Creating Social Good through Debts:
Critical Discourse Analysis of Borrower
Representations at Kiva

Dragomir Dimitrov
# Table of Contents

**Abstract**

**Introduction**
- Background and Motivation for Research
- Limitations
- Communication for Development

**Literature Review and Theoretical Background**
- Microfinance, Representations and Subjectivity
- The Challenges of Microfinance as a Vehicle for Neoliberalism
- Market Capitalism and Poverty Marketization
- Microfinance, Kiva and the Intercultural Contact
- Representations of “Majority” vs. “Developed”
- Participatory Communication, Language and Representations

**Methodology**
- Critical Discourse Analysis
- The Implication of Visual Research for Critical Discourse Analysis
- Postcolonialism

**Analysis**
- Kiva’s Approach to Microfinance
- The Role of Microfinance in Development: a Poverty’s Panacea?
- Fictionalization of Humanitarianism
- Case Study
- The Sample: Review and Results
- The Interplay of Text and Visual Representations
- Family Status Tags and Gender as a Decision-Making Criteria
- The Financial Status of the Loan as an Encouraging Factor for Lenders
- Semiotics of Borrowers’ Representations
- Stereotypes through Participatory Communication

**Conclusion**

**References**

**Appendix**
Abstract

Kiva is an international non-governmental organization that competes for funds with others in the field. As a consequence, some special relationships and dependencies are formed. This paper argues that among the most significant ones are the representations of borrowers on Kiva’s online lending platform. The work hypothesizes that while Kiva has the potential to create a friendly environment where both participatory and problem-solving style of communication is encouraged, the organization turns out to be a development factor with international importance which inevitably influences the stereotyping of individuals from the Global South. In that sense, the representations of people from the Global South on Kiva’s online platform seem to continue a well-established tradition of Western-centrism, thus admitting further stereotyping also of the audience from the Global North.

Through the lens of postcolonial theory and critical discourse analysis as research methods, the research questions and the hypotheses of the paper aim at contributing to the current debates on the existing power relations between the Global South and North by providing information on: how are people in need represented through profiles of single parents as borrowers on Kiva’s website; do representations of single parents contribute to the process of creating stereotypes; what is the role of microfinance in development.

By using the most recent data from Kiva’s online lending platform, the work aims to present evidence on the stereotypization of representations of a specific sample group of borrowers – individual single parents. While taking into consideration Kiva’s ambition towards creating cooperation based on reciprocal dignity, the paper provides some possible interpretations of the way individuals in need are portrayed. It aims to come to the aid of individuals who have interests in the development field, who may want to rethink fundraising strategies involving both visual and textual representations of people, especially in the field of online lending.

Keywords: Kiva; online lending; microfinance; representations; individual single parents; borrowers; Global South; critical discourse analysis; postcolonialism;
Introduction

Kiva is an international nonprofit organization (INGO) which claims to help in reducing poverty by linking people by means of lending. Its mission is to sustain "people looking to create a better future for themselves, their families and their communities” (Kiva 2018, About us). The primary issues concerning Kiva are communicated through the following four mottos on their online platform: (1) "It's a loan, not a donation”, (2) "You choose where to make an impact”, (3) "Pushing the boundaries of a loan”, (4) “Lifting one, to lift many” (Kiva 2018, About us). Kiva’s organizational culture trusts that "lending alongside thousands of others is one of the most powerful and sustainable ways to create economic and social good” (Kiva 2018, About us). Moreover, its organizational values embrace the belief that lending "creates a partnership of mutual dignity and makes it easy to touch more lives with the same dollar” (Kiva 2018, About us).

Once donors register for funding a loan, they then may get repaid at a certain point. Afterwards, if they wish to, they can proceed with funding other loans with that same amount of money. According to Kiva’s vision, lenders can provide funds for friends in their communities, for individuals "halfway around the world (and for many, it’s both)", and by doing so, lenders can "play a special part in someone else's story” (Kiva 2018, About us). Kiva seems to position itself as a pioneering organization in crowdfunding while embracing innovations in the process of meeting everyone’s unique lending needs – regardless of whether they are "reinventing” microfinance through "flexible terms, supporting community-wide projects or lowering costs to borrowers” they are "always testing and learning” (Kiva 2018, About us). Kiva’s core values imply that individuals in need of financial assistance should be given the opportunity to grow a business which would also create opportunities for other people, thus shaping the future of communities on a large scale, for the better.

Kiva is one of the international non-governmental organizations that compete for funds with other INGOs. The big variety of borrower groups from different parts of the world on Kiva’s online platform is remarkable in itself and is worth considering for the study. However, the paper will take into consideration a particular sample group of borrowers which is deemed most representative. Kiva’s online lending platform can be compared
to a one-stop shop seeking to offer financial help services to people mainly from the Global South which is achieved thanks to the good will of individuals and organizations mainly from the Global North. As a consequence of this interaction, some special relationships and dependencies are formed when microfinance activities are being applied through Kiva’s platform. From a development point of view, the most significant ones are the representations of the borrowers at Kiva. Therefore, with representations of individual single parents as a case study, the paper focuses on the following interconnected research questions:

- How are people in need represented through profiles of single parents as borrowers on Kiva’s website?
- Do representations of single parents contribute to the process of creating stereotypes?
- What is the role of microfinance in development?

It is herein hypothesized that Kiva, as both an INGO and an online lending platform, is a factor with international importance which influences the stereotyping of people from the Global South. As a consequence to this main hypothesis, it is further hypothesized that the organization creates a friendly environment which encourages the participatory style of communication, where the use of certain media approaches provoke interaction that gives the impression of being controlled not by elites or governments, but controlled by the community.

A second hypothesis is that representations of people from the Global South on the Kiva.org site continue the tradition of Western-centrism, thus providing ground for further stereotyping also of the audience from the Global North.

Both hypotheses appear to be testable through qualitative methods (i.e. critical discourse analysis and postcolonial theory) for analysis of forms of representation including photographs and texts where individuals from the Global South are portrayed at Kiva.

This research paper aims to examine the role of representations of single parents from the Global South publicly available on Kiva’s online platform. More specifically, how these representations of the sample of the study contribute to the process of creating stereotypes about the oppressed ones. As such forms of representations connect with
the Western-centrism, I hypothesize that there is a necessity for these representations to be decoded for the viewers from the Global North.

In the context of development, the differences between Global South and Global North are reinforced with the help of representations (Baaz, 2005). As proposed by Dogra (2012), the process of "feminization" and "de-masculinisation" of the Global South aims to create a distinction based on "feminine" and "masculine" characteristics of the Global South and the Global North. Therefore, the study argues that, as a consequence of this, a very specific relationship between the Global North and the Global South is being formed. This relationship is maintained with the help of representations which, thanks to the relation between signs, things and concepts, and according to Hall (2013), are the consequence of creating meaning in language. But as meaning is fixed by people, it is people who firmly encode the meaning so that it becomes natural and inevitable. Together with representational systems such as linguistics, the meaning of representations is communicated and constructed by social actors of a specific cultural conceptual system, and that meaning is characterized by its interpretative side (Hall 2013). In other words, by referring to Foucault, instead of language, meaning can be created through discourse – a text or a representation has its own meaning within a specific practice of discourse (Hall 2013).

Background and Motivation for Research

My first experience with Kiva was during my employment at Hewlett-Packard. At that time, Kiva was something both new and unusual. Thanks to the initiative called "Matter to a Million", the company I worked for provided a small amount of money ($25) to each employee to lend to his or her preferred cause on the Kiva.org website (Kiva 2014, Press Release). Therefore, I had the opportunity to choose my preferred project and lend money to people in need thanks to this partnership between both organizations. It was 2014 and I was excited about the fact that I’m given the chance to lend somebody a hand, even if I was assisting a person with someone else’s money!

Together with the pride in helping others, there was also the sense of doing something wrong and the feeling of guilt in thinking that I could "save" someone’s life by lending some $25 which in their turn will allow me to feel important, while also "purchasing" the right to just forget about that person, guilt-free. Indeed, some studies suggest that
giving makes giving people happier. But what about the happiness of those whose living conditions depend on someone’s goodwill?

Limitations

The scope of the paper is to analyze a collection of applications for loans on the Kiva.org website. The sample for the study are the actual representations of the profiles of a specific group of borrowers – individual single parents. The specific written style of these loan applications, together with photographs of the potential borrowers, constitute a characteristic approach to representing borrowers thought fiction. On one hand, this study considers and applies knowledge from the already available literature on representations of the Global South in the context of microfinance as a development tool for reducing poverty. On the other hand, by adopting qualitative research methodology, it provides both an alternative and a personal point of view on the issues related to such representations. Qualitative research may offer a unique perspective on an issue; however, it relies on data from previous works such as the ones which are deemed major, outlined in the Literature Review section.

As borrower groups on Kiva.org may consist of different borrowers at any given point in time, the analysis of these representations may be seen as strongly subjective. Because of the dynamic nature of Kiva’s online platform, these representations can have some specific characteristics at one time and some other specific features at a later time. As soon as a loan is funded or is expired, it is being archived thus making place for a newer application. This aspect could make some conclusions questionable if these same conclusions are to be applied on other (newer) loan applications available after the end of the study.

Additionally, the knowledge available from previous studies on the matter is inevitably connected to this paper. In contrast to other written works which concern representations of women in the context of microfinance, the analysis of photographs and texts from online loan applications of individual single parents (mothers and fathers) on Kiva.org is the basic source of empirical data for this study. It is argued that the groups of borrowers on Kiva’s online platform are formed and based on lenders’ interests and expectations. Therefore, these groups can change from time to time depending on their fundraising potential for success. Kiva maintains a very
rigorous archive (data snapshots) where every single fundraising initiative can be found – this archived repository can be used if it is necessary to check any already outdated (archived) information. In that sense, even if a loan application is no longer normally accessible on the site, it can still be found and checked online.

Communication for Development

The research questions and hypotheses herein aim at contributing to the current debates on the existing power relations between the Global South and North. These power relations are analyzed through the lens of postcolonial, postdevelopment, and neoliberal theories, in the context of Communication for Development. Considering the traditions of each of these schools of thoughts, the study takes into account the incorporation of an interpersonal style of communication (i.e. the inclusive model that Kiva implements) which is achieved mainly through digital technologies. The representations of people are "supplied" (i.e. provided) by a corporate-style INGO (i.e. Kiva), and the analysis of these representations seeks to respond to the vigorous effort to provide a more obvious representation of the voices of the Global South, to encourage a more participatory approach to development in general.

The relation of the study to Communication for Development consist in the fact that this field also presumes understanding people’s lives including their cultural and social norms, their perspective and their values. The two-way process of sharing knowledge and ideas through empowering people with communication tools works towards making people’s lives better. With both their advantages and disadvantages, borrowers’ representations on Kiva.org are the consequence of such effort to improve quality of life for individuals from the Global South. The World Wide Web, together with the communication opportunities it provides, has the potential to better both social and economic life of people. Microfinance is part of this innovative approach to development and it can be seen as an innovative approach to development.

On one hand, following the ideas of Pieters (2010) it can be assumed that Kiva’s role in development is part of the capitalist model which is deemed to create social and economic marginalization. In this regard, Pieters supports the idea that, in development policies, the application of information and communication technologies (information-for-development or ICT4D) "follows ideas of digital divide and cyber
apartheid” (Pieterse 2010, p. 166). On the other hand, the positive power of ICT contributes positively to the process of stimulating development (including literacy, economic education, etc.) in the Global South.

Kiva is important from a Communication for Development point of view, because from a broader perspective, and despite wide criticism, this specific INGO has been influential in encouraging interpersonal networks to shift from theory to continued practice. This in turn, even with its own potential faults (such as justifying development projects for the sole presumably lucrative purpose), seems to be in accordance with the desire to (1) louden the voice of "majority world”, to (2) make participation significantly easier, and to (3) further social reform. Such developmental objectives inevitably imply that communication is often structured by power relations, and this is where Communication for Development comes into play – it aims to address such problematic relations between the Global South and the Global North. And in addition, to study how, from a corporate (neoliberalist) perspective to development, representations of the Global South are seen as potential areas that are worth exploring while imposing Western practices such as modernization.

On the other hand, the mediatized representations of borrowers on Kiva’s website have a reciprocal effect on the indirect (not that obvious) representations of lenders. Both types of representations fuel each other, thus, reproducing and reflecting themselves in a whirlpool of communication processes which are characterized exclusively by power relations.

From a broader Communication-for-Development perspective, the study is conducted in a time when an ever globalizing, but still highly mediatized world seems to be shifting towards anti-cosmopolitan dispositions. It would add value to the strive for a deeper and more profound understanding of global development issues. Its interdisciplinary character aims to include applied knowledge from academic spheres such as culture, media, communication and development. This work has the ambition to contribute to the professional efforts in investigating the phenomena of communication in the context of both global and local processes of social evolution and change. The study engages with issues concerning social, political and economic power, it combines theories with practice in order to challenge hegemonic knowledge, and it challenges the established common sense for societal order and injustice.
Literature Review and Theoretical Background

In chapter, in order to answer the research questions, I will go through the relevant literature and present the theoretical background that are deemed important for the process of analysis. All of these theories concern notions and particular details within the field of Communication for Development like the representation of otherness, power relations, participatory communication, voice of the oppressed ones. These ideas will be used in the analysis to find out what how representations of individual single parents work towards the stereotypization of the borrowers and what is the role of microfinance in development in this regard. The theories mentioned herein would help in better explaining, predicting and understanding related phenomena in the field. The following analytic models and theories were deemed the most pertinent for the research problems.

Microfinance, Representations and Subjectivity

Kiva is an international non-profit organization which promotes microcredit beyond charity. Historically, microcredit is seen as an instrument for fighting poverty and economic inequality on a global scale, starting with the ideas of Muhammad Yunus who argued that credit one of the basic human rights, which would help millions to break out of poverty. Microcredit is seen as a mechanism for changing borrowers’ economic situation for the better.

With the event "International Year of Microcredit" in 2005, the United Nations underlined the importance of microfinance as a tool for socioeconomic development. However, microfinance seems to have its own problems. Guérin et al. (2015) argue that some of the issues were the high rates, bad management decisions, and corruption which puts pressure on fieldworkers to find even more clients regardless of borrowers’ potential to earn and repay. The representations of poverty seem to remain the usual instrument for fighting against poverty (Guérin et al., 2015).
While some studies suggest that lenders tend to fund more quickly projects which are related to health and education (Ly and Mason, 2012), the individual online lending process can be dependent on different factors including subjective personal preferences. Therefore, the subjective factors can indeed influence decision making in the process of microfinancing. Borrowers who have similar characteristics (i.e. single parents, refugee, orphan, etc.), which are deemed to be valuable for fundraising, tend to be categorized through tagging in groups so that potential lenders can choose from, thus enabling "lenders to find loans they are interested in faster" (Kiva.org 2018, Kiva Lending Team: Loan Taggers). The publicly available visual representations, together with textual representations of the individuals in need, seem to be selected intentionally in order to provoke both compassion and action in a context of seemingly equal power relations.

Since INGOs compete for funds, this may influence the process of selecting borrowers on the ground. According to some critics, the representations of borrowers’ personal narrative are deemed to be the new “capitalist currency” (Black 2013, p. 109) – these representations become a main selling point for INGOs. The givers’ community fulfills the relationship between the giving Global North and the receiving Global South. Some critics claim that the typical lender can be regarded as “the antiheroic, perverse subject who impersonates a responsible citizen without fully claiming or accepting full responsibility for humanitarian actions” (Black 2013, p. 104). Borrowers become fictional characters for lenders.

