



NEWS RELEASE

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MEDIA CONTACT:

Jennifer Winter
312.487.5038 | jwinter@opportunity.org

THE NEXT DECADE: CLOSING “OPPORTUNITY GAP” FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

CHICAGO – September 19, 2019 – Ending extreme poverty requires the advancement of the hundreds of millions of women who are currently removed from formal economies in developing countries, according to the CEO of an international nonprofit.

Atul Tandon, Chief Executive Officer of Opportunity International and a former Citibank executive who left Wall Street nearly 20 years ago to serve those living in extreme poverty, spoke about the importance of investing in women and girls at Ideagen’s Annual Global Goals 2030 Empowering Women & Girls Summit at the United Nations Headquarters on September 13.

“This is more than just a miss for women and girls,” said Tandon. “This is a miss for all of us. There is a \$285 billion credit gap that represents an intolerable opportunity gap,” he said. “By eliminating that, we will move closer to the finish line of achieving gender equality, the United Nations’ fifth Sustainable Development Goal.”

Tandon noted that women perform 66% of the world’s work, but only earn 10% of the world’s income and that, on average, women earn 60% to 75% of men’s wages.

“When women have greater influence over their household’s economic decisions, families invest more on food, health, and education,” said Tandon. “Regrettably, one of the greatest impediments women are facing is governments’ restrictions on their employment.”

In addition to his keynote speech, Tandon led a panel with three others about their organizations’ work toward SDG 5:

- Eduardo Martinez, President of The UPS Foundation, UPS Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer
- Asahi Pompey, Global Head of Corporate Engagement and President of the Goldman Sachs Foundation
- Rosa Wang, Global Director of Digital Financial Services, Opportunity International

“We know that when women are given opportunities, they have the power to transform families, communities, and the world,” said Tandon. “Opportunity International helps pave the way for women entrepreneurs to support their families and for girls to attend good schools by offering what they need most: an opportunity. But we don’t do it alone. It takes all of us—corporations, individuals, nongovernmental organizations, foundations—working together to make progress. So it’s an honor to host this conversation with leaders like Ed, Asahi, and Rosa. Their leadership inspires all of us to think creatively about how we can better empower women and girls.”

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Prior to Tandon's keynote and panel at the UN, he received Ideagen's Global Leadership Award, an honor bestowed upon global leaders dedicated to achieving the SDGs by 2030 with their leadership.

High-resolution photos from the events are available [here](#).

ABOUT OPPORTUNITY INTERNATIONAL

Opportunity International is a global microfinance 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 2018, Opportunity International issued \$1.9 billion in loans, reaching nearly 10 million clients in 24 countries, and helped fund 6,343 schools serving 1.8 million children. Discover more at opportunity.org or join the conversation on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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