

November 2004



IMPACT

A publication of Opportunity International



World poverty – what can I do?

WHEN IT COMES TO WORLD POVERTY, can one person make a difference? Yes! With your help, last year Opportunity International helped move 500,000 poor entrepreneurs out of chronic poverty and into futures of self-reliance and hope. With the support of people like you, Opportunity International provides lasting change for some of the world's poorest people. And Opportunity International wants to do more. Our goal is to grow our family of supporters to help move 1 million poor entrepreneurs out of chronic poverty every year by 2007. We need your help. By working together, we can break the cycle of poverty.

To expand our family of supporters, Opportunity has embarked on a major initiative to raise awareness about our work, our mission and vision, and the microenterprise development movement.

As part of this strategic effort, we are happy to announce the launch of our new Web site—www.opportunity.org. Through our new online presence, we are committed to communicating the Opportunity International message of hope. With your help, we can share this message of hope with others. Together, we can communicate how one small business loan from Opportunity International can alter a life—and one changed life can touch dozens of others in the developing world.

To help spread this message, close friends of Opportunity International have offered a gracious financial gift. Ruth and Don Ebinger have been supporters of Opportunity since 1998—they know the power of Opportunity International's global mission and vision. They have been changed by their participation with Opportunity International, and they want to change lives in turn.

That's why Ruth and Don Ebinger are offering \$50,000 in increments of \$10 for each person who visits our new Web site and answers a few simple questions. And \$10 will help Opportunity International move one person out of chronic poverty. Through this Ebinger Family Challenge, more people will encounter the work of Opportunity, and more lives will change.

You can help—simply go to www.opportunity.org and participate in the Ebinger Family Challenge and you will help Opportunity International move one person out of chronic poverty. Together, we can break the cycle of poverty. ■

TAKE THE CHALLENGE!

Read about the Ebinger Family Challenge in the shaded box to the right.

You can help move one person from poverty today!

OPPORTUNITY INTERNATIONAL
Using the power of working women



Photo © Richard Lord

Help us raise \$50,000 for poor entrepreneurs today!

Banking in the heart of Africa

MALAWI IS THE FIFTH POOREST COUNTRY in the world, and most citizens do not have financial services because of their poverty and their inability to prove who they are. The country has no national identity card, so people must use drivers' licenses or passports. These documents are too costly for poor people. Furthermore, many poor people are also illiterate.

Our program in Malawi solved the identity problem with smart cards. Using a technology investment made by the Central Bank of Malawi, these credit card size identification documents are embedded with Opportunity clients' fingerprints. Cards can be scanned at our teller's station at the Opportunity bank or at an ATM. Thanks to this technology and Opportunity's commitment to serve the poor of Malawi, the Opportunity bank holds more than 15,000 savings accounts with deposits totaling \$2 million. The bank

is packed daily with over 1,000 customers. Approximately 80 new accounts are opened each day.

The demand on the bank, designed to handle 10,000 clients, led to the construction of a satellite branch in a densely populated area of the city where many Opportunity clients live. To keep construction costs low, the bank built a roof over three shipping containers left in the country due to low exports. The building is secure and looks both safe and inviting.

The governor of the Central Bank of Malawi, Elias Ngalande, attended the branch opening. He spoke about the competition in the banking sector for wealthy clients while the rest of the population have almost no access to credit and savings services. He urged banks to expand their outreach. "The way to do it is the way that Opportunity is doing it,"



AIDS bracelets help orphans

TODAY, 11 MILLION CHILDREN in sub-Saharan Africa are orphans because of AIDS. Some live with grandparents. Some live with neighbors. Many live in child-headed households, and many live on the street with no one to care for them.

What can you do to help these children today? Buying \$20 AIDS Bracelets is one way. This project was developed by Dale Hanson Bourke, a member of Opportunity International's Board of Directors. The bracelets are made by women who are entrepreneurs and caring for AIDS orphans. The AIDS Orphan Bracelet Project is staffed by volunteers, and the cost of the bracelets and shipping is covered by a foundation. One of the bracelet makers is Gloria Nanono Kigundu, an Opportunity client in Uganda, who is raising four AIDS orphans in addition to her three children.

To find out how you can help AIDS orphans today, visit Opportunity's Web site www.opportunity.org. ■

"Through its microenterprise development programs, Opportunity International combats global human suffering at its root cause — poverty. Opportunity is opening doors to economic, social, and spiritual transformation that were once closed to many of the world's poorest people."