On the other hand, corporate fundraising initiatives in microcredit are another method to lend money to people in need and this corporate practice of fundraising seems to show another part of peer-to-peer lending as a way to support microfinance, but also as a tool for reducing poverty through philanthropic responsibility. Nevertheless, the charitable part of microfinance received a lot of criticism through time. Roodman (2009) argues that the donor-to-borrower connections created by Kiva do appear as somehow fictional, because private aid cannot replace public aid, as private donors have their irrationalities, too. In that sense, representations of people (i.e. borrowers) on Kiva’s online platform may have various interpretations depending on the point of view of the lender (i.e. spectator). In this regard, while authors like Chouliaraki (2006) claim that the potential of media to shape a cosmopolitan disposition is both possible and not possible at the same time, others claim that it all depends on the characteristics of individual texts (Scott 2014, p. 182). But in this regard, online
microcredit platforms offer to their audiences similar experience as suggested by Scott (2014) – "an experience of simultaneous participation in global events through the act of watching something at the same time as millions of dispersed others”, while media orient audiences towards fellow spectators rather than towards the distant other (Scott 2014, p. 172). Therefore, instead of reducing the divide between both Global South and North, microlending and its communication approach seem to be working towards distancing lenders from borrowers.

By referring to Scott (2014), it can be argued that, in terms of the relationships between the Global South and North, the online representation and communication models supported by technology demonstrate the "forms of colonialism, cultural, political and economic imperialism and the maintenance of Western hegemony” (Scott 2014, p. 184). The representations of borrowers depict people in need from the Global South and, similarly to the idea proposed by John Cameron and Anna Haanstra (2008), it seems that the primary objective is to "provoke feelings of guilt and pity in Western audiences through portrayals of extreme material poverty and suffering” (John Cameron and Anna Haanstra 2008, p. 1476). The practice of showing suffering and the apparent “plain reality” and “raw realism” (Chouliaraki, 2011) is obvious and therefore it is hard for the audience to refuse its existence – victims must be perceived as guiltless and helpless (Höijer 2004) in order to induce guilt which in its turn would generate stronger response that, in the case of Kiva, would result in higher fundraising.

Scott argues that such representations contain some kind of tension as these can be perceived as "lacking ‘respect for people’s dignity and privacy’, or as being ‘misleading by omission’” (Scott 2014, p. 144). On the other hand, even if shock effect campaigns might be good at fundraising, they actually have a "more damaging long-term implications both for public awareness and fund-raising efforts” – Scott (2014) refers to the term "compassion fatigue” which expresses a "general sense of audience apathy towards the wider world in which the public are subsequently less inclined to engage in overseas giving as a result of the repeated use of the same disaster narratives in the media (Moeller 1999: 3)” (Scott 2014, p. 146). In this regard, corporate fundraising and microfinance seem to join forces while having in mind the possible audience apathy – lending is further secured by corporate-like practices where dependents (i.e. employees) are expected to distribute a certain amount of money on behalf of a company for charity lending.
Representations of the Global South appears to be destined to nourish the sense of superiority of the people from Western countries over people from developing countries. Even if deliberate positivism seems to empower people through “discourses of dignity and agency”, the implication that Global South’s development relies on charitable donations somehow continues the idea that “‘they’ remain objects of ‘our’ generosity” (Chouliaraki 2013:63) (Scott 2014, p. 152) which creates hierarchy between the developed world as the active giver in contrast to the majority world and its passive role as taker. Moreover, media can make impact not only on government aid budgets, but media-informed public can also provide money to charities, buy fair trade goods and such decisions are mainly based on media representations of the Global South (Scott 2014, p. 172).

The Challenges of Microfinance as a Vehicle for Neoliberalism

According to Bateman et al. (2011), microfinance is still seen as a silver bullet for reducing poverty. Wealthy philanthropists, global commercial banks and corporations “are pledging hundreds of millions of dollars to the microcredit movement”, they “are establishing microcredit funds”, and “even people with just a few dollars to spare are going to microcredit websites, such as Kiva, and lending money to poor entrepreneurs around the world” (Bateman et al. 2011, p. 83). Bateman et al. (2011) remind that it was Dr. Muhammad Yunus who considered initially that he discovered an entirely new way for “resolving the high levels of poverty, deprivation, and disempowerment in his native Bangladesh, and everywhere else around the globe, using self-help and individual entrepreneurship as the way to do it” (Bateman et al. 2011, p. 1). However, as the authors argue, more than thirty years after the foundation of the microfinance movement, there is no clear evidence that indicates that microfinance does what it was initially supposed to do.

The first ones who questioned the positive view of microfinance were the analysts who studied the impact of microfinance in Bangladesh – they were "not convinced of its potential, and they strongly questioned Muhammad Yunus’s claims that his Grameen Bank model could therefore be scaled up and turned into a serious national program of poverty reduction” (Bateman et al. 2011, p. 5). Since 2007 the industry of microfinance has seen some strong evidence that contradicts its positive impact on
development – in fact, it is “finding it increasingly difficult to retain its legitimacy and support” (Bateman et al. 2011, p. 10). In their book, Confronting Microfinance: Undermining Sustainable Development, Bateman et al. (2011) review the role and the consequences of microfinance mainly in southeastern Europe since 1990 (more specifically, Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia contrasted to countries with high microfinance saturation such as Bangladesh, India, Mexico and Colombia).

For the purpose of the study, it is important to take into consideration the critical point of view of Bateman and Chang who challenge the belief that microfinance is a sustainable poverty alleviating tool that furthers both social and economic development. The authors argue that their criticism on microcredit is based on their analysis on “the faulty economic principles upon which the microfinance concept is based” (Bateman and Chang 2009, p. 17). Moreover, they find out that microfinance “is most likely to lock people and communities in a ‘poverty trap’” (Bateman and Chang 2009, p. 14). The authors argue that regardless of the indications that microfinance fails in its poverty reduction mission, for the international development community, the microfinance is still very attractive “because of its huge political serviceability to the neoliberal worldview that centrally locates the main driver of economic development to be individual entrepreneurship” (Bateman and Chang 2009, p. 14). As one of the examples for the gradual nemesis of microfinance is the 2007 Initial Public offering (IPO) of the Mexican MFI, Compartamos. Instead of reducing poverty among poor Mexican individuals, “the IPO process revealed instead the Wall Street-style levels of private enrichment enjoyed by Compartamos’s senior managers” (Bateman and Chang 2009, p. 15). Other examples for failure of the microcredit approach to alleviating poverty are the ones in Morocco, Nicaragua and Pakistan, and the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh where the poor are taking microloan after microloan in order to repay earlier microloans.

Microfinance entails a small loan (microloan) that can be used by a necessitous individual in need in order to generate a small income-generating activity (Bateman and Chang, 2009). Therefore, this would ideally help the person to start earning an income that is sufficient to come out of poverty. As Bateman and Change (2009) argue, starting from the 1980’s, microfinance and self-employment was so widely promoted as the panacea for poverty that the expectations began to imply that a “historically unparalleled poverty reduction and ‘bottom-up’ economic and social development episode was in the making” (Bateman and Chang 2009, p.14).
Bateman and Chang (2009) suggest that microfinance is not just about helping the poor, and at the same time, it is not ideology-free as well. In fact, they argue that it is "almost perfectly in tune with the core doctrines of neoliberalism", meaning that the economic activity is directed through people's own individual initiative (Bateman and Chang 2009, p. 28). According to Bateman and Chang (2009), the connection between neoliberalism and microfinance is supported by the following facts:

a) As a tool for poverty alleviation, microfinance seems to be politically acceptable to the neoliberal political order. But while microfinance offers to neoliberals a way "of being seen to be addressing the issue of poverty", it actually does not provide a real challenge to the existing power relations. One can be easily blamed for his or her own poverty situation if they failed to make a successful microenterprise "or, worse, do not even attempt to establish a microenterprise" (Bateman and Chang 2009, p. 28).

b) Microfinance questions the provisioning of the state service by supporting processes such as privatization and by provisioning the private sector. For instance, if the poor is using microfinance, they can be easily made to accept that they are now in control of their destiny, but at the same time, it is also easier for the government to discontinue its responsibility towards them (Bateman and Chang 2009, p. 29).

c) Microfinance provides the means for liberalization of the financial sector and its commercialization. Even if microfinance has played an "important role in the promotion of global financial liberalisation and commercialisation", commercial type of funding of microcredit programs separated the microfinance industry from the NGO sphere (Bateman and Chang 2009, p. 29).

d) Microfinance is seen as an "important ‘safety valve’ within the globalisation project" (Bateman and Chang 2009, p. 30). The idea that globalization provides the means for reducing poverty is popular between neoliberals, but at the same time globalization seems to be "driven by a handful of the wealthiest of the developed countries" (Bateman and Chang 2009, p. 30). As both wealth and power are concentrated in the hands of a specific number of people (countries), the number of unemployed, powerless and marginalized people rises, thus making them "reject both the outcome assigned to them and, most dangerous of all for neoliberals, the globalisation process itself" (Bateman and Chang 2009, p. 30).
Furthermore, Bateman and Chang (2009) argue that instead of just alleviating poverty, microfinance, in most of the cases, makes things worse. The authors support the idea that microfinance has a negative impact on both local community level and national economy level (Bateman and Chang 2009, p. 17) because:

a) It neglects the important role of the economies of scale. Therefore, by neglecting of “the far more productive above-minimum efficient scale enterprises and farms”, microcredit and its focus on the expansion of “the very tiniest informal microenterprises and farming units” presents a shift of resources away (Bateman and Chang 2009, p. 22), also known as “the microcredit paradox” where “the poorest people can do little productive with the credit, and the ones who can do the most with it are those who don't really need microcredit, but larger amounts with different (often longer) credit terms” (Bateman and Chang 2009, p. 22: Dichter 2006, p. 4). Therefore, in a broader sense, this has led to the formation of ‘infantilizing’ development trajectories (Bateman and Chang 2009, p. 22).

b) Microfinance doesn’t seem to respect the rule of “fallacy of composition”. Developing countries are "saturated with simple informal microenterprises" and "informal microenterprise has long been the default activity for those without any type of formal employment or income” (Bateman and Chang 2009, p. 22).

c) Microfinance helps in deindustrializing and infantilizing the local economies. Microfinance makes it impossible for developing countries to renew and vitalize their industrial capabilities which are a key element in the process of reducing poverty through economic success.

d) Microfinance is unable to link with the enterprise sphere. Bateman and Chang (2009) support the idea of Weiss (1988) that “the core of modern microcapitalism is not competitive individualism but collective endeavour”. The individual skills of the "players" in microfinance do not include the skill of teamwork that is crucial success.

e) Its model "is pre-programmed to precipitate a sub-prime-style over-supply of microfinance” (Bateman and Chang 2009, p. 26). Microfinance is more about making money for the providers of microcredit than reducing the poverty among the poor beneficiaries of microlending. Therefore, a microcredit bubble is being formed fuelled by both providers and beneficiaries causing an excessive supply and demand.
f) Its model does not respect the principles of "solidarity and local community ownership and control" (Bateman and Chang 2009, p. 26). The authors argue that "the informal microenterprise sector simply does not possess the sort of 'transformational power' and solidarity-building capability widely claimed for it by the microfinance industry and its ideological supporters" (Bateman and Chang 2009, p. 27).

The importance of the criticism of microcredit of Bateman and Chang (2009) consists in the fact that, according to the authors, "the microfinance model has very serious limitations as development policy" (Bateman and Chang 2009, p. 30) and in many cases microfinance can act as a "poverty trap". Globalization and neoliberalism are linked to the microfinance model that is almost uncritically supported within the international development community.

On the other hand, Lamia Karim (2011) provides a unique ethnographic point of view on neoliberalism, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) from the microfinance sphere, and gender, specifically in terms of Bangladesh. Her study is focused on how microfinance NGOs "promote the idea that the borrower knows best, and that the state should withdraw from the sphere of economic activities, leaving it to the unseen hand of the market" (Karim 2011, p. 14). The enormous success of the poor women of Bangladesh who repay their loans at a rate of 98% was the main reason for philanthropists, CEOs, leaders and INGOs to "unite in support of microfinance that will give poor women the resources to invest in their communities, families, and children’s lives" (Karim 2011, p. 15).

Karim’s research aims at filling the gap between what was known about the microfinance institutions through their sponsored research and the on-the-ground practices. The author studies four of the most impactful microfinance organizations at the time, including Grameen Bank (the Nobel Peace Prize winner in 2006), Building Resources Across Communities (BRAC) (also know as Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, Proshika Human Development Center (Proshika), and the Association for Social Advancement (ASA). According to Karim’s ethnographic experience (2011), the irony of microfinance is that while a female borrower can be expected to transfer her loan to a male relative, the bank manager, "who understands microfinance as a commercial venture", imagines an autonomous female person "who freely makes choices in the market" (Karim 2011, p. 17). In other words, the paradox of
microfinance consists of the rhetoric of microfinance organizations and the realities of women who are constrained by social and kin obligations (Karim 2011, p. 17).

In her work, Karim (2011) implements Foucault’s point of view on governmentality, Harvey’s opinion on neoliberalism, and Escobar’s beliefs on development. Therefore, the author argues that three new contributions in the study of women and microfinance are made. Firstly, Karim (2011) argues that NGOs make use of the "rural codes of honor and shame to manufacture a culturally specific governmentality” (Karim 2011, p. 19). Secondly, the services provided by NGOs in Bangladesh make these NGOs operate as a shadow state, and these dependency-based relationships between NGOs and rural clients confirm the NGOs positions in an almost sovereign state within the state of Bangladesh. Thirdly, Karim examines the process of "cultural production of NGO knowledge itself“ (Karim 2011, p. 19). The author studies how development knowledge is formed within the societal context of Bangladesh, and, by considering the fact that a small group of NGO researchers dominate the discourse of development, Karim (2011) proposes that "the construction of development knowledge itself has to be culturally examined” (Karim 2011, p. 19).

