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**SPM Peer Learning Forum
Tools Workshop Series**

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Century Park, Manila**

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Microfinance Council of the
Philippines, Inc.



MFCouncilPHL



Mindanao networks join MCPI

The Microfinance Council of the Philippines, Inc. (MCPI) welcomed two Mindanao networks to its roster of members.

Mindanao Microfinance Council

In the 1990s, the microfinance industry landscape in Mindanao was changing and confronted with challenges such as escalating competition among microfinance practitioners; an unprecedented demand for quality and value on the part of clients; and growing pressure from government regulation. Microfinance practitioners in Mindanao agreed to work together and establish an organization that will support the common interests of microfinance institutions (MFIs) in Mindanao; become their voice in the microfinance industry; and promote growth of and cooperation among MFIs to achieve desired results of poverty alleviation efforts of the Mindanao microfinance industry.

The idea of forming a council was initially broached in a meeting by rural banks engaged in microfinance in the Caraga region – the Caraga Rural Bankers' Federation (CARBAF). It gained momentum when the initiative was supported by the People's Credit and Finance Corporation (PCFC) and other MFIs in Mindanao, particularly those participating under the Rural Microenterprise Finance Project (RMFP). Thus, on November 21, 2003, representatives from 32 Mindanao MFIs gathered in Davao City to map out plans for the creation of the

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MCPI, Smart Campaign train Smart Assessors

The Microfinance Council of the Philippines, Inc. and The Smart Campaign partnered to conduct the three-day Smart Assessors Training last February 24 to 26 in Manila, Philippines.

The Smart Assessors Training course aimed to create a pool of assessors who can evaluate the performance of microfinance institutions against the Client Protection Principles (CPP) embodied by the SMART Campaign.

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Participants pose with the facilitators after receiving certificates of completion at the end of the three-day Smart Assessors Training.

network. The Mindanao Microfinance Council (MMC) was formally registered with the Philippine Securities and Exchange Commission on March 25, 2004 and its first officers were elected and sworn in on March 30, 2004 during the 2004 Mindanao Microfinance Summit in Davao City.



True to its mission “to strengthen member institutions in delivering effective financial and capability development services to the poor and to

develop them into effective catalysts of economic and social development of Mindanao”, MMC regularly provides training and education, and technical assistance to its 36 member organizations in Western, Northern, Eastern, and Southern Mindanao. It also organizes conferences and meetings of MFIs, conducts research on microfinance, and disseminates best practices in the industry.

Last March 27, MMC celebrated its 10th anniversary. In those 10 years and through the work it has done, it is recognized as one of the most active microfinance associations in the Philippines.

MASS-SPECC Cooperative Development Center

The 1950s was a period of severe economic hardship and political

uncertainty. To address these problems, leaders in the provinces of Bukidnon, Misamis Oriental and Cagayan de Oro City decided to organize cooperatives that provided credit and savings to their members in the communities. A shared mission prompted these cooperatives to bond and, in 1962, the Misamis Oriental-Bukidnon-Camiguin Federation of Cooperatives (MBC) was formed.

Realizing the need to strengthen the educational component of community-type cooperatives, the leaders of MBC institutionalized a cooperative training center - the Southern Philippines Educational Cooperative Center (SPECC), Inc. After it was established in 1966, SPECC’s Pre-Membership Educational Program (PMEP) was brought to different parts of Mindanao because of its success. SPECC also began training more staff that would bring the program to the Visayas and Bicol regions. Soon after, SPECC started offering other courses for cooperatives; and led the formation of provincial cooperative federations all over Mindanao that extended SPECC’s services in the provinces.

These activities gave a venue for cooperative leaders to discuss industry problems and solutions. It was during these meetings that leaders representing 11 provincial federations in Mindanao decided to form the Mindanao Cooperative Alliance (MCA). MCA changed its name to Mindanao Alliance of Self-help Societies (MASS), Inc.; and its legal character to a non-stock, non-profit organization; during the martial law years.



While MASS established technical programs, SPECC also expanded its education program for the benefit of the cooperatives. In 1984, MASS and SPECC were integrated to maximize the organizational, financial, physical, and human resources of both organizations. MASS-SPECC, through various partnerships and in solidarity with the cooperatives in Mindanao, continues to make available training programs for cooperatives; and hold dialogues on issues affecting the industry and Mindanao development.

MCPI, SMART CAMPAIGN...FROM PAGE 1

Nineteen microfinance professionals from networks, rating agencies, and social investment funds or consulting companies in Asia participated in the training that introduced them to tools and indicators used in the assessment process. The training also equipped participants with skills and techniques in conducting client protection assessments with financial institutions. The participants were also given the opportunity to apply their learning by carrying out an assessment of a sample microfinance institution.

The Smart Campaign Training of Assessors is the first in the Philippines. It is part of the Campaign’s plan of expanding its local presence by developing a pool of Assessors that will be tapped to take part in the Campaign’s future hub in the Southeast Asia region.

The training course was facilitated by Dr. Hema Bansal, Smart Campaign’s India Manager; and Mr. Amit Gupta, the Campaign’s Principal Advisor. To learn more about Smart Campaign, follow this link www.smartcampaign.org.

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Citi Microentrepreneurship Awards hails economic triumph of winners in community town halls across the country



(From left) Citi Philippines CEO Batara Sianturi toasts the husband and wife team of George and Necy Ty for building a homegrown brand - Higher Ground. They are joined by Rizal Microbank President Ma. Lourdes Pineda, Citi Corporate Affairs Director Aneth Ng-Lim, and Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Microfinance Consultant Eduardo Jimenez.

