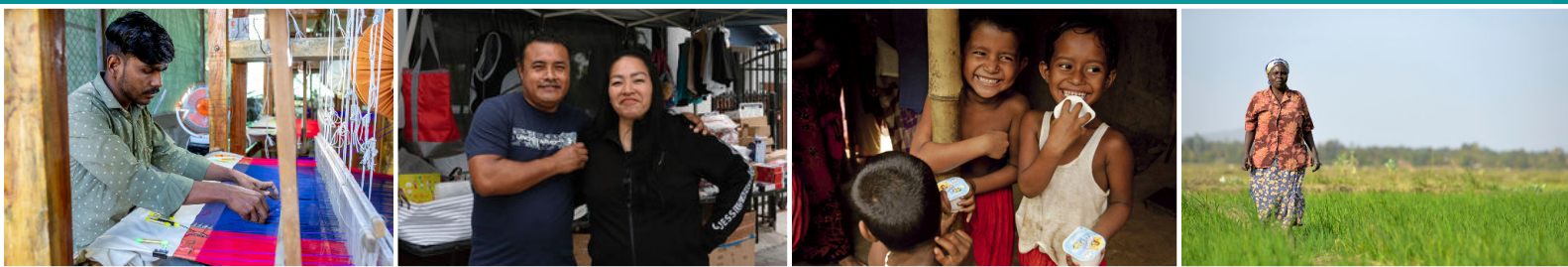


# REPORT OF THE GRAMEEN FAMILY GATHERING

*11&12 February 2026*



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The inaugural Grameen Family Gathering took place in February 2026 in Paris. It marked an historic moment in the collective journey of the group towards a world with Three Zeros: Zero poverty, Zero unemployment and Zero Net carbon emissions.

The aim was to recognise the changing world in which all the members of the Grameen Family operate. The movements in funding landscapes, geopolitics, climate priorities and AI are reshaping development.

So, 2026 was considered the right time to start the dialogue, share knowledge and experience and look towards the future.

The event brought together more than 60 participants from 25 organizations in 18 countries to strengthen their ties and amplify their collective impact. Participants shared diverse experiences about financial inclusion,

women's empowerment, digital technology and climate action strategies.

It was a first step towards a more interconnected Grameen ecosystem that honours the shared heritage of Professor Muhammad Yunus while embracing the innovation needed to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

The event highlighted that cooperation is essential to addressing complex global problems with participants recognizing that their diversity is also their strength. The importance of employing collective knowledge and investing in youth leadership were also emphasised.

The meeting marked a turning point for the Grameen Family: a collective recognition that past success is not enough and only deeper collaboration, inclusion and decisive action will secure the future of the movement.

## OVERALL MESSAGE

The gathering affirmed that the future of the Grameen movement depends on:

**Deepening the family collaboration, continuing to regularly share knowledge and experience**

**Reinforcing shared values across the family**

**Protecting the human-centred mission**

**Evolving together to meet 21st-century challenges including digitization and developing future leaders**



# KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

## *PROTECT CORE GRAMEEN PRINCIPLES*

Continue to preserve the movement's fundamental values:

- Retain focus on the poorest women
- Credit discipline and savings
- High-touch, trust-based engagement
- Responsible loan delivery and management
- Create a central function to monitor and interpret trends for the network

## *ADAPT FLEXIBLY TO LOCAL CONTEXTS*

- Encourage responsible adaptation but not rigid replication
- Tailor business models to local contexts
- Ensure compliance with local regulatory and economic conditions
- Treat setbacks as learning opportunities to build institutional resilience

## *CONTINUE TO BALANCE SUSTAINABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY*

- Ensure financial sustainability serves social objectives, not the other way around
- Design models where affordable services remain accessible to the poorest
- Build financial strength that supports long-term impact and inclusion

## ***PRIORITISE QUALITATIVE IMPACT MEASUREMENT***

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Focus on client life outcomes rather than narrow financial metrics

Measure the improvement in clients' livelihoods and well-being

Collect and promote client success stories

Staff growth and commitment

Local community recognition must be heightened

Emphasize lived experiences as the truest form of validation

## ***STRENGTHEN INSTITUTIONS FOR LONG-TERM RESILIENCE***

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Build organizations that can:

Withstand economic and climate shocks

Sustain social mission integrity

Foster internal capacity and leadership development

Prioritise collective action and solidarity across the Grameen network

## ***PRESERVE THE HUMAN CONNECTION***

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Keep human relationships at the heart of financial interactions

Safeguard trust-based, personal engagement as technology evolves

Maintain a social mission over purely financial performance

## ***FOSTER A CULTURE OF STEWARDSHIP AND CO-OPERATION***

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Promote experimentation over perfection to build trust and adaptability

Value unity without uniformity ; align around purpose not conformity

Follow up this event - and others - with a structured, formal process

Encourage collaboration and shared learning across organizations

Emphasize clarity, conviction and flexibility in leadership

Invest in young people who can be potential leaders

# OPENING SESSION, DAY 1: WELCOME ADDRESS AND OVERVIEW



The first day began with opening welcomes that set the tone for the two-day international gathering.

Speakers recognised the historic importance of the gathering and looked forward to the outcomes of the proceedings, which they hope will inform the future of the movement.

Speakers highlighted the broad array of community programmes represented: microcredit, microinsurance, health and education projects, sanitation, water access and humanitarian support.

## WELCOME SPEECHES: VIDEO MESSAGE FROM PROF. MUHAMMAD YUNUS

In his welcome message to the historic first Grameen Family Gathering in Paris, Professor Muhammad Yunus reflects on nearly five decades of transformative work rooted in a simple yet revolutionary belief. Though unable to attend in person, Prof. Yunus addresses the diverse assembly, celebrating how each has adapted Grameen's core principles to create innovative solutions within their unique contexts.

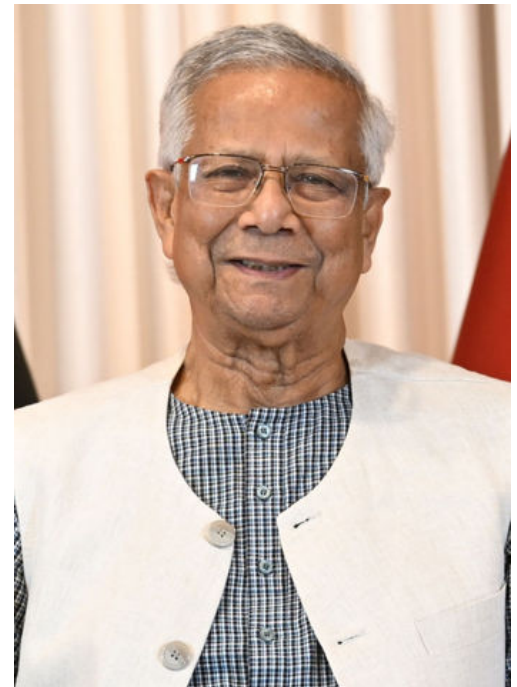
Prof. Yunus frames the gathering as occurring at a critical historical moment, where the world faces unprecedented challenges including persistent poverty, growing unemployment, increasing inequality, particularly affecting women, and the existential threat of climate change.

