaving the money in the house, where they may be tempted to spend it; b) ensure their money is safe; and c) increase the liquidity (cash) of agents, especially in rural areas where liquidity management is often challenging. In order for mothers to fully leverage these products, DFS providers need to i) market the products appropriately (using imagery of the women who they want to target and likely using local language); ii) train agents to explain the products using terminology that will be understood by the women (perhaps using the example of *chilimbos*); and iii) critically, explain to customers how interest works (even setting up a calculator for women to calculate how much they will earn if they save for a certain period of time).



2. Help wanted: Design income-smoothing products for mothers as 'gig economy' workers.

One of the greatest challenges for women AND men who have uneven, unpredictable income is managing their financial life. While evidence has shown that simply having a safe space to save like a DFS account can create some resiliency for women and families, providers could take a step further and develop products (e.g., savings, credit or investment products) to help them smoothen their income. Such efforts could take the form, for example, of an investment product that allows individuals to add small amounts of money every month and pay towards a pension or an annuity. Or, it could be in the form of a product that, through machine learning and data analytics, analyses the income potential of a 'gig economy' mother over the period of a year and gives the mother a steady monthly income, which the provider recoups in full by the end of the year. In return, the mother would give her monthly income (whether it is a high or low month) to that provider.



3. Create digital borrowing circles that leverage social networks of mothers.

There has been an increase in mobile lending products in the Zambian market. Airtel, MTN and Zoono offer mobile lending products, and AB Bank, Agora Microfinance, FINCA and others have micro-lending products on the market. There is an opportunity for providers to bridge the digital and real economy divide by leveraging assets of both digital and real social networks. It could be as simple as using social groups in marketing campaigns, targeting the use of Facebook and WhatsApp messages (for marketing and for connecting borrowers to providers) as well as *chilimbos* for digital lending products. As previously mentioned, it would be critical to use local language as well as simple, easy-to-understand terms to describe the lending products, the amounts that could be borrowed and the interest rates charged for specific amounts of time. It would be equally critical to highlight how the product works—especially if there are not separate wallet 'pockets' for savings and credit. In some instances, the product would work as in this example: if the provider lends the customer ZMW100 (US\$8), any funds added to the customer's account at the time the loan is due would go towards paying off the debt.

4. Unlock digital education payments using mothers as champions.



While the Zambian market has lightly experimented with digital education payments, it still faces many challenges—both at the front end with teaching parents how to use DFS for education payments and at the back end with the schools and reconciliation processes. Moreover, the sector has overlooked one of the greatest potential champions for the success of such programmes: Zambian mothers. Education payments are one of their chief concerns and reasons to save. By using DFS for these payments, they can save both time and money. They also have the ability and opportunity to teach other relevant stakeholders how to use such services. Once participants are comfortable making education payments digitally, there is the prospect to introduce a savings or credit component to allow mothers, and other stakeholders, to save towards or borrow for school fee payments.

5. Design insurance products that serve as a plan B for mothers.



Mothers represent a natural audience for insurance products, such as hospital cash/cover, funeral and family insurance, and weather index insurance. Mothers already provide significant backstopping and use informal mechanisms to cope with financial shocks, but the availability of appropriately marketed, relevant insurance products could help mothers cope with such shocks more effectively. For instance, a hospital cash product linked to DFS providers for both urban and rural clients could help bridge the gap in health insurance for the mass market in Zambia. Funeral and family insurance is a relatively simple but valuable insurance product that could easily be delivered to the mass market via DFS providers. This product enables the policyholder and his/her family to cover the cost of a funeral and other expenses in the event of a sudden death in the family. Weather index insurance is another product type that farmers, including women smallholder farmers in Zambia, would find useful. This product pays farmers in the event of a drought or excessive rainfall that affects their harvest. Access to such insurance would help smoothen income for farming mothers and ensure that low-yield crop seasons would not affect their ability to maintain their contributions to household finances.



Design and marketing of products for Zambian mothers

- ☑ Offer a diverse set of products that correlate to where mothers are in their different lifecycles.
- ☑ Account for low, inconsistent incomes and price sensitivity.
- ☑ Remember that accessible, user-friendly technology and basic knowledge are needed; make sure mothers are comfortable with digital technology, can access it and find it easy to use.
- ☑ Ensure appropriate, targeted communication networks are used for uptake.
- ☑ Understand household decision-making and do not assume decisions are made equally.
- ☑ Appreciate the reasons mothers are not using DFS.
- ☑ Engage mothers where they live and work, and design age- and lifecycle-appropriate products.



Conclusion

Like any customer segment, not all women and not all mothers have the same financial challenges. However, after unpeeling the layers of data reflecting the nuances of their lives, it is clear that they have scores of unmet financial needs. Achieving full financial inclusion for all peoples of Zambia, women AND men, does not simply amount to the number of adults using DFS every 30 days. It means that all Zambians are able to address their needs, wants and aspirations through the vehicle of financial services. Mothers can be great champions of safe, accessible, affordable financial services in this market. The great challenge will be to help them realize their own power to drive the next wave of financial inclusion for women in Zambia.



About the UN Capital Development Fund

The UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) makes public and private finance work for the poor in the world's 47 least developed countries. With its capital mandate and instruments, UNCDF offers 'last mile' finance models that unlock public and private resources, especially at the domestic level, to reduce poverty and support local economic development. UNCDF's financing models work through two channels: financial inclusion that expands the opportunities for individuals, households and small businesses to participate in the local economy, providing them with the tools they need to climb out of poverty and manage their financial lives; and localized investments that show how fiscal decentralization, innovative municipal finance and structured project finance can drive public and private funding that underpins local economic expansion and sustainable development.

About MM4P

UNCDF developed the MM4P programme to ensure that the opportunities and benefits of digital finance would reach low-income people in difficult markets. UNCDF provides a mix of technical, financial and policy support to policymakers, regulators, providers, distributors and users of digital finance in order to expand access to and usage of services that contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

In Zambia, MM4P launched its programme in March 2015. The programme is funded by the Mastercard Foundation and is aimed at increasing active usage of digital financial services within the adult population, from 2% in 2014 to 35% by 2019. Using a theory of change based on the Making Markets Work for the Poor approach, the programme seeks to work with all digital finance providers, the regulators and the Government to achieve this mandate.

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