

FROM IDEA
Breaking New Ground



TO MARKET
in Reaching Underserved Savers



WELCOME TO THE CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MICROLEAD ANNUAL WORKSHOP, 2017!

The MicroLead Expansion Programme held the fourth and final peer-learning workshop in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in March 2017.

This document outlines innovations and lessons learned, and highlights knowledge management products presented at the 2017 workshop. MLE partners' work has provided safe, affordable and convenient savings to over a million low-income clients across Africa and Myanmar.

Conference logo (above) by Khangarue Media, Ltd.

Photo (below) courtesy of Ivana Damjanov.



From Idea to Market #IDEA2MKT



The MasterCard Foundation

The UNCDF MicroLead team would like to thank the MasterCard Foundation for their generous support, as well as special guest speakers from the event:



Finally, the 2017 peer-learning workshop was a great success due to the participation and contribution of UNCDF MicroLead's financial service provider partners, technical service providers (both past and present) and other workshop attendees:



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents.....	3
Acronyms.....	4
About the UNCDF MicroLead Programme.....	5
Acknowledgements.....	6
Introduction.....	7
Moving Forward in Reaching Women.....	8
Human-Centered Design and Rapid-Prototyping for Financial Services.....	16
MicroLead’s Knowledge Products: A Contribution to All Stakeholders.....	21
Building on MicroLead’s Legacy	27
Reflections on MicroLead.....	28

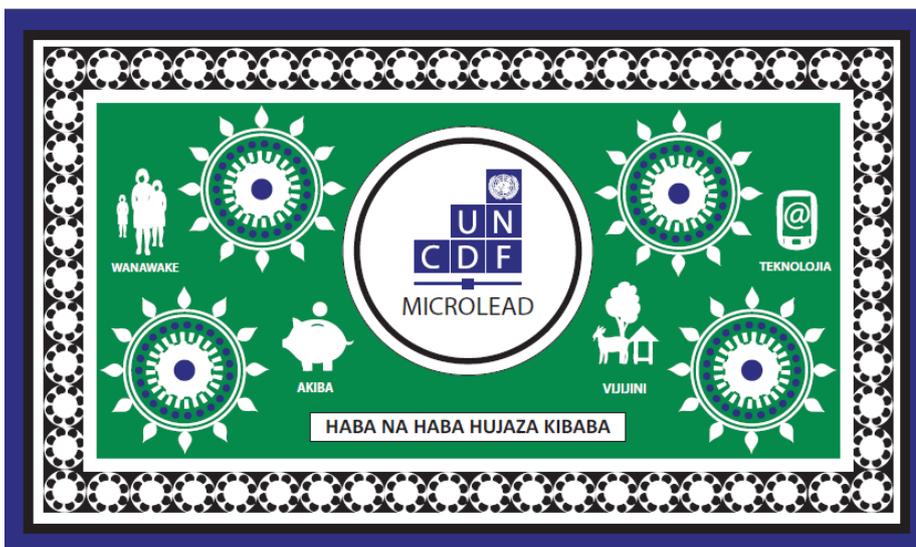
ACRONYMS

ADC	Alternative Delivery Channel
BFA	Bankable Frontier Associates
DFS	Digital Financial Services
FSDT	Financial Sector Deepening Trust, Tanzania
FSP	Financial Service Provider
HCD	Human-centered Design
MFI	Microfinance Institution
MLE	UNCDF MicroLead Expansion Programme
POS	Point of Service (Device)
PRA	Participatory Rapid Appraisal
TPB	Tanzania Postal Bank
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund

ABOUT THE UNCDF MICROLEAD PROGRAMME



MicroLead is one of the United Nations Capital Development Fund's (UNCDF) largest global thematic initiatives. It supports the expansion of financial service providers (FSPs) that pursue a savings-led approach, in the belief that savings, not credit, will allow low-income populations to take control of their complicated financial lives. The first phase, initiated in 2008, focused on 'greenfielding' in least-developed countries, awarding grants and loans to proven market leaders.



The second phase, started in 2011 and ending in December 2017, includes capacity-building by technical service providers with FSPs. The FSPs are poised for significant growth in providing deposit services to low-income populations via alternative delivery channels (ADCs), with a focus on outreach to rural areas, women and financial education.

“The MicroLead Expansion (MLE) programme has provided a wealth of knowledge in two key respects: (i) understanding how low income rural women access and use deposit services and (ii) understanding how FSPs can sustainably serve this target market. From greenfield credit unions, MFIs, FSPs, to downscaling commercial banks, our wide range of partners demonstrate the plethora of institution types that are capable of innovating to serve “the last mile.” With informal groups one of the largest untapped markets to introduce to formal financial services, our partner FSPs have begun rolling out innovative products and channels to address the constraints rural women face when attempting to avail themselves of financial services. With the advent of digital financial services and agent networks, and by brokering partnerships among FSPs, MNOs, aggregators, Fintechs, human-centered design firms, and supporting the organizational change management required to fully embrace new operating paradigms, MLE is pushing the frontier of not only access but usage for rural women. And finally, with our understanding of how empowering groups are for women, we are confident of the long-lasting impact this programme will have on millions of low income rural women in Sub-Saharan Africa.”

~Pamela Eser, UNCDF MicroLead Programme Advisor

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We are grateful to Khangarue Media, Ltd. for the majority of the photos that are presented here. Their photography and videography allowed us to document each stage of the conference in action, and unless otherwise noted, all photos in this document are attributed to them. Additionally, Livin Matabaro, leading a team from Livin Translation, provided excellent simultaneous interpretation in French and English throughout all sessions.

Our participants were lucky to visit a number of branches of Tanzania Postal Bank (TPB) and NMB and test their prototype ideas with real clients. We extend our thanks to Amos Kasanga at TPB Bank and the managers, staff and clients of the Temeke, Kimara, Tegeta, Ubungo and Ilala branches. At NMB, we are grateful to Michael Maggebo and the managers, staff and clients of the Msasani, Sinza, Magomeni, Ilala, Mwenge and Tegeta branches.

As always, this workshop – and all UNCDF MicroLead activities – would not be possible without the generous support of the MasterCard Foundation. We would like to thank Prabhat Labh and Amos Odero for their active participation in the workshop and feedback on the programme and content.

Finally, the excellent presentations of all speakers, both from within the MicroLead Programme and from special guests, allowed us to include a number of important and illustrative graphs, found throughout this document. All presentations can be listened to in full on the conference website, and the accompanying PowerPoint files downloaded. We recognize the hard work that went into the preparation of these materials and are pleased to be able to use them here and on our website, <http://www.mleworkshop2017.org>

~ June 2017

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INTRODUCTION

Over one hundred participants from eighteen countries, representing almost fifty organizations, participated in the 2017 MicroLead Annual Peer-Learning Workshop held from March 6-10 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The 2017 workshop was the fourth and final event in which partners gathered to review programme accomplishments and challenges, reflect on innovations from the wider field of financial inclusion, and learn from each other. Participants presented lessons learned and challenges from their own programs, as well as focused on human-centered design (HCD) and participated in a field trip to practice rapid prototyping.

