

REFLECTIONS: A GRASSROOT GAZETTE

Inside these walls a brighter tomorrow



Message from our Director

Happy to share the good news that we have received a minor project from NABARD to submit DPR and Business Plan for the Off Farm Producer Organisation we have proposed to help the marginal and small silk weavers of Kanchipuram. This is a very prestigious and path-breaking initiative and if we do get the major project, it would be yet another milestone in the Academy's journey.

I am happy to announce that during February, the Belstar Microfinance call center commenced operations at the Academy premises. In the first phase 14 seats have been planned.

It is that time of the year when we organize the Trainer's meet and this time, apart from upskilling the RTMs, they were also exposed to HIH's interventions in the tribal area of Jawadhu Hills. The visit helped in better bonding within the team apart from gaining knowledge on new skills/techniques which will help them become more effective.

The 25th batch of our flagship course CPMM kick-started this month in Salem and is progressing well.

Cloud Technology is gaining popularity as a successful career option. In this connection we held a couple of workshops to expose students to the nuances of this technology, besides providing an overview of the C2GP program we have signed up with our partner CloudThat.

The Academy takes pride in partnering with the Kanchipuram Collectorate once again, to impart basic computer skills to adolescent girls in 2 orphanage homes. The program commenced this month and will run for a little over 3 months with weekend sessions.

Senior officials from Essilor India visited the Academy for discussion in connection with the new project "Eye Connect" being undertaken by HIH India. We are hopeful that the Academy will have a part to play in implementing this project.

Following the formal launch of this project with the prestigious Adi Parasakthi Dental College and Hospital, Melmaruvathur for establishing a Centre of Excellence in Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Startup Promotion activities at their premises, the FDP is scheduled to take place in March.

The Tally Prime batches at satellite centers Indo American College and Vidyasagar Women's College, Chengalpattu, are progressing as per schedule.

The marketing team along with the support of Credit Plus team is busy with promotion and mobilization for various courses/programs and our connect with the colleges continued through conducting workshops, career counselling sessions and discussions on setting up Entrepreneurship and Start-up cell. They are also attending various job fairs across TN to source suitable candidates for placement with our partner companies.

Stay FIT. Stay HEALTHY. Stay HAPPY.

S. Chandrasekar
Director

This issue:

Message from our Director

PAGE 01

Training Outreach,
Belstar Call center

PAGE 02

Trainer's meet,
Flagship course - CPMM,
Corporate visit

PAGE 03

Study for OFPO,
Cloud technology workshop,
TEDP in Food Processing,
Skill Development Programs
for Adolescent Girls

PAGE 04

Field bytes,
Thoughts & Wisdom,
Motivation buddy

PAGE 05

BFSI sector update

PAGE 06



Training Outreach

In February 2024, the Academy training team focused on delivering the training for Belstar Microfinance staff on “Quick Loan and Death Claim processing” for pending regions. This was in addition to the other routine training – welcome calling, common induction and role-based induction for new joiners ensuring a smooth transition into their roles.

Also, the Regional Training Managers made visits to the

branches and extended hand-holding support to the branch teams. During such visits, they conducted branch refresher training sessions aimed at reinforcing knowledge and skills related to the Samrithi App, QR code usage, Cyber attack prevention and Insurance claim processes.

A total of 364 training sessions were conducted during the month, which covered 4167 participants and 4673 man-days.



In February 2024, Belstar Microfinance Limited successfully commenced its call centre operations at the HIH Academy premises with a team of 14 dedicated telecallers in Phase 1.

The designated call centre workspace has been equipped with workstations, each furnished with essential hardware, software, and telecommunication tools to facilitate efficient call handling and customer interactions. A team of 14 telecallers was recruited based on stringent selection criteria and underwent comprehensive training sessions to familiarize themselves with call centre operations, customer service protocols, and technology platforms.

Advanced communication systems, including VoIP telephony and call management software, were integrated to streamline call routing, monitoring, and reporting processes, enhancing operational efficiency and service delivery. A robust Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system was deployed to facilitate seamless customer interactions, data management, and service personalization, enabling telecallers to provide tailored solutions.

