



The Case for Support
Bringing Opportunity to Women

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Why Women?

The Case for Investing in Women

Women represent an estimated 70% of those living on less than \$2 a day.¹ They suffer most from the chronic effects of poor nutrition, insufficient access to healthcare and limited educational opportunities. And they comprise the majority of victims of forced labor, gender violence, and legal and cultural inequities.²

In their book, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, Pulitzer Prize-winning authors Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn offer another reason for making women and girls the focus of our efforts to reduce poverty: “When women gain control over spending, less family money is devoted to instant gratification and more for educating and starting small businesses.”

Numerous studies support the emerging view that women and girls create more developmental change for each dollar invested in them. The United Nations Development Programme summed it up this way: “Women’s empowerment helps raise economic productivity and reduce infant mortality. It contributes to improved health and nutrition. It increases the chances of education for the next generation.”⁴

When women are able to access the tools they need, they can really make an enormous difference.³

Opportunity International invests the majority of its donor dollars in providing microfinance services to the most vulnerable people on our planet—women—who use their increased income to support their children. We believe in the potential of women to transform their lives and those of their children and their community. Microfinance is available to both men and women entrepreneurs. Yet, the gains that women achieve are almost three times more likely to be reinvested in their children—providing a powerful generational multiplier that accelerates economic growth.

The Harsh Reality For Women Living In Poverty

Two-thirds of the world’s illiterate people are women.

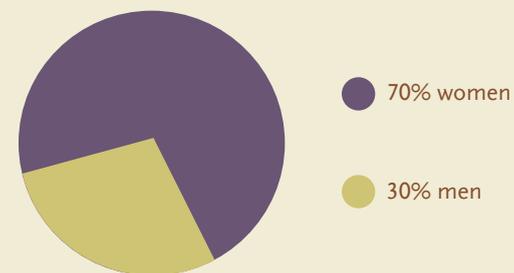
Women are owners of just **one hundredth** of the world’s property, yet they make up the majority of farm labor, with wives working alongside their husbands in the fields.⁵

Women do **66%** of the world’s work and receive only **10%** of the pay.⁶

Women on average earn **two-thirds** of what men earn, and spend at least twice as much time as men on unpaid work.¹

Despite these realities, women have consistently shown inspiring resilience and determination to change their own world and create a better future for their children.

Living on less than \$2 a day



Opportunity International knows that when a hardworking woman gets a microfinance loan and training, she begins to build her business—anything from a produce stall or clothing vendor in a bustling urban market to a mobile phone charging station or beauty shop in a remote village. In the developing world, opportunities for women in the formal labor sector are often limited. Starting her own business helps a woman generate an income, while giving her the flexibility to care for her children and her household.

With her profits, she improves her children’s diets to help build strong minds and bodies. She sends her children to school to receive the education she never had. She makes sure they get the medicine they need when they’re sick. She takes out life, credit, property or health insurance from Opportunity International to reduce her family’s risk should a hardship occur.

This woman—who once lived in extreme poverty with little or no hope for the future—now invests in an Opportunity savings account for her family’s future needs. When she has enough money saved, she puts a better roof over their heads or a concrete floor under their feet. She may care for one or more of the children in her extended family who have been orphaned by AIDS. She often starts new businesses, employs several neighbors, becomes a leader. Opportunity leverages her savings to make loans to other women in her community so that they, too, can start life-changing businesses.

Microfinance becomes a tool not just in the transformation of families, but of entire communities.



On these pages, you will discover stories of hope and transformation for the women of Uganda, who are representative of the nearly 1.5 million women in more than 20 developing countries served by Opportunity International last year.

Rayusa Muzalila of Kiganda, Uganda, has used Opportunity loans to expand her grocery store and start a textile business. With her increased profits, she has opened her first-ever savings account with Opportunity. She also has constructed a new home for her family and several apartments to rent. Rayusa is proud that she can send her two children to university and two orphaned relatives to day school. Because there is only one major school in the area and many of the local children can’t afford to travel there, she hopes to someday build a neighborhood school. “I want to educate other children so they will have a good future,” she says.

