

## Executive Summary

Under the auspices of the International Year of Microcredit, member states were requested to establish National Committees to facilitate activities and to create a dialogue on best practices to build more inclusive financial sectors in their countries. Each National Committee assesses the challenges that poor people confront in accessing financial services and decides upon activities and initiatives to address these issues. As of June 14, 2005, a total of eighty-nine countries have developed activities to support the International Year of Microcredit, and forty-eight countries have formally established National Committees/Focal Points. The National Committees include representation from across different sectors. Forty-five governments are involved and nineteen central banks are represented. The private sector is present in fifty-seven National Committees and academia in sixteen.

As part of their commitment to the IYM, the National Committees are addressing three specific goals set by the Advisors. To **fill information gaps**, countries are making great strides in conducting research, evaluating current practices, and developing recommendations on national strategies, which will implement change. Across continents, National Committees are engaged in varied forms of research surrounding microfinance, including assessments of the availability and demand for microfinance, MFI presence, best practices, opportunities and challenges. Some National Committees are establishing centers that provide information and assistance for MFIs and clients, while others are developing training programs and hosting informational events. In addition, several countries have actively contributed to the Blue Book Project.

In an effort to **raise public awareness**, countries around the world are organizing public events, seminars and conferences, disseminating information through the media (print, electronic, and broadcast), and coordinating communication campaigns to promote the importance of building inclusive financial sectors. Thirty-two countries have created websites. Countries are coming up with innovative ways to educate the public. A number of National Committees are making films, holding contests, or hosting entertaining events such as parades, exhibits, and theatrical plays. In some countries, caravans are traveling across the country to promote information on microfinance. Several Committees are also highlighting success stories and hosting trade shows for products made by microenterprises. Among other creative ideas are the issuance of stamps and currency notes with the IYM logo. One hundred sixty-nine conferences have been held or will be held within the year.

In addition, the National Committees are focused on **building commitment**. In an effort to build inclusive financial sectors, many countries are assessing their legislation to create operational environments conducive for MFIs and their clients. Others are focusing on building relevant networks, engaging various sectors, and mobilizing resources. Some of the National Committees also have plans to evaluate the IYM at the end of the year and establish long-term strategies and steps to last beyond 2005. Countries are working toward this goal in various ways, from the work already mentioned to other ideas, such as creating a Masters level course on microfinance and supporting microfinance product development.

Many countries, which have not created formal National Committees, have still pledged their support and are actively participating in the International Year of Microcredit. Worldwide, forty-one other countries are engaging in similar

types of activities as outlined under the three goals above. Many countries are involved in research and evaluation of their microfinance sector and are hosting symposiums and trainings. Countries around the world are engaging in public awareness campaigns. Many are participating in the Global Microentrepreneurship Awards Programme or utilizing channels such as caravans, exhibitions, and documentaries to exchange information and promote microfinance under the logo of the International Year of Microcredit. They are standardizing procedures and working to create legislation and regulatory frameworks that will assist microfinance. Countries are also engaging different sectors and building partnerships.

The following table presents a summary of indicators regarding the International Year of Microcredit initiatives and involvement:

<b>International Year of Microcredit Indicators</b>	
# of Countries Involved	89
# of National Committees Formed	48
# of Websites Established	32
# of Countries Organizing Conferences	53
# of Conferences Scheduled	169
# of Countries with Public Awareness Campaigns	29
# of Governments Represented	45
# of Central Banks Represented	19
# of Bank Associations Represented	27
# of Microfinance Networks Represented	202
# of UNDP Offices Involved	49
# of Private Sector Organizations Represented	57
# of Multilateral Organizations Represented	48
# of Universities Represented	16

## Africa Overview

In Africa, 26 countries are actively participating in the International Year of Microcredit, while 11 have formed National Committees. The National Committees' membership includes significant representation from most sectors, including the government, non-profits and NGOs. Central Banks are represented on four Committees and multilateral agencies are members of nine.

The African National Committees are engaging in activities to fill information gaps (Goal 1). Ghana is creating a report with recommendations for a National Strategic Framework on Microfinance. Kenya is conducting an assessment of MFI presence around the country to better address client needs. Benin is holding a seminar on researching the microfinance field. Several conferences are being hosted by the Moroccan National Committee, which will serve to educate and provide a forum for discussion on microfinance.

Most of the National Committees are working on building public awareness (Goal 2) using different types of communication and media channels. Committees are organizing conferences and workshops, publishing brochures and newspaper articles, and launching media campaigns. Five National Committees are also creating websites. Burkina Faso and Central African Republic are holding a national press conference, as well as forum discussions. Similarly, Malawi is holding workshops, conferences, and launching a media campaign; Guinea Bissau is holding events in the capital and in three other provinces; and Madagascar is hosting a week of celebration for the IYM in June 2005. Kenya is publishing newspaper articles publicizing the work of MFIs and other stakeholders and holding school-based programs that promote knowledge about microfinance. Burundi is developing brochures and a video, and holding an open house to educate the public. Both Burundi and Burkina Faso are creating radio outreach programs and holding competitions. Benin is holding round tables on microfinance themes, which will be presented on radio and TV. Nigeria too is producing a radio and television documentary of microfinance institutions, clients and operations. Morocco is hosting a number of conferences on various themes surrounding microfinance and is hosting an exchange workshop between urban microcredit associations and a rural credit foundation. The Moroccan National Committee presented an impact study in the presence of the Prime Minister. Burundi is putting together a theatrical play, and Kenya is holding local activities, such as parades, exhibits with awards, discussions and other entertainment, in eight Provinces. Nigeria is launching a commemorative stamp with the IYM logo and organizing a road show in local public places where MFIs will market products to clients. Mauritania is organizing a caravan, which will be traveling across the 12 regional capitals holding exhibitions and workshops on microfinance themes.

Some of the National Committees have shown positive steps in building commitment (Goal 3). Ghana is developing strategies on making microfinance an effective tool, which can provide inclusive and sustainable services for all. By doing so, Ghana hopes to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Ghana is also working to improve training, tools, supervision and regulation. Kenya is incorporating microfinance into its formal financial sector and working with local NGOs to create action plans to improve financial services. As a part of a regional effort, in April 2005, Benin hosted a conference for the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO) on the challenges and prospects in microcredit in Africa; participants included high-level government officials from eight West African countries.