The main objectives of the 2017 Workshop were to 1) highlight the success stories and lessons learned by MLE partners during the course of the programme; 2) provide MLE partners with the opportunity to learn from their peers through partner-led presentations and a closer look at institutions' case studies; and 3) expose partners to developments in the larger field of financial inclusion such as human-centered design (HCD) that will add value to their MLE-developed savings products and allow them to integrate these innovations into their ongoing services. The event placed a focus on Tanzania, where a number of organizations have experience using HCD to better target small savers and rural groups.

These event proceedings detail the main points taken from the interactive sessions, presentations by experts and partners, and the workshop and field trip to NMB and TPB to put rapid prototyping into practice. The proceedings follow MicroLead's cross-cutting strategic programme areas – savings, rural, women, and technology (via alternative delivery channels (ADCs)) – along these themes, which include a special focus on MicroLead's newest knowledge management products:

- 1) Succeeding in DFS (with PHB Development);
- 2) Mobilizing deposits from small balance savers (with EA Consultants);
- 3) Keeping a focus on women;
- 4) Putting clients at the center of design (HCD and Client Centricity); and,
- 5) Next steps for Alternative Delivery Channels (ADCs).

MLE KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT PRODUCTS 2017



 **PHB Development**
towards financial inclusion

How to Succeed in Your Digital Journey:

A Series of Toolkits for Financial Service Providers



EA Consultants

Pulling Levers Toward Sustainability:

A Framework for Small-balance Savings Mobilization

MOVING FORWARD IN REACHING WOMEN

Since it began in 2009, MicroLead has challenged partners – FSPs in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia – to develop and roll-out new and innovative savings products which respond to the rural vacuum of services in those contexts. With an emphasis on reaching female clients, often traditionally unbanked, and the belief that technology is one of the ways forward to reach those who are not yet financially included, MicroLead has exceeded initial programme goals. **By the end of 2017, MicroLead partners are projected to have reached over 2,000,000 new savers in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, about 70% of whom are women and almost all are rural.**

Peer-learning workshops, such as 2017's event titled *From Idea to Market: Breaking New Ground in Reaching Underserved Savers*, have offered partners, staff, and the larger stakeholder community to come together and reflect on MicroLead's achievements as well as to "break new ground" with new ideas, innovations and skills. And while much has been achieved, the programme's final workshop sought to bring in speakers and breakout sessions that will catalyze partners to continue targeting women and the rural poor with essential savings products.



Irene Mlola of FSD Tanzania outlines the Tanzanian context for workshop participants at the opening event on March 6. Photo Credit: Khangarue Media, Ltd.

The MicroLead programme catalyzes FSPs to reach low-income, rural women. It brings together up-to-date knowledge from multiple fields, including sociology (through group savings mechanisms), behavioral economics (employing human-centered design (HCD) and customer engagement strategies), digital financial services (DFS) and alternative delivery channels (ADCs) to provide safe and affordable products to those new to formal services.

“Over two billion adults still do not have access to financial services. These unbanked populations consist predominantly of women (1.1 billion), and those living in rural areas.”

Mayra Buvinic & Rebecca Furst Nichols, *“Promoting Women’s Economic Empowerment: What Works”*¹¹

In keeping with the focus on women, including International Women’s Day on March 8th during the event, the workshop’s opening and a keynote speaker challenged participants to continue working towards women’s economic empowerment.



Henri Dommel, UNCDF’s Director of Financial Inclusion, welcomed participants, emphasizing that women’s economic empowerment is at the heart of MicroLead’s approach, and one of the programme’s major strengths. He cited a World Bank study¹ which found that access to savings products by women is one of the strongest ways to build women’s capacity, to help them better manage household resources, to earn their own money, to further to educate their children, improve their health, and plan their lives. He noted that MicroLead has excelled in these areas of expanding savings products and DFS innovations, a great contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). *(Above, the SDGs with specific relationship to MicroLead.)*

¹ ‘Promoting Women’s Economic Empowerment, What Works?’ World Bank, Policy Research Paper 7087, November 2014. http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2014/11/04/000158349_20141104112018/Rendered/PDF/WPS7087.pdf

“What has struck me is how MicroLead has been an incredible incubator of innovation and approach, combining ADCs, leveraging DFS, and linking informal savings groups to the formal financial sector. In the initial request for proposals, only four looked at these linkages – only four. Now, eleven out of twelve partners have embraced that approach. Giving women a stronger voice and better economic opportunities is very much linked with the ability to reach them through the informal mechanisms they have, which have strong social cohesion but often come with risk and uncertainty about resilience and their ability to tap into the system over time, and which is also limited in terms of reaching scale. The strategy that MicroLead has developed has paved the way for something very powerful as we look at the road ahead.”

Henri Dommel, Director of Financial Inclusion, UNCDF

The opening sessions for the 2017 workshop fell two days before International Women’s Day and the 61st Session on the Commission of the Status of Women, where the focus is looking for ways to promote women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work. Panelists at the opening MicroLead session cautioned that there is no “one size fits all” for women’s economic empowerment, and outlined a number of ways in which the challenge of reaching women with safe and accessible formal financial services can be faced.

- ♦ Focus on the way that women **access services – including financial** – and the resources and employment that allow them to be

financially independent and in control of their money. DFS holds great potential in removing the barriers women face towards accessing finance in a more convenient and affordable way;

- ♦ Look closely at **women’s decision-making and use of resources**, both in their households and in the broader community;
- ♦ Consider the **enabling environment**, and the way that economic policy is – or is not – responsive to the needs of women, as well as whether the legal frameworks exist to promote women’s rights;
- ♦ Promote women’s **skills development**, an idea that is inclusive of both the capacity to earn money as well as to manage it and make economic choices. For example, in Tanzania women are over-represented in micro-, small and medium enterprises and are the majority of users of informal financial services, but they are greatly underrepresented in formal employment and use of formal financial services;
- ♦ **Invest in women** as agents of change. On a national level in Tanzania, a key priority is the investment in and strengthening of women’s associations and their ability to influence key decisions;
- ♦ Consider the **next-generation issues** dependent on women’s economic empowerment, such as children’s development;
- ♦ Focus programs on areas where **women have greatest need**. Women are more adversely affected by issues of fragility, and face greater challenges as migrants and refugees;
- ♦ Such as in MicroLead, form strong **partnerships** between organizations, and between organizations and government, to increase outreach to women and other underserved populations. This is the difference between affecting the lives of 1,000,000 people and affecting the lives of 25,000,000 people, especially when it comes to advocacy and policy. The reach of government into rural areas is actually limited, so helping local governments in their role of empowering women beyond just health, education and infrastructure, has great potential;
- ♦ Do not overlook **the role of men** in women’s economic empowerment. Women must be empowered legally, economically, and politically; at the same time, most senior policy makers in most countries are men. Incredible inequalities between and within countries still exist, and women often lack a voice in political decision-making.

