



SUCCESS STORY

Haitian Credit Union Executives Study Field Officer Banking in Mexico



A field officer from Caja Yanga credit union makes a transaction with CONECTA ENTURA software, which allows credit union field officers to make transactions anywhere and in real time (Photo credit: HIFIVE).



Credit union executives from Haiti who participated in the exchange trip accompanied a field officer on a visit to a rural family that benefits from membership with Caja Zongolica through field officer banking. Caja Zongolica serves 772 rural organized groups of people, each with approximately 20 members, through the field officer banking methodology. (Photo credit: HIFIVE).

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Through HIFIVE¹-supported grants, Haitian credit unions are on the verge of major ICT improvements that will bring greater quality, efficiency and outreach so they can reach more people and provide better services. In order to help jumpstart important advancements in technology to expand access to the unbanked, HIFIVE organized a Cooperative Knowledge Exchange Trip for three credit union executives, from SOCOLAVIM in the Artibonite department, KEPOMEK and COSODEV in the West department, and a representative of the Le Levier credit union federation. Two senior HIFIVE staff members accompanied the group to Veracruz, Mexico, in order to learn from the ICT revolution that has transformed credit unions in Mexico over the past 10 years.

The group participating in the exchange visited two Mexican credit unions, Caja Yanga and Caja Zongolica, to learn about Field Officer Banking, a model which both credit unions have successfully implemented through technical assistance from World Council of Credit Unions. The group visited the credit unions and traveled to the field to gain first-hand experience with the methodology. Under this model, field officers of the financial institutions use smartphone mobile technology to make remote transactions for rural credit union members who would not otherwise have access to a financial institution. The field officers recruit clients by organizing community groups, and then deliver financial services to the groups using the smartphone technology linked to the financial institutions' core banking software. The exchange group learned about the CONECTA ENTURA software used by the field agents, which allows them to make remote transactions on their smartphones in real time. The Field Officer Banking model allows credit unions to expand outreach to rural areas, increasing their membership and credit portfolios, and bringing financial access to the unbanked. In addition, the exchange group was introduced to ENTURA Mexico, the ICT-enabled business network that supports the credit union network to work with service providers in order to offer members shared branching, mobile banking services and other access points.

Through the exchange visit, HIFIVE sought to help credit union executives to understand the potential of the Field Officer Banking model and to see how financial institutions have capitalized on investments in technology to bring financial access deep into their communities. By exploring Field Officer Banking, the use of ENTURA, business planning strategies, risks and opportunities, the study group was able to draw valuable lessons from the Mexican experience to bring back to Haiti. According to Claude Mondésir, the Le Levier participant, the field officer methodology could be very profitable for Haitian credit unions, while facilitating access to financial services in real time for people in rural, marginalized communities. Although important infrastructure such as roads are not well-developed in Haiti, Mondésir added that “we could adapt [the model] to the realities of our environment.” Reflecting on the example set by the Mexican credit unions, the other participants noted the potential they saw in the technology, and echoed the desire to adopt the field officer banking model in order to expand financial access to Haitians.

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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 works to expand financial inclusion through improved access to financial products and services and encourages the use of technology to expand outreach.