

Update on WSBI Programme to double the number of savings accounts



Ian Radcliffe

On 17 June, the WSBI Programme Steering Committee met for the third time to review progress on the launch of the WSBI 'doubling savings accounts' programme supported by funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. To recap, the dual objectives of the programme are to implement viable projects at selected WSBI member banks aimed at materially increasing the number of savings accounts for poor people, and to spread lessons from selected projects among WSBI membership and beyond. Progress during this year has primarily focused on the start-up phases of project implementation at the ten banks, agreeing and signing Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with the selected beneficiary banks and mobilising project teams (consultants).

At the time of going to print, projects have commenced at nine of the ten selected banks. The only one outstanding is in favour of Poste Maroc, where a request was received at the beginning of the year to postpone start-up whilst they were undergoing the establishment of a new entity, Al Barid Bank, which was launched on 8 June; the bank's management is now more able to turn their attention to this project.

Activities performed to date have broadly been undertaken in line with the original timetable planned, which envisaged a staggered start-up of projects over a 6 month period. Extensive exchanges between the banks and the WSBI project team have taken place. Detailed project descriptions, which form a part of Memoranda of Understanding, have been finalised and Terms of Reference for almost all projects have been established. The process followed is that these are confirmed or adjusted by WSBI project teams in consultation with the beneficiary banks during inception visits.

Separately, the Programme Technical Adviser working with WSBI, Stephen Peachey, has developed verifiable indicators of achievement for each project. This has proven to be a more challenging task than originally envisaged, in part because there are no standard microsavings indicators against which to benchmark the projects, and also because there needs to be a broadly consistent approach across all ten countries in order to be able to compare like with like.

Individual project progress is monitored closely by way of regular conference calls with beneficiary banks' project teams and WSBI team leaders on a weekly or 2-weekly basis. In some cases regular internal Project Steering Committee meetings have been scheduled within the beneficiary banks. Project Management visits

have been undertaken during the past couple of months by WSBI project managers Weselina Angelow and Kostas Konstantinopoulos to Lesotho PostBank, South Africa Postbank, Kenya Post Office Savings Bank, and SONAPOST Burkina Faso, Post Bank Uganda and Tanzania Postal Bank and the Programme Director Ian Radcliffe visited Vietnam Postal Savings Company.

A Mid-term workshop has been scheduled for 21 and 22 October 2010 in Cape Town, South Africa, immediately following the WSBI Postal Savings Banks Forum and the 100 year anniversary celebrations of South Africa Postbank. The aim of this workshop will be to allow the banks benefiting from the programme to share lessons learned with each other and to view one of the projects being performed on-site.

In the coming six months, external mid-term evaluation activities are due to commence, with surveys and visits to a number of the beneficiary banks commencing in early September by an external evaluator to assess early progress on the projects and to confirm the baselines from which they all start.

CONTACT

Ian.Radcliffe@savings-banks.com

Beneficiary Banks

- Bank BTN, Indonesia
- Kenya Postal Savings Banks Office (POSTBANK), Kenya
- Lesotho Postbank (LPB), Lesotho
- Postbank Uganda (PBU), Uganda
- Poste Maroc, Morocco
- Sistema FEDECRÉDITO, El Salvador
- SONAPOST, Burkina Faso
- South African Postbank (SAPO), South Africa
- Tanzania Post Bank, Tanzania
- Vietnam Postal Service Company (VPSC), Vietnam