Irene Mlola of Financial Sector Deepening Trust Tanzania (FSDT) outlined the situation in Tanzania where there is still a gap between men's and women's access to and use of formal finance. She noted that providing formal services to informal groups, in which women are the majority of participants, provides a great potential to close this gap. According to Mlola, access to finance for women can increase the GDP of a country up to 3.5%. "Women must be given the opportunity through programs like MicroLead to take control of their economic lives."

Finally, panelists looked forward, imagining how progress can be made building on the successes and lessons learned from programs like MicroLead:

- **Private Sector Empowerment:** Empower the private sector via data to make decisions and see new market potential based on data, such as is done with FinScope in Tanzania and a number of other countries. Support data driven innovations. Enable the private sector to fail quickly, innovate quickly, find solutions, and create the mechanisms for many institutions to scale up.
- **Regulatory Environment:** Make sure that data is available to decision makers. The government can look at key drivers of financial inclusion and how to connect the dots, unlocking the potential of investment.
- **Strong Partnerships:** Such as in MicroLead, bring together MNOs, banks, community banks, informal financial services and NGOs, to reach women in rural areas sustainably. The potential of leveraging the very strong social capital of the informal sector has a ton of potential, and find business models that are scalable – and then the market will develop on its own. Keep a focus on scalable, proven, business models.
- **Engender the Data:** According to Irene Mlola, in Tanzania, the separate FinScope excerpt on women can help all actors to look at what the market actually is. Engender the data, show the constraints on women, and then build programs on that. Give a human face to the data.

SPOTLIGHT ON TANZANIA

Increasing outreach to women through policy and partnerships

Panelists at the 2017 MicroLead Peer-Learning workshop's opening session focused on both global and Tanzania-specific issues in women's economic empowerment. Tanzania's [Strategic Framework for Economic Empowerment](#) is multi-sectoral, and provides action items to deal with many of the constraints that still face women. These include 1) creating a digital identity, 2) formulating new policies that reflect the interests of women, 3) disaggregation of data (funds and resources must not be "gender blind"), and 4) increased opportunities for women to take leadership positions in women's forums and other groups on all levels – local and national.

The session was moderated by Ivana Damjanov of UNCDF Tanzania. Henri Dommel (UNCDF HQ) opened the session, and panelists were:

- Alvaro Rodriguez, UN Resident Coordinator
- Maria Karadenizli, UN Women Country Director
- Beng'i Issa, Executive Secretary, National Economic Empowerment Council
- Irene Mlola, Operations Director, FSDT

“Women’s economic empowerment is not simply a technical issue. It touches very much on the social norms, on stereotypes, on how women are perceived within their households and communities, so it is a social issue, it is a human development issue. And unless we challenge and we change some of these norms that have an impact on how women are perceived and how women perceive themselves, I don’t think we can see a lot of change. One of the key elements is investing in changing these perceptions, among women themselves, and in their communities.”

~ Maria Karadenizli, UN Women Country Director



Women as Active Participants in the Development Process

On Tuesday, March 7th, participants heard from Gillian Brown, a specialist in gender and social development, on what it really means to involve women in the process of designing programs and products. Financial services are an essential part of women’s economic empowerment, and both institutions and policy-makers are key to helping them flourish.

Brown noted that throughout the world, women carry the commitment of caring work and unpaid work, and influence generations in development. Women can make and influence decisions that impact their families, communities and nations as a whole. There is no downside to women’s economic empowerment. It is multi-dimensional, and we are no longer guessing that women should be a focus to our programs. There is now robust evidence that links women’s economic empowerment and gender equality to economic growth.

According to Brown, there are a number of ideas to focus on that can have a great impact on empowering women, and involving them in the design process. These go beyond the first step of ensuring that women’s voices are reflected during initial research and include:

- ◆ **See beyond women’s incomes:** When tracking data directly from women, consider all of their assets – financial, social, and physical. Women need control over their incomes and assets, and we must look for ways in which financial services can allow women this control in the same way they have it with informal services (via savings groups, for example).
- ◆ **Disaggregate data:** Sex-disaggregated data is essential to understanding similarities and differences between women and men. A further step must be taken, as different segments of women access and use services in different ways, whether they are elite, non-elite, entering the job market after school or have left school early, married, single, widowed, etc.
- ◆ **Include men and the communities of which women are part:** Women are constrained by power relationships both within families and the communities in which they live. A clear idea of how these function – with information from women themselves – can help us to redesign products and programmes so that women have more agency. Men’s role is critical, and we must design in ways that do not increase violence within households. Make sure both men and the larger community get the information once it is processed, so they can be part of facilitating and mobilizing change.
- ◆ **Show the private sector the bottom line:** For women to be part of the institutional design process, the private sector must see that there is more than simply human rights to serving women with products that they will want.

REMITTANCES IN INDONESIA

How data helped the World Bank, IMF and regulators in Indonesia take women seriously as customers of financial institutions

Gillian Brown related to workshop participants an example of how “data from the bottom up” can influence both products and policy surrounding financial services for women. While managing research at the World Bank on how remittances are used in poor villages in Indonesia, Brown gathered information on women going abroad to be maids in Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore. These women were trapped in endless cycles of migration – whatever they sent home was gone by the time they came back. Remittances helped families to improve their homes, buy a fridge, TV, microwave or motorbike, but when the women returned and remittances ceased, these assets were sold.

The maids faced shoddy treatment from the banking system, with services that were not useful or appropriate, and were discouraged from using formal products. Banks’ opening hours, poor customer service and unwelcoming treatment included requiring these maids to enter a branch by the back doors to send remittances home. They were not allowed to go to the front with other customers. KYC requirements placed great restrictions on them as well. At the same time, many informal instruments existed to help women send money home, albeit with a huge fee.

Into this context came the Bank of Indonesia, which was not impressed or convinced by the data. According to Brown, the partnership between researchers and the Bank was “an arranged marriage that got off to a very rocky start.” To make their point, researchers pulled out the data from the ministries and the banks, and the World Bank team looked at the data from informal remittances. After a year of data collection and analysis, the team was able to show that women from poor villages made up 80% of the 800,000 migrant workers that left Indonesia each year. Additionally, they found that these women sent back a larger percentage of remittances than men did, and each year more than 8 billion dollars’ worth of remittances came back into the country – the second highest source of foreign exchange after oil. Only 10% of these remittances came back through the formal sector.