Karim’s criticism on microfinance can be summarized by the following findings:

a) The loans from the microfinance process present a new form of control over poor women. Karim (2011) argues that "the access to microfinance loans has created new forms of subordination and oppression for poor women both at the household and community levels” (Karim 2011, p. 197). While the women are the ones expected to repay the loan, in reality, men are those who use the loan. Therefore, poor women are not owners of capital – they are the means of capital for rural men. Additionally, when defaults occur, in order to recover the loan, NGOs use the group of borrowers – the group suffers if an individual member (a poor woman in debt) defaults. Even if there are no guarantees for the loans, the Bangladeshi women’s shame operates as the collateral (Karim 2011, p. 198).

b) The loans “benefited the rural middle class at the expense of the poor” (Karim 2011, p. 198). The increase of microfinance loans made NGOs turn to the middle class that is represented by richer clients. According to Karim (2011), these rather richer clients guarantee more regular payments to the NGOs, posing fewer risks (for example, the case of Grameen cell phone ladies).
Therefore, by shifting from "primarily working for the poor to increasingly targeting the better-off people", NGOs are now able to provide less services and goods to the poor than to the rural middle class (Karim 2011, p. 199).

c) Successful borrowers tend to be characterized by neoliberal subjectivity. While the NGOs operate in a neoliberal type of competition, female borrowers share identical demographics – they are household heads, have financial autonomy. These women live by the "principles of competition and rationality" and they want to increase their earnings "not through a sense of community solidarity, but through competition" (Karim 2011, p. 199). Karim (2011) contrasts the entrepreneurial female borrowers with the NGOs to the "petty female moneylender" that is part of an emergent neoliberal subjectivity.

d) Social solidarity was lost due to the introducing of microfinance in private life. Karim’s research show that the introduction of microfinance loans dissolves the private-public notions in rural life; the concepts of family and community solidarity begin to dissolve because of the microfinance policies (Karim 2011, p. 200).

e) The NGOs’ role as a state within the state. By directing millions via NGOs, the Bangladeshi state was replaced by the Western governments. Therefore, NGOs become the main provider of services (including credit, education and even basic healthcare services) to the poor. On the one hand, NGOs have taken part in important national decision-making. On the other hand, there is a relationship of dependency between the NGOs and the rural people – while rural people need the NGOs in order to get vital services, NGOs on their side need these people in order to continue their development initiatives.

f) The process of producing knowledge in a development context. Even if NGOs have the ability to produce an enormous amount of knowledge thanks to their dedicated researchers, Karim (2011) argues that the purpose of the vast majority of this literature is to validate the work of the NGOs, thus, producing their own truth.

g) NGOs help in inventing markets by transforming the poor in consumer. From financial services to education loans and pension plans, NGOs facilitate the entering of the products of multinational corporations into the local market. Thanks to the loans, the poor becomes a consumer and, therefore, new markets are being formed in developing countries.
According to Karim (2011), the revolution of microfinance led to transformations in three main areas. The first one is the fact that the enormous rise in loans through microfinance formed new institutional arrangements that connect development organizations, NGOs, corporations, etc. via microfinance institutions (Karim 2011, p. 20). As an example for such partnership are institutions such as Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association – College Retirement Equities Fund (TIAA-CREF) – they already take part in microfinance with the help of organization like Kiva. Therefore, the individual and institutional investors as stakeholders of these NGOs involve “two contradictory impulses: the need to make profit and the need to help the poor” (Karim 2011, p. 20). The second area of transformation is “the articulation of business arrangements between NGOs and multinational corporations that are known as social business enterprises (SBEs), a term coined by Nobel laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus” (Karim 2011, p. 20). Thus, the adoption of “bourgeois consumption norms” by the poor “is considered beneficial for both the poor clients and the corporations” (Karim 2011, p. 20). The third transformation concerns the “export of the Grameen model” where “Grameen Bank, BRAC, and ASA have become transnational microfinance institutions because they offer their financial services to the global poor” (Karim 2011, p. 20). However, having an institution from a developing country as a leader in addressing global poverty does not automatically mean that the interest of the poor is represented (Karim 2011, p. 21).

Similarly to Bateman et al. (2013), Karim (2011) argues that “much of the research that supports microfinance as the tool of economic empowerment is based on studies conducted on a few select institutions” (Karim 2011, p. 27). Nevertheless, by citing the findings from other studies, the author does not reject the evidences that microfinance had a positive economic effect.

Market Capitalism and Poverty Marketization

Anke Schwittay (2011) provides an interesting analysis on how transnational corporations (TNC) see themselves in the process of alleviating poverty and I argue that the author’s findings are very relevant to Kiva’s case. With specific emphasis on Hewlett-Packard’s e-Inclusion activities in Costa Rica, Schwittay (2011) argues that “transforming the poor into protoconsumers of TNC products and services cannot address the structural drivers of their circumstances and will lead to neither the
eradication of poverty nor a corporate fortune at the BoP” (Schwittay 2011, p. 72). Similarly, Kiva claims to provide both economical and technological means for eradicating the poverty, but those seem to be limited to those who can manage to get in touch with a field worker and apply for a loan. According to Schwittay (2011), while taking into consideration C. K. Prahalad’s assumptions about the "bottom of the pyramid" (BoP) and Muhammad Yunus’s achievements in terms of microfinance, the goal of the e-Inclusion program was to "turn millions of noncustomers into buyers of HP products and to build "self-sustaining, profit-making businesses, so that the rural poor can better their lives for themselves by relying on their own entrepreneurial skills and not charitable donations”” (Schwittay 2011, p. 75).

Moreover, in her study, Schwittay (2011) finds a pattern that in my opinion is applicable to the case of Kiva. By referring to Prahalad (2005), the author supports the idea that "if we stop thinking of the poor as victims or as a burden and start recognizing them as resilient and creative entrepreneurs and value-conscious consumers, a whole new world of opportunity will open up” (Schwittay, 2011, p. 73). And this focus on "self-reliance, choice, and consumption marks the neoliberal "entrepreneurs of the self” as the ideal subject of development (Rose 1999:142)” (Schwittay, 2011, p. 73). Therefore, the problem of poverty is conceptualized as solvable by market mechanisms where the foundations (political, social or historical) of poverty seem to be erased.

Microfinance, Kiva and the Intercultural Contact

The intercultural implications of microfinance have their own importance, because microlending is nonetheless a consequence of the new media technologies. Therefore, the role of new media technology is important "in building intercultural relationships, in addressing global power inequities, and in facilitating the construction of identities generally” (McKinnon et al., 2013: Mollov & Schwartz, 2010; Thierer, 2000; Turkle, 1995; Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin, 2008). McKinnon et al. (2013) argue that the analysis of a platform like Kiva.org can shed more light on how both lenders and borrowers imagine and perceive each other "as members of a global community who are simultaneously culturally other to each other” (McKinnon et al., 2013, p. 329). While the motivations of the lenders at Kiva can be analyzed by evaluating the "discourses that lenders use in their lender profiles to describe their motivations for lending”
McKinnon et al. (2013), the representations of both lenders and borrowers can provide further details on the implications of alternative microfinance practices in the development context, as tools for alleviating poverty. As McKinnon et al. (2018) suggest, at Kiva.org, lenders are empowered to express their own reasons why they are offering their help, why they participate in general and what in their opinion this lending will generate (McKinnon et al. 2013, p. 331). Of course this empowering opportunity of the lenders to express their opinion is contrasted to the complete lack of a similar opportunity in terms of the borrowers. McKinnon et al. (2013) argue that just like with online stores, lenders can browse borrower profiles and add as many of them to their “basket” as they want until the lenders “check out”, and that seems to be the only intercultural contact between borrowers and lenders on Kiva.org (McKinnon et al. 2013, p. 330).

By examining mainly the sections called “We loan because”, “Description” and “About me” on Kiva.org, the study of McKinnon et al. (2013) identifies the unique trends in institutional discourse (with discursive elements of neoliberalism) at Kiva, but it also provides details on why lenders lend and how they perceive and explain the process of lending. According to McKinnon et al. (2013), Kiva advertises itself as being the more equitable option and the better alternative to lending and borrowing that improves the quality of life. However, the idea that Kiva is a tool for improving people’s lives introduces another problem – whether or not the Internet broadens or limits the inequalities globally (McKinnon et al. 2013). The authors summarize that since the early days of the Internet, while some of the critics argued that the Internet has the full potential to address inequalities, others, less optimistic, maintained that the Internet may have the opposite effect of preserving inequalities even further.

Furthermore, as Schuler (2003) argues, people imagine the transformative properties differently, and this does happen because “people typically equate and confuse open and undirected discussion with ‘democracy’” (Schuler 2003, p. 72). Therefore, inequalities exist among users of the Internet as the degree of integration of technologies and web infrastructure is different for every country. At the same time, web technologies change in a fast-paced environment and this makes it extremely difficult for individuals to keep their skills up to date. On the other hand, there are communities that are dealing with restrictions and regulations when they use the Internet, and by being on the “wrong side” of the digital divide, they “will become second-class and third-class citizens, or no citizens at all” (Van Dijk 2005, p. 17).
Thus, Kiva.org has the potential to both overcome or strengthen these kinds of inequalities.

According to McKinnon et al. (2013), Kiva frames the borrowers as entrepreneurs, and it positions itself "outside of the discourse of dependency that so often accompanies discussions of philanthropic giving, and outside of the discourse of risk that tends to accompany discussions of investment in underdeveloped areas" (McKinnon et al. 2013, p. 8). Furthermore, the motivations of the lenders at Kiva are framed through "individualism and personal responsibility" (McKinnon et al. 2013, p. 8). McKinnon et al. (2013) argue that while praising the power of both the lenders and the borrowers as individuals, there are constant declarations from the representatives of the Global North (i.e. the lenders) on how to improve the disparities for people in the Global South (i.e. the borrowers). On the other hand, in order to frame "their belief in individual power", other lenders turn to "discourses of entrepreneurship" (McKinnon et al. 2013, p. 9). At Kiva, both borrowers and lenders are depicted as the ones that can provide actual solutions to poverty through the means of the Internet as a tool for democracy (McKinnon et al. 2013, p. 9). It can be argued that according to the perspective of the lenders at Kiva, the global redistribution of wealth can be achieved if poor people are given the opportunity to work harder in order to achieve some kind of self-sufficiency. Indeed, McKinnon et al. (2013) contemplate that self-sufficiency is the main motivation for a loan for each lender. The authors argue that many of the lenders perceive the borrowers as individuals lacking the "success, happiness, and security that hard work brings, but with a little help, they too can achieve them" (McKinnon et al. 2013, p. 10).

Presumably, lenders on Kiva accept the idea of "development through credit" because it involves the responsibility of the individuals without the need to take into consideration any bigger and more significant structural inequalities (McKinnon et al. 2013, p. 11). Additionally, as these transactions are performed through the Internet, lenders never see the actual structural inequalities, thus not putting any "significant amounts of effort into the relationship" (McKinnon et al. 2013, p. 11). Lenders are well aware that, while promoting personal responsibility through hard work, each borrower is monitored through a process of surveillance at Kiva in order to ensure a responsible repayment.
According to McKinnon et al. (2013), individualism and personal responsibility, as the two primary themes, provide more details on how lenders and Kiva in general perceive the intercultural and financial contact with borrowers from around the world. Therefore, the lenders on Kiva.org are given the opportunity to help create the kind of responsible entrepreneurs "that fit within neoliberal visions of personhood” (McKinnon et al. 2013, p. 13), and where individuals should see themselves as "self-seeking, responsible economic agents, now expected to ensure their own survival through job training or other means of betterment” (Herbert 2005, p. 851). These ideas are reflected on how Kiva lenders imagine themselves and the others (the borrowers). McKinnon et al. (2013) argue that despite Kiva’s efforts to create a global community of individuals with the help of the World Wide Web, the same conditions of connecting these individuals are "neither power neutral, nor conducive to such ends” and despite its collectivist approach to institutional discourse, Kiva’s platform interface is extremely individualistic (McKinnon et al. 2013, p. 14). Therefore, as the biggest part of the world still remains disconnected, the Internet, despite "claims of its democratizing capacities", it is just another means of supporting global power inequalities (McKinnon et al. 2013, p. 14). In other words, instead of directly addressing existing structural inequalities and imbalances, the Internet is directly incorporated into them (McKinnon et al. 2013, p. 15).

Moreover, in terms of women empowerment, McKinnon et al. (2013) demonstrate that lenders at Kiva "consider their involvement as furthering a vision of development that is based on the transformation of such poor women into self-helping, increasingly responsibilized and entrepreneurial economic actors” (McKinnon et al. 2013, p. 16). Therefore, such neoliberal values are reproduced by both big organizations and microlenders "who have also assimilated these discourses into their rationale for participating in microlending ventures” (McKinnon et al. 2013, p. 16). This means that the work falls on the individual person as big actors like banks, corporations and even states are released of responsibility to "generate policy and programs that would reduce economic and social inequities” (McKinnon et al. 2013, p. 16). In other words, as issues relating to ongoing postcolonialism, structural poverty, patriarchy are somehow missing on Kiva’s online platform, microlenders do not seem to be disturbed with such broader issues relating to their chosen borrowers. Instead, lenders are given the "luxury” to find their own ways to solve the problems of the poor, instead of having to deal with the "messy business of development ‘on the ground’” (McKinnon et al. 2013, p. 16).
Finally, McKinnon et al. (2013) argue that Kiva’s online platform seems more to be masking inequalities instead of challenging them, allowing lenders to impose a neoliberal style of discourse of “individualism and personal responsibility in framing why they loan, and what they believe microlending does in the lives of borrowers” (McKinnon et al. 2013, p. 17). By taking into account how borrowers are perceived and understood, the authors suggest that the visual representations of borrowers at Kiva need to be further studied. Lastly, McKinnon et al. (2013) conclude that new media can improve the balance in power relations, but at the same time, “it can also conceal the power imbalances that exist—flattening complex dynamics between global governance actors and global capital, colonial histories and imperial presents that differently impact global actors” (McKinnon et al. 2013, p. 18).

Representations of “Majority” vs. “Developed”

If once Muhammad Yunus argued that credit is a basic human right, now Kiva furthers this by focusing on the promising new technologies, by promoting participatory communication that appears to be cyber-utopianism. Therefore, the practice of lending and borrowing becomes exclusively available for participants who are tech-savvy, who can take part in these forms of communication. In that sense, it can be assumed that, paradoxically, the most marginalized are the ones who do not have access to such options or rights.

The process of “feminization” and “de-masculinisation” of the majority world “sets out a masculine / feminine distinction between the DW and MW” (Dogra 2012, p. 63). Such representations increase the difference between both “worlds” even further, through “binary oppositions of an active, dynamic, concerned and giving DW as against a vulnerable, incapable, low-skilled, gratefully receiving MW” (Dogra 2012, p. 63). Because this is how representations work, this leads to disparities resulting in bias towards both Global North and South as they both are implicitly depicted with stereotypes. While the Global South is represented as the passive taker, the Global North is represented as uniform consumers that can do good per se.

In other words, there is still the colonial practice of representing “majority world” as very different from the “developed world”. While arguing that “MW women form the
second most popular group represented in INGOs’ messages (30%)” (Dogra 2012, p. 39) Dogra (2012) claims at the same time that “Majority world” is portrayed as “infantilised, feminised, naturalised and dehistoricised, separate and unconnected to the DW” (Dogra 2012, p. 73). While such representations have their roots in “discourses of colonialism, Orientalism, Africanism and development, they simultaneously, and ironically, erase the historical materiality of the same colonial period that impacts current global poverty” (Dogra 2012, p. 73). As Dogra (2012) suggests, some representations need to be decontextualized in terms of historical background or any specific type of knowledge (or the lack of it), because such details could make the audience react negatively towards the subject.

Dogra argues that INGOs represent the “majority world (MW)” – i.e. people in need from “developing countries’ mainly of Asia, Africa and South America” to the audiences of nations from “developed world’ (DW)” where such representations are perceived as “legitimate and proxy voices of the MW” (Dogra 2012, p. 23). In that sense, an organization of this kind has the role of an institution of representation as it can be seen as a “media institution” as well (Dogra 2012, p. 23).

Additionally, Dogra (2012) argues that the differences between the “developed world” and the “majority world” are portrayed through binary oppositions which further increase the distance between both “worlds”. Therefore, the “developed world” is characterized as the active giver, while people from the “majority world” are depicted as passive takers (Dogra 2012, p. 57). The difference is also underlined by INGOs messages through oppositional representations which portray individuals from the rural part of a “majority world” where extreme poverty and vulnerability can be found quite easily, whereas the urban and prosperous “developed world” further “heightens the distance between MW and DW through oppositional representations” (Dogra 2012, p. 73).

