



## ***Partnering to Expand Access to Financial Services***

### **Announcing the First SOUTHERN SUDAN MICROFINANCE CONFERENCE Under the Auspices of the Southern Sudan Microfinance Forum**

**July 20-22, 2010  
Juba, Sudan**

#### **I. Introduction**

Support to the micro, small and medium-sized enterprise (MSME) sector in Southern Sudan is a critical element in improving the area's economic potential. Since 2003, a microfinance industry has been forming in Southern Sudan as part of this effort. Microfinance has been supported and promoted by the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS), USAID, the World Bank, UNCDF and several nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

Under the auspices of the Southern Sudan Microfinance Forum and with the support of the USAID Generating Economic Development through Microfinance in Southern Sudan (GEMSS) project, the first **Southern Sudan Microfinance Conference** will bring together practitioners, donors, government officials and stakeholders for a frank and enlightening exchange about the status of microfinance in Southern Sudan and the way forward.

The conference will provide an opportunity for stakeholders to consider microfinance within the broader contexts of both Southern Sudanese development and international microfinance experience, and to help establish a comprehensive strategy for microfinance development. Following the event, a draft "Southern Sudan Microfinance Strategy" will be sent to participants for comment and discussion.

#### **II. Objective of the Southern Sudan Microfinance Conference**

The conference will:

1. support a comprehensive conversation among microfinance stakeholders
2. enable information sharing among practitioners, particularly of international best practices
3. develop the foundation for a comprehensive strategy



### III. Issues Facing Microfinance in Southern Sudan

- A. Microfinance as a Tool. Southern Sudan donors and implementers need to discuss funding, location of programs, implementation mechanisms, evaluation of project results, etc., to determine how best to achieve Southern Sudan's microfinance objectives. The evolution and development of the microfinance sector should particularly be considered within broader efforts to promote access to financial services to support MSME and rural and agribusiness development. And to deliberate what variations from internationally accepted best practices will exist due to the diversity of objectives and on-the-ground constraints of Southern Sudan.
- B. Microfinance Practice. As the Southern Sudanese grows, the conference will provide an opportunity for the growing microfinance practitioner community to discuss experiences and practices. Specific topics may include: (i) techniques for tracking, managing, and sharing information using IT/MIS, (ii) policies and procedures relating to effective interest rate, fee systems, and working with banks, (iii) product design, targeting, testing, and marketing including new products such as savings, small insurance instruments or agricultural finance, and (iv) managing growth such as staffing, seeking investors/donors, preparation of MFI business plans for sustainability, and alternate delivery mechanisms. In addition, training and technical assistance needs will be elucidated. Finally, the community will explore mechanisms for ongoing communication and advocacy, such as strengthening the Microfinance Association of Southern Sudan (MASS).
- C. Legal and Regulatory Issues. All microfinance stakeholders in Southern Sudan will be affected by the shape of the legal and regulatory environment. Donors, implementers, and practitioners should identify problems and advise on the way forward now, while legal and regulatory frameworks are being debated and developed. Specific issues for discussion may include (i) development of a Southern Sudan Microfinance Policy, (ii) implications for potential regulation by the Bank of Southern Sudan, (iii) strategies for registration as or transition to companies versus NGOs, (iv) "ownership" and governance issues concerning NGO/MFIs, (v) the relationship between commercial banking and microfinance, (vi) possibilities for fully licensed micro banks, (vii) development of credit unions, and (viii) exit strategies for financially unsustainable microcredit agencies.

At this early stage it is important for regulators, donors and practitioners to consider the range of issues and strategies with the potential to shape development of the Southern Sudanese microfinance industry.

Agenda Coming Soon.

For additional information about the conference, please contact Charles Data ([charles.data@gmail.com](mailto:charles.data@gmail.com)) and Irene Karimi ([ikarimi@africaonline.co.ke](mailto:ikarimi@africaonline.co.ke)).