Because the informal sector gave women limited control over funds, the long-term impact of lifting families out of poverty was small. Brown stated that once the remittance data was clear, “the next thing I knew, I’m sitting with the IMF and the Governor of the Bank of Indonesia talking about housemaids.” Since the research exercise, the Bank of Indonesia has changed policy and KYC requirements, and there are more programs helping women to invest at local level, keep control over finances, and to get services. The data, showing the amount of money lost to the formal system because of poor and inappropriate service, caused both policy and the private sector to change.

The Way Forward

Over the course of the program, MicroLead made great strides in extending formal financial services to low-income women in rural areas, and lessons from partners must now be scaled up to reach even more women. Financial services for women should no longer be considered projects of corporate-social responsibility or simple social outreach. Women present a viable and profitable target group for banks, and through the experience of MicroLead partners and other stakeholders such as the Bank of Indonesia (see above), they should be provided services that fit their incomes, goals, and needs.

To effectively reach women, an approach such as the European Investment Bank’s “Protect, Invest, Impact” strategy could be adopted on a large scale, especially by donors of large scale. Given societal norms, women’s rights must be protected, and when large development partners (like the EIB) are involved, the will to do so

grows. There is a need to increase the amount of money invested in women through financial intermediaries and onlending to FSPs. Collecting disaggregated data to show the potential of women and their contribution to the economy is one step that must become standard to help drive investment. Finally, a great impact can be made by improving product and programme design for women. A view towards building up to more significant economic activities for women, such as access to credit in savings-led models, could help women to grow their businesses.

Tanzania, the workshop's host country, is a great example of the potential for growth in terms of women's economic empowerment, and an ideal place in which to further advances made by MicroLead partners. Tanzania has 11 million savings group members, 70% of whom are women, and 90% of whom live in rural areas. According to Henri Dommel, beyond Tanzania, the innovations developed by MicroLead should be embedded into UNCDF. These include advocating for positive regulatory changes, testing of innovations like agency banking, linking that agenda to the real economy, focusing on women-led enterprise and entrepreneurship, and then planning how to link to the role of technology and leveraging DFS to truly empower women economically. The final step will be deciding how to contribute through that agenda to the agenda of domestic resource mobilization, domestic resources and women's savings at scale, reinvesting into local economies, and leveraging the legacy of MicroLead to build stronger and more resilient financial services that continue to serve women.

Finally, when scaling up outreach to women, providers and promoters must keep in mind that both women's wants and needs and the world will change. As Alvaro Rodriguez reminded workshop participants, the challenge is to provide more control and choice without prescribing what these will be. "It is essential to enhance people's choices, whatever those choices are. We must keep in mind that we cannot predetermine what the end result will be of that enlargement of choices."



At the opening session, Henri Dommel compliments MicroLead's success and challenges partners to go further. MicroLead partners have embraced women as a core part of their business model, reaching them through partnerships and technical assistance, especially in difficult contexts and rural areas – exciting areas of sustainability and further reach. MicroLead's eagerness to share and develop a community of practice, is a basis for future expansion of UNCDF activities and strategy on financial inclusion. Looking at the example of Tanzania, we have the potential to go to scale. "There is tremendous potential to mainstream MicroLead's lessons in all countries where UNCDF works."

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

BUILDING THE FINANCIAL CAPABILITY OF CLIENTS

“Because it can facilitate effective product use, financial education is critical to financial inclusion. It can help clients to both develop the skills to compare and select the best products for their needs and empower them to exercise their rights and responsibilities in the consumer protection equation.” ~ Monique Cohen, Founder, Microfinance Opportunities

Financial education to increase the financial literacy of FSP clients has been a core focus of MicroLead since its beginning. During that time, many steps forward have been taken in terms of better understanding how financial education can – and at times cannot – lead to more than just changes in knowledge. Changing behavior, and building financial capability, are now at the center of programmes that build on good practices in educating clients.

In Tanzania, Fundación Capital and Khangarue Media are two organizations at the forefront of building financial capability. Both shared the lessons they have learned in developing effective programmes with workshop participants:

- 1. Know your audience the way a marketer would:** The foundation for a strong programme is built during the initial stages of getting to know your target audience. What work do they do? What is their family situation? What does their day look like? What financial strains and responsibilities do they have? Client-centered research should not only be leveraged for product design and refinement but also to inform outreach and customer service, and should use a “human-centered” approach, too.
- 2. To find inspiration, look outside of education:** Research has shown that traditional, workshop-based training approaches do not necessarily produce the types of changes that FSPs need, and are not time or cost-effective for institutions to take on in the long-term. Khangarue has taken this learning to heart, developing *Noa Ubongo*, a YouTube-based series of videos that are culturally and demographically relevant, delivered in Kiswahili and easy to access and share. Fundación Capital develops local language applications shared via tablet.
- 3. Treat financial education like a BRAND:** According to both experts, creativity and aesthetics matter. Just as with products, key messages must “stick” with participants and be simple to remember as well as actionable. Ideas must be tested, iterated and improved. Fundación Capital’s method includes testing both messages and images used in apps on an ongoing basis, to ensure that they are interesting and engaging to participants.
- 4. There are no shortcuts to localizing content:** When it comes to financial education, a plethora of materials that can be adapted and modified exist. The key is to actually doing the adaptation and modification. Clients should see themselves reflected in the situations, characters, and problems presented in the education they receive, and relate to the struggles and successes.
- 5. Find the universal human truth and connect on an emotional level:** Sometimes the affective or emotional side of clients is neglected. For example, Khangarue’s mission is to help their target segment, youth, to develop basic skills that will help them to become financially independent. To do this, they must believe that their past does not determine their future. While the very real challenges that low-income clients face cannot be ignored, the financial education must inspire them to take positive steps forward.

When it comes to financial services, some engagement becomes advertising and “trying to sell stuff,” rather than providing essential information for making good choices. While advertising and marketing have great overlap with financial education, to be effective in changing behavior it must provide an opportunity to

HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN AND RAPID-PROTOTYPING FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES

Because the 2017 workshop was the final workshop planned for the MicroLead Expansion programme, an important objective was for participants to learn new skills that could be taken home and used to refine existing products and develop new ones. Ideas from behavioral economics, aimed at increasing not just uptake but usage of products, were at the center of the workshop.

Alexandra Fiorillo², Founder and Principal at GRID Impact, a consulting firm specializing in HCD, was invited to walk participants through the HCD process. She also led a rapid-prototyping exercise and field trip to apply learnings through a “design sprint,” a process through which participants generate an idea, build it, test it in the field, and learn from their experiences.



Workshop participants compete in the “Marshmallow Challenge.”
Photo credit: Khangarue Media, Ltd.

What is Human-Centered Design?

HCD is a process used to develop innovative solutions to a variety of complex problems. Through empathy, co-creation, and iterative prototyping, we arrive at new solutions that are grounded in a deep understanding of people’s needs, wants and desires.

What is Rapid Prototyping?