## International Year of Microcredit Achievements – Africa

### Goal 1: Filling Information Gaps

#### *Countries with National Committees*

##### *Benin*

- Hold a seminar on research studies on microfinance
- Conduct a study on the impact of microfinance on poverty reduction

##### *Ghana*

- Produce a report with recommendations for a National Strategic Framework on Microfinance

##### *Kenya*

- Map microfinance institutional presence throughout the country to ascertain where there is need for stronger or better services and village level activities

##### *Morocco*

- Hold conferences with the microfinance sector on the following themes: “Generalize the access to drinkable water and electricity by microfinance,” “Microfinance in West Africa: the mobilization of savings,” “MF and help to the enterprise creations” (experiences of ADIE France, BTS in Tunisia, Opportunity International in Macedonia and the credit experience during the Lafarge enterprise creation in Morocco/CGEM)
- Hold a Trickle up program: “how to insert the really poor in the financial tracks”
- Hold a forum on the “Individual credit model: risk and recovery management and regional forum” organized by the Al Karama association in Oudja

##### *Nigeria*

- Produce an analytical survey of the impact of leading microfinance institutions

#### *Countries without National Committees*

##### *Angola*

- Conduct an evaluation of microfinance initiatives and capacity building and standardize relevant procedures throughout the country

##### *Gabon*

- Build a partnership program between university students and multilateral organizations for the realization of MDGs

## Goal 2: Raising Public Awareness

### *Countries with National Committees*

#### *Benin*

- Organize the second national seminar on microfinance
- Hold round tables on microfinance themes which will be presented on radio and TV
- Film a documentary on microfinance in Benin and an institutional film on the Microfinance Institutions Association
- Disseminate information on the IYM through diverse websites
- Organize a microfinance caravan

#### *Burkina Faso*

- Hold a national press conference
- Generate publicity via a journal on microcredit
- Hold forum discussions
- Implement a public awareness campaign including brochures and five radio pieces
- Hold a university competition on microfinance
- Promote education and training for youth and their parents, helping them to settle small-scale activities through microfinance with the goal of poverty reduction and socioeconomic re-integration (responsibility of UNV)

#### *Burundi*

- Host an educational open house (or fair)
- Disperse brochures on microfinance
- Create a website, a video on basic concepts of microfinance, and radio outreach programs
- Perform a theatrical play
- Train people to speak about microfinance in laymen's terms
- Host a contest and awards
- Mobilize resources for microentrepreneurs and MFIs

#### *Central African Republic*

- Hold a launching event (was held in November 2004 and included conferences and round tables)

#### *Ghana*

- Hold meetings/conferences/special events to discuss best practices, promote public awareness, enhance performance of the microfinance sector
- Implement the GMA Programme

#### *Guinea Bissau*

- Hold events at the capital and in three other provinces

#### *Kenya*

- Publish newspaper supplements in "The Nation" and "The Standard" that publicize the work of MFIs and other relevant stakeholders
- Host guest speakers and exhibitions where microfinance institutions can explain microcredit schemes and facilitate the opening of new accounts
- Hold workshops, conferences, and school-based programs that promote knowledge about microfinance
- Hold local activities and promotion in eight provinces: parades, exhibits with awards, discussions and entertainment

#### *Madagascar*

- Host a week of celebration for the IYM in June 2005
- Attend conference with AFMIN (African Network of Microfinance) in November 2005

#### *Malawi*

- Hold a microfinance workshop on May 9-11, 2005 followed by a national conference
- Hold a press conference and launch a media campaign

#### *Morocco*

- Give FNAM presentation (on impact study of microfinance) in the presence of the Prime Minister
- Issue a press release on the opening of the year of microcredit in Morocco

#### *Nigeria*

- Launch a commemorative stamp with the IYM Logo
- Publish a microcredit newsletter derived from papers presented at seminars
- Organize a road show in local public places where MFIs can market products to clients
- Produce a radio and television documentary on MFIs, clients and operations

#### ***Countries without National Committees***

#### *Angola*

- Hold a national meeting on microcredit
- Launch a national microcredit campaign

#### *Mauritania*

- Host a national forum on the challenges facing the growth of microcredit
- Host a two day event titled "Open door to microfinance" with exhibitions, conferences, debates, and distribution of awards by the President of Mauritania
- Organize a caravan which will be traveling across the 12 regional capitals of Mauritania holding exhibitions and workshops on microfinance themes

#### *South Africa*

- Hold exhibitions, competitions, and conferences throughout the country
- Implement the GMA Programme

#### *Uganda*

- Create a documentary capturing UNDP's contribution to microfinance development in Uganda
- Hold publicity events with local media and the press
- Hold a microcredit conference

#### *Zambia*

- Celebrate microfinance week
- Hold a microfinance summit
- Develop initiatives to strengthen the regulatory framework for microfinance

### **Goal 3: Building Commitment**

#### *Countries with National Committees*

##### *Ghana*

- Develop strategies and recommendations to make microfinance an effective tool for building inclusive and sustainable financial services for the economically active poor, as a means to achieving the MDGs in Ghana
- Engage private sector and improve training, tools, supervision and regulation

##### *Kenya*

- Build microfinance partnerships for stronger delivery
- Incorporate microfinance into the formal financial sector
- Work with local NGOs to create action plans to improve financial services

##### *Morocco*

- Hold an exchange workshop between Microcredit Associations, such as Zakoura Workshop on the refunding sources of the Microfinance Associations, AL Amana workshop on the mobilization of savings, FBPMC workshop on interest rates, and a rural credit foundation workshop on microfinance in rural places

#### *Countries without National Committees*

##### *Angola*

- Execute a plan to finance small-scale activities (responsibility of Ministry of Family and the Promotion of Women)

##### *South Africa*

- Build capacity through training sessions for young people, women and students
- Initiate communication with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) (responsibility of the Government of South Africa, counterpart for microfinance initiatives)

## Asia Overview

Since the onset of the International Year of Microcredit (IYM), 12 Asian countries have pledged their support to building inclusive financial sectors; nine countries have formed National Committees to forward this agenda. In general, National Committees include representatives from the government, as well as non-profits and non-governmental organizations. An additional strength is participation from the private sector, primarily private banks, on six National Committees. International agencies are also active on three Committees; in Bhutan the SNV Netherlands Development Organisation, and in China and Mongolia, the World Bank. The Indonesian, Mongolian and Philippine National Committees have representation from academic institutions.