Yet characteristically, he views these challenges as opportunities. He emphasizes that *"credit is a fundamental human right, and that even the poorest of the poor can lift themselves from poverty if given the right opportunities"*.

This foundational belief, which launched Grameen Bank as a small experiment, has evolved into a global movement spanning continents and cultures.

Central to Prof. Yunus's message is the Three Zeros mission: Zero poverty, Zero unemployment, and Zero net carbon emissions, which he argues is more relevant than ever in addressing today's interconnected crises. He calls upon the Grameen Family to move beyond celebrating past achievements toward forging new connections and discovering synergies. *"This gathering is not just about celebrating our past achievements. It is about forging new connections, discovering synergies, and building a stronger collective future"*.

Prof. Yunus encourages participants to approach discussions with open minds and hearts, listen deeply to one another, and think boldly. He articulates a powerful vision for the movement's future: *"Remember that the strength of our network lies in our diversity as well as our shared commitment to creating a world where poverty exists only in museums"*. This statement encapsulates both the movement's recognition of its diverse approaches and its unwavering commitment to a world fundamentally transformed by financial inclusion and social justice.



# RAPHAËL APPERT, CHAIRMAN OF THE GRAMEEN CRÉDIT AGRICOLE FOUNDATION



Mr. Appert welcomes the participants in the premises of the Crédit Agricole Group, the 10th largest bank in the world, guided by its cooperative and mutual values, founded over a century ago to serve farmers and rural communities in France.

He emphasizes that the Grameen Crédit Agricole Foundation, established in 2008 with a 50-million-euro endowment, has deployed over 400 million euros to support more than 150 partners in 40 countries, primarily serving women in rural areas.

The Foundation's distinctive approach combines Crédit Agricole's banking expertise with Grameen's grassroots social mission. A core conviction underpins this work: "*Women are powerful agents of change. When women are financed and supported, they transform families, communities, and economies*". This commitment to women's empowerment remains central to all initiatives.

Looking forward, the Foundation launches LIFT 2028 (*Leading, Innovate, Financing, Transforming*), a strategic plan addressing Professor Yunus's Three Zeros framework. Mr. Appert stresses that "*LIFT 2028 is a contribution to this global movement*", positioning the Foundation as a partner for financial institutions' transformation, a global expert in women's financial inclusion, and an actor in climate adaptation. He concludes with an urgent call for collective action: "*Together, we can amplify our impact, speak with a stronger voice, and accelerate progress toward the Three Zeros*".

## MD. ASHRAFUL HASSAN, CHAIRMAN OF THE GRAMEEN GROUP

Md. Ashraful Hassan frames this gathering as a historic moment where Grameen-inspired organizations worldwide reconnect around shared purpose. He traces Grameen's origins to a fundamental moral question posed by Professor Muhammad Yunus: why should poor people be denied access to credit?

This philosophical foundation has evolved into a global movement spanning over 175 countries, encompassing microfinance institutions, social businesses, foundations, and research centers.

The Chairman emphasizes that Grameen's impact extends beyond finance to encompass healthcare, education, and digital financial inclusion. He articulates the movement's core belief: "*People living in poverty are not the problem, they are the solution*". This perspective positions communities as agents of their own development rather than passive recipients of aid.

Recognizing that despite shared values, Grameen organizations have often operated independently, the Chairman reframes the gathering's significance: "*This is not simply a meeting of institutions, it is a reunion of purpose*". He calls for strengthened cooperation while respecting organizational independence, emphasizing that a united voice can influence global discussions on financial inclusion and ethical finance.

Ultimately, the Chairman grounds the movement's strength in its foundational principle: "*Real change begins not with money, but with trust : trust in people, communities, and human potential*". This reminder anchors the Grameen family's collective commitment to transforming systems and empowering communities.



## KEYNOTE SPEECH: "THE GRAMEEN LEGACY: EVOLUTION AND IMPACT OF A GLOBAL MOVEMENT", ABDUL HAI KHAN, EXECUTIVE VICE CHAIRMAN, GRAMEEN TRUST

Abdul Hai Khan traces the Grameen movement from its revolutionary origins in 1970s Bangladesh to its current status as a global force for financial inclusion and social transformation. Born from Professor Muhammad Yunus's fundamental question: "*Why should access to credit be a privilege rather than a human right?*" Grameen Bank demonstrated that the poor were not only creditworthy but disciplined and entrepreneurial. By replacing collateral with trust, Grameen transformed microcredit from a concept into a global movement spanning over 175 countries.



The evolution of the Grameen model extended far beyond small loans to encompass a comprehensive, people-centered development approach.

Key innovations included group-based lending, deliberate focus on women's empowerment, and the integration of social development goals through the Sixteen Decisions. Mr. Khan emphasizes that "*Trust in the poor, inclusion over exclusion, and empowerment over dependency*" remain the core principles guiding Grameen's work across diverse contexts. Mr. Khan underscores the profound global impact of Grameen microcredit, which fundamentally altered how the world understands poverty and finance.

"*Microcredit became a recognised policy instrument supported by the World Bank, the United Nations, and regional development banks*", reshaping development discourse by placing financial inclusion at the center of poverty reduction strategies.

The movement's influence extended beyond finance to inspire social business, ethical finance, and impact investing.

Looking forward, Mr. Khan articulates the contemporary relevance of the Grameen legacy in addressing today's challenges of inequality, climate change, and digital divides. The future directions include digital financial inclusion, youth and green entrepreneurship, and scaling social business models. He concludes with a powerful reminder: "*The true strength of Grameen has never resided in money alone. Its power lies in belief: belief in people, belief in justice, and belief in a world where poverty is not inevitable, but solvable*".

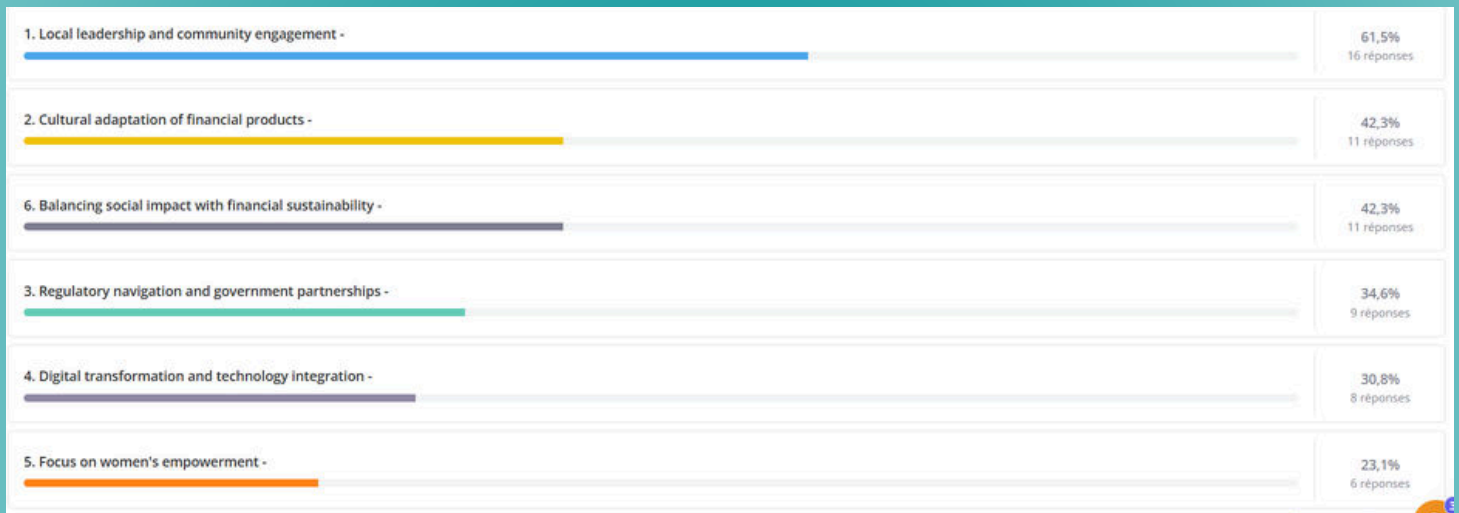
# FIRST PLENARY:

