



# **Mobile Financial Services for Visually Impaired End-Users Pilot Initiative**

**Q & A Session**

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*Female:*

Okay thank you, Martin. Douglas Goist is in the audience and I'm going to give Doug a chance to introduce himself both in his professional capacity here in DC and then also more specific to this pilot as a member of this steering and advisory committee, which Aubrey referenced earlier, so Doug I'm going to hand it over to you for a few minutes.

*Male:*

Good morning. First of all I'd like to thank Aubrey and Martin for their good work with this pilot. It's very interesting there are some results that I wasn't aware of that happened and I'm really kind of surprised by it but, first of all, just to give you an introduction, I work for National Industries for the Blind in the United States. We are the largest employer of persons who are blind. Right now it's over 6,100 individuals.

We have 90 associated agencies across the country and we produce or they produce over 3,500 products and we're now getting into services. We were started in 1938 under an act called the Wagner-O'Day Act, under the Roosevelt administration. The primary purpose on our Mission Statement is to provide employment opportunities and personal independence for persons who are blind. As you can imagine in 1938 that technology wasn't around so most of the jobs would be assembling brooms, janitorial services and so forth. It's only within the last 10, 15 years we are now able to offer more advanced career training and so forth, thanks to technology and from what we're talking about today, mobile-phone technology, screen-reading technology and so forth.

My position at NIB is as an assistive technology specialist and I support over 70 individuals right now who are as part of a contract management support program. What that is they are contractors for the federal government to follow up on contracts and all of them are legally blind and blind and they're working at a salaried level, a good salary, dependent on region so, essentially, moving into the study here, what really surprised me, as I said, was the fact that over 90 percent or 98 percent of the individuals were aware of mobile financial systems and money transfers and so forth. It's a great contrast from here I believe that persons who are blind in the United States are aware that there are systems to access through your phone but if you're blind in the US usually you're going to have a computer connection and a screen reader, say, and do your banking that way with very few individuals. There are very still little – well I wouldn't say a lot of hesitation and resistance in using your mobile phone to start doing anything to do with your checking account, bank account and so forth so part of it is an accessibility issue but another part is also the concerns about security so I think this is a real area to focus on and look at that, in a lot of ways, Kenya is way ahead of the US as far as doing these types of transactions. The US is that's probably your 3<sup>rd</sup> option is to use your mobile handset.

The other interesting parts were the fact that the older generation – older adults – were more technology-proficient, let's say, even if they couldn't use the devices to their full potential whereas here the young population seems to be much more involved into smartphones and using apps and so forth. A crossover was a fact that 30 percent were employed or self-employed. That nears what happens in the US. The current rate is about 68, 70 percent of persons who are blind who are unemployed or underemployed so around 30 percent as well so I was interested to see that that was similar. Part of this study is going to look at – as Aubrey had mentioned – the confidentiality aspect of using these phones. I as an individual who is very technically savvy before my vision loss was only able to use a smartphone or text and not very well because the phone really didn't have the capacity, a full capacity so in the intervening years phones got better and I was able to use those speech screen readers and audible read outs and so forth but there's still a long way to go and maybe one or two providers will have – or operating-system developers will have – full access to their phones in the current iteration of the technology so it'll be interesting to see how far an individual, how much confidentiality they're able to have to complete their transactions and in what environment. In other words are you going to have to use a headset, are they going to have to talk to the phone providers?

All of these tie together, especially with policy, discussing with the internet service provider or, excuse me, the phone providers and the bank officials that even if you have a phone that's speech-enabled, if you change the way you transact your money or you change the system, the user interface, that could really impact somebody using a phone and they would potentially be confused and so forth so with that I'll just turn it back over to Maria but I appreciate, again, Martin and Aubrey's and their group's work on this, and it'll be really interesting to see the further studies as they drill down deeper into the types of phones they're using and some of the reasons why that -- on the policy level – why things are the way they are and how they can improve so thank you.

*Moderator:*

Thanks, Doug. Before we go to Q&A I just wanted to mention, I'm not sure if we mentioned earlier in any of our comments the sort of bigger context of the visually-impaired within Kenya. I think it's around 567,000. That's the registered number so you could imagine it is most likely much higher than that particularly in the urban area so just to put that as a context and imagine that large number of people for a variety of reasons not being able to fully participate within the economic community within Kenya and then the impact on economic growth and other variables resulting from that. Before we turn to Q&A I just wanted to prompt a couple of the questions mainly for Charlotte to see if she can't mention a little bit contextually about the potential in terms of next steps for

accessing universal fund sources for programming that could develop appropriate technology-based programming, and then maybe we could speak a little bit to what the potential role is for donors, the large foundations, private-sector actors such as the mobile-network operators, et cetera so those are just a couple of the prompts before we turn over the floor to Q&A.

