

Citi Foundation



**For Immediate Release
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**Citi Foundation Launches \$11.2 Million International Microfinance Program
in Partnership with the SEEP Network**

New York, NY – The Citi Foundation today announced a three-year US\$11.2 million international grant program, in partnership with the SEEP Network to advance the integration of microfinance into the mainstream economies of developing countries. The Citi Network Strengthening Program will increase the ability of 12 major microfinance networks and their members to develop products and services that meet the needs of their clients. In addition, the program aims to enhance the industry’s infrastructure, introduce higher standards of management and governance, and promote the vital role of microfinance in providing the poor with access to financial services.

This program builds on the Citi Foundation’s long-standing support of the microfinance industry. Over the past decade, the Citi Foundation has contributed nearly US\$60 million in funding to support 250 microfinance institutions, microfinance networks and microenterprise programs in 55 countries.

Pam Flaherty, President and CEO, Citi Foundation said, “We are very pleased to launch the Citi Network Strengthening Program this year. The microfinance industry currently serves approximately 113 million poor individuals, however, there are still 1.7 billion individuals earning less than \$2 per day. Reaching scale and meeting client demand is currently one of the greatest challenges facing microfinance institutions. The objective of our program is to address that challenge by increasing the capacity of microfinance networks in specific geographies, helping them to expand their operations and better serve the needs of the poor.”

Bob Annibale, the head of the Citi Microfinance Group and a board member of the SEEP Network added, “The outstanding regional and local microfinance networks selected to participate in this program are committed to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of their MFI members, promoting performance standards, and contributing to the growth of the microfinance industry overall. As local knowledge centers that share information, learnings and best practices in support of the microfinance industry, we are confident that their participation in the Citi Network Strengthening Program will result in expanded outreach to microfinance clients in the countries they serve.”

Additionally, Bill Tucker, Executive Director, SEEP Network, noted that, “SEEP is privileged to partner with the Citi Foundation to implement the Citi Network Strengthening Program. SEEP supports microfinance networks throughout the world, and this important program will provide the networks with opportunities to confirm their current goals, enhance their core capabilities, learn from and orient network peers in other countries who are also participating in this program, and, ultimately, improve services to micro-entrepreneurs through its member organizations.”

Following are the twelve networks participating in the Citi Network Strengthening Program. In total they represent approximately 60 countries, over 1,300 MFIs and microfinance organization members, and more than 19 million clients.

- **Asia Pacific:** Banking With the Poor Network, Asia Pacific; China Association for Microfinance; Microfinance Council of the Philippines; and Sa-Dhan, India
- **EMEA:** Association of Microfinance Institutions of Uganda; Microfinance Centre for Central & Eastern Europe & New Independent States; Pakistan Microfinance Network; Russian Microfinance Center; and Sanabel, Middle East
- **The Americas:** ProDesarrollo, Mexico; Red Financiera Rural, Ecuador; and REDCAMIF, Central America

The Citi Network Strengthening Program will include:

- A comprehensive assessment of the network's capacity to meet the needs of its members;
- An in-depth report on the microfinance industry in the respective country or region;
- Strategic, business and implementation plans which may include embracing new technologies, advocating for interest rate liberalization, establishment of ratings agencies and credit bureaus, creating local debt and equity ratings funds that raise domestic capital, and developing links between the commercial finance and microfinance sectors.

In addition, Citi Microfinance, a business unit, supports the microfinance sector through commercial activities that build scale, lower costs and introduce new products. Citi Microfinance currently has business relationships with more than 70 MFIs in over 35 countries in Asia, Latin America, Africa, Eastern Europe and the Middle East, as well as global microfinance networks, specialized fund managers, and investors.

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The Citi Foundation is committed to enhancing economic opportunities for underserved individuals and families in the communities where we work throughout the world. Globally, the Citi Foundation is focusing its giving on Microfinance and Microentrepreneurship, which helps individuals become economically self-sufficient; Small and Growing Businesses, leading to economic expansion and job creation; Education, which prepares young people for personal and professional success; Financial Education, which helps individuals make informed financial decisions; and the Environment with a focus on sustainable enterprises that generate jobs and stimulate economic growth while preserving the environment. Additional information can be found at www.citigroupfoundation.org.

SEEP Network

Since its inception in 1985, the SEEP Network has been a leader in the development of the international microfinance and enterprise development fields. SEEP's 74 institutional members are committed to reducing poverty, working in over 140 countries and reaching more than 25 million microentrepreneurs (70% of whom are women). SEEP convenes key stakeholders to generate, document and share best practices through inclusive and productive dialogue among practitioners. SEEP is committed to connecting microenterprise practitioners in a global learning community. For more information, please visit us at www.seepnetwork.org.