Women And Girls Are Powerful Change Agents

Women invest in their children and communities.

- In families where women have an income, they have a voice in financial decisions, resulting in better nutrition, health and education for children—including girls.⁷
- A woman will spend 90% of her income on her family, while men typically spend only 35%.⁷
- When family needs are met, women are more likely to invest in their communities.⁷
- When women have the skills to participate in public life, government corruption declines.⁷

Educated girls make a difference.

- When a girl receives seven or more years of education, she will marry four years later and have 2.2 fewer children.⁷
- When 10% more girls go to secondary school, the country’s economy grows by 3%.⁷
- When women have the skills to participate in public life, government corruption declines.⁷

Why Microfinance?

Women Use Microfinance Services to Transform their Lives

Cultural and legal equality is slowly coming to the developing world. Microfinance can help women change their own world—and their children's futures—starting today.

Microfinance has proven to be a powerful accelerant for helping resourceful and entrepreneurial women work their way out of poverty. According to *Half the Sky* authors Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, "Microfinance has done more to bolster the status of women, and to protect them from abuse, than any laws could accomplish. Capitalism, it turns out, can achieve what charity and good intentions sometimes cannot."

Investing in women through Opportunity's bank-based microfinance model has the additional multiplier of sustainability.

When clients pay back their loans on time—and 95% of them do—the principle is loaned over and over again, providing a sustainable source of capital. Opportunity International builds and operates regulated microfinance banks which take and invest client savings, further increasing the funds available for loans. When a bank becomes sustainable, donor contributions can then be used to expand outreach and develop innovative services and technology.

Loans: Developing Income-Producing Businesses

Founded in 1971, Opportunity International was one of the first nonprofit organizations to recognize the benefits of providing small business loans as capital to those working their way out of poverty.

Opportunity offers a mix of loan products, including group and individual loans, and allows clients to access larger loans as their businesses grow. In 1991, the Women's

Opportunity Network started an innovative group-lending methodology called the Trust Group, which has become a core component of Opportunity's service to communities around the globe.

A typical first point of entry, the Trust Group helps women break free from the limitations of poverty. It promotes solidarity among a group of entrepreneurs, usually women, who guarantee each other's loans and support one another. Many become employers and role models in their community. All benefit from deep connections with their group and loan officer as they experience previously unimaginable growth in their lives.

Savings: Planning For the Future

Opportunity's microfinance solutions, which now include interest-bearing savings accounts, small-business loans and affordable insurance, have evolved to reflect the needs of our clients. Not everyone is an entrepreneur, but all those living in poverty need asset protection. Recent studies by the World Bank have shown that savings are as important as loans to people who are impoverished. In some countries, the demand for savings is five times as high as the demand for loans.

This Opportunity Uganda Trust Group meets weekly to repay their loans and receive invaluable business training from their loan officer.



Because clients' lives are precarious and their incomes irregular, it is critical for them to save money for business opportunities, family needs and emergencies.

Unfortunately, a large majority of women in the developing world are forced to keep what little money they may have in cash because of the high minimum deposits required by most banks. Cash doesn't earn interest and is difficult to keep secure—especially for women. When they lack access to a bank, people living in poverty often turn to local deposit takers who charge up to 20% per day to hold their money.⁸

The ability to save money with a bank like Opportunity, and to earn interest instead of paying it, is crucial to the success of women around the world. In developing countries where thousands of children die each year from malaria for the lack of \$5 to purchase medicine, women understand the value of saving for family health emergencies. Many clients also put away money each week to save for larger expenses that exceed their weekly incomes such as children's school tuitions.

Women are quick to learn that independent savings can be as important to their children's welfare and security as independent income.

Insurance: Adding Security

Opportunity International creates effective and affordable insurance products for people making less than \$2 a day. We insure over one million policyholders and their families in the developing world, helping to keep families healthier and reduce their risk.