*A **prototype** is a rough representation of an idea used to understand and evaluate that idea. **Prototyping** allows the designer to receive feedback, understand constraints and test assumptions without the risk of wasting time and resources.²*



1. Discover



2. Concept



3. Prototype



4. Experiment

The Marshmallow Challenge & Rapid-Prototyping

To introduce the rapid-prototyping process, Fiorillo led the “Marshmallow Challenge,” an activity in which participants work in teams using a variety of materials – string, spaghetti and tape – to build the tallest freestanding structure possible. At the top of the structure, teams were challenged to place an entire marshmallow.

² Definitions and information in this section are included thanks to Alexandra Fiorillo. For the full presentation, see www.mleworkshop2017.org.

The marshmallow challenge brings out two important lessons to apply to real-life design, according to Fiorillo:

☆ **Lesson #1: Prototyping matters.**

The way that most participants complete the marshmallow challenge demonstrates the importance of prototyping. In the majority of groups, participants work in a linear fashion: orienting themselves to the task, planning, building, and then seeing if the marshmallow will or will not stay on top. There is very little building and lots of talking. Fiorillo explained that in most marshmallow challenges, groups like recent business school graduates do poorly, spending too much time talking. The group that performs best? Recent kindergarten graduates. They're free of preconceived notions of how things are supposed to work, and are, therefore, more able to think "outside the box." From the challenge, the importance of prototyping becomes clear: we must be constantly iterating and constantly learning, with as much doing and testing as talking. The prototyping process flips the normal design process, as ideally there is lots of building and figuring out what works and what doesn't.

"The process of human-centered design really relies on empathy, so having empathy for users that you're designing for, co-creation meaning that the users who are going to use the solution are actually part of the design process."

~ Alexandra Fiorillo, GRID Impact



MicroLead partners create their product prototypes.

Photo credit: Khangarue Media, Ltd.

☆ **Lesson #2: Diverse skills matter.**

The second important lesson from the marshmallow challenge is the strength of working in a team; specifically, a team with a diverse set of skills. Working in a team and getting ideas from other people. While lawyers and engineers often do poorly on the challenge, groups that pair CEOs plus executive assistants tend to do well, as they fill each other's gaps. In real life, when prototyping a new product or service, similar diverse groups of people should work together so that different strengths and weaknesses, and different perspectives, are brought to the design process.

After the marshmallow challenge, groups applied the lessons learned to prototypes created together, each choosing one problem or issue to solve. Fiorillo outlined what she calls “the prototyping mindset” for participants (see below).

THE PROTOTYPING MINDSET

Designing for innovations that are feasible, viable, and desirable

1. **Fail fast, fail *early*:** Part of prototyping is testing ideas to see what doesn't work
2. **Create *with*, not *for*:** Keep clients at the center, giving their ideas and opinions
3. **Iterate constantly:** Part of the process is flexibility and making changes
4. **Make it tangible:** Whenever possible, show clients what you mean with pictures, examples, and physical prototypes – don't just explain and talk
5. **Zoom in and zoom out:** Look at the idea from multiple angles – in the boardroom, and in the field

Taking the Prototypes to the Field

On Wednesday, March 9th – International Women's Day – workshop participants took their prototypes to the field to get feedback from real bank clients. NMB and TPB hosted groups at locations throughout greater Dar es Salaam, allowing groups to meet their clients and find out what they liked and did not like about the prototypes.

Below: Rapid-prototyping in the field with NMB and TPB Clients



Much like Client Journey Mapping, an exercise taught and led by 17Triggers at the 2015 MicroLead partner workshop, HCD and rapid prototyping provided participants with an introduction to a skill that is applicable to their institutions, and can be brought back and used within their own contexts. Participants noted a great deal of learning from the field visit – differences in the reactions of young vs. older people, areas in which products were too complicated, and pictures used that did not evoke the ideas desired by designers. The core message, that products and services should not just be designed in headquarters in a conference room, was received by all. The activity showed a real example of co-creation, which participants will be able to put into practice upon their return home.



“From my perspective, the key difference [of rapid-prototyping] is that from early on in the conceptualization of a solution you are involving the customer, and it allows a lot of iterations. You can go to the field, and if customers raise an idea that is very different from where you started it provides for the flexibility to modify, to make changes. You can go again and again, engaging with customers, until you arrive at a solution that they agree to and they can support and buy in to.”

~ Mercus Chigoga, NBS Bank, Malawi

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CLIENT-CENTERED DESIGN IN AGENCY BANKING

“It’s not just about doing a program to reach X number of people and then you are done. It’s about really building sustainable and strong interventions so that once the institutions know how to serve poor customers, the excluded populations, with the right products, right delivery channels and the right mind-set; then, you bring in a sustainable change management within the institutions so that they have a better understanding and appreciation of their customers. They’re more empathetic to the customer needs. Then they know how to address those needs through better designed products and better designed channels.” ~ Prabhat Labh, Program Manager Financial Inclusion, The MasterCard Foundation

Part of helping institutions to truly know how to serve low-income customers and become more empathetic towards their needs is giving them the right tools to learn about customers directly. At each year’s workshop, MicroLead has brought in such a practical tool. This year, HCD and rapid prototyping were the focus; in 2015, another useful tool called Client Journey Mapping (CJM) was included in the workshop, led by 17Triggers.

Many MicroLead partners put their new knowledge into practice in their home countries. Sinapi Aba Savings & Loan, with technical support from Opportunity International, completed a CJM exercise in Ghana to specifically improve their agency banking products, and presented their experience to workshop participants in 2017.



Starting with the question “What do clients need in a savings (deposit) service?,” Sinapi Aba applied CJM, and found that Susu collection would best meet their capabilities and clients’ needs. This method best fit clients’ desires for accessibility, convenience, low fees and charges, and transparency – four themes that any financial institution could also explore when assessing client needs. Digitization of the Susu model has also helped Sinapi Aba make the product even more accessible and convenient.

Some of the key successes experienced by Sinapi Aba include:

- ◆ Massive “take-up” – increase in number of savings accounts by over 130,000
- ◆ Deposit portfolio boost – USD 5 Million (24% of total deposit portfolio)
- ◆ Increase in capital from savings mobilization
- ◆ Reduced cost of borrowing from external funders

Sinapi Aba’s journey was not without challenges, yet by keeping clients at the center, using tools like CJM and rapid-prototyping, and considering similar mitigating solutions, it was successful. Other institutions may experience similar successes and steps forward when employing CJM.

