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JEL Classifications: C12, G21, G22, L31, O54

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1. Introduction

While various countries gradually move from low to middle-income status worldwide, there remains often a paradoxical coexistence of rising overall household income levels and increasing levels of poverty and social exclusion (Paes de Barros *et al.*, 2009). Microfinance is one of the many instruments to support income generation for the poor and socially excluded (Robinson, 2004). Many development promoters consider microfinance as a most appropriate tool to lift persons out of poverty, especially if the level of poverty is moderate. Microcredit can contribute to income generation, schooling and social inclusion (Hamelin, 2007; Morduch, 1999) and often it encourages solidarity and participation in a community or organizational context (Lapenu *et al.*, 2004). Still, it remains a challenge to appreciate the evidence –beyond anecdotal references- to what extent microfinance effectively contributes to poverty alleviation, especially when considering its complex and multidimensional nature and dynamics (Collins *et al.*, 2009).

Despite the fact that recent microcredit summits and international conferences mark the milestone of 150 million clients (Labie, 2009), microfinance still is only available to a fraction of the world's poor (Barr *et al.*, 2007). There are reasons to expect that these initiatives do not always adequately serve the destitute (Banerjee *et al.*, 2009). Financial barriers to micro-finance services for the poor can be questioned from a social justice point of view (Hudon, 2007). Extreme poverty often goes hand in hand with by low levels of education, nutrition and information that are not conducive to program participation. Social ostracism may also make it hard for some of these households to be involved in group activities (Dewan and Somanathan, 2007).

If, there is a supply challenge in the industry, this challenge isn't only about the need to make loan products accessible, but also about responding to a wider variety of needs and hence financial products (Helms, 2006). CGAP, one of the leading MFI promoters states that: *'poor people need a wide array of flexible financial services. A demand driven approach will encourage portfolio diversity by offering the poor savings, insurance and cash transfer services in addition to various loan products'* (CGAP, 2003).

This paper reviews whether CMF could be an approach to enhance poverty outreach. It analyses existing literature, refers to information placed in over 300 websites and builds on cross-sectional analysis of 3500 audited observations of 250 MFIs from Latin America and the Caribbean² covering the fiscal year 2006. All MFIs have loan delivery as main product.

This paper is organised as follows. Section 2 reviews literature on the way "utility" for poor clients can be measured and summarizes different approaches towards social performance for MFIs. Section 3 presents the findings from literature and formulates hypotheses with relation to the main research question. The following section describes the methodology and defines the various selected variables. Section 5 presents the dataset and section 6 gives an overview of the results of the regression analyses. The final section proposes conclusions on the findings and offers a number of recommendations.

2. How can one measure the poverty relevance of microfinance?

If poverty alleviation lies at the heart of the mission of MFIs, then one should measure the performance of a MFI not only by its organizational achievements, but especially by asking ourselves: how can one measure if a MFI is really relevant and of use for the poor?

There exists a wealth of literature on the different approaches to define, measure and monitor poverty (UNDP, 2009; World Bank Institute, 2005; Sen, 2000). Various development and MFI promoters, in their quest to ensure that their interventions reach the most needy, have set up specific tools and survey mechanisms. Examples for the measurement of absolute poverty are the Worldbank poverty measurement tools (2004), USAID's Poverty Assessment Tools³ and the Grameen Foundation's Progress out of Poverty Index. Instruments focusing on relative poverty are the CGAP Poverty

² Data collected by the Mixmarket, www.themix.org

³ See : www.povertytools.org

Assessment Tool⁴, UNICEF's child poverty concept (UNICEF, 2008) and various targeting tools developed in the light of the recent efforts of MFI promoters to ensure the social mission of microfinance⁵.

Measuring the contribution of MFIs to poverty alleviation strongly relates to "social performance assessment" which is the process by which an organization measures its social performance relative to its social mission and objectives, as well as to those of key stakeholders (Simanowitz and Pawlak, 2005). In social performance modelling to microfinance, one can make a distinction between the poverty approach and the self-sustainability approach. The poverty approach assumes that great depth of outreach can compensate for narrow breadth, short length, and limited scope. The self-sustainability approach assumes that wide breadth, long length, and ample scope can compensate for shallow depth (Schreiner, 2002).

Various MFI promoters have developed frameworks and tools to monitor the social performance of MFIs. These include Imp-Act, the SEEP Network/Argidius Foundation, CGAP/CERISE, USAID and ACCIÓN. They all combine -at different levels- elements of the poverty and self-sustainability approach.

The Imp-Act guidebook on social performance management (Simanowitz and Pawlak, 2005) could be considered as a poverty approach oriented tool. It defines social goals for microfinance into three categories: outreach to specific target group(s); sustainable delivery of appropriate services that respond to identified needs of specific target client markets and lastly; impact, defined by positive economic or social changes in clients, their families, their businesses, or the wider community. Also the SEEP Network and Argidius Foundation (2007) have a social performance approach which is poverty oriented. It underscores four dimensions: outreach to poor people and excluded populations; adaptation of products and services to target clients; improved social and political capital, and corporate social responsibility (Lapenu *et al.*, 2004).

The NGO ACCIÓN gives also attention to sustainability indicators. Its social

⁴ See : <http://www.microfinancegateway.org/poverty/pat/pat.html>

⁵ See : http://www.microfinancegateway.org/resource_centers/socialperformance/targeting

performance product is called "SOCIAL" as it stands for Social mission, Outreach, Client service, Information transparency and consumer protection, Association with the community and Labour climate. It offers a comprehensive social assessment of the MFI to complement its financial assessment tool, "CAMEL" which stands for Capital adequacy, Asset quality, Management, Earnings, and Liquidity of microfinance institutions (ACCIÓN, 2007).

The Social Performance Indicators Initiative (SPI⁶) of the exchange network "CERISE"⁷ includes a balanced view of both sustainability and poverty dimensions of social performance. The tool, called "SPI-CERISE", refers to four main clusters of indicators: outreach, social responsibility, social capital and adaptation of products (Zeller *et al.*, 2003). This is also the case for the Social Performance Assessment (SPA) tool developed by USAID⁸ which includes the following dimensions of outreach: breadth, depth, length, scope and costs. These five indicators are similar to the social performance framework proposed by Schreiner (2002), who also adds a sixth component; worth.

