



impact

A HANDFUL OF RICE

Daisy Rani's family was barely subsisting on her husband's meager income, so she started a sari business. The \$12 per month she earned helped, but was far from sufficient. Through Growing Opportunity Finance, our India partner, Daisy and 19 other women formed the *Good Shepherd Trust Group*. Three loans later, she has tripled her profits and has \$50 in savings.

For the first time in her life, Daisy was in a position to help others in her community. She started a



Liesel Pritzker in Tanzania



“handful of rice” program, inspiring three Trust Groups to join. In nine months, after setting aside a handful of rice every day, the women donated 265 pounds to a school for girls with visual impairment—enough to provide food for three months.

Young Ambassadors for Opportunity

Inspiring and involving younger generations

Young Ambassadors for Opportunity, or YAO, is a new volunteer-driven initiative aimed at engaging members of the younger generation who are committed to alleviating poverty. YAO will mobilize significant volunteer support and financial resources for Opportunity's mission as well as cultivate future leaders in microfinance.

The idea for YAO was generated by Liesel Pritzker, an Opportunity supporter who wanted to connect in a meaningful way beyond financial support. “I was thrilled to learn about Opportunity International and become involved in the microfinance revolution,” she said, “and I was not willing to wait until my career was fully established before trying to make a difference in the world.”

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“This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.”

—Psalm 34:5,6

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Most often our relationship with a client begins with a loan—an essential financial product that creates jobs and increases incomes. Yet, Opportunity International offers so much more. Our extensive, ongoing training enhances work and life skills. Our savings accounts keep money secure and make plans for the future possible. Our insurance products protect families from slipping backwards when the unexpected occurs.

Through efficient loan recycling, effective financial leveraging and wealth creation among clients, Opportunity's powerful business model enables supporters to provide benefits to the poor far beyond the actual dollars contributed. In fact, for every \$100 contributed in 2007, we were able to make available an amazing \$274 in financial services.

(See our 2007 Annual Report at www.opportunity.org.)

In addition to the social and emotional boost our clients receive from success in business, increased income means improved nutritional status, health, education and housing for families—and the benefits ripple out through their communities and beyond.

As part of our continued commitment to the poor, we are building six new banks scheduled to open in the next two years in Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Albania and Colombia. We are “banking on the poor” because it makes good business sense and because it is a powerful way to answer God’s call to serve the poor.



As part of an Insight Trip following the Africa Conference, Jay Hein, Deputy Assistant to the President and Director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, opens an account at Urwego Opportunity Microfinance Bank in Kigali, Rwanda.

Opportunity International plays marquee role in White House Africa Conference

In March, the White House hosted the *Africa Conference on Public-Private Partnerships and Economic Development* in Kigali, Rwanda. Sponsored by the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, the conference was held in coordination with President Paul Kagame of Rwanda and included church leaders, private companies, non-governmental organizations and government officials from the U.S. and Rwanda.

Opportunity International was prominently featured at the conference through plenary talks given by Dale Dawson, chair of Opportunity International's President's Council, and Dubby Mahalanobis, Africa Regional Director for Opportunity's Micro Insurance Agency. Many of our partnerships, such as those with Compassion International, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and USAID (United States Agency for International Development), were also highlighted.

Empower Women: End Poverty!

This headline was the theme of the Women, Faith, and Development Alliance's inaugural event—*Breakthrough: The Women, Faith, and Development Summit to End Global Poverty*, held recently at Washington's National Cathedral.

In a powerful keynote address, Madeleine Albright, former U.S. Secretary of State, said, "...we are present at the creation of a new era based on a big idea—that investments in women and girls hold the key to an achievable goal—the elimination of extreme poverty and injustice."

Sharing the podium was Opportunity International's Bhuvana Nataraj, client development officer in Chennai, India. She was selected as one of only three women from the Global South to present during the plenary portion of the summit. She spoke on behalf of 18,000 women who are receiving microloans through Growing Opportunity Finance, Opportunity's partner in India.



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Opportunity's gender equity work honored



Julie Hindmarsh, Board of Directors (left), and Susy Cheston, Senior Vice President for Policy, accept the Leet Award on behalf of Opportunity.

