

Savings at the Frontier (SatF)

A Mastercard Foundation partnership with Oxford Policy Management

Project Briefing: Interpay – Expanding the Reach and Use of Formal Financial Services with the Maximus App for Group Funding



Introduction

Interpay is a financial technology (fintech) company in Ghana which offers an electronic payment platform. SatF is supporting Interpay to launch a new free-to-use mobile finance service, via its Maximus app, that helps self-formed savings groups and those saving through *susu* collection in peri-urban and rural areas to save money securely using their platform, via their chosen financial services provider (FSP). *Susu* collection is an important and popular financial industry in Ghana, particular for low-income, more marginal segments of the peri-urban population. *Susu* collectors go out on daily rounds to pick up savings which are returned to savers at the end of a monthly cycle.

Interpay currently provides payment processing and reconciliation services to a variety of mostly urban/ peri-urban FSPs. Even before hearing about SatF, Interpay had identified an opportunity to expand its business into the peri-urban and rural market because of the relatively manual systems that FSPs use to provide cash-in/ cash-out services to their clients. SatF support will help Interpay to target FSPs to offer better services to clients in these new areas.

What difference will SatF's support make?

SatF funding will be used to finalise modifications to the working platform for Maximus and support rollout to the clients of their partner banks. The company aims to work with three partner banks in 2018 and two additional banks in 2019 by providing the technology needed to migrate existing savings groups and individual *susu* contributors onto the Maximus platform.

SatF will then fund the ongoing costs of working with FSPs and marketing the Maximus platform to potential new FSP users. For the first three partner FSPs, SatF funding will be used to help with the change management required within the FSPs, for example by offering cash subsidies and an initial buffering of the transaction charges for servicing collection.

How will this project benefit ISM users?

Maximus will bring formal financial services to people in peri-urban and rural areas who have not previously had access to them. It will potentially offer group members access to other payments and savings products supported by Interpay, such as cross-sold pensions, as it will be linked to a mobile wallet. Group members will be able to harness the full power of digital money transmission in ways that mobile money transfers cashed-in or out individually via agents almost certainly never will.

At its heart, Maximus reduces the time and money costs of both the people saving, and those collecting those savings. If a way can be found for users to load individual wallets via the group wallet and vice versa (and the technical capacity is there to do this) some reasonable cost-sharing between FSPs, groups and group members should allow very low-cost, micro cash-in and cash-out in the villages. This would make mobile wallets useable in ways that the high cost of individual travel to and from an agent and individual cash-in and out at an agent preclude.

Overall, we anticipate value being added to ISMs and their members, mainly in the form of increased outreach, enhanced transparency and strengthening trust in the technology and services provided, as well as in the functioning of the ISMs.

Can this be profitable for Interpay and the FSPs they are working with?

The project will enable Interpay to support its FSP partners to reach 40,000 underserved members of savings groups. If successful, Interpay will extend the service to more FSPs, potentially leading to benefits for hundreds of thousands of customers. SatF wanted to set a deliberately low target for the project as we want to work with Interpay to build a business case that looks at the economics of digital linkage: both for Interpay as provider and for the FSPs that might use Maximus. The overall aim is that linked groups and their users will not pay anything to use Maximus: rather FSPs will be prepared to bear the cost as it will enable them to add digitised new business and will free up staff members' time as cash collection will no longer be manual. Modelling so far suggests that a business case can be made for a mid-sized rural bank, which is one of the FSP types Interpay will target for the migration of its existing linkage business to Maximus. Interpay is also targeting mid-sized Savings and Loans Associations and large retail banks with a financial inclusion focus. At this stage, the business case for working with this broader portfolio of institutions is less clear but we are planning to work with Interpay to investigate these cases in more detail.

A critical issue is the change management needed to get FSPs to focus on a bigger customer value proposition than just linking groups with saving accounts and lending lines, as well as the wider business case. For the first three FSPs that will be migrated to the Maximus platform, Interpay plans to use SatF funding to help with this change management by offering cash subsidies and an initial buffering of the transaction charges for servicing collection and disbursement of the new wider primary/secondary offer. These will wind down as freed-up staff begin to bring in more business.

Why the project was approved

SatF is excited to be supporting Interpay to create a financially viable business-to-business (B2B) solution for banks and microfinance institutions with an interest in reaching lower income groups in peri-urban and rural areas. This project carries a real prospect of making savings-led linkage commercially viable, without cross-subsidy from the loan margin, in ways that previous efforts in Ghana have failed to deliver. The sort of FSPs likely to be interested in Maximus will probably have limited capacity to manage emerging technology: this barrier is removed with Interpay managing that technology on their behalf and helping them reach a new customer base in the target areas. The benefit for SatF is that B2B models offer wider potential than just the direct SatF partners and we hope that our work with Interpay on modelling will help more FSPs than SatF could deal with directly to find a business case for linkage.

Interpay is a financial technology (fintech) company that makes traditional transactions and ecommerce simpler, secure, and more convenient. They do this by making it possible for merchants to receive payments of bills, invoices, and fees anytime and anywhere through a variety of local and international payment channels. Visit www.interpayafrica.com and follow Interpay on Twitter @InterpayAfrica.