— Hernando de Soto, Peruvian economist, Time Magazine's 100 Most Influential People

he said. "Bring the bank to the people."

In addition to providing savings accounts for poor people, the Opportunity bank in Malawi has started a successful lending program with 1,200 women and men in Trust Bank lending programs. Their loan repayment rate is greater than 98 percent. ■



Opening a branch office (left), constructed from three discarded shipping containers, reduces the constant congestion at the main office (below) of Opportunity's bank in Malawi.



Smart card **outsmarts** in-laws

One of Opportunity International's clients is becoming the most outspoken advocate of Opportunity's bank in Malawi after her smart card outwitted greedy in-laws. Tradition permits a deceased man's family to claim all of his assets, plus all of his widow's assets. Widows often lose their home, furniture, livestock, and money. But this widow, who had recently been laid off from her job, saved her severance pay at Opportunity's bank in Malawi. Her in-laws seized her smart card and rushed to the bank expecting a windfall. But her fingerprints were embedded in the card, not theirs.

The legend grows as the story flows through women's groups in the markets and villages of Malawi. Along with a refreshing chuckle at foiling greedy in-laws, poor women are getting the message about the smart way to save. Opportunity's bank in Malawi reports that savings accounts opened by women are steadily increasing. ■



Women's Opportunity Fund

FUNDING IMPACT



Beth Houle, Director
Women's Opportunity Fund

The Women's Opportunity Fund of Opportunity International–U.S. is a special fund that targets funding to Opportunity International Trust Bank group lending programs, training that meets the special needs of women, leadership development, and cutting-edge research that advances financial services to poor women.

The Women's Opportunity Fund Committee of the Opportunity International–U.S. Board of Directors directs the allocation of these funds.



Ghana's new pioneers

THE WOMEN'S OPPORTUNITY FUND helps Opportunity programs to meet the special needs of poor women. In Ghana, Opportunity's Trust Bank program (developed by the Women's Fund) is now serving nearly 45,000 women and men. As businesses grow, larger loans are needed to maintain business expansion.

The Ghana program graduated successful Trust Bank clients into solidarity lending programs where loans are larger and groups are smaller. When successful solidarity group members sought larger loans, the Women's Fund funded the research and development of a new lending program for clients who have received the maximum benefits from solidarity loans.

Opportunity clients in Ghana have few options for acquiring equipment such as freezers and ovens, because their profit margins are so small. Research revealed that Ghanaian women's self-esteem changes significantly when they operate their businesses everyday, during market hours, and with an adequate selection of goods. Solidarity group clients who were ready to invest in assets wanted loan terms to be determined by the size of the loan and their projected cash flow.

Loan officers reported that its successful solidarity group clients had little experience incorporating major equipment into their businesses. To prepare borrowers for the new loan program, they developed a training course.

By learning from the experts—our clients and their loan officers—the Women's Fund funded the development of and pilot of the asset loan program. All participants increased their revenue and doubled their earnings by more than 30 percent. Twenty-four clients interviewed created 20 new jobs for people in their village. Our new pioneers, the Ghanaian microentrepreneurs and their loan officers, are opening up new territory for poor women. ■

Baker triples her income

VICTORIA OWUSU ANSAH, member of Blessings Trust Bank in Ghana, has been selling baked goods in her village for 16 years, using a clay oven in her yard. With a special asset loan for \$500, she purchased a gas oven and is the only baker with modern equipment. Victoria increased her output and gained many customers because of the gas oven; her income soon tripled. "Customers know that their baked goods won't contain dust and other impurities from a clay oven."

She also sells popcorn, which she prepares in a large pot. She plans to buy a popcorn machine with her next asset loan so she can prepare larger quantities of this popular treat with less labor.

Victoria knows she must work hard to support her four children, especially now that her husband is unemployed. With Opportunity loans and dedication to her business, she is keeping her children in school, supporting her church, and growing in confidence. Once largely ignored by her community as just another poor woman, she says that women often come to her for advice. "Even the older women cherish me," she said. ■

Board of Governors convenes

ON OCTOBER 15, CHRISTOPHER A. CRANE, president and CEO of Opportunity International, and Polly McCrea, chair of Opportunity's board of governors, welcomed 81 governors from all over the U.S. to their first annual meeting in Chicago, Ill. A sense of community was forged as governors shared their passion for the mission and vision of Opportunity International. Governors Warren Beach, Karol Emmerich, Tim Geoffrion, and Lydia Miller tapped into their years of experience as Opportunity governors to inspire and motivate this dynamic group of like-minded people to explore new ways to forward our mission of providing opportunities for people in chronic poverty to transform their lives.