Many National Committees are organizing activities under Goal 1 of the IYM. They are focusing on filling information gaps through research, training and support services for MFIs and microentrepreneurs. For example, Azerbaijan is providing marketing services and legal aid to stimulate the development of microentrepreneurship. Mongolia is establishing a Microfinance Competence Center to advise and support MFIs. Mongolia also held a National Summit on "Microcredit and Entrepreneurship," which was attended by over 1400 participants. Nepal is using the UNCDF Microfinance Distance Learning Course to educate constituents on microfinance. Nepal is also researching microfinance in conflict situations and suggesting strategies to increase access for the rural poor. China and Indonesia have committed to contributing to the Blue Book project.

Many National Committees are making use of the media, including radio programs, newspaper articles and documentaries, to increase public awareness (Goal 2). Seven National Committees are hosting conferences, workshops and fairs. Another common feature is the use of the Internet to disseminate information; eight National Committees have launched websites. Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal and the Philippines are highlighting success stories within their countries to recognize achievements in the industry. Pakistan is producing a film on microenterprise. Mongolia and Bangladesh are establishing weekly radio and television programs and publishing newspaper articles regularly throughout the year. The Philippines is implementing a communications campaign with posters, radio and TV commercials to promote microcredit, while Bangladesh is printing the IYM slogan on calendars, diaries and pads of various organizations. Azerbaijan is publishing booklets and assisting microloan beneficiaries by organizing a display of products produced by successful businesses. The Philippines is also holding a tradeshow for products made by microenterprises. Bangladesh is also publishing booklets and is holding essay and debate competitions on issues pertaining to microcredit activities. Meanwhile Pakistan is hosting exposure visits for key journalists. Many of the Committees have come up with creative ideas. For instance, Bangladesh has issued stamps and the Philippines has introduced a 20 peso currency note, both of which display the logo of the Year. Pakistan is holding a Walk for Microfinance and engaging in publicity through stamps, ads on fertilizers, and utility bills. Indonesia hosted a fundraising tea party attended by all stakeholders; this event raised 10 billion Rupiah (approximately USD\$1.04 million, 6/8/2005).

Under Goal 3 of the IYM, the National Committees are taking steps to build commitment. They are establishing microfinance networks, launching programs that will last beyond the Year and creating legislation that provides a more conducive environment for MFIs. For instance, Mongolia is establishing networks and organizing a series of meetings for different stakeholders, including commercial banks, donor and government funders, and non-

governmental organizations. Bhutan is launching the BDFC Rural Savings Program "Save to Grow." Mongolia is adopting a long term strategy, post 2005, that would include a traveling caravan to promote microfinance in the rural areas and a new UNDP microfinance initiative that would last for at least 2 years. The Philippines is planning to assess the IYM at the end of 2005 and then identify next steps. Nepal and Philippines are both reviewing the existing relevant legislation and working on improving it to allow MFIs to grow and provide sustainable microfinance services. The Philippines is also pushing the adoption of a Microfinance Performance Standard. Indonesia is improving policy and legal environment to sustain MFIs and clients, including drafting a law on microfinance. Azerbaijan is preparing a 6-month and an annual report on the celebration of IYM and activities of the National Committee and is disseminating them to appropriate organizations. Meanwhile, China is creating a Masters course in microfinance to promote expertise and best practices in the industry.

## International Year of Microcredit Achievements - Asia

### Goal 1: Filling Information Gaps

#### *Countries with National Committees*

##### *Azerbaijan*

- Provide marketing and training services and advice and legal support to stimulate the development of microentrepreneurship
- Explore problems in microfinance and related legislation

##### *China*

- Perform an overview of China's microfinance efforts and assess what models have worked. Establish benchmarking standards and assess the field
- Research and develop a Blue Paper on Challenges to Microcredit in China; conduct China case study on microcredit and MDGs for the MDG+5 conference

##### *Indonesia*

- Examine and map issues/constraints relating to the implementation of poverty alleviation policies
- Establish a forum for banking and non-banking financial institutions and appoint a network advisor through a national convention
- Investigate existing problems and identify microcredit funding sources
- Hold microfinance training, including internships and a certification
- Provide a capacity and needs assessment for microfinance beneficiaries
- Contribute to the formulation of the UN Blue Book on Microcredit
- Hold seminars/workshops
- Facilitate dialogue between local, national and international microfinance NGOs

##### *Mongolia*

- Host relevant events; held a national summit on "Microcredit and Entrepreneurship," attended by over 1400 participants
- Create a database of in-country MFIs
- Establish a local MFI rating system
- Develop a microfinance training toolkit for MFIs at the local level
- Maintain a website
- Create a national network of MFIs
- Develop key principles and operating criteria for local/international MFIs, government and donors
- Provide support to microfinance trainers
- Assist the local MFIs to become the members of international MF Networks
- Implement a project on MF market analysis to further develop an MF development strategy in collaboration with the stakeholders
- Establish a Microfinance Competence Center with the support of MFIs

##### *Nepal*

- Organize and provide capacity building activities to MFIs using UNCDF's Microfinance Distance Learning Course
- Prepare periodic National Committee progress reports
- Design and update monitoring and reporting tools
- Research linkages between microfinance, poverty reduction, women's empowerment and the achievement of the MDGs

- Research microfinance in conflict situations and suggest strategies to increase access for the rural poor
- Research problems/constraints in MFIs who serve clients in remote hill/mountain areas
- Research sustainability of informal savings and credit organizations

#### *Philippines*

- Facilitate flow of information on best practices among practitioners
- Host workshops for microfinance practitioners
- Maintain a microfinance outreach database
- Gather data on government issued policies related to microfinance