For emerging entrepreneurs, a market fire or a death in the family can wipe out their business and any unbanked savings, plummeting them back into chronic poverty. Thanks to Opportunity, loan clients often have credit life insurance built into their loan payments. If a client dies, the benefit pays off the loan balance. In the case of a catastrophic loss of a client's business, the benefit automatically repays the loan and pays to



In 2009, a major fire in the Owino Market in Kampala, Uganda, destroyed 300 client businesses, including Sarah Byamukama's. Fortunately, Opportunity insurance covered her loan and she was able to take out a new loan to rebuild her secondhand clothing stall. Sarah says, "By God's grace, I have more clients than ever before."

replace inventory and rebuild the business.

With a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Opportunity is providing weather-index crop insurance to protect smallholder farmers from the risk of crop loss from drought or typhoon—a common and devastating occurrence in sub-Saharan Africa and the Philippines.

Training: Transforming Lives

In the past, most women in the developing world have not had access to the financial literacy training they need to make informed business and personal finance decisions.

To achieve the life transformation that Opportunity desires for its clients, Trust Group members receive weekly training in business practices, personal relationships and healthcare issues from their loan officers. As their loans are repaid, clients become eligible for larger loans and more training and development.

Last year, almost 1.2 million Opportunity clients received training to develop business skills and enhance their social and spiritual growth. With training, women can make their money and their dreams go further.

Why Education?

Banking on Education Can Help End the Cycle of Poverty

Microfinance x Women x Educating Girls = Sustainable, Generational Impact

It is widely recognized that education holds the potential of breaking the cycle of poverty in the next generation, yet there is still a great need for increased funding.⁹

While most African countries have public school systems, many schools are of poor quality or are not accessible to children—especially girls—in rural communities. Public schools are often underfunded, which results in overcrowded classrooms, poor infrastructure and an ineffective learning environment. Public school uniforms can cost as much as \$30, the equivalent of one month's income for many families. When book fees and transportation expenses are added to this, education is often out of reach for people living in poverty.

Opportunity International's Banking on Education school proprietor loan program is proof that necessity is the mother of invention. Responding to her community's needs, an educator may have started a day care or primary school in her home, and then sought an Opportunity Trust Group loan to expand her facilities.



Now, through the Banking on Education program, a school proprietor can obtain larger, long-term loans of \$5,000 to \$25,000 to add classrooms, improve infrastructure and hire qualified teachers. Business skills and community leadership training, as well as ongoing mentoring, helps school proprietors create and implement a successful business plan. These entrepreneurs, in turn, provide children with the greatest gift of all—the gift of learning. With higher quality schools, children also benefit from improved nutrition, sanitation and clean water.

Since 2007, Opportunity has given 350 loans to private schools serving 87,000 children living in poverty.

When families have financial difficulties, girls are often the first ones kept out of school. Opportunity encourages school administrators to focus on attracting and retaining female students, since their enrollment rate is significantly lower than that of boys in developing countries. To help parents afford school tuition, Opportunity provides school fee loans and savings accounts. These accounts also earn interest and guarantee assets if a child loses her or his guardians.

To accelerate this positive trend to expand educational opportunities for children on a larger scale, Opportunity is piloting education loan programs in Ghana, India, Malawi and Uganda.

A quality education empowers students with the skills and abilities to secure higher paying jobs, build strong families and help in the economic development of their communities.

Banking on Education Goals

- Invest in 1,000 schools
- Impact 250,000 children
- Provide \$14 million in loans
- Develop new products, including child savings accounts and school fee loans

A School Entrepreneur Educates the Next Generation and Impacts the Future

Rosemary Namande is a Banking on Education loan client in Uganda.

Patricia Tukahirwa is human resources manager for Opportunity Uganda.

Fifteen years ago, Patricia was Rosemary's student.

When her husband died, Rosemary (shown at right) started a school for infants in makeshift quarters as a way to support her own family and help others at the same time.

Like so many Ugandans, Rosemary's life had been deeply affected by the AIDS epidemic. She lost her daughter, two siblings and a nephew, adopting the 11 children they left behind. Running her school enabled her to raise and educate all of them.

