

## Resilience to Climate Change top of the Agenda at European Microfinance Week 2019

- Close to 450 practitioners, investors, academics and support providers from more than 90 organisations gather at Abbaye de Neumünster in Luxembourg
- Day of Action Group meetings, plus two conference days with three plenary sessions and in total, over 25 sessions
- Three plenaries: on strengthening resilience to climate change, protecting the working poor, and closing debate on personal vs. institutional responsibility in client protection
- e-MFP's *Financial Inclusion Compass 2019* launched, based on sector-wide survey of financial inclusion trends
- European Microfinance Award ceremony at EIB tonight

Luxembourg, Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup> November 2019

For Immediate Release

The [European Microfinance Week](#) (#emw2019) conference, hosted by the European Microfinance Platform (e-MFP), was formally opened today in Luxembourg. A member-driven conference supported by the Luxembourg government, EMW continues to grow as one of the most important annual events in the financial inclusion sector, bringing together all branches of the industry, including e-MFP's own members, to discuss trends, innovations, challenges and opportunities in inclusive finance in developing countries.

Reflecting the broader trends in this sector, the Platform's focus has expanded beyond microfinance into various aspects of financial inclusion, from FinTech to energy finance, and from branchless banking to agri-finance. This focus, made possible by the work and expertise of the Platform's over 130 members, fosters innovative action and research to advance sustainable and responsible microfinance around the world.

As always, this year's European Microfinance Week started on Wednesday with Action Group Day, when our specialised working groups meet to build on their months of work by holding in-depth discussions and training on their focus topics, this year including human capacity development, refugee finance, measuring contribution to the SDGs, and green smart finance.

Each conference day is headlined by plenary sessions that bring together all members, delegates and speakers. This morning saw the opening plenary, on *Strengthening resilience to climate change through financial inclusion*. The plenary kicked off with opening remarks from Manuel Tonnar of the Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, who advocated the “multiplier” effect governments can have in supporting other actors in increasing climate change resilience. This was followed by a keynote speech by Tim McDonnell, journalist and National Geographic ‘Explorer’, who movingly presented photographic, narrated case stories of the journeys of people most affected by climate change, from Bangladesh to Guatemala, Nigeria and the US – part of the “largest mass movement of people in history”.

Natalia Realpe Carrillo of HEDERA then moderated a discussion with the finalists of the European Microfinance Award 2019 (APA of Kenya, ASKI of the Philippines and FDL of Nicaragua), who presented their initiatives, discussed the main challenges they’ve faced when developing their programs, and reflected on the role the sector can and must play in improving the lives of those most affected by climate change.

Friday will open with another plenary, entitled *Protecting the working poor in the 21<sup>st</sup> century through responsible finance*. How do we build on the progress that has been made in worker protection, and how can responsible finance ensure they’re offered new opportunities for prosperity? Speakers will include Craig Churchill, head of the Social Finance Programme at the ILO; Guy Stuart, Executive Director at Microfinance Opportunities; and Reema Nanavaty, head of SEWA.

The conference will close with an unusual debate-style plenary, entitled *Responsible client choices in finance: whose responsibility is it?*, which will wrestle with the challenging philosophical issue of when does protecting clients become a paternalistic limitation on client choice? The speakers taking both sides of this issue will be Gerhard Coetzee from CGAP; Roshaneh Zafar from Kashf Foundation; Timothy Ogden of the Financial Access Initiative; and Mayada El-Zoghbi, the new Managing Director of CFI. This session will also be live streamed on NextBillion.

The three plenary sessions are, as always, complemented by a diverse range of workshop sessions – featuring over 90 organisations – covering topics such as impact investing, education, use of data in climate resilient agriculture, measuring outcomes, the Atlas data platform, financial health, financial inclusion in Bangladesh, savings, refugee finance, cooperatives and cyber security – among many others.

Many of these topics and trends are discussed in the [Financial Inclusion Compass 2019](#), the second e-MFP survey of financial inclusion trends, which launched today, and which distills the short, medium and long-term ideas, aspirations, concerns and predictions from stakeholders all across the inclusive finance sector.

We also look forward to hearing the announcement tonight of the winner of the €100,000 [European Microfinance Award](#) 2019 – with the theme of “Strengthening Resilience to Climate Change” – during a ceremony at the European Investment Bank, to which all EMW participants are invited.

As Christoph Pausch, Executive Secretary of e-MFP, says: “EMW evolves each year, partly with the dedicated stream of sessions on that year’s European Microfinance Award, but also by bringing in new stakeholders from across the financial inclusion ecosystem to present, debate and exchange knowledge on new issues, challenges and ideas, and build new partnerships. We’re delighted as always to welcome all the conference delegates to join us in supporting innovation in the sector and identifying the issues and opportunities of tomorrow”.

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The European Microfinance Platform (e-MFP) is the leading network of organisations and individuals active in the financial inclusion sector in developing countries. It numbers over 130 members from all geographic regions and specialisations of the microfinance community, including consultants & support service providers, investors, FSPs, multilateral & national development agencies, NGOs and researchers. Up to two billion people remain financially excluded. To address this, the Platform seeks to promote co-operation, dialogue and innovation among these diverse stakeholders working in developing countries. e-MFP fosters activities which increase global access to affordable, quality sustainable and inclusive financial services for the un(der)banked by driving knowledge-sharing, partnership development and innovation.

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