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The SEEP Network partners with the Association of Microfinance Institutions of Rwanda (AMIR) and The MasterCard Foundation on a 4-year consumer protection program for 2 million low income financial service customers

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The SEEP Network (www.seepnetwork.org) will collaborate with the Association of Microfinance Institutions of Rwanda (AMIR) and The MasterCard Foundation in the implementation of the *Responsible Finance through Local Leadership and Learning Program: A Market Systems Approach to Scaling Impact*. This USD 3.9 million program aims to scale the application of consumer protection principles for at least 2 million low-income Rwandan financial service customers while providing a strong learning platform that will allow replication of successful Rwandan sector strategies in other sub-Saharan Africa countries.

The program will consolidate learnings from the *Responsible Finance through Local Leadership Program (2012 – 2016)*, in which the SEEP Network, in collaboration with The MasterCard Foundation, worked together with seven microfinance associations (MFAs) in Sub-Saharan Africa to promote standards for responsible market conduct. During that first program, consumer protection -the idea of providing fair and transparent services to clients while decreasing risk and strengthening the reputation of the sector- evolved from an emerging field of work for most of the associations, characterized by limited understanding of how to ensure implementation and compliance by their members, to a fully recognized core function. The program partners decided on a continuation of the program in order to scale these achievements through deeper and more expanded practice in the sector.

Quote from Sharon D’Onofrio, Executive Director, The SEEP Network

“While advancements have been made in forming industry consensus on consumer protection principles, there are significant opportunities to expand



the adoption of improved standards of practice. Requirements associated with the capacity and incentives of financial service providers, regulators, industry associations, and consumers, need to be addressed.”



Association of Microfinance
Institutions in Rwanda

The *Responsible Finance through Local Leadership and Learning Program (2016 – 2020)* aims to promote the wide application of consumer protection practices. It will seek to establish an enabling environment by facilitating collaboration amongst a wide range of private and public sector stakeholders; and to expand AMIR’s role in the provision of critical support functions in consumer protection including awareness raising and capacity building, implementation and monitoring of the industry codes of conduct, and promotion of customer grievance mechanisms. It will also seek to impact other geographical markets through a strong learning component that will include facilitated knowledge exchange amongst organizations in Rwanda, and within the Sub Saharan African region, and through documentation and dissemination of lessons learned.

Quote from Peter Rwema, Executive Director, AMIR:

“In spite of growing awareness of consumer protection related issues, implementation experience is still limited. There is significant potential for this program to provide a model for replication amongst stakeholders in Rwanda and in Sub-Saharan Africa. ”

For more information about this program, please contact SEEP Director of Communications, Carla de Chassy, or SEEP Director of Association Services, Bintou Ka-Niang at programs@seepnetwork.org.

About The SEEP Network

SEEP is a global learning network. We support strategies that create new and better opportunities for vulnerable populations, especially women and the rural poor, to participate in markets and improve the quality of their life.

Founded in 1985, SEEP was a pioneer in the microcredit movement and helped build the foundation of the financial inclusion efforts of today. In the last three decades our members have continued to serve as a testing ground for innovative strategies that promote inclusion, develop competitive markets, and enhance the livelihood potential of the worlds’ poor.

SEEP members are active in more than 170 countries worldwide. They work together and with other stakeholders to mobilize knowledge and foster innovation, creating opportunities for meaningful collaboration and, above all, for scaling impact.



For more information and to sign up for the SEEP Networker newsletter, please visit www.seepnetwork.org. Follow SEEP at @SEEPNetwork on Twitter.

About The Association of Microfinance Institutions in Rwanda

AMIR is the only umbrella body for microfinance institutions in Rwanda that seeks to build a flourishing microfinance sector through Advocacy and Information, Research and Development, Responsible Finance, Performance Monitoring and Capacity Building.

AMIR was created in 2007 with 32 founding members. Currently its membership has reached 341 licensed microfinance banks, limited savings and deposit taking companies, and credit and savings cooperatives. Its membership represents more than 97% of the microfinance sector in Rwanda with an aim of integrating all MFIs/SACCOs operating in Rwanda by the end of 2017 to ensure the sector drives under one voice.

The core mission of AMIR is to offer diversified services to microfinance institutions to enable them to work professionally and contribute to poverty reduction in a sustainable manner based on 5 core values (Professionalism, Transparency, Unity, Integrity, and Sustainability) with a vision to become a strong and efficient organization that contributes to the development of the microfinance industry through the promotion of transparent management systems in MFIs, innovative and market led financial services and products.

As a very strong partner to the Government of Rwanda and a member of the private sector federation, AMIR serves more than 2,8 million customers and hopes to promote an enabling environment by facilitating collaboration amongst a wide range of private and public sector stakeholders by 2020. AMIR is committed to easing the acceleration of learning through knowledge exchange amongst MFIs/SACCOs and other financial market practitioners both in Rwanda and Sub-Saharan African region to ensure the application and respect of consumer protection and responsible financial market is achieved.

For more information about AMIR please visit www.amir.org.rw; Follow AMIR at @AMIR_Rwanda on Twitter and Like the AMIR's page at AMIR.Rwanda1 on Facebook.