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OPPORTUNITY INTERNATIONAL'S WOMEN'S OPPORTUNITY NETWORK RECOGNIZES THE MASTERCARD FOUNDATION WITH ITS ANNUAL LEADERSHIP AWARD

President & CEO Reeta Roy accepts the award on behalf of the Foundation, and highlights the power of women entrepreneurs during Opportunity's annual conference, "Innovating to End Poverty"

SAN FRANCISCO, Oct. 14, 2011 - [Opportunity International](http://www.opportunityinternational.com)'s Women's Opportunity Network (WON) today presented The MasterCard Foundation with the 2011 International Women's Leadership Award at its annual conference, "Innovating to End Poverty," being held Oct. 14-15, at the Hyatt Regency San Francisco Airport.

This year, WON chose to honor The MasterCard Foundation for its role in supporting and inspiring global women entrepreneurs. By increasing access to microfinance and youth education in developing countries, the Foundation helps women realize their potential and lift themselves out of poverty. Through its partnership with the Foundation, Opportunity International is leveraging technology and innovation to enable rural women and farmer families in sub-Saharan Africa to access life-changing financial tools.

"The MasterCard Foundation's belief that everyone has the potential to transform their lives and improve the lives of their families and communities is especially empowering for women in the developing world," said Ruth-Anne Renaud, vice president, women's philanthropy, Opportunity International. "A woman with access to savings, loans and other financial services can feed her children nutritious meals, send them to school, pay for their medicine, and employ her neighbors in her business."

Accepting the award on behalf of The MasterCard Foundation was President and CEO Reeta Roy. "It is a great honor to accept the International Women's Leadership Award from the Women's Opportunity Network," said Roy. "We are proud of our partnership with Opportunity International and commitment to empower women in developing countries with the financial tools they need to become financial decision-makers within their families and to contribute to their communities."

Following the presentation of the award, Roy spoke to attendees gathered at the Opportunity International Conference, "Innovating to End Poverty," highlighting the foundation's efforts to

create partnerships that advance effective and innovative programs in the areas of microfinance and youth education. Through a series of keynotes and breakout sessions led by technologists, business and development leaders, and philanthropists, the conference is exploring how a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship led to breakthroughs in Silicon Valley, and how the same culture is changing the way the world community is fighting poverty.

About the Women's Opportunity Network

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 tools and training that transform their lives, their children's lives and their communities.

WON's annual awards recognize leaders who are making a dramatic impact on the lives of women around the world. Past honorees have included Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, president of Liberia; Dina Powell, global head of corporate engagement for Goldman Sachs, on behalf of the company's *10,000 Women* initiative; and Sheryl WuDunn, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and author.

About Opportunity International

Opportunity International provides access to savings accounts, small business loans, insurance and training to over three million people working their way out of poverty in the developing world. Clients in more than 20 countries use these financial tools to start or expand a business, provide for their families, create jobs for their neighbors and build a safety net for the future. For more information, visit www.opportunity.org or join the conversation on **Facebook** and **Twitter**.

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