

Fernando

Handbook of Microfinance

Interdisciplinary Scholar-Practitioner Perspectives

Microfinance is a major development tool in less-developed countries, and thus of vital concern for all contemporary studies of the social theory of development. The promises of microfinance extend far beyond increased income generation in developing countries, and its products and goals are diverse: health, housing, water and sanitation, education, climate change mitigation, and empowerment of women. Microfinance Studies is an emerging field of research and teaching, and it is now clear that the perspectives on, and performance evaluations of, microfinance differ among disciplines, including economics, history, political science, gender studies, etc., and among individual scholars and practitioners (for example from NGO, government and donor agency backgrounds). These differences illustrate the wide gaps between 'knowledge produced for understanding' and 'knowledge produced for action'—forms of knowing that have up until now been very separate, both in terms of their approach, and in the venues in which they are published. There is a pressing need for a comprehensive volume that brings together different disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and scholar and practitioner perspectives on microfinance. The current volume aims to bridge this gap. Missing in the current literature are discussions of the ways microfinance impinges on broader social, economic and political processes. This Handbook contains contributions from both scholars and practitioners, with a particular emphasis on exploring the way different domains of knowledge inform each other. It is divided into sections including a glossary and an appendix of information about important agencies involved in microfinance. The conceptual rigour and empirical richness of these chapters will spring from cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural perspectives. Well-structured for reference, the Handbook of Microfinance is accessible to a broad audience of general readers, and also useful to scholars and practitioners.

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