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# Newsletter LEARN MICROFIN

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## Knowledge Management Forum named **LEARN MICROFIN** launched

Rural Microfinance Development Centre Ltd. (RMDC), Kathmandu, Nepal and the Institute of Microfinance (InM), Dhaka, Bangladesh, agreed to initiate the process of establishing the **SOUTH ASIAN MICROFINANCE FORUM ON KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT (LEARN MICROFIN)**, one of the outcomes of the Regional Conference on *“Microfinance in SAARC Countries: Sharing Lessons & Way Forward”*, held during November 30 - December 1, 2010 in Kathmandu, Nepal, to facilitate continuous interactions among the microfinance practitioners, researchers, policy makers, and academicians of the region comprising: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. All the interested MFIs of the SAARC countries are encouraged to be the member of this **LEARN MICROFIN** Forum.

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## Way Forward

- Build cooperation and coordination among MFIs in the region
- Sensitizing MFIs on risk management
- Deepening the microfinance services down to the poorest and the destitute
- Developing second generation of microfinance clients
- Financing unemployed youth in the rural areas
- Increasing the use of ICT in MFI programs for transparency and good governance
- Advocacy for conducive policy and regulatory environment
- Institutional strengthening and capacity building of MFIs by conducting research and studies on key issues
- Further exploring the feasibility of establishing Microfinance Banks serving the poor
- Micro-insurance should be explored as a possible integral part of the mainstream microfinance to safeguard the interest of the borrowers

## Regional Conference on *‘Microfinance in SAARC Countries: Sharing Lessons & Way Forward’*



Regional Conference on *“Microfinance in SAARC Countries: Sharing Lessons and Way Forward”* was held from 30 November to 1 December 2010 in Kathmandu, Nepal with the vision to look forward and to point out the right directions of microfinance for the future. The conference was jointly organized by the Institute of Microfinance (InM), Bangladesh and Rural Microfinance Development Centre (RMDC), Nepal in cooperation with the SAARC Secretariat. The conference was aimed at disseminating the findings of the InM study on *‘State of Microfinance in South Asia’* among the stakeholders in microfinance sector throughout the SAARC region.

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## Action Agenda

### Establishing a virtual platform for Knowledge Management

The Regional Conference indicated the need for regular exchange of ideas and experiences to materialize the ultimate objective of going towards a poverty free world and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. In order to facilitate such interactions among the practitioners and stakeholders, InM and RMDC agreed to initiate a web portal involving the relevant partners in the region with a view to sharing lessons, knowledge, thoughts, ideas, practices and experiences not only from South Asia but also from other places around the globe.

### Regional Dialogues

Regional dialogues on the new developments in the sector and experience sharing would be convened in every two years upon consultation with relevant organizations.

## Microfinance in SAARC Countries: Sharing Lessons & Way Forward

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First Regional Conference on “Microfinance in SAARC Countries: Sharing Lessons and Way Forward” held during Nov 30- Dec 01, 2009 at Kathmandu, Nepal.

The conference, derived from InM research on state of microfinance in different regions, was jointly organized by the Institute of Microfinance (InM) and Rural Microfinance Development Centre (RMDC) of Nepal in cooperation with the SAARC Secretariat. Honorable Finance Minister of Nepal Mr. Surendra Pandey inaugurated the conference as the Chief Guest.

The Secretary General of SAARC H.E. Dr. Sheel Kant Sharma and the Governor of Nepal Rastra Bank Dr. Yuba Raj Khatiwada were present as Guests of Honor. Dr. Wahiduddin Mahmud, Chairman, InM presided over the inaugural session.

Dr. Md. Mosleh Uddin Sadeque, Interim Executive Director, InM and Mr. Shankar Man Shrestha, Chief Executive Officer, RMDC also addressed the audience.

More than 170 participants from the SAARC member countries took part in the two-day long conference, where renowned personalities from eight countries presented their respective country reports.

At the beginning of the conference, Secretary General of SAARC H.E. Dr. Sheel Kant Sharma launched the Overview Report, “Microfinance in SAARC Countries: Overview Report 2010”, coordinated and edited by Dr. Rashid Faruqee, Visiting Fellow, InM.



Honorable Finance Minister of Nepal Mr. Surendra Pandey inaugurated the conference as the Chief Guest.



