

Crossing Borders – Microcredit Grows!

After success with microcredit programs through Los Niños in Tijuana and Mexicali, Mexico, Via International has expanded initiatives to the U.S. border region by collaborating with other organizations and expanding the relationship with University of San Diego's Center for Community Service-Learning.

What is Microfinance?

mi-cro-fi-nance noun \ 'mī-krō-,fī-' nan(t)s
"Microfinance is the practice of extending small loans to individual borrowers who have been traditionally denied access to credit." *As defined by University of San Diego, Community Service Learning Department and San Diego Microenterprise Project, www.sandiego.edu/csl/microfinance/index.php*

A popular anti-poverty strategy for building self-reliance, microfinance provides support for low-income individuals to start or grow small businesses.



San Diego Microcredit group members build their own businesses (Photo by University of San Diego and Center for Service Learning)

With small loans and a network of support, individuals can help their families by generating additional income. Common microenterprises include making or selling products such as clothing, jewelry, food, or crafts.

The San Diego Microenterprise Coalition

Working with USD's Center for Community Service Learning, Via International and ACCESS, a job development organization, are supporting small loans to be disbursed through La Maestra, a community health organization. The coalition is collaborating to outreach to very low-income women who have no access to credit. The project was created to promote economic recovery, encourage experiential learning, and facilitate active community involvement. By supporting microcredit loan groups in the San Diego region, the program is designed to develop micro-entrepreneurs in order to address poverty in communities and populations hit hard by difficult economic times. The first loans were disbursed in the fall of 2009.

Get Involved! Help women with no access to credit start or grow small businesses. Contact us at 619-426-9110

- Become a microcredit donor
- Volunteer to share your business or marketing expertise
- Support Via International and the coalition's microcredit initiatives

Microcredit Spotlight

"The money from the microfinance group is just the beginning. When we have our meetings, I get new ideas, receive important information, and create lasting relationships."
– Dora, construction business founder and microfinance loan recipient.

"This model, which empowers people to become entrepreneurial and creates a network of support with other individuals in their communities, can really make a difference."

Carlos, MBA student and USD Microfinance Club member.



San Diego microcredit loan recipient with her handmade purses (Photo by University of San Diego and Center for Service Learning)

"Having my own business gives me a sense of independence that I want to pass on to my daughters." -- Laticia, jewelry designer and microfinance loan recipient

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