In May, the global organization InterAction recognized Opportunity with the Mildred Robbins Leet Award for our work in India through our partner Growing Opportunity Finance. The Leet Award recognizes member agencies that are making significant progress in attaining gender equity in their programs and management. This year, the focus of the award was "expanding investments in women and girls and reducing poverty."

YOUNG AMBASSADORS FOR OPPORTUNITY (CONTINUED FROM THE COVER)

"That's why I wanted to get Young Ambassadors for Opportunity off the ground. I knew there were many other young people who are globally minded, philanthropic and passionate about improving our world. They are quick to open up networks, share innovative ideas and get involved in giving back. YAO will provide a forum for people of my generation to commit their energy and resources to the microfinance field," said Liesel.

A diverse board of emerging leaders, including Nancy Brady, Elena Compton, Nathan Popkins, Brian Zakrocki and Liesel, will be responsible for the oversight and implementation of YAO's goals and mission. To jumpstart YAO fundraising efforts, a lead gift of \$1.8 million for Tanzania has been pledged by the board.

Interest in YAO has been overwhelming at initial meetings and kick-off events. For more information, please contact Sonya Perez at 630-242-4150 or at yao@opportunity.org.



Lower interest rates yield higher gift benefits

Recent reductions in interest rates by the Federal Reserve did more than raise hopes of stimulating the economy; they also opened the door to a special giving arrangement that provides significant benefits to both families and charities.

Here's an example: Susan Miles (not her real name) owns an apartment building with a fair market value of approximately \$2 million. It generates approximately \$150,000 in rental income annually, and has been depreciated to almost zero. Susan would like to pass the property to her children but her estate is well over the estate tax limit. She also supports several charities, including Opportunity International.

Responding to the low interest rate environment, her advisors recommend Susan transfer the building to a special trust arrangement ("charitable lead annuity trust" or "CLAT"). For 20 years, the trust will pay a fixed 7% annuity (\$140,000) to Susan's selected charities, after which the building (as well as any appreciation) will pass directly to her children free of estate taxes.

By taking advantage of this time of unusually low interest rates, Susan achieved both a financial and a philanthropic goal, and resolved a substantial tax issue at the same time.

Chuck Day, Director of Gift Planning Services, can be reached at cday@opportunity.org or 630-242-4136.

EMPOWER WOMEN: END POVERTY! (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

Before Bhuvana joined the Opportunity family, she felt nothing but discouragement about the plight of the poor in India. She had worked as an AIDS counselor but felt the futility of advising patients to eat well and take expensive medicines when it was obvious they could afford neither.

Working directly with women and their Trust Groups, she came to understand how microfinance provides real solutions to poverty. With Opportunity loans and the support of their groups, she saw her clients move from desperation to hope, and from destitution to stability. She witnessed the change from within that allowed her clients to not only provide for their family, but share with others. (See the story of Bhuvana's client Daisy Rani and the "handful of rice" program on the cover.)

The Women, Faith, and Development Alliance is a unique partnership of internationally focused organizations. It is a powerful new force dedicated to engendering global efforts to reduce poverty by increasing political will and action to increase investments in women's and girls' empowerment around the world.

As a direct result of the summit, Opportunity International has made two Breakthrough Commitments. We have pledged \$1.5 million in 2008 to expand the reach of our microfinance programs in India, with the goal of empowering 275,000 women by 2012 with business loans and training. We have also committed \$1.5 million to reduce the vulnerability of over 500,000 African adolescent girls through the creation and delivery of innovative microinsurance products in conjunction with the Nike Foundation.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Employees of Opportunity International Bank of Malawi recently spent their free time building a house for a family in need. Similar volunteer efforts occur at many of our partner organizations.





Arah Sadava



Patricia Tukahirw

The Women’s Opportunity Network of Opportunity International was created to promote women in leadership and to enable the poor to transform their lives. A major initiative of the Network is our LEAD Campaign—Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Development—which recruits and trains leaders for senior positions.

Two such leaders, new to the Opportunity family, are Arah Sadava in Tanzania and Patricia Tukahirw in Uganda.

