



# NEWS RELEASE

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Opportunity International Honors 2018 WeGo Award Winners**

**Chicago – October 31, 2018** – [Opportunity International](#) is pleased to announce the winners of the Women and Girls Opportunity (WeGO) Awards. The inaugural WeGO Award seeks to highlight and honor Opportunity International partners around the world who work selflessly in challenging environments to implement projects that improve livelihoods and financial opportunities of women and girls around the world. Winners of this award receive a small cash prize to support their project's implementation.

"For nearly half a century, Opportunity International has worked to empower some of the most marginalized women around the world by listening to them," said Lydia Baldrige Meier, Senior Vice President for Philanthropy Services at Opportunity International. "The WeGO Awards are meant to shine a light on some of the most innovative ways our partners are doing that work. I was thrilled to see the volume of great submissions, and I am looking forward to working with my colleagues to ensure that all our partners around the world can learn from each other. Together, we are creating opportunities for women living in poverty to change the future for themselves, their families and the world!"

#### **FIRST PRIZE (\$5,000): Youth apprenticeship program in Ghana**

Opportunity's microfinance partner [Sinapi Aba Trust](#) runs a job training program offering livelihood opportunities to young people, mostly young women and girls (ages 15-25), who are poor, uneducated, orphaned or caring for sick parents or siblings. The livelihood program provides on-the-job apprenticeships with experienced mentors, usually Sinapi Aba Trust's clients, who lead them in developing valuable skills, including hands-on training, small business education and mentorship from female leaders in the community who help encourage and inspire the young women in the program. More than 3,000 apprentices – 80 percent of whom are young women – have completed the program, and a recent survey showed that one year after completion, 97 percent of graduates were employed. Sinapi Aba Trust plans to use its award winnings to expand its program to the northern part of Ghana.

#### **SECOND PRIZE (\$2,500): Recovery and economic empowerment program in Malawi**

Opportunity Malawi partners with the Freedom from Fistula Foundation, providing financial services to women who are experiencing pain and ostracism as a result of fistula, an obstetric condition. Through the partnership, the organizations work together to help these women undergo fistula repair and reintegrate into their communities, providing financial literacy and entrepreneur training, soft loans and savings accounts to help the women launch small-scale businesses. Since 2012, more than 3,000 women and girls have gone through the program in Malawi. Opportunity Malawi hopes to reach another 1,500 women in the next three years, using part of its winnings from this award to expand its outreach.

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### **THIRD PRIZE (\$1,000): Women banking agents program in India**

[Center for Development Orientation and Training \(CDOT\)](#) is an Opportunity International partner in India's Bihar state, serving 4,000 women with loans and thousands more with access to savings opportunities. CDOT is also working to establish more women as "agent bankers," small shop owners who have enough cash flow to also serve as deposit-takers or cash providers in their local community on behalf of larger financial institutions. Each agent banker earns a small transaction commission for their work. Agent bankers also help their female clients by serving as a source of financial education and encouragement. The organization hopes to expand the program and train more agent bankers beyond Bihar state.

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### **ABOUT [OPPORTUNITY INTERNATIONAL](#)**

Opportunity International is a global microfinance non-profit committed to ending extreme poverty and promoting quality education for poor families. Since 1971, Opportunity has helped millions of families work their way out of poverty by providing financial resources, training and delivering ongoing support to start small businesses, earn living wages and feed their families. To get more children into better quality schools, the organization provides loans to families seeking tuition and educators who want to improve local schools. In 2017, Opportunity International issued nearly \$1.6 billion in loans, reaching nearly 9 million clients in 22 countries, and helped fund 1,800 schools serving more than 500,000 children. Discover more at [opportunity.org](http://opportunity.org) or join the conversation on [facebook.com/opportunityintl](https://facebook.com/opportunityintl) and [twitter.com/opportunityintl](https://twitter.com/opportunityintl).