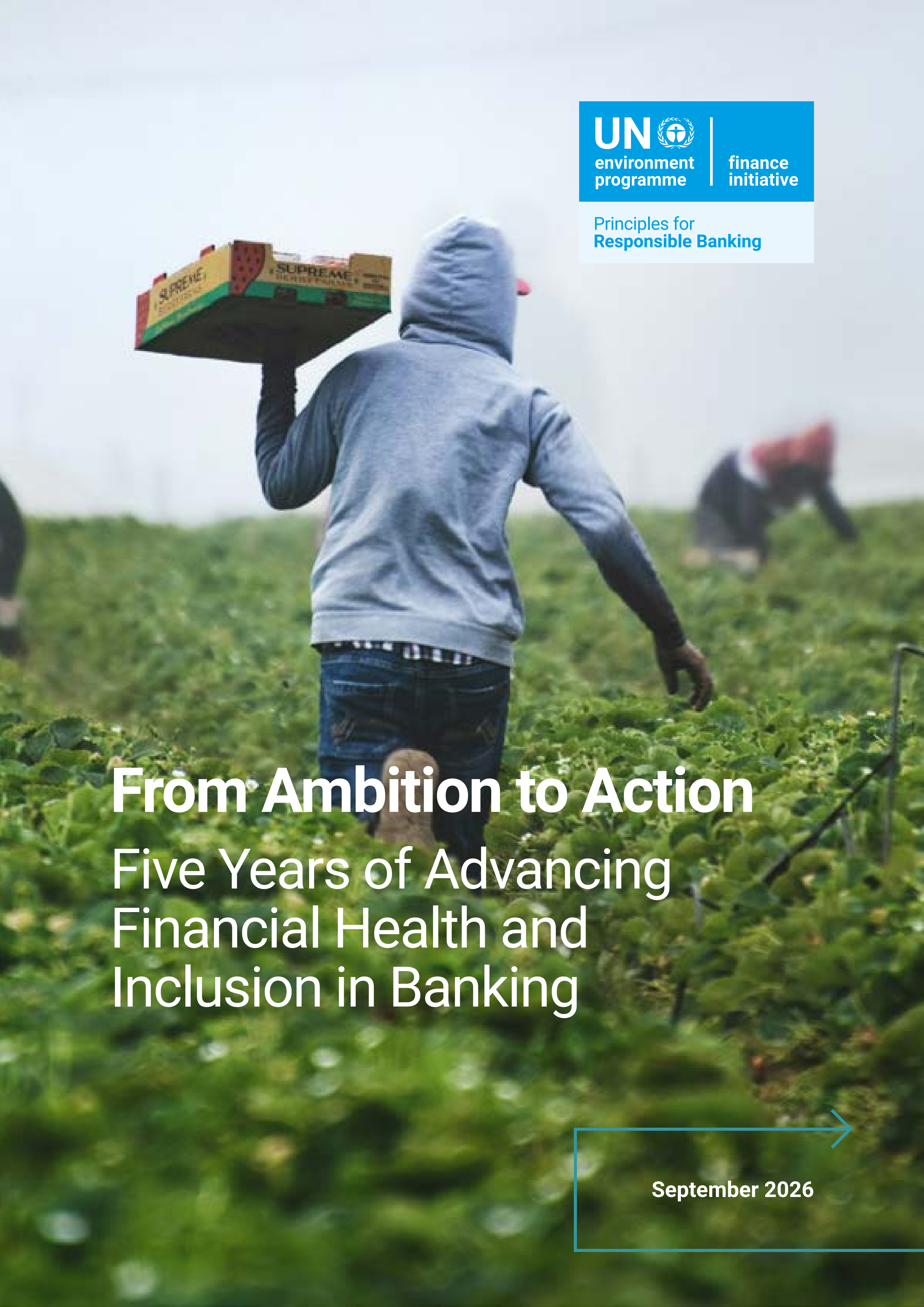

UN environment programme | finance initiative

Principles for Responsible Banking

From Ambition to Action

Five Years of Advancing Financial Health and Inclusion in Banking

September 2026

Disclaimers

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At the centre of this work were the pioneering banks that participated over the Commitment period. The United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative (UNEP FI) extends its appreciation to these institutions for their ambition, early action, target-setting efforts, implementation experience and engagement in peer learning. Through the PRB Financial Health and Inclusion Working Group, which brought together Commitment signatories, other PRB banks, civil society advisers, technical contributors and partner organizations from different regions, these contributions helped build the body of knowledge reflected in this report and provided a practical foundation for wider learning across the PRB community and related banking ecosystems.

This foundation was further supported by PRB governance and wider ecosystem engagement. UNEP FI recognizes the role of the PRB Banking Board and Civil Society Advisory Body in strengthening accountability around impact-level target-setting for financial health and inclusion, supporting wider uptake across the PRB membership. It also recognizes the wider community of financial institutions, banking associations, cooperative banking networks, regulators, development finance institutions, civil society organizations and other ecosystem actors that have helped advance these approaches beyond the original Commitment signatories and across the wider PRB community.

Finally, special thanks go to Professor Elaine Kempson and Professor Christopher Fitch for their longstanding academic and technical advice to UNEP FI on the conceptual and practical application of financial health and inclusion in responsible banking, and to colleagues across UNEP and UNEP FI whose work on guidance development, convening, implementation support, research, communications and stakeholder engagement has underpinned this initiative from its inception.

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Foreword

I've often thought that the banking sector deserves more credit than it receives. The irony, of course, is that extending credit is what banks do. But credit is more than a loan. At its core, it is an act of belief: confidence that an entrepreneur can build a business, a family can build stability, and an economy can build a stronger future. Which is why every investment begins with the same question: What future are we underwriting?

