

Conference brings participants from all corners of globe

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Holly Heap/NewsNet

Micro-credit conference participants from Africa, the Phillipines and Guatemala join in onle last cheer before leaving BYU campus Wednesday morning. The participants spent three days

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People from around the world met at BYU this week to discuss the progress of Credit with Education Learning Exchange, a non-government organization, which exists to help women in developing countries become self-sustainable by providing them with small loans.

The three-day conference had never been held at a university before. Normally, CELE had trouble getting enough translators, but, at BYU, twenty-five students helped host the participants in the conference, said Warner Woodworth, a BYU organizational behavior professor.

"These students helped with translating, travel arrangements and hospitality," Woodworth said.

He said CELE doesn't just provide loans, but focuses on teaching the women business and literacy skills.

Women are targeted because they show the desire to work hard and will channel the money to their children, Woodworth said. The women save their money and are able to provide health care and an education for their children, he said.

Conference representatives have provided loans to 2.1 million people, Woodworth said. The average loan is \$54, and the total amount that has been loaned is \$119 million.

The women who have received these loans have been able to save \$48.6 million, and these reserves can be used to help their country in times of disaster, Woodworth said.

Students involved in the conference are either members of the Gremeen group on campus -- the first

village loan and banking group to be created at a university in the United States -- or the Students for International Development.

This was a great opportunity for students who want careers in micro-credit to network and see that there are real people out there doing micro-credit work, Woodworth said.

Loretta Gale, a student majoring in international development from Kuwait, said, "For me it's incredible to see the people that are involved in development work; a career in it is possible."

Conference participant Vivianne Romero from Bolivia said she previously had the general idea that Americans were more cold than Latinos.

"I was very impressed with the initiative they took to welcome us into their home. People are very friendly here."

Conference participant Ayele Foly from Africa said she was impressed with the warmth shown to her at BYU.

"We are all human beings and we care for each other. They have given us food, water, music, dance and taken time with us," she said.

Rock Magleby, a student majoring in economics from American Fork, who organized the student participation in the conference, said there is a huge interest in humanitarian work on campus that is untapped and uncoordinated.

"We could've pulled it off with 10 student participants but we wanted to get as many people involved and let them know there are careers out there in international development," Magleby said.

SID meets every Tuesday at 7 p.m. in the David M. Kennedy center room 238. Their Web site is www.byusid.org.