## “GRAMEEN IN ACTION: LESSONS LEARNED AND FUTURE HORIZONS”

*Exploring the application of Grameen principles across diverse contexts and identifying emerging challenges*

**Moderator: Mr. Raymond Patrick Serios, NWTf – Philippines**

**Poll results:** *In your experience, what is the most critical factor for successfully adapting the Grameen microfinance / social business model to different cultural and economic contexts ?*



The moderator opened:

*“Poverty is not inevitable. Finance, when designed with trust and discipline, can restore dignity and opportunity”*. Participants shared how core Grameen principles have endured, despite growth and changes in context.

### **Mr. Zahirul Alam – IDF, Bangladesh**

Mr. Alam stated that Bangladesh, as the birthplace of the model, still tests its resilience through crises, regulation and technological change. He described the non-negotiable core:

*“Credit discipline, savings, and the trust-based engagement with the poorest women. These are sacred to the model”*.

He emphasized continuous field presence and client interaction, not only to safeguard repayment but to *“safeguard dignity”*. Where IDF adapted, it did so to survive without losing purpose: digital tools have been integrated, but *“never at the expense of the human relationship”*.





### Ms. Lerato Lekhula – WDB Trust, South Africa

Ms. Lekhula reflected on applying a Bangladeshi approach in a distinctly African, post-apartheid context. She shared an example of a client who said that her loan has truly kept her hair salon running, growing and active every day. And because the client consistently has stock, her sales are stable, and she can plan better. The lesson: faith in poor women’s reliability transcends geography.

*“Our reality is different, but the spirit is the same: discipline, weekly contact, savings and trust”.*

Ms. Lekhula explained that WDB had to adapt products to South Africa’s regulatory and social constraints:

- Interest rates structured *“to be fair but sustainable”*.
- Support added through social-business and empowerment programmes addressing education, gender violence, and livelihoods.

*“We kept the heart while reshaping the structure. Adaptation did not weaken the model. It strengthened purpose”.*

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### Mr. Halil Fatih Akgül – TGMP, Turkey

Mr. Akgül described TGMP’s path through economic turbulence and earthquakes. He stressed credit discipline and weekly group solidarity as indispensable and *“Grameen’s moral spine”*. Yet circumstances forced innovation such as digital record-keeping, flexible repayment schedules after natural disasters, and local job-creation projects.

*“Turning setbacks into strength ensures survival. Grameen must breathe with its environment”.*



### Mr. Jasper Kubasek – Grameen America Inc., USA

Mr. Kubasek shared how Grameen America has translated Grameen values to a vastly different financial ecosystem.

*“What connects us is the belief that access to credit is a human right, and that the populations we serve are both highly entrepreneurial and highly creditworthy when supported by the right program”.*

He listed his non-negotiables:

- A high-touch model that creates the space to build relationships and cultivate behavior change
- A trust-based model that can unlock access to capital that traditional underwriting methodologies might prevent
- Being member-led in program and product design, meeting members where they are.

Grameen America’s principal adaptations were adapting the Grameen methodology to the United States’ unique financial ecosystem, leveraging tech as it scaled. *“High-tech can still be high-touch if you design it with empathy and intentionality”.* Mr. Kubasek said their strongest proof of impact has been a *“a Randomized Control Trial study that showed statistically significant results in savings behavior, business revenue growth, credit health and in several measures of material hardship”.*



### Ms. Corazon A. Henares – NWF, Philippines

As co-founder of Negros Women for Tomorrow, Ms. Henares described 40 years of Grameen replication in the Visayas. She recalled early challenges:

*“When we began, the very poor were invisible to bankers. We had to prove that the poorest do repay”.*

What remained constant for the organisation was the focus on women, trust and discipline.

What evolved over the years was offering micro-insurance, health, water, and education programs for holistic poverty reduction.

Success is evident, she said, when clients *“not only rise from poverty but bring others with them”.*



**Mr. Suresh Krishna –  
Yunus Social Business Fund Bengaluru, India**

Joining online, Mr. Krishna spoke about the intersection between microfinance and social business.

*“Grameen’s genius was to marry financial logic with moral purpose. Our challenge is to keep that marriage intact”.*

He underlined a shift from classic lending to entrepreneurship investment in youth and women but keeping the same foundation of trust and accountability.

*“Faithful replication is not rigidity. It’s fidelity to the idea that people are capable when the system believes in them”.*

Mr. Krishna added that impact measurement must evolve beyond repayment rates:

*“We validate our work not by spreadsheets but by the strength of the people who no longer need us”.*



All agreed that certain principles are inviolable:

Action Points Emerging:

- Protect credit discipline, trust, savings culture, and client focus
- Encourage context-specific innovation: new products, digital finance for inclusion, crisis-specific flexibility
- Develop measurement frameworks linking internal performance to client well-being
- Strengthen women-centred human engagement despite technological shifts
- Nurture next-generation leaders who view microfinance as vocation, not business
- Maintain purpose ahead of profit; mission ahead of metrics
- Use technology to extend empathy, not replace it.

**Moderator’s Closing Reflection**

*“To remain transformational, we must continue building institutions that are disciplined, mission-driven, and forward-looking, without losing the human connection at the heart of Grameen. Our task is stewardship: carrying this idea forward with conviction and responsibility, ensuring it remains a force for dignity and lasting poverty reduction”.*

