South Africa
March 2026

MicroLoan Foundation South Africa

MicroLoan Foundation South Africa (MicroLoan South Africa) launched operations in July 2025, marking a significant milestone in the organisation's strategy to expand financial inclusion across Southern Africa. Established in Phuthaditjhaba in South Africa's Free State Province, near the KwaZulu-Natal border, the programme builds on MicroLoan Foundation's proven model of providing responsible financial services, business training and financial literacy to women entrepreneurs living in underserved rural communities.

The expansion into South Africa reflects MicroLoan Foundation's commitment to reaching more women living in poverty while strengthening its regional impact across Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Although South Africa is one of sub-Saharan Africa's most advanced economies, it remains one of the world's most unequal countries, with an estimated 18.2 million people living in extreme poverty, many in rural areas where access to formal financial services remains limited. By combining local market expertise with over two decades of experience in women's financial inclusion, MicroLoan South Africa is well positioned to help women build sustainable businesses, increase household incomes and improve their long-term economic resilience.

Leadership Team

Mateo Zanetic

Regional Director, Africa/Chief Executive Officer - South Africa

As Regional Director, Africa, Mateo is responsible for the overall operational development, performance and strategic growth of MicroLoan Foundation's programmes across Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. He works closely with each country's senior management team to strengthen operational performance, drive sustainable growth and ensure the delivery of high-quality, client-centred financial services. Mateo also leads the Group's Social Performance Management function, embedding responsible finance and client protection across all operations.

As a member of the Boards of MicroLoan Foundation's subsidiaries in Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa, he provides strategic oversight to ensure the organisation operates effectively, efficiently and in line with its mission. In addition to his regional responsibilities, Mateo serves as the Chief Executive Officer of MicroLoan South Africa, leading the organisation's newest country programme as it expands access to financial services for women entrepreneurs and establishes a strong foundation for sustainable growth.

Mateo holds a degree in Management Accounting and Corporate Finance from Wits University.

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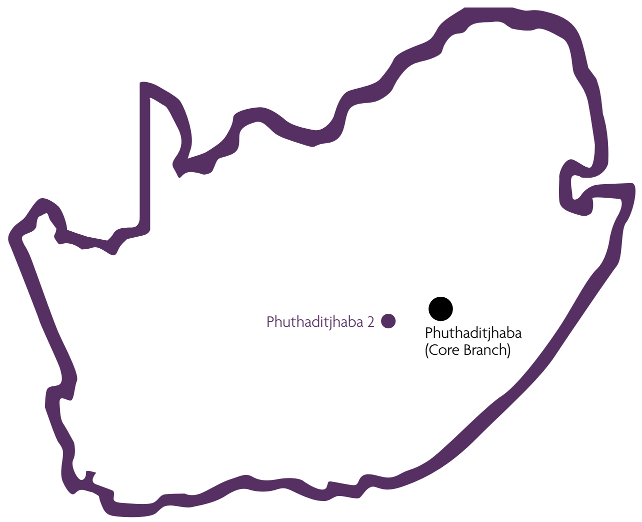

Social Performance Management

Social Performance Management (SPM) ensures MicroLoan Foundation stay true to its mission of empowering financially excluded women to lift themselves out of poverty. It translates social goals into practice through ongoing measurement and improvement. Recognised by TrueLift as a best-practice model, our SPM approach in South Africa uses several tools including the internally developed MIS system for real-time data tracking; Outcomes Questionnaires to monitor client well-being; and Client Surveys for deeper insights into social impact and service delivery. Together, these tools enable MicroLoan to evaluate progress and adapt the support to meet clients' evolving needs.

Key Products and Services

Four month business loan

The Business Loan is designed to help women establish or grow income-generating businesses by providing accessible working capital to invest in stock, equipment and other business needs. The loan carries an interest rate of 7% per month and is repayable over a period of 4 to 6 months, depending on the loan term. No collateral is required, making the product accessible to women who may not qualify for traditional bank financing while supporting responsible entrepreneurship and sustainable business growth.

Financial literacy and business training

We offer pre and post loan disbursement training modules. They aim to help clients understand the purpose of the loans and ensure they are equipped to run and manage their businesses. Training modules include: market research, profit analysis, budgeting and the importance of savings.

Community Savings (Stokvels)

In addition to providing business loans, MicroLoan South Africa encourages clients to participate in Stokvels, community-based savings groups that have long been an important part of South Africa's informal financial system. Participation is voluntary, with women coming together to save regularly as a group while supporting one another in building financial resilience.

Members contribute savings into a shared fund and are able to borrow from the group's pooled savings at interest rates determined by the group. The interest earned remains within the Stokvel, increasing the value of the fund over time. At the end of each savings cycle, members receive a payout based on their contributions and the group's accumulated returns.

By bringing women together through its lending groups, MicroLoan South Africa helps create an environment where clients can establish and strengthen these community savings schemes alongside the organisation's financial services. This complementary approach enables women to access business finance while also building a culture of saving, mutual support and long-term financial security.

Customer Hotline

This is to provide customers with ongoing support on any operational issues. It is monitored monthly to analyse any common issues coming from clients.

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MicroLoan South Africa News

Macroeconomic situation

South Africa's economy continued on a gradual recovery path during Q1 2026, with real GDP increasing by 0.5%, marking a sixth consecutive quarter of economic growth. Expansion in the finance, agriculture, trade and transport sectors supported economic activity, although the official unemployment rate rose to 32.7%, highlighting the country's persistent employment and inequality challenges. These conditions reinforced the importance of expanding access to responsible financial services for women entrepreneurs, particularly in underserved rural communities.

As the organisation's newest country programme, MicroLoan South Africa focused on consolidating its early growth while extending its reach. By the end of the quarter, the programme was operating two branches with a team of 10 Loan Officers, serving 2,315 active clients and managing an outstanding loan portfolio of R7.06 million (USD428,037). Portfolio quality remained strong, with PAR30 of 2.7%, reflecting disciplined lending practices as the operation continued to build towards long-term financial sustainability.

Operational highlights

Number of active clients
2,315

Number of branches
1

PAR30 (%)
2.7%

Average loan size (USD)
$ 259

Loan book (USD)
$ 428,037

Operational self-sufficiency (%)
72%

No. of clients per Loan & Training Officer
992

Source: MicroLoan Performance Report. Exchange rate based on Oanda at March 2026

If you would like any further detail about the information included in this document please contact MicroLoan Foundation's Group Chief Executive Officer, Medha Wilson.

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