EDITORIAL FROM JEAN-LUC PERRON

Current events in microfinance and social business include much news, both good and bad. In the first category falls the participation of more than 3000 people in the Convergences 2015 Forum; an account of this is given elsewhere. In the second category belongs the announcement of Professor Yunus’ resignation from his position of managing director of Grameen Bank, which he founded in 1983. Grameen Bank, with its 8.3 million active borrowers, 97% of whom are women, is a reference for all those who want to give the poor back their dignity. It is also a reference because of its original method of governance: more than 96% of the bank’s capital is held by the female borrowers, who elect nine of the 12 members of the board of directors. Professor Yunus’ resignation is the outcome of a destabilisation and smear campaign launched in late November by a documentary on Norwegian television. Even though the investigative commission named by the government of Bangladesh proved these accusations to be false, the authorities of Bangladesh have decided to dismiss him under the pretext of his age. The board of directors of the Grameen Crédit Agricole Microfinance Foundation, of which Professor Yunus is an eminent member, renews its message of solidarity and friendship in the very difficult circumstances he is going through. It strongly expresses its desire for Grameen Bank to be able to continue its mission to help poor families in all the villages of Bangladesh, true to the principles inspired by its founder, with respect of its rules of governance, and safe from any interference.

The board of directors of Grameen Crédit Agricole Microfinance Foundation, its managing director and its executive team stand by Professor Yunus to continue the Foundation’s mission in accordance with its mandate: to fight poverty in developing countries through microfinance and social business.

Pr. Yunus at the Foundation on April 28th

It was an honor for Grameen Crédit Agricole Foundation’s team to welcome on April 28th, in its premises, Pr. Yunus, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 2006 and founder of the grameen Bank. It was the opportunity to introduce Prof.Yunus to the activities and projects of the Foundation, in particular in Social Business. During two hours, Prof Yunus could exchange on this theme with senior managers and specialists of Crédit Agricole Group, at the initiative of the Foundation. The experts of Amundi and Ideam in the fields of socially responsible and investments and employees savings schemes, top managers of Banque de Gestion Privée d'Indosuez (BGPI), Crédit Agricole Luxembourg and LCL Private Banking, as well as representatives of Crédit Agricole Cheuvreux, CA-CIB, Crédit Agricole SA and CACEIS bank took part in this exchange; Hans reitz, the founder of the Grameen Creative Lab in Germany, also participated in this high-level exchange.

The Paris Appeal for responsible microfinance

At a time when microfinance is undergoing a crisis and when drifts are to be deplored in certain countries, it was necessary to evoke the fundamentals of microfinance.

At the request of the Steering Committee of Convergence 2015, a platform that brings together major French microfinance and social business operators, the Foundation Managing Director, Jean-Luc Perron, has prepared the Paris Appeal for responsible microfinance that was presented at the closing session of the Forum Convergence 2015, at the Paris' City Hall, on May 5. The text of this Appeal is proposed for signature to all those who support microfinance as a development tool for the poor. It is available on the website www.appeldeparis.org.

The “Paris Appeal”, aimed at the general public, professionals and policymakers, reminds the core values of the sector and suggests a series of actions to improve its practices and its impact.
The Foundation is committed to agricultural microinsurance

Within the framework of the development of its activities, the Foundation decided to intervene in the field of agricultural microinsurance. Indeed, microinsurance is a very complementary tool for microcredit to meet the needs of those excluded from financial services in developing countries. Compared to the objectives of the Foundation to finance the agricultural sector, agricultural microinsurance seems to be a real alternative for small farmers, even if it is true that this type of insurance has to cope with complex covariant risks to model and therefore requires specific expertise. That is why the Foundation will partner with Pacifica (the insurance company of Crédit Agricole) and specialised operators.

In this context, Thérèse SANDMARK joined the Foundation last April, as agricultural microinsurance programme officer. It is with great pleasure that we welcome Thérèse, who has worked extensively in East Africa, on behalf of the Swedish Cooperative Centre.

New investments

On April 11, 2011, Grameen Crédit Agricole Microfinance Foundation granted a syndicated loan in local currency to the Indonesian institution MBK Ventura. The Foundation will grant, over a 3-year period, in Indonesian rupiah, an amount equivalent to EUR 800,000. At the same time, ASN Novib Fund, managed by Triple Jump, will lend an amount equivalent to EUR 500,000 in local currency. This represents a loan totalling EUR 1.3 million for MBK Ventura.

The loan is granted in partnership with Triple Jump, a fund and technical assistance manager in the microfinance field based in Amsterdam, that works with a philosophy similar to that of the Foundation and with whom a joint mission was organised on February 2011 to support MBK Ventura.

Other contracts were signed with organisations in Cambodia, the Philippines and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

FOCUS PARTNERS

Forum Convergences 2015

The Foundation's action falls within the perspectives of the United Nations Development Objectives, especially the fight against poverty and the eradication of malnutrition. Convergence 2015 was created in 2008 at the initiative of ACTED (3rd French NGO) to mobilise all the French microfinance and social entrepreneurship actors in order for these objectives to be achieved by 2015. From the very beginning, the Foundation is associated with the initiatives of Convergences 2015 and it participates actively in its working groups.

For the third consecutive year, the Foundation was a partner of the Convergences 2015 Forum, held at the City Hall of Paris, from 3 to 5 May 2011. The organisers of the 4th edition of this forum can be proud of having been able to mobilise more than 3,000 participants. The foundation was among 200 speakers at the Forum and actively participated in a number of debates, including the workshop on the funding of rural and agricultural areas, the one on the implementation of social impact assessment and the workshop on investment in social enterprises.