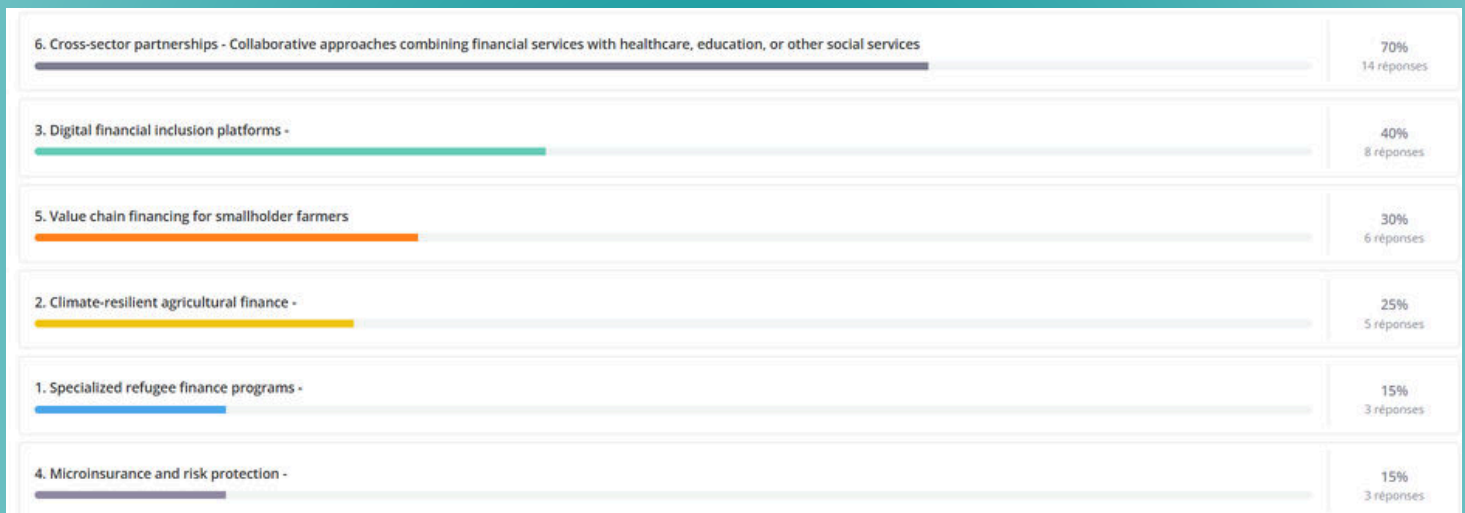


## SECOND PLENARY: “PATHWAYS TO ZERO POVERTY: INCLUSIVE FINANCIAL SOLUTIONS FOR VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES”

*Addressing innovative approaches to serving refugees, smallholder farmers, and developing effective microinsurance models*

**Moderator: Ms. Tasmina Rahman, Managing Director, Grameen Trust – Bangladesh**

**Poll results:** *Which financial innovation do you believe has the greatest potential to create sustainable pathways out of poverty for the most vulnerable communities ?*



### Dr. Dolores M. Torres – CARD MRI, Philippines

Dr. Torres, co-founder of CARD, shared the organization’s remarkable growth from humble beginnings:

*“We started in 1986 as a small NGO, with 89 women borrowing and repaying weekly at 100%. By 1997, we reached 100,000 clients and now serve 9.5 million”.* CARD evolved into a diversified group of 34 institutions, with three microfinance banks, four microinsurance companies, and four IT companies.

Dr. Torres emphasized key milestones:

- The transformation of the CARD Rural Bank into a commercial bank regulated by the Central Bank of the Philippines.
- The introduction of micro-insurance models now covering 33 million people, claiming to insure almost 40% of Filipinos.

*Key Lessons:*

- The most critical early challenge was building strong discipline among clients: *“Before Grameen replication, our repayment rate was below 50%. After replication, it rose to nearly 100%”.*
- CARD introduced the ‘1-3-5 rule’: insurance claims paid within 1, 3, or 5 days, which was later improved to ‘8-24 hours’ for rapid response.
- The group championed shared ownership with clients. Members are shareholders in the bank and insurance entities.

CARD also pioneered branch operations under Islamic finance (*Shariah banking*) to serve Muslim communities in Mindanao.

On sustainability, Dr. Torres stressed: *“We see microfinance not as work but as a vocation. Protect it, ensure training and prevention of fraud, and share ownership with clients”.*



### Mr. Omar Lutf Suwaid – Grameen Yemen

Mr. Lutf Suwaid spoke about the perseverance of a replication programme in the context of conflict:

*“Regardless of the armed conflict and the economic collapse, Grameen Yemen continues to support the poorest by adapting its approach to difficult conditions”.*

Founded in 2018, Grameen Yemen operates in Hodeidah, one of the poorest regions. Despite turmoil, the organization now serves 35,000 financing clients, emphasizing it provides financing, not loans, as a nonprofit social business model.

*Key Activities:*

- Health services: approximately 1,000 cleft lip and cataract operations, sanitation, and clean water provisions
- Education support: 25,000 schoolbooks distributed, training 700+ women teachers to provide afternoon education
- Focus on village-level self-sufficiency and non-loan social enterprise models.

*“Money alone is not enough. We combine finance with education, healthcare, and water”.*



### Ms. Roshaneh Zafar – Kashf Foundation, Pakistan

Ms. Zafar shared Pakistan’s rich replication history. Having trained at Grameen Bank in 1994, she recalled Professor Yunus’s counsel:

*“Microfinance is not rocket science. The products work but the biggest challenge is changing mindsets”.*

*Milestones:*

- Kashf Foundation became the first Grameen replicator in Pakistan
- A shift from group lending to individual enterprise lending, while sustaining discipline
- 70% of loans now go to women, reversing early gender imbalances.

*Kashf Foundation currently:*

- Serves one million female clients
- Operates Pakistan’s largest microinsurance program, with 6.5 million beneficiaries

*Reflections and Crises:*

Ms. Zafar identified three critical crises that reshaped their approach:

- 2008 Global Financial Crisis which exposed structural weaknesses which imposed flexibility in lending and a shift to individual models
- COVID-19 Pandemic, which reinforced the need for high touch even in high tech
- Climate Crisis (2022 Floods), which prompted new insurance products for climate risk.

*“Digitization should be a means, not an end. When relationships become transactional, we lose our essence”.*



### Mr. Giuseppe Torluccio – Yunus Italia Foundation

Mr. Torluccio described how academia bridges microfinance and education:

*“Our foundation, started in 2010, works to help people unable to reach traditional banks, through training and collateral guarantee schemes”.*

*Main Activities:*

- The Grameen Lab which helps groups design microcredit applications with multiple banks
- Collaboration with the University of Bologna through the Yunus Social Business Centre to integrate social finance into university curricula
- Promotion the Three Zeros Club: students working on Zero poverty, Zero unemployment, and Zero net carbon emissions.

*“We are changing the mindset that microfinance is just another banking product ; it’s a social inclusion tool”.*

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### Ms. Hanadi Tutunji – Grameen Crédit Agricole Foundation, Luxembourg

As technical assistance lead, Ms. Tutunji, outlined GCAMF’s approach to blended finance. Her team combines funding and technical assistance to prepare markets, emphasizing measurable impact and the need for:

- Integration rather than fragmentation (*“we tend to box things (climate, insurance, etc.) but communities don’t”*)
- Differentiation between results and impact
- Partnerships with microfinance providers to serve refugees and displaced communities.