## **Goal 2: Raising Public Awareness**

### *Countries with National Committees*

#### *Azerbaijan*

- Publish booklets, brochures and magazines to provide entrepreneurs and other groups with information about microfinance
- Hold business-forums, credit fairs and exhibitions in agricultural regions to support the exploration of problems faced by microentrepreneurs in these regions
- Implement activities to increase awareness on IYM and microfinance activities of entrepreneurs (involving mass media and press)
- Prepare 6-month report on the celebration of IYM in Azerbaijan and disseminate to appropriate organizations
- Announce and award microfinance institutions that have made achievements, gained certain experience and demonstrated activeness
- Organize a display of products produced by active microloan beneficiaries and visits to successful businesses
- Hold a final event with participation of MFIs and other organizations related to the completion of IYM; give microfinance achievement awards
- Produce the annual report of the National Coordination Committee

#### *Bhutan*

- Publish study on how microfinance can be expanded using expertise of local consultant
- Launch IYM through a one-day workshop on microfinance in Bhutan (speakers from within and outside Bhutan) on April 5, 2005
- Increase media focus on microfinance

#### *Bangladesh*

- Publish booklet titled "State of Microcredit"
- Hold essay and debate competitions on issues pertaining to microcredit activities; awards for successful managers/field workers and other relevant persons
- Hold seminars, symposiums, rallies, documentary films and audio-video shows
- Implement a public awareness campaign, including posters, leaflets and stickers (special supplements have been published in English and Bengali newspapers regarding the day of inauguration of IYM, and write-up features will be published regularly in the national newspapers throughout the year)
- Broadcast talk shows, features and success stories of microcredit activities through national broadcasting centers and other electronic media
- Hold national and local fairs to promote the products of microentrepreneurs
- Print the IYM slogan on calendars, diaries, pads and envelopes of various organizations involved in IYM

#### *China*

- Promote a distance learning initiative
- Maintain a website
- Use media kits
- Host field trips
- Produce documentaries
- Promote workshops dedicated to key issues in China
- Host a regional seminar to share experiences and best practices

#### *Indonesia*

- Publish articles in the *Jakarta Post*
- Host relevant events; held a fundraising tea party attended by many stakeholders and raised 10 billion Rupiah (approximately USD\$1.04 million, 6/8/2005)
- Generate publicity regarding microfinance programs and activities
- Hold press conferences
- Hold microentrepreneurship writing contest and give awards
- Share expertise, experiences, success stories and lessons-learned in the area of microfinance

#### *Mongolia*

- Convene a second national microcredit meeting in 2005
- Hold a conference on the national microfinance landscape to spotlight microentrepreneur award winners
- Hold training programs and do outreach for university students
- Establish weekly radio programs on MF & SME, bi-weekly newspaper articles and a bi-monthly or quarterly TV program

#### *Nepal*

- Use appropriate media to raise awareness on the importance and ability of microfinance services
- Collect and disseminate success stories
- Organize cooperative education/microfinance training programs

#### *Pakistan*

- Produce a film/documentary
- Appoint a spokesperson on microfinance
- Host exposure visits for key journalists
- Launch an awareness program including the following: guest speakers at universities; clients as speakers on experience; some universities in every province to be covered for awareness-building at the national level; MFIs involved in GMA speaking of their experiences (winning client of 2004 invited)
- Hold a Walk for Microfinance
- Host two open forum talk shows
- Engage in undercover publicity: stamps, ads on fertilizers, utility bills, etc.
- Engage in overline publicity: ISP providers

#### *Philippines*

- Conduct national forum/conference to include all players the Philippines' microfinance sector
- Implement a communications campaign (posters, flyers, radio and TV commercials)
- Publish monthly updates on policies in newspapers
- Increase awareness of MFIs so clients can avail of their services and promote responsible use of credit
- Highlight and recognize success stories
- Hold a tradeshow for products made by microenterprises
- Recognize outstanding MFIs and microenterprises

*Countries without National Committees*

*Cambodia*

- Hold a microenterprise fair and workshop
- Produce a film on Cambodian microenterprises
- Implement the GMA Programme

*Malaysia*

- Host seminar on “Empowering through Microcredit” to kick off the launch of the IYM
- Consider the production of a book/knowledge product on microcredit financing in Malaysia
- Enhance awareness of microcredit through collaborative efforts to develop and implement a communication campaign for IYM
- Develop a website linked to UNDP to promote activities related to IYM

### **Goal 3: Building Commitment**

#### *Countries with National Committees*

##### *Azerbaijan*

- Provide microcredit through MFIs, commercial banks, other non-bank credit organizations and public organizations

##### *Bangladesh*

- Hold year-round meetings with beneficiaries and stakeholders

##### *Bhutan*

- Launch BDFC Rural Savings Program "Save to Grow"

##### *China*

- Create an MA course in microfinance

##### *Indonesia*

- Facilitate closer linkage and cooperation with donor countries and micro-finance wholesalers
- Improve policy and legal environment to sustain MFIs and clients, including drafting a law on microfinance; accelerate law on credit collateral
- Simplify regulation on credit distribution
- Channel funds from major government owned financial institutions into microbusinesses

##### *Nepal*

- Review microfinance related legislation and suggest appropriate national microfinance legislation to allow MFIs to grow and provide sustainable microfinance services

##### *Mongolia*

- Adopt a long term strategy, post 2005, that would include a traveling caravan to promote microfinance in the rural areas and a new UNDP microfinance initiative for at least 2 years
- Create national networks to promote information sharing and coordination
- Organize a series of special meetings of commercial banks on downscaling to serve the low income niche of the market
- Assist in the creation of Aimag (rural administrative units) Coordinating Committees (ACC) to facilitate the process of Aimag MF and SME strategy development; hold conferences and summits
- Organize a series of special meetings of donor and government funded programs, adopting the key principles of MF and assisting the traditional MFIs in entering into the financial mainstream
- Organize a series of special meetings of non-governmental organizations to clarify their role in poverty alleviation through working in the MF sphere with the participation of policy and decision makers

##### *Pakistan*

- Provide active input on the Steering Committee for the regional summit

##### *Philippines*

- Create a conducive environment for sustainable microfinance
- Draft relevant legislation with stakeholders' advice and participation; submit draft of legislation and lobby for passage of bill
- Launch the adoption of Microfinance Performance Standards
- Assess the IYM at the end of 2005 and identify further steps