Neoliberalism and ideas about the negative image of the world prior to the new opportunities that follow from the Neoliberal approaches are to be considered as well. Dogra argues that “heavier leaning on ‘positivity’ is also in line with increasing corporatisation and marketisation of INGOs” (Dogra 2012, p. 191). In this regard, as Martin Scott suggests, “participatory communication must be an inclusive process in which [...] those who are most oppressed – are able to speak” (Scott, 2014, p. 49),
and it can be argued that this should have been at least the initial motivation for the representations of people in need from the Global South.

Participatory Communication, Language and Representations

Scott argues that the notion of development can have different meanings depending on the different contexts (Scott, 2014, p. 48). With some INGOs, there are provided means for "a participatory, problem-posing style of communication" (Scott, 2014, p. 54), where the organization’s media approaches imply the promotion of "local group interaction and reflection" that are "owned and controlled by the community rather than by the government or elites" (Scott, 2014, p. 54).

Hall claims that representations have an important role in the study of culture, because representations link both meaning and language to culture (Hall 2013, p. 27). Representations make meaning by representing things. Hall argues that representations is "the production of meaning through language" (Hall 1997, p. 16). Through language, representations are the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds. Representation is the consequence of the concepts’ meaning in our brain through language. The links between concepts and language are the ones that enable us to distinguish real world objects (like events, people, etc.) from fictional or imaginary things. Therefore, Hall argues that there are two systems (or processes) of representations (Hall 1997, p. 17).

The first one is where all objects (including people, events, etc.) are associated with mental representations (concepts) which people have in their minds. In this case meaning relies on the nature of the images and concepts that were formed systematically in our heads. And that is called a “system of representation” as it does not rely on single concepts – the system of representation relies on individual ways of “organizing, clustering, arranging and classifying concepts” thus creating "complex relations between them” (Hall 2013, p. 3). In order to create complex ideas, relationships between concepts are being mixed and matched at the same time, thus making it possible for our concepts to be ordered into various classifying systems (Hall 2013, p. 3). The “conceptual map” or "mental representations” of one individual can be completely different from the one in another individual and this phenomenon can lead to drastically different interpretations of the surrounding world. As most probably each
individual interprets the world in a very unique way, each person is still capable of understanding each other. People can communicate with one another because they use roughly the same conceptual maps which makes them understand and explain the world in very similar ways. In this regard, Hall (2013) argues that indeed this is what it means when they say that certain persons “belong to the same culture” – it means that they understand the world in similar ways, that they share the same social world that they live in (Hall 2013).

It does not seem that just a shared conceptual map is enough – people need to share meanings. This can be achieved thanks to the use of a shared language. If there is a shared conceptual map, then there should be a way to translate it into a common language in order for individuals to connect their ideas and concepts to specific images, sounds, or words (Hall 2013). According to Hall (2013), “signs” is the general term which has meaning, and which is used for images, sounds or words. Therefore, signs are responsible for the representation of the concepts and the relations between these concepts. Together, they form the “meaning-system of our culture” (Hall 2013, p. 3).

When organized into languages, signs are helpful in communicating with other people, in expressing meanings. Hall argues that “language” should be interpreted in a very broad way, because the traditions in writing and speaking are both “languages”. But whenever they’re used to express meaning, visual images can be considered also as “language” no matter if they are created electronically or by hand (Hall 2013, p. 4).

Hall (2013) argues that there are two systems of representation. The first one provides the means to assign meaning to the world by building “correspondences or a chain of equivalences between things” (such as individuals, ideas, objects, etc.) and our “system of concepts, our conceptual maps” (Hall 2013, p. 5). The second system of representation relies on creating “correspondences between our conceptual map and a set of signs” which are ordered into different languages which “stand for or represent those concepts” (Hall 2013, p. 5). Hall claims that indeed this relation between signs, things and concepts is in the center of producing meaning in language. These three elements are connected together in a process that is called “representation”.

Images and visual signs are still signs, even if they have close similarity to the people, objects or ideas they refer to. In order for people to interpret such images or signs, they need to have the following systems of representations: a conceptual map and a language system. The conceptual map connects the “thing” with the concept of the
"thing". The language system "bears some resemblance to the real thing or 'looks like it' in some way" (Hall 2013, p. 5). Visual signs are also called iconic signs because they have a "certain resemblance to the object, person or event" (Hall 2013, p. 6). Therefore a photograph of a person (e.g. borrower) should reproduce some of the characteristics of one's visual perception in the visual sign. On the other hand, spoken or written signs are called "indexical" and they have no apparent relationship with the things they refer to (Hall 2013, p. 6).

Furthermore, Hall (2013) argues that there are three types of approach to representations of meaning through language. The first one is the reflective ("mimetic") approach, where language is like a mirror. Contrarily, the second, "intentional" approach supports the idea that through language, the ones who speak impose their own individual meaning on the world – the meaning of the words depends on their author's intention. Language is a social system in which the personal thoughts "have to negotiate with all the other meanings for words or images which have been stored in language which our use of the language system will inevitably trigger into action" (Hall 2013, p. 11). The third perspective to meaning in language is called "constructionist" (constructivist) approach (Hall, 2013). In order to represent concepts, the language system is used – the material world in itself does not deliver meaning. Culture's conceptual system together with linguistics and other systems for representation is used by social actors in order to create meaning.

Lastly, according to Hall, the notion of "representation" was used somehow differently by Foucault. In fact, he contributed to a new approach to the issue of representation. Instead of creating just "meaning", Foucault considered the production of knowledge through discourse (instead of simply "language") (Hall 2013, p. 27). Instead of studying "language", Foucault studied "discourse" as a system of representation. The term "discourse" had a slightly different meaning for Foucault: by "discourse" he meant "a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment. ... Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language. But ... since all social practices entail meaning, and meanings shape and influence what we do – our conduct – all practices have a discursive aspect" (Hall, 2013).
Methodology

The paper takes into consideration both visual and textual representations of individual single parents as borrowers on Kiva.org. As the visual representations and the texts depicting borrowers are deemed to be the main source of empirical evidence, Critical Discourse Analysis and Visual Research are the two main methods that this degree project is going to adopt. In the process of examination, these major research methods will be supported by Postcolonialism more as a method for research than a theoretical perspective. On the other hand, given that the work of the authors mentioned in the Literature Review and Theoretical Background section are already an important source for this study, especially from a postcolonial perspective, Postcolonialism has also the role of a primary research method throughout the research process.

The reason for choosing Critical Discourse Analysis as a main qualitative research method for the study is the fact that it "offers the potential to challenge ways of thinking about aspects of reality that have come to be viewed as being natural or normal and therefore tend to be taken for granted" (Cheek, 2008, p. 3). As a result, this research method would add value to the analysis of the representations of borrowers from both "worlds” on Kiva’s website.

Critical Discourse Analysis

By adopting discourse analysis as a research method, not only the content of the text (including images) is taken into account. Rather, it is used for analyzing the "way in which texts themselves have been constructed, ordered, and shaped in terms of their social and historical situatedness" (Cheek 2008, p. 5). In other words, the texts available on Kiva’s online platform can be "interrogated to uncover the unspoken and unstated assumptions implicit within them that have shaped the very form of the text in the first place" (Cheek 2008, p. 5). In addition, the study will take into consideration the "weak points" of this research method including the fact that "analytic approaches to discourse often refer to partial or situated reality, viewing texts as constructed by and in turn constructing understandings of reality rather than describing a or the reality”, which does not necessarily aim to seek closure in terms of producing the only possible reading (Cheek 2008, p. 6).
In terms of critical discourse analysis as a research method, Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) argue that discourse contains both written and spoken language and visual images at the same time. Therefore, when analyzing texts accompanied with visual images, it is a common practice to consider the relationship between images and language on one hand, and the features of visual semiotics on the other (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). It is believed that the discursive practices in critical discourse analysis have their own part in the process of creating power relations that are deemed to be unequal. For instance, such unequal relationships can exist between women and men, social classes, social minorities and the majority. Contrarily to discourse theorists like Foucault, and Laclau and Mouffe, according to Jørgensen and Phillips (2002), critical discourse analysis is not divergent from the Marxist tradition. Some approaches to critical discourse analysis assign a Foucauldian "view of power as a force which creates subjects and agents – that is, as a productive force – rather than as a property possessed by individuals, which they exert over others" (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). The authors argue that the aim of critical discourse analysis is to help in the process of social change and it oversees "more equal power relations in communication processes and society in general" (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

The Implication of Visual Research for Critical Discourse Analysis

For the purpose of this study, visual research is a secondary qualitative research method as it is deemed most compatible with critical discourse analysis for the purpose of the study. The form of data collection which is adopted is the analysis of photographs in combination with text. As suggested by Siegesmund (2012), this methodological approach to the use of the visual in qualitative research can be called objective, as "photographic images, or ethnographic films, are considered to be objective renderings of reality" (Siegesmund 2012, p. 2). Therefore, the photographic material are the actual photographs of borrowers. As these images will be analyzed through language (i.e. text), it is hypothesized that the analysis itself will reveal other "layers" of semiotic meanings. Some of the analyzed images are self-explanatory, while others can be qualified as formative, because "our experience of objective reality is always constrained by conscious or unconscious schematic filters" as perception requires focusing and framing (Siegesmund 2012, p. 2). The analysis of
representations of borrowers, through the prism of the visual research method, could lead to the assumption that "photographic lens selectively frames, omits, and emphasizes information" (Siegesmund 2012, p. 2). The visual research method (i.e. its generative approach) is used to analyze the combination of photographs and texts representing borrowers at Kiva as a visual media or even digital art.

Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism focuses on the study of the influence of colonialism on human life, and more specifically on the social system including politics and economics. Sherry (2012) argues that postcolonial studies examine the situation of people who were colonized. On the other hand, postcolonialism explores the issues around the process of colonialism and its impact on those who "benefited from colonial acts such as dispossession, violence, and the promotion of racist ideology" (Sherry 2012, p. 2).

Various works of postcolonial theorists, like the one of Spivak's who studied the "subaltern", examine the particular ways in which inequalities of different forms converge in specific historical locales and in specific discourses. By employing the concept of the subaltern, Spivak argues that, within Western discourse, the "Third World" appears as inferior and somehow silenced. Spivak takes into consideration the fact that while Western scholars are trying to represent a subaltern's point of view, inevitably, "it runs the risk of speaking on behalf of the being studied (which is a similar dynamic to colonialism itself)" (Sherry 2012, p. 2). In this regard, this also may have bad result in terms of overstating the level to which the subaltern is in fact part of a unified group.

Even if her use of the term "subaltern" appears to be sometimes contradictory, according to authors like Sherry (2012), Spivak’s application of it is deemed important for the study because of the following reasons: (1) the term "subaltern" is used to address society members who are not part of the "elite"; (2) Spivak’s approach to postcolonialism assumes that it is impossible to create a "safe" category of the subaltern, the interests of whom can be represented and identified – instead, Spivak puts the stress on the heterogeneity of the individuals who are in the position of a subaltern; (3) Spivak’s approach to the role of gender in postcolonial context is fundamental for the analysis of representations within the study.
As a qualitative research method, postcolonialism is important in order to "theorize cross-cultural contact in the context of colonialism and globalization" (Sherry 2012, p. 9). Postcolonialism is moving away from colonizer-colonized style of power relations, and it tends to study the importance of hybridity, its intersection with other forms of social stratifications.

Analysis

In this chapter, in the light of the main research questions and hypotheses, I will analyze the data gathered through my observations. I have decided to organize my results in the following subsections:

- Kiva’s Approach to Microfinance
- The Role of Microfinance in Development: a Poverty’s Panacea?
- Fictionalization of Humanitarianism
- Case Study
- The Sample: Review and Results
- The Interplay of Text and Visual Representations
- Family Status Tags and Gender as a Decision-Making Criteria
- The Financial Status of the Loan as an Encouraging Factor for Lenders
- Semiotics of Borrowers’ Representations
- Stereotypes through Participatory Communication

Nevertheless, the main focus in all of these sections is on the representations of individual single parents as borrowers on the Kiva.org web site. Each section from the list provides my findings in terms of the research questions through the lenses of the theoretical framework. Even if in some of the sections I do not explicitly talk about representations, but rather about related concepts, representations of borrowers are the reason and at the core of my analysis.
Kiva’s Approach to Microfinance

Kiva’s activities are divided in three organizational components or entities. The first one, called "Kiva Microfunds”, is a nonprofit organization based in California (Kiva 2018, Finances). Every donation (loan) which has been made goes to "Kiva Microfunds”. These donations are used "to cover the operating costs of running Kiva” (Kiva 2018, Finances). The second entity, "Kiva User Funds LLC”, keeps the funds belonging to Kiva users in escrow-like bank accounts which are further insured by the “Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation” (FDIC). These “low-yielding FBO accounts were set up to ensure Kiva users’ funds (meant for lending) are protected and fully separated from Kiva’s operational funds” (Kiva 2018, Finances). The third and last entity is called "Kiva-DAF LLC”. It holds “donor advised funds to facilitate lending on Kiva’s platform for Kiva’s institutional partners (such as charitable foundations)” (Kiva 2018, Finances).

The organization’s vision on social change and development can be explained through the five-steps-of-a-loan "journey” available on Kiva’s web platform (Kiva 2018, How Kiva works). These steps explain how the lending process works, while also reflecting the organization’s structure.

The first step is made when a borrower applies for a loan (Kiva 2018, How Kiva works). In order to reach a wider audience, these loans are facilitated through two models: (1) Partner model, where partner loans are controlled by field partners who in their turn make these loans available for borrowers in more than 80 countries. (2) Direct loan model, where the loans are distributed through the online payment processor PayPal. This specific direct loan model is available to U.S. lenders only (Kiva 2018, How Kiva works). Kiva states that in most of the cases of partner loans and "because of the high cost of providing small loans", the borrowers are expected to pay the Field Partner some interest (Kiva 2018, How Kiva works). While direct loans have 0% interest, these are deemed “riskier” because there is not a field partner in charge of the process of following up and collecting the repayments (Kiva 2018, How Kiva works).

The second step includes the approval or disapproval of a loan. Local lending institutions or nonprofit organizations take part in the loan approval if it is a partner
loan. Kiva implements a regular audit process for each of its field partners. "Social underwriting“ plays a definitive role in approving direct loans, and reliability is "determined by friends and family lending a portion of the loan request, or by a Kiva approved trustee vouching for the borrower” (Kiva 2018, How Kiva works).

The "disbursal period" is the third step where the borrower gains the right to own the money. In most of the cases of field partner loans, "the money is pre-disbursed, so the borrower can access the funds right away” (Kiva 2018, How Kiva works). While in the case of direct loan, the amount is given to the borrower only after the loan has been fully crowdfunded on Kiva’s website (Kiva 2018, How Kiva works). Usually, on behalf of the borrower, field partners are responsible for uploading the details of a loan on the online platform. Prior to becoming available for crowdfunding online, the information about the loan is translated and edited by a network of volunteers. Once a loan is made publicly available for funding, lenders can crowdfund it until the fundraising is complete. The final fourth step is when the loan is repaid by the borrower. Considering the repayment schedule and the ability of the borrower to repay, the lenders receive their amount back in their Kiva accounts. Lenders can use these repayments to donate, fund new loans or withdraw the money. Once received back, these repayments can either be withdrawn or used for donations and new loans.

The Role of Microfinance in Development: a Poverty’s Panacea?