*“If impacts made money, every bank in the world would be doing it”.*

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*Audience question: “What advice would you give for new Grameen replicators?”*

Ms. Zafar advised:

*“Do your research, start small, embed core principles, but adapt to your context. Train your staff well and listen to clients”.*

She recalled Yunus’s message: *“Just take the risk”.*

Dr. Torres added:

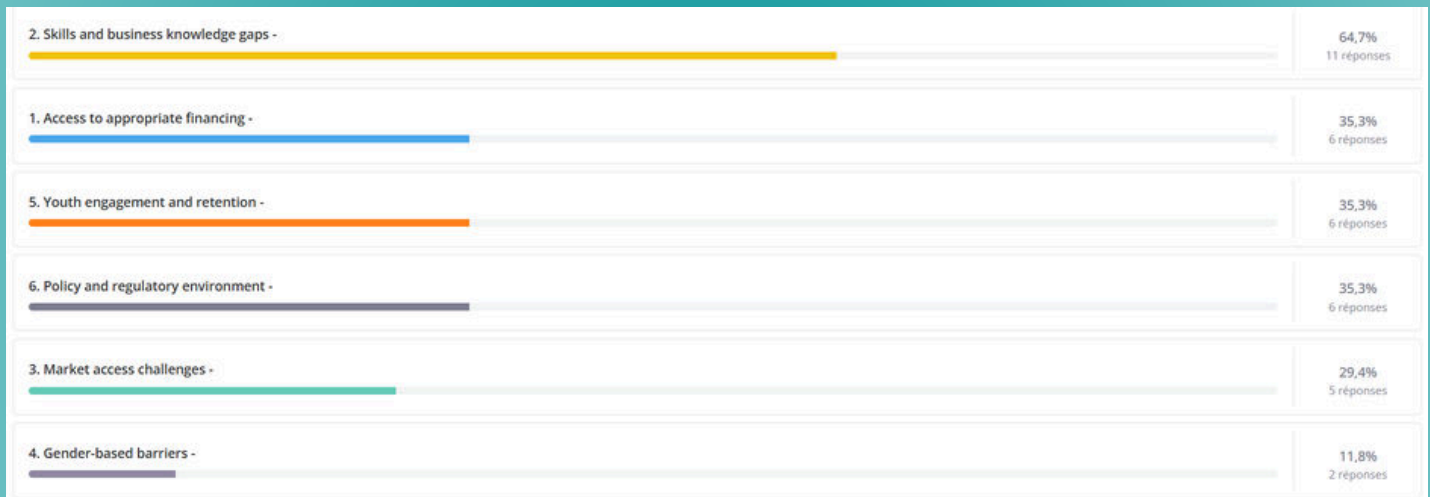
*“Make microfinance a vocation, not just work. Share ownership, protect sustainability, and ensure staff training and client integrity”.*

# THIRD PLENARY: "CREATING SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS: THE ZERO UNEMPLOYMENT CHALLENGE"

*Interactive roundtables on women's entrepreneurship, SME financing, and youth employment initiatives*

**Moderator: Ms. Sharifah Sofia, Trustee at Albukhary Foundation – Malaysia**

**Poll results:** *What do you consider the most significant barrier to achieving 'Zero unemployment' through entrepreneurship development in vulnerable communities ?*



**Mr. Abdul Matin – Grameen Trust, Bangladesh**

Mr. Matin detailed the 'Nobin', New Entrepreneur Program, born of Yunus's vision that youth should be job-givers, not job-seekers.

Since 2013, the program has:

- Created 228,000 entrepreneurs, investing over \$300 million.
- Inspired graduates to consider self-employment instead of corporate jobs.

*"If you scale up your business, you become self-employed, and a creator of employment for others".*



**Mr. Martin Mata – Albanian-American Development Foundation, Albania**

Mr. Mata detailed AADF's investments in education as the root of employability and innovation. *"Earlier is better. Education is cheaper and shapes minds before they enter the job market".*

*Programmes of the foundation:*

- AI for Youth (*with intel*)
- Coding Academy with General Assembly
- Innovation Hub and Plug & Play Accelerator
- Junior Achievement for school students
- Over \$80 million in education projects.

He stressed patience: *"In our lifetime we may not live to see the results. But these are bricks in the wall for future generations".*

*Key learning:*

- Replicate proven models globally, adapt locally
- Avoid grant-dependency; insist on measurable outcomes
- Link education ecosystems across school to job.



### Mr. Clément Delcourt– Yunus France, France

Representing the Nobin Programme in Senegal, co-funded by L'Oréal Fund for Women, Mr. Delcourt outlined successful women's inclusion through entrepreneurship.

*"We started not with finance but with trust".*

The programme focuses on low-income women who have low literacy. It uses boot camps, training, and mentorship, before moving to microfinance.

*Results (2023–25):*

- 2,200 women trained
- 91% can now separate private vs. business income
- 47% manage household finances independently

*Next steps will include:*

- Introducing tailored microfinance segmentation tools
- Scaling to Ivory Coast and other countries.

### Mr. Md. Abdul Kalam – Grameen Kosovo, Kosovo

Mr. Kalam presented Grameen Kosovo as a successful replication:

- It has been active since 2000, serving 26,000 clients.
- It has disbursed €131 million and has 96% repayment rates
- It has two programmes: Microcredit and Social Business/Nobin.

*"Some clients who started with €600 loans now have factories exporting pickles to Europe".* Failures, he admitted, came during COVID-19, but client trust sustained repayment. *"Our satisfaction is their prosperity; our strength is our relationship".*



### Mr. Shankar Man Shrestha – Centre for Self-help Development (CSD), Nepal

Mr. Shrestha told the gathering that Nepal has become a champion of the Three Zeros Movement, particularly Zero Unemployment and Zero Net Carbon Emission. *"More than 3,500 'Three Zeros Clubs' are active, involving 50% of the global total".*

These include:

- Eco Villages promoting sustainable practices
- Learn-and-Earn programs in schools (*students raising chickens or small enterprises*)
- Projects on carbon reduction (*electric vehicles, organic farming, tree planting*).

*"Microfinance is no longer just credit, it's community transformation".*

*Impact:*

- School enrolment in microfinance regions rose from 20% to 95%.
- Over 65 tuition centres established for children of poor households.
- Integration of education, microenterprise, and environmental sustainability.

CSD agreed to:

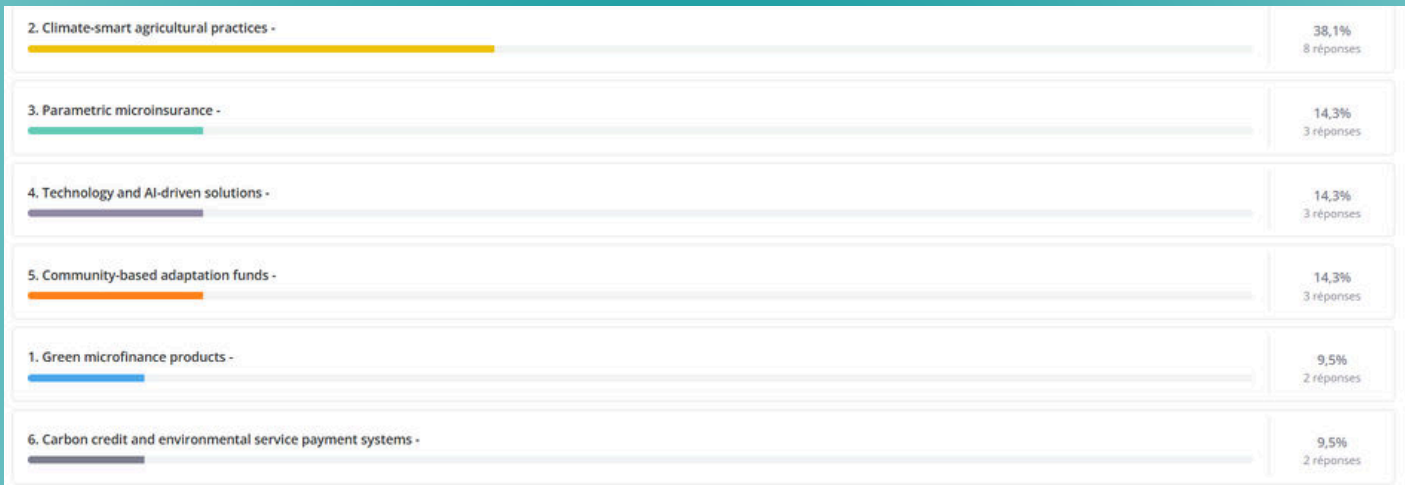
*"Create dedicated, motivated staff who value others' happiness above their gain. Ensure good governance and never deviate from core Grameen principles".*