Today, thanks to Rosemary's determination and Opportunity loans, five permanent buildings house her elementary school and orphanage. Here Rosemary cares for 900 children, 55 of whom are orphans. Fifteen of them were born HIV positive and receive treatment at the school. Rosemary says, "God has blessed me with the ability to care for His most needy children."

Rosemary started with a group loan of \$204. Today, through Opportunity's Banking on Education program, she has a loan for \$7,000. Rosemary uses part of the loan to buy fabric to make school uniforms that she sells to defray the cost of tuition for those who can't afford it.

Rosemary employs 53 people at the school and in her sewing business, and greatly enhances economic activity in her community.

She also has helped educate hundreds of girls, some of whom will grow up to be professional women like Patricia (pictured in left photo below), her former student, who is now a senior manager at Opportunity Uganda, the microfinance bank that provides Rosemary her loans.



Why Opportunity?

We Help Communities Thrive



Client Milly Nassuna makes a savings deposit at Opportunity's satellite branch, which is conveniently located near the Kalerwe Market where she sells produce.

Reaching the Most Marginalized

Women in the developing world shoulder a huge amount of responsibility—caring for children, fetching water, growing food, preparing meals—and often running small businesses. This keeps them busy from early morning to late evening, and ties them to their homes.

Opportunity uses technology to bring the bank to these women's doorsteps. Satellite branches and mobile banks reach clients in previously unserved areas, like rural farming villages and urban sprawling markets. Cell phone technology gives clients in remote locations affordable, reliable access to their accounts. Convenient ATMs and point-of-sale devices offer the only safe method for transactions in many markets.

These innovative delivery channels are particularly important to women in rural areas who are afraid to carry cash to banks that are miles away. In addition, struggling entrepreneurs with narrow profit margins can ill afford the transportation costs and time it takes to make weekly trips to distant towns.

Many women clients are illiterate and lack formal identification, so Opportunity uses biometric fingerprint technology to provide secure banking services. To access her account, a client presses her finger to the screen. No one else—not even her spouse or his relatives—can access her account, giving her control over the family's finances.

One Trust Group Client's Success Story

Hamida Nabbanja (right) from Kampala, Uganda, has seen great changes in her life since she joined Opportunity in 2001. Hamida is now treasurer of the Blessed Trust Group and an influential and respected woman in her community. She has built a house for her three children, rents out 17 homes to her neighbors, and owns two stalls in the Owino Market, where she sells new and used handbags. Hamida has three close friends in the Trust Group; they share challenges and support each other in their businesses. Hamida dreams of her children doing well at university and having good jobs. She even hopes that one of them will work at Opportunity someday. Hamida is pictured here with Opportunity loan officer Margret Kisakye. Loan officers like Margret are teachers, role models and mentors, as well as bankers.



Unlocking Human Capital

For almost 40 years, Opportunity's services have tapped into the individual potential that makes transformation possible for those living in poverty. Our clients receive the tools they need to develop capacity to the fullest—an array of financial products reinforced by educational programs and business training. Given the freedom to learn new skills, pursue dreams and improve their lives, our clients feel validated, listened to and cared about. With their confidence and courage bolstered, even the most vulnerable can become powerful, active citizens creating lasting change in their families and communities.

Building Community

Every day, the financial activity of our clients catalyzes local commerce and contributes to the larger economies of regions and countries. With profits from their businesses, our loan clients buy food and household goods, improve their housing, support their churches and grow their savings. Trust Group members develop strong connections and learn new business skills while using Opportunity services to improve their lives and strengthen their communities.

Opportunity's community banking model plays an integral role in building vibrant commerce and thriving communities. Since 2001, Opportunity has opened 13 regulated microfinance institutions—including nine banks—for impoverished people who may have never had access to financial services until now. What's more, our banks use clients' interest-bearing deposits to make loans to other people working their way out of poverty.

The generosity of our supporters also helps Opportunity clients and their communities thrive. With their donations, Opportunity creates microfinance products that make it possible for market vendors to fill their stalls with goods, artisans to make a profit, educators to expand schools and farmers to move beyond subsistence. Communities prosper as new income is reinvested to grow businesses, employ more neighbors and enroll children in school—creating an economic cycle of growth for every dollar contributed to Opportunity International.