While microcredit is often offered as a remedy for poverty, it is also characterized by a lot of problems in the field of development. Guérin et al. (2015) suggest that microcredit had its problems even in the beginning – high rates were just some of the issues that hit the sector of microcredit in countries like Bosnia, Morocco, Nicaragua and Pakistan. Another problem of the microcredit industry is bad management decisions and corruption which results in pressured fieldworkers to attract more clients no matter their earning and ability to repay. Another issue is micro-credit’s weak regulation from the part of the state, but on the other hand many of the loans are used for paying other debts and are not used for supporting new entrepreneurs. Another difficulty is the presumed exploitative character of some microcredit institutions that, as Guérin et al. (2015) mention, can lead to a non-payment of the loans as a political act.

34
The industry of microcredit seems to be unstable and failing to accomplish its own goal to reduce poverty. Guérin et al. (2015) suggest that poverty is a political problem and as such it needs a political solution, and perhaps microcredit is not the right solution for reducing poverty. However, even if that is true, the representations of poverty seem to remain the standard tool for achieving success in campaigns against poverty (Guérin et al., 2015). In that sense, Kiva, and the idea of microcredit in general, seem to depoliticize the problem by making it appear as a matter of personal responsibility. This does not mean that microcredit should be deprecated. The poor and the oppressed ones do need financial services. For this reason, Guérin et al. (2015) call for a new vision of microcredit.

Fictionalization of Humanitarianism

According to Kiva’s founder, the language of storytelling is the key for the NGO’s success, thus making the borrowers’ story “into a new form of capitalist currency” (Black 2013, p. 109). In this regard, the feeling of direct contact with “the other”, through representations of borrowers, seems to become the main selling point of Kiva. The organization relies on outsourcing the literary work to microfinance loan workers around the world who then synthesize Kiva’s borrower questionnaire into a “readable narrative” (Flannery 2009, p. 41). Similarly, by referring to Chouliaraki’s “call for an empathetic representation of the other that stresses both historical agency and the constraints of circumstance”, Black argues that, in the end, these “representations are mediated and packaged to fit within a global capitalist economy of trade in symbols” (Black 2013, p. 109). In that sense, in the public domain, responsibility works as a transactional narrative. Stories of someone’s life “can be the currency through which such responsibility is negotiated” (Black 2013, p. 109). Therefore, borrowers and lenders are produced as “discursive subjects within the uneven topography of humanitarian aid” (Black 2013, p. 109). The relations between the giving Global North and the receiving Global South are fulfilled through the giver’s own community (Black 2013, p. 103). As proposed by Black, the representation of a typical lender at Kiva may be perceived as “the antiheroic, perverse subject who impersonates a responsible citizen without fully claiming or accepting full responsibility for humanitarian actions” (Black 2013, p. 104).
A part of Kiva’s concept of development seems to be its moving away from the “individual emotional transaction between lender and borrower” (Black 2013, p. 109). As Black suggests, now a significant number of loans are given to borrowing groups, therefore, enabling poorer borrowers which are allowed to use social capital rather than investment capital to secure their loans (Black 2013, p. 110). The images used for such group profiles on Kiva’s online platform appear as not that individual, where an individual’s face is at times hard to recognize. Thus, such representation of borrowers look more anonymized than individualized. With these group representations, the relationships expressed in the images are not the direct link to a potential lender – the lender seems to be visually excluded in the relationship between the borrowers. The representations of the lenders and lenders’ group understanding of responsibility are offered in the “We loan because” section on Kiva’s online platform.

Black (2013) argues that by examining such representations it is possible to comprehend “potential invitations to certain forms of responsibility”, but it is difficult to “provide evidence that individuals actually experience, or act on, such feelings of responsibility” (Black 2013, p. 110). The author supports the idea that, indeed, Kiva decides on the boundaries in terms of representing borrowers as individuals while, at the same time, he suggests that its online platform shows “how lenders choose to articulate their own receptivity to such invitations” (Black 2013, p. 110). This affirmation suggests that the representations of borrowers and lenders are not equal, as they follow the same logical pattern of the global North-South divide – the direct voice of the borrowers is the missing part in this kind of supposed space for dialogue. Borrowers’ stories seem to be “mediated rather than directly posted” – responsibility is assumed through indirect communication between lenders and borrowers (Black 2013, p. 111).

Fictionalization has an important role in the interpretation of humanitarianism. Black argues that borrowers are in fact perceived by the lenders as fictional characters. Moreover, lenders can engage indirectly with borrowers, if they wish to do so, but interestingly enough borrowers are not expected to have their say to those using the platform “except through the careful mediation of Kiva’s conventions of life writing for borrowers” (Black 2013, p. 117). Such representation of borrowers can be seen as an “ethical violation” where individuals are reduced to fictional characters. In Kiva’s case, humanitarianism functions at a representative level as well. As Black (2013) explains, at such level, “bodies dissolve into story, where everything—from money to
personhood to community—is a literary cipher as well as a tangible material substance” (Black 2013, p. 117). The representations of both borrowers and lenders at Kiva depict humanitarianism as “a discursive layering that simultaneously revives and undermines the idea of the "human” as the ground of cosmopolitan responsibility” (Black 2013, p. 118). Considering this, the author suggests that there could be many singular stories of motivation that determine humanitarian responsibility.

Case Study

The aim of this section is to show the results of the study through the lenses of critical discourse analysis as a qualitative research method. Therefore, I provide answers to the main research questions and hypotheses, by analyzing both visual and textual content on borrowers’ profiles at Kiva, and by considering if that content is ordered and shaped in reference to their historical and social position. In that sense, I contemplate the fact that texts can also be constructing understandings of reality instead of reflecting the reality. As a consequence of my critical discourse analysis of the profile descriptions (i.e. representations) of individual single parents at Kiva, I argue that lenders’ decisions on who to lend to are based on both objective and subjective decision making. And those types of decision making would make it easier to grasp the meaning of representations of borrowers in general.

Collecting information about all of the existing loans of individual single parents on Kiva.org would be impractical. In that sense, for the purpose of this small-scale study, and in order to have results that can be generalized after the analysis of the sample, a collection of loans (see Appendix 1, Appendix 2) that were added most recently was taken into consideration. As already mentioned, Kiva supports a full archive of its loans which is downloadable from their API web page. However, because of the time constraints and the possible immense amount of data to analyze, the reason for not taking in consideration all of the loans to individual single parents is the fact that the analysis of the most recent loan application would reflect the latest trends in representing individual single parents as borrowers at Kiva. Conducting the study for a longer period would show better the tendencies in representing borrowers on Kiva’s online platform, but it would also provide a more comprehensive information about the evolution of the art of representation in this specific field. Nevertheless, the results and findings from this small-scale study would have their contribution to the debate on
microfinance as well and would open the way for further more in-depth analysis on the matter.

The Sample: Review and Results

At the time of selection of the sample for the study (May 18, 2018), the total number of loans under the category of "single parents" was 112. While 90 of these loan applications are determined as "individual" versus 22 categorized as "group", 102 loans are women-oriented (including both "individual" and "group" applications) versus in total 10 loan applications oriented towards men (both "individual" and "group" applications). Therefore, as the study takes into consideration the individual single parents only, the total number of loan application in this category is 90 where 83 of them are attributed to women while the remaining 7 loans are determined as oriented towards supporting men as individual single parents. For the analysis, 41 female profiles of individual single parents and all of the 7 male profiles will be taken into consideration.

The biggest part of the female borrowers are from the following countries: El Salvador (26), Colombia (20), Ecuador (14), Kenya (48) and Tajikistan (14). According to this criterion, the borrowers represent a total of 18 countries. The full list of loans according to the research criteria can be found in the Appendix section (see Appendix 1).

The male individual single parent loan applications are distributed as follows: El Salvador (1), Guatemala (1), Honduras (1), Ecuador (2), Kenya (2), Uganda (2), Mozambique (1). According to this criterion, the borrowers represent a total of 8 countries. The full list of loans according to this criterion can be found in the Appendix section (see Appendix 2).

By excluding a complete randomness in picking the sample, a decision was made to consider approximately two profiles per country in the case of female borrowers. In that way, even if the percentage of covered applicants would be smaller for countries with the higher number of applicants, the countries with just a few applicants (like Mexico, United States, Honduras, Nicaragua, Uganda, Albania, Jordan, Lebanon,
Cambodia, Kyrgyzstan, Philippines, Vietnam) will have around 100% coverage in the study. By covering many borrower representations from many countries, the study aims to challenge the beliefs that studies related to postcolonial theory are usually limited to a specific national context or region.

The loan applications were selected by gender, marital status, and individual versus group criteria. Therefore, the two search criteria were used for finding the sample for the study (see Appendix 3, Appendix 4).

The reason for choosing both filters is that, within development, there is a particular predisposition towards women empowerment and at the same time people (both men and women) from Global South are represented through stereotypes. I have chosen this specific sample – borrowers who are individual single parents – because, on the one hand, this group of borrowers does not appear as well studied, but on the other hand, it represents one of the most stereotyped representations of people in need in a development context. Additionally, in development, studies of women empowerment seem to involve research of representations of women only, and revealing the role of men does not seem to be a winning strategy for fundraising. This argument is supported by the fact that, at the time of the study, there were 83 loan applications from women versus 7 loan applications from men. In other words, if divided by gender, individual single female parents are almost 12 times more than individual single male parents. Of course, there may be different reasons for this disproportion between female and male loan applications. However, this result can be easily supported by statements of the authors who argue that, in development context, there is a colonial practice to represent people from the Global South as demasculinized. But the study also permits to look at the data from a different perspective: it can be argued that, in the case of Kiva, there is as well a push towards an equal representation of both women and men (even if numbers do not support this statement!), that contributes to the practice of shifting away from INGOs’ messages that depict the developing world as feminized, infantilized and dehistoricized.

When a cause is supported on Kiva.org, the borrowers passively receive financial support from the lenders. It is argued that this financial support is based on lenders’ own rational or irrational decision making model. An interesting fact is that the most influential part of the process of lending at Kiva is indeed the way a borrower is represented. Generally speaking, the representations of borrowers seem to increase
the difference between the developed world and the majority world. This one way relationship limits the possibility of "understanding between DW and MW and also locates them on a superior/inferior axis" (Dogra 2012, p. 63). The borrower has to be liked and has to be apparently inferior in order to receive financial support. Apparently, even if some representations pretend to be shown with dignity, the profiles of the borrowers are somehow detached from their history and place, somehow having the sole purpose to be liked for one reason or another.

The Interplay of Text and Visual Representations

At Kiva, the photographs act together with the texts that are appended to every single loan application. Therefore, both textual and visual material seem to be characterized by some patterns as well. The first section of an entrepreneur’s description on the Kiva.org site contains some primary personal data such as the name, the personal story of the borrower including professional experience and the reasons for their loan application. An important part of a borrower’s description is the business sphere s/he is working in followed by the reason for the loan request and an explanation on what is needed to support their business and a plan on the implementation of the loan in their business. Then some other informational sections follow such as the "This loan is special because", "Lending and lending teams", "Country information", "Comments and updates", "Tags" – all of them providing additional (in most of the cases statistical) information about the loan application. On top, right before the loan status summary of every borrower profile, there is a one-sentence-summary which perhaps has the practical purpose of summarizing the description of the purpose of the loan and therefore save time for the lender. Designwise, the profile of every single borrower seems to follow the same template and it seems to be crafted specifically for incentivising online customers (i.e. lenders). In that sense, one could say that, similarly to the idea of marketization of poverty as suggested by authors like Schwittay (2011), the same eCommerce-like tools can be used for the purpose of providing even charitable donations or loans.

The representations of borrowers at Kiva seem to follow a standard pattern in order for them to fit the design of the page. Every borrower has a photograph. These photographs show the borrowers in their day-to-day reality and most of the pictures
tend to show them in their working/living environment that is presumably a lot different from the one of a potential lender: the borrowers are often portrayed with animals or agricultural products in the background, and even if many of the borrowers tend to be smiling, the photograph compositions as a whole appear to be implying harsh living and working conditions. Appendix 7 and Appendix 8 show the borrowers’ profiles that were taken into consideration for the study and their similarities in terms of textual and visual style and content.

Instead of aiming to provide the most detailed and accurate information about the borrowers, it may seem that the loan application descriptions have been made with the expectations of lenders in mind. In this regard, the representations of borrowers look so much simplified that a distorted impression of them seems to be given. As it can be seen from the loan descriptions (see Appendix 7, Appendix 8), there is information mostly about the applicants’ age, gender and civil status, followed by a clarification about the reason for asking for a loan. These findings can be in support of the arguments made by authors such as Schwittay (2011) who argues that there is a marketization of poverty where the foundations of poverty seem to be erased. A historical background explaining the current situation of a borrower is missing. This can be confirmed also from the results of the most commonly used words in Kiva’s loan descriptions (see Appendix 5, Appendix 6). By following similar patterns in depicting borrowers, the representations appear to be also in line with arguments that the developing world is very often portrayed through colonial themes. In that sense, even if representations at Kiva seem to be shown with dignity, the profiles of the borrowers are in some way detached from their history and place, somehow having the sole purpose to be liked for one reason or another.

However, the uniformity in borrowers’ representations can be perceived as a very well-thought-out approach, because this consistency almost guarantees that the author has total control and that the lenders will not be distracted by too much uniqueness. But on the other hand, as stated by Kiva, some of the texts are translated by both field partners or translation volunteers and this can have an unexpected impact on the final message that is brought to the lender. The problem of translation is somehow mitigated by Kiva’s decision to also include a link to the original language version of the profile description.
Family Status Tags and Gender as a Decision-Making Criteria

On its "Loan Taggers" page, Kiva explicitly mentions that the Loan Taggers team "enables lenders to find loans they are interested in faster" (Kiva 2018, Kiva Lending Team: Loan Taggers). Therefore, the concept of family appears constantly especially in the sample group of individual single parent borrowers. The most used family-related words in the profile descriptions of female individual single parents (see Appendix 5) are children (153), single (131), mother (96), family (95), while the most commonly used family-related words with male individual single parents (see Appendix 6) are single (11), family (9), father (8), children (6) and child (5). The descriptions of both types of borrowers seem to have some common words like loan, business, buy, helps, story, years, purchase, lives, old, school, etc. The borrowers are always represented as fighting single parents that want the best future for their children. This would make them more recognizable and perhaps more similar to the lenders. The spectator has the final word on what it is to be a single parent from the Global South, meaning that the lenders understand the situation through their own personal experience. In that sense, the lenders’ expectations of a single parents’ life in the Global North might differ completely from the usual life of a single parent in a developing country. But by standardizing the representations of the borrowers at Kiva, it seems that it is more important to provide a story that sounds familiar to them, no matter the photograph of a toil-worn person surrounded by domestic animals and agricultural products.

On the other hand, both men and women seem to be stereotyped as single parent borrowers: women tend to be represented together with their children, as strong independence-seeking mothers, while men are depicted as hard working fathers. Additionally, the significant difference between the number of female single parents, compared to the male single parents, supports the fact that since the 1970s the main subjects of the efforts of development are women. Even if the sample group is not directly represented as family, there is the implication that, despite the apparently personal nature of the loan, it would also benefit other individuals (i.e. children, siblings, parents) who relate to the single parent borrower, for example (Profile # 9):

Thào's story
"Thảo is 36 years old and single. She has had a manufacturing business sewing clothes for eight years. Thảo lives in Dong Son district, a rural town in Thanh Hoa province. Her family is a low-income household in village and her job is unstable.

One of the most critical difficulties that concerns her is the latrine in her house is not hygienic. But her income is not enough to get a new one. She is requesting a loan to purchase sand, cement, bricks and equipment to build a toilet.

This is Thảo first loan with Thanh Hoa microfinance institution. Thảo hopes for her family to be healthy and happy, for her business to do well, and for her children to do well in school.”