# FOURTH PLENARY: “FINANCING ZERO NET CARBON EMISSIONS: SOLUTIONS FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE”

*Exploring climate adaptation strategies, agricultural insurance innovations, and technology-driven solutions for environmental sustainability*

**Moderator: Mr. Md. Ashraful Hassan, Chairman Grameen Group – Bangladesh**

**Poll results:** *Which approach do you believe has the greatest potential to simultaneously address climate resilience and poverty reduction in vulnerable communities ?*



The moderator said:

*“Floods, droughts, and unpredictable weather threaten livelihoods. Microfinance, working at grassroots, can be a key tool for adaptation”.*

**Mr. Vincent Brousseau – Grameen Crédit Agricole Foundation, Luxembourg**

Mr. Brousseau acknowledged the gender gap on stage, *“no women are here”* linking it to the broader theme of inclusiveness.

*Key Points:*

- GCAF has launched a thematic fund: the “Women Empowerment for Climate” fund to invest in adaptation
- There is a focus on capacity building, savings and insurance and technical assistance
- Emphasis on being humble and learning from field experts.

*“The fight for climate adaptation begins now with expertise and listening to those in the field”.*





**Mr. Callum McKenzie – Yunus Thailand, Thailand**

Mr. McKenzie called for aligning climate finance with microfinance systems:

*“Climate funds exist, but how are they reaching those most affected? Microfinance has the trust and networks to deliver”.*

He highlighted:

- Integration of mitigation and adaptation models
- Using microfinance for response and recovery after extreme weather
- Combining impact investment and community entrepreneurship for double results.

**Mr. Jérôme Gabriel – Virunga Foundation, Democratic Republic of Congo**

Mr. Gabriel introduced the unique link between conservation and finance.

*“Protecting Virunga’s ecosystem, the oldest park in Africa, means helping people who depend on it survive without destroying it”.*

Virunga connects energy access, microcredit, and conservation:

- Hydropower for local communities
- Green microfinance funding clean cooking, farming, and small solar enterprises
- Use of drone and satellite data to monitor land use.

*“Clean cooking alone reduced charcoal use by 30%, cutting deforestation and household costs”.*



**Mr. A.K.M. Shirajul Islam – Basa Foundation, Bangladesh**

Mr. Islam offered compelling examples from coastal Bangladesh:

*“Our borrowers live the front line of climate change. When they are in trouble, we are in trouble”.*

Major Initiatives:

- Grassroots cooperatives for climate training
- Fecal sludge management plant (*first of its kind*) turning waste into compost, reducing methane emissions and improving soil health
- Government scaled up the Basa model as national policy for urban municipalities
- Introduced improved cookstoves and electric vehicle promotion.

*“Microfinance must move beyond lending: it’s about empowering communities to face disasters”.*



**Mr. Advin Barun Banerjee – PIDIM Foundation, Bangladesh**

Mr. Banerjee described a cluster-based microfinance approach, focusing on eco-friendly technologies:

- Biosecurity practices, waste-to-energy conversion, organic fertilizer
- Rainwater harvesting, solar panels, efficient LED use
- Education for digital literacy and eco-certification.

*“Microfinance institutions are creating new ecosystems that foster innovation, efficiency, and sustainability”.*



*Closing questions: Should developed nations contribute more to finance Zero carbon transitions?*



**Mr. Brousseau’s** answer was direct:

*“Yes but not only with guilt, with partnership. Our role in the North is to link investors to Southern innovators”.*

He noted that:

- Climate aid is declining
- GCAF focuses on blending public concessional funds with private capital
- Exposure missions to Africa have convinced European insurers to invest after witnessing field innovation.

*“They learned more from Kenyan microinsurance innovators than from their offices in Paris”.*

**CLOSING REMARKS:  
VÉRONIQUE FAUJOUR, GRAMEEN CRÉDIT  
AGRICOLE FOUNDATION**

Ms. Faujour delivered a heartfelt closing statement:

*“Today we travelled the world without leaving this room. From Nepal to Yemen, from Pakistan to Congo, we saw the Grameen spirit alive. Not as a slogan, but as a shared mindset...”*

*The challenges we face, climate, inequality, displacement are too big for any single institution... The world doesn’t need more conferences: it needs action, cooperation, and courage”.*

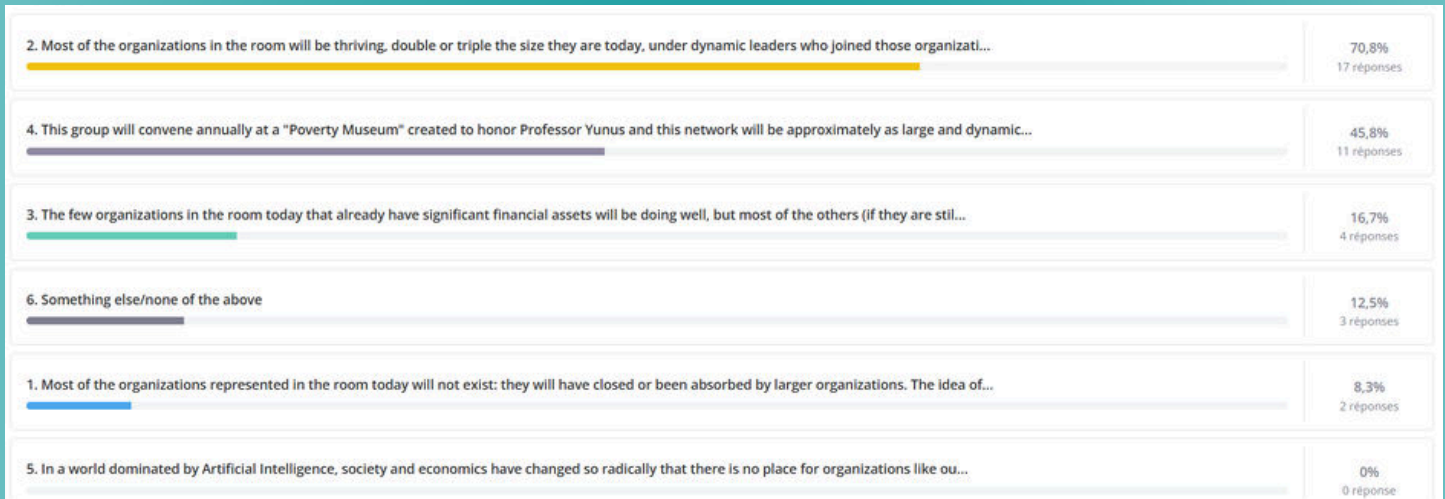
*“We are not just a network, we are a family”.*