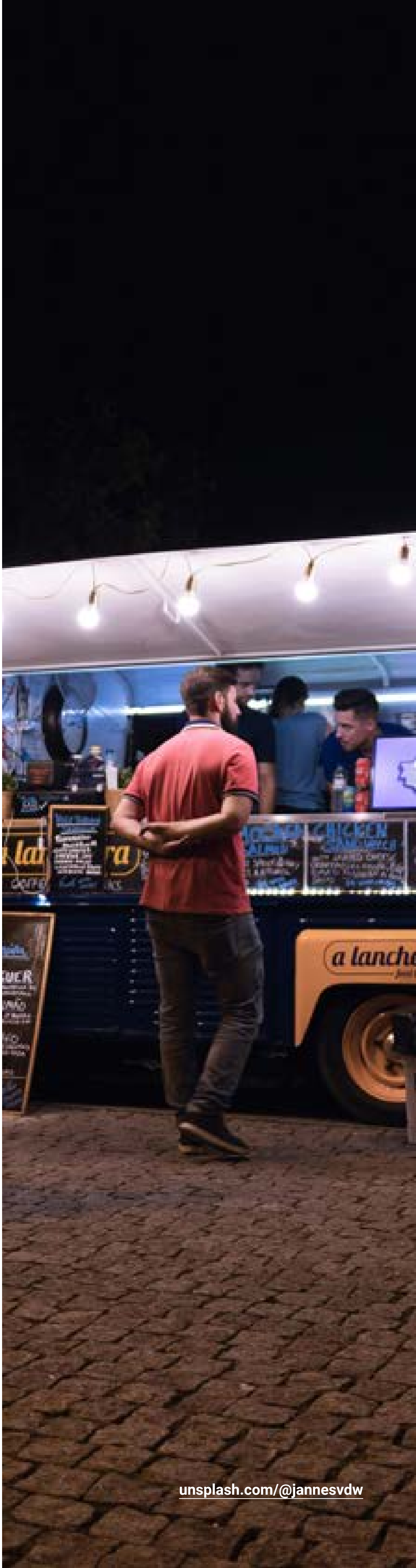
The banking sector sits at the heart of that future. Banks do more than allocate capital—they allocate opportunity, connecting savings with investment, ideas with financing, and ambition with possibility. In emerging markets, a bank account is often an entry point into the formal economy. A credit line can become a first employee, a mortgage can become generational wealth, and a small business loan can become the next local champion.

For us investors, improved financial health and financial inclusion aren't just social outcomes—they are economic ones because, multiplied across a market, that is what economic development actually looks like. They signal stronger market penetration and stronger expected resilience through market cycles. They reflect a bank's management quality, institutional strength, and durable customer relationships—characteristics we increasingly expect banks to demonstrate, not simply describe—for us, they signal business quality and are leading indicators of durable investment returns.

This is the power of capital: underwriting a sustainable future where financial returns and resilient ecosystems reinforce one another.

The impact of this PRB Commitment

For years, the banking industry has focused on expanding financial access. That was an essential first step. But access alone is an input, not an outcome. Banking is about more than moving money—it is about building financial health, the foundation of lasting wealth, for households and businesses. For impact investors, the true measure of sustainable banking is not how much capital it deploys and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where, but whether that capital leaves people, businesses, and communities financially stronger.

The PRB Commitment to Financial Health and Inclusion advanced this evolution by encouraging banks to focus on affordable, suitable, responsible products that generate measurable positive financial outcomes for customers. They challenge the financial ecosystem to ask not only how much capital it deploys, but whether that capital is building more resilient customers, more competitive businesses, and more prosperous economies.

What's next

Capital has always shaped the future and now we have the tools to shape it more deliberately:

- **Data.** We live in the era of big data. Data science allows us to measure actual customer outcomes. AI and advanced computational methods can now uncover patterns, so banks can deploy credit with greater precision, conviction, and purpose.

- **Joint effort.** No institution can build a stronger financial system alone. Banks, investors, policymakers, regulators, researchers, and communities each have a role to play. PRB's work already reaches hundreds of banks worldwide. Together, we can strengthen practice, share learning, and help create the conditions for capital to be channelled more effectively.

- **Intentionality.** Next is not simply measuring outcomes—it is acting on them. As the case for customer resilience as a driver of long-term sustainable returns becomes clearer, capital should crowd toward institutions that can demonstrate it—creating measurable value for the customers whose resilience makes those returns possible.

Perhaps that's why the banking sector deserves more credit than it receives. Before capital builds factories or portfolios, it builds belief. And belief—guided by better data, deeper collaboration, and greater intentionality—can build a more resilient, prosperous, and sustainable future.

Asha Mehta, CFA
Founder and Chief Investment Officer, Global Delta Capital

Member & Listed Equities Advisor, Principles for Responsible Investment

Author, Power of Capital

Executive summary

Between 2021 and 2026, the Principles for Responsible Banking Commitment to Financial Health and Inclusion helped catalyze a shift in banking practice: from financial inclusion understood mainly as access, to financial health and inclusion understood as measurable improvements in customers' financial lives. The Commitment succeeded on the terms it set for itself. It gave signatories a shared accountability mechanism, built the institutional capability to act on it, and extended its approach into the wider PRB membership. What follows in this report is an account of what that infrastructure achieved, and what remains for the sector to build on.

Access remains essential, particularly where individuals and businesses remain excluded or underserved. But access alone does not show whether financial services are affordable, suitable, responsible, actively used or helping customers manage day-to-day finances, absorb shocks and pursue future security. The Commitment translated this premise into target-setting, guidance, common indicators, technical support, peer learning and reporting.

Commitment signatories		Wider PRB practice	
93% Active banks delivered a qualifying target	**82%** Banks with a delivered target moved beyond access- or output-only target logic	**64%** PRB banks with financial health and inclusion as a priority area had an initial or robust target	**70%** Banks participating in target-setting capacity-building later had a robust public impact target after interaction with UNEP FI

The evidence is strongest on accountability and target design. Twenty-eight of the 30 active banks delivered a robust target, and 22 of those 28 moved beyond access- or output-only logic to direct financial-health outcomes. Stronger target-setting practices also extended into the wider PRB membership: banks with closer interaction with the Commitment, through guidance downloads, learning communities or direct contact with the UNEP FI Secretariat, were more likely to have set any target (45.5 versus 26.0 per cent) and, among banks with a target, more likely to have set a robust one (52.9 versus 25.6 per cent). The Commitment contributed to this progress, though its effect cannot be fully separated from regulation, market conditions, technological change and banks' own prior strategies, all of which also shaped the result.