Type	Challenge	Mitigating Solutions
OPERATIONAL	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Security of cash collected by MB’s in the field from theft and fraud. 2. Clients complained of inconsistencies of MB visits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SASL introduced a threshold on the amount a single client can deposit and the amount an agent can hold. • Lagging field withdrawals by 24 hrs to allow for the necessary due diligence. • Tightened demarcated locations (zoning) for supervision.
TECHNICAL	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fluctuation/lack of mobile network coverage. 2. Intermittency in the delivery of SMS alerts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SASL POS devices use dual SIM which allows agents to rely on multiple networks. • Although this is dependent on MNO, a call centre was established for clients to seek clarification.
FINANCIAL	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. High cost of POS devices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SASL adopted alternative solutions (Xtigi phones) which are cheaper and very durable.

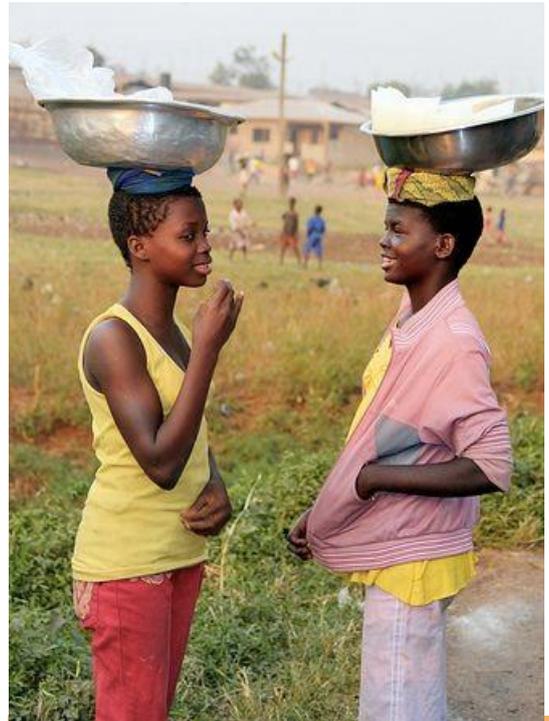
MICROLEAD’S KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT PRODUCTS: A CONTRIBUTION TO ALL STAKEHOLDERS

In 2017, MicroLead is publishing a paper on small-balance savers with EA Consultants, and a series of DFS toolkits with PHB Development. All publications focus on the real-life insights and experiences of MicroLead partners. These new knowledge management products were showcased during the workshop, and will allow those outside of the MicroLead programme to benefit from the myriad lessons learned.

Pulling Levers toward Sustainability: A Framework for Small-Balance Deposit Mobilization

Barbara Magnoni of EA Consultants discussed the framework for small-balance savers presented in the paper created for MicroLead, as well as real-life examples from the MicroLead partners interviewed for case studies. Magnoni advised that small-balance deposit products should be considered only after the FSP has considered the environmental factors that surround it. (See image below.)

Magnoni emphasized that while the move towards financial inclusion by development partners and many governments is a huge driver of FSPs that target small-balance savers today, many providers that decide to approach this market segment think first in terms of numbers. She noted that **“one of the key findings of our research with MicroLead partners was that increasing savings balances can be a critical lever to improve the business case, often more so than scale.”**



*Making small-balance savings accounts both useful to clients and profitable to institutions is a challenge for FSPs. EA Consultants offers solutions to stakeholders in their recent paper with MicroLead.
Photo Credit: Barbara Magnoni*



Magnoni introduced a set of viability levers for institutions to consider to help them make a “Go/No Go” decision about offering savings products to small-balance clients as well as for those already offering such products to decide whether to make new investments or even to exit. For those who decide to go forward, the levers should help to improve sustainability of the products, and even to arrive at profitability in a shorter timeframe.

She emphasized that **“we need very large economies of scale to scale a losing business out of its losses.”** For example, if an institution’s unit cost is \$4, while unit revenue is \$2, it will lose no matter how many accounts are opened. 10,000 clients will mean a loss of \$20,000, while 1 million equals a loss of \$2 million. Considering more than scale is imperative for those developing new products to ensure that institutions do not create a lose-lose solution.



Magnoni focused on the importance of increasing balances for sustainability and to ensure that products remain available to low-balance clients, noting:

- ◆ If balances do not increase, FSPs may seek revenues in other, more lucrative segments that have more cross-selling opportunities or potential for scale;
- ◆ An FSP may drift up to higher-income customers to make up lost revenue, and;
- ◆ There is a risk of drifting away from female clients and excluded communities with low or irregular incomes.

Finally, Magnoni echoed the importance of client segmentation, and segmentation beyond finding niches that are either too broad or too narrow. For example, if a FSP looks only at account balance, they may see two clients with the same balance as the same and miss enormous opportunities for providing better and more targeted service, which could lead to higher balances and therefore higher profitability. To segment in a useful way, indicators and M&E systems should:

1. Be measurable and identifiable
2. Examine heterogeneity among segments
3. Examine homogeneity within the segment
4. Be accessible and actionable
5. Show segments large enough to be profitable

The full paper (which will be published in 2017 and available via the website www.unCDF.org/microlead) will address the environmental factors and viability factors in depth, along with case studies featuring MicroLead partners.



Workshop participants practice “pulling levers through sustainability” through a group activity led by Barbara Magnoni.

How to Succeed in Your Digital Journey

MicroLead partners have learned many lessons about developing digital financial services within their own institutions, and have much to share with other stakeholders seeking to do the same. PHB Development, the authors of MicroLead's upcoming series of DFS **toolkits**, led a workshop session on the challenges faced in implementing DFS and showcasing the various business models used by MicroLead partners.

☆ **DFS Challenge #1: Finding the right partner / provider.**



Participants give examples of how they have focused on developing DFS in their institutions.

Photo Credit: Khangarue Media, Ltd.

Many FSPs and mobile providers are interested in delivering financial services, or improving the services they have already developed. Partnerships between MNOs and FSPs are at the heart of reaching customers, but present a number of challenges for each type of institution. Sinapi Aba Savings & Loan serves many rural customers, and took a light touch approach to partnering with MNOs. To make sure they could best serve their clients, they chose a POS device that could work with more than one SIM card, thus partnering with multiple MNOs and ensuring that they used the right networks for their customers by location.

Training by MNOs for FSP staff was a partnership challenge by credit unions in Liberia, according to Thomas Demawu. Likewise, telco staff sometimes also do not understand the products and partnerships, so training for them is equally important. There is a lot of mutual education to be done between FSPs and MNOs that must take place from day one to ensure strong partnerships.

Finally, creating an agreement that works for all partners, and is clearly supported by senior management, is a good practice for facing partnership challenges before they start. This can help to define processes to follow if mobile networks go down, and specify charges in writing, providing recourse mechanisms if they vary in practice. Stephen Mwaniki of Equity Bank Tanzania advised that patience and persistence are important for such partnerships given that even with an agreement, issues will still arise and need to be dealt with using proper channels.

