

TRENDS AND ISSUES IN MICROFINANCE INFORMAL INFORMATION EXCHANGE MEETING

HELD ON MONDAY 31st January, 2005 AT FAIRWAY HOTEL

The theme of this quarter's Information Exchange meeting was "**The media and financial services providers: Getting the story straight**". The meeting was attended by 57 participants. Mr. Christopher Musoke, Deputy Manager, DFID Financial Sector Deepening Uganda Project (FSDU), facilitated the meeting. Mr. Henry Mbaguta of the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development represented the Chairman of the forum, Mr. Keith Muhakanizi, who was unable to attend the meeting due to other duties.

Two presentations were made.

Highlights:

1st Presentation: "Making development newsworthy: Improving coverage of financial issues in the Ugandan media"

By: Mr. Gavin Anderson, Project Manager, ILO FIT-SEMA, Mr. Martin Ssemakula, Media Trainer, and Mr. Hamzat B. Ssenoga, Radio Programmes Producer, CBS FM

Mr. Anderson made a presentation on bridging the information gaps to improve the coverage of business issues in the Ugandan mass media. Mr. Ssenoga and Mr. Ssemakula made presentations on Microfinance Institutions and the Media with emphasis on the fact that MFIs have not utilized the media effectively. Further details can be obtained from the attached presentation files in .pdf

Questions and Comments

Q. How can the MFIs make the media their friends? Do we buy them dinner or what?

HB Ssenoga: MFIs should change their information desks to Media desks which can meet all information needs.

MS MFIs should note the following "Don'ts"

Do not work with news room editors or with marketing executives; they are only interested in selling space or airtime without developing a strategy for their clients.

GA URA has been successful with the media because they have an available and approachable public relations officer.

Comments:

- The MFIs do not have communications experts to be able to interact with journalists at the branch office level.
- The journalists may lack knowledge of financial services and the technical language and are not able to articulate the issues.

2nd Presentation: "The Microfinance Outreach Plan communication strategy"

By: Mr. Helton Achaye, Programme Manager, M.O.P. and Mr. Dennis Matanda, General Manager, TERP Group

Mr. Achaye gave a background to the need for a communications strategy for the Microfinance Industry while Mr. Matanda presented an overview of the communications strategy under development for the Microfinance Outreach Plan. Further details can be obtained from the attached presentation files in .pdf

Questions and Comments

Q. There is no mention of clients in the communications strategy presentation yet that is what it is all about?

DM Clients and other stakeholders are considered and there is a section of Strategic Stakeholders' Relationship Management (SSRM) which was not presented due to time constraints

Comments:

- There was a mention of "branding" in the presentation. It must be appreciated that "branding" can cover product imperfection, as in the case of cigarette products while on the other hand "branding" can mean having a commitment to maintain a certain quality.
- MFIs have failed to appreciate "Internal Marketing" The lack of will to share information with outsiders extends to the internal customers – staff. Information is shared at Board or Management level only.

Brief from the "Microfinance Pin Board"

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The next Trends and Issues in Microfinance – Informal Information Exchange meeting will take place on **Monday 25th April 2005 at 2.30 pm**. The organizers wish to satisfy the desires of the microfinance community for information and therefore invite suggestions for the theme. People with ideas for future presentations should communicate them to SUFFICE (hmutabazi@suffice.or.ug) or to FSDU (chris@fsdu.or.ug). FSDU invites other institutions that would like to sponsor the Trends and Issues meetings to contact us.

Best Regards



Christopher Musoke
DFID/FSDU Project