Although the Commitment was successful, the broader goal to which it sought to contribute—improving financial health and inclusion for all individuals and businesses—has yet to be achieved. As of 2024, 1.3 billion adults worldwide still lack a bank account and financial resilience remains out of reach for many more. So, the end of the Commitment does not signal the end of the road, just an alignment on its direction, shifting from approving targets to supporting implementation, evidence and continuous improvement, working with PRB banks and the wider financial ecosystem.

Introduction

Over five years, the Principles for Responsible Banking (PRB) *Commitment to Financial Health and Inclusion* brought together 35 banks around a shared objective: to promote universal financial inclusion and foster a banking sector that supports the financial health of customers. This report marks the conclusion of that time-bound joint effort, recognizes what its signatories achieved together and carries its lessons into the next phase of financial health and inclusion work across the PRB community.

The Commitment began from a simple but demanding premise: access to appropriate, affordable and responsible financial services is essential, particularly where individuals and businesses remain unbanked or underbanked. But access alone does not show whether financial services help customers manage day-to-day finances, absorb shocks, pursue future security or feel more confident and in control. The Commitment therefore sought to measure both financial inclusion and financial health of banks' customers, especially those in situations of vulnerability.

Drawing on quantitative and qualitative evidence, the report looks at what this collective effort achieved. It examines the accountability established through target-setting and reporting. It considers whether and how products, services, data, governance, customer engagement and partnerships changed. It traces how guidance and learning developed through the Commitment extended into wider PRB practice and the financial ecosystem. And it draws out what lessons should shape the next phase moving forward.

1. From access to financial health: a commitment designed to bridge the gap

Financial inclusion has long been part of the global development agenda, including the Sustainable Development Goals, reflecting the role that useful, affordable and responsible financial services can play in helping individuals and businesses participate in economic life, manage risks and pursue opportunities (United Nations, 2015). Sustained efforts by governments, financial institutions and development actors have expanded that access to finance significantly: between 2011 and 2021, the proportion of adults worldwide with an account rose from 51 to 76 per cent (World Bank, 2022).

Greater access to finance has not, however, guaranteed greater financial resilience or wellbeing. In 2021, only 55 per cent of adults in developing economies reported that they could obtain additional funds within 30 days without much difficulty, while 63 per cent were very worried about at least one common financial expense (World Bank, 2022). These findings did not weaken the case for financial inclusion. They showed why access to banks, accounts and loans alone was not sufficient, but for people to be truly included, the services must also be affordable, suitable, responsible, actively used and capable of supporting greater stability, resilience and future security.

For banks, this revealed an operational gap. Account ownership, product uptake and financing volumes can show who has been reached, but not whether customers are better able to manage day-to-day finances, absorb shocks or pursue longer-term goals. In 2021, PRB began addressing this gap through its Guidance on Financial Inclusion and Financial Health Target Setting, which provided an initial framework connecting financial inclusion and financial health with products and services, internal processes, data and partnerships, and set out a five-step target-setting process (UNEP FI, 2021b).

The next challenge was to find a mechanism that could accelerate implementation, wider adoption and, ultimately, help narrow the divide between expanded access and better customer outcomes. The response was a familiar instrument for collective action: a shared, time-bound commitment.

The PRB Commitment to Financial Health and Inclusion was designed around both objectives: deeper implementation among signatories and wider uptake through shared learning, guidance and standards. Launched on 2 December 2021 by 28 founding signatories, it asked banks to mobilize their people, products, services and relationships to promote universal financial inclusion and support customers' financial health. Signatories committed to identify priority issues, establish specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound targets, develop implementation plans and report progress through PRB reporting (UNEP FI, 2021a).

The Commitment did not replace financial inclusion with financial health. It raised the level of ambition by asking banks to consider not only whether access expanded, but whether it supported better financial outcomes for customers.

The Commitment in practice

The Commitment set a shared, time-bound accountability mechanism that could translate collective ambition into measurable banking practice. It required signatories to set targets within 18 months, develop implementation plans and report progress through PRB reporting, with particular attention to those in vulnerable situations.

To support implementation, three successive guidance documents developed common definitions, indicators and approaches to target-setting and implementation culminating with the PRB guidance Driving Impact on Financial Health and Inclusion: From Setting Targets to Implementation, developed by UNEP FI with Commitment banks, PRB signatories, leading experts and organizations on financial wellbeing.

Commitment signatories also had access to technical support from the UNEP FI Secretariat with over 100 technical-support touchpoints registered during the Commitment timeline. Working groups, peer exchange and capacity-building created additional routes through which banks could interpret the requirements, test approaches and learn from implementation experience. Successive guidance, peer exchange and technical assistance therefore captured learning generated through implementation and converted it into reusable approaches for the wider PRB community.

The Commitment was never set up for Commitment signatories only, but was intended to support broader adoption across the wider PRB community. It supported signatories to deepen implementation of outcome-oriented approaches, particularly for populations in vulnerable situations and those facing gender-related or other barriers, while also aiming to strengthen methodological alignment, evidence, expertise, partnerships and implementation support across the financial ecosystem.

2. From commitment to measurable change

The Commitment created a time-bound accountability mechanism which, combined with guidance and technical support, contributed to high target delivery, more outcome-oriented target design, stronger institutional foundations and wider methodological uptake.

