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Dansk Forum for  
**Mikrofinans**

**Hvordan håndtere opsparingsgrupper i COVID 19-tiden (læs nedenfor eller på link her):** <https://mangotree.org/Resource/Savings-Groups-and-COVID-19>

**Dansk Forum for Mikrofinans og Andelskassen Oikos arrangerer Årsmøde om finansiel inklusion af flygtninge-entreprenører forventeligt til maj. Dato følger senere pga. corona-nedlukning.**

#### Core guidance for Savings Groups by SEEP network

**1. Protect groups.** Traditional Saving Group meetings bring lots of people together where they: transfer money; share, touch, and pass around items; socialize; and sometimes share a meal. This means that, IF meetings are happening in any form or with any number of members at all, it is critical for members and staff to adhere to WHO guidelines, or the relevant guidance from the National Ministry of Health, for personal protection against COVID-19.

Only share scientifically based, up-to-date and accurate hygiene promotion and COVID-19 information, including: wash your hands, maintain physical distance (2m), and stay home if you are sick. Avoid physical greetings and physical contact. Practice good hygiene when sneezing or coughing.

**2. Help groups make their plan right now.** Groups are highly resourceful and the model itself is highly adaptable. Development organizations should help groups understand the current crisis.

Every single group should make a plan right now for what it wants to do now - in response to its existing context and WHO and government guidelines - and what to do when the situation changes. They will need to be ready to change that plan very quickly (sometimes with little notice) as the situation evolves, or mobility restrictions are introduced or modified. We cannot enforce a solution. It is up to the elected leadership of each group to decide and communicate their plan of action to members, as well as to their community.

**1 For more information on how COVID-19 spreads,** visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/transmission.html>

**When movement is still possible and small gatherings (under 10) are permitted, hold a meeting immediately (within 1-2 days, if possible)**

1. Share information on COVID-19 and work with groups to develop a plan to adapt to the crisis

2. In a scenario of restricted mobility, plan and execute a system of communication - between members, and between the organization and groups - such as a phone tree, a focal person, SMS and WhatsApp groups. All in-person meetings must comply with physical distancing restrictions by local governments.

**During the planning meeting, here are adaptations groups can consider:**

**1. Share out as quickly as possible.** This approach avoids holding further meetings and gives members access to their savings.

#### Things the group needs to discuss:

- Plans for any group assets
- Access to or distribution of the group's social/emergency fund
- Recovery of outstanding loans. If this is not an option, other options include: deducting owed amounts from the member's savings, repayment of principal only, or postponing repayment until the group resumes its activities.
- Partial share-out based on the available cash; and the possibility of further rounds of share-out(s) after the group resumes its activities and outstanding loans are repaid
- Any relationships with financial institutions. Discuss options with the lender, such as the extension of a repayment plan to allow time for members to recover.

**2. Suspend meetings for now, without sharing out.** This approach allows the group to resume activities, when ready, from the same point.

#### Things the groups need to discuss:

- Physically count cash balances of all funds in front of members - use sanitary procedures before and after touching the money
- Ensure all balances and records are established and well-communicated to all members
- Ensure cash and the cash box are safe from theft and tampering. If available, the group may consider using a financial service provider or mobile money to store its funds until activities resume.
- Risks resulting from the way group funds are stored during the crisis. If group funds are held in an individual account, there may be a greater risk of theft or fraud. If it can be avoided, group funds should not be held in an individual account.
- Plans for any group assets
- Access to or distribution of the group's social/emergency fund
- If possible, create a digital copy of group records. A simple option could be to take photos of group records and send them to members to create a shared record. Member records could also be digitized and then shared with individual members.
- Be ready for an early share-out if decided by the members

**3. Continue meetings with modified procedures if viable.** This option is valid ONLY if there is no active spread of COVID-19 in the region AND if

policy does not promote meeting in groups.

#### Things the group needs to consider:

- Be ready to do an early shareout if government restrictions on group meetings are introduced, or if COVID-19 is spreading in your community. Use sanitary procedures (see Core Guidance 1).
- Systems to allow for small gatherings, with under 10 members: staggering meeting times, sending representatives. Systems should allow the members to feel transparency is sufficiently protected.
- Loan policies and procedures. Consider not issuing any new loans, ask members with loans to repay them promptly, adjust loan terms and amounts, or ask for repayments sooner than agreed.
- Opening an account at a financial service provider (bank, MFI, SACCO, or mobile money provider) to deposit excess liquidity. Ask members to deposit their savings, social fund contributions, and loan repayments directly into that account. Ensure the group can track individual payments and communicate balances to all members. If it can be avoided, group funds should not be held in an individual account.
- If a member wishes to stop participating due to anxiety, the group can return the member's savings - according to its constitution and available funds
- Plans for any group assets
- Access to or distribution of the group's social/emergency fund