Tele-callers efficiently managed calls, addressing customer queries, resolving issues, and providing necessary assistance promptly, reflecting the effectiveness of the training and technology infrastructure.



(Clockwise from left) Induction training- West Bengal, Induction training- Karnataka, Branch refresher – Madhya Pradesh, AGT with SO - Rajasthan, AGT with SO – Uttar Pradesh, Induction training – Tamil Nadu.



Trainer's meet

Regional Training Managers (RTMs) are engaged in providing different training interventions to field staff regularly and hence it is important to ensure upskilling and certification of trainers. HIH Academy's Regional Training Manager's annual meet was conducted from 22-26 February 2024. 18 Regional Training Managers from all states and two Zonal Training Managers attended the program.

On the first day the trainers visited Belstar Microfinance headquarters, in Chennai and met with the Senior Management team. On the Second day, the trainers attended training sessions focused on enhancing interpersonal skills and learning Lean Six Sigma methodologies at HIH Academy, Kanchipuram. On February 24-25, the trainers visited Jawadhu Hills, in Tiruvannamalai dist., observed the various project interventions which is being implemented by Hand in Hand India to support the Tribal communities and the impact created towards transforming their life.

The trainer's meet included a diverse range of activities aimed at knowledge exchange, skill enhancement and collaboration, contributing to the continuous improvement and effectiveness of HIH Academy's training programs.



Flagship Course: CPMM

25th batch at Omalur, Salem

The Academy launched its 25th batch of the Certificate Program in Microfinance Management (CPMM) in Salem on 12th February 2024. Since its inception in 2018, the CPMM courses have provided comprehensive training in microfinance management to uplift the skills of rural youth. A unique feature of this course is combining theory with practical exposure to field operations. The duration of this course is 45 days, which includes classroom sessions, branch visits, field internships and assignments.

The launch of Batch 25 marks a significant milestone for HIH Academy as it continues its journey of shaping the future of microfinance management education.



Corporate visit

Onesight Essilor Luxottica Foundation (OSELF) officials Mr. Sanjib Kumar Jha, Head Network Development & Channel Management Sustainable Programming India & Bangladesh, and Mr. Rohan Kumar Jha Project Manager visited HIH Academy on 7th February 2024 with P&A team and observed the infra facility. They discussed about utilizing the Academy facility for conducting training programs to develop women entrepreneurs to set up Essilor Eye Connect centres.

Study for Off-Farm Producer Organization(OFP)



HiH Academy is proposing to start an Off-Farm Producer Company for the benefit of small and marginal handloom weavers to enhance their income through - Direct procurement of raw materials from the source, Developing market tie-ups, Offloading 85% of revenues to the weaver instead of wages and Technology integration for production efficiencies and emphasize authenticity. In this regard, the HiH Academy Team made a presentation to the NABARD Steering Committee and based on that NABARD has sanctioned a mini-budget to undertake a Diagnostic Study and prepare a DPR with a Business Development Plan.

HiH Academy with the active support of the Social Mobilization team and the M&E wing has undertaken the Diagnostic Study from Feb 16th to 4th March 2024 and the market research is underway.

Cloud technology workshops

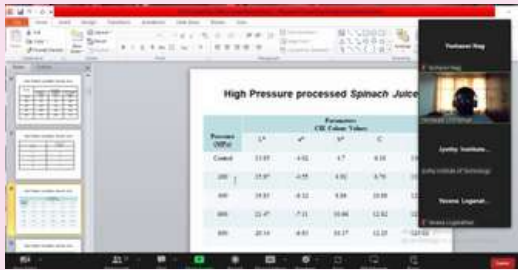


Academy conducted two Cloud Technology workshops for colleges to introduce students to the fundamental concepts of cloud computing. One program was conducted at Sanghamam College of Arts And Science - Annamangalam, Gingee on 16th February 2024 and the second program was conducted at Aksheyaa College of Art and Science, Puludivakkam, Madurantakam on 27th February 2024.

The workshop aimed to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of Cloud Technology. At the workshop, we conducted a basic coding exercise to run a program in C, C++, Python and Java to test the students' coding capabilities.