*Countries without National Committees*

*Kazakhstan*

- Adopt a state program on microcredit for 2005-2007 (responsibility of the Government of Kazakhstan)
- Formulate a Programme for Microcredit Development (responsibility of the Committee for Support of Small Business Agency on Microcredit and the Ministry of Agriculture)
- Adopt laws to promote access to financial services

## Latin America Overview

Since the launch of the UN International Year of Microcredit (IYM), 16 Latin American countries have joined the global effort to build inclusive financial sectors in order to create real and accessible financial possibilities for the poor. Nine Latin American countries have established National Committees in charge of planning and conducting diverse activities to foster the microfinance sector. The Latin American National Committees have support from all key players in the microfinance sector. Seven out of nine Latin American National Committees involve the government, financial institutions, private non-financial institutions, multilateral organizations and civil society in the National Committees' activities.

In order to fill information gaps (Goal 1) on the microfinance sector, Latin American countries have been conducting diverse research studies on microfinance and microcredit themes. For instance, Argentina is conducting research on best microfinance practices in the country; Chile is researching and developing a position paper on access to microfinance and the infrastructural obstacles; El Salvador is conducting ongoing studies of the micro and small business climate and on supply and demand of microcredit services. The National Committees are organizing diverse microfinance training activities. Argentina is holding training workshops on sustainability practices and institutionalization of microfinance activity; Ecuador is organizing training sessions for certificating trainers on microcredit management and on microcredit strategic plan development. Some countries are working on filling information gaps by creating databases on microfinance information and establishing links between MFIs and sectors that are involved in microfinance. Ecuador is building a strategic partnership to strengthen current ties between MFIs in regional institutions, Bolivia is organizing an MFI convention and Colombia is building a quantitative database on the country's microfinance sector. Nicaragua is organizing two research competitions: Nicaraguan Journalist Award on microfinance research and Microfinance Investigation Award directed at university students.

Latin American National Committees have been very active in raising public awareness (Goal 2) about the International Year of Microcredit. To achieve this goal, countries are organizing a series of conferences, seminars and forums on microfinance themes with the participation of national and international experts in the field. For instance, Bolivia is holding a conference titled "Creation of inclusive financial sectors for low income people." Ecuador is organizing forums in four different Ecuadorian regions with the objective of analyzing the microfinance services in the country, and Argentina is holding an exhibition on successful projects financed through microcredit loans. Mexico is holding seminars and forums on a number of topics including the social aspects of microfinance and the empowerment of women. Many Latin American National Committees are making use of the national media and print material to publicly disseminate information and increase the scope of activities planned for the year: Chile issued a press release announcing the launch of the National Committee during the Microcredit Summit Week in Chile; Nicaragua is implementing a media campaign by publishing monthly publications, a quarterly microfinance bulletin and a twice-yearly magazine; El Salvador is building a communication campaign by establishing a special Press Committee (in addition to the National Committee), which will be in charge of promoting the activities of the year and introducing research studies and informative documents. Nicaragua is also organizing a painting competition for children of microfinance clients with the purpose of encouraging them to paint the way they perceive microfinance has changed their lives.

Some countries are building commitment (Goal 3) by involving other sectors of society, participating in forums and analyzing economic and financial policies to create a legal framework that encourages microfinance development. For instance, Bolivia is working to involve other organizations (MFIs, NGOs, and multilateral organizations) and is participating in the microenterprise forum of the International Development Bank. Ecuador is analyzing its regulatory and legal framework on microfinance services. Mexico is launching approximately 10 new MFI branches.

## International Year of Microcredit Achievements – Latin America

### Goal 1: Filling Information Gaps

#### *Countries with National Committees*

##### *Argentina*

- Analyze best practices
- Hold forums and workshops on the following topics: sustainability practices, institutionalization of microfinance activity, a national workshop to introduce activities and evaluate goals and a national forum to present activities

##### *Bolivia*

- Organize an MFI convention in which each institution has to present ideas on themes directed to optimize microcredit services
- Promote a meeting of same sector MFI clients

##### *Chile*

- Research and develop a position paper on access to microfinance in Chile and the infrastructural obstacles preventing it
- Invite the head of the Microenterprise Unit at the IDB in Washington to hold a moderated Master's level discussion on the global microfinance market

##### *Colombia*

- Create a national database on the microfinance sector

##### *Ecuador*

- Build a partnership strategy in order to strengthen the current partnership between UNDP and MFIs in Ecuador (special emphasis will be given to partnerships among regional and local institutions)
- Hold training sessions for future trainers on microcredit management and the development of strategic plans

##### *El Salvador*

- Conduct an ongoing study of the micro and small business sector
- Conduct a research study on supply and demand of microcredit services in El Salvador

##### *Nicaragua*

- Organize two research competitions: Nicaraguan Journalist Award on microfinance research and Microfinance Investigation Award directed at university students

## **Goal 2: Raising Public Awareness**

### *Countries with National Committees*

#### *Argentina*

- Hold an exhibition on successful projects financed through microcredit loans
- Hold a national workshop to present the activities held during the IYM

#### *Bolivia*

- Organize discussion panels
- Organize workshops directed at university students and professional associations (boards)
- Hold an international conference on the "Creation of inclusive financial sectors for low income people"

#### *Chile*

- Develop country-wide recommendations for improved microfinance in Chile to be released by the end of 2005
- Issue a press release announcing the launch of the National Committee during the week of Microcredit Summit in Chile

#### *Ecuador*

- Hold a launching event with the participation of the major Ecuadorian experts in the microfinance field
- Hold a forum in four different Ecuadorian regions with the objective of analyzing microfinance services in Ecuador

#### *El Salvador*

- Launch Year of Microcredit website
- Design a brochure on the Year of Microcredit
- Organize a communications strategy to promote the activities of the year through different media and social venues
- Launch microcredit program in the City of Sonsonate within the framework of a UNDP project
- Organize a forum on popular credit with the participation of national and international panelists
- Present a conference on microcredit as an essential factor for the financial system

