

December 19, 2016

## 9TH BIENNIAL MFI CONFERENCE FOCUSES ON INCLUSIVE FINANCE INNOVATION

9<sup>th</sup> Biennial Microfinance Conference was held in Jigjiga from November 23 to 26, 2016 in collaboration with Somali MFI S.C.

The Association of Ethiopian Microfinance Institutions (AEMFI), a national network of Ethiopian Microfinance institutions, in collaboration with Somali Microfinance Institution S.C. organized its 9<sup>th</sup> Biennial conference from Wednesday November 23- Saturday November 26, 2016 in Jigjiga, Ethiopia. Over 120 people from the inclusive finance arena specifically, executive directors and board representatives of MFIs, MSE and SME promotion, Banks, local as well as foreign universities, international organizations, entrepreneurship promotion organizations, technology companies, consultancy companies, financial cooperative experts, lease companies and development partners from across

the country and the continent attended the four-day event. There were also higher officials from the National Bank of Ethiopia, Federal Cooperative Agency, Federal Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency, Somali Regional State Office and REST.



Group picture: Delegates of the 9<sup>th</sup> biennial conference

Each year, the conference selects a different theme. The theme chosen this year was “Innovation to Promote Inclusive Finance for a Sustainable Development in Ethiopia”.



Inclusive Finance is a wide concept that takes into consideration diverse types of financial products. It is about incorporating different categories of people into the financial pool. Inclusive Finance is an important method of bringing an all-inclusive and sustainable development by enhancing the availability of financial services.

Ato Teklewoini Assefa, Board Chairperson, AEMFI



There is a strong political will and commitment from the government side to support the expansion of inclusive finance in Ethiopia. The recent government decision to allocate a 10 billion Birr revolving fund to address youth unemployment is an excellent example. While giving due recognition and thanks for current supports, I would like to request that the government, donors and

other development partners provide additional, tangible capacity building interventions to better promote inclusive finance, and best implement the recently drafted **National Inclusive Finance Strategy** says Ato Teklewoini Assefa, Board Chairman of AEMFI while making a welcome address during the conference.

In line with this, the overall objective of the conference was framed to bring together different stakeholders including microfinance practitioners, policy makers, researchers, academicians, development partners and technical service providers to discuss the future expansion of inclusive finance to expand the opportunities for all in Ethiopia.

The welcome speech was made by Ms.Suad Ahmed, Vice president of Somali Regional State. Paper presenters this year are from the National Bank of Ethiopia, Agricultural Transformation Agency, Commercial Bank of Ethiopia, Microfinance Institution, Addis Ababa University, Federal Cooperative Agency, Entrepreneurship Development Centre, MercyCorps, Consultancy companies, AEMFI and a staff from Sudan University. The presenters came up with various types of current issues linked to inclusive finance such as: MFI development and governance, SACCOs, entrepreneurship, women and MFIs, Greening the financial services, Financial Inclusion, Lease Financing and access to credit. In addition to this, presentations about in-house projects were made by MercyCorps, Care-Ethiopia, Enterprise Partners, BASIX Consulting and Technology Services Limited, Fern software, ET Inclusive Finance Technologies and Hello cash. On the third day of the conference, the MFIs presented about their institution's performance, innovation, challenge and the way forward.

Moreover, the various presentation topics and delegates from different organizations enabled participants to share and exchange ideas from one another. Valuable comments and suggestions were provided in-house to the speakers and this are expected to sharpen the papers further creating fruitful and knowledgeable combination of articles for the conference proceeding. This conference enabled the participants to deepen their knowledge of Inclusive Finance. The contribution of concepts and thoughts from different sectors will serve as an input to broaden the idea of Inclusive finance paving the way for development through inclusive finance.

Taking into consideration the content of the theme and the importance the event has for the growth of the microfinance industry, several partners sponsored this event. Among them were Somali MFI S.C., BASIX, Care Ethiopia, Commercial Bank of Ethiopia, Entrepreneurship Development Center (EDC), UNDP, Fern Software, Belcash, IFAD, Irish League of Credit Union Foundation (ILCU), Mercy Corps, MOSS ICT and Wegagen Bank.



School established by a client



A hellocash agent

Attendees visited Somali MFI branch, clients and a hellocash agent that works with Somali MFI S.C. in the final day of the conference. The visit put a clear picture of what is being done Somali

MFI and the status of agent banking.

The Association of Ethiopian Microfinance Institutions strongly believes in engaging all stakeholders of the inclusive finance agenda, keeping up with best practices and creating new ideas into the promotion of inclusive finance. AEMFI is one of the strong sustainable associations in the world. The association has been active in sharing its experiences to many networks and practitioners from various countries. It has been providing-value adding capacity building support to MFIs, including financial cooperatives. On top of serving as the voice of the industry, it has been very active in implementing evidence-based advocacy and publishing the performance of MFIs on regular basis. The association has been directly involved in implementing government and donor support programs such as RUFIP, HABP and the five-year micro and small enterprise development strategy. It has developed a transparent system to work with donors, National Bank of Ethiopia and other stakeholders. Although AEMFI has been involved in research and training from its inception, it has currently established the Ethiopian Inclusive Finance Training and Research Institute to conduct policy-oriented research and provide short and long-term training in the area of inclusive finance. The new training and research institute of AEMFI has completed its residential building for trainees and has the objective of being a center of excellence for southern and eastern Africa in the future.

Additional information can be found in our website at <http://aemfi-ethiopia.org/>

