FINANCIAL INCLUSION

**FINANCIAL INCLUSION** is the availability and usage of affordable financial products and services provided by professional institutions to all society segments including vulnerable and low-income population groups, and small businesses.

Financial inclusion is increasingly being recognised by the UN and other development partners as one of the most powerful tools to fight poverty. Access to finance is essential for enabling individuals and families to invest in their lives and shape their future as well as it is essential for businesses to invest, employ people, and grow. Formal financial systems strengthen the financial sector on a national level and enable resource mobilisation at household level.

**FINANCIAL INCLUSION IN RWANDA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Inclusion</th>
<th>Average Annual GDP Growth</th>
<th>Rwandan Population</th>
<th>GDP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>11,609,666</td>
<td>USD 697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FINANCIAL PRODUCTS AND SERVICES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Usage among adult population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Banked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other formal (non-bank)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excluded</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BIFSIR IS ALIGNED TO:**

- **EDPRS II**: Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy
- **FSDP II**: Financial Sector Development Programme
- **NMPIS II**: National Microfinance Policy Implementation Strategy
- **EDPRS II**: Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy
- **FSDP II**: Financial Sector Development Programme
- **NMPIS II**: National Microfinance Policy Implementation Strategy

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

1. **End poverty**
2. **Zero hunger**
3. **Health and education**
4. **Gender equality**
5. **Responsible consumption and production**

**THE BIFSIR PROGRAMME**

**THE BIFSIR PROGRAMME** (2010-2015) seeks to tear down the barriers for financial inclusion in Rwanda by contributing to capacity building of stakeholders at the macro, meso, micro and client levels, with an overall objective to make sustainable, high quality and diversified financial services accessible to the less advantaged. With a total budget of USD 8,038,364, BIFSIR is implemented with support from Republic of Korea-UNDP MDG Trust Fund, UNDP and UNCDF under the leadership of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN). Key partners include Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM), National Bank of Rwanda (BNR), Rwanda Cooperative Agency (RCA) and private sector players like the Association of Microfinance Institutions (AMIR), Microfinance institutions (MFIs), SACCOs and individual clients.

**BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE FINANCIAL SECTOR**

**BIFSIR THEMATIC AREA:**

- Village Savings and Loan Associations

**THE BIFSIR PROJECT IS MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF RWANDA, THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA, UNDP AND UNCDF.**

---

VSLAs have proven to be very effective in generating growth and building local capacity. A VSLA is a micro-credit model under which 25-30 members meet in a self-managed group once a week to save and borrow money. Members can take out smaller loans to invest in income generating activities or they can use the loans to meet expenses like school fees and medical bills. All members pay 10% interest and have three months to repay the loans, resulting in a steadily growing pool of money, which is distributed among the members once a year in a share-out ceremony. The VSLA methodology is designed to reach the poorest of the poor. The members are provided with security against unforeseen emergencies and they have access to means to invest in the future.

**A STEP TO TOWARDS USING FORMAL FINANCIAL SERVICES**

For many poor people a VSLA is the first encounter with financial services and products. VSLAs form an entry point that allows people to develop from being financially excluded to understanding and properly using formal financial services. BIFSIR has supported a local NGO, PAJER, to establish and train new VSLAs. With the support from BIFSIR:

- 535 new VSLAs have been formed with a total membership of 14,903 people
- 70% of the members are women
- 90% loan repayment rate
- 15,754 people received financial education
- 15.754 people received financial education

**IMPACT OF BIFSIR’S SUPPORT**

“My husband and I own a retail shop. Before we joined the VSLA, we depended on the harvest for having money to spend. At the time, we could only afford to buy small amounts of stock for the shop - not for more than RWF 10,000 (USD 12) - but now I regularly buy for RWF 50,000 (USD 62) and above. Because we can access loans at the VSLA, we have been able to make larger investments and our income has increased considerably. We can cover for our expenses; our children have health insurance and when they are old enough we can send them to school. We have bought a piece of land and we are planning to build a house for our family.”

Clematine
VSLA member and shop owner, Gatsibo District

VSLAs have demonstrated that even with very little funds, big results can be achieved.