

**e-MFP's online European Microfinance Week 2021 closes – with climate change, impact measurement, health care, and financial inclusion for women top of the sector's agenda**

- *Conference closes with panel on 'Crisis and opportunity – where do we go from here?'*
- *Over 500 participants took part in online EMW2021, with more than 120 speakers across over 50 sessions*
- *Launch of e-MFP publication "[The First Wealth is Health](#)"*
- *Fonkoze of Haiti wins €100,000 European Microfinance Award 2021 for its Boutik Santé initiative*
- *All EMW2021 content recorded and available for attendees after the conference*

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For Immediate Release

[European Microfinance Week](#) (#EMW2021), online for the second consecutive year, concluded Friday with a plenary entitled *Crisis and opportunity – where do we go from here?* in which a panel of senior speakers representing different stakeholder groups looked back over the period of the pandemic and discussed what changes – better or worse – will endure.

Moderated by Johanna Ryan, VisionFund International, and with Maria May from Gates Foundation, Jessica Schicks from BIO, Stanley Munyao from Musoni Microfinance, Babak Abbaszadeh from Toronto Centre, and Apricot Wilson from LMDF, this fast-moving and wide-ranging discussion covered questions from how resilient the sector has been, the catalysing effect it has had on digitalisation, and the need to “not lose momentum, but strive for the best possible balance between personal contact and digital convenience and efficiency”, according to one of the panellists. The generally high resilience of institutions has been a feature of the past two years but strengthening that of clients remains the sector's key task – a belief shared by the online audience who, asked in a live poll the most important way to make last-mile clients more resilient to a future crisis, overwhelmingly chose ‘deepening outreach to the very poor’.

This engaging closing session was a suitable finish to a conference that wrestled with these big questions across over 50 sessions. How can we better measure impact? How can the sector accelerate climate change adaptation measures? How can financial providers provide access to affordable and quality health care? And how can the sector understand and respond to structural barriers and norms to develop products and services that better serve the needs of women? These and many other topics were addressed in a variety of formats, from fireside-chats to panel discussions, interviews, plenaries and working sessions, involving over 500 participants, and well over 100 speakers. Each day kicked off with working sessions by e-MFP's

many Action Groups, all more active than ever before, having been involved in the organisation of 14 sessions – including the opening plenary on climate finance after COP-26, and a green finance Action Group session which was the most highly attended at the entire conference. This clearly reflects the paramount importance with which e-MFP members and the sector at large perceive this topic.

On Thursday, there was the ceremony for the €100,000 [European Microfinance Award](#) on 'Inclusive Finance & Health Care'. A hybrid event this year, with speakers *in situ* in Luxembourg as well as an international audience watching online, it included speeches from Franz Fayot, Luxembourg's Minister for Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs and member of the EMA2021 High Jury; Dr. Tlaleng Mofokeng, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to health; and Craig Churchill, head of the ILO's Social Finance Programme and team leader of its Impact Insurance Facility. These were followed by films profiling the organisations and initiatives of the three finalists, CRECER IFD from Bolivia, Dreamlopmments Ltd. from Thailand, and Fonkoze from Haiti, and live interviews with representatives of each.

The ceremony finished with Her Royal Highness the Grand Duchess of Luxembourg, President of the European Microfinance Award's High Jury, announcing Fonkoze of Haiti as the winner for *Boutik Santé*, which trains and empowers community health entrepreneurs to provide screenings, education, and health products to the very poorest groups in Haiti. She announced the winner by saying that *"in the context of the current pandemic, guaranteeing access to affordable good quality health care to the most vulnerable is even more crucial. It is encouraging to see that microfinance is helping to find appropriate solutions for people in need while guaranteeing quality education for children, and offering employment prospects to young people."*

Friday's EMW2021 plenary was followed by closing remarks by e-MFP's chairwoman Laura Hemrika. She began by recognising that EMW2021 coincides with the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of e-MFP, which has grown from 20 to well over 130 members, and which has a portfolio of initiatives and work streams more diverse and influential than ever before. Noting that there are both challenges and opportunities that come with an online conference, she said that while e-MFP hopes to be able to return to the in-person conference in 2022, it's clear that an online model invites and welcomes participants who would otherwise be unable to take part, and that a hybrid model going forward, involving stakeholders from all over the low-income world, will be inevitable.

Laura then summarised some of the emerging themes of the conference as a whole and said that it's clear already that the move to more rigorous and accessible impact measurement, climate and green finance, and financial inclusion for women (the topic of Wednesday's



keynote, and the just-announced topic of the EMA in 2022) are at the forefront of the sector's concerns today. Laura closed EMW2021 with an expression of thanks to all participants, speakers, event organisers and the e-MFP Secretariat for building successfully on 2020's experimental first online event, and with the hope to see everyone in person for EMW2022.

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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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