

Regulation of micro-finance is one of the issues on the agenda for the inaugural meeting in Nairobi of the Anglican Alliance – the new international development initiative for Anglicans.

The event in April, jointly organised by the Alliance with CAPA which brings together Anglican churches in Africa, will be looking at the challenges facing micro-finance as part of its policies for economic empowerment.

Micro-finance has provided cheap loans for small enterprises across the developing world, with an estimated 650 million people taking out loans averaging \$250 from 3,000 institutions. The sector was originally run by NGOs, but many providers now are in the commercial sector, and there has been growing criticism of some practices. Andhra Pradesh in India introduced controversial legislation, and the International Association of Micro Finance lenders has supported regulation.

The Anglican Alliance has a mandate for development, relief and advocacy, and will be looking at strategies for all three at its Nairobi meeting. Representatives from all the provinces in Africa will be attending the conference, along with participants from South America and the Caribbean, South Asia, South East Asia and the Pacific. The proposals for regulation could be put to G20 Governments attending the G20 which will be focussing on the economy and financial services. There are Anglican churches in most of the G20 countries.

Sally Keeble, Alliance Director said: “Micro-finance has an important role to play for generating enterprise in poor communities. But we have seen the appalling consequences that irresponsible and unscrupulous lending can have, and we need to prevent this. It’s wrong for poor people to be burdened with bad debt.”

The conference will also be looking at the economic implications of education and training, investment and trade, climate change, regional economic development and women’s economic empowerment. It is one of a programme of events to roll out the Anglican Alliance across the worldwide communion.