*Female:* So before we go to Q&A if you could please raise your hand and speak into the microphone when you have a question just so the webinar audience can hear your and we'll alternate between webinar and in-room questions.

*Female:* If I may just pick up on a point that Doug raised and he said he was surprised by the 90 percent of persons who were blind or visually impaired that were aware of the MFS. I mean given that 70 to 80 percent of Kenyans use M-PESA, which is this mobile system or this mobile financial platform. I guess it's not that surprising because even though persons with disabilities may not be using the platform, their families are using their platform, their neighbors are using their platform. There's been a very – if you drive around in Nairobi, M-PESA is everywhere so there's been a very kind of aggressive campaign around financial – mobile financial – banking in Kenya and so that's why – I would imagine that's why the percentage is so high.

*Female:* In Kenya.

*Female:* In Kenya.

*Female:* Right.

*Female:* It's also pretty high in Uganda and I think that is an area where donors should be looking to Maria's point. I think this is an area that donors could start thinking about. We all talk about the importance of innovation. This to me is innovation at its best. It can be low-cost.

Its potential for inclusion is huge so if you have an accessible handset you can – as I said in my opening remarks – you can engage in the banking – in banking – but you can also be part of a whole range of other opportunities that mobiles are now being used for, you know, so for women with disabilities who may be pregnant, this is a perfect tool for prenatal checks and all of that so I think we should think about the device as a device-of-development and a device that can, again, at low-cost be used by persons with disabilities.

*Male:* Maybe I'll just make two observations. One of the things that is very interesting about the developing countries and the use of mobile

technology, one of the things that a developing countries have done is in some ways they are, in developing countries, we are ahead of the game in the context that keyboards within a very short period of time will be a thing of the past. Developing countries are already onto the mobile platform and using the mobile platform for a person with disability, training persons applying to use the mobile platform over keyboards is – many of those persons who can use it but while the younger kids in school might be using keyboards, the older persons are using the mobile technology and that’s why you see that difference, and also it’s an econ [crosstalk] --

*Female:* But Aubrey I also think it’s a cost factor.

*Male:* I was just going to say that, an economic difference as well.

*Female:* Yeah because computers, keyboards cost a lot more than a smartphone and so people have a lot more access to the smartphone than they would to a computer so to Doug’s point where people here in the US use the computer, this is not necessarily in Kenya or in the rest of Africa. Sorry to interrupt.

*Male:* Yeah, no, that’s fine. Yeah, well that’s the point. I mean the economic point is well-said both for students and the older person who can lay his or her hand on a \$30.00 phone versus I don’t know how much a keyboard costs. [Laughter]

*Female:* Yeah which as I understand it is getting even cheaper with the thriving second-hand market in Androids.

*Female:* Right.

*Male:* Absolutely.

*Female:* So yeah.

*Male:* Absolutely.

*Female:* Well we have a question from someone on the webinar.

*Male:* Yeah.

*Female:* Hi, good morning. This question is actually a couple of questions from Astrid Germe from Oris Development in Paris. She asks specifically what is the snowball method and then she would like some more details and descriptions on the speech-enabled phones. Are there specific phones,

specific software or just phones we're all used to? For example does the Nokia that are all over Africa called speech-enabled phones.

*Male:* Martin, do you want to take a crack at the methodology piece?

*Female:* Snowball.

*Male:* That's right. Basically what we did since we don't have a \_\_\_ process on where to find people, maybe using Maps or Edit that kind of thing, we were using Kenya B Networks so that the branches would identify the people they and find \_\_\_ and give the time give out the relation team and the people available so it did not do, like, supplement or supplicant I think so basically one possible will lead us to the next person and to the next person and to the next person with the assistance Kenya B Organizing Groups in the different places

*Male:* In terms of the software – so in general in development language term it's really a network affect so that one person tells the other and it snowballs or the network reaches out about this study. In terms of this software, at the high end, there are many phones from Android and Apple and so on that comes with built-in software and those are the ones that the \$300.00-plus ones so those come with the software that is already built and at the lower end there are some phones, somewhere in the middle range rather than the low end. It has to be a certain level of phones that come where you can buy software from 2 or 3 companies around the world and download the software onto the phone.

