



NEWS RELEASE

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OPPORTUNITY INTERNATIONAL ANNOUNCES 2020 WeGO AWARD WINNERS

CHICAGO, October 5, 2020 – As COVID-19 continues to erode the financial inclusion, safety, and livelihood of women and girls around the world, [Opportunity International](#) announced Healing Fields as the first-place winner of the 2020 Women and Girls Opportunity (WeGO) Awards for its role as a leading agent of change in addressing the needs of women and girls in new and innovative ways.

Since its founding nearly 50-years ago, Opportunity has sought to end global poverty through high-impact, cost-effective, and sustainable programs that empower millions of families—most of the clients are women—to rise out of poverty and provide children with the education needed to thrive.

The WeGO Awards were established in 2018 to celebrate and promote innovations in economic empowerment for women and girls around the world. The program honors staff and clients across Africa, Asia and Latin America who are working selflessly to overcome significant challenges to economic and educational advancement for women and girl. It also calls attention to the groundbreaking work that deserves expansion and replication.

This year's winners were announced on Friday, October 2 at "Winds of Change," Opportunity International's 2020 virtual gala. Hosted by WGN-TV journalist [Lourdes Duarte](#), the gala also featured a keynote speech from [William Kamkwamba](#), author of *The New York Times* bestselling book "The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind."

"This year, as COVID-19 ravaged the world, millions of people living in poverty have been disproportionately affected by the economic fallout of the pandemic," said Atul Tandon, Opportunity's Chief Executive Officer. "In the midst of this catastrophe, the WeGO awards seek to build awareness of women leaders around the world who are harnessing creativity and innovation to empower women and girls in new ways and bring hope."

Opportunity is thrilled to announce this year's award winners:

- First Place (\$15,000 award): Healing Fields
- Second Place (\$7,500 award): Roots of Change
- Third Place: (\$3,750 award): Community-Led Economic Development

- **Healing Fields Foundation**, which empowers women to be community health trainers in India through access to health education, healthcare and entrepreneurship training
- **Roots of Change**, which empowers women in rural Ghana and the DRC by increasing access to financial services, training, weather and market information to improve their farm productivity and household income
- **Community-Led Economic Development in Nicaragua**, which brings health information and services to women in rural communities by launching health clinics

The three winners were selected from a pool of 13 submissions from around the world. A panel of women evaluated the merits of each submission through the criteria of technology, scalability, sustainability, the need to include men in social change, and the challenge of focusing on the next generation.

“The WeGO Awards shine a spotlight on programs and partners around the world that address the holistic needs of women seeking to work their way out of extreme poverty once and for all,” said Lydia Baldrige Meier, Senior Vice President, Philanthropy Services. “We are proud to honor all of our partners during this challenging time. We’d like to give special recognition to Muffy MacMillan, Opportunity’s Global Ambassador for Women and Girls and Chair of the WeGO Awards, whose commitment to this cause has helped to empower countless women. Opportunity is most thankful for WeGO’s generous sponsors Dominic and Nada Salvino, Julia and Philip Wade, Jennifer and David Hall, Jill and Scott Wine and another friend of Opportunity.”

ABOUT OPPORTUNITY INTERNATIONAL

Opportunity International is a global non-profit committed to ending extreme poverty and promoting quality education for families in need. 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. The organization provides loans to families seeking tuition and educators who want to improve local schools to get more children into better quality schools. In 2019, Opportunity International and its partners made more than \$3 billion in loans, reaching more than 7 million clients in 27 countries, and helped fund more than 14,000 schools serving more than 3 million children. Discover more at [opportunity.org](https://www.opportunity.org) or join the conversation on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).