
WORKSHOP: GROUP-BASED FINANCIAL SERVICES FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION

We invite submissions of working papers on all topics related to group-based financial services in Africa and beyond for a two-days workshop taking place on September 21-22, 2023 at the University of Agder (Norway). The workshop will focus on savings groups, ROSCAs, self-help groups and other related informal financial co-operatives. Confirmed speakers are: Alfredo Burlando (University of Oregon), Jeffrey Ashe (Columbia University)

Over the last decades, great efforts have been made to include more vulnerable households into formal financial systems due in large part to the expansion of microfinance services. Despite these advancements, informal finance, like traditional ROSCAs and ASCAs as well as more organized savings groups or VSLAs, continue to be the most predominant financial institution in rural Africa and beyond. This workshop aims to bring together influential established scholars and promising junior scholars in the field of group-based financial services. Together we aim to gain a better understanding of group-based financial services and develop avenues for future research.

This two-days workshop will be an opportunity to present working papers and foster discussion and exchange of research ideas. Participation in the workshop will be limited to 25 participants to create an exclusive and stimulating environment where everyone is invited to freely share ideas and research insights. The workshop will take place in-person at the University of Agder at the Center for Research on Social Enterprises and Microfinance (CERSEM), in beautiful Norway.

CERSEM is a leading research center in academic publications related to group-based micro-finance with 3 professors and 7 PhD students dedicated to this topic.

Practical information

Confirmed Speakers: Alfredo Burlando (University of Oregon), Jeffrey Ashe (Columbia University)

Practitioners participation: One goal of the workshop is to discuss new opportunities for partnership and data collection with field practitioners. In this perspective, Celeste De la Huerta, program manager for Strømme Foundation, will present their program promoting the creation of new savings groups in Africa. Anne-Marie Van Swinderen, from L-IFT, will present FINBIT, a new tool to collect data on entrepreneurs and household financial transactions. And Moira Eknes from CARE International, initiator of the VSLA model, will give an overview of the evolution of the savings groups model in the last three decades.

Organizing committee: Anaëlle Petre (University of Agder), Roy Mersland (University of Agder) & Bert D'Espallier (KU Leuven)

Logistics:

When? 21-22 September 2023

Where? University of Agder, Kristiansand, Norway

Contact: atpetre@uia.no

Participants will have to pay for their own travels and accommodation.

Paper submission:

Submission deadline: 15 June 2023

Acceptance notification: 30 July 2023

Full working papers should be submitted to: atpetre@uia.no