

Word of greetings

2011 is coming to an end as well as the 3-year project "University Meets Microfinance" (UMM) which could be initiated thanks to the support of the European Union in the frame of its Education for Development programme.

We take this occasion to thank all UMM partners and friends for their interest in the programme. The past 3 years have been successful in terms of improved microfinance education at European universities and enhanced cooperation between microfinance practitioners, academics and university students all over Europe. More than 500 students benefited from the seminars conducted, mentorships given as well as from scholarships and awards granted. The programmes' workshops and awareness raising events gathered about 1900 students, professors and practitioners. We are now working on continuing UMM activities and will keep you updated in 2012.

In the meantime, we wish you a happy new year and all the best for 2012!

Scholarship Winners - 2nd and 3rd Call 2011

In the course of the second and the third call for proposals, UMM scholarships were awarded to 3 Master students and 3 PhD students to conduct field research in Bangladesh, Egypt, Ethiopia and Vietnam.

The 3 winners of the Scholarships' **2nd Call 2011** came from Université Libre de Bruxelles. Adeno Kidane Ereda conducted his research on "Balancing microfinance performance on balanced scorecard". Azeemur Rehman investigated the question "In terms of client satisfaction, which microfinance methodology serves it better: group or individual lending?". Mekbeb Mekonen won a scholarship for his proposal on the "Financial sustainability of microfinance institutions in Ethiopia".

The Scholarships' **3rd Call 2011** exclusively focused on the research proposals of PhD students. Thilo Klein, PhD candidate at Cambridge University, won a scholarship for his research proposal on "Experimental impact evaluation of the Egyptian information sharing system for MFIs". The other scholarships were awarded to Badruddozza Mia, PhD candidate at the Open University, and Belayeth Hussain, PhD candidate at the Universität Kassel, for their research proposals on "ICT-based information systems and organizational change in microcredit organization" and "Women's social capital and disciplinary technologies of microfinance institutions".

Awards 2011

The first prize of the UMM Awards 2011 has been given to Alejandro Turbay, Daniel Nordlund and Oluwafunmilayo A. Akinosi from the School of Engineering at the Blekinge Institute of Technology for their jointly written thesis "Sustainable microfinance". The starting point for their research was their firm belief that the interconnectedness of the socioeconomic and ecological system as well as the reliance on ecosystem services makes it important to provide microcredit from a full sustainability perspective. The authors used the Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development, a scientific based systematic and strategic approach, to create a principle-based model of a microfinance institution operating in a socioeconomic and ecologically sustainable manner. This model was then compared with the circumstances in which these institutions currently operate. Aside from extensive literature review, interviewing experts and practitioners was a major part of the research. The authors then explored how taking a full sustainability perspective could meet current challenges and maximize opportunities. After a prioritization process, the team made recommendations on how these organizations could strategically move towards sustainability. Among the suggestions were: leverage on loan process, build staff capacity, offer complementary services, connect with impact investors and emphasize external communications.



From left to right: Alejandro Turbay, Oluwafunmilayo A. Akinosi, Daniel Nordlund

The second place winner is Anna Custers from the London School of Economics and Political Science, who received the Awards for her thesis on "Furthering financial literacy: Experimental evidence from a financial literacy training program for microfinance clients in Bhopal, India".

As in the past two years, the Awards winners will publish their thesis with the scientific publisher "Ibidem". For more information please visit: <http://www.ibidemverlag.de>

MicroWorld.org seeks volunteer

MicroWorld.org, the online microloan platform and subsidiary of PlaNNet Finance, is seeking a volunteer who speaks fluent Vietnamese to assist with its business development in Vietnam. The assistance would only be required on a sporadic and ad-hoc basis, therefore this is not an internship or part-time position. It would, however, be an excellent opportunity to gain experience and exposure in funder-MFI relations, regulatory issues, and online microlending.

About MicroWorld.Org

MicroWorld.org is an internet platform that enables individuals and businesses to finance the projects of micro-entrepreneurs around the world by making online loans. Part of the PlaNNet Finance Group, MicroWorld was launched at the start of 2010, and has since created partnerships with five microfinance institutions and raised financing for over 600 loans.

If you are interested in helping, please email contact@microworld.org

UMM Session at the European Microfinance Week 2011 in Luxembourg

Luxembourg, 2nd – 4th November – Four UMM Awards and Scholarship winners presented their research at the European Microfinance Week which gathered 373 microfinance professionals from 59 countries. The UMM session was moderated by Ms. Erna Karrer-Rüedi (Credit Suisse) and involved a wide range of microfinance topics including environmental risks, the impact of the financial crisis on MFIs' performance, product flexibility and microinsurance.

The following students did present:

- Marion Allet, CERMi/PlaNet Finance: Managing environmental risks in microfinance
 - Lessons learned from El Salvador
- Sascha Huijsman, University of Groningen: The Impact of the Global Economic and Financial Crisis on MFIs' performance
- Carolina Laureti, CERMi: Product flexibility in microfinance – Trade-offs and challenges for the industry
- Thilo Klein, University of Cambridge: Why Do India's Urban Poor Choose to Go Private? Health Policy Simulations in Slums of Hyderabad



From left to right: Erna Karrer-Rüedi, Sascha Huijsman, Marion Allet, Delphine Bazalgette, Thilo Klein, Carolina Laureti

UMM Session at the Microcredit Summit

Valladolid, November 16th - An associated UMM session was held in the frame of the Microcredit Summit at Valladolid. It was organized in cooperation with the University of Salamanca and with the European Microfinance Platform.

During the associated session, entitled "Microfinance crisis: the students' perspective", Jessica Schicks, PhD student enrolled at the Université Libre de Bruxelles and Veronica Trujillo, PhD student enrolled at the University of Salamanca, presented their research findings regarding two main topics:

- "Over indebtedness in Microfinance, an empirical evidence from Ghana" (Jessica Schicks, PhD enrolled at the Université Libre de Bruxelles) commented by Professor Fernando Rodriguez Lopez from the University of Salamanca.
- "Microfinance regulation in Latin America" (Veronica Trujillo, Universidad de Salamanca) commented by Marc Labie from Université Libre de Bruxelles

Report on the UMM Workshop in Groningen and Frankfurt

PlaNet Finance, in cooperation with the European Microfinance Platform (e-MFP) has now published its latest Workshop Report on the topic of rural microfinance and savings. The report summarizes the results of the 6th "University Meets Microfinance" Workshop organized by the e-MFP Action group "University Meets Microfinance" in the fringe of the "Second European Research conference on Microfinance" from June 17th – June 18th at the University of Groningen. The Workshop Report is available for download here:

<http://www.universitymeetsmicrofinance.eu/site/workshop-reports.html>

The results of the 7th UMM Workshop, which was held in cooperation with the Frankfurt School of Finance & Management will be published very soon in the upcoming Workshop Report on "Investments and Regulation in Microfinance".

New Selection Committee Members

We would like to welcome the following new members of the UMM Selection Committee: Niclaus Bergmann (Sparkassenstiftung für internationale Kooperation), Dr. Paul Armbruster (Deutscher Genossenschafts- und Raiffeisenverband e.V.) and Philippe Guichandut (Grameen Crédit Agricole). The Selection Committee is the core part of the UMM Scholarship and Awards Programme. Currently 47 academics and 49 practitioners volunteer to support the UMM team, evaluating Scholarship proposals and Awards theses.

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