The Secretary General of SAARC H.E. Dr. Sheel Kant Sharma launched the Overview Report 2010 entitled ‘Microfinance in SAARC Countries’



The Chair of the session, Dr. Wahiduddin Mahmud delivering his speech

## Knowledge Management Forum named LEARN MICROFIN launched

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(from right to left), Mr. Shankar Man Shrestha, Dr. M. Amanullah (MAK) Khan, Dr. Wahiduddin Mahmud and Dr. Md. Mosleh Uddin Sadeque are seen in the pre-conference PRESS MEET



In the last session of the conference, Lessons Learnt & Way Forward, (from right to left) Dr. Rashid Faruquee, Keynote Speaker, is seen along with the panel discussants Mr. Sanjay Sinha (MD, M-CRIL and Founder, EDA Rural Systems, India), Dr. Quazi Mesbahuddin Ahmed (MD, PKSF, Bangladesh), Ms. Simeen Mahmud (Lead Researcher, BRAC Development Institute, Bangladesh), Mr. Shankar Man Shrestha, Chair, Mr. Anura Atapattu (Microfinance Consultant, Sri Lanka), Dr. Harihar Dev Pant (Executive Chairman, Nirdhan Utthan Bank Ltd., Nepal), Dr. Saeed Ahmed (Head of Microfinance, State Bank of Pakistan, Pakistan), and Dr. Puspa Shrestha (Chairman, Women Support Cooperative Ltd., Nepal)

In fact, the organizing institutes expressed their interest to launch such a knowledge management forum in the pre-conference *PRESS MEET* held on November 29, 2010 in Kathmandu, Nepal, where Dr. Wahiduddin Mahmud, Chairman, InM, Dr. Md. Mosleh Uddin Sadeque, Interim Executive Director, InM, Mr. Shankar Man Shrestha, CEO, RMDC, and Dr. M. Amanullah (MAK) Khan, International Team Leader, PROSPER – PCU, DFID – Bangladesh were present.

The Chief Executives (Chief Executive officers, Executive Directors or Chair) of the Microfinance institutions representing SAARC member states also accorded with the idea, which were formally presented as one of the declarations in the *WAY FORWARD & ACTION AGENDA* of the Conference.

**LEARN MICROFIN** will be a forum to advance research, knowledge management, capacity building, and advocacy in the area of microfinance. The forum will work in close collaboration with the SAARC Secretariat and various microfinance related think-tanks, academic institutions, advocacy groups, and also with the NGO network organizations involved in microfinance operations in the SAARC Region as well as International arena.

## LEARN MICROFIN Promoters



**The Institute of Microfinance (InM)** is an independent non-profit organization established primarily to meet the research and training needs of national as well as of global microcredit programs. InM was initiated and promoted by Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) in November, 2006. It is principally funded by UK Aid, Department for International Development (DFID) through its Promoting Financial Services for Poverty Reduction Program (PROSPER).

InM has an excellent team of professionals in research, training and knowledge management. The regular core research group comprises well coordinated and dedicated researchers with extraordinary expertise. Besides, InM draws research scholars from reputed universities across the world.

The major services that InM provides are research on poverty, microfinance, enterprise development, livelihood promotion, climate change, impact assessment, evaluation as well as training on capacity building, training of trainers, scheduled & tailor made courses, training evaluation, training need assessment, curriculum & module development, consultancy and program management.



**The Rural Microfinance Development Centre Limited (RMDC)** is an apex wholesale lending organization of microfinance in Nepal. It also works for the promotion and development of the microfinance sector in the country. It was registered on October, 1998 as a public limited company under the Companies Act, 1996 with a mandate to operate as a development within the framework of the Development Banking Act (BFIA), 2006.

The vision of RMDC is to emerge as a financially viable, operationally sustainable, and professionally efficient apex institution of microfinance in the country, while the mission is to reach out to the largest number of the poor and deprived households with appropriate microfinance services to enable them to realize their untapped potentials of development through the network of partner MFIs.

RMDC has been collaborating and partnering with various national and international agencies for promotion and development of microfinance. It has also been organizing training, studies, seminar and conferences in collaboration with institutions such as ADB, Microcredit summit, Grameen Trust, Grameen Bank, IDF, InM, EDA, AusAID. It looks forward to cooperating and collaborating with national and international institutions that intend to help and strengthen microfinance industry in Nepal.

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