*Female:* Can I just say that I felt one of the interesting points that Aubrey raised in his presentation was that even the owning of phones or access to phones is gendered and the percentage of men that had access or had phones over women who had or had access to phones was strikingly large, and I just throw that out because it's clearly it's not just about disability. It's about a whole range of marginalization and exclusion.

*Male:* Economics is where they're going.

*Female:* Economics I guess is at the base of it.

*Male:* Yeah.

*Female:* Yeah.

*Moderator:* Any questions from the floor, comments, thoughts?

*Male:* My name is Charles Hess. I'm from FHI 360. I'm working on a couple mobile technology projects funded by USAID and I was curious with

regards to this current initiative what has been your interaction with the mobile network operators and Kenya and what can they do to enable access for these customers that they have that they might not even realize the number?

*Male:* We'll let Martin answer that as well because we do have members of the mobile network and mobile users, providers, on the steering committee and we have had significant relationship with particularly Safaricom but with some of the others as well so Martin do you want answer that a little bit more?

*Male:* That's right. We have representatives of the two largest networks here, Safaricom and Orange in this steering committee and from Safaricom we have the chair of the M-PESA Foundation – it's a foundation established about two years ago – to give back some of the profits that are kind out of the MFS. He was previously the chair of the Telecom Foundation but M-PESA Foundation is established to give large grants amounting to millions of dollars and he's been sitting in the committee and very interested in how the foundation can roll out a program that is \_\_\_\_\_. From Orange we have the head Orange Money Product, basically the one who is charge of the MFS within Orange, and yesterday we also gave lots of interesting options and perspectives on how the company \_\_\_\_ in product \_\_\_\_\_ so they're engaged basically and I'm waiting for the results.

*Female:* I mean I just might add that I think one of the attractive aspects of this pilot is that it really brings together public/private partnerships and we've got Perkins working it. We've got M-PESA and Orange is part of the steering committee and this is really something that USAID is keen to support, the public/private partnerships and at the core of this is innovation and, again, I do want to emphasize that because I think it is through innovation that we can begin to break down some of the barriers around exclusion, writ large.

*Female:* If I could just make one quick comment. I was struck by one of the statistics here namely that 19 percent of those interviewed use their SIM cards while 69 percent use borrowed phones and then their SIM cards with borrowed phones. I'm just hoping that in the study we can also tease out potential issues related to broad access to the underlying identification needed to get a SIM card and this takes us into a real deep territory in development of who gets birth certificates necessary to get the identification and all that so I just want us to sort of peel back the layers a little bit on that issue as well because we could find disparities that are gender-based and rural-based on that very simple thing and we could be making an assumption that everyone can get SIM card, which may not necessarily be true.

*Male:* That might very well be looked at in relationship to access especially for women in terms of ownership because to get a SIM card you have to get an address and lots of other stuff. *[Laughter]*

*Female:* Well you have to legally exist.

*Male:* *[Laughter]* Yeah.

*Female:* In some places that could *[crosstalk]* be generic.

*Female:* Well in some countries you have to have an ID, you know, some kind of an ID and so if you don't have an ID then you can't access so I think Maria raises a very valid point that may then be at the initial stage a way of keeping people out.

*Female:* Right. I think you had a question or comment, right? No? *[Crosstalk]* All right.

*Male:* Yeah someone could buy a SIM card off the shelf and use it but about a year ago a regulation was issued to have all SIM cards registered and any that were not registered were shut down so that's meant a big difference in people being able to access SIM cards and it was discussed in yesterday's meeting actually as an issue and then flagged also as leading to a means of the operators knowing the clients more, when they registered them, you know, things around knowing that this client acquires, speech-enabled access and things like that.

*Female:* I also thought the concept of the agent was very interesting because it could – it has the potential – to be useful but it has the potential to be – it can go very, very wrong, and, again, I mean with people with disabilities, this is really difficult because you're – yet again – you're depending on somebody else so I think that that's an interesting relationship and it's clearly not a regulated relationship so that I think would be interesting to flush out a bit in the research to get a sense of who these agents are in the event that you don't get a confirmation what do you do? What kind of recourse do you have if Agent A decides, "Hey, you're blind and this is just the perfect opportunity for me to take this money," and, yeah.

*Female:* And you may have the legal recourse but how practical is the legal recourse?

*Female:* Exactly if you're in Thika or Kita, wherever.

*Male:* And I think, Martin, you guys were discussing some of that yesterday because I raised the question around that in a slightly different way but you were discussing the question of whether the – of how much control

the phone companies have over the agent and for all intents and purposes they were saying they didn't have that control.

*Male:* And I'm sure you have to pay the agent.