3. Does combining microfinance enhance or challenge social exclusion?

While measuring the breadth of outreach can be relatively straightforward when considering the number of clients as its key variable, appreciating the depth of outreach reveals the complexity of the analysis. Depth of outreach can be approached as directly referring to the level of poverty of the clients of a MFI (Churchill and Frankiewicz, 2006). Still, measuring income directly through wealth is relatively difficult, especially in informal economy conditions (Churchill, 2006). Therefore, various proxies can be proposed to measure depth of poverty outreach indirectly. The SPI-CERISE tool for example uses the targeting of the poor, the percentage of female clients and the level of intervention in rural settings as depth of outreach indicators (Zeller *et al.*, 2003). The SPA-USAID tool also proposes characteristics of the

⁶ See/ <http://www.cerisemicrofinance.org/publication/impact.htm>

⁷ Comité d'Echange, de Réflexion et d'Information sur les Systèmes d'Epargne Crédit, see: <http://www.cerise-microfinance.org>

⁸ See/ http://www.microlinks.org/ev_en.php?ID=9940_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC

financial products (Woller, 2006).

In summary, the depth of outreach can be indirectly measured in a number of ways, depending of the focus of interest of the assessor or evaluator. The various tools reflect the diversity of approaches when measuring social performance. In order to include elements of both the self-sustainability and poverty approaches towards social performance, this paper focuses both on the breadth and the depth of poverty outreach.

It is difficult to predict the effect of multiple financial products on poverty alleviation. Existing literature offers some elements to formulate hypotheses with relation to the breadth and the depth of poverty outreach.

H1: Combining multiple financial products enhances the breadth of outreach of MFIs

The above-described social performance instruments put the breadth of outreach as a core dimension of social performance. For poor customers, good performance means use and especially repeated use (Bruett, 2006). If customers did not expect to gain, than they would not repay debts, borrow more than once, continue to pay premiums, nor hold deposits (Schreiner, 1998). A proxy for outreach accounts for the number of clients serviced, and in particular the number of returning clients (Hermes *et al.*, 2009). Research refers to various explanatory variables to outreach such as income per head, population density, donor support, governance and commercial bank presence (Armendáriz and VanRoose, 2009).

Social performance can be measured by the way it provides appropriate services that respond to client needs. Dowla (2006) underlines that over time credit services contribute to the development of a social capital which is built on trust. Insurance services can respond to needs linked to the protection and mitigation of future risks and vulnerabilities (ILO STEP, 2002; Churchill, 2000). Dekker and Wilms (2010) explore the relationship between health insurance and other risk-coping strategies used to finance medical expenditures in Uganda. They found that insurance is associated with a lower frequency of asset sales but not with lower incidences of

borrowing. Poursat (2004) finds various advantages for clients when analysing the combination of health insurance with microcredit in Cambodia. Savings services in the other hand respond to the need of clients to build up capital for future expenses (Hirschland, 2005) and in particular the poor would need savings services (Lee and Sawada, 2010).

As combined microfinance schemes, by definition, offer clients the possibility of using a larger choice of financial services, one should expect that the social performance of combined microfinance schemes is higher than of mono-product MFIs (Peachey, 2007). In conclusion, as a first hypothesis, this paper proposes that CMF has a positive effect on the breadth of outreach of MFIs.

H2. Combining microfinance products does not enhance the income-related depth of outreach

The existing literature points to the circularity between poverty and vulnerability: poor people are more vulnerable (exposed to risk), and often, their vulnerability is the cause of their poverty. Hence, the link runs both ways (Ahuja and Jütting, 2004). Literature on CMF refers to enhancing and challenging factors when assessing its effect on the depth of poverty outreach.

Goldmark (2001) projects that the future of microenterprise development contemplates a continuing wider range of available services -both financial and non-financial- through which small business owners can build linkages to larger businesses and to more profitable markets. Adjei, Arun and Hossein (2009) find in Ghana that microsavings and microinsurance have improved the quality of life of microcredit clients and their family and has allowed them to build up their asset base. Various sources suggest that the need for savings and insurance may be more urgent for the poor than the not-so poor (Rutherford, 2005). One could expect that the needs of the poor will be better served if a wider choice of services is being offered and that this should lead to a higher number of poor persons reached (Labie et al, 2006). Savings, credit and insurance arrangements can enhance management in a variety of ways. First, households can use precautionary savings or consumption credit to smooth consumption in the face of either income shocks or anticipated variation in income or in expenditures (e.g., unexpected social events). Second, households can

use credit to build up assets and thereby increase their future ability to self-insure (Bhattamishra and Barrett, 2010). In other words, by offering more services, one expects that more needs are addressed and hence more socially excluded people will make use of these services. This is also referred to in an impact assessment of Morris and Barnes (2005). This research observes that MFIs can help client households reducing their financial vulnerability through product diversification.

The nature of the combined financial services has a pro-poor protection element against social exclusion. Both savings and insurance products can help clients dealing with liquidity needs when expected (f.e. social events or primary health care) or unexpected (accident, funeral ...) events arise (ILO STEP, 2005). Woller (2006) measures the scope of outreach in function of the number of distinct enterprise loan products, other loan products, other financial services, the type of savings offered, and the percentage of clients with three or more products or services. Hence, he implicitly supposes that combining microfinance products increases scope of outreach, which is strongly related to the income-related depth of outreach. Also Zeller *et al.* (2003) consider the range of services as a core dimension to achieve social performance (CERISE SPI tool).

It is generally accepted that microcredit reaches the poor, but not the destitute (Abdelmoumni, 2005; Matin, 2005; Amin, Rai and Topa, 2003). A survey on membership of microcredit groups in India for example found evidence that participation among the poorest households was relatively lower (Dewan and Somanathan, 2007). Various reasons can be attributed to this such as affordability, discriminatory practices, but also lack of understanding of the products (Patt *et al.*, 2010). McIntosh and Wydick (2005) model the behaviour of non-profit MFIs, and observe that competition exacerbates asymmetric information problems over borrower indebtedness, the most impatient borrowers begin to obtain multiple loans, creating a negative externality that leads to less favourable equilibrium loan contracts for all borrowers. Contrary to popular expectations, Maldonado and González-Vega (2008) find evidence in Bolivia that microfinance can increase the risk for child labour.

Fernando (2006) suggests that credit does not reach the poorest of the poor due to the self-selection of credit-worthy borrowers, determined according to their ability to pay.

Often, MFIs tend to extend larger loans in order to reduce transaction costs. This phenomenon, often linked to "mission drift" (Armendáriz and Szafarz, 2009) creates new forms of exclusion.