### When movement is fully suspended, or shelter-in-place/quarantine is enforced

#### 1. Hold fully remote meetings using mobile platforms (phone, text, chatroom, etc.)

##### Things the group needs to discuss:

- This is an option only for those groups whose members have access to the required technology. This means that members can consistently access and use these tools without breaking any restrictions on movement.
- Groups can create WhatsApp groups, Facebook groups, SMS trees or other tools to meet remotely, connect, support each other and make basic decisions. In a remote meeting setting, without mobile money, consider how members will secure any savings. Where practical, fully transition to digital recordkeeping applications and/or digital money
- Ensure all transactions, balances and records are well-communicated to all members

##### Things the group needs to consider:

- In some contexts, digital recordkeeping applications for Savings Groups exist and are reasonably accessible; these tools could help reduce the risk of theft, while also enabling groups to continue to operate without physical meetings. Many groups may already be moving in this direction. For some guidance on 'going digital', you can start here: <https://mangotree.org/Technology>
- Many groups may already be saving, borrowing and repaying loans on mobile platforms
- When introducing digital payments, keep in mind that group funds should not, under any circumstances, be held in an individual account.
- In many countries, mobile money fees are being waived for low-value transactions
- Be aware of the options available and what is involved in transitioning to digital recordkeeping applications and/or mobile money. This could be a long-term process. Be realistic about how much work and time it would take.
- Keep in mind that this is also a time of crisis for ICT providers and financial institutions

If movement is fully suspended, these are options for groups to consider. These options should be discussed - and prepared for - during the group's Planning Meeting (see Core Guidance 1).

### Guidance for Implementing Organizations

1. Identify a Savings Group COVID response focal person. Identifying a focal person at your organization, at the national level, will ensure the consistency of your response across projects and partners.
2. Build a phone tree right now. Given the need for physical distancing, consolidate a single phone list - with Savings Group leaders, community trainers, and community leaders - ideally from both supervised groups, as well as graduated groups that you have worked with in the past.
3. Keep a record of the Savings Groups' plans. This will help with restarting or adapting Savings Group programs during the COVID-19 recovery stage. It can be a full record, or as simple as: location, group name, main contact number, and 2-3 lines about the group's adaption plan.
4. Complement group plans with broader program response. Get Savings Group members on lists for food distribution and other support to vulnerable people in the event of an outbreak.
 

Integrate with cash and voucher assistance (CAV), WASH and health programming, food security programming, and referral systems for intimate partner violence (IPV) and gender-based violence (GBV) where appropriate.
5. Align with others, including the private sector. Coordinate with partners and other Savings Group promoters (NGOs, public sector, faithbased organizations, local authorities) to standardize messages - both around COVID-19 and Savings Group protocols during the crisis. Identify vendors or partners to disseminate messaging to and collect input from groups and community trainers. Information and communication technology and mobile money will be particularly important in this process.
 

Implementing organizations should familiarize themselves with alternatives that might work for groups.
6. Engage community trainers and group leaders. Local leaders will be a key part of effective response and information sharing. Work with leaders to ensure groups are informed on COVID-19 and are not exploited by potential mitigation measures. Work to reinforce health messages and awareness campaigns from the Ministry of Health through community trainers and group leaders.
7. Restrictions on group gatherings means no community meetings or mobilization of new Savings Groups. Projects and staff may feel the pressure to meet targets; or, during the official suspension of activities, that they can 'get ahead'. Funders, facilitating agencies and local partners should revise implementation plans and grant agreements, and be clear: there should be no community meetings, group training, or formation of new Savings Groups as long as there are local restrictions on group gatherings.
8. Recovery. Begin thinking now about how Savings Groups' resilience could be built after the pandemic. What supportive systems could help with restarting activities? What adaptations might remain relevant? Is mobile money part of the future for Savings Groups? How can relationships with banks, MFIs, or MNOs support the recovery of

**Andelskassen Oikos og Dansk Forum for Mikrofinans inviterer til Årsmøde og debat:  
Hvordan skaber vi finansiel inklusion for flygtninge i Danmark, som er selvstændige  
erhvervsdrivende?**



Vilkårene er svære for flygtninge, som ønsker at være selvstændige i Danmark. Ofte har de erfaring med iværksætteri fra hjemlandet, hvor det at være selvstændig er en stolthed, som giver stor værdi for den enkelte person og for familien. Det ønsker mange også at opnå i Danmark, men her møder de som regel en del vanskelige barrierer – ikke mindst når de går til banken med papirerne i hånden og nerverne uden på tøjet. Iværksætteri kan være en god vej til beskæftigelse, men det er umuligt at realisere drømmen uden adgang til en bank.

Andelskassen Oikos og Dansk Forum for Mikrofinans inviterer til oplæg og debat om finansiel inklusion i Danmark. Vi har tre oplægsholdere på programmet, og Ahmad, som er syrisk flygtning og iværksætter, kommer med sin foodtruck og serverer falafel.

