



impact

MORE ABOUT OPPORTUNITY INTERNATIONAL INDIA:

- Operates eight branches
- Serves more than 40,000 active clients with plans to grow to 80,000 by 2010
- Quadrupled its outreach over the last two years
- Reaches the very poor in the world's second most populous country with low average loan sizes—\$100 for first loan and \$130 for average loan
- Commits significant resources for the transformation and training of staff and clients



The Samandhi Trust Group is named overall best group for Opportunity India's Chengalput branch during the International Women's Day celebration.



Mary, a member of the Pudhiyapaadhai Trust Group in Tambaram, India, sells her products at the Micro Business Expo as part of International Women's Day.

India celebrates client achievements

More than 29,000 clients joined in Opportunity International India's joyful celebration of International Women's Day the first week in March. The theme of the festival was Penne, Unnai Kondadu, which is Tamil for Woman, Celebrate Yourself.

About 60 Trust Groups and clients received awards for exceptional contributions to their businesses, families and communities in 2008. A Micro Business Expo showcased the products and services of 50 successful Opportunity clients and provided the chance for clients to network with each other. It also raised awareness of Opportunity's microfinance services and other resources available in Chennai, India.

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"Be encouraged in heart and united in love."

—Colossians 2:2

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Partnerships provide tools and training

As you know, our clients are facing increasingly challenging circumstances due to a deep contraction in the global economy. We are committed to doing everything we can for these hard-working entrepreneurs, and we are encouraged that we have so many people joining with us to meet this pressing need.

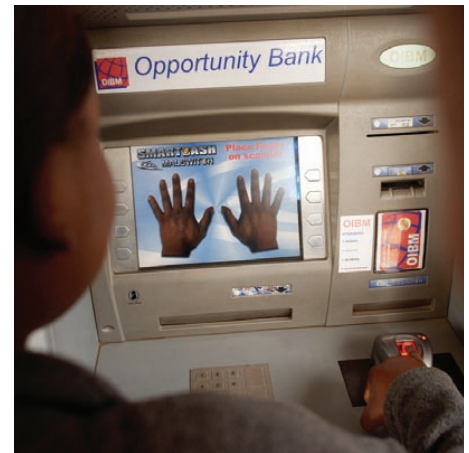
Strategic partners like the Omidyar Network, the Caterpillar Foundation and Goldman Sachs recognize it's not time to pull back, but to do even more. Not only are they helping meet immediate needs, they are investing in long term projects like staff development and infrastructure that will benefit people living in poverty for years to come.

But it's not just corporations and foundations that can make a difference. I'm encouraged every day by the work of our Board of Governors and other volunteers who not only raise funds, but tell the story in boardrooms, classrooms and churches of how lives are transformed through the tools of microfinance.

As you read these pages, consider how you can help tell this story to family, friends and coworkers—how you can introduce others to this life-changing work. Even in these difficult times, we can celebrate what our clients have achieved and be grateful for all those who helped them along the way. As always, we thank God for you and the time, talent and support you give to Opportunity International.

Omidyar Network

Opportunity International has received a \$4.5 million grant from Omidyar Network, a philanthropic investment firm started by eBay founder Pierre Omidyar and his wife Pam. The grant will be used to design, create and implement new electronic and mobile banking technologies to reach more people living in extreme poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa.



Opportunity will use an “electronic wallet” strategy to develop the right mix of technologies in countries where the organization already has banks and financial institutions. These include Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda. This will reduce transaction costs and make micro-finance services available to many more entrepreneurs to help transform their lives.

“Omidyar Network is pleased to be working on this innovative microfinance initiative,” said managing partner Matt Bannick. “Opportunity International has made significant progress in modernizing microfinance delivery channels and openly shares its knowledge to help advance the entire industry. This collaborative spirit, along with a scalable, technology-based model, makes Opportunity a natural fit for Omidyar Network.”



Opportunity client Valentim Thomas Samuel of Mozambique.

Caterpillar Foundation

The Caterpillar Foundation will make a significant grant to Opportunity International in 2009 to help provide financial services for 175,000 entrepreneurs and create 77,140 jobs in the developing world.