☆ **DFS Challenge #2: Managing liquidity.**

Sinapi Aba Savings & Loan took several steps to manage issues of liquidity when transitioning from a credit-only institution to a deposit-taking FSP. Using an updated type of Susu collector, a traditional form of savings in Ghana, Sinapi Aba first made sure to start with savings and build up a base of capital. Next they focused on managing agents and the issues of fraud and risk that arise when these agents are known by many, and known to carry large amounts of cash. For Sinapi Aba, the key question was: How much money should each Susu agent go to the field with at any particular time? To mitigate risk, they put a limit on how much each client could deposit each day, and required clients to request withdrawals twenty-four hours in advance. This option protects the agent against issues of theft and fraud and at the same time protects the branch against serious liquidity issues.

NBS Bank in Malawi faced a different set of challenges with DFS and liquidity than was faced by Sinapi Aba in Ghana. Mercus Chigoga explained that NBS built their own agent network, given that Malawi has a highly rural population with very limited income. They looked for businesses in rural areas, although many of those businesses did not have sufficient capital to serve clients' needs, and these agents had to make more frequent visits to the bank to make sure they had cash on hand. Bank branches are often located far from agents' businesses, and visiting the branch often meant that agents were closed for several days, with clients having no access to NBS services. To help manage agents' liquidity problems, NBS revised their commission structure and built up their own network in locations with more economic activities. They also expanded their network by partnering with an MNO and leveraging its agent network, linking mobile money and mobile wallet products and providing even more services to clients.

SUCCEEDING IN YOUR OWN DIGITAL JOURNEY

MicroLead and PHB Development publish a series of toolkits to show FSPs how to choose models and face challenges

MicroLead partners have become experts in developing alternative delivery channels to reach low-income clients, with many choosing digital solutions. To ensure that the many lessons learned throughout the programme's lifetime were not lost, and would be made available to all stakeholders embarking on similar digital journeys, MicroLead teamed up with PHB Development to research partners' experiences and document them in a practical way.

This project resulted in a series of six [toolkits](#), publicly available for any stakeholder getting started on or facing challenges with their digital products. The six toolkits and associated case studies can be found online, and focus on:

1. Use Mobile as a Tool
2. Be an Agent
3. Leverage an Existing Agent Network
4. Develop Your Agent Network
5. Develop Your Mobile Banking Channel
6. Be a Provider

MicroLead partners remain committed to implementing digital financial services so that they can bring the bank even closer to their rural clients, while exploring the models and learning from the experiences of their colleagues. They cited asking the right questions, incorporating training, and addressing challenges up front as important steps to take in their own contexts.

Many continued to focus on women and girls, and the role that financial education will play on the client side, with one participant stating: **“Digital financial services need to go together with financial literacy as a holistic approach. And this means we must not forget financial education specifically for women.”** In addition to reaching any and all potential clients in rural area, steps forward in DFS will very likely help MicroLead partners to continue reaching women and achieving MicroLead's goals of economic empowerment for women and girls.



“According to the McKinsey Global Institute, digital finance has the potential to provide access to financial services for 1.6 billion people in emerging economies, more than half of them women and could create up to 95 million new jobs across all sectors of the economy. In a nutshell, digital finance ecosystems may translate into a win-win-win situation, benefiting financial service providers (FSPs), clients and the social ecosystem as a whole. MicroLead wants to share these lessons learnt to FSPs worldwide interested in the digital finance transition in order to spread the delivery of better and far-reaching financial services.”

~ MicroLead, Digital Financial Service Toolkit “Teaser”

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THE NEXT FRONTIER: REACHING YOUTH

“For NMB, we convinced our management of the business sense of reaching youth. What is key for us as a bank is that eventually we want to have more depositors than borrowers. If you look at the market right now, many banks are dying because people do not have the saving culture, and many borrowers do not know how to manage and repay their loans. Building financial capability for youth and offering them a chance to practice via our product will develop our future market.” ~ NMB Bank

Many MicroLead partners have expressed an interest in reaching new client segments with their innovative products, and have specifically identified youth as a potential segment. To help partners learn more, MicroLead brought in local experts from Tanzania with experience in reaching youth with financial services and financial education. NMB shared their experience in developing and offering their *Wajibu* suite of products and education for students, youth, and parents, while Well Told Story explained their Shujazz materials and how they were designed. Finally, PSI Tanzania shared their expertise in reaching youth from the domain of public health. Key takeaways from the panel included:

- 1. Parents need to know who their children are dealing with when it comes to banks:** NMB, for example, meets new youth clients through schools and open days where both children and parents can learn about accounts and ask questions of bank staff. The trust and acceptance of parents, who are often the gatekeepers for youth under 18 years old, is paramount to offering a successful financial product.
- 2. Youth have sources of funds, and have money to save:** Panelists’ experiences are that youth have money to save. They receive money on birthdays, if they do well in school, from daily allowances from parents, on confirmation days, and sometimes need help in identifying these sources and realize that savings is possible. Additionally, youth are sometimes more open to new ways of saving, such as using digital products.
- 3. Youth need education and opportunities to practice:** Quality of education is key when dealing with youth and financial education should be a “way of life” for banks. What is more, branch staff need training and support to learn how to talk with young clients, as per NMB’s experience. Well Told Story echoed this advice, adding that contextualizing education and marketing so that it appeals to young men and women and reflects their lives is a must for any institution targeting youth. The wide appeal of Shujazz, delivered through SMS and available online, also shows that youth are open to receiving education using technological delivery channels.

Photo credit: Madeleine Moore, PSI Tanzania



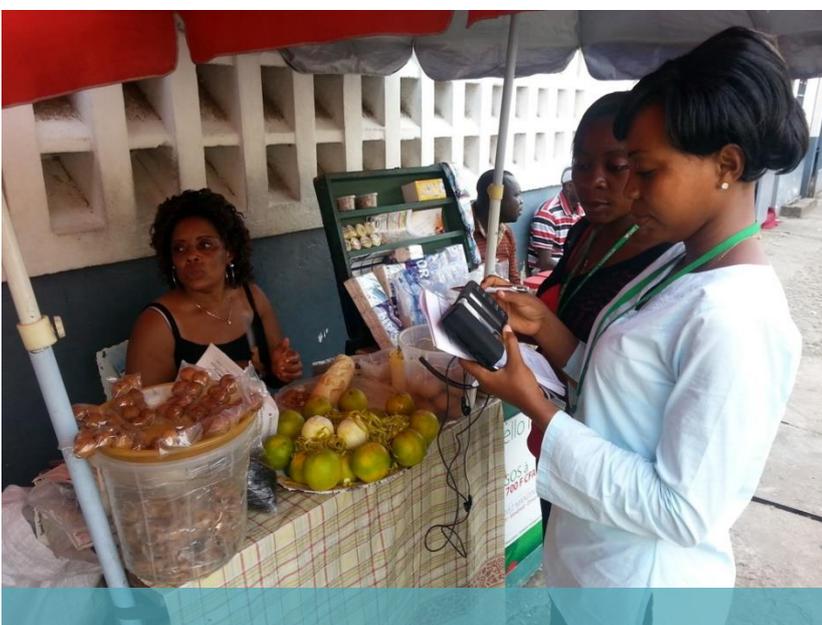
BUILDING ON MICROLEAD'S LEGACY

While much ground has been broken through MicroLead and MicroLead Expansion programming, there is still a long way to go in offering savings to the unbanked – particularly women and those in rural areas. Over two billion adults still do not have access to financial services, more than half of whom are female (1.1 billion). Lessons learned and products developed under MicroLead can contribute much to offering customer-centric deposit products and financial services to these underserved potential clients.