On its 11th year, the Citi Microentrepreneurship Awards (CMA) capped another successful nationwide search for outstanding microeconomic heroes with community town halls held across the country.

A partnership among Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), Microfinance Council of the Philippines, Inc. (MCPI) and Citi Philippines, this year's CMA awarded seven individuals for their exemplary leadership in microenterprise. They are:

- **Enrico Fojas** from Hagonoy, Bulacan, who turned a PhP5,000 loan into Cookie Mill Feeds, and bested over 100 nominations to win the 2013 National Award.
- **Marylyn Cleto**, a former overseas worker who came home and used her meagre savings to start a soft brooms manufacturing business won the CMA Luzon Award.
- **Regina Paller**, a survivor of Typhoon Frank in 2008 won the CMA Visayas Award for setting up the successful Ken-ken Talabahan diner in Passi City, Iloilo. While Paller's business also suffered from the devastation wrought by Typhoon Yolanda, she continues to persevere for her family and community members.
- **Necy Ann Ty**, recipient of the CMA Mindanao Award, established Higher Ground together with her husband, which caters to the mountaineering market in Davao City.
- **Rosario Caparas**, winner of the Special Award for Innovation, for introducing new variants of flavoured buchi (glutinous rice balls) to Laguna.
- **Maria Gudilla Argabio** won the Special Award for Agri Micro-Business for transforming a 3-hectare plot of farmland in Negros Occidental to a thriving agri-business that sells sugarcane while providing livelihood to 50 farmers.
- **Jennilyn Antonio**, a CMA Award Winner from 2006, grew a backyard peanut butter making business into a PhP30 million enterprise. Jennilyn now supplies peanut butter to major bakeries under the "EHJE'S" brand while exporting her product to Singapore and Japan. For her remarkable business growth and track record of sustainability, she won the Special Award for Microenterprise Leadership.

Funded by Citi Foundation, the CMA has recognized 93 outstanding microentrepreneurs since its introduction in 2002.

Officials of BSP, MCPI and Citi led the town halls in partnership with the microfinance institutions supporting the winners. Although the winners were recognized in a national awarding ceremony last December 3, the town hall gatherings became an opportunity for the winners' families, friends, and community to participate in the celebrations. The town hall celebrations introduced in 2012

have proven to be a successful model for promoting the gains and benefits of microfinance to local communities.

Community Role Models

The first town hall gathering was held in February 11 in Hagonoy, Bulacan for National Winner Enrico Fojas. A client of the Urban Program for Livelihood Finance and Training (UPLIFT) Philippines, Inc., Fojas shared the beginnings of his Cookie Mill Feeds and how it has grown to earn an estimated PhP2.7 million annually and employing 21 people.

Fojas makes use of discarded bread and transformed these into natural feeds for the growing livestock industry in Bulacan, and showcased that success in business comes not only through hard work, but through innovation and identifying the right opportunities.

Special Awardee for Innovation Rosario Caparas' flavored buchi story was also highlighted in a celebratory town hall in her honor in Binan, Laguna last February 17. As Buchi King continues to expand its market, Rosario also continues to receive business support and spiritual guidance from the CCT Savings and Credit Cooperative where she inspired other members of her microfinance institution to also focus on other businesses through hard work and innovation. Citi Corporate Affairs Director Aneth Ng-Lim attended the affair, together with Citi volunteers Cecille Fonacier and Muffet Flores, who visited Caparas' place of business as part of the screening process and supported her nomination.

The town halls culminated in a small ceremony held in Davao City, honoring the accomplishments of Necy Ann Ty, regional award winner for Mindanao. Joining Ty in this affair were Citi Philippines CEO Batara Sianturi as well as Aneth Lim, BSP microfinance consultant Eduardo Jimenez and MCPI Executive Director Allan Sicat.

Ty found her success in the manufacturing of gear and apparel of mountaineering enthusiasts. Recognizing the potential of Davao's mountaineering market, she started with an initial capital PhP3,500 and a sewing machine borrowed from her mother-in-law. She began the brand Higher Ground together with her husband and due to good marketing and distribution strategies, the Tys were able to grow to four branches covering the entire region Mindanao. Her microfinance institution, Rizal Microbank, provides financial support for the expansion of the business, which is now competing with products imported from other countries such as China. Rizal Microbank President Ma. Lourdes Pineda also attended the town hall to show her personal and professional support for the Tys.

Today's Heroes

Addressing the intimate crowd in Davao City, Sianturi said, "Microentrepreneurs and microenterprises are considered to be the backbone of the Philippine economy. This is why it is important for us to recognize their outstanding achievements as well as the invaluable support provided to them by their microfinance institutions. Citi strongly believes in the power that both microfinance and microentrepreneurship have in alleviating poverty and providing a sustainable solution to economic progress for all. Microfinance can transform ordinary people into symbols of hope and the CMA is our way of recognizing these modern economic heroes for their courage and desire to overcome obstacles."

Aside from cash prizes, awardees undergo entrepreneurship training at the Citi Microenterprise Development Center at Bayan Academy and are given microinsurance coverage. They also become members of the CMA Alumni Network - a winners' circle organized to promote experience sharing, networking, and continuous learning among the alumni. ♦