# KEYNOTE SPEECH DAY 2: ALEX COUNTS, STRATEGIC ADVISOR, GRAMEEN FOUNDATION, USA "FROM LOCAL SOLUTIONS TO GLOBAL MOVEMENT: THE NEXT CHAPTER OF THE GRAMEEN STORY"

## THE FUTURE OF THE GRAMEEN NETWORK

**Poll results:** Participants were asked to reflect on what the Grameen ecosystem might look like in 15–20 years.



Alex Counts delivered a candid and critical keynote speech that moved beyond celebration to address fundamental challenges facing the Grameen Family. He opened by noting that the gathering would benefit from greater focus on disagreement and uncertainty, observing that *"If we had spent more time talking about things we disagreed on or didn't understand, there would have been much more active participation"*. A central concern was the declining global perception of microfinance. Mr. Counts traced a clear trajectory: pre-2010 largely positive discourse, 2010–2015 mixed and contested, and post-2015 declining visibility with often negative framing. Within major development institutions like the World Bank, microfinance is increasingly dismissed as a failed 1990s experiment. While acknowledging Professor Yunus's attempt to distinguish "Grameen credit" from generic microcredit, Mr. Counts emphasized that *"the Grameen Family lacks a coherent, shared communications strategy"* to counter this damaging narrative. He also highlighted the impact of sustained attacks on Professor Yunus over 15 years, which have constrained fundraising and damaged the Grameen brand in key regions. Mr. Counts raised critical concerns about leadership renewal, noting the absence of younger voices and Gen Z representation at the gathering. He challenged the movement to systematically include younger leaders in governance, study the achievements of Grameen Bank's succession experience, and consider formal client ownership and participation mechanisms, that have been so vital to the uniquely powerful governance models of Grameen Bank and CARD. He asked participants to reflect on the question, *"What would it look like if five or ten clients of our organizations' work were sitting here with us today?"* Finally, Mr. Counts argued that the Grameen Family can no longer ignore major geopolitical and economic trends, including AI's societal impact, the rise of authoritarianism, shifts in development funding, and China and India's growing influence. He proposed establishing a central intelligence or secretariat function to monitor these trends and interpret them for the network, positioning the Grameen Family to remain relevant and responsive to an increasingly complex global landscape.



## FEEDBACK FROM GROUP DISCUSSIONS

### Group 1 - Summary

This group emphasized the need to formalize a collective mission, vision and theory of change distinct from any one organization. While celebrating the family-like values of the movement, the group stressed that diversity requires light but effective structure to harness network effects. The overall aim is a unifying alliance that amplifies the global Grameen movement's ability to drive poverty alleviation, climate action and systemic change.

#### *Key Recommendations:*

- Co-design a shared mission, vision, and theory of change
- Develop a global platform for resource sharing, knowledge exchange, and potential joint fundraising
- Establish governance, funding, and management structures that maintain flexibility and nurture innovation
- Clarify target audiences, external influence strategies, and improve documentation and technology use.

### Group 2 - Summary

This group focused on the importance of short-term, practical steps; starting with mapping who the network is, where each member is based, and what expertise each brings. Their long-term vision included raising a large shared investment vehicle, referred to as the "Three-Zeros Grameen Fund", starting with a target of one billion dollars over three years - supported by collaborative governance and multi-institution commitment.

#### *Key Recommendations:*

- All organizations should update data within the Grameen Global Network
- Create a comprehensive mapping of member organizations' activities, beneficiaries, and expertise
- Begin designing a large shared fund (*the Three Zeros Grameen Fund*) with multi-year planning and strong governance.



**Group 3 - Summary**

Group 3 focused on the intersections of microfinance, social business, and the Three Zeros Clubs, urging greater integration of Three Zeros Clubs into events and decision-making spaces. They highlighted the need for a central communications hub to provide clear definitions and rapid coordinated responses, particularly during crises such as when Professor Yunus was under attack. The group identified unresolved debates, including whether to use external versus local funding for social business and whether Three Zeros Clubs should engage politically. They also emphasized the importance of succession planning and improved engagement with government regulators across countries.

*Key Recommendations:*

- Integrate Three Zeros Clubs more actively into gatherings and major events
- Establish a central communications hub to provide information, definitions, and rapid response coordination
- Facilitate deeper conversations on funding models and the degree of political engagement
- Share best practices and examples of succession planning and regulatory engagement.

**Group 4 - Summary**

This group focused on the need for stronger feedback loops, ensuring insights from field realities flow back to leadership. They also recommended forming thematic and regional working groups to avoid duplication and identify complementarities. Recognizing that the Three Zeros require a fundamental mindset shift, the group encouraged organizations to register as Three Zeros Support Organizations to access shared resources and youth-oriented activities. Finally, they suggested more structured and outcome-oriented gathering formats in the future.

*Key Recommendations:*

- Build a knowledge-sharing platform for practitioners, academics, and partners
- Create thematic or regional working groups for focused collaboration
- Encourage organizations to register as Three Zeros Support Organizations to strengthen youth engagement
- Make future gatherings more granular and outcome-driven.

**Group 5 - Summary**

Group 5 agreed on the desire for stronger collaboration without concluding whether it should be highly formal or more flexible. They suggested creating practical mechanisms such as knowledge-exchange events, topic-specific monthly workshops and a coordination or knowledge manager role to help connect organizations with relevant expertise. They acknowledged the difficulty of formalising a structure given the diverse stages and models of organizations in the movement.

*Key Recommendations:*

- Implement regular thematic workshops, networking events, and shared problem-solving sessions
- Designate a knowledge manager or coordination role to connect organizations and distribute best practices
- Use a less formal but structured approach to preserve independence while enabling collaboration
- Identify shared needs and ask a trusted partner (*e.g., Grameen Trust*) to coordinate next steps.

## CLOSING ADDRESS: FROM DIALOGUE TO COLLECTIVE ACTION

In the final address, the Chair of Grameen Group Mr. Md. Ashraful Hassan reflected on the gathering as a turning point, not a conclusion. He emphasized that:

- The Grameen idea, born in a Bangladeshi village, belongs to the world
- Financial inclusion alone is insufficient to end poverty
- Integrated approaches, health, education, housing, insurance are required
- Climate change is already affecting the communities served.

Quoting Professor Yunus, he reminded participants: *“Poverty is not created by the poor. It is created by systems”*.

He framed the Three Zeros as a call to redesign those systems, not as branding, but as responsibility.



## CONCLUSION

The 2026 Paris Grameen Family Gathering marked a shift from symbolic unity toward self-aware, action-oriented collaboration. Participants demonstrated both pride in the movement’s historic achievements and concern about its future relevance.

The gathering was seen as *“not an end, but a beginning”*; a beginning that will be judged not by speeches or resolutions, but by whether the Grameen Family can translate shared values into shared action in a rapidly changing world.



