PRESS RELEASE

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AMIR Shared IT services platform for Micro-finances in Rwanda:
210 Micro-finances' Staff Trained on using the web-based core banking software and MIS

July 28th 2017
Kigali –

The digital revolution has unleashed a wave of innovation that is profoundly transforming the financial services industry. Mobile applications, big data and cloud computing, to name a few, offer significant opportunities for financial institutions to better serve their customers. On the other hand, for avoiding technological related challenges, sector practitioners, day after day, lay down strategies and programs aiming at helping the financial institutions to cope and successfully deal with current technological trends for ensuring the efficiency of information management and quality service delivery.

"…we thank AMIR for this software training, undoubtedly, this web-based core banking will help my institution to provide high quality services – we used to operate manually – but this technology will enable us not only to provide high quality services to our clients but also to record institutional information in a digital, reliable and accurate manner…" Mr. Jackson KWIZERA, the manager of *COOPEC ZAMUKA* said.

Mr. Jackson KWIZERA is one of the training participants who attended training program on core banking software that was organised by AMIR in the last 2 weeks. AMIR for the couple of months ago has facilitated software trainings for SACCO/MFI managers and employees. 54 trainees from 21 Rwanda Micro finance Institutions were trained as "super trainer" to use the banking software "**FinFinancial**" but also to be able to transfer their knowledge to their colleagues afterwards. In the first training series in May this year, 210 beneficiaries have been equipped with practical skills on how to use the software.

All of the training participants (participants from automated and non-automated institutions) are excited about the use, functionality and performance of **Fin-Financial** software which was tailored to the needs

and business models of the SACCO/MFIs. Their expectations converge to one common point that **Fin-Financial** has its own uniqueness compared to other existing core banking software.

"… FISA is already automated, we have already core banking software. **Fin-Financial** brings new features in which we are interested so much, Fin-Financial is more detailed, and it provides more information about physical location and address of clients that we normally need for making sound decisions for loan applications, secondly it helps fast-tracking clients applications and one may rate promptly the application at any level of application stage …" Thadee NIBAMUREKE the Managing Director of Financial Safety Services (FISA).

Alain MUGABE, the IT Officer in *Réseau Interdiocésain de Microfinance* (RIM) revealed that there are system weaknesses and gaps that they intend to overcome by having FinFinancial. "My institution has got core banking but with some weaknesses, or what I may call lack of some modules like mobile banking; with FinFincial we will have Mobile Banking and this will ease our operations especially for End-of-day and End-of-Month. And furthermore our clients will be having their bank at their fingertips…" Alain said.

AMIR has entered into a strategic partnership with the professionally reputable companies, as a way of assuring requisite technical expertise in providing these trainings and other related services. AMIR has chosen FinTech International Limited, a Kenyan software vendor for core banking software, as its long-term business partner to provide core banking system tailored for microfinance institutions and ready for the integration of electronic financial services (e-channels).

Executive Director of AMIR underlines: "a positive feedback of the SACCOs and MFIs is our benchmark to measure the success of AMIR Shared IT Services. This is not a project of one organisation. It's a project of the AMIR members and their clients towards access to finance for everyone and the Vision 2020".

To make this project a success, many partners including government agencies, the internet service providers like Popconn and TIGO, RSwitch and key development partners namely Savings Banks Foundation for International Cooperation (SBFIC) and Access to Finance Rwanda (AFR). AFR supports the project also with a risk assessment by the international audit farm PWC, which ensures the quality of the project results.

The next important milestone of this project will be a software test by the users in August 2017.

AMIR IT Shared Services

In the general assembly of AMIR members which took place in December 2015, AMIR members expressed their strong wish and desire about technology services: shared IT platform composed of core banking system, hardware, connectivity, payment system and digital finance services; and this was like a "rocket booster" for AMIR to translate members' dream into reality by introducing IT shared services tailored to members' needs and expectations.

The AMIR IT Shared Services aims at equipping Rwanda Microfinance Institutions, especially those in rural areas, with modern, affordable and secure technological services for the digital processing of operations, electronic financial services for their clients and improved information management systems. The AMIR IT Shared services will be an opportunity for: Automation of core banking and management procedures; Strengthening competitive ability in a long-term perspective; Reduction of IT –efforts; Improvement of data quality for accountancy; Improvement of security and fraud prevention because of automatic internal controls; Fulfilment of regulatory requirements through IT and automatic reports.

Key milestones recorded so far include: (1) Acquisition and MoU with 22 MFIs and SACCOs; (2) Contracting of 22 MFIs and SACCOs for the project pilot phase; (3) Data cleaning phase 1 (evaluation of the financial data of the MFIs for data migration); (4) Pilot MFIs and SACCOs Data analysis and data mapping; (5) Field visits for IT Infrastructure readiness assessment of pilot MFI/SACCOs' branches; (6) User Training for pilot MFI/SACCOs: Training of Trainers for 210 MFI/SACCOs' staff members; (7) software customization; (8) End-to-End user training for pilot MFI/SACCOs :super trainer/user training for 50 MFI/SACCOs' staff.

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.