

## **MicroSave's Optimising Performance and Efficiency Series Now Available Online!**

The Optimising Performance and Efficiency Series (OPE Series) brings together key insights and ideas on specific topics, with the clear objective of providing microfinance practitioners with practical and actionable advice. Based on *MicroSave's* acclaimed Briefing Notes and India Focus Notes series, the Optimising Performance and Efficiency Series provides succinct guidance on a variety of topics from product innovation to delivery system optimisation. Each of the booklets addresses a key topic that can transform a microfinance institution for the better. The Series will help improve microfinance institutions' double bottom line – both the business and its social performance.

*MicroSave* has developed a compendium of brief publications. The first three booklets under the OPE Series are now available:

### **Savings – An Essential Service for the Poor**

Increasingly MFIs have started to recognise the importance of savings as key component of financial inclusion and essential to providing useful financial services to the poor. It is clear, and now generally accepted, that poor want, need and do save - mainly through informal mechanisms. But practitioners estimate that savers stranded in the informal sector lose 15% to 25% of their savings annually – so clearly there are significant opportunities for formal and semi-formal sector financial institutions.

The organisational as well as the financial implications of mobilising voluntary savings are discussed in the series. Compulsory, locked-in savings are rigid and provide limited liquidity for the borrower, and thus a growing number of MFIs are providing voluntary, open-access savings for their clients. However, the viability of managing voluntary savings remains a challenge. These, and related issues, involved in savings promotion are also discussed in this series, together with the experiences of ASA, Grameen II and similar mass savings initiatives.

### **Product Development**

In order to respond to client needs, financial institutions must operate on a market-led approach that puts clients at the centre of the business. In the financial sector, responding to clients' demand through product development requires management/planning skills, preparation and commitment. *MicroSave* promotes systemic approach to product development designed to minimise the risks associated with what can be a complex task.

This series deals with product development based on market research to respond to the needs of the poor, as well as pricing of products based on cost, competition and demand. The series also addresses the assessment of risk involved, and organisational issues arising from delivering a particular service.

### **E/M- Banking**

The potential for mobile money and electronic/mobile banking (e/m-banking) to provide inclusive financial services to the poor is increasingly clear. It overcomes two major barriers of traditional banking – the need for a branch infrastructure and managing high volumes of low value transactions. *MicroSave* has been closely working with service providers in Africa and Asia on the 'soft-side' of e/m-banking.

This series deals with the regulatory and technical issues involved in promoting mobile money and e/m-banking in developing countries. E/m-banking has the potential to reach huge numbers of unbanked customers, but to develop effective systems, it is essential to set up a well managed network of agents and financial institutions, and also to choose the appropriate technological options for service delivery. At the user end, education and marketing are key issues. While for organisations delivering e/m-banking services issues related to staffing and extension services, as well as the wider concern of the policy environment remain.

These issues are discussed in 13 insightful articles which discuss the implementation choices and the opportunities and challenges involved in mobile banking.

#### **Further Information**

Under the OPE Series, *MicroSave* plans to publish a number of thematic publications that can be of great help to practitioners, consultants, investors and policy makers. In the pipeline are:

- Risk Management
- Individual Lending
- E/m-banking (Volume 2)
- Pilot-Testing

For more information log-on to [www.MicroSave.org](http://www.MicroSave.org) and download these publications.