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Opportunity International Encourages Shoppers to *Bank on Mothers This Mother's Day*

Non-profit's New Gift Card Campaign Connects Women Entrepreneurs in the Developing World with Women Who Want to Make a Difference

Oak Brook, IL, April 14, 2011 – Women do two-thirds of the world's work, but earn only 10 percent of the world's income. A staggering 70 percent of those living in extreme poverty are female, as women are often excluded from education and the workplace, from owning property, and from equal participation in politics. For example, women produce half of the world's food, but own just one percent of its farmland.

With Mother's Day around the corner, and with these staggering statistics in mind, Opportunity International (www.opportunity.org), today launches its "Banking on Mothers" campaign. The new campaign is designed to celebrate women-owned businesses, and to connect more mothers, daughters and sisters living in poverty with women around the globe who want to make a difference. Opportunity International is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing access to savings accounts, small business loans and financial services to struggling entrepreneurs and those living in poverty in the developing world,

At the centerpiece of the Mother's Day campaign is Opportunity's "Banking on Mothers" gift card, which is available in increments as low as \$10. All proceeds from the purchase of a gift card go towards funding small business loans, often referred to as microloans, to economically marginalized mothers in 20 different countries.

Here's how it works: Gift givers simply visit opportunity.org/mothers. There, they can purchase a tax-deductible gift card for their mothers or other special women in their lives. Once purchased, the gift card can be printed, e-mailed or mailed. Gift recipients visit opportunity.org/mothers to redeem the card and fund a loan to a mother profiled on the site whose business they'd like to invest in. Users can select from hundreds of entrepreneurs around the world, operating a wide variety of businesses. Once the gift card is redeemed, the card recipient can receive updates on the entrepreneur whose loan they funded.

Participating in the "Banking on Mothers" campaign engages both the gift giver and gift recipient in the lives of women around the globe who benefit from the financial services offered by Opportunity International. These business loans make it possible for women to work their way out of poverty by expanding their small businesses. As a result, market vendors can fill



their stalls with goods, educators can expand schools, artisans can make a profit and farmers can move beyond subsistence.

"Opportunity International proves that one person can make a difference," said Opportunity International donor and supporter Teri Goudie. " As a journalist and as a mom, I have seen first hand what one donation can do to change the lives of many. I climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro to raise money for Opportunity International and the experience brought me to Africa where women through a small business loan, are able to build their businesses and educate their families. We are empowering women to be the best they can be."

The significance of investing in the growth and advancement of more women-owned businesses in the developing world is not to be underestimated. Recent studies point to the fact that women's empowerment can raise economic productivity, and in families where women have an income, they also have a voice in financial decision-making, which can result in improved nutrition, health and education for their children.

"We believe that small-scale female entrepreneurs can be big change agents in overcoming global poverty. The new 'Banking on Mothers' campaign represents an exciting new way that shoppers can get involved," said Ruth-Anne Renaud, vice president of Women's Philanthropy, Opportunity International. "There is no more important work in the world than helping women go from hopeless and head down, to being empowered and standing tall."

Opportunity International encourages women and men – as well as families and businesses – to reach their arms across the globe this Mother's Day and "bank on mothers" in the developing world.

For more information, please visit opportunity.org/mothers.

About Opportunity International

Opportunity International is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that provides access to savings accounts, small business loans, insurance and training to over two million people working their way out of poverty in the developing world. Clients in more than 20 countries use these financial services 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](#).