The Caterpillar Foundation also has offered a special matching challenge

to employees and retirees of Caterpillar Inc. and its dealers. Opportunity supporters who know Caterpillar employees or retirees are encouraged to visit www.opportunity.org/caterpillar to learn more.

Through its 15-year partnership with Opportunity, Caterpillar invests in local economies by financing microenterprises that generate income and employment and promote infrastructure investment.

Goldman Sachs

Hundreds of promising young women in Ghana, Kenya, Malawi and Mozambique will have the opportunity to become “Emerging Leaders” through Opportunity International’s new partnership in the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Women initiative. The 10,000 Women Emerging Leaders Program will train women for careers in management at Opportunity and other financial institutions serving the poor in Africa. Selected female managers at these organizations will participate in a three-week professional development program to improve their skills and increase their impact. There will also be training programs for talented women who would like to be hired as entry-level supervisors and loan officers. Opportunity hopes to expand the program to new countries in the coming years.



The Goldman Sachs grant will help women like Stella Adu-Gymafi (above), operations manager for Opportunity Ghana in Kumasi, achieve their career goals and provide leadership in their communities.

Reflections from Ghana and Uganda



B.J. Hess with two clients at a Trust Group meeting in Ghana.

Betty Jane (B.J.) Hess shares thoughts from her recent trip to Ghana and Uganda with Ruth-Anne Renaud, Opportunity International’s vice president of women’s philanthropy. B.J. is vice chair of the Board of Directors.

“My husband Herb and I are grateful to have been blessed with health, opportunities and provision for our material needs. We desire to be good stewards of our lives and our resources, and pray that the Lord will give us grateful hearts and a spirit of generosity. We both believe that Opportunity International provides a vehicle for sharing with others that is efficient, compassionate and professionally managed.

We all want to feel that we have made a difference. It is impossible to spend time with our clients without realizing that our efforts make a significant difference. It is also humbling to realize that all of our efforts to help, while appreciated, are small compared with the huge effort required of our clients to face the challenges of living each day. I left each client meeting with great admiration for their ability to be resourceful, industrious and creative.

Our clients’ needs are so great and our opportunities to help are so varied. Our challenge will always be to determine how we can best serve, and then to be willing to focus our efforts on those priorities. Our move towards regulated banks will provide the banking services that our clients want and need. It also will help us implement the processes and controls needed to efficiently deliver these services—and to grow in a thoughtfully planned manner.

In the seven days that Ruth-Anne and I met with clients and staff and traveled in various communities, we never felt “different.” We were accepted with openness and sincerity—by children and adults, and by clients and strangers in the marketplace. The people we met won our hearts. I feel truly blessed to have represented Opportunity International.”



Good news for families and nonprofits

Despite these turbulent economic times, families now have a unique opportunity due to low interest rates to make tax-free gifts to children and provide substantial financial support to charity.

Establishing a charitable lead trust (“CLAT”) and then funding it with assets becomes truly practical during times of extremely low interest rates. The trust holds the assets (income producing property such as an apartment building work especially well) for a specified time period (e.g. 20 years) and each year makes a charitable gift of a fixed dollar amount. When the trust ends, the assets are distributed to the children. The key attribute of a CLAT is that the children can receive the assets (plus any appreciation on those assets) completely free of gift/estate taxes. Since these taxes can reach 45%, the tax savings on a CLAT can be impressive.

For example, a family funds a 20-year CLAT in March 2009 with \$500,000 and sets the pay-out rate at 6.5%. If the trust assets earn at least 6.5%, the trust will provide \$32,500 annually to charity for 20 years (\$650,000 total) and then pass the entire \$500,000 (plus any appreciation) to the children free of gift/estate taxes. A true “win-win” for everyone involved.

Chuck Day, Director of Gift Planning Services, can be reached at cday@opportunity.org or directly at (630) 242-4136. The information in this column is not to be used as legal advice.

India celebrates client achievements

(CONTINUED FROM THE COVER)

Special guests included famous classical dancers and actors who spoke about the important role that Indian women play in their families and communities. Through dance, drama and song, Opportunity clients shared their talents and personal stories of transformation to help motivate other women. One memorable skit depicted the positive changes in a woman’s life after she joins a Trust Group and starts her own business. She begins saving money instead of spending more than she has, improves her relationship with her husband and employs four women in her community.