New faces of leadership

Arah Sadava is chief operations officer for Faulu Tanzania Limited, our new start-up partner in Tanzania. Arah became interested in microfinance as she witnessed how it alleviated poverty in her native Philippines—even bringing stability to areas in conflict. But she wanted to bring her skills to a country where the need was even greater and her contributions could be most impactful.

“Tanzania is 80% rural and most households have an informal income-generating activity. This makes it perfect for microfinance—building on the existing economy. Most financial institutions steer away from small agricultural businesses, like farmers who plow with a water buffalo rather than a tractor. But Opportunity International has designed the tools that make microfinance work—even for the poorest and most remote clients. With our approach, no one needs to be denied access.”

Another transformational leader is **Patricia Tukahirw, human resource manager for Faulu Uganda Limited**, who shares Opportunity’s Christian values and vision. She believes that focusing on the poorest of the working poor touches God’s heart. Opportunity’s goals of improving lives and enhancing dignity are especially poignant for her, living in a country plagued by HIV/AIDS.

“At Opportunity, we don’t discriminate, we accommodate,” says Patricia. “We find ways to bring hope, like microinsurance even for those who may not live to repay their loan. After receiving a loan, one client dying of AIDS thanked me for giving her a chance to live another day. With the help of the loan, her child finished university. Later, we helped the child get a job and the client said, ‘You’ve now given me two days to live.’ To me, this is very powerful and only possible because Opportunity International looks beyond what can be seen.”

A PHILANTHROPIC SWEET 16

When Patricia Guinea, Savannah Smith and Katherine Cheng (from left) were planning their birthdays, they found inspiration from the photos and stories of Kimberly Hunt, Savannah’s mother and popular San Diego television anchorwoman, who had just returned from an Insight Trip to Nicaragua.

“We realized just how fortunate we are and we were determined to do our part to help the poor empower themselves,” said Savannah. The result was a different kind of *Sweet 16* party—one in which guests made a \$45 donation to Opportunity International in lieu of gifts. The girls raised a total of \$7,000.

“It was thrilling to see everybody’s positive response and very rewarding to make a contribution,” Savannah added. She is continuing her commitment to Opportunity by interning this summer and attending an Insight Trip in the near future.



The gift of a grateful heart

Linda Vander Weele is a firm believer in Insight Trips—the chance to see the work of Opportunity in the field firsthand. She has hosted nearly two dozen, initially inspiring her to become Opportunity’s first female board member in both the U.S. and U.K., and later prompting Linda and her husband Ken, now president of our Investment Services Division, to take a year’s sabbatical in Latin America for Opportunity in 1991.

But those Insight Trips pale in comparison to her multi-year sojourn through Eastern Europe from 1992 through 2006, raising her young family shoulder-to-shoulder with the people they were trying to help lift out of poverty.

Ken had written a proposal to apply the Opportunity model in Bulgaria, which had just emerged from communism. USAID (United States Agency for International Development) officials were inspired by the proposal and agreed to



“I was in Bulgaria for three years where we had water once every three days, the electricity was unpredictable, the hospitals were bankrupt, the buses belched exhaust and everybody over 30 had respiratory problems because garbage was burned for heating,” Linda says. “Life in Bulgaria was not easy, but it was an unexpected gift to our family. Being there at a critical time in our children’s development has had a lifelong impact, especially creating in them a heart for social justice—what more can a mother ask for?” All four children are now involved in social justice and community service as adults.

Her time abroad has had a profound effect on Linda as well. “I have always been incredibly moved by our clients’ unending hard work to overcome overwhelming odds,” she says. “The experience has given me the gift of a very grateful heart, because it is easy to see how, by just the flip of a coin, any of us could have been born into different circumstances.”

Today, Linda applies her life lessons in her full-time work as a regional director for Opportunity International in the Chicago area. She enthusiastically embraces the mandate “to whom God has given much, much is expected.” Linda says, “Great philanthropy is a bridge. If people on both sides of the bridge are being uplifted, that’s fulfilling philanthropy!”



implement it with the precondition that Ken would take the leading role in country. So Linda packed up her four children and moved to Bulgaria, while Ken initiated operations for Opportunity in Bulgaria, and soon after in Poland, Romania, Russia, Macedonia, Croatia, Montenegro, Albania and Serbia.