When combining microcredit with other financial services, exclusionary dynamics may apply double or even reinforce each other (Gine, 2007). Dror, Radermacher and Koren (2007) found evidence in India that the poor do demand insurance and are willing to pay for it. While nominal willingness to pay correlated positively with income they found that relative willingness to pay (expressed as a percent of household income) correlated negatively. Also Gine and Yang (2009) found evidence from rural Malawi that credit insurance was positively correlated with farmer income as well as education. The potential enhancement of microinsurance depends on affordability (Jütting, 2004). When loan reimbursement is already challenging, it may be unaffordable for this person to engage in additional financial services such as life or health insurance. Basaza, Criel and Van der Stuyft (2008) find in Uganda that the lack of good information, affordability, poor quality of services, enrolment requirements and lack of trust are the main reasons for people not to join. Characteristics of clients can also change the distributional impact of insurance benefits. Sinha, Ranson and Mills (2007) examined the impact of a community-based insurance scheme which covers death, hospitalization, and asset loss benefits in a bundled package and found evidence that urban members benefit much more from the scheme than rural members.

It is also, for example, difficult to imagine a client engaging in new savings products when having large debts or being under strong pressure for loan repayment (Servet, 2005). Lee and Sawada (2010) find evidence in Pakistan that precautionary saving is significantly higher for liquidity-constrained households. This finding suggests that the need for saving motives appear stronger when households see that their access to credit markets is limited. Hence, non-access to savings (or insurance) may impact strongly lower income households.

With reference to the above-mentioned challenges for real poverty outreach, this paper expects that insurance and savings -despite their positive nature- may in a relative way adversely affect the depth of income-related poverty outreach of MFIs

(hypothesis2).

H3: Combining microcredit with other financial products can sharpen certain exclusionary gender-sensitive mechanisms.

The ILO (2009) claims that –worldwide- 75% of poverty is female. Females constitute 50% of the world’s working population but take roughly 67% of the burden of the world’s work. Still, they would only earn 10% of the world’s wages and 1% of its wealth (Fernando, 2006). Hence, MFIs –if geared towards gender inequality- should be targeted towards female clients. This would be already the case globally as the Microcredit Summit 2007 Campaign Report estimates that 85% of the poorest loan takers are women (Daley-Harris, 2007). Still, information about gender dynamics, offered by rating agencies, remains limited and intrahousehold dynamics are difficult to assess (Fletschner, 2009).

In literature, one can make a distinction between two competing interpretations on the effects of microfinance and CMF with relation to gender equality (Nader, 2008). Armendáriz and Morduch (2005) observe that the use of microfinance services by women can enhance greater redistribution of its socio-economic utility to the family at large. Mahjabeen (2008) finds that MFIs raise income and consumption levels of households, reduce income inequality and enhance welfare in Bangladesh. Following Helms (2006) microfinance institutions contribute to various millennium development goals (MDGs) such as poverty reduction, access to primary education, decrease of illiteracy, access to health care and gender equality. The availability of savings are generally a empowering element for female decision-making power within the household. Ashraf *et al.* (2010) find positive impacts of savings for women who have relatively low decision-making power. Boyé, Hajdenberg and Poursat (2006) suggest various levels of real impact of microfinance, such as the economic and social situation of its clients, the autonomy of women and the strengthening of solidarity structures. Other positive social externalities include greater participation of women in local governance bodies, gender equity and the promotion of human capabilities (Indira, 2005). The ILO (2009) indicates that savings and insurance products adapted to women's needs are a fundamental element of risk management.

Still, when reviewing in-depth analyses, most of the above-mentioned authors recognise that it is difficult to attribute the effect of microfinance on the wellbeing of women. Recent research indicates that there is evidence about unintended exclusionary gender-sensitive dynamics as a consequence of introducing microfinance, often linked to the pressure on MFIs to ensure profit making (Woller, 2005; Rahman, 2004) and competition (Olivares-Polanco, 2005). Agier and Sfaraz (2010) found in a Brazilian MFI the presence of a glass ceiling in loan size faced by the most ambitious female entrepreneurs. Honohan (2010) finds similar results in Paraguay, where women are more credit-constrained than men. Empirical surveys in West-Africa (Atim, 2000) and globally (Baeza, 2002), suggest that social exclusion and poverty remain challenges, even for microinsurance schemes. As women have lower income levels than men in general, they are likely to have less access to microfinance (Guérin and Servet, 2003).

It is likely that women, because of their lower power status in the household, may find not only economic, but also socio-cultural barriers to engage in new complementary products such as savings and insurance. Reported examples of negative social externalities include excessive debt-burdens at the family level (Collins *et al.*, 2009), increased social tension (Indira, 2005), intimidation (Fernando, 2006) and increased violence against woman borrowers (Servet, 2005). Dupas and Robinson (2009) observe in Kenya that women daily income workers face important savings constraints. Banarjee *et al.* (2009) observe in India that women in MFI areas were not more likely to make decisions about household spending, investment, savings, or education than those with no access to microcredit. Guérin, Palier and Prevost (2009) mention the limits of voluntary savings for poor women as these do not always understand its principles compared with loans and often have geographical and cultural barriers to regularly deposit funds.

For these reasons, this paper projects as a third hypothesis that combining financial services also combines unintended exclusionary dynamics of these schemes and hence that in particular women, who are most vulnerable to these risks, may eventually not fully access these additional services.

4. The model

As reflected in hypotheses H1, H2 and H3, this paper is looking for evidence whether CMF contributes to more inclusion or to more exclusion of poor clients. This research question can be described in function of following expected utility outcomes: $E[U_c|W]$ and $E[U_m|W]$, where $E[U|W]$ is the expected (average) utility of either a mono-product (U_m) or combined (U_c) microfinance scheme - measured by the same indicator - given (or conditional on) the information set W . If CMF leads to respectively more or less social inclusion, than the relation is: $E[U_c|W] - E[U_m|W] >$ (resp. $<$) 0.

In order to address the three hypotheses, the combined microfinance dimension (c) further refers to four possible situations⁹:

- (i) Low intensity of insurance services (ll combination);
- (ii) Medium intensity of insurance services (lm combination);
- (iii) High intensity of insurance services (lh combination);
- (iv) Savings services (ls combination).

Hence, four potential differences in utility between combined and monoprodut MFIs may be found: $E[U_{ll}|W] - E[U_m|W]$; $E[U_{lm}|W] - E[U_m|W]$; $E[U_{lh}|W] - E[U_m|W]$ and $E[U_{ls}|W] - E[U_m|W]$.