“Clients who attend this annual celebration come to realize they are part of a global wave of women who are making a difference in the world,” said Bhuvana Nataraj, client development manager for Opportunity in Chennai. “Over the past four years, we have found the International Women’s Day celebration to be an important tool for the holistic development and transformation of our clients.”

Global expert in our ranks

As a leader in building microfinance banks for the poor, Opportunity International is committed to recruiting international finance experts. With depth of experience and passion for our mission, these leaders are creating a powerful global enterprise to bring a full range of financial services to the developing world.



Esther Awovi Akafia joined Opportunity Ghana in April 2005 as corporate lawyer and company secretary. She handles all legal affairs and is responsible for board, audit, shareholder and other stakeholder matters. In addition, she currently serves as head of communications and at one time acted as head of human resources.

“Through these roles and experiences, I have been constantly challenged to think about God’s purpose for me in this world,” Esther said. “I have witnessed clients, who had no source of funding prior to receiving a loan from us, donate a portion of their profits to orphanages. I have seen staff join us as drivers and become customer service officers. I have noticed persons who could not speak in public do so. These are experiences you would notice only when you’re in the business of transforming lives.”

Esther is passionate about the development and empowerment of the entrepreneurial poor, particularly women, and has been guided by this passion throughout her career. She holds a bachelor’s degree in law, a graduate degree in international business law, and is a qualified barrister and solicitor of the Supreme Court of Ghana. She and her husband Martin live in Accra with their eight-month-old son Mawuena, whose name means “Gift from God.”



Jill McClusky's mother/daughter book group joined together to fund an OptINnow client.

Creating a circle of giving

Governor Jill McClusky, from Evanston, Ill., and her 15-year-old daughter Rachel first learned of OptINnow.org during an Insight Trip to Honduras this past summer. Jill started spreading the word to friends and family and then purchased \$25 OptINnow gift cards at Christmas for four administrators at Rachel's school.

When their mother/daughter book club leader suggested pooling their money for a worthy cause instead of exchanging Christmas gifts, Jill told her about OptINnow. Gathered around the computer, they donated \$175 to fund a loan to a woman who sells stationery and needed extra funds to sell to schools. The group was surprised (and pleased) to discover that the gift card recipients from Rachel's school had funded the rest of the loan. Thanks to the efforts of this one governor, a woman in another part of the world is on her way to a better economic future.

Creating the Global Opportunity Quilt

The Women's Opportunity Network (WON) is launching a virtual quilt to help end global poverty faster. Find the quilt at www.OptINnow.org/quilt. This Mother's Day, patches can be purchased in honor of mothers and other special women. Honorees will receive an email with a link to the quilt, as well as a gift card to fund a loan for an entrepreneur of her choosing on OptINnow.org.

"Our virtual quilt started from square one with the hope that it would grow into something big and beautiful," said Ruth-Anne Renaud, vice president of women's philanthropy for Opportunity International. "This is an inspirational and interactive way to raise awareness and funds for loans for women across the globe who are struggling to work their way out of extreme poverty."

Like all good quilts, the Global Opportunity Quilt is designed to be passed on. Visit OptINnow.org for more information on purchasing a quilt square for this Mother's Day.

A Mother's Day gift at www.OptINnow.org/quilt



Patches on the quilt can include personal messages such as "Mom, I want to honor you and all the hardworking mothers around the world."

Youth for a better world

Long-time Opportunity International supporters Dennis and Stacey Barsema have taken 20 students on Insight Trips to Mexico to discover firsthand how microfinance really does make a difference. The students applied for and were selected to take Dennis' microfinance class in Northern Illinois University's College of Business.

"For some students, the Mexico trip changes their lives and their career choices. It shows *all* of them that the poor in developing countries are not lazy or ignorant—they just haven't been given the same chances that we have," Dennis says. "Our students consistently comment on how 'happy' our clients are. They see how proud these entrepreneurs are of their businesses and the standard of living they've achieved since having access to capital from Opportunity International."