However, there are some exceptions to this tendency. For instance the following profile (Profile #11):

Sheila's story

"I was born and currently reside in the Bronx of NY. While growing up, I have fond memories of lots of colors. Back in the 70’s and 80’s the communities consisted of Latino’s, African-Americans and Caribbean’s. Every culture had their unique way of using color to represent their heritage, which ranged from beautiful dresses with lots of ruffles, sneakers and gym suits that marched to the beat of hip-hop and graffiti which showcased the arts as well as the struggles of the time.

At the age of 14, I had my very first vision of owning my own business. At the time, I didn't know what kind of business I wanted or why I was having the vision in the first place. As a teenager, I developed a passion for choosing unique and coordinating accessories to go with my outfits. I would save my lunch money for the whole week just to be able to purchase handbags and other accessories. In my early twenties, I learned how to sew and started making my own clothes and self-taught accessories to match my wardrobe.

I was a stay-at-home mother when I started selling my collections of Tote Bags, Hats and Jewelry at craft fairs. I developed and taught handcraft workshops for organizations including the NYC Public Library, Senior Centers, and specialty organizations. My creations won the Blue Ribbon at the Craft Fair in Plainfield, NJ and I have been featured in the Sacred Hands Exhibit at the Corridor Gallery in Brooklyn, NY."
In contrast to the previous profile of a female individual single parent that is deemed to be following the same template as with other profiles from developing countries, this time the profile does not state that her family is the main reason for this loan application. Instead, the loan description is mainly about the borrower’s personal life and entrepreneurial inclinations. Dissimilarly to the other profiles of borrowers from the Global South, this specific profile talks in first person. Additionally, the profile has incentivising comments from lenders who seem to be from the same country of origin (USA) as the borrower. Even more, the borrower had also the opportunity to answer in person to these comments. However, none of the borrower profiles that represent developing countries seem to have had the opportunity to write in first person or to receive comments from lenders. The distance between the borrowers from the Global North and South seems to be furthered by the correlation between the individualistic nature of the borrower profiles (see Appendix 7) from the Global North, written in first person, and the collectivistic approach to the representation of all of the borrowers from the Global South. On the other hand, some further assumptions can be made in terms of the amount of the loans of the borrowers from the developed world in relation to the amount of the loans of the borrowers from the developing countries.

Therefore, a borrower from the Global North tends to be represented as an educated, urban, business oriented individual. While a typical borrower from the Global South would appear as narrated and as somehow underrepresented as rural, economically unstable, and even having basic issues such as hygiene continues to contribute to the process of creation stereotypes about both Global North and South.

By analyzing the results from both figures showing the most commonly used words in borrowers’ description, it can be deduced that lenders tend to find borrowers who they can identify with, or they have something in common with (Black 2009). That is because most of the borrowers are represented as extraordinary people who work very hard under extremely difficult circumstances. Even if the borrowers are given more agency through their profile descriptions, it seems like that is just another way of representing the same issues with another way of portraying people in need.
Therefore, it happens that people who need money the most may not be given the opportunity to be helped because of lender’s personal, subjective decision making which in its turn is based on stereotypes.

As already suggested, when compared to each other, such representations further the contrast between a modern developed world in contrast to a chaotic, ahistorical majority world. Both lenders and even Global North borrowers are represented as educated and technologically savvy individuals that take responsibility in person, thus contrasting to the widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of people from the Global South.

Additionally, the loan applications have a standard look for every borrower profile. An interesting fact is that, at the time of this short study, the three borrower profiles from the U.S.A. (see Appendix 7) are characterized by significantly longer and more detailed descriptions written in first person. In addition to its profile picture, as a peculiar exception, one of them has a video containing a short personal story from the borrower. In addition, these borrowers have their personal comments in reply to comments of their lenders in the discussion section of their loan application page. Another interesting fact is that these three borrower profiles need $21,000 in total while more than a half of the loan applications from the Global South are worth less than $1000. These profiles of borrowers from the Global North appear to be in contrast to the profiles of borrowers from the Global South where people do not speak for themselves. The loan applications of "majority world" individuals are all written in third person and many of these descriptions contain less than 150 words.

Moreover, with the help of both quantitative and qualitative analysis methods, some peculiarities in representations were found, based on borrower’s gender. One of them is the fact that as well as being rare, single fathers seem to have the shortest descriptions too – many of them with less than 100 words. And the representations of children and women, and their problems related to poverty and vulnerability are contrasted to the viewer who most probably does not have such issues, thereby the distance between the spectator and the other is further increased.

In the case of Kiva, the gap between loans to both women and men do not seem to be equally represented on the platform. At the time of the study, there were a total of 3,773 loan applications of women and a total of 1,670 loan applications of men on the
platform. Therefore, loan applications of women were a bit more than 2 times when compared to loan applications of men. In terms of the sample of the study (individual single parents), there was even a bigger percentage difference: female loan applications were more than 12 times more than the ones of men. This fact does not seem to contribute positively in terms of closing the gap between the feminine perspective on the developing world versus the masculine perspective on the developed world.

Some authors argue that women from the Global South comprise the second most prevailing group which is represented in the messages of the INGOs (Dogra 2012, p. 39). In the case of Kiva, because of the binary gender division of the loan applicants, women have the first place.

The Financial Status of the Loan as an Encouraging Factor for Lenders

Every single borrower profile follows the same representational model. Under the header of each web page, there is information about the loan details including: loan length, repayment schedule, disbursed date, currency exchange loss, field partner, interest rate, field partner risk rating. This section provides some very specific finance terms that remind lenders that their donation is in fact a loan (see Appendix 7, Appendix 8). The suggestion on financial loss makes it unclear if an unpaid loan could result in a donation at the end. The indebtedness is not directly perceived, but it is the main instrument to achieve the final goal of providing help to the borrowers. Both Kiva and borrowers seem to be free of risk – the risk of capital loss seem to exist only for the lenders. However, there seems to be other incentivising mechanisms for the lenders – some of the descriptions of borrowers who already repaid their previous loans have this information mentioned. Therefore, this detail could be a match for a less risk oriented lender. Here is an example (see Appendix 7):

Jane's story

[...]

46
She will use the KES 50,000 loan to buy more stock of sugar, bread, flour, soap and other items. This is her fourth loan with SMEP Microfinance Bank. Her previous loans were repaid successfully.”

From a neoliberal perspective, people can help themselves out of poverty if they are given this opportunity. Therefore, a loan can be seen as the panacea for improving people’s lives. As proposed by Schwittay (2011), hypothetically "they will have more self-esteem and trust in their innate entrepreneurial abilities. The latter, when scaled up and reinforced with training and microcredit, will enable the poor to pull themselves out of poverty” (Schwittay 2011, p. 73). Kiva tries to market its approach to development not as a charity. However, as borrowers are represented as helpless and needing help, charity seems to be the main driving force that pushes towards development and progress. Despite that, Kiva insists that borrowers are independent, humble and hard working entrepreneurs that take care of their families. The following is an example of a female individual single parent borrower (see Appendix 7):

Bertilda María’s story

"Bertilda, age 38, is head of household and a mother who lives in the town of Malambo with her two kids, ages 11 and 14. She started her business a year ago selling food at her house. She works from Friday to Sunday, and the rest of the week she works at a restaurant.

[...] Bertilda has a good reputation in the locality. She is a very responsible and proactive person, and that is why she is requesting a loan to buy non-perishable food such as rice, legumes, pastas, oil, salt and sugar, among others. This will help to make her business more profitable. [...]”

Here is another example of a male individual single parent borrower (see Appendix 8):

Carlos Ernesto’s story

Carlos is 43 years old, single, and is characterized as being humble, hard-working, and honest. He lives with his family in the countryside. He has a daughter, Micaela, 10 years old, who studies.
To pay for the necessities, he works raising animals. This has allowed him to generate an income for his family. He wants to get a loan to purchase a dairy cow and vitamins so to be able to improve his production. In the future, he wants to continue improving his rural business and also to educate his daughter.

There is an absence of facts regarding help received from the community that these borrowers live in. Their representations appear as quite homogenized. Women empowerment is a regular topic within the development context. The percentage of female profiles is significantly higher compared to male profiles – single mothers appear to be more than ten times when compared to profiles of single fathers. In that sense, Kiva does not exclude the importance of empowering also single fathers. However, the big difference in numbers could lead to the assumption that poverty alleviation endeavors work mainly for the women, thus projecting the established pros and cons in terms of women empowerment.

**Semiotics of Borrowers' Representations**

Hall argues that people, objects, things in general do not have any fixed or true meaning in themselves – representation itself is a process in which "members of a culture use language (broadly defined as any system which deploys signs, any signifying system) to produce meaning” and, as cultures are different from each other, "there is no guarantee that every object in one culture will have an equivalent meaning in another" (Hall 2013, p. 45). Therefore, both visual and textual representations of borrowers at Kiva are the product of a specific point of view, where meaning is produced through language. Language and culture impose specific rules which connect ideas and concepts to specific words or images. This would be valid in the case of the representations of people in need at Kiva – for instance, if one could argue that working in hard conditions with no other options to survive is the reality, others could say that this is part of their everyday life, even part of their culture.

Dogra suggests that the development discourse implies "erasing the diversity, complexity and historicity of the 'Third World’ through monochromatic and ahistorical depictions” where modalities and mechanisms such as homogenization, classification and labelling, commodification, fetishism, decontextualization and discontinuity are illustrated and represented through the themes of "'Third World Woman', barren land, overcrowding, ruins, famine, war, developed/underdeveloped, modern/traditional,
setting – rural/urban, predominant display of decontextualized body parts such as eyes, lack of local–global links: historical and current” (Dogra 2012, p. 18). The analytical approaches to the representations of the “others” of the “majority world” (MW) and the “self” of the “developed world” (DW) can be summarized, as Dogra suggests, in a “postcolonial lens” (Dogra 2012, p. 17) and such illustrations and themes can be found in the representations of borrowers as well. Dogra argues that world history is connected and it shapes the global order of “majority world” poverty and “developed world” prosperity, and this is valid also for the production of knowledge through representations which are the “cultural effects of colonial history which invented various constructs such as ‘race’, ‘Africa’, ‘Orient’ and later ‘development’” (Dogra 2012, p. 9).

The protagonists in the loan applications are somehow showed as victims, supported by others. Moreover, depictions of virtues such as hard work in questionable working conditions make the loan applicants “deserving help”. The use in pictures of “majority world” children, followed by images of “majority world” women continues the same narrative of “‘infantilisation’ and ‘feminisation’ of MW” (Dogra 2012, p. 32), thus implying that the developing world is mainly occupied by women and children. On the other hand, a state of need is being projected through the use of images of children. Such images inevitably contribute to the story of the infantilized Global South and, as Dogra argues, this “attributes to it several contradictory ideas associated with children such as ‘positive’ notions of innocence and a child-like state and ‘negative’ connotations of paternalism, ignorance and under-development” (Dogra 2012, p.38). In this regard, Dogra refers to Ashis Nandy arguing that this “infantilization” and the childhood are used as “a blank slate on which adults must write their moral codes” (Dogra 2012, p.38). This further increases the power inequalities between the “developed world” and the “majority world”. The feminization (or “de-masculinisation”) of “majority world” continues to have its role when representing borrowers: women are portrayed in a specific way – quite often they are shown as the opposite of the emancipated and independent Western women. In this regard, some of the images of the female borrowers remind of what Dogra argues about the “colonial discourses of the ‘fecundity’ of ‘Other’ women which were transformed within the development discourse into the over-crowded MW with its overreproductive women […]’ (Parmar, 2003: 289)” (Dogra 2012, p. 41). Last but not least, the studied representations of borrowers from the Global South seem to make no exception by confirming that, traditionally, “majority world” is seen as a place of violence and instability. In support
of this, Dogra further states that the “generalised 'child-like' and 'primitive' stage of the Global South signifies lack of leadership through portrayals of disorder, violence and corruption, and irrationality through representations of overpopulation which, in turn, justifies paternalism and outside leadership” (Dogra 2012, p. 82).

Stereotypes through Participatory Communication

Kiva’s online platform provides the means for a participatory style of communication – it provides the infrastructure and technology to promote style of communication that is not controlled by elites or governments. Its model of communication and media approaches seem to support style of interaction which is owned by its community.

The borrowers on Kiva’s platform who are mainly from the Global South have their own story to share with prospective lenders who are mainly from countries from the Global North. Even if the consequences from this kind of interaction between people from both the developing world and the developed world lead to some optimistic results such as participatory communication – which may or may not result in the adoption of horizontal communication that promotes structural change – the representations of borrowers at Kiva seem to continue a tradition of portraying oppressed individuals from the Global South though stereotypes.

But what is important here is that the resulting interaction seems to be controlled by the community and not by elites or governments. The historically pre-imposed power relations between the Global South and North, and their respective representations, question the possible dialogic form of communication (as contrasted to a monologic one) between them. In this regard, Scott (2014) rightly points out that representations through new technologies help in reducing “concentrations of ownership” – and the representations of the borrowers and their personal stories on Kiva’s platform seem to control and take community ownership though new forms which are very similar to the ones found in social media for example.
Conclusion

It is impossible to deny the fact that Kiva appears to be an INGO which is seriously involved in the pursuit of development and poverty reduction. However, the voice of the subaltern is not really amplified through the means of Kiva’s online platform. Instead, the voice of people in need appears as both reproduced and monotonous, and this can be easily realized when reading through the descriptions of loan applications of the sample of the study. People’s story is told in third person (which is not the case with the stories of borrowers from the Global North), similarly to fiction, like literature created from the imagination. In most of the cases, these stories contain no more than 100-150 words which are used to influence lenders’ decision. All profiles seem to be intentionally homogenized, following the same visual and textual template. By almost completely excluding borrowers’ historical, political and economic context, their representations appear as decontextualized and disconnected from the developed world. Similarly to an ecommerce online store where each product should be as good as the others, borrowers at Kiva are represented with lenders in mind. Ultimately, Kiva’s goal is to distribute loans to borrowers in a timely and effective manner and, therefore, the possible problematics of representations appear to be left aside if not just ignored. Considering the findings from the analysis, it seems like the most winning strategy in the process of securing a loan is to represent individual single parents as emancipated, hard-working, entrepreneurial, mostly female, caring for his/her children. These personal qualities seem to be easily recognizable and admirable by the lenders from the Global North. That way borrower speak lenders’ language and when speaking the same language it is most probably more likely to have a deal and, therefore, lend/borrow money more smoothly.

The fact that borrowers are divided in specific groups provides a lot of information about the approach of Kiva towards crowdfunding as a tool for reducing poverty in the Global South. Microfinance looks like a well-thought-out tool for empowering both “majority world” and “developed world” where the former is allowed to receive a certain amount of money while the latter is entitled to feel better once they give money to someone. The apparent connection between borrowers and lenders is furthered by visual and textual representations of the Global South in the loan descriptions, while there is no guarantee that the social practice where a borrower is
located actually presumes a civil status of "divorced" or "single" parent. The most important fact here seems to be the lenders’ own perception of the world. The “majority world” is “simplistically” represented through the lens of “developed world” – people work hard to support their families and their dreams for a better life, and financial support is deemed the only solution to their problems. By critically analyzing the depictions of people in need on the lending platform, it is possible to argue that borrowers may deserve a more adequate approach to their own stories, where Western-centric ways of thinking and stereotyping are less privileged, and more speaking in first person is encouraged and therefore understood.