GOVERNORS IN ACTION:

Taking the lead with LEAD

Fifteen years ago, Ted and Marietta Johns were drawn to Opportunity because of their love for the poor. Today, they are Board of Governors members co-chairing the effort to raise \$10 million for our LEAD Campaign.

“We were so blessed with all that we had been given. When we retired in 2001, we wanted to give back in the most effective way possible,” said Marietta.

“We looked at many nonprofits around the world,” explained Ted. “Opportunity was the one organization where we could see the direct results of our contributions as we traveled on Insight Trips to the Philippines, Nicaragua, Peru and Ghana.”

The LEAD Campaign—Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Development—was a natural fit for Ted and Marietta. Ted’s journey as senior pastor of several Lutheran churches and Marietta’s career as senior vice president at American Express gave them both a keen understanding of the importance of strong leadership.

“Much of my career was devoted to recruiting and developing senior leaders, with an emphasis on women,” said Marietta. “The LEAD Campaign is so exciting because I can continue using my skills to cultivate transformational leaders. By 2010, we’ll have almost 6,000 new leaders in place—all critically needed thanks to Opportunity’s phenomenal growth.”

“Opportunity allows us to serve together, share our talents and set an example for our children and grandchildren,” Marietta explained. Their daughter Kristin traveled with them to Ghana and they plan to take their grandchildren on a trip soon. “We want them to think philanthropically—not only through the checkbook, but by getting fully involved,” Ted added.

“Opportunity allows us to meet our philanthropic goals and spiritual needs at the same time—everything coming together in one package to serve the poorest of the poor,” said Ted.



Ted and Marietta Johns visit with Hilda and Jeffrey Kuasihieman and their son, Jeffrey. Hilda, a client with the *Use Your Hands to Work* Trust Group, had just received her first loan of \$400 for her fabric and secondhand clothing business.

Board of Governors calendar

WEBINARS

August 13, Noon CST
Church Connections

September 4, Noon CST
Connect with Media

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

October 3 – 4
Oak Brook, IL

RWANDA INSIGHT TRIP
August 29 – September 7

GHANA INSIGHT TRIP
December 5 – 13

To participate in any Board of Governors activities, please contact Wendy Cox, Board of Governors director, at (630) 414-2567 or wcox@opportunity.org.



Opportunity International
GIVING THE POOR A WORKING CHANCE

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THE **OPPORTUNITY INTERNATIONAL MISSION** IS TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE IN CHRONIC POVERTY TO TRANSFORM THEIR LIVES.

Our strategy is to create jobs, stimulate small businesses and strengthen communities among the poor.

Our method is to work through indigenous partner organizations that provide small business loans, other financial services, training and counsel.

Our commitment is motivated by Jesus Christ's call to serve the poor.

Our core values are respect, commitment to the poor, integrity and stewardship.

Opportunity International serves women and men of all faiths and no faith.



Opportunity International

GIVING THE POOR A WORKING CHANCE

2122 York Road, Ste. 150, Oak Brook, Illinois 60523

In the remote mountains surrounding Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, Victoria Thulisile Gumede and fellow members of the Camperdown Women's Co-operative run a school lunch program in 31 public schools. For 5,000 children, the Co-operative provides what is more than likely their only meal of the day.

As a mother of nine, including three adopted orphans, Victoria was keenly aware of the challenges of keeping a family fed. In 2006, she and several other women created the Co-operative to purchase, cook and serve nutritious meals through a government-funded initiative.

In an area where food, running water and electricity are scarce, demand for the program was high and it grew quickly. But at times, government payment lagged behind. In danger of running out of food, the Co-operative approached commercial banks for financing but were turned away.

Opportunity made it possible for the Co-operative to continue the program with customized bridge loans that covered costs while they awaited reimbursement. Our Pietermaritzburg staff understood that the food program is more than a business—it impacts the very survival of the children served.