## APPENDIX: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

<i>Bangladesh</i>	Grameen Trust
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Md. Ashraful Hassan - <i>Chairman</i></li> <li>• Mr. Hai Khan - <i>Executive Vice-Chairman</i></li> <li>• Ms. Tasmina Rahman - <i>Managing Director</i></li> <li>• Mr. Abdul Matin - <i>General Manager</i></li> </ul>
<i>Luxembourg</i>	Grameen Credit Agricole Foundation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Raphaël Appert - <i>President Crédit Agricole Representative</i></li> <li>• Ms. Sylvie Lemmet - <i>Independent Director</i></li> <li>• Ms. Véronique Faujour - <i>General Delegate</i></li> <li>• Mr. Vincent Brousseau - <i>Deputy General Delegate</i></li> <li>• Mr. Philippe Guichandut - <i>General Secretary</i></li> <li>• Mr. Edouard Sers - <i>Director of Risks &amp; Impact</i></li> <li>• Ms. Sarah Canetti - <i>Administrative &amp; Financial Director</i></li> <li>• Mr. Maxime Borgogno - <i>Investment Officer Central Asia, Eastern Europe</i></li> <li>• Ms. Cécile Pochet - <i>Senior Investment Officer, South and Southeast Asia</i></li> <li>• Ms. Kathrin Gerner - <i>Global Customer Relations Advisor</i></li> <li>• Ms. Hanadi Tutunji - <i>Technical Support Manager</i></li> <li>• Ms. Pauline Blit - <i>Risk Manager</i></li> <li>• Ms. Ines Yaici - <i>Risk Analyst</i></li> <li>• Mr. Julien Leroy - <i>Consultant</i></li> <li>• Ms. Anaïs Pantzer - <i>Communication Officer</i></li> </ul>
<i>USA</i>	Grameen America Inc.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Jasper Kubasek - <i>Vice President &amp; Chief of Staff</i></li> </ul>
<i>Kosovo</i>	Kosovo Grameen Missione Acrobaleno Microfinance Fund
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Md. Abul Kalam - <i>CEO</i></li> </ul>
<i>Yemen</i>	Grameen Yemen Foundation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Omar Lutf - <i>Co-Founder</i></li> <li>• Mr. Ahmed Alkulani - <i>Officer</i></li> </ul>
<i>Turkey</i>	Turkish Grameen Microfinance Program
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Aziz Akgül, Ph.D. - <i>Founder, Member of Board of Directors</i></li> <li>• Mr. Halil Fatih Akgül - <i>General Secretary, Chairman of Board of Directors</i></li> </ul>

<i>South Africa</i>	WDB Trust
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ms. Lerato Lekhula - <i>Head of Microfinance &amp; Social Business</i></li> <li>• Ms. Mandisa Matyeka - <i>Operations Manager</i></li> </ul>
<i>DRC</i>	Virunga Foundation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Jérôme Gabriel - <i>Responsible for the Green Corridor, co-manager</i></li> <li>• Mr. Tengiz Tkeshelashvili - <i>Deputy CFO</i></li> </ul>
<i>Albania</i>	Albanian-American Development Foundation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Aleksander Sarapuli - <i>Co-CEO</i></li> <li>• Mr. Martin Mata - <i>Co-CEO</i></li> <li>• Mr. Marin Shtylla - <i>Project Manager</i></li> </ul>
<i>Italy</i>	Yunus Italia Foundation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Giuseppe Torluccio - <i>Vice President</i></li> <li>• Ms. Giulia Zanetti - <i>Senior Project Manager</i></li> <li>• Ms. Alessandra Cavallo - <i>Researcher and Project Manager</i></li> <li>• Mr. Davide Verrocchi - <i>Financial and Admin Manager</i></li> <li>• Mr. Iacopo Greppi - <i>Jr. Project Officer</i></li> </ul>
<i>Thailand</i>	Yunus Thailand
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Callum Mackenzie - <i>Co-Founder &amp; Managing Director</i></li> <li>• Ms. Kanokvalee Viriyaprapaikit - <i>CEO</i></li> </ul>
<i>Bangladesh</i>	Integrated Development Foundation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Zahirul Alam - <i>Founder and Executive Director</i></li> <li>• Ms. Hosne Ara Begum - <i>Director Clients Protection</i></li> </ul>
<i>Pakistan</i>	Kashf Foundation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ms. Roshaneh Zafar - <i>Founder &amp; Managing Director</i></li> </ul>
<i>Philippines</i>	CARD MRI
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Dolores M. Torres - <i>Management Senior Adviser</i></li> <li>• Dr. Flordeliza L. Sarmiento - <i>Management Senior Adviser</i></li> <li>• Ms. Aurora M. Lagman - <i>Member</i></li> <li>• Ms. Emelyn L. Contreras - <i>Member</i></li> </ul>

<i>Philippines</i>	Negros Women for Tomorrow's Foundation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ms. Corazon Henares - <i>Board Chairperson</i></li> <li>• Ms. Suzzette Gaston - <i>Executive Director</i></li> <li>• Mr. Raymond Patrick Serios - <i>Director of Administration and Strategic Projects</i></li> <li>• Ms. Syrel Aplao - <i>Director of Accounting, Finance and Insurance</i></li> </ul>
<i>Nepal</i>	Centre for Self-Help Development
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Shankar Man Shrestha - <i>Chairperson</i></li> </ul>
<i>France</i>	Yunus France
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Clément Delcourt - <i>Head of Programs</i></li> </ul>
<i>USA</i>	Grameen Foundation USA
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Alex Counts - <i>Strategic Advisor</i></li> </ul>
<i>Malaysia</i>	Albukhary Foundation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ms. Sharifah Sofia - <i>Trustee</i></li> </ul>
<i>India</i>	Yunus Social Business Fund Bengaluru
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Suresh Krishna - <i>MD &amp; CEO</i></li> </ul>
<i>Bangladesh</i>	BASA Foundation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. A. K. M. Shirajul Islam - <i>Founder &amp; Executive Director</i></li> <li>• Ms. Samina Islam - <i>Deputy Executive Director</i></li> </ul>
<i>Bangladesh</i>	DESHA
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Md. Robiul Islam - <i>Executive Director</i></li> <li>• Mr. Nazmus Saleheen - <i>Assistant Executive Director</i></li> </ul>
<i>Bangladesh</i>	PIDIM Foundation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Advin Barun Banerjee - <i>Executive Director</i></li> <li>• Mr. Md. Shofiullah Shovon - <i>Deputy Executive Director</i></li> </ul>
<i>Germany</i>	Yunus + You – The YY Foundation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Dominique V. Dauster - <i>Executive Director</i></li> </ul>
<i>Bangladesh</i>	Proyas Manobik Unnayan Society
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Md. Hasib Hossain - <i>Founder &amp; Executive Director</i></li> </ul>

# WE ARE A FAMILY !



Written and laid out by Bernie MORGAN, Philippe GUICHANDUT & Anais PANTZER  
Photo Credit: ©Philippe LISSAC

# GRAMEEN FAMILY GATHERING

11 & 12  
FEBRUARY  
2026