#### *Mexico*

- Host forums and seminars including the international microfinance forum, forum on microfinance and development, second forum on the empowerment of women, and a seminar on the social aspects of microfinance
- Hold a microfinance event in the city of Puebla
- Organize an MFI meeting in the city of Leon, Guanajuato

#### *Nicaragua*

- Implement a media campaign with monthly publications, quarterly microfinance bulletins and a bi-annual magazine
- Hold press conference to announce the activities for the year and invite donors and MFIs to join the effort
- Publish the activities for the year and success stories of microfinance entrepreneurs in the main newspapers
- Hold a Central American Microfinance Forum on financial opportunities for women and an exhibition on microfinance products
- Organize a painting competition for children of microfinance clients with the purpose of encouraging them to paint the way they perceive microfinance has changed their lives
- Issue a postal stamp allusive to the International Year of Microcredit

### *Countries without National Committees*

#### *Panama*

- Provide support for the Junior International Chamber (JCI), an NGO that is planning national workshops for Young Entrepreneurs within the IYM and MDG frameworks
- Develop “Community Entrepreneurs Developing Workshops”

#### *Venezuela*

- Issue a special publication on microcredit
- Promote microfinance through the banking sector and mass media (visual and print)

## **Goal 3: Building Commitment**

### *Countries with National Committees*

#### *Bolivia*

- Work to involve other organizations (MFIs, NGOs, and multilateral organizations) and emphasize the importance of microcredit
- Participate in the microenterprise forum of the International Development Bank

#### *Ecuador*

- Analyze the regulatory and legal framework for microfinance services

#### *Mexico*

- Launch approximately 10 new MFIs branches

### *Countries without National Committees*

#### *Grenada*

- Integrate all government-controlled microcredit finance institutions under one central umbrella body

#### *Guatemala*

- Create a work plan in conjunction with the Ministry of the Economy and the Vice Ministry of Micro, Small and Mid-size Businesses

#### *Venezuela*

- Increase small loans from the government to vulnerable groups, including indigenous communities
- Promote the State Industrial Bank’s \$65 million endowment for financing microcredit in 2005

## Middle East/Eastern Europe Overview

Seventeen countries have signed onto the International Year of Microcredit from the Middle East/Eastern Europe, and seven countries have formed National Committees. Representation on the National Committees includes members from varied sectors including the governments, central banks, bank associations, non-profits/NGOs, private sector, multilateral agencies, and academia.

Countries in this region are working to fill information gaps (Goal 1). For instance, Moldova is organizing seminars, round tables, and training sessions at the local and national levels in order to inform stakeholders (such as commercial banks, microfinance institutions, and small business agencies) about the current financing system and the conditions for crediting and lending. Moldova's National Committee is also editing a set of methodical and instructive titles (publications) in the realm of microfinance. Bosnia and Herzegovina are holding round tables to assess the need for new laws on microlending. Turkey is producing policy papers on non-banking finance institutions. Poland is conducting a feasibility study - an analysis of demand and supply in the current financial market and is hosting a forum on microfinance policy for the countries of the former Soviet Union.

The National Committees are also taking active steps raise public awareness (Goal 2) by implementing informative programs and organizing conferences and seminars. Bulgaria is organizing seminars on the non-banking sector and the legal issues surrounding MFIs. Its National Committee is launching an information campaign targeting businesses as well as an awareness campaign aimed at the public; this includes publishing newsletters, partnering with the media and establishing a website. Bulgaria is also developing a Microentrepreneur of the Year award while Poland is holding conferences as well as a few competitions with awards. Moldova is implementing a national awareness program, including publishing national and local press columns, distributing informative materials and broadcasting thematic discussions. Turkey is organizing a national conference and thematic workshops on microfinance in addition to opening a Microfinance Information Centre. Hungary is also hosting conferences on microfinance and IYM and is seeking media opportunities. Iran is holding two half-day workshops to promote and clarify the concept of "inclusiveness" with respect to microcredit. Bosnia and Herzegovina are exhibiting microfinance client products in Sarajevo and are inviting Mohammed Yunus, founder of the Grameen Bank, to speak.

Building Commitment (Goal 3) is on the agendas of the National Committees of this region. This includes bringing about legislative change and establishing a strategy to last beyond 2005. Bulgaria, Moldova and Turkey are assessing their legislative regulations (with plans to draft or amend) to create an environment that is conducive for MFIs and their clients. Hungary and Moldova are developing plans to build relevant networks and mobilize resources. The National Committees are also implementing projects that will outlast the IYM. Hungary is creating a strategy surrounding microcredit and is working to engage private sector. Moldova is developing the National Program of Strategic Development, including a section that provides concrete measures for development of microfinance as a tool for poverty reduction. Turkey is establishing the Turkey Grameen microfinance project and starting a Microfinance Sector Development Project to facilitate microfinance discussions and to draft legislation on MFIs. In addition, it is engaging in microfinance product development. Bulgaria is also focused on the long term and is hosting a conference in November of 2005 to assess the results of the IYM and to develop future steps for action.

## International Year of Microcredit Achievements – Middle East/Eastern Europe

### Goal 1: Filling Information Gaps

#### *Countries with National Committees*

##### *Bosnia and Herzegovina*

- Hold round tables to assess the need for new laws on microlending; held such round tables in March 2005 with participants from microcredit organizations and other relevant actors

##### *Moldova*

- Organize seminars, trainings and round tables at the national and local levels involving representatives of the commercial banks, microfinance institutions and small business agencies in order to inform them about the current financing system and the conditions for crediting and lending
- Organize round tables entitled "Micro-financing – an element of small business support infrastructure" within the framework of the "Small Business Expo-2005"
- Develop a training program for microfinancing framework participants
- Edit a set of methodical and instructive titles (publications) within the realm of microfinance

##### *Poland*

- Conduct a feasibility study – an analysis of demand and supply in the current financial market in Poland (July)
- Host a forum on microfinance policy for the countries of the former Soviet Union (in October in Krakow, Poland); the forum is for high ranking politicians, decision makers, and national bank representatives of the Newly Independent States who are involved in developing legal acts for MFIs

