Covid-19 Coping Strategies for the Microfinance Ecosystem

Time: 14:00 India, 15:00 Myanmar, 15:30 Cambodia, Indonesia/Java, 16:30 Philippines, Singapore
8:30 GMT
Duration: 60 minutes

Webinar to exchange experiences and practices in coping with economic disruption caused by the global pandemic

Background

As the events surrounding COVID-19 unfold, the M-CRIL team is committed to delivering thoughtful analysis and resources that will help the microfinance ecosystem to deal more effectively with the current uncertainty and disruption. We must help financial inclusion providers deliver services sustainably and at the same time enable providers to assist their clients cope better with the financial stress in these challenging times.

To facilitate this, M-CRIL proposes to conduct a series of webinars to bring together the microfinance ecosystem stakeholders in the Asia region with the objective of discussing and sharing experience and practice/s that stakeholders can learn from, modify and adapt to their respective country contexts.
Agenda for the first webinar, 02 April 2020

In recent days, Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) across Asia have put out messages reiterating their commitment to support their clients, in this unprecedented global crisis. In this context the issues at hand are:

- what can be done to mitigate the health crisis turning into a financial and food crisis for low income households being serviced by them?
- apart from initiatives around credit and forbearance on loan repayments, what are the other initiatives that providers can consider rolling out to help their clients and for their own business continuity?

Responses could range from informational health advisory to technical advice on managing cash flows to digital initiatives that can address social distancing issues, and other innovative ideas.

The microfinance ecosystem is bracing itself for a tough operational period ahead with lock-downs and social distancing advisories issued by local administrations. Working at minimal/no field capacity, MFIs will have to adopt innovative operational and communication methods to manage costs, maintain viability whilst also supporting clients through an economic slowdown. This webinar will facilitate an exchange of views on

- What has been tried, and
- How to innovate to cope with various aspects of the crisis

Topics to be covered in the discussion include

**Managing Operations and Helping Customers**
- Innovation/s that can enable business continuity in this unique COVID-19 situation
- Alternative communication methods for interaction with customers
- New digital initiatives adopted
- Managing financial relief to clients
- Maintaining communication with staff, staff welfare initiatives
- Preserving liquidity to survive
- Simple pointers for clients

**Issues for representation to Funders and Regulators/Governments**
- A moratorium/rescheduling of existing debt funding
- Concessional credit lines from development banks
- Tax holidays
- Other forms of regulatory forbearance
Output of the Webinar

M-CRIL will summarise the key discussion points/takeaways in a note to be circulated to all participants and published more widely, within a week of the webinar. The note will provide:

- Knowledge sharing and guidance to the MFI ecosystem
- Innovate and co-develop best practices
- Act as the basis for representations/dialogue with regulators and/or Governments for seeking mitigating measures in this unprecedented scenario

Follow up webinars will be organised on emerging issues as the crisis evolves