During the workshop, we introduced the Academy's new initiative, CloudThat's 'Cloud Career Guarantee Program' (C2GP) in partnership with AWS & Microsoft Azure. This initiative aims to provide students with a clear pathway to success in cloud technology careers by offering comprehensive training, certification, and guaranteed job placement.

Online TEDP in Food Processing



The online Technology Entrepreneurship Development Program in Food Processing commenced on the 27th of Dec 2023. 26 rural youth and women from Tamil Nadu participated in the program. Inputs have been given on Business Opportunity Guidance in the Food Processing sector, Technical Training on different food processing technologies, entrepreneurship competency inputs, inputs on compliance and statutory aspects, inputs on export marketing, small business management inputs etc.

The program is sponsored by the Department of Science and Technology. Hand in Hand Academy has been engaged as a Knowledge Partner with Atal Incubation Centre - Jyothy Institute of Technology, Bangalore. The Program concluded on 9th Feb 2024.

Skill Development Programs for Adolescent Girls at Orphanage Homes



Academy started a Skill Development Program in Basic Computer operations on 18th Feb 2024 for adolescent girls of two Orphanage Homes- one at Child Haven orphan home, Kaliyampoondi and another at St.Joseph's orphan home at Kanchipuram. The entire Skill Development program is supported by the Kanchipuram Collectorate and sponsored under the "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao" Program of Govt of India.

The inaugural event was held on 18th Feb 2024 in both the centres in the presence of Govt officials and HiH Academy Team. There are 30 students at Child Haven orphan home, Kaliyampoondi and 19 students at St. Joseph's orphan home, Kanchipuram attending the program. It is a 120 hour weekend program being held over 3 months.

In alignment with the commitment to fostering a customer-centric approach and promoting continuous improvement, Belstar Microfinance has undertaken the installation of complaints and suggestions boxes in all branches across Karnataka. This initiative, led by Mr. Ponnappa.B, the Regional Training Manager and supported by the Branch Accountants and other staff members, aims to provide stakeholders with a structured channel to voice their feedback and concerns.

With the guidance of the Regional Training Manager and the active participation of branch-level staff, the installation process was efficiently executed. Each branch was allocated designated areas for the placement of complaints and suggestions boxes, ensuring easy accessibility for both customers and staff.

The boxes were well positioned within each branch, clearly labeled and accompanied by instructions on their usage. Staff members, particularly the Branch Accountants, were briefed on the significance of these boxes and trained on the protocol for handling submissions promptly and confidentially.

The presence of dedicated boxes encourages customers to share their feedback and suggestions, facilitating a more interactive and customer-focused approach. Regular review and analysis of the feedback received through the boxes will enable the identification of areas for improvement, leading to enhanced service delivery and customer satisfaction.

The installation of complaints and suggestions boxes in Belstar branches across Karnataka signifies company's dedication to listening to their stakeholders and continuously striving for excellence in services.



Thoughts & Wisdom



Motivation buddy



Continuous learning empowers us to adapt, innovate, and thrive in an ever-changing world.



RBI nudge pushes

NBFC-MFIs to cut rates

The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) nudge to micro-finance lenders that they should pass on the benefits of higher margins to borrowers is beginning to bear fruit, as a number of players have already cut interest rates, and many are planning to follow suit.

Industry sources say that close to 20 NBFC-MFI players, including Belstar Microfinance, Svatantira Microfin, and Annapurna Finance have already slashed interest rates in the December quarter. Midland Microfin and ASA International India Microfinance have reduced the interest rate on their loans by up to 125 basis points (bps).