##### *Turkey*

- Produce policy papers on non-banking finance institutions

## Goal 2: Raising Public Awareness

### *Countries with National Committees*

#### *Bosnia and Herzegovina*

- Introduce the microfinance sector in the country and its achievements at a Formal Assembly of UMFO (Association of Microfinance Organizations) and present impact study results by the World Bank (April 2005)
- Organize exhibit to present client products in Sarajevo
- Invite Mohammed Yunus, founder of the Grameen Bank, to speak

#### *Bulgaria*

- Organize a series of seminars focused on the current trends in the development of the non-banking microfinance sector and on the legal issues concerning the work of the microcredit organizations
- Conduct an information campaign on the benefits and challenges of microfinance and the opportunities that it presents to small and medium-sized businesses
- Establish a Microentrepreneur of the year award
- Implement a public awareness campaign through launching an Internet site, publishing newsletters and establishing media partnership to ensure regular information flow about the activities of MFIs

#### *Hungary*

- Seek media and public relations opportunities targeting microcredit in Hungary
- Hold conferences on microcredit and IYM

#### *Iran*

- Implement the Social Mobilization and Microcredit Program (SAPAP)
- Hold two half day workshops to promote and clarify the concept of “inclusiveness” with respect to microcredit

#### *Moldova*

- Implement a national awareness program on the IYM
- Place information on microfinance and IYM activities on the web site of the Ministry of Economy
- Publish national and local press columns related to the International Year of Microcredit 2005
- Broadcast thematic discussions of the representatives from central and local public authorities on both the national and local radio/TV stations
- Publish and distribute informative materials on the activities of microfinance organizations
- Organize an international forum on the IYM

#### *Poland*

- Hold relevant events; in May 2005, the VIII Conference of Microlending Institutions in Central and Eastern Europe & the New Independent States was held in Bucharest (called “The Success of Microfinance: how to capitalize on the success and maximize benefits for the clients?”)
- Hold press conferences; in early June, a press conference was held to observe the 10th anniversary of Micro Fund, the largest microlending organization in Poland, established by the Polish-American Enterprise Fund (PAEF)
- Host a competition for the best cartoon promoting microlending (organized by Rural Development Foundation with sponsorship from UNDP/Poland and ING Bank Śląski) (June)
- Hold a competition and award ceremony on “The Best Product of MicroFirm 2005” (December); Prof. Leszek Balcerowicz, President of National Bank of Poland, will attend as a Guest of Honour
- Participate in the GMA Programme

*Turkey*

- Organize a national conference
- Open a Microfinance Information Centre
- Hold thematic workshops on Microfinance

**Goal 3: Building Commitment**

*Countries with National Committees*

*Bulgaria*

- Hold round tables to address the need for legislative regulations that are conducive for the work of MFIs
- Convene a national conference in November 2005 to assess results and activities throughout the year and to highlight the main areas for future actions
- Continue activities beyond the formal end of the IYM and advocate for more attention to the risks that microbusinesses will face after Bulgaria's accession to the European Union

*Hungary*

- Develop a PPP strategy for the microcredit project in Hungary and engage private companies in this strategy
- Develop plans to build relevant networks and mobilize resources

*Moldova*

- Develop the National Program of Strategic Development, including a section that provides concrete measures for development of microfinance as a tool for poverty reduction
- Establish a network of regional funds to support small business as well as some loan guarantee organizations
- Create more access to favorable (incentive) credits and other financial services
- Adopt a unique policy for the commercial banks providing that the value of the pledges do not exceed the amount of credit plus the interest rate
- Decrease the interest rate and increase the term of crediting, especially at the stage of small and medium enterprises' establishment
- Direct the technical assistance provided to the Republic of Moldova to offering financial support for investment projects in the small business domain
- Enlarge access for the country's small and medium enterprises to the small business support services, as well as to the financial market, that is not covered by the commercial banks services
- Harmonize the legislative and normative framework to create optimal conditions for the microfinance system; enhance legislation to support the activities of MFIs and small and medium enterprises (draft or amend appropriate legislation, for instance: law concerning microcrediting of small business enterprises; law concerning citizens' savings and loan associations; and tax code)

*Turkey*

- Propose a bill on microfinance institutions
- Establish the Turkey Grameen microfinance project
- Start a Microfinance Sector Development Project to facilitate microfinance discussions and to draft legislation on MFIs
- Engage in microfinance product development

## OECD Countries Overview

Eighteen OECD are participating in activities promoting the International Year of Microcredit. Among the 18 countries, 11 have formed National Committees and two more are in the process of doing so. National Committee membership is diverse and inclusive; eight Committees include government ministries, seven include NGOs, and six incorporate the private sector. Bank associations, academia, and multilateral organizations are also represented. OECD countries that have not formed National Committees have actively participated in the Year by holding government-sponsored symposiums and promoting public information campaigns.

OECD countries are planning or implementing a variety of measures in pursuit of Goal 1, filling information gaps. Canada is training its CIDA staff in microfinance; Italy is formulating recommendations for the government's initiatives on poverty reduction through microcredit; and an Australian parliamentary committee is discussing microcredit issues. Spain and the United Kingdom are targeting professionals by publishing reference manuals on microfinance.

National Committees and associated organizations in OECD countries are working toward Goal 2, increasing public awareness, by utilizing a variety of media. Australia, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the United States and the Netherlands are creating operational websites promoting the Year. Belgium is launching a national campaign integrating TV and radio spots, brochures and a website; the country is also reaching beyond its borders by partnering with a West African country. Promoting microcredit domestically, Canada is planning a Week of Microfinance for Fall 2005, and Australia is issuing "pre-stamped" envelopes featuring the Year's website address. Symposia, conferences, and meetings on microcredit are being held in a number of countries, including France, Germany, Luxembourg, Spain, Switzerland and the United States. To encourage public participation, Italy is developing national awards for achievement in microfinance and Canada is sponsoring a contest aimed at ages 18-30 entitled "Building the Future Now!"