The review undertaken for this report found that:

- **Most Commitment signatories set the required targets:** Thirty-five banks signed the Commitment over its five-year period. Thirty remained active at the close of the Commitment period, of which 28 delivered a robust target. Twenty-two of those 28 did so within the required 18 months.
- **Targets moved from access towards customer financial health:** Twenty-two of the 28 banks with a delivered target moved beyond access- or output-only measures, to direct financial-health, behavioural or livelihood outcomes.
- **Institutional foundations developed faster than customer financial outcome management:** The Commitment also supported changes in the institutional capabilities needed to manage financial health and inclusion. In the audited survey of 18 responding banks, the strongest reported development was in cross-functional integration, while monitoring customer outcomes remained the weakest capability area.
- **Financial health and inclusion entered different areas of banking practice.** Section 3 different approaches such as Government Savings Bank's strategy-led model; mBank's integration of financial health and inclusion as a business pillar; Akbank's work with women-owned micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises; and, Erste Group's ecosystem support for high-impact enterprises. These cases demonstrate different ways in which banks are implementing their financial health targets. However, these cases do not establish common targets that could easily be aggregated or compared.
- **Banking practice expanded, but evidence of impact remains low:** Banks lack evidence to explain the relationship between their actions and customers' financial lives. Banks more often document what they put in place and whom they reached than whether customers experienced sustained changes and why. A bank may meet or surpass a target while still lacking evidence of the impact that it has on customers' financial health.
- **When measured, customers impacted cannot be compared between institutions:** Individual cases provide emerging evidence of customer and business outcomes, but their populations, indicators, units and reporting periods across different banks differ.

- **Priority populations became visible, but equity and safeguards remain insufficiently evidenced:** Twenty of the 28 delivered targets named a prioritized or underserved population. Naming a population, however, is not proof that implementation reached the group as intended, that benefits were distributed equitably or that customers were protected from foreseeable harm.

- **The Commitment also reached the wider PRB community:** The language and approaches advanced through the Commitment became part of wider PRB implementation practice. More than 66 per cent of PRB have defined financial health and inclusion as a priority area, 127 banks have set targets, of which 52.8 per cent are robust.

- **The closer a PRB bank interacted with the Commitment, the more likely it has advanced:** When comparing banks that downloaded the guidance, were part of learning communities, or had direct interactions with the UNEP FI Secretariat on this matter, versus those that did not have any of these interactions, the former were more likely to have any target (45.5 versus 26.0 per cent) and, among banks with a target, were more likely to have a robust one (52.9 versus 25.6 per cent).

- **The Commitment's language and methods also reached institutions beyond its immediate signatories and PRB implementation processes**. The guidance was downloaded over 5,000 times downloads and referred in other guidance documents and related work across the field.

The Commitment contributed to the progress observed, even though its specific impact cannot be fully separated from broader influences like regulation, public policy, and market conditions, technological change, banks' prior strategies and capabilities, and customers' circumstances, all of which also played a role. The following figure explains the implementation process of the Commitment and the results achieved at each stage.

The following figure explains the implementation process of the Commitment and the results achieved at each stage.

From commitment to wider influence

Evidence is strongest where the Commitment operated directly and becomes more associative as influence extends outward.

Implementation → Learning → Uptake → Diffusion

1 Accountability mechanism & common infrastructure

Direct mechanism and implementation support

- Targets within 18 months
- Implementation plans
- PRB reporting
- Common approach and indicators
- Technical tools and support
- Peer learning and capacity building

2 Commitment signatories

Front-runners | Strongest evidence of contribution

- Governance
- Targets
- Measurement
- Cross-functional collaboration
- Products and services
- Institutional capability

28/30 active banks (93%) delivered a robust target

Learning exchange and collaborative shared assets

Guidance and tools help drive implementation support

3 Shared learning & evolving infrastructure

Implementation experience informs evolving guidance, tools, support and engagement

- Common language
- Common indicators
- Guidance and methodologies
- Technical support
- Peer learning
- Implementation approaches

4 Wider PRB community

Broader uptake | More associative evidence

- Use of guidance and indicators
- Target setting and implementation support
- Peer learning
- Wider implementation

198/300 PRB banks (66%) selected financial health and inclusion

127 have set a target, 52.8% robust

5 Financial ecosystem

Enabling environment | Most distant evidence of contribution

- Methodological alignment
- Evidence and experience
- Sharing experiences and referrals
- Interest from regulators and policymakers
- Academia and other financial institutions

Guidance downloaded 5,004 times, and referred to in external guidance

Strongest evidence of Contribution → Most indirect evidence of Contribution

Evidence becomes more associative as distance from direct implementation increases

3. Innovation in action: Translating financial health and inclusion into practice

While participating institutions operated in different markets and entered the Commitment from different starting points, their experiences reveal common pathways through which financial health and inclusion were translated into banking practice. The cases that follow are organized according to the implementation areas set out in PRB's Responsible Banking Blueprint: strategy, policies and processes; portfolio composition and financing; client engagement; advocacy and partnerships; targets (setting and implementation) and disclosure. Most cases described here sit within the four action categories of policies and processes, portfolio composition and financing, client engagement, and advocacy and partnerships, reflecting the operational, on-the-ground nature of implementation. A smaller number illustrate strategy-level integration.

Together, although the cases demonstrate that there is not one single route to implementation, they also demonstrate that institutions committed to common objectives while adapting them to different business models, customer segments and market realities, thus contributing to a growing body of practical experience across the sector.

Government Savings Bank, Thailand

Scaling social banking through inclusive finance

Low-income households, microentrepreneurs and informal workers in Thailand often face limited credit histories, high household debt and reliance on informal lenders. To address these barriers, Government Savings Bank embedded financial inclusion into its core strategy through its Social Bank model, aligning products, subsidiaries and digital channels around access to fair and appropriate finance.

The model combines targeted lending, debt restructuring and digital delivery. ARI AMC supports customers facing non-performing loans, Good Money provides formal credit options for higher-risk and underserved borrowers, and MyMo enables digital access to small-value loans. Complementing these efforts, the Credit Builder Loan helps customers establish or rebuild their credit history, enabling them to enter or re-enter the formal financial system while promoting responsible borrowing.

By 2024, GSB had expanded access to fair financing for more than 651,000 grassroots and retail customers, while ARI AMC's first debt-transfer batch covered more than 130,000 accounts. The case shows how a public-sector bank can use governance, specialized delivery vehicles and data-enabled products to move from access-focused inclusion toward financial resilience.

- **651,000+ customers financed**
- **130,000+ borrowers supported through debt resolution**

Learn more

mBank, Poland

From target achieved to strategic business pillar

Broad access to financial products does not guarantee that customers are financially resilient. Under its PRB Commitment, mBank set a target to increase the share of customers who believe they are financially resilient to at least 50 per cent, measured through quarterly customer surveys.