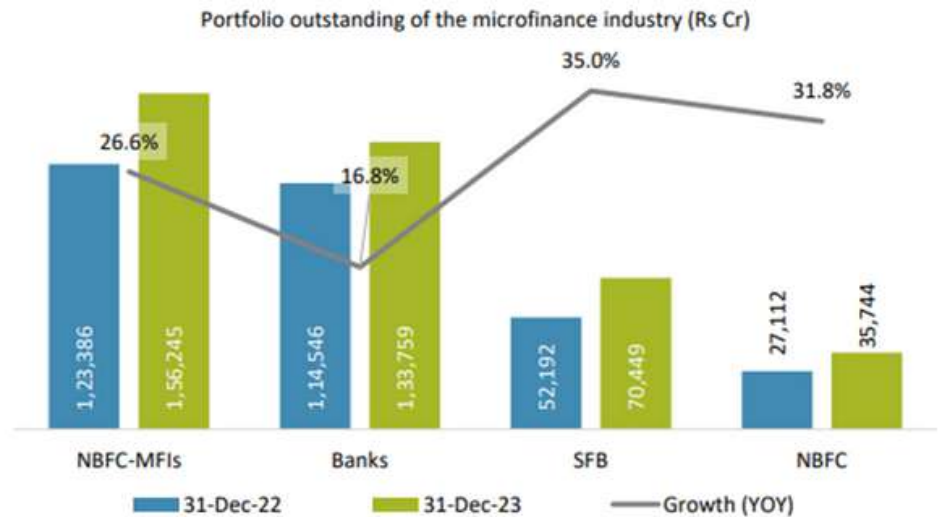
Others like Spandana Sphoorty Financial and Satin Creditcare Network also plan to cut rates across categories soon.

Unlike diversified non-bank lenders, NBFC-MFIs have been aided by the fact they largely operate in the unsecured loan segment. Hence, they are able price their loans on the basis of perceived risk of default. Due to their presence in far-flung areas, these entities are also able to ward off competition from banks in this segment.

In recent months, RBI has consistently urged microfinance entities to reduce the interest rate and make their products more affordable. At a public event in February, RBI Deputy Governor M Rajeshwar Rao had reprimanded microfinance entities for charging higher rates to borrowers, and for indulging in irresponsible practices.

Currently, the weighted average lending rate of large microfinance entities is at 23.9%.

MFI Portfolio Crosses Rs 4 Lakh Cr Mark Across India: Report



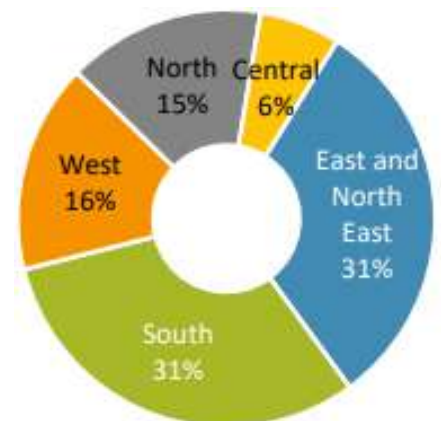
The portfolio of Micro-finance Institutions (MFI) has reached almost Rs 4 lakh crore during the third quarter of the current financial year, according to a report by the self-regulatory organisation MFIN. The report indicates that the industry witnessed a robust growth of 24.6 per cent over the last financial year, and portfolio delinquency has reached pre-Covid levels, indicating an improvement in the sector's health.

The report also highlights a significant change in the portfolio distribution across regions, with South India emerging as the largest contributor to the MFI portfolio, followed by east and northeast regions. The assets under management (AUM) of the MFI-NBFC members of MFIN stood at Rs 1,41,980 crore as of December 2023, a rise of 36 per cent year-on-year over the similar previous period.

During the third quarter of the current fiscal, the average loan disbursed per account stood at Rs 45,705, approximately 8.2 per cent higher than the previous period.

The report further reveals that NBFC-MFIs received total debt funding of Rs 21,847 crore, which is higher by 57.3 per cent over the similar previous period. Additionally, the total equity base of the NBFC-MFIs grew 37.7 per cent to Rs 31,825 crore, a rise of 37.7 per cent year-on-year, according to the report.

Regional distribution of portfolio 31 December 2023



The top 10 states (based on universe data) constitute 83.6% in terms of GLP. Bihar continues to be the largest state in terms of portfolio outstanding followed by Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh. Among top 10 states Tamil Nadu has the highest average loan outstanding per account of Rs. 29,996 followed by Kerala at Rs. 28,979.

Suggestions? Feedback?
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