

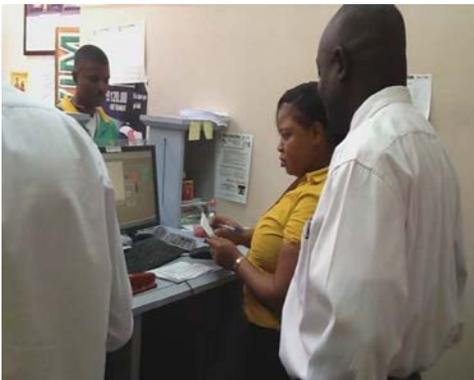


SUCCESS STORY

Leveraging ICT to Improve Access to Financial Services



SOCOLAVIM Managing Director Prophète Fils-Aime exclaims “Lajan pèp ameriken byen itilize” (the funding from the American people has been well utilized) during his announcement to the community at-large of the inauguration of the interconnection of SOCOLAVIM’s branches. (Photo Credit – HIFIVE)



Frantz Augustin, a SOCOLAVIM member for more than 15 years, conducts his first transaction, a withdrawal, at the L’Estere branch, which is outside of his home branch of St. Marc. (Photo Credit – HIFIVE)

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Since 2010, HIFIVE¹ has partnered with *caisse populaire* SOCOLAVIM² to support the credit union to tackle critical barriers to expanding access to finance in the Artibonite department of Haiti. Bringing financial services closer to the people through a new branch in L’Estère, one of Haiti’s largest markets, and developing agricultural credit products to meet the needs of the underserved sector has enabled SOCOLAVIM to increase its membership by 84% from 27,000 to 49,780 in just three and a half years. Building on the success of these initiatives, SOCOLAVIM sought HIFIVE support to interconnect all of its branches. This investment in information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure strengthens SOCOLAVIM’s management capacity so that the institution can offer more efficient services to its current clients and expand outreach.

On June 3, 2014, Managing Director Prophète Fils-Aime announced to the community at-large the inauguration of the interconnection of all SOCOLAVIM branches. This ICT solution will modernize the financial services provided by SOCOLAVIM by interconnecting its geographically dispersed points of services (St. Marc I, St. Marc II, Montrouis, Pont-Sondé, Marchand Dessalines, L’Estère and Gonaives). This technology allows real-time processing and provides SOCOLAVIM clients with the ability to access their accounts and conduct a range of typical transactions at any of the SOCOLAVIM branches. On that day, Frantz Augustin, a SOCOLAVIM member for more than 15 years, conducted his first transaction, a withdrawal, at the L’Estère branch which is outside of his home branch in St. Marc. Mr. Augustin, who travels often within the Artibonite region, stated that this new service is very beneficial to him, as “There is less risk now. I don’t have to travel with money as long as I have my account passbook.” SOCOLAVIM’s ICT solution improves the credit union’s data security as well, ensuring that online and offline information is secure.

The updated ICT framework will also be used as a springboard for the institution to capitalize on other forms of technology to further improve its services to its clients. This back end systems development creates a platform which allows SOCOLAVIM to independently integrate other technologies into its system. Future technologies could include integration of electronic check readers, transaction printers and mobile money services. With the Central Bank’s recent approval of the inclusion of Le Levier credit unions, including SOCOLAVIM, in the national electronic check clearinghouse, this technological enhancement provides SOCOLAVIM the potential opportunity to issue checks to its members. Interconnection lays the foundation for myriad possibilities of further ICT improvements that have the potential to expand financial inclusion.

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¹ HIFIVE (Haiti Integrated Finance for Value Chains and Enterprises) is a USAID-funded program implemented by World Council of Credit Unions and FHI 360 that expands financial inclusion through improved access to financial products and encourages using technology to expand outreach.

² SOCOLAVIM (Société Coopérative Lavi Miyo) is a Le Levier federated *caisse populaire* (credit union) serving its 49,780 members at its seven branches in the Artibonite department of Haiti.