



Azərbaycan Mikromaliyyə Assosiasiyası



Azerbaijan Micro-finance Association

Leader of Commercial Microfinance in Azerbaijan Participates in MicroFinance Transparency's Transparent Pricing Initiative

LANCASTER, PA, USA & BAKU, AZERBAIJAN, January 22, 2010 – AccessBank, the leader of commercial microfinance in Azerbaijan, has recently submitted pricing data for all its microfinance loan products to MF*Transparency*. The official date of submission was December 25, 2009. As the largest institution to date, AccessBank has 98,000 active borrowers and by far the largest portfolio of microfinance products in Azerbaijan, totaling USD 297 million as of 1 January 2010. AccessBank is a member of the Azerbaijani Micro-finance Association (AMFA), MF*Transparency*'s partner in the *Transparent Pricing Initiative in the Azerbaijani Republic*. The participation of this prominent commercial bank along with many other MFIs in this global movement demonstrates the commitment of Azerbaijan's microfinance industry to transparency and consumer protection.

During MF*Transparency*'s *Transparent Pricing Initiative*, the group, in close collaboration with AMFA, collected data on interest and fees charged on microfinance loan products in Azerbaijan in order to calculate their accurate, true prices (Effective Interest Rates). MF*Transparency* will post that data for the public to see and learn from on its website (www.mftransparency.org). This ongoing *Initiative* in Azerbaijan is sponsored by KfW Bankengruppe.

In the course of the initiative in country, MF*Transparency* met with the partner institutions of AMFA, as well as the Central Bank of Azerbaijan and other key stakeholders of the local microfinance industry. MF*Transparency* and AMFA co-hosted a training workshop in Baku at the Hotel Respublika on the October 8, 2009, following the AMFA Investors Fair on October 7, 2009. The workshop marked the launch of MF*Transparency*'s *Transparent Pricing Initiative* in Azerbaijan and was attended by 43 participants representing 22 institutions who were trained on issues related to pricing transparency and consumer protection. During the data collection process, the team focused on the 12 largest microfinance service providers in terms of market share, as determined by total gross outstanding loan portfolio and number of active borrowers.

Microfinance was introduced in Azerbaijan in the mid-1990s as a strategy for addressing the economic needs of as many as 1 million internally displaced persons who were uprooted during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Armenia and has evolved to serve other areas and sections of the population. For more information please see [Historical Background](#) [1].

About AccessBank

AccessBank is a fully licensed commercial bank that was founded in 2002. AccessBank's mission is to provide access to financial services for Azerbaijan's low and middle income households and micro and small businesses. AccessBank strives to provide a complete range of financial services, including loan products, current accounts, savings facilities, plastic cards, trade financing, money transfer and payment services. AccessBank aims to achieve the highest banking standards, in particular with respect to efficiency, transparency, customer satisfaction, responsibility, prudence and human resource development. It is one of the largest private banks in Azerbaijan and is supported by the European Community and the German Government. According to the MIX Market, AccessBank served 98,000 active borrowers and its gross loan portfolio totaled USD 297 million, as of the end of 2009. AccessBank received a BB+ credit rating from Fitch, the highest among Azerbaijan's private banks and matching the country ceiling.

About MFTransparency

MicoFinance Transparency is an international non-governmental organization founded in 2008 with the purpose of facilitating transparent markets through the dissemination of true cost information to all market stakeholders. *MFTransparency* represents an industry movement toward fair practices and responsibility. Based in the United States, the group has previously been active in Bosnia, Peru, Cambodia and Bangladesh. For more information please visit (www.mftransparency.org). Grameen Bank's Dr. Mohammad Yunus and Elizabeth Littlefield, CEO of CGAP, as well as more than 200 industry professionals and organizations have committed to transparent pricing by endorsing *MFTransparency* and its initiative. For information on MFTransparency staff, please see [Who We Are](#).

About KfW Bankengruppe

KfW Development Bank is part of the German government-owned KfW Banking Group. The Group has been active for already 60 years. In 2009, it committed a total of more than USD 100 billion for projects in Germany, Europe and worldwide. KfW Development Bank is committed to improving the economic and social conditions of people in all developing and transitional countries and has been one of the key players in developing micro and SME finance in Eastern Europe and the CIS over the past 20-years. For more information please see www.kfw-entwicklungsbank.de

About AMFA

Azerbaijan Micro-finance Association (AMFA) was created in December 2001 and officially established in November, 2004 for the purpose of advancing the interests of the microfinance industry in support of sustainable and equitable economic growth in Azerbaijan. The microfinance industry within Azerbaijan is growing by leaps and bounds, and this is characterized by the large influx of capital from foreign investors into the Azerbaijani market place. The role of AMFA is to support its members in understanding this environment, and bringing structure to the overall microfinance industry. As of January 2010 AMFA has 27 members including 15 non bank credit organizations, 10 banks, 1 credit union and 1 foundation. For more information please see www.amfa.az.

For questions relating to this press release please contact:

Jordan Filko
MF*Transparency*
+31.68.416.4262
jordan@mftransparency

1 - Azerbaijan Micro-finance Association. "Historical Background"
<http://amfa.az/sehife.php?lang=eng&page=0000> Accessed 9/17/2009.

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