In order to estimate these potential differences, one can specify the following equation for the MFI i :

$$U_{.i} = \beta_0 + \beta_1.DCI_i + \beta_2.DMI_i + \beta_3.DHI_i + \beta_4.S_i + w_{ik}.b_k + u_i, \quad (1)$$

In equation (1), $U_{.i}$ is the utility (social performance) indicator of the respective MFI i ; DCI_i is a dummy variable for low intensity insurance. The associated coefficient β_1 estimates $E[U_{ll}|W] - E[U_m|W]$. In the same way, DMI_i , DHI_i and S_i are dummy variables for the presence of respectively middle and high intensity insurance and savings, which are the independent variables of interest. Their respective associated

⁹ Next to low intensity insurance (credit insurance only), this paper defines middle intensity insurance as the delivery of two insurance products and high intensity insurance as the delivery of three or more insurance products. The delivery of health insurance, because of its complex nature, is also considered as high intensity insurance.

coefficients are presented as well. The equation also includes w_{ik} which is a vector of k independent control variables explaining MFI i utility, to be specified later on; b_k is the vector of the k associated coefficients measuring the effect of each of these control variables and u_i is the error term associated to MFI i utility.

5. The dataset

5.1. Dependent and independent variables

In order to analyse the difference in utility between mono and combined microfinance schemes, this study compares selected dependent (U_i) and independent variables (w_{ik}).

The dependent variable, utility –to poverty alleviation- is complex and hence difficult to measure. No single variable can in a comprehensive way correspond to its multidimensional nature (Sen, 2000). Analyzing utility, this paper relies on analysis of proxy indicators, relating to selected dimensions of the utility of microfinance products on the well-being of the client. These include the general breadth of outreach, income-related depth of outreach and gender-sensitive depth of outreach (to female customers).

The most generally accepted indicator for the breadth of outreach of microcredit organizations is the number of active borrowers (Copestake, 2007), expressed as ‘ C ’ and referring to the number of individuals who have an outstanding loan balance with the MFI (Mixmarket, 2010). This variable refers to the use of microcredit services and hence its utility in absolute terms.

The poverty level of the clients can be associated with the relation between the MFI’s average loan size and the country’s GNI per capita. This indicator, abbreviated as ‘ $ALBpGNI$ ’, is the average loan balance per GNI per capita¹⁰. Recent research

¹⁰ The Mixmarket calculates the ratios as percentages of values referring to data from MFIs reports, income statements and balance sheet items. The figures are converted to USD using exchange

(Armendáriz and Szafarz, 2009; Cull *et al.*, 2008) suggests that a relevant proxy for poverty is average loan size – the smaller the average loan size, the greater the depth of outreach.

Gender equality is about the equal treatment between men and women, despite their sex. A proxy for the gender-sensitive outreach to the family at large is the number of female borrowers in relation with the total number of borrowers, abbreviated as ‘*WOMAN*’. It reflects female participation in a MFI.

The model described above presents as well the w_{ik} vector of k independent control variables, which explain the utility of the MFI, i . One dimension for control variables which is being considered in this paper is the organizational structure of MFIs. MFIs can be non-bank financial institutions (*NONBANK*), banks (*BANK*), nongovernmental organisations (*NGO*), cooperative credit unions (*COOP*) or other organisations (*OTHER*). The agreed definitions of these are available in the online Mixmarket glossary. The nature of the organizations is expressed by dummy variables which take the value 1 if the MFI i is the organization in question, 0 if not.

This research also considers the control variable AGE_i , the age of the scheme expressed by the number of years that the MFI i existed in 2006.

5.2. Descriptive Statistics

In order to appreciate the key characteristics of the sample, this section describes general trends of MFIs in the LAC region, reviews variables of the database and points out key findings of the correlation analysis.

Many countries in this region –high, middle and low income- have a Gini coefficient of over .50 reflecting alarming levels of unequal income distribution. As in many other regions in the world, microfinance has known an exponential growth in the LAC region (Westley, 2005; Lashley, 2004) with borrower outreach growing up to a rate of

rates from the end of the reporting period.

26% yearly (Stephens, 2009). Following Armendáriz and VanRoose (2009), the number of active MFI borrowers by population would be the highest in the world, estimated at 11,65%. Despite these specificities in Latin America and the Caribbean, findings from MFIs from this region are not expected to be much different than other parts in the world, taking into account the nature of the various dependent and independent variables.

{Insert table 1 here}

Table 1 reflects key statistical data on the different variables in the sample, grouped by independent explanatory variables, dependent performance variables and independent control variables.

We observe that many schemes in the database are combined in nature. In more than one in three cases, the clients have access to savings services¹¹ (37.6%) while respectively 21.6%, 4.8% and 12.4% have also access to credit insurance, middle- and high intensity insurance.

With reference to the dependent performance variables, an important dispersion exists between the social performance of the MFIs, expressed by the standard deviation and the minimum and maximum values. One can observe important differences in breadth of outreach ranging from small MFIs having 123 to others reaching 643659 borrowers. The mean value here is 36298 clients. Chart 1 represents the distribution of the size of the MFIs in the dataset. One can observe a distribution, which is skewed towards the lower values. Some values are outside of the general assimilation of the distribution. These outliers represent a few very large organisations.

{Insert chart 1 here}

Most schemes have more female than male clients with an average of 64% of total clients being female suggesting that the sample MFIs are proactively targeting female clients. can observe in chart 2, a relative symmetric distribution, but still, a strong

¹¹ It should be recognised that also in a CMF context, financial or cultural barriers can exist allowing the setting up of a savings account.

presence of many MFIs which target only women (100% value).

{Insert chart 2 here}

One can observe important discrepancies in terms of income related depth of outreach (*ALBpGNI*), with minimum and maximum values of respectively 1.2% and 885.4%. Chart 3 presents a relatively symmetric distribution skewed towards the right, with its center around 40%. Only a few outliers are over 200%. Barres (2002) suggests that MFIs with an average loan size of 20 percent of GNI per capita do effectively reach poorer segments of the population. With an average value of 51%, one can suggest – with the necessary reservations- that most schemes tend to reach middle-income instead of poorer households.

{Insert chart 3 here}

As for the independent control variables, one can observe that the majority of the MFIs are NGOs (54%), followed by non-bank financial institutions (20%) and cooperatives (17%). A minority are formal banking institutions (7%) and other organizations (2%).

{Insert chart 4 here}

Also the age of the schemes is heterogeneous, ranging from 1 to 51 years of existence with a mean of 14.9 years and a median value of 13 years, which refers to a relative average maturity. Chart 4 reflects a relative symmetric distribution of the various values of *AGE*, though slightly skewed to the right (lower values).

Table 2 below presents the correlations between the independent variables of interest, the dependent variables and the independent control variables.