*Male:* The agent and the shopkeeper.

*Female:* So that's an additional disadvantage.

*Male:* Basically, in terms of control – oh, sorry.

*Female:* Go ahead, Martin.

*Male:* Go ahead.

*Male:* Sorry, again, basically the agents are controlled by regulations by the operators and have a level interaction. What can start happening is that sometimes loose relationships exist between agents and visually-impaired users where they basically overlook some of the regulations that enable and assist the users and \_\_\_\_ there were days where writing letters of serious issues they need to address within \_\_\_\_ regulation of agents.

*Male:* Right but there were a lot of issues raised about that relationship. Anyway I think somebody on the web [*crosstalk*] --

*Male:* That's right, that's right, that's right because [*crosstalk*] --

*Male:* I think somebody had a question from the web.

*Moderator:* Yes I have a question from Mesfin Feekray Woldemariam who is joining us from Addis Ababa University, in Ethiopia.

*Female:* Cool.

*Moderator:* He has two questions. This first one ties a little bit into what you were just speaking about. The question is if a visually-impaired person says money to a wrong person how will he know his action and is there any possibility of getting his money back, is there any legal framework that helps get the money back?

*Male:* Second question?

*Moderator:* Oh, I'm sorry. Thank you. Thank you, Aubrey. The second question is how do – it says, "As I see from the presentation, smartphones with speech-enabled software are relatively expensive. How do you see this working for poor individuals who earn \$2.00-a-day?"

*Male:* They're both very, very, *[laughter]* very important questions. The first question is which we were speaking to in terms of that relationship with the agent if there's an error of sending money to the wrong person, et cetera, that will have to be – that's one of the regulation questions that one will have to look at as to what is the recourse and that has to come in regulation and policy and either with the operator or more so by national – when national – governments begin to recognize and develop regulation around MFS, and taking into consideration the plight or person with disability within that framework. That's a critical piece so that when they develop regulation and policies they should have some references around interface and interaction with persons with disabilities as to how they interact with that as they do with other policies like education and/or health and so on and so on so that's something to be looked at especially those persons who are into regulation. In terms of cost of software that's a critical question. That's a question that is not a question – I think Charlotte was talking a lot about development and innovation. That's where that has to come \_\_\_\_ right at this time.

It's not a question that the disability community answers. It's a question that we're confronted with on a lot of fronts, especially in \_\_\_\_ because the market is so small, relatively speaking. What some have been able to do is where you are making it more universal you are able to bring the price down but how much they can do that will depend on innovation and creativity.

*Female :* And I think there are some interesting examples of how communities or associations of persons with disabilities have been able to negotiate, say, good prices for phones for their members so, for instance, in South Africa, the South African Council for the Blind has been able to negotiate lower prices of the actual handset with the various service providers for its members, and this is because they have great numbers, and they make the case for the number of people they're bringing in but they also make the case for using the phone as a tool for protection, a tool for communication and for all the things that the mobile phone can be used for so I think, again, it's about looking at all the various options out there to ensure that there is better access for persons with disabilities because, given the current costs, it makes it very exclusive for most persons with disabilities.

*Male:* Yeah.

*Male:* My name is Mike Catalano. I'm with PMT Americas, which has a relationship with a South African mobile transactions and mobile money vendor. The observation that Maria made about the percentage, I think that was for people that did not own phones, the borrowing of the SIM. In

South Africa, it's RICAT is the regulation. To get a SIM card you need to provide valid address or national ID or foreign ID.

To get your SIM card I think very similar regulations exist in many other countries in Africa but that really alludes to the opportunity for access across devices so we see here in the states we see somebody had mentioned that internet banking is the predominant way that somebody that's visually impaired will access their financial services and I think what we're going to see is not necessarily just a single device for access but it's going to be a tablet or a connected mobile device and one other point on the hardware and software costs relating to speech-enabled phones is that there's two types – two levels – of cost. One is the hardware itself and the embedded software that resides on the phone and the one is that these higher-end phones that we're familiar with here, like Android, that requires network access to run some of that speech-recognition software so for the price-sensitive consumer or somebody that's poor in emerging markets they'll not only need the hardware and the software on the device, they might need to have access to a data plan so there might be an opportunity to look at subsidization of the costs of the data service if that's going to be a network-enabled speech capability, and lastly I think this was a wide net cast for looking for respondents for the survey and I think there may be opportunities not only within USAID programs but other bilateral donor programs where we can even get more granular on certain types of visual impairment with certain types of employment. For example small holders or somebody in the family of a small holder that might be the economic person within the household. Alawi I'm thinking in particular and opportunities in South Africa as well.

