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May 21, 2013

Mobile Financial Services for Visually Impaired End- Users Pilot Initiative

Aubrey Webson
Perkins International



Martin Kieti
Perkins International





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Aubrey Webson

Perkins International

As Director of Perkins International, W. Aubrey Webson oversees Perkins' work with hundreds of partners in 65 countries around the world. Since 1992, he has led initiatives to grow services in Africa and the Caribbean. He helped shape educational services for children who are deafblind and those with multiple disabilities and introduced and implemented the Institutional Development Program, a capacity building project for organizations of the blind in Africa and the Caribbean. Prior to joining Perkins, Webson worked with SightSavers and Helen Keller International.

Webson works with policy makers, families, educators and students to expand services, bring resources and opportunities where none exist, and join the world community in the social network of creating possibilities for all.



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Martin Kieti

Perkins' Institute

Martin Kieti is currently the Senior Consultant at the Perkins' Institute's Institutional Development Program. He holds a Master's Degree in Linguistics and has previously held numerous positions including that of Chief Executive Officer of the Kenya Union of the Blind. He has professional experience in education, social development, non-profit management and research.



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Charlotte McClain-Nhlapo

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Charlotte McClain-Nhlapo was recently appointed USAID's Coordinator for Disability and Inclusive Development, where she will lead work on mainstreaming disability throughout the Agency. Formerly, McClain-Nhlapo was a Senior Operations Specialist at the World Bank, working in Africa, East Asia and the Pacific regions. She has also served as a Commissioner on the South African Human Rights Commission, Project Officer on Child Protection for UNICEF, Legal Advisor to the South African Presidency, and Deputy Chairperson of the Council of the University of South Africa. She studied law at the University of Warsaw and Cornell Law School.



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Maria Stephens

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Maria Stephens is a Senior Technical Adviser at USAID and subject matter expert on emerging payment systems risk and regulatory issues. She has over 18 years of experience in economic development and financial economics. Stephens' current areas of expertise are in identifying backdoor vulnerabilities specific to national and cross-border payment systems viz. emerging payment systems (EPS) funds flows within and through threat finance networks, and the role of donors and NGOs within an emerging payment systems context. Stephens' regional areas of expertise are East Africa (with a focus on the Horn of Africa), and the PR of China. Stephens served as a Foreign Service Officer with USAID from 1995-1999, with tours in Washington and Nairobi.

Stephens has extensive NGO-based technical experience, including having acted as director of CRS's microfinance unit and from providing long-term in-country technical support to the Central Bank of China through GTZ to establish the People's Republic of China's first private-sector microcredit company. She continues to lead in the development of USAID's emerging payment systems policy and risk management agenda, is a contributing member of the Department of Justice and FDIC-led Payments Fraud Working Group and the State Department-led Terrorist Finance Working Group (TFWG), and co-chair of the TFWG EPS sub-working group.

Inclusive Mobile Financial Services for Visually Impaired People in Kenya

Interim findings of a research into access and extent of utilisation of mobile financial services by persons with visual impairment and the responsiveness of the said services to the needs of this population group in Kenya.

**Presented By:
Dr. W. Aubrey Webson and Martin Kieti
May 2013**



Background

This study is a result of the joint intention of the Perkins School for the Blind and the United States Agency for International Development to respond to the need to expand the ability of the people who are blind or visually impaired to access and utilise **Mobile Financial Services (MFS)** in Kenya.

Developmental Challenge/Research Problem

Mobile phone-based money transfer services utilise sight-dependent text-based interface potentially excluding visually impaired persons from fully utilising this increasingly important payments system within emerging markets.

Developmental Hypothesis

Incorporating appropriate interventions into mobile money transfers product design and marketing will lead to fuller access and utilisation of mobile money transfers amongst the visually impaired end-user population.

Developmental Goal

To make mobile money transfer as inclusive as possible for the visually impaired end-user population

Research Objectives

- Identify barriers faced by people who are visually impaired to fuller utilisation of mobile-enabled money transfer technologies, focusing on mobile phone-based products and services
- Design and test appropriate intervention/modifications to determine if, and how, these reduce or eliminate the barriers
- Raise awareness among service providers and development practitioners of the unique needs/barriers of visually impaired end-users into their product design and marketing and among regulators of the need to develop appropriate regulatory guidance and supervisory capacity to ensure “Know Your Customer” compliance and asset protection oversight.