{Insert table 2 here}

While little significant correlations can be found with relation to the various dummy variables for insurance, a negative significant correlation (value of -0.392) is found

between *S* and *WOMAN*. This could mean that microcredit organizations offering savings tend to have less female clients than those who don't. This observation is also supported by the findings in the table 3 highlighting higher mean and minimum values of *WOMAN* in case of savings. One can observe little to no significant difference between the mean values in case of high intensity insurance. Still, as in all cases the mean number of *WOMAN* is higher than 50, one can observe that in all scenarios the MFIs are targeting women.

{Insert table 3 here}

The positive relative significant correlation between *S* and *ALBpGNI* (value of 0.236) suggests that MFIs offering savings tend to contract higher loans and hence -are expected to- reach out to higher income categories than the MFIs which do not offer savings services. Table 4 gives an overview of the descriptive statistics in case of savings and high intensity insurance. It indicates that the mean, the minimum and the maximum values of *ALBpGNI* are significantly higher in case of savings. A similar observation -with the exception of maximum values- could be made in case of high intensity insurance.

{Insert table 4 here}

By way of conclusion, one can observe that the MFIs in the database are strongly geared towards female clients and reach out to a middle-income target group. One can find -in case of combining credit with savings- a tendency of lower participation of the low income clients, which are in majority female. The next section looks deeper into the relationship between combining microfinance and the social performance outcomes through regression analysis.

6. Estimation Results

As mentioned above, this paper aims at exploring if combining micro-credit with savings or insurance contributes to more inclusion or to more exclusion of poor clients. The previously specified model (1) reflects this question and can be presented as following, when including the above-described explanatory variables:

$$(2) \quad U_{.i} = \beta_0 + \beta_1.DCI_i + \beta_2.DMI_i + \beta_3.DHI_i + \beta_4.S_i + \beta_5.NGO_i + \beta_6.COOP_i + \beta_7.BANK_i + \beta_8.NONBANK_i + \beta_9.AGE_i + u_i$$

As and alternative and whereas possible, variables are specified in logarithms. The following model therefore is also estimated:

$$(3) \quad \ln U_{.i} = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1.DCI_i + \gamma_2.DMI_i + \gamma_3.DHI_i + \gamma_4.S_i + \gamma_5.NGO_i + \gamma_6.COOP_i + \gamma_7.BANK_i + \gamma_8.NONBANK_i + \gamma_9.\ln AGE_i + v_i$$

Both models (2) and (3) are estimated by means of Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression¹².

{Insert table 5 here}

Table 5 presents the results of the OLS regressions, with relation to respectively breadth of outreach (*C*), income-related depth of outreach (*ALBpGNI*) and gender-sensitive depth of outreach (*WOMAN*). Table 6 presents the results of the OLS regression of the logged values of the relevant dependent variables. The robust standard-errors from the OLS regressions (in parentheses), the significance following the t-test, the F stat and the adjusted R² are reported.

{Insert table 6 here}

As a methodology to appreciate the estimation results, this research applies the Hendry/LSE approach to build from larger models simplified models by including the most significant variables. In this paper, we first select the models with the highest (Adjusted) R-squared value (comparison between results from regression from nominal values and logged values). Following, we apply the Fisher test to explore if the test statistic has an F-distribution under the null hypothesis with a probability of less than 5%. In case of significant results for the F-test, we simplify the equation by discarding those variables which have t-stats of less than 1. In the simplified econometric model, we only keep those variables having a $P > |t|$ which is lower than

¹² Robust standard errors are estimated in case of 5% significant heteroskedasticity following the Breusch-Pagan / Cook-Weisberg specification test. (This test allows one to appreciate whether the estimated variance of the residuals from the regression depends on the values of the independent variables.)

10%. The results of the simplified equations are represented in table 7.

{Insert table 7 here}

The following two sections will present the equations of those dependent variables with the most significant results (based on the highest R-squared value). The various OLS regressions allow one to make observations which directly refer to the hypotheses projected in section 3.

6.1. Combining microfinance products has a positive effect on the breadth of outreach of microcredit organizations.

Comparing the Rsquared values of the breadth of outreach one can find most relevant results for the logged value of *C* (see table 6). Applying the estimation methodology presented above, one can find the following simplified model, also represented in table 7:

$$(4) \quad \ln C = 3.424^{***} + 0.837 DMI^{***} + 0.311 DHI^{***} + 0.416 S^{***} - 0.597 COOP^{***} + \\ (0.123) \quad (0.173) \quad (0.114) \quad (0.097) \quad (0.123) \\ 0.603 BANK^{***} + \quad 0.356 \ln AGE^{***} \\ (0.162) \quad (0.110)$$

This equation (4) highlights the significant effect of *DMI*, *DHI* and *S* on $\ln C$. The findings suggest as well a positive effect of *BANK* and *lnAGE* on outreach. *COOP* has a negative effect on $\ln C$, which may reflect a reality of relatively smaller cooperative organisations. In this equation, the adjusted R^2 has a value of 0.323 and the F-stat is 20.34. By eliminating the less significant explanatory variables in the general equation (see differences table 6 and 7), the simplified estimation allows one to observe the significance (t-test) of *S*, which is one of the main variables of interest.

Chart 1 in section 5.2. highlighted the presence of outliers in the distribution of *C*. Therefore, to test the robustness of the results against these outliers, one can re-estimate the regression by eliminating the values of *C* higher than 500.000. As the results of this re-estimation remain similar to those including all observations, one can suggest that these outliers do not influence significantly the overall estimation results.

The equation (4) suggests that one can expect a higher value for the number of clients in case of respectively middle intensity insurance, high intensity insurance, and savings in comparison with the value for mono-product MFIs. Hence, these estimation findings are in line with the hypothesis H1 which suggests that CMF can contribute to the breadth of poverty outreach. This is also supported by various literature references which underscore that the demand for savings (Hirschland, 2005; Sawada, 2010) and insurance services (Poursat, 2004; Churchill, 2000) which should naturally lead to more breadth of outreach.

6.2. The supply of savings does not enhance income-related depth of outreach of microcredit organizations

The estimation is most relevant following (highest R^2) when regressing the logged value of $ALBpGNI$. The simplified equation highlights a significant positive relation with S and $\ln AGE$ (see table 6) as reflected below:

$$(5) \quad \ln ALBpGNI = 0.918^{***} + 0.406 S^{***} + 0.326 \ln AGE^{***}$$

$$(0.122) \quad (0.061) \quad (0.109)$$

In this simplified model (5), also presented in table 7, one can find similar results as in the general model presented in table 6. The values of the F-stat and R^2 are respectively 32.14 and 0.213.