**Dato og tid: Planlagt 31.3. men udsat til maj pga. corona-nedlukning. Dato følger snarest.**

**Sted:** Founders House, Njalsgade 19D, 2300 København S (i kantinen på 1. sal)

**Tilmelding/flere oplysninger:** Send mail til [oikos@faster.dk](mailto:oikos@faster.dk) eller [kristine.mikrofinans@gmail.com](mailto:kristine.mikrofinans@gmail.com) senest d. (deltagelse er gratis, men tilmelding nødvendig)

### Program

16:00 Velkomst og introduktion til emnet v/ faglig koordinator Kristine Kaaber Pors fra Dansk Forum for Mikrofinans

16:10 Perspektiver fra en bank – mikrofinans i Danmark og inspiration fra Europa v/Githa Kurdahl, projektleder i Andelskassen Oikos

16:30 Etnisk iværksætteri – erfaringer fra Helsingør Kommune v/Juan Recinos Jensen, erhvervs- og iværksætterikonulent, Helsingør Kommune

16:50 Finansiel inklusion af virksomhedsejere med flygtningebaggrund – erfaringer og læring fra de første år v/Marie Birna Olafsdottir, stifter af den socialøkonomiske virksomhed Finklusiiv

17:10 Debat med spørgsmål fra salen

17:30 Falafel Bar og netværk Ahmad

serverer falafel fra sin foodtruck. Ahmad er syrisk flygtning og har via Finklusiiv oprettet en erhvervskonto hos Andelskassen Oikos til sin virksomhed Falafel Bar.

**Projektet "Mikrofinans til flygtninge i Danmark"**, som DFM har været med til at igangsætte, er blevet formaliseret i et tæt samarbejde mellem Marie Olafsdottirs nystartede virksomhed Finklusiiv Danmark og Andelskassen Oikos. Projektets fokus det næste års tid er at opnå *Proof of Concept* via praktiske erfaringer med målgruppen "virksomhedsejere med flygtningebaggrund". Finklusiiv Danmark håndterer den første kontakt og screening af virksomhedsejerne, hvorefter de henvises til Andelskassen Oikos. På Facebook opdaterer både Finklusiiv Danmark og Andelskassen Oikos løbende om udviklingen i pilotfasen. De kan følges her: Finklusiiv Danmark: [www.facebook.com/Finklusiiv](https://www.facebook.com/Finklusiiv) Andelskassen Oikos: [www.facebook.com/andelskassenoikos](https://www.facebook.com/andelskassenoikos)

Finklusiiv er inspireret af microStart, som er Belgiens førende mikrofinansinstitution, og Githa Kurdahl fra Andelskassen Oikos og DFMs bestyrelse var på besøg i starten af december. Formålet med besøget var erfaringsudveksling og sparring og ikke mindst inspiration til vores eget initiativ 'Mikrofinans til flygtninge i Danmark'. MicroStart tilbyder mikrolån og vejledning til selvstændige, som er ekskluderet fra det almindelige finansielle system. 62 % af deres kunder er født udenfor EU, og 84 % lever under fattigdomsgrænsen i Belgien. MicroStart har eksisteret i snart 10 år og har indtil videre hjulpet mere end 6200 entreprenører. Besøget er finansieret af EU-programmet EaSI Technical Assistance for Microfinance. se mere på Finklusiiv

MicroStart arbejder med alle, som er finansielt ekskluderet i Belgien. Et af deres indsatsområder er at få arbejdsløse i beskæftigelse via workshops, coaching og iværksætteri-træning suppleret med mikrolån i størrelsesordenen 3.500 kr. til 185.000 kr. se mere på:

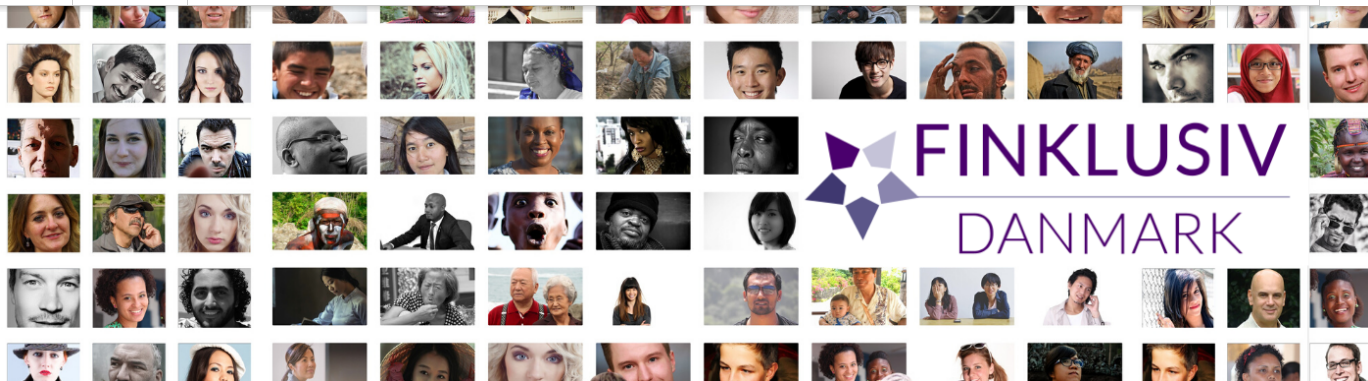
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