MicroLead partners have developed both new products, many using technology and ADCs, and new skills, such as Client Journey Mapping and rapid prototyping, that will last far beyond the end of this phase of the programme. The next phase, Digital Inclusion for Women's Empowerment (DIWE) will leverage the lessons learned during the first two program phases, and will focus on ADCs, informal groups, rural areas and women to:

- ♦ Use technology to reach scale, educate, and build FSP capacity;
- ♦ Empower women through stronger social cohesion via informal groups;
- ♦ Expand economic growth through domestic resource mobilization (i.e. savings);
- ♦ Continue to create enabling environments through advocacy at the regulatory level;
- ♦ Capture market effects at regulatory and FSP levels;
- ♦ Strengthen demand-driven knowledge sharing, and;
- ♦ Maintain a client-centric approach via HCD, Customer Journey Mapping and the application of lessons from behavioral economics.

Overall, more than two million new clients have access to safe and affordable services as a direct result of MicroLead's efforts. The next phase promises new innovations, particularly for women in rural areas, to further expand these efforts, many of which cannot yet be imagined as we close out our second phase.



“The market is ready for us to do more...and to build on what we're doing on MicroLead to open up to other actors and work with them and help them to engage in the digital finance adventure.”

~ Christian Loupeda, Grameen Foundation

Above quote is sourced from the document “7 Things to Know About MicroLead.”

Left: Agents at CEC Cameroon provide financial services to clients in a local market using a POS device. Photo Credit: Eric Kenkolla.

REFLECTIONS ON MICROLEAD EXPANSION

Expanding Savings Programmes to More Rural Clients

As the MicroLead Expansion Programme completes its final year, partners have continued their focus on reaching rural clients, particularly women, by leveraging technology. Alternative delivery mechanisms (ADCs) for savings products have been developed and piloted in numerous iterations throughout Africa and Asia, resulting in over 25 new products.

Under MicroLead Expansion, a total of 21 partner FSPs have greatly surpassed the goal of reaching 550,000 low-income savers in rural areas, 70% of whom are rural and 73% women. These FSPs have tapped into the knowledge base of MicroLead partners as well as technical service providers to embark on savings group linkages, new customer engagement strategies, and strong marketing campaigns. Government agencies in target countries are now requesting support from UNCDF to realize similar achievements for larger numbers of their unbanked citizens.

What's more, through peer-learning and dissemination workshops and learning visits organized by MicroLead, partners have both learned from each other and involved clients in each step of the product development process. Financial education materials have also been designed, to help clients build the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors necessary to become economically active. New skills mean that organizations involved in the programme can continue to refine their products as well as to develop new ones, thus allowing MicroLead's contribution to multiply far beyond the end of 2017.

Knowledge generated:

- Over a dozen case studies and policy/ programme briefs outlining the experience of various MicroLead partners were published in digests and online, in locations such as the Financial Inclusion Digest, Next Billion, and Mobile Money Africa's newsletter.
- Over 20 presentations by MicroLead staff and/or partners were made at international conferences and workshops, such as the SEEP Network Annual Conferences in September 2015 and 2016, the Boulder Microfinance Institute in Turin Italy in July 2015 and 2016, and the Savings Group Conference in Lusaka Zambia in November 2015.
- Knowledge documents were produced by MicroLead partners PHB Academy and EA Consultants, describing *How to Succeed in Your Digital Journey* and *Pulling Levers towards Sustainability*, respectively.
- Blog articles and newsletters have highlighted internal lessons learned and knowledge shared. Weekly Digests have highlighted lessons learned and breakthroughs in the digital finance, microfinance, and savings industries.

These knowledge management products are available to the greater microfinance community, and countless other institutions will be able to benefit from MicroLead's learnings for years to come.

ABOUT UNCDF

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 by showing how localized investments – through fiscal decentralization, innovative municipal finance, and structured project finance – can drive public and private funding that underpins local economic expansion and sustainable development. By strengthening how finance works for poor people at the household, small enterprise, and local infrastructure levels, UNCDF contributes to SDG 1 on eradicating poverty and SDG 17 on the means of implementation. By identifying those market segments where innovative financing models can have transformational impact in helping to reach the last mile and address exclusion and inequalities of access, UNCDF contributes to a number of different SDGs.

ABOUT MICROLEAD

MicroLead, a UNCDF global initiative which challenges financial service providers to develop, pilot and scale deposit services for low income, rural populations, particularly women, was initiated in 2008 with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and expanded in 2011 with support from The MasterCard Foundation and LIFT Myanmar. It contributes to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 1 (end poverty), SDG 2 (end hunger, achieve food security and promote sustainable agriculture) and SDG 5 (achieve gender equality and economic empowerment of women), as well as the Addis-Abeba Financing for Development Agenda (domestic resource mobilization).

MicroLead works with a variety of FSPs and Technical Service Providers (TSPs) to reach into previously untapped rural markets with demand-driven, responsibly priced products offered via alternative delivery channels such as rural agents, mobile phones, roving agents, point of sales devices and informal group linkages. The products are offered in conjunction with financial education so that customers not only have access but actually use quality services.

With a specific emphasis on savings, women, rural markets, and technology, MicroLead is a performance-based programme that supports partnerships which build the capacity of financial institutions to pilot and roll out sustainable financial services, particularly savings. As UNCDF rolls out the next phase of MicroLead, it will continue to focus on facilitating innovative partnerships that encourage FSPs to reach into rural remote populations, build on existing digital financial infrastructure and emphasize customer-centric product design.

ABOUT THE MASTERCARD FOUNDATION

The MasterCard Foundation works with visionary organizations to provide greater access to education, skills training and financial services for people living in poverty, primarily in Africa. As one of the largest private foundations its work is guided by its mission to advance learning and promote financial inclusion to create an inclusive and equitable world. Based in Toronto, Canada, its independence was established by MasterCard when the Foundation was created in 2006.



MicroLead/UN Capital Development Fund

Two United Nations Plaza, 26th Floor
New York, NY 10017
United States of America

Tel: +1-212-906-6565
Fax: +1-212-906-6479

Email: pamela.eser@uncdf.org
Website: www.uncdf.org/en/microlead
Twitter: [@UNCDFMicroLead](https://twitter.com/UNCDFMicroLead)