Methodology

- Identifying and interviewing, through interviewer-administered questionnaires, 120 blind and partially sighted primary respondents drawn from four study sites in Kenya to determine extent of and barriers to usage of MFS
- Set up two Focus Groups – one of the low-end and the other of the high-end MFS users – to discuss and test recommendations on reducing barriers to MFS utilisation
- Identify and interview key informants to obtain in-depth technical information on MFS operations
- Convene a Validation Workshop of stakeholders to validate findings
- Establish a Steering Committee to provide guidance and technical assistance to the study

Sampling of Primary Respondents

- 120 primary respondents were sampled from four sites: Nairobi, Mombasa, Thika and Kericho
- Sampling done on a snow ball method using branches of the Kenya Union of the Blind
- Nairobi and Mombasa represented urban settings while Thika and Kericho represented rural settings
- Distribution of the sample: Nairobi 28.3%, Thika 31.7% Mombasa 24.2% and Kericho 15.8%

Characteristics of the Primary Respondents

- Gender: 55% men, 45% women
- Visual Status: 67% totally blind, 33% partially sighted
- Education: 2.5% None, 36.67% Primary, 20.0% Secondary, 38.33% Tertiary, 2.5% Post-Graduate
- Nairobi has highest tertiary education at 82.36% while Kericho has lowest at 42.11%
- Employment: 30% employed, 29.17% self-employed, 27.% unemployed, 8.34% retired and 5.0% students
- Income: average USD 201.2 per month for the employed and USD 50.15 for the other categories
- 51.56% of the employed earn less than USD 120 per month

Access to Phones

- 86.67% of respondents own phones
- All partially blind versus 91.78% totally blind respondents own phones
- 94.37% of the employed respondents own phones versus 73.47% of the unemployed
- More older people (50+) own phones at 83.78% than younger people (18 – 34) at 89.47%
- Mean cost of phones was US 45.1, Mode was USD 25 and Median was USD 31

Access to Speech-Enabled Phones

- Only 7.5% (nine people) of respondents have speech-enabled phones
- Of these, 77.8% are men while 22.2% are women
- 30% phones came with speech software while the rest had had software installed
- Average cost of speech-enabled phones was USD 301.20
- Average cost of phones capable of installation of speech software was USD 159.32
- Average cost of speech software was USD 132.50

Access for Those Without Phones

- Only 13.33% of the respondents reported not owning phones
- Out of these, 87.5% can access phones easily
- Sources of phones for those without are friends (50%), offspring (12.5%) and spouse (12.50%)
- Other sources include siblings, parents, neighbours, teachers and office
- 18.75% insert own SIM card, 68.75% use borrowed phone and SIM card
- Main reason (31.25%) for not owning a phone is the cost
- Other reasons are loss of phone, inability to use a phone and lack of interest in phones

Knowledge of and Subscription to MFS

- 98.3% know at least one MFS
- MPesa is the most recognized MFS by 98.3% of respondents
- AirtelMoney (90.0%), OrangeMoney (82.5%) and YuCash (81.67%) are also known
- 90.83% have registered with MFS
- 95.4% are registered with MPesa while AirtelMoney has 6.4% registration
- Those subscribed to more than one MFS prefer M-Pesa (83.3%) then AirTelMoney (16.7%)

Utilisation of MFS

- 97.25% of MFS users use MFS to send and receive money
- 27.52% use MFS to make payments for goods and services
- 16.51% use MFS to transact with banks and other accounts

Ability to Operate Phone-Based MFS Operations

- Only 19.27% can independently manipulate MFS menus on their phones while 80.73% require some form of sighted assistance
- Only 21.52% can input figures into the MFS interface on their phones while the rest require sighted assistance
- Only 11.01% can access transaction confirmations and feedback while 88.99% require sighted assistance

Ability to Carry Out Agent-Based Operations

- Only 19.27% of the respondents can independently identify themselves at the Agents'
- Only 5.5% are able to access the Agent's number and other Agent-based information
- Only 3.67% are able to confirm transaction on the Agent's phone