Four guests from our programs in Ghana, Uganda, and Zimbabwe provided an in-depth look at Opportunity's work in Africa and our response to clients, families, and communities devastated by HIV/AIDS. Governors received information and materials to motivate their friends and colleagues to build hope in poor communities in Africa and the Philippines by establishing or expanding branch offices in impoverished areas. The campaign connects groups in the U.S. with communities they support so that they can follow the progress of their giving and the impact of their



Martin Marty addressed the governors, "Opportunity International operates across the boundaries of faith. They plunge in where the people are, spiritually energized to make a difference..."



Keynote speaker David Bornstein, author of *How To Change the World*, said, "What business entrepreneurs are to the economy, social entrepreneurs are to social change. They are the driven, creative individuals who question the status quo, exploit new opportunities, refuse to give up—and remake the world for the better."

charity through an ongoing relationship with the needy community.

Susy Cheston, senior vice president of policy, invited governors to join her in advocating for microfinance by helping to build the case for our work in the House and Senate. Larry Reed, CEO of the Opportunity International Network, presented a compelling overview of our work from its beginnings in Latin America to its global reach today.

Upcoming Board of Governor events include an Insight Trip to Peru in February 2005, a Governors Family Week in Honduras in June 2005, and their second annual meeting in October 2005.

The Board of Governors is an influential group of men and women who make Opportunity International a priority in their giving, advocating, and volunteering. To find out how you can join, please contact Wendy Cox at WCox@opportunity.org or 952-927-0929. ■



Karol Emmerich (left) presented the Giving Game, which she created to enlighten philanthropists about their personal giving styles. Game participants included Bob and Polly McCrea (right), aka Ted and Tina Twogood.

Photos this page:
© 2004 Micah Marty

Mark your calendar! Second annual Board of Governors meeting is October 21 – 22, 2005.

The Opportunity 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, training, and counsel.

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

Statement of Intent Regarding Poverty and Women

Opportunity International—U.S. strives to reach the world's poorest people through its microenterprise development programs. Recognizing that the large majority of the world's poorest are women and that they contribute decisively to the well-being of their families, Opportunity makes it a priority to support programs that serve the particular needs of women.

Opportunity International has partners in Albania, Bulgaria, China, Colombia, Croatia, Dominican Republic, East Timor, Egypt, Ghana, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Macedonia, Malawi, Mexico, Montenegro, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Maria Estrella Colano is the chair of her Trust Bank.

Maria turns on the lights



SHE PUT IN ELECTRICITY FIRST, so her children could study better. Maria Estrella Colano is a microentrepreneur with her own sari-sari store—a small variety shop that she operates out of a room added onto her small home.

Maria's six children range in age from 10 to 18. Along with her children, she and her husband live in a cinder-block home in General Santos City, on the southern island of Mindanao in the Philippines. Her first loan of \$100 from Opportunity is figured down to the last cent.

That loan gave her enough cash to buy six large bags of rice, which she sold in one week at an 85-percent profit. She bought six more bags. Within the six-month period of her loan—after subtracting the initial capital and interest payments—Maria ended up with a net gain of \$152. That doesn't count the \$34 she had

invested in the savings program, an integral part of the package of financial services offered through Opportunity International's work in the Philippines.

Maria already has plans for her next loan. She wants to invest her profits in expanded inventory for her store. Eventually, she wants to have enough working capital to make a third loan unnecessary.

At age 44, she is the chair of her 28-member Trust Bank and vice president of the waterworks association in her village. With Opportunity's help, Maria is discovering she can be a mother, a community leader, and a successful businesswoman.

Building on success and piloting new ways to serve poor entrepreneurs through loans, savings, and other financial services, Opportunity International's programs in the Philippines are now serving more than 275,000 of the country's working poor. ■

MARISSA RELOX credits the training provided by her Trust Bank in Manila for her new skills in managing family and business finances. She is just one of the 275,000 successful Opportunity International clients in the Philippines. Like most of the mothers benefiting from Opportunity International programs, her priority is giving her children a better life. Marissa's personal desires are secondary to providing her four children with good food, decent shelter, and an education.