*Female:* Thanks, Mike.

*Female:* Thank you.

*Female:* You had a question. Did you?

*Female:* Yes, I did. Thank you so much. I'm Chelsea from the Mobile Health alliance at the United Nations Foundation and I just had a quick question about caregivers and if there was any look in the study toward the caregivers of particularly elderly persons with disabilities and their use of mobile phones and their use of mobile phones with their patients.

*Male:* I'm going to pass that to Martin but simply say that we didn't look at the caregivers because the focus was on the person himself so – but I'll let Martin build on that.

*Male:* That's right. What came out of the research and later from the focus group dealing with the lower-end users is that people simply depend more

on the agent than the family relation when it comes to MFS and what they will do is to \_\_\_ your phone and money and \_\_\_ certification to the agent and instruct the agent on the whatever construction they wish to be conducted and once that is done they go back home with their phone so that's what's called \_\_\_ with SIMS to see most of the regions.

*Male:* So from the poorer group they depended on the family to assist with the project one way or the other, taking the message if you mind but we didn't look at the actual – more to your point the caregiver – because we are looking at persons, we looked at a cross section of people from who are workers, people who are students, people who are not so much dependent on somebody else.

*Female:* But also the parameters of the pilot were really within the financial space as opposed to the health sector.

*Male:* Yeah.

*Female:* That said I mean I think you know a gain mobile phones can be used in all sectors and can be used in all sectors and can be an excellent tool for broader inclusion.

*Female:* Do we have any other questions from the field?

*Moderator:* Yes we have a question from Amanda Lotts. She's joining from the Financial Inclusion 20/20 Team. She says, "Where there are significant differences in using MFS, depending on gender, also did this research look into the number of visually-impaired individuals who received financing – microfinance or other – in order to purchase their mobile device?"

*Male:* No, we didn't. That's a good question but we did not.

*Moderator:* Okay then she has another question. "Did this survey also utilize qualitative methods to better understand motivations behind decisions?"

*Male:* Good question. Martin, do you want to take a stab at that one? Most of the survey is – most of it is qualitative information but I'll let Martin, yeah, go ahead, Martin.

*Male:* That's right, yes. I think we are looking more at the \_\_\_ material that was factored both in the preparation of the tools and also in the feedback that has been received, and, yes, we \_\_\_ giving information that \_\_\_ say it's a matter of choice on how to – you know, whatever choices they make in terms of the practices of mobile phones and choice of MFS and those kind of things.

*Male:* That's why the methodology is focused on questionnaires and interviews and discussion workshops because then that you are able to get the qualitative information out of that so it's a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative information so one of the things we might do at the final thing is tell some stories.

*Moderator:* No, I was just saying we're going to wrap up in a few. Are there any other questions from the participants here in the room? All right I just wanted to put one more plug out. To my knowledge we're still moving in the direction of establishing, at a global level, enforceable standards for new payment systems of which mobile financial services is a part. The normal standard setting bodies, the Basel, BIS, CPSS, et cetera, I guess have been somewhat preoccupied with the financial meltdown.

They're getting to the point where we're starting to hear from them on issues related to new payment systems in general but I would hope and I we certainly have very good guidance coming out from the Financial Action Task Force, from FATF, represented by Treasury, from USG perspective, so I would hope that those groups would start to engage in this discussion on what types of enforceable standards are necessary to address some of the issues that we're raising here as well as other groups, such as the Alliance for Financial Inclusion, AFI, and others. I think there's plenty of opportunity for a wide range of participation in this discussion as we go forward, and with that I thank you all for joining us and, again, we did this pilot as a way to introduce some issues, to raise some issues in the strong hope that you all pick this up and run with it, and we hope that that happens in the very near future.

*Female:* Can I just – one piece of information. I just got on my email that there's going to be – the UN General Assembly on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September is holding a high-level meeting on disability and development and as a prelude to that there are a number of consultations that are going on with stakeholders and currently – it started yesterday there is a consultation that's going on in terms of using ICT for persons with disabilities as a development tool so if anybody is interested please check it out. It is – oh dear let's see what their webpage is. It's the obvious, <http://www.itu.int/en/ict/accessibility> so that's one way you can plug in some of your ideas about accessible ICT and how we can use mobiles to better ensure the employment of persons with disabilities.

*Moderator:* All right well thank you everyone for joining us for the last seminar. Thank you to Aubrey and Martin and Charlotte and Maria as well Doug.

*[End of Audio]*