Demographic Distribution of Need for Sighted Assistance in MFS

- More totally blind (52.8%) require assistance than partially blind at (45.7%)
- More 34 – 50 need sighted assistance (58.5%) than others (42.0% and 46.0%)
- More women (52.2%) require assistance than men (46.0%)
- More people with tertiary education (53.3%) need assistance than those with secondary education (35.0%)
- ALL retrenched persons need sighted assistance as opposed to those retired (25.0%)
- More people in Thika leave attestation to Agents (13.2%) than elsewhere (3.4%)
- Ink pads used most in Mombasa (41.3%) than elsewhere (31.0%)

Confidentiality and MFS Security

- 38.5% believe that confidentiality in MFS for blind people is impossible
- 26.7% reported misuse of MFS details by sighted assistants
- Of these, 62.0 % reported un-authorized transfer of money from their MFS accounts

Suggested Barriers to Accessing MFS by Visually Impaired Users

- Lack of sight
- Inability to read and/or understand English and numbers
- Phone design and affordability
- Lack of trustworthy assistance and/or assistants
- Lack of understanding by Agents

User Suggestions for Improvements of MFS

- 21.1% of the respondents believe that by using only one trusted agent their MFS details were secure
- 19.27% believe in restricting access to their phones and assistance on MFS to only trusted family or friends
- 16.5% try to keep details confidential by changing PIN frequently

Key User Suggestions for Improvement of MFS

- Sensitisation of MFS Agents on customer support to blind clients - 48.1%
- Affordable speech-enabled phones - 30.8%
- Accessible information at the Agent-based operations – 25.0%
- Voice prompts from the MNO - 17.3%

Other Suggestions

- Introduction of biometric identification for all users of MFS
- Introduction and/or enforcement of policies to improve services to blind clients
- Improvement of accessibility features in all phones
- Introduction of Kiswahili in speech enabled phones
- Recognition of thump-signing by MOs and their Agents
- Agent-based transaction to be carried out in privacy

General Observations

- A vast majority of the respondents own or have access to a mobile phone
- Most of the phones cost less than USD 30
- Most of the phones are not speech-enabled
- The cost of a speech-enabled phone is about USD 30
- 70% of the respondents have a monthly income of less than USD 50

General Observations (2)

- Over 90% of the respondents have subscribed to an MFS
- Over 90% of the respondents use MFS to send and receive money while payment of bills and transaction with their bank accounts come a distant second and third respectively
- Under 20% of the respondents are able to independently operate their phone-based MFS transactions
- Under 20% of the respondents are able to independently carry out all the Agent-based MFS operations

General Observations (3)

- There is greater need for sighted assistance in the Agent-based operations than in the phone-based operations
- Confidentiality and security do not stand out as alarming concerns among respondents
- There is greater trust and dependency on MFS Agents than on family and friends
- Suggested areas of improvement focus more on MFS Agents and network operators than on the handset

Next Steps 1. Focus Group Discussions and Testing

- **Work with two Focus Groups-** to discuss and test the recommendations from the primary respondents
- **First Focus Group-** to consist of lower-level users of MFS to determine whether recommendations increase their uptake and utilisation of MFS
- **Second Focus Group-** to consist of higher-end users to determine whether recommendations increase their independence in use of MFS
- **Focus Groups-** to be identified through a snow-ball method and to consist of not more than 12 people each

Next Steps 2. Key Informant Interviews

- Identify and interview between six and eight key informants to obtain in-depth technical information behind the operations of MFS and mobile technology
- Key Informants to include technical and policy personnel from MNOs, communications regulators, Financial Services regulators, mobile phone and access software dealers and MFS agent companies.

Next Steps 3. Validation of Findings

- Validation Workshop to be convened to validate the findings of the study
- Workshop to consist of about 30 participants drawn from regulators, operators, Agents, consumers and mobile phone hardware and software dealers



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Stay In Touch

Aubrey Webson:
Aubrey.webson@perkins.org

Martin Kieti:
Martin.kieti@perkins.org

Contact Us:
microlinks@microlinks.org

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Microlinks and the EPS Seminar series are products of Knowledge-Driven Microenterprise Development (KDMD) project, funded by USAID's MPEP office.