By 2025, 56 per cent of customers reported feeling financially resilient, exceeding the original target. mBank has since integrated financial health into its 2026–2030 strategy, moving from a perception-based metric to a more demanding objective: at least 50 per cent of active customers should reach financial resilience by 2030, assessed against mBank's Financial Health Principles.

Delivery focuses on direct, in-app and transactional communications linked to real-life financial moments, including document preparation, beneficiary designation and retirement planning. The case illustrates a useful pattern for the sector: achieving a target should not end the work. It can become the basis for a stronger, more embedded measurement approach.

- **56% reported financial resilience in 2025**
- **Target exceeded**
- **Financial health embedded in 2026–30 strategy**
- **New 2030 target set**

Learn more

Bancolombia, Colombia

Turning financial wellbeing into a business metric

Many banks struggle to understand whether customers are becoming financially healthier because traditional approaches focus on product usage and outreach rather than customer outcomes. To address this challenge, Bancolombia developed a multidimensional Financial Wellbeing model designed to measure customer financial health and embed it into decision-making across the organization.

The model combines 25 variables across seven dimensions of financial wellbeing, using transactional data to generate customer-level insights. Historical data was back tested to ensure comparability over time and integrated into dashboards used by commercial, risk and strategy teams. In parallel, the Bank is redesigning its financial education strategy to better align initiatives with measurable outcomes.

By creating a common framework for measuring financial wellbeing, Bancolombia is helping shift the organization from activity-based reporting towards a more outcome-oriented approach, strengthening governance, customer insights and data-driven decision-making.

- **Financial model with 7 dimensions of financial wellbeing**
- **25 behavioural & financial variables**

Learn more

Bank of Ireland, Ireland

Measuring the drivers of financial resilience

Many banks can measure whether customers appear financially resilient, but struggle to understand what is actually driving those outcomes. Traditional survey-based approaches often cannot distinguish between the effects of bank interventions and wider economic factors such as rising living costs or income shocks. To address this challenge, Bank of Ireland developed a new measurement framework designed to identify the behaviours that most strongly influence financial resilience.

Developed in partnership with Professor Elaine Kempson, the framework combines a Financial Resilience Index, an Active Savings Index, and statistical analysis to assess the relationship between customer behaviours and financial outcomes. The approach uses both survey and transactional data to monitor resilience, track saving behaviours, and account for the impact of external economic conditions.

Early findings identify active saving as the strongest driver of financial resilience, while also helping distinguish the effects of customer behaviour from wider economic factors. The framework demonstrates how banks can move beyond tracking outcomes to understanding the factors that influence them, enabling more evidence-based financial health strategies.

- **Behavioural measurement framework developed, with active saving identified as strongest driver of resilience**
- **Dual financial health indices developed**

Learn more

"We developed a shared understanding as we worked through it. Some of it was really hard yards—it was difficult, and sometimes the process was rightly challenging, but we worked through it together. The outcome was very satisfying: to have been part of that conversation, and to have helped shape that framework."

Dawn Bailey, Bank of Ireland & Co-chair of the PRB Working Group on Financial Health and Inclusion

Desjardins, Canada

Embedding inclusion into project design

As financial services become more complex, vulnerable customers can be overlooked when products, services and internal processes are designed. Desjardins identified a need for a more systematic way to help employees consider financial inclusion throughout project development, rather than relying only on targeted programmes or specialist teams.

In response, the institution developed a financial inclusion guide available to employees on a self-service basis. The guide prompts teams to consider inclusion-related questions at key stages of project design, including requirements gathering, customer analysis and implementation planning. By integrating these prompts into everyday decision-making, the guide supports employees to identify potential barriers, consider the needs of different customer groups and strengthen the inclusiveness of projects before they are implemented.

Launched in 2026, the initiative remains at an early stage and outcome data are not yet available. Its value lies in the shift it represents: moving financial inclusion from a discrete programme area toward a practical consideration in internal design, governance and delivery processes. As adoption expands, Desjardins is tracking the number of projects using the guide to assess uptake and inform further implementation.

- **Projects using the guide (tracking underway)**
- **Self-service guide**

Learn more

ING, Kingdom of the Netherlands

Evidence-based product design for financial health

Banks often lack a consistent way to assess whether financial health initiatives are improving customer outcomes. ING developed its Financial Health Indicator as an internal measurement methodology, aligned with UNEP FI definitions, to monitor the impact of financial health initiatives at aggregated customer-group level.

Started in 2022 and rolled out across seven markets in 2024, the indicator uses existing transactional and product data to assess financial health components such as day-to-day financial management, resilience, debt sustainability and future planning. It is used for internal reporting, dashboards and analytical processes, with central coordination by Global Retail Sustainability and local adaptation across Australia, Belgium, Germany, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Poland, Romania and Spain.

In Netherlands (Kingdom of the), the approach has helped ING better understand how products and features influence customer-group financial health, informing more targeted interventions and product optimization. ING also reached its original PRB target of a 25 per cent increase in customers connected to long-term savings and investment plans by December 2024, ahead of its 2030 deadline, and set a new 40 per cent target for 2030.

- **Internal FHI methodology**
- **Aggregated customer-group reporting**
- **Rolled out in 7 markets**
- **25% PRB target reached by 2024**
- **New 40% target for 2030**

Learn more

Vancouver City Savings Credit Union (Vancity), Canada

Scaling newcomer banking through shared delivery

Refugees, refugee claimants and displaced people often face barriers to accessing mainstream financial services, including language, identification and credit history requirements. As Vancity's Resettlement Assistance Program expanded, inconsistent onboarding processes and growing administrative demands created challenges for both members and staff. To address this, Vancity introduced a more scalable and consistent delivery model.

The revised model separates administrative and member-facing functions. A dedicated team manages documentation, eligibility verification and compliance processes, while trained Newcomer Champions focus on onboarding, financial education and relationship-building. Standardized referral pathways and account transition processes support more consistent delivery across branches and community partners.