To help increase food and financial security in rural communities, Opportunity's agricultural finance initiative provides smallholder farmers with loan products, crop insurance, high-quality seed and fertilizers, technical assistance and linkages to well-established markets.

This initiative helps ensure that clients like Ruth Nassimbwa (above) of Kampala, Uganda, have a steady supply of fruits and vegetables for their homes and market stalls. Ruth was in business for years, but until she received an Opportunity loan in 2006, she had difficulty purchasing inventory. A true entrepreneur, Ruth expanded from selling groceries to operating her own restaurant. Now repaying her tenth loan of \$779, her business is stable and her loan is insured. Ruth's income has more than doubled enabling her to send her four children to school, and to hire four neighbors to help in her businesses.

Why Now?

Transforming More Women's Lives Requires More Resources

Serving the Women of Uganda

The Women's Opportunity Network (WON) is committed to raising \$1 million to provide Ugandan women with the financial services they need to work their way out of poverty. In 2007, Faulu Uganda, a small independent microfinance organization, became part of Opportunity International. Because Faulu gave larger individual loans and fewer group loans, the Uganda operation had a lower percentage of women clients (51%) compared to Opportunity's average (84%). With WON's help, Opportunity will increase its Trust Group loan program to greatly increase access to microfinance for the women of Uganda. In addition, Opportunity plans to invest in 17 full branches, 18 bank satellites and several mobile banks to bring services to women living in geographic isolation in Uganda. For more information on how you can come alongside us in WON's Uganda Campaign, visit opportunity.org/won.

Banking on Africa

WON's Uganda Campaign is part of a larger \$123 million initiative called "Banking on Africa." Through this campaign,

Agnes Kayongo, 34, is a branch relationship manager for Opportunity Uganda. In early 2010, she participated in the 10,000 Women Emerging

Leaders Program. Agnes says, "I really like how the program empowers women leaders to be more effective and more impactful in their workplace and communities. It gives us the confidence and courage to carry on with our lives and work." Agnes considers microfinance to be very important in her country. "People here have always had small businesses, but now, with loans from Opportunity, they are able to build up their inventory and serve more clients," she said. "I want to lead my organization in providing more business development training to our clients so they can move up to the next level."



Opportunity hopes to provide financial services that will impact more than 30 million people—or one in 20 Africans living on under \$2 a day. The focus is on sub-Saharan Africa, where less than 10 percent of the population has an account with a financial institution. Over \$100 million has already been raised from individuals, corporations and foundations such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and The MasterCard Foundation. We are seeking an additional \$23 million from our community of supporters to make our campaign goal. For more information on how you can bank on Africa with us, visit opportunity.org/initiatives/banking-on-africa.

Providing More Loan Officers

To expand access to more women, Opportunity Uganda plans to hire and train 40 additional loan officers by the end of 2011. The loan officer has the most transformational impact on our clients. Serving as mentors, advocates and trainers for Trust Group members, loan officers develop as community leaders. With a heart for the most needy, they become passionately involved in their clients' lives and become instrumental in building their own local economies.

Creating Women Leaders

Opportunity has raised \$10 million dollars to train indigenous leaders, especially women, across Africa. A major initiative of WON, this program has identified and developed talented young professionals, and has prepared future leaders for senior management positions in the countries Opportunity serves.

Opportunity has joined the Goldman Sachs *10,000 Women* initiative which aims to prepare 10,000 women across Africa for jobs in the financial sector. Opportunity's *10,000 Women* Emerging Leaders Program is training hundreds of promising young African women for management careers in financial institutions serving Africans living in poverty.

Women in the developing world are ready and waiting for the financial services and training they need to build a business and a better life for their family. Here's how you can help them get this opportunity.