This equation suggests that MFIs offering savings tend not to reach out to poorer or socially excluded clients, but to a relative higher income group. This finding is in line with the second hypothesis H2 with reference to the savings function. It supports hence the research from Servet (2005) and Lee and Sawada (2010) highlighting the remaining obstacles for the low-income households to engage in savings services. On the contrary, the current estimation doesn't find evidence to support the hypothesis 2 relating to adverse affect of the insurance function on the income-related depth of poverty outreach.

6.3. The availability of savings has an adverse effect on the gender-sensitive (female) depth of outreach of microcredit organizations

We can observe from tables 5 and 6 that the variable *WOMAN* offers the most representative estimation. When applying the above-described methodology, one can find following simplified model after OLS regression:

$$(6) \quad WOMAN = \begin{matrix} 70.513*** \\ (1.614) \end{matrix} - \begin{matrix} 16.987 S*** \\ (2.705) \end{matrix}$$

Though explanatory value of the findings remain relatively low with an adjusted R^2 of 0.141. Still, the F value is 39.43 and the t-test of the model suggests that the variable *S* has a significant negative effect on *WOMAN* at $P > |t|$ of 0.000%. The simplified equation –in comparison with the general model- suggests that the control variables – including *COOP*- have little significant effect on *WOMAN*.

We can hence –in line with hypothesis H3- suggest that in the database there is a relative adverse effect of savings on the women-specific depth of outreach of MFIs. While the positive role of savings is not under discussion, the presence of savings goes together with a relative lower participation of females in microfinance. This is in line with the various literature studies in section 3 which highlight the various barriers of females to participate in combined financial products. Next to income-poverty (coherent with hypothesis 2), the geographical and cultural barriers of voluntary savings for women, as proposed by Guérin, Palier and Prevost (2009) can support these findings. Similar to the income-related depth of poverty outreach, the estimation results do not allow one to present evidence with relation to the effects of insurance on gender-sensitive depth of poverty outreach (hypothesis H3).

7. Conclusion

Microfinance can be considered as an instrument to deal with market failures, especially when the poor and socially excluded have no access to financial services such as credit, savings or insurance. When combining multiple financial services, one can expect that more poor and socially excluded clients would be reached. This paper

explores this research question by analysing cross-sectional data of 250 microcredit organizations offering -at different levels- also savings or insurance products.

This research observes empirical evidence of the positive effects of CMF on the breadth of outreach. This makes sense as with an increased offer of financial products, one would expect more clients to participate in the various financial schemes. Conform with hypotheses two and three; the findings suggest that the presence of savings products can have a relative adverse effect on the income-related and gender-sensitive (pro-female) depth of outreach of microcredit organizations. No evidence was found on the effects of insurance on the depth of poverty outreach. In other words, this research suggests that, with CMF, poverty outreach is enhanced from a self-sustainability approach, but can have relative adverse effects from a poverty approach point of view.

While generalization should be avoided, the last two observations may challenge policy expectations that combining microfinance should naturally lead to higher levels of social performance. This paper doesn't question the contribution of savings and insurance to the wellbeing of a person or a micro business. Still, it highlights the possible hindering factors of access –both financial or socio-cultural- which need to be reviewed in the different contexts. One of the main reasons for these adverse effects may be that the new services are not enough targeted to the poor, but foresee other exclusionary mechanisms –often linked to affordability and socio-cultural or gender-sensitive dynamics- creating new access barriers. The lower participation of women in complementary financial products, confirms observations in literature that women are given a greater role in debt-repayment than in capitalization of funds (savings), reflecting their lower power position in households (Guérin and Palier, 2005).

By means of descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and regression estimates, this paper has allowed one to access various elements of evidence contributing to the research question. Applying the Hendry/LSE approach, this research found significant results for the efficiency and productivity dimensions relating to the variables of interest. One potential weakness of the used econometric estimation approach is the possible endogenous relation among the regressors, which may bias the OLS

estimates. For example, while the MFIs' breadth of outreach may increase when providing insurance and savings activities, the opposite may also be true. An organization with a large number of clients may respond to different needs, have a stronger organizational capacity and hence offer a wider array of financial products. Hence there may be a circular effect between the variables which drives MFIs in one or the other direction.

Though more in-depth research is needed at the scheme level to understand the nature of the -context specific- dynamics of exclusion, it is important to look beyond the concept of "outreach". While a absolute higher number of –including poor- clients can be reached through CMF, the relative proportion of the poor is decreasing. This observation can contribute to public and corporate policy recommendations when designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating CMF.

One of the key outcomes of this study is that the presence of savings matters for poverty outreach. Savings, as a variable of interest was found significant for both the breadth and the depth of poverty outreach. Savings can be an important empowerment tool for low income, and in particular female, vulnerable groups. Social studies in the field of microfinance should give more attention to the various characteristics of this crucial dimension. Findings and future research could explore how savings, and the elimination of its access barriers, can contribute more effectively to local business and household financial development.

Bolero (2006) highlights in the Microinsurance Compendium that –from the design outset- combined microfinance can work better if the demand side is being prepared and stimulated. For it to fulfil its potential, it is necessary to develop an insurance and savings culture among the low-income market and to introduce products that meet priority needs, particularly for those who are most vulnerable. Hence, before launching new financial services, there is a need to explore whether these products will enhance participation of the intended target groups. Not only quantitative data, but also qualitative evidence should enable in-depth understanding of the potential risks and outcomes of combining microfinance, adapted to the context in which the schemes operate.

Examples exist of social performance monitoring tools looking at the level of adaptation of products to the target clients. The example in annex 1 looks at indicators referring to the quality of services, the levels of participation of clients and the availability of non-financial services accessible to the clients. The findings of this study underscore the relevance to monitor these "depth of outreach" performance indicators when implementing CMF in order to ensure effective design and targeting. Policy support and supervision, building on the ongoing efforts to enhance social performance should be encouraged. This would better ensure the effective translation of the MFI's ultimate *vivendi ratio*¹³: lift unbankable people out of poverty.