The updated approach has helped reduce manual interventions, improve consistency and allow frontline staff to focus more directly on member support. For members, the model supports clearer communication, smoother onboarding and fewer unexpected fees during account transitions. It illustrates how banks and credit unions can scale inclusion-focused services while preserving tailored support for customers facing complex barriers to access.

- **>23% RAP Member Primacy Rate**
- **10%+ of annual membership growth attributed to segment (from 2023–25)**

Learn more

Banco Guayaquil, Ecuador

Combining digital banking with last-mile access

Many rural and low-income communities in Ecuador remain excluded from formal financial services, while informal microentrepreneurs often lack the records required by conventional credit-scoring models. To address these barriers, Banco Guayaquil combined a nationwide network of local financial access points with a digital basic account that can be opened without visiting a branch.

The approach links Banco del Barrio, a network of neighbourhood businesses acting as financial service points, with Peigo, a virtual basic account that enables customers to make transactions, receive social benefits and access remittances. Transaction data generated through account use is also helping build alternative credit histories for informal customers.

By the end of 2025, the model supported 931,567 active basic accounts, including 709,696 Peigo accounts, and enabled 98,548 new accounts to be opened through the network. The experience demonstrates how combining digital products with local distribution channels can expand access while generating new data to support financial inclusion.

- **931,567 active basic accounts**
- **US$ 3,266 million in transactions through the Banco del Barrio network**

Learn more

"Many times, you start focused on the product: how can I bank more customers, how can I facilitate access? But resilience or financial health itself is not measured from the beginning. Had we done so from the start, it would have allowed us to achieve greater scale and greater impact in inclusion."

Oswaldo Alejandro Borja Goyes,
Banco Guayaquil

Banorte, Mexico

Expanding SME finance

Many SMEs in Mexico face persistent barriers to financing, including limited credit histories, low levels of formal income, and insufficient collateral. These challenges intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to constrain business growth. In response, Banorte developed an SME inclusion approach that combines tailored financing solutions with customer insights to broaden access to credit.

This approach leverages a 360-degree customer view, enhanced segmentation to serve diverse SME profiles, and the reduction of selected entry barriers in credit origination. Its implementation is supported by cross-functional teams across sustainability, SME banking, risk, product, digital banking, data governance, and user experience.

By December 2025, the approach had served more than 480,000 SMEs and expanded the portfolio to MXN 62.5 billion. It also increased access among underserved groups, with women representing 30 per cent of sole proprietor borrowers. This experience demonstrates how customer-centric design and targeted flexibility in credit policies can help scale financial inclusion for SMEs.

- **480,000+ SMEs served**
- **MXN 62.5 billion loans outstanding**

Learn more

Gatehouse, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Building low-barrier savings for young adults

Young adults were underrepresented among savings customers, driven in part by a high minimum deposit requirement that limited access for those with lower or irregular incomes. Internal analysis also showed weaker savings habits among younger age groups, alongside broader uncertainty about achieving financial goals. The Regular Saver account was designed to address these barriers by lowering entry thresholds and encouraging structured saving behaviour over time.

The account enables customers to start saving with GBP 1 and contribute up to GBP 300 monthly over a fixed 12-month term. It was developed through collaboration between Product and ESG teams to align product design with the needs of younger customers. A strengthened reporting approach was introduced to track customer outcomes, supported by an ESG Forum providing executive and board oversight of financial health and inclusion activity.

By 2025, young savers represented 19.6 per cent of savings customers, reflecting improved reach. In 2024, 71 per cent of young customers increased their savings balances quarter on quarter, indicating stronger saving behaviour. The average balance after 12 months was GBP 2,165, showing sustained accumulation through the product structure.

- **19.6% young savings customers (2025)**
- **71% young customers increased savings quarterly (2024)**

Learn more

"By the end of 2025, we actually really surpassed the 10 per cent target by a long way and reached 19.6 per cent of our customers being in savings customers."

Lucy McNaught, Gatehouse

Industrial Bank of Korea, Republic of Korea

Combining digital tools with human support

Small and micro-businesses often struggle to use digital financial services due to limited time, resources, and experience with digital tools. IBK BOX was created to reduce these barriers by bringing financial and business support services into one free platform that can be used in daily operations. The aim is to make access to finance and business tools more usable in practice, not only available in principle.

IBK BOX combines lending, payments, and business management support. Businesses can apply for loans online and receive in-person follow-up through an online-to-offline process. They can access early payment of card sales revenue and view low-interest public and government-supported financing options in one place. The platform also provides tools for customer and receivables management, product promotion through a digital business profile, and an ESG self-assessment. Branch staff outreach and partnerships help extend access, including free POS terminals in traditional markets.

By 2024, the platform had handled more than 38,000 loan applications, supporting over KRW 1 trillion in financing. It shows how combining digital channels with human support and practical business tools can reduce access barriers for smaller enterprizes and embed financial inclusion into everyday business activity.

- **38,000+ loan applications**
- **KRW 1 trillion+ in financing facilitated**

Learn more

Piraeus Bank, Greece

Financing the next generation of farmers

Young farmers often face barriers to accessing finance due to limited credit history, seasonal income patterns, and insufficient collateral. To address these challenges, Piraeus developed a dedicated financing model combining tailored lending products and support for land acquisition for young and new farmers.

The approach moved beyond traditional agricultural lending by adapting financing structures to the realities of farming businesses and integrating public-sector support mechanisms to reduce financing costs and improve accessibility.

Digital channels, including the Agri e-loan platform, further expanded access for rural communities, with ongoing support throughout the customer journey.

By 2025, the initiative had exceeded its original target, demonstrating how tailored product design can expand financial inclusion while supporting rural development and agricultural generational renewal.

- **11,000+ young farmers supported**
- **EUR 255 million disbursed**

Learn more

"We have succeeded and surpassed this goal just from the beginning, from the first year of implementing this initiative."