Expand Trust Groups for women

\$5,000 gift funds a Trust Group, impacting 25 clients and their families

\$35,000 gift provides a new loan officer with a portfolio that impacts an entire community

Educate the next generation

\$10,000 gift funds a Banking on Education loan that impacts 635 lives today and the future of a country

Provide support for farmer families

\$30,000 gift provides loans and crop insurance for a group of 200 farming families

Deploy technology to make savings accounts accessible and secure for women

\$1,500 gift helps fund the purchase of a point-of-sale device that will provide access to financial services in rural markets, farm shops and other communal locations

\$40,000 gift, when combined with equal gifts from four others, is enough to purchase and equip a mobile bank that serves up to 5,000 entrepreneurs each week

Build capacity and train women leaders

\$1,750 gift provides management development programs for one woman bank employee

\$15,000 gift employs and trains a loan officer who touches the lives of more than 200 clients for one year

Get involved Board of Governors, opportunity.org/bog • Women's Opportunity Network, opportunity.org/won
Young Ambassadors for Opportunity, opportunity.org/yao

Join the conversation opportunity.org/blog • twitter.com/OpportunityIntl • facebook.com/OpportunityIntl

Fund a microloan at optinnow.org Choose an entrepreneur to support • Host a fundraiser

1. "Facts on Women at Work" – International Labour Organization
2. "Violence Against Women" – World Health Organization
3. "Voices of Power" – *The Washington Post*
4. "Gender Equality in Development" – Bureau for Research and Economic Analysis of Development

5. "Women Gain Inch in Push for Land Rights in Uganda" – Women's eNews
6. Gender Equality – the Big Picture – UNICEF
7. "Why Girls" – Nike Foundation
8. "Lessons from Ugandan Money Lenders" – Financial Sector Deepening Project Uganda
9. "Millennium Development Goals" – United Nations



Opportunity International

Our vision is a world in which all people have the opportunity to provide for their families and build a fulfilling life.

Our belief is that small-scale entrepreneurs can be big change agents in overcoming global poverty.

Our mission is to empower people to work their way out of chronic poverty, transforming their lives, their children's futures, and their communities.

Our method is to provide microfinance services, including lending, savings, insurance, and transformational training, to people in need. To do this, we build and work through sustainable, local microfinance institutions.

Our motivation is to respond to Jesus Christ's call to love and serve the poor.

The Women's Opportunity Network (WON) is a dynamic network of women supporters and staff committed to helping Opportunity International reduce poverty in the developing world. WON's mission is to invest in the lives of women around the world, giving them access to financial services and training that transform their lives, their children's lives and their communities.

To learn more, visit us at opportunity.org

Opportunity International is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and serves all people regardless of race, religion, ethnicity or gender.



Mariam Noah's Ladybird Infant Primary School is a hub of education, fellowship and commerce in Kampala, Uganda. Her 18 employees teach the three Rs, as well as English, science and social studies. Mariam leads the 411 students, including 213 girls, in physical education exercises and singing in the school courtyard.

As a member of the Opportunity Progressive Trust Group, Mariam is applying for a Banking on Education loan to build a new school. She dreams of indoor plumbing, soccer fields and concrete-block classrooms that will serve students up to seventh grade. It also means she'll have a nicer place to share for community gatherings such as parties, weddings and funeral services. Mariam is well-respected as a leader in the community and her wisdom is often sought after when her neighbors are facing a problem.

Mariam's fellow Trust Group members send their children to her school, and in turn, she supports their businesses in various ways. To make nutritious school lunches for her students, she purchases fruits, vegetables and other food items from Opportunity clients in the Kira Market across the road. She buys school uniforms and dresses from a woman Trust Group member whose shop is at the school's entrance.

Charity Namutebe serves as Mariam's loan officer. Mariam says, "Charity is a very good person, she processes our loans promptly, guides us and shows us how to save. She is like a relative to me." Charity says that helping others thrive is her way of serving God.

Opportunity loans and training have enabled Mariam to run her school efficiently without any gaps in service. With increased profits, she has built her own house, cared for her mother and educated all three of her children, including her 14-year-old daughter. She also has security and peace of mind from having a savings account and credit insurance with Opportunity. Mariam says, "I am now very comfortable and content."