¹³ Latin, translation: reason to live; reason of existence.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics¹⁴

	Variable	Acronym	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Independent Variables of interest	Low intensity insurance	<i>DCI</i>	250	0.216	0.412	0	1
	Medium intensity insurance	<i>DMI</i>	250	0.048	0.214	0	1
	High intensity insurance	<i>DHI</i>	250	0.124	0.330	0	1
	No insurance	<i>NI</i>	250	.612	0.488	0	1
	Savings	<i>S</i>	250	0.376	0.485	0	1
Dependent variables	Number of clients (in 1000 persons)	<i>C</i>	244	36.298	91.407	0.123	643.659
	Percentage Female borrowers	<i>WOMAN</i>	235	64.466	21.463	0	100
	Average loan size per GNI/capita	<i>ALBpGNI</i>	236	51.106	86.839	1.2	885.4
Independent control Variables	Non-bank financial institutions	<i>NONBANK</i>	250	0.2	0.401	0	1
	Cooperatives	<i>COOP</i>	250	0.168	0.375	0	1
	Banks	<i>BANK</i>	250	0.068	0.252	0	1
	Non governmental organisations	<i>NGO</i>	250	0.536	0.499	0	1
	Other organisations	<i>OTHER</i>	250	0.028	0.165	0	1
	Maturity of scheme	<i>AGE</i>	249	14.992	9.802	1	51

¹⁴

Section 5 describes the selected variables. Idem for the following tables.

Table 2. Correlation table of the values of low, medium and high intensity insurance, (respectively *DCI*, *DMI* and *DHI*), savings (*S*), number of clients (*C*), percentage of female borrowers (*WOMAN*), average loan balance per gross national income per capita (*ALBpGNI*), non-bank financial institutions (*NONBANK*), cooperatives (*COOP*), banks (*BANK*), NGOs (*NGO*) and maturity (*AGE*). (N=235)

	<i>DCI</i>	<i>DMI</i>	<i>DHI</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>WOMAN</i>	<i>ALBpGNI</i>	<i>NONBANK</i>	<i>COOP</i>	<i>BANK</i>	<i>NGO</i>	<i>AGE</i>
<i>DCI</i>	1.000											
<i>DMI</i>	-0.117	1.000										
<i>DHI</i>	-0.182	-0.081	1.000									
<i>S</i>	0.108	0.134	0.182	1.000								
<i>C</i>	-0.111	-0.000	0.093	0.142	1.000							
<i>WOMAN</i>	0.05	-0.113	-0.042	-0.392	-0.143	1.000						
<i>ALBpGNI</i>	-0.027	-0.041	0.088	0.236	0.023	-0.300	1.000					
<i>NONBANK</i>	0.074	0.040	-0.073	0.351	0.037	-0.122	0.111	1.000				
<i>COOP</i>	0.084	0.186	0.112	0.505	0.034	-0.270	0.137	-0.218	1.000			
<i>BANK</i>	-0.033	0.120	0.215	0.300	0.293	-0.119	0.002	-0.126	-0.108	1.000		
<i>NGO</i>	-0.150	-0.215	-0.114	-0.204	-0.204	0.323	-0.186	-0.567	-0.487	-0.281	1.000	
<i>AGE</i>	0.023	-0.131	-0.026	-0.051	-0.051	-0.125	0.184	-0.020	0.152	-0.012	-0.057	1.000

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the percentage of female borrowers (*WOMAN*) in case of savings (*S*) and high intensity insurance (*DHI*)

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
<i>WOMAN</i> when <i>S</i> = 0	152	70.513	20.755	18	100
<i>WOMAN</i> when <i>S</i> = 1	84	53.526	18.233	0	99.8
<i>WOMAN</i> when <i>DHI</i> = 0	206	64.755	21.332	0	100
<i>WOMAN</i> when <i>DHI</i> = 1	30	62.487	22.618	13	100

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of the average loan balance per gross national income per capita (*ALBpGNI*) in case of savings (*S*) and high intensity insurance (*DHI*)

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
<i>ALBpGNI</i> when <i>S</i> = 0	148	35.334	56.673	1.2	540.09
<i>ALBpGNI</i> when <i>S</i> = 1	88	77.631	117.506	3.42	885.4
<i>ALBpGNI</i> when <i>DHI</i> = 0	209	48.599	79.984	1.2	885.4
<i>ALBpGNI</i> when <i>DHI</i> = 1	27	70.508	128.602	3.33	685.6

Table 5. Regression of the dependent variables towards the independent variables

Independent variable	Abbreviation	Dependent variable ¹⁵		
		Clients in 1000 persons (C) ¹⁶	% Female Borrowers (WOMAN)	Average loan per GNI per capita (ALBpGNI) ¹⁷
Low intensity insurance	<i>DCI</i>	-23.567*	-.308	-11.992
		12.414	3.333	11.543
Medium intensity insurance	<i>DMI</i>	-31.916	-4.379	-29.750*
		24.117	6.672	17.275
High intensity insurance	<i>DHI</i>	17.433	4.013	9.199
		31.468	4.277	30.167
Savings	<i>S</i>	-19.588	-12.152 **	33.399**
		25.142	4.963	14.877
Non-bank financial institutions	<i>NONBANK</i>	-10.595	-13.473	8.254
		49.040	9.117	17.432
Cooperative organisations	<i>COOP</i>	2.643	-18.087*	3.804
		50.093	9.698	25.182
Banks	<i>BANK</i>	61.193	-16.557	-15.068
		67.738	10.745	25.302
Non governmental organisations	<i>NGO</i>	-50.515	-11.304	-5.809
		45.258	8.494	14.536
Maturity	<i>AGE</i>	0.126	-.147	1.058
		0.939	.144	1.056
Adjusted R-squared value	Adj. R ²	0.098	0.135	0.083
F-test statistic	F-stat	1.30	5.05***	1.86**
Number of Observations	N	244	235	236

¹⁵ Robust standard errors in parentheses

¹⁶ Corrected for heteroskedasticity after Breusch-Pagan / Cook-Weisberg test gave a Prob > chi2 = 0.0000

¹⁷ Idem with a Prob > chi2 = 0.0042

Table 6. Regression findings of the different logged dependent variables towards the variables under interest and the control variables

Independent variable	Abbreviation	Dependent variable ¹⁸		
		Logarithm Clients (lnC)	Logarithm % Female borrowers (lnWOMAN) ¹⁹	Average loan per GNI per capita (ALBpGNI) ²⁰
Low intensity insurance	<i>DCI</i>	.065	.065	-.009
		.091	.062	.076
Medium intensity insurance	<i>DMI</i>	.811***	.118	-.112
		.177	.131	.142
High intensity insurance	<i>DHI</i>	.348***	.144	.064
		.117	.110	.102
Savings	<i>S</i>	.179	-.121**	.413***
		.139	.061	.150
Non-bank financial institutions	<i>NONBANK</i>	.188	-.068	-.124
		.273	.084	.243
Cooperative organisations	<i>COOP</i>	-.478*	-.223*	-.127
		.286	.127	.250
Banks	<i>BANK</i>	.727**	-.377	-.232
		.305	.345	.265
Nongovernmental organisations	<i>NGO</i>	-.123	-.075	-.143
		.261	.082	.227
Maturity	<i>lnAGE</i>	.409***	-.029	.331***
		.113	.098	.113
Adjusted R²	Adj. R ²	0.332	0.101	0.221
F-stat	F-stat	14.41***	2.50***	7.62***
Number of Observations	N	244	235	236