Aikaterini-Stamatia Pournara, Piraeus Bank (on the young-farmers target)

CaixaBank, Spain

Building entrepreneurial support around microcredit

Many entrepreneurs, particularly those at risk of financial exclusion, face barriers beyond access to finance. Limited financial literacy, lack of business planning support, and weak professional networks can make it difficult to access traditional lending and sustain a business. To address this challenge, MicroBank, CaixaBank's social bank, developed an ecosystem that combines microcredit with training, advisory support, and mentoring.

The free online MicroBank Academy provides flexible training for entrepreneurs. A network of 281 collaborating institutions supports project assessment, business planning, and access to financing. A mentoring programme for women entrepreneurs adds tailored guidance from experienced mentors, combining financial and non-financial support.

In 2025, the collaborating institutions' network supported 2,152 entrepreneurial projects and facilitated EUR 44 million in financing. A longitudinal social impact study found that 97 per cent of participating entrepreneurs reported they would not have started their business without MicroBank's support or would have done so under more difficult or costly conditions. The approach demonstrates the value of pairing finance with capability-building and support networks.

- **2,152 entrepreneurial projects supported**
- **EUR 44 million granted**

Learn more

La Banque Postale, France

Preventing banking exclusion through specialized support

Financial exclusion can stem from structural barriers such as low income, disability, or administrative challenges, as well as from financial difficulties linked to life events such as unemployment, illness, or over-indebtedness. To address both challenges, La Banque Postale developed a comprehensive accessibility and vulnerability support model designed to help customers maintain access to essential financial services and strengthen their financial resilience.

The model combines accessible banking products and services with dedicated support for customers experiencing financial hardship. At its core is L'Appui, a specialized banking and budgeting support telephone platform staffed by trained advisors who assist customers facing temporary or long-term financial difficulties. The approach is complemented by digital inclusion tools, tailored products, and partnerships with social and charitable organizations.

In 2025, La Banque Postale's banking accessibility mission benefitted 1.1 million customers otherwise excluded from the traditional banking system. In parallel, the bank had identified 1.8 million financially vulnerable customers requiring support because of e.g. overindebtedness or revenues below the poverty line. Between 2023 and 2025, the share of accessibility customers holding at least two financial products increased from 52 to 61 per cent, suggesting deeper engagement with the formal financial system.

- **1.1 million marginalized customers reached**
- **1.8 million financially vulnerable customers supported**

Learn more

Compartamos Banco, Mexico

Turning financial education into a continuous customer journey

Customers often make decisions across credit, insurance, savings and investment products with limited information, low trust and exposure to fraud. To support safer and more informed use of financial services, Compartamos Banco developed a cross-cutting financial education campaign that follows customers across their relationship with the bank.

The approach brings together product-use guidance, fraud prevention and financial education in one accessible digital hub, rather than treating them as separate campaigns. Content is designed to be clear, practical and relevant across business lines, giving customers a reference point they can return to regardless of the product they use first.

In its first year, the 2025 digital campaign generated 5.9 million impressions and 134,000 visits to educational content. Compartamos Banco is now developing a three-year continuity strategy and strengthening traceability to assess whether early exposure to financial education content is associated with changes in customer behaviour over time.

- **5.9 million impressions**
- **134,000 content visits**
- **Financial education hub created**

Learn more

Akbank, Türkiye

From priority-segment target to scaled support for women-owned MSMEs

Women-owned MSMEs in Türkiye face persistent barriers to suitable finance, business support and growth opportunities. Akbank's financial health and inclusion target was initially designed around this priority segment: to achieve 10 per cent annual growth through 2025 in the number of women-owned SME customers, helping strengthen their financial resilience and support sustainable business growth. Following the successful delivery of this commitment, Akbank has renewed its target and now aims to achieve 10 per cent annual growth through 2030 in the number of women-owned SME customers who gain access to at least one new financial product. Since launching its women-owned SME strategy, Akbank has increased its women-owned SME customer base by 125 per cent and expanded its loan portfolio for this segment eightfold by the end of 2025. Akbank exceeded its annual financial inclusion target in each reported year, with the number of women-owned SME customers increasing by 23 per cent in 2023, 19 per cent in 2024 and 11 per cent in 2025, consistently outperforming its annual ten per cent commitment.

To complement financial inclusion with non-financial support, Akbank established the Akbank Transformation Academy in 2022 to strengthen SMEs' digitalization, green transformation and financial resilience. Through programmes designed for SMEs and entrepreneurial women, the Academy has reached more than 22,000 commercial businesses, offering training in areas including foreign trade, digital marketing, e-commerce and sustainability.

- **10% annual target exceeded in 2023, 2024 and 2025**
- **+22,000 commercial businesses reached |125% increase in women-owned SME customer base**

Learn more

Erste Group, Austria

Scaling high-impact enterprizes through ecosystem support

High-impact enterprizes across Central and Eastern Europe often face barriers that limit their ability to grow, including limited access to finance, low investment readiness and fragmented support systems. The Marc Impact Programme was created to address these barriers by combining business support, investment readiness and connections to finance and markets through a coordinated ecosystem approach.

The programme is a joint initiative of ERSTE Foundation, Erste Social Finance, IFUA Nonprofit Partner and SIMPACT, delivered with local ecosystem partners in Austria, Hungary, Czechia, Romania, Serbia and Croatia. Participating enterprizes receive tailored diagnostics, expert advisory support, workshops, investor pitch preparation and access to financing opportunities through social banking units and impact investors. This helps enterprizes strengthen their business models, prepare for investment and connect with the actors they need to scale.

By combining bank-linked finance with specialist ecosystem support, the programme has supported more than 160 enterprizes. Participants have raised more than EUR 4.5 million in external funding and secured more than EUR 4 million in bank financing. In addition, 88 per cent of participants improved or developed their business models. The experience shows how banks and their partners can support financial inclusion for enterprizes not only by providing finance, but by strengthening the conditions that make finance usable, investable and capable of supporting long-term social and environmental impact.

- **160+ enterprizes supported**
- **EUR 4.5 million+ in external funding raised**
- **EUR 4 million+ in bank financing secured**
- **88% improved or developed business models**

Learn more

4. Looking ahead

The Commitment closes with a clear achievement: it helped shift financial health and inclusion from shared ambition towards measurable banking practice. Over five years, participating banks, UNEP FI and partners built a common language, outcome-oriented targets, practical guidance, implementation support and a community able to learn across markets.