The borrowers are represented mainly through their loan descriptions in combination with their profile photograph. The descriptions are short (around 100-150 words), providing some basic information about age, gender, and family status. Almost without exceptions, all of the borrower profiles seem to be oversimplified and very identical. There is a sense of privacy in both profiles and photographs which somehow undermines the authenticity of the descriptions. However, the language of storytelling remains in the center of the INGO’s success. As Black (2013) argues, these descriptions are "mediated and packaged" so that they can be more easily integrated in the global capitalist economy. Therefore, someone’s story becomes the currency through which "responsibility is negotiated" (Black 2013, p. 109).

The lenders are given the opportunity to find a borrower who meets their expectations. Just like on an online selling platform, one can consume (or fund) a story for at least $25. Of course, every effort to reduce poverty is admirable, and if that is the case with Kiva, every effort is worth it, no matter its shortcomings. However, the subjectivity of the lending process which depends on personal decisions could have questionable results in the long run, especially when compared with other fundraising practices which are based on trust, rather than personal preferences. Indebtment and debt are considered as a natural development instrument, but the complete focus on it may prevent the use of other alternative forms of development intervention. However, in the case of Kiva, the notion of development seems to be hooked on the idea of microfinance. The main focus on lending makes the idea of microfinance appear as biased and limited when it come to the representation of borrowers.

Indeed, Baaz (2005) suggests that, in the context of development, the differences between Global South and Global North are reinforced with the help of representations.
For this reason, from a postcolonial perspective, it can be assumed that the consumers of these representations expect that lenders are presented as the active "do-gooders" and givers while the borrowers are depicted as the passive takers whose life depends on the givers’ decisions. Additionally, the givers can be perceived as passive as well as they themselves are reciprocally stereotyped – they are targeted by campaigns, which poses the problem of the commercialization and automation of INGOs. The lenders can already automate their good-doing by automatically linking their credit card to their Kiva account, so that every month a certain amount of money is sent to a borrower – lenders can just forget and have their conscience automatically cleared.

Now, it seems that there are more questions to be answered. The representations of individual single parents from the Global South are just one sample for studying the depictions of a specific group of borrowers on an online lending platform. It would be interesting to find out if representations of other groups follow the same logic and if there are any differences between the ways one group is portrayed in contrast to another. While taking into consideration the result of the most commonly used words in loan application descriptions, a further, more in-depth comparative study can be conducted. The same would be valid for the visual representations of the borrowers, including the content of their photographs, but also their quality and composition in general. Also, it may be worth studying if the use of descriptions in first person for the profiles from the Global North compared to the use of third person for the ones from the Global South is just a coincidence or not.

Finally, despite Kiva’s efforts to shift away from traditional colonial discourses, the postcolonial tone of representations of borrowers who are depicted as somehow inferior to their givers, thus deserving help, is still the force that drives microfinance in developing countries. The correlation between microcredit and charity seems to be characterized by corporate standards where automation and seemingly rational decisions do the actual “poverty reduction” work. Indisputably, Kiva has its own place in the family of "semi-charitable” organizations even though microlending is not really a charity as it relies mainly on local partners who collect interests from the borrowers: it is not a donation, it is a loan!
References


Cheek, Julianne (2008), *Foucauldian Discourse Analysis*, The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods, Editors: Lisa M. Given, Last Checked: May 27, 2018, Retrieved from:  


**Appendix**

**Appendix 1: Full list of individual single parents (women). [Image Source: Kiva.org]**
Appendix 2: Full list of individual single parents (men). [Image Source: Kiva.org]
Appendix 3: A screen capture of the applied search filter on Kiva.org:
×Women ×Individual ×Single Parent ×Risk rating: 0 to 5 ×Fundraising.
[Image Source: Kiva.org]

Appendix 4: A screen capture of the applied search filter on Kiva.org:
×Men ×Individual ×Single Parent ×Risk rating: 0 to 5 ×Fundraising.
[Image Source: Kiva.org]
Appendix 5: The most commonly used words in loan descriptions of individual single parents (women). [Image Source: Wordcounter.com]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>loan</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>business</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buy</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helps</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>story</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>years</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>single</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>purchase</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>income</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>farming</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>improve</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>woman</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>old</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>help</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>two</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lives</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>increase</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sell</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>store</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>farm</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>able</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>profits</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>living</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wants</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stock</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kiva</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>products</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seeds</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>needs</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clothes</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>selling</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inputs</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>customers</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hopes</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sells</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pay</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>make</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>food</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>future</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>through</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>loan</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buy</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>business</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>story</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>single</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helps</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>years</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>josé</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>purchase</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lives</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>father</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grow</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grains</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>basic</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>old</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cows</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>little</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>future</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>home</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>necessary</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>motorbike</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sell</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agricultural</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rodoifo</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tuk</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>income</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>house</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dreams</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dairy</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>service</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supplies</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>three</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>young</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rafael</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>materials</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>construction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>samuel</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>able</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>humberto</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dream</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>material</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fattening</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sand</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>build</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 7: Individual single parents loan descriptions (women). [Image Source: Kiva.org]
A loan of $1,290 helps to buy more crates of eggs, salt, sugar, bread and other items to sell in her shop.

A loan of $1,000 helps to pay for the birth of her child.

Profile # 1

Anet's story
Need to: Expand her business by purchasing more eggs, salt, sugar, bread and other items to sell in her shop.

This loan is special because:
It targets extremely rural populations.

More about this loan
Loan amount requested: $1,290
Loan length: 14 months
Repayment schedule

Profile # 2

Anutta's story
Need to: Assist her family in the care of their children. The financial support will allow her to pay for medical expenses for her son.

This loan is special because:
It covers medical expenses for low-income families.

More about this loan
Loan amount requested: $1,000
Loan length: 20 months
Repayment schedule
**Profile # 3**

**Aloina story**

About her store:

Worried about rising food inflation and the rising cost of living in her country, Aloina started a grocery store in her community. She uses the loan to purchase fresh food items for her store.

**Loan details**

- **Interest**: 14 months
- **Loan Amount**: $77.9
- **Country**: Honduras

**Country Information**

- **Average credit score**: 855
- **Debt to income ratio**: 85.6%
- **Debts per household**: 0
- **Number of credit cards**: 0

**Tops**

- **Rating**: 5/5
- **Number of reviews**: 1

**Comments and updates (0)**

No new comments to be retrieved for this loan.

**Profile # 4**

**Aloina story**

About her store:

Worried about rising food inflation and the rising cost of living in her country, Aloina started a grocery store in her community. She uses the loan to purchase fresh food items for her store.

**Loan details**

- **Interest**: 14 months
- **Loan Amount**: $77.9
- **Country**: Honduras

**Country Information**

- **Average credit score**: 855
- **Debt to income ratio**: 85.6%
- **Debts per household**: 0
- **Number of credit cards**: 0

**Tops**

- **Rating**: 5/5
- **Number of reviews**: 1

**Comments and updates (0)**

No new comments to be retrieved for this loan.
Profile # 5

A loan of $400 helps to buy cereals, sell to her customers, and earn extra income to help a single women support her children who are in school.

Agnes's story

Agnes is a single mother of two children. She makes a living by selling cereals in her local market. She needs a loan to purchase more cereals to sell to her customers. With the extra income, she wants to ensure her children have a good education.

This loan is special because:

- It finances a single mother to support her family and education.
- It provides a source of income for Agnes to continue her business.

More about this loan

- Purpose: Purchase cereals for sale
- Interest rate: 12%
- Duration: 6 months
- Amount: $400
- Purpose: Support single mother's business

Field Partner: Thalhin
Kilimo

Repayment schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>$200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tags

- #SingleMother
- #SupportEducation
- #SmallBusiness

Profile # 6

A loan of $1,375 helps to buy a few head of cattle to promote his business.

Ziyodagul's story

Ziyodagul has been raising cattle for about 5 years. He needs a loan to purchase more cattle to expand his business. The loan will help him increase his income and provide for his family.

This loan is special because:

- It supports the well-being of a family.
- It helps to promote the cattle trade in the area.

More about this loan

- Purpose: Purchase cattle for business
- Interest rate: 0%
- Duration: 20 months
- Amount: $1,375
- Purpose: Promote cattle trade

Field Partner: Nami
Kilimo

Repayment schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$68.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>$68.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>$68.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>$68.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>$68.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>$68.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>$68.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>$68.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>$68.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>$68.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>$68.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>$68.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>$68.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>$68.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>$68.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>$68.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>$68.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>$68.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>$68.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>$68.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tags

- #CattleTrade
- #FamilyWellbeing
- #BusinessExpansion

67
Profile # 9

**Thiis's story**

I am the owner of a coffee plantation. We face difficulties in the market due to the goods being lower in quality as the coffee is not exported. I am using the loan to buy fertilizer which will improve the quality and therefore, increase the earning of the coffee. My monthly income is $200, which will improve to $250-

**Location details**

- **Loan amount**: $1,900
- **Loan length**: 20 months

**Field Partner**: Tha Sai Microfinance Institution

**Repayment schedule**

**Leaders and lending teams**

**Country information**

- **Average annual income (2020)**: $2,400
- **Currency**: Cambodian riel (KHR)
- **Exchange rate (2020)**: 3,776.7 KHR = 1 USD
- **Current interest rates**: 16%

**Comments and updates (0)**

**Tags**

Profile # 10

**Sreoun's story**

I am the owner of a small restaurant next to the river. Due to the closeness of the restaurant to the river, the customers prefer to come to the restaurant in order to view the river. I have a monthly income of $300. However, my family is not satisfied with the income. I am using the loan to buy new crockery in order to attract more customers.

**Location details**

- **Loan amount**: $1,700
- **Loan length**: 18 months

**Field Partner**: Chreavoeun Microfinance PLC

**Repayment schedule**

**Leaders and lending teams**

**Country information**

- **Average annual income (2020)**: $2,400
- **Currency**: Cambodian riel (KHR)
- **Exchange rate (2020)**: 3,776.7 KHR = 1 USD
- **Current interest rates**: 18%

**Comments and updates (0)**

**Tags**

- Woman
- Village
- Cambodia
A loan of $450 helps to build an extension in her house.

**Reyna Del Carmen**

**Profile # 13**

**Profile # 14**

**Loan details**

**Loan length:** 17 months

**Country:** Honduras

**Field Partner:** Prisma

**Repayment schedule**

**This loan is special because:**

It provides credit to some of the most isolated communities in Honduras.

**More about this loan**

Honduran farmers grow coffee to sell and raise cattle. Reyna Narvarte is a smallholder farmer that grows coffee on about 2.25 acres in the easter of Honduras. She is a single mother and her family is facing extreme financial difficulties for the lack of resources. She needs help to be able to pay for the supplies and labor to extend her house. With the loan she plans to extend her house and improve her living conditions.

**Lenders and lending teams**

**Country information**

**average income:** $4,803

**lending partners:** $32,093,073

**Comments and updates**

**Tags**

A loan of $500 helps to buy cereals, chicken, and beans and help a single mom meet the increased demand for food and eventually lift the livelihood of her family.

**Rebecca**

**Profile # 14**

**Profile # 13**

**Loan details**

**Loan length:** 17 months

**Country:** Kenya

**Field Partner:** Juhudi Kilimo

**Repayment schedule**

**This loan is special because:**

It finances smallholder farmers to purchase dairy cows, chickens, cereals and farming equipment.

**More about this loan**

The farmers are given a small loan to acquire dairy cows, chickens, cereals or farming equipment. They are required to be farming for a minimum of one year. They are required to give 5% of their output of any of the commodities to the lending partner. The repayment period is 17 months with a 6-month grace period after that. The loan is for up to $800. The purpose of the loan is to increase livelihoods for smallholder farmers. The funds will be used to purchase the cows/chickens/cereals/equipment.

**Lenders and lending teams**

**Country information**

**average income:** $4,803

**lending partners:** $72,000,000

**Comments and updates**

**Tags**
Profile # 15

North

North's story

North is a 42-year-old married mother of two children. She and her family live in a village on the outskirts of Kampala. She is a self-employed seller of hair extensions.

Though she has been successful in her business, North has had to sacrifice time with her children as she spends much of her time working from dawn to dusk.

This loan is special because:

It provides entrepreneurs with resources to improve their living conditions.

Field Partner: Chairmain Microfinance Plc

More about this loan

The microcredit loan is a product of Chairmain Microfinance Plc. The organization operates in Central Uganda, providing access to credit for the rural poor. They offer a wide range of financial services, including microloans, savings, and insurance products.

This loan is designed to help entrepreneurs increase their income and improve their living conditions.

Leaders and lending teams

Chairmain Microfinance (2)

Country information

Average annual income (USD): $1,600

Comments and updates (0)

Tags

Profile # 15

Profile # 16

Mayra Alexandra

Mayra Alexandra’s story

Mayra is a 28-year-old mother of two children. She is a self-employed seller of vegetables and charcoal.

This loan is special because:

It aims to reach vulnerable refugee populations in an isolated region.

Field Partner: VivaKung

More about this loan

This loan is part of a program that targets vulnerable refugee populations. It provides access to credit for microentrepreneurs in isolated areas. The program focuses on providing financial support to refugees who are struggling to find employment.

Leader and lending teams

CreditAccess (1)

Country information

Average annual income: $3,600

Comments and updates (0)

Tags
Profile # 17

Maria

Loan details

- Loan length: 23 months
- Loan amount: $1,500
- Repayment schedule

Country information

- Income per capita: $3,000
- Government lending: 10%
- Loan maximum: $2,500
- Loan to value: 30%

Comments and updates (0)

Tags

Profile # 18

Maria Santos

Loan details

- Loan length: 16 months
- Loan amount: $1,500
- Repayment schedule

Country information

- Income per capita: $3,000
- Government lending: 10%
- Loan maximum: $2,500
- Loan to value: 30%

Comments and updates (0)

Tags

A loan of $1,500 helps Maria to expand her home-based cosmetic and household goods trading business.

A loan of $1,500 helps Maria to pay for the Septima Tank for waste from the piggery.
A loan of $500 helps to buy motorcycle spare parts.

Lucy's story
Lucy runs a business that provides transportation services for local residents. She took out a loan to purchase motorcycle parts for her business.

Loan details
- Loan amount: $500
- Duration: 14 months
- Interest rate: 7.4%
- Repayment schedule

This loan is special because:
It enables rural borrowers to access funding at competitive rates.

Landers and lending team
Cost: $500

Field Partner: Kiva

Country information
- Average annual income: $1,800
- Kenya's GDP: $173,000,000
- Loan amount: $500

Loan usage: microfinance

Comments and updates (0)
You had been lender to comment on this loan.

Tags
- #Microfinance
- #Kiva
- #Loan

Profile #19
A loan of $800 helps to buy noodles, rice, sugar, eggs and bread to sell in her shop.

Karen Bright's story

Karen Bright is a 35-year-old, single woman who lives in a small village in the Philippines. She is a hardworking woman who would like to support her family and her small business. With the help of this loan, she hopes to increase her income and provide for her family's needs. She plans to use the money to purchase more ingredients for her shop, which will help her to expand her business and increase her profits.

Loan details

- **Loan amount:** $800
- **Duration:** 14 months
- **Interest rate:** 21%

Field Partner: VisionFund

Repayment schedule

- Monthly payments

This loan is special because:

- It allows Karen to support her family and her small business.

More about this loan

The amount of funds that we provide is small compared to other microfinance institutions. However, this is not a problem for us. Our goal is to support the smallest businesses and help them grow.