***, **, * Significant at respectively the 1%, 5% and 10% level

¹⁸ Robust standard errors in parentheses

¹⁹ Corrected for heteroskedasticity after Breusch-Pagan / Cook-Weisberg test gave a Prob > chi2 = 0,0002

²⁰ Idem with a Prob > chi2 = 0.0176

Table 7. Regression findings of the simplified models, applying the Hendry/LSE methodology

Independent variable	Abbreviation	Dependent variable ²¹		
		Logarithm Clients (lnC)	% Female borrowers (WOMAN)	Average loan balance per GNI per capita (ALBpGNI) ²²
Low intensity insurance	<i>DCI</i>			
Medium intensity insurance	<i>DMI</i>	.837***		
		.173		
High intensity insurance	<i>DHI</i>	.311***		
		.114		
Savings	<i>S</i>	.416***	-16.98***	.406***
		.097	2.705	.061
Non-bank financial institutions	<i>NONBANK</i>			
Cooperative organisations	<i>COOP</i>	-.597***		
		.123		
Banks	<i>BANK</i>	.603***		
		.162		
Nongovernmental organisations	<i>NGO</i>			
Maturity	<i>lnAGE</i>	.356***		.326***
		.110		.109
Adjusted R²	Adj. R ²	0.340	0.141	0.213
F-stat	F-stat	20.34***	39.43***	32.14***
Number of Observations	N	244	235	236

***, **, * Significant at respectively the 1%, 5% and 10% level

²¹ Robust standard errors in parentheses

²² Idem with a Prob > chi2 = 0.017

Chart 1. Distribution of the dependent variable number of clients ©

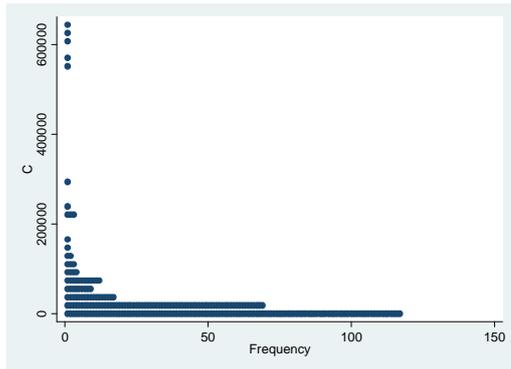


Chart 2. Distribution of the dependent variable percentage of female borrowers (WOMAN)

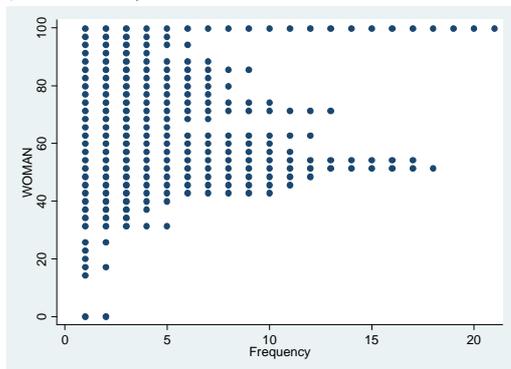


Chart 3. Distribution of the dependant variable average loan balance per gross national income per capita (ALBpGNI)

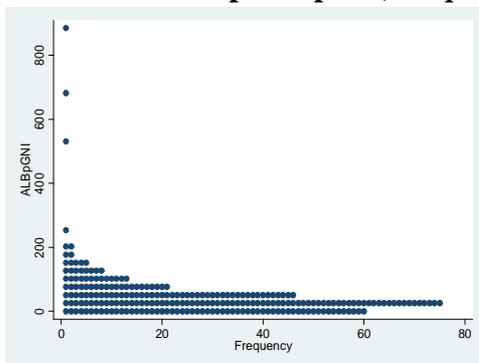
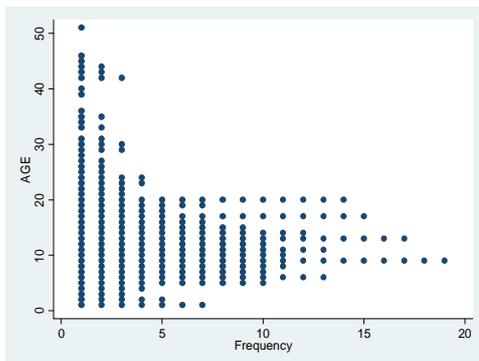


Chart 4. Distribution of the independent variable maturity (AGE)



Annex 1. SPI-CERISE indicators referring to need for adaptation of the services and products to the target clients (Source: ZELLER M., LAPENU C. and GREELEY M., 2003)

Range of services

- How many different types of loan products does the MFI provide?
- Does the MFI provide consumer /emergency loans?
- Does the MFI provide loans from 0 to 6 months?
- Does the MFI provide loans from 6 to 12 months?
- Does the MFI provide loans above 12 months?
- How many different types of voluntary savings products does the MFI provide?
- Does the MFI provide insurance products?
- What is the flexibility of repayment?

Quality of services

- Decentralisation: In the rural areas, what is the maximum distance clients travel to receive a loan or make a deposit
- Prompt delivery of the loans: what is the frequency of the meetings of the credit committee (or of the decision taking for loan delivery by the loan officers) to decide to give the loans to a borrower ?
- Has the MFI ever conducted market surveys (in particular with study of the household budgets) to improve the quality of services to the clients?
- Percentage of client drop-out or inactive clients (no transaction on credit and savings for more than one year) over the last 12 months.
- Has the MFI ever conducted surveys on drop-out clients?

Non-financial services accessible to the clients

- Does the MFI insure that the clients can have access to the following non financial services (within the same organization or thanks to formal partnership and cooperation with other local organization) :
- Non financial services related to financial and economical management of the loan: business training, management of family budget, access to market, innovation, etc.?
- Non financial services related to social needs: literacy training, health services, access to social workers, etc.?

Participation

- Has the MFI ever used tools (such as meetings, surveys or focus groups discussions) to involve its clients in the design of the services provided?

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