The time-bound mechanism ends but the case for continuing the work is stronger than ever.

Why action matters now

Progress in account ownership is real, but it does not yet amount to financial health and inclusion for all. In 2024, 1.3 billion adults still lacked a financial account, more than 700 million of them women (Klapper et al., 2025).

For people and businesses with access, the test is whether financial services are affordable, suitable, responsible and actively used—and whether they support day-to-day stability, resilience to shocks and future security. Economic volatility, rising living costs and climate-related shocks make that test increasingly urgent.

This is both a development imperative and a strategic opportunity. Banks can reach underserved markets responsibly, deepen relevant customer relationships and improve their understanding of the circumstances and structural barriers that expose customers to heightened risks. Better customer-outcome evidence can also strengthen product, risk, data and customer-engagement decisions.

These benefits are not automatic. They depend on fair pricing, suitable design, safeguards and evidence that bank actions improve customer outcomes—not only that more people were reached or used a product.

For people, businesses and economies, affordable and effective financial services can support day-to-day needs, resilience, investment and future goals. Directing capital and support fairly towards underserved segments can contribute to healthier, more inclusive and resilient economies. The 2024 OECD/G20 policy note reinforces this focus on outcomes while recognizing the influence of wider economic, social and policy conditions (OECD, 2024).

A shared long-term purpose

The community created through the Commitment now has a shared long-term purpose: a financially healthy and inclusive system in which financial stability is the norm, resilience to shocks is widespread, and individuals and businesses are increasingly able to meet their future needs and pursue what they value, with financial distress limited to a small minority.

Financial inclusion remains indispensable, especially for people and businesses still excluded from appropriate financial services. But access is the entry point, not the endpoint. The objective is effective and responsible inclusion that strengthens customers' financial lives.

Turn momentum into outcomes

Three priorities should carry the work forward:

1. **Make customer outcomes part of core banking.** Banks should integrate financial health and inclusion into product, portfolio, risk, data and customer-engagement decisions. Evidence should be used to adapt approaches when results are weak, unequal or unintended.

2. **Direct capital and capability where gaps are greatest.** Banks should expand affordable, suitable and responsible services for underserved individuals and businesses, with explicit attention to people in vulnerable situations, gender-related inequalities and other structural barriers, alongside safeguards against harm.

3. **Keep the work of the Commitment alive.** PRB should preserve the common language, guidance and peer infrastructure created through the Commitment, using workstreams, capacity-building, technical support and communities of practice to support implementation. Banking associations, insurers, investors, regulators, policymakers, civil society and academic experts also have distinct roles in aligning incentives, strengthening evidence and protecting customers.

> **"The Commitment leaves more than targets. It leaves practical tools, relationships and a community with experience to build on. The responsibility now is to use that foundation with greater ambition and stronger evidence, so that financial health and inclusion become part of how responsible banking creates value for customers, institutions and society.**
>
> **The Commitment concludes but the momentum must continue..."**
>
> **Eric Usher**
> Head, UNEP FI

Global context

2011

51%

of adults worldwide had an account

→

2021

76%

of adults worldwide had an account

Access expanded.

But account ownership alone did not ensure affordability, effective use or resilience.

This gap helped define the work ahead.

The UNEP FI and PRB pathway

May 2021 — **A common starting point**
The first PRB guidance sets out a practical process for financial inclusion and financial health target-setting.

Dec 2021 — **The time-bound Commitment launches**
Twenty-eight PRB signatories commit to set targets within 18 months and report annually thereafter.

Sep 2022 — **Shared definitions and measures take shape**
Updated target-setting guidance, core indicators and a theory of change give banks a more consistent basis for action and measurement.

Jul 2023 — **Targets become visible**
UNEP FI consolidates the targets set by Commitment signatories, making the range of priorities and approaches easier to compare and learn from.

Feb 2024 — **The focus moves from targets to implementation**
Driving Impact translates the shared approach into practical guidance for strategy, products, engagement, data, governance and measurement.

2022–26 — **Implementation support continues throughout**
Workstreams, technical support, capacity building and communities of practice help banks apply the guidance in different markets and business models.

2026 — **The Commitment period concludes; implementation continues**
The impact assessment consolidates achievements, limitations and lessons to inform the next phase of work across PRB and beyond.

The road ahead

A wider community of banks and financial-sector actors advances a shared long-term purpose: day-to-day financial stability, resilience and future financial security for people and businesses.

2050 is a marker for that direction—not a quantitative target or formal commitment.

Sources: World Bank, Global Findex Database 2021; UNEP FI, PRB guidance and Commitment publications (2021–2024); UNEP FI, PRB Commitment to Financial Health and Inclusion Impact Assessment (2026).

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UNEP Finance Initiative brings together a large network of banks, insurers and investors that catalyzes action across the financial system to deliver more sustainable global economies.

For more than 30 years the Initiative has been connecting the UN with financial institutions from around the world to shape the sustainable finance agenda. We've established the world's foremost sustainability frameworks, helping the finance industry achieve sustainability goals, address sustainability risks and identify the business opportunities in taking a responsible approach to banking and insurance.

Convened by a Geneva, Switzerland-based secretariat, more than 550 banks and insurers are individually implementing UNEP FI's Principles for Responsible Banking and Principles for Sustainable Insurance. Financial institutions work with UNEP FI on a voluntary basis to apply these industry frameworks and develop practical guidance and tools that drive institutional change, shaping the future of sustainable finance and positioning their businesses for the transition to a sustainable and inclusive economy. In parallel, UNEP FI also drives systems change and fosters enabling conditions in service of the broader mission to mobilize and align private finance to help achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Founded in 1992, UNEP FI was the first organization to engage the finance sector on sustainability and incubated the Principles for Responsible Investment, now the world's leading proponent of responsible investment.

Today, we cultivate leadership and advance sustainable market practice while supporting the implementation of global programmes at a regional level across Africa & the Middle East, Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America & the Caribbean, and North America.

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