Several OECD countries are pursuing international avenues to implement Goal 3, building commitment. Numerous countries are acting on both the domestic and international fronts. The Netherlands is working to build partnerships among Dutch institutions and their counterparts in the developing world. Germany is planning a conference with an international organization to foster effective partnerships; it is also planning high-level meetings with the public and private sectors. France's Ministry of Foreign Affairs is continuing to fortify microfinance sectors in countries emerging from crises. Luxembourg is pursuing a rural finance project aimed at increasing synergy among European microfinance actors. Other OECD countries have focused on securing domestic commitments. In Canada, Oikocredit is encouraging employees to invest in microcredit finance instruments. Spain is holding a national convention offering networking opportunities for borrowers, featuring a discussion of the future of microcredit in that country.

## International Year of Microcredit Achievements – OECD Countries

### Goal 1: Filling Information Gaps

#### *Countries with National Committees*

##### *Australia*

- Hold a meeting with Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade at Parliament House

##### *Canada*

- Train CIDA staff in microfinance

##### *Germany*

- Focus on linkages between microfinance and economic development

##### *Italy*

- Develop recommendations for the Italian government regarding microfinance development for poverty reduction

##### *Luxembourg*

- Establish a multi-stakeholder National Coordinating Committee aimed at harmonizing microfinance at the European level, raising awareness in the banking sector and financing the agricultural sector

##### *Netherlands*

- Provide transfer of know-how and expertise

##### *Spain*

- Publish the “White Book” (microfinance reference manual) for professionals in microfinance
- Publish articles; article written for FOSB called “The Experience of a Savings Bank to Combat Financial Exclusion” published in magazines
- Create a microcredit model in conjunction with PhD work on behalf of the CECA and FUNCAS

##### *United Kingdom*

- Host relevant events; held a symposium at HSBC’s London bank with 50 MFIs and NGOs that resulted in “Blue Book on Building an Inclusive Financial Sector for Development”

#### *Countries without National Committees*

##### *Norway*

- Carry out a microfinance peer review process focusing on aid effectiveness and harmonization, guidelines on financial services and financial case studies (responsibility of CGAP association)

##### *Sweden*

- Develop Microfinance Guidelines (responsibility of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA))
- Make funds available for the Swedish Microfinance Network (SIDA)
- Carry out a microfinance peer review process focusing on aid effectiveness and harmonization, guidelines on financial services and financial case studies (responsibility of CGAP association)

## Goal 2: Raising Public Awareness

### *Countries with National Committees*

#### *Australia*

- Implement a public relations campaign through publications such as Focus Magazine (the magazine of Australia's overseas aid program), a poster series, curriculum materials for AusAID's Global Education Program, and AusAID's website (all managed by AusAID's Public Affairs Group)
- Create pre-stamped envelopes with IYM website address and bookmarks with website and logo
- Launch community based education activities (i.e. displays and seminars)

#### *Belgium*

- Establish a partnership with a West African Country
- Implement a public awareness campaign through TV, radio, brochures and a website

#### *Canada*

- Organize conferences and technical seminars
- Declare a Week of Microfinance in Fall 2005
- Make available an information brochure on microcredit, specifically for the IYM (responsibility of Oikocredit International)
- Issue a press release to raise awareness among the media regarding microfinance and DID's activities in this field
- Hold a "Building the Future Now!" contest (ages 18-30)
- Distribute IYM news releases with regular mailings, invite speakers and encourage church participation (responsibility of Oikocredit International)

#### *France*

- Hold a research and exchange of ideas symposium with six lectures, each followed by a debate, to be concluded with a research synthesis

#### *Germany*

- Hold an exhibition on microfinance
- Develop a website to increase public awareness

#### *Italy*

- Organize a microcredit public awareness campaign
- Implement a working group on public awareness that will research and define Italy's microfinance path
- Establish "National Awards for Microfinance Innovative Production"
- Develop a website to increase public awareness

#### *Luxembourg*

- Inventory competences and sector priorities and present these themes at a workshop in 2005
- Organize a 2-3 day conference including national party representatives, one minister in charge of microfinance, 10 representatives from multilateral institutions, five representatives from the IMF, and five experts
- Inform about risks and constraints of microfinance through seminars, conferences, a website and newsletters (responsibility of ONDG)

#### *Netherlands*

- Attract new participants to the microfinance sector
- Develop a website to increase public awareness

*Spain*

- Work with the government to increase awareness of microcredit (Focal Group is acting as National Committee)
- Launch university activities (discussions, roundtables, and conferences) for students to learn about microcredit

*United States*

- Coordinate and share information through a website
- Organize a conference in New York in July 2005

*Countries without National Committees*

*Austria*

- Conduct an information campaign on the benefits and challenges of microfinance and the opportunities that it presents to small and medium-sized businesses
- Host relevant events; held a Symposium on Microfinance in Vienna in June 2005, attended by representatives from government, World Bank and UNDP

*Switzerland*

- Hold an SDC symposium on the financial sector contributions to attaining the MDGs
- Focus SDC's Annual Conference and an issue of its magazine *One World* on microfinance

### **Goal 3: Building Commitment**

#### *Countries with National Committees*

##### *Australia*

- Hold business breakfasts

##### *Canada*

- Establish a partnership with ING-the Netherlands to encourage employee investments in microcredit finance instruments (responsibility of Oikocredit International)

##### *France*

- Contribute to further strengthening the microfinance sector in countries emerging from crises (responsibility of Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

##### *Germany*

- Hold joint high-level events involving relevant implementing agencies, the Federal Ministries and banking institutions
- Hold a meeting with an international organization: New Partnerships for Innovation in Microfinance

##### *Italy*

- Promote involvement of several sectors (UN, MFIs, NGOs, general public, private sector, etc.)

##### *Luxembourg*

- Implement a rural finance project that fosters synergy and efficiency between European microfinance actors and publishes studies, press releases and a printed newsletter highlighting themes

##### *Netherlands*

- Strengthen partnerships between institutions within the Netherlands as well as partnerships between institutions in developing countries

##### *Spain*

- Host a national convention with a presentation about the future of microcredit in Spain
- Hold a microcredit meeting for borrowers to network within the community
- Hold roundtable discussions

#### *Countries without National Committees*

##### *Austria*

- Continue to strengthen MFIs in developing countries through expanding outreach, improving services and efficiency as well as supporting local, regional and international microfinance networks