Lenders and lending teams

- R:\n  - Cambodia
  - Slovak Republic
- L:\n  - Colombia
  - Lebanon

Country information

- Average income per year: $1,920
- Average life expectancy: 66
- Average education level: 5

Comments and updates

- No comments or updates available.

Tags

- Microcredit borrowers
- Women

Profile # 23

Profile # 24

76
Profile # 25

Jackeline's story

Jackeline is a 39-year-old single mother, and she is determined to keep her family healthy and strong through medical care. She has been struggling with medical costs and wants to increase her family's health. The loan will help her family to purchase medicine, hospitalization, and other medical expenses. She is eager to use the loan to improve her children's health.

This loan is special because: It helps people cover important costs for medical treatment.

Loan details

- **Loan length:** 18 months
- **Amount:** $5,000
- **Interest rate:** 0%
- **Repayment schedule:**

Field Partner: AI Meknesa

Lenders and lending teams

- Microbusiness
- FPM

Country information

- **Average annual income (GDP):** $11,000
- **Rank:** 59th
- **Country:** Portugal

Comments and updates (0)

- All loan has been funded successfully.

Tags

- Microbusiness
- Microfinance

Profile # 26

Jackeline Omeira's story

Jackeline Omeira is a 39-year-old single mother, and she is determined to keep her family healthy and strong through medical care. She has been struggling with medical costs and wants to increase her family's health. The loan will help her family to purchase medicine, hospitalization, and other medical expenses. She is eager to use the loan to improve her children's health.

This loan is special because: It aims to reach vulnerable refugee populations in an isolated region.

Loan details

- **Loan length:** 14 months
- **Amount:** $4,000
- **Interest rate:** 0%
- **Repayment schedule:**

Field Partner: VisionFund Ecuador

Lenders and lending teams

-组合

Country information

- **Average annual income (GDP):** $20,000
- **Rank:** 10th
- **Country:** Ecuador

Comments and updates (0)

- The loan has been funded successfully.

Tags

- Combination
- Microfinance

Profile # 25

Profile # 26
Helen Yasmin's story

Helen is a young mother of two sons. She decided to use her loan to buy more fruits to sell.

This loan is special because:

It supports single mothers and other vulnerable women.

Field Partner:
CradleBank

Repayment schedule

Loan details:

Loan length: 6 months

Loan amount: $300

Interest rate: 12%

Principal: $264.29

Interest: $35.71

Total: $300

Gladys’s story

Gladys is a single mother who has 2 children. She uses the loan to buy more fruits to sell.

This loan is special because:

It enables rural borrower access to funding at competitive rates.

Field Partner:
SMEP Microfinance Bank

Repayment schedule

Loan details:

Loan length: 14 months

Loan amount: $300

Interest rate: 12%

Principal: $264.29

Interest: $35.71

Total: $300

Country Information

Average annual income: $1,000

GDP per capita: $685.76

Comments and updates (0)

Tags

A loan of $600 helps to purchase staple products to stock the store and, on, with the earnings she will get ahead since she is a single mother.

A loan of $500 helps to buy more fruits to sell.
Genny's story
Living in a 4 person household, having 3 children, and making a living working in a textile factory, Genny's income is not enough to make ends meet. Recently, a local bank refused to fund her operation for a new home. She is looking for a loan to purchase a property, but her monthly income of 800,000 pesos is not enough to get the loan. Her monthly expenses are estimated at 500,000 pesos, and she is left with only 300,000 pesos for other necessities. Genny has no collateral, such as property or vehicles, which she needs to have to get approved for a loan. So far, she has been turned down by 10 different banks. A loan of 1,000,000 pesos means she can finally pay off her mortgage and start living in her own home.

Loan details
Loan amount: 1,000,000 pesos
Loan term: 20 months
Interest rate: 6%
Monthly payment: 46,400 pesos
Total interest paid: 141,600 pesos

Country information
Average annual income: 1,100,000 pesos
Median household income: 467,000 pesos

Tags
Genny, Profile #31, Location, Household, Income, Children, Education, Work, Lifestyle, Health, Food, Clothing, Housing, Transportation, Utilities, Entertainment, Other

Flora De Maria's story
Flora De Maria works in a textile factory and earns a monthly income of 1,100,000 pesos. She is looking for a loan to purchase a property, but her monthly income is not enough to get approved for a loan. She has no collateral, such as property or vehicles, which she needs to have to get approved for a loan. So far, she has been turned down by 10 different banks. A loan of 1,000,000 pesos means she can finally pay off her mortgage and start living in her own home.

Loan details
Loan amount: 1,000,000 pesos
Loan term: 20 months
Interest rate: 2%
Monthly payment: 41,000 pesos
Total interest paid: 131,000 pesos

Country information
Average annual income: 1,100,000 pesos
Median household income: 467,000 pesos

Tags
Flora De Maria, Profile #32, Location, Household, Income, Children, Education, Work, Lifestyle, Health, Food, Clothing, Housing, Transportation, Utilities, Entertainment, Other
Profile # 33

**Profile # 33**

**Title:** Fizze's Story

**Details:**
- **Loan details:**
  - **Loan length:** 26 months
- **Field Partner:** Home Repayment Schedule

**Description:** Fizze is a 59-year-old professional from Tanzania. She is a member of the farmers cooperative in her village, which supplies her with the resources she needs for her family. She uses the loan to purchase a computerized machine to modernize her sewing process and make more dresses in shorter time.

**More about this loan:**
- **Country Information:**
  - **Average annual income:** $2,700
- **Comments and updates:** No comments submitted on this loan.

**Tags:** 
- Tanzania 
- Agriculture 
- Technology

---

Profile # 34

**Profile # 34**

**Profile # 34**

**Title:** Feasmoeimoi's Story

**Details:**
- **Loan details:**
  - **Loan length:** 14 months
- **Field Partner:** South Pacific Business Development (SPBD) - Samoa

**Description:** Feasmoeimoi is a 66-year-old woman from Samoa. She recently married and is looking after her three grandchildren and a baby. She uses the loan to purchase a sewing machine and a computer to improve her skills and earn money for her family.

**More about this loan:**
- **Country Information:**
  - **Average annual income:** $2,000
- **Comments and updates:** No comments submitted on this loan.

**Tags:**
- Samoa 
- Agriculture 
- Technology
Burosha's story
Burosha lives in a rural community in Bangladesh. She sees the benefits of modern farming techniques and wants to expand her farm's production of vegetables. She used her loan to buy a generator that helped her grow more vegetables, allowing her to supply markets with fresh produce year-round.

This loan is special because:
The borrower receives a rebate on the interest rate if all repayments are made on time.

More about this loan
The loan was granted to help sustainable development in Bangladesh. The borrower has improved her cash flow by increasing production and has started exporting her products to new markets.

Country Information
Average annual income: $3,600
Population: 1,000,000

Comments and updates (0)
No comments or updates on this loan.

Tags
Burosha, Bangladesh, Vegetables, Environmentally friendly

Brigid Del Cormen's story
Brigid is a 32-year-old woman. She is an experienced agricultural entrepreneur with a strong track record. She used her loan to invest in new technologies and expand her business, allowing her to supply markets with fresh, quality produce.

This loan is special because:
It helps communities to protect themselves from diseases that can spread through poor sanitation.

More about this loan
Some communities have seen a decrease in the prevalence of certain diseases due to improved sanitation. The loan recipient has implemented effective sanitation practices, reducing the risk of disease transmission in the community.

Country Information
Average annual income: $4,800
Population: 500,000

Comments and updates (0)
No comments or updates on this loan.

Tags
Brigid, Bangladesh, Agriculture, Health

Loan details
Profile # 37
Profile # 38
Profile # 39

Benita's story

Benita had been working in a small grocery store for the past five years. She has always dreamed of opening her own business in the town, but she needed a loan to buy the equipment and stock. She applied for a loan of $5,000. After reviewing her application, the bank approved her loan. With the loan, Benita was able to open her own store.

This loan is special because:

It allowed the borrower to access a loan, plus other family-oriented services.

Field Partners: Abayi to Kusarke (ASFI)

Repayment schedule

Loan details

Loan amount: $5,000

Loan term: 1 year

Interest rate: 0%

Payment plan: Monthly

Country information

Average annual income: $7,900

Philippines Poverty: 65%

0.3

Comments and updates (0)

You must be signed in to comment or post.

Tags

Profile # 40

Berna's story

Berna was a hardworking and responsible woman. She had always wanted to start her own business in her village. With the help of the Rural Microfinance Program, she applied for a $5,000 loan to start a small shop.

This loan is special because:

It reached a rural population with less access to opportunity.

Field Partners: MON International

Repayment schedule

Loan details

Loan amount: $5,000

Loan term: 1 year

Interest rate: 0%

Payment plan: Monthly

Country information

Average annual income: $7,900

Philippines Poverty: 65%

0.3

Comments and updates (0)

You must be signed in to comment or post.

Tags
A loan of $1,075 helps to begin a business selling eggs, milk, and other dairy products; with this money she will begin stocking the business which she will locate in her home.

Astrid Carolina

Astrid Carolina's story

Astrid Carolina lives in the rural town of Cienaga del Mar. Her dream is to own a dairy farm. She wants to earn a living and also offer her community good quality milk to drink.

Astrid is planning to start the business selling eggs, milk, and other dairy products; with this money she will be able to start her business and offer her community high-quality milk.

Profile is designated for Interacredit, a microlender affiliated with Fondo Solidario de Fomento (FOSFO) and Fondo Solidario de Financiamiento Alternativo (FOSFIN). The profile's donations will be processed through Interacredit.

This loan is special because:

It goes towards helping someone fulfill his or her dreams of starting a business.

More about this loan

As a member of the Microfondo VI, Astrid Carolina has been very helpful in her community.

Along with the loan, she also receives training and technical support from Microfondo VI. As part of her training, she learns how to manage her business and how to use best practices to make her business successful.

Astrid's personal loan for $1,075 helps her to start her own dairy farm and provide high-quality milk to her community.

Leaders and loan officers

Country information

Comments and updates (0)

Tags

Profile # 41
Appendix 8: Individual single parents’ loan descriptions (men).

[Image Source: Kiva.org]
A loan of $800 helps to purchase a dairy cow and vitamins.

Carlos Ernesto's story

Located on an average income farm, Carlos Ernesto is raising cattle and growing vegetables. He has 10 children and relies on his fresh produce and meat for income. He has accumulated a year of debt and now wants to repay it with a new loan.

Field Partner: VahanFunded Ecuador

Repayment schedule

Loan details

Loan length: 10 months

More about this loan

This loan is part of Kiva’s program to provide microcredit to farmers in rural communities. Kiva supports the organization’s mission to provide sustainable and affordable financial services to rural communities through its work with local partners.

Comments and updates (0)

The most recent update was on this loan.

Tags

Emitter Credit Score

A loan of $550 helps to buy more cacao, raw, and spirits to sell.

Benjamin’s story

Benjamin is a successful entrepreneur, and he has been farming in his village for several years. He is now interested in growing cacao and has received training to improve his harvests. He is taking this loan to purchase raw cacao from neighboring farmers and sell it at a better price.

Field Partner: NORFOKAM

Repayment schedule

Loan details

Loan length: 10 months

More about this loan

This loan is part of Kiva’s program to provide microcredit to entrepreneurs in rural areas. Kiva supports the organization’s mission to provide sustainable and affordable financial services to rural communities through its work with local partners.

Comments and updates (0)

The most recent update was on this loan.

Tags

Emitter Credit Score

Average annual income $10,000

Loan amount $550

Country Information

Liberia

U.S. dollars

Average annual income $10,000

$38,498.373

Expenditure leadership

Comments and updates (0)

The most recent update was on this loan.

Tags

Emitter Credit Score

Average annual income $10,000

$412,102.123

Liberia

U.S. dollars

210

Country Information

Liberia

U.S. dollars

210

Comments and updates (0)

The most recent update was on this loan.

Tags

Emitter Credit Score
A loan of $2,700 helps to buy ice cream, cleaning products and condiments on his own small more in his little store.

Wilson De Jesus's story
Wilson, 37, has been in Brazil for 11 years. He opened his ice cream store three years ago, but due to the pandemic, he couldn’t make much profit. With this loan, he plans to buy ice cream, cleaning products, condiments and some other essentials for his store.

More about this loan
Lenders and lending teams
Country Information

Profile # 44

A loan of $3,270 helps to buy more plan, synthetic material, tools and other necessary items.

Rudolf Ernesto's story
Rudolf, 25, owns a textile handloom business in his hometown in Ecuador. He wants to buy more plan, synthetic material, tools and other necessary items for his business to expand.

More about this loan
Lenders and lending teams
Country Information

Profile # 45
A loan of $5075 helps to buy construction material.

Rafael's story:
Rafael lives in a small, rural village in Colombia. He is a farmer and he wants to build a new house for his family. He has been working for years and he has saved enough money to start this project. However, he needs a loan to cover the costs of building materials.

Lease details:
Lease length: 20 months
Lease amount: $5075
Interest rate: 8%
Repayment schedule:
- Monthly payment: $253.63
- Total interest: $507.50

This loan is special because:
It provides capital in underserved areas.

Lenders and lending teams:
- Contributing lenders:
  - 1 lender
- Contributing teams:
  - 1 team

Country information:
Average annual income: $2,280
Percentage of population: 4%
GDP per capita: $1,232

Comments and updates (3):
This loan is special because it provides capital in underserved areas. Rafael is working hard to build a new house for his family and this loan will help him achieve his goal.

Tags:
- Colombia
- Farmer
- Rural

Profile # 46

A loan of $450 helps to purchase spare parts and service his tea trolley.

Noel's story:
Noel is a tea trolley owner in Kenya. He wants to purchase spare parts and service his tea trolley to keep it running smoothly.

Lease details:
Lease length: 14 months
Lease amount: $450
Interest rate: 5%
Repayment schedule:
- Monthly payment: $20
- Total interest: $45

This loan is special because:
It provides financial services and education in deep rural areas.

Lenders and lending teams:
- Contributing lenders:
  - 1 lender
- Contributing teams:
  - 1 team

Country information:
Average annual income: $1,800
Percentage of population: 5%
GDP per capita: $1,232

Comments and updates (3):
This loan is special because it provides financial services and education in deep rural areas. Noel is working hard to keep his tea trolley running smoothly.

Tags:
- Kenya
- Tea trolley
- Rural

Profile # 47
A loan of $400 helps to purchase agricultural supplies to grow basic grains.

José Enya’s story
José Enya is a 46-year-old farmer from the department of Cucuta, Norte de Santander, Colombia. He has been farming for over 20 years, growing crops such as corn, beans, and potatoes. José’s farm is located in a small village where the majority of the population relies on agriculture for their livelihood.

José needs his loan to purchase agricultural supplies such as fertilizers, seeds, and tools to improve the yield of his crops. With a larger harvest, José will be able to sell more to local markets, increasing his income and the income of his family.

José’s farm is supported by local farmers who provide him with technical assistance and access to markets.

Loan details

Loans in Colombia, supported by Field Partner Credifondo, have helped farmers like José to improve their livelihoods and the well-being of their families.

Field Partner: Credifondo

More about this loan

This loan is special because it enables farmers to plant basic grains to feed their families.

Lenders and lending teams

Credifondo is supported by several lenders, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and the European Union.

Country information

- Average annual income: $1,500
- Population: 2,500
- Average age: 40

José’s farm is located in the Andes region, where the climate is ideal for growing crops.

Comments and updates (0)

There are no comments or updates on this loan.

Tags
- Colombia
- Andes region
- Agriculture
- Farmers