He adds, "I believe that this generation has a great heart for the needy in our world. We should be encouraged to see what they are doing to make the world a better place."



Dennis Barsema (back row, second from left) and Northern Illinois University students visited Opportunity International's operations and clients in Mexico last November.



Betsy Perdue leading a *Trust Game*

Women's Opportunity Network chair Betsy Perdue and Katie Smith Milway led a microfinance role-playing exercise for small groups of 4th and 5th graders at Heritage School in Highland Village, Tex. Katie is author of *One Hen: How One Small Loan Made a Big Difference*. The book is based on the real-life story of Kwabena Darko who took out a microloan to buy a single hen. Today, he owns one of the largest chicken farms in West Africa and is the former board chair of Opportunity International Ghana.

Betsy developed the *Trust Game* to teach children about the power

of microfinance and Opportunity International to change lives. Each child is given the role of a person living in poverty in Africa. He or she chooses a business to start with a microloan from Opportunity and then joins a Trust Group. Children talk about how their businesses are doing and then have to problem solve when one person cannot make her loan payment that week.

"I'm impressed with how quickly children get the concept of what a small loan can mean to someone in poverty, and how working together as a group can help them deal with tough issues," Betsy said.

Helping spread the word

Living in a house filled with women inspired Terry Duryea to look for an organization that focused on the needs of women in the developing world. That's when Governor Randy Haykin invited him to a luncheon to learn more about Opportunity International. Terry says he was impressed with Opportunity's business model and the fact that 85 percent of its clients are women.

He and his wife Kathy joined the Board of Governors in 2000 and took their two adult daughters, Amy and Robin, on an Insight Trip to Lima, Peru in January 2001. Then in February 2007, Terry and Amy went on an Insight Trip to Mexico.

"These experiences exposed us to poverty like we had never seen before and caused us to question things we'd taken for granted in the past," Terry said. His vision now is to create an Opportunity International Speaker's Bureau. "Many of us want to do more than just write a check," he says. "We know we can be instrumental in spreading the word so that people think 'Opportunity International' when they hear the word 'microfinance.'"



Terry Duryea and daughter Amy on an Insight Trip to Mexico in 2007.

The Speaker's Bureau will provide training, support and encouragement to fellow Governors who want to speak to community and professional groups about microfinance and Opportunity's work. Over the next year, a committee will help develop speaker resource materials for posting on the Governors Web site. The Board of Governors meeting in San Francisco on April 24 and 25 will feature a special breakout session on the Speaker's Bureau. For more information on joining or utilizing the Speaker's Bureau, call Terry at (408) 483-6480 or email him at tduryea@aol.com.

Board of Governors calendar

New!

UPDATES FROM THE FIELD

One-hour conference calls with Opportunity Network CEO Adrian Merryman

May 13, Sept. 9 and Dec. 9; 12 noon EST
To participate, call: (866) 548-2699

INSIGHT TRIPS

Mexico—Governors Family Week

June 21 – 27, 2009

Malawi

Aug. 17 – 24, 2009

India

Oct. 10 – 17, 2009

GOVERNORS CONFERENCES

San Francisco

April 24 – 25, 2009

Chicago

Oct. 2 – 3, 2009

**Please note that trips fill up quickly and may be unavailable.*

To check on a trip or participate in any Governor activities, please contact Wendy Cox, Board of Governors Director, (630) 414-2567 or wcox@opportunity.org



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THE **OPPORTUNITY INTERNATIONAL 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, other financial services, training and counsel.

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

Our core values are respect, commitment to the poor, integrity and stewardship.

Opportunity International serves women and men of all faiths and no faith.

If you prefer to receive the *Impact* newsletter via email, please contact getinfo@opportunity.org.



Opportunity International

GIVING THE POOR A WORKING CHANCE

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P. Kamala joined the Vaanavil Trust Group in Chennai, India in August 2004 to support her family after her husband died. She used her first loan to invest in a heavy brass iron. She irons clothes for customers from morning until evening, earning an average of \$3 per day. With subsequent loans, she has decorated her shop and purchased material to sell for blouses and sarees.

Kamala lives with her son in their own four-room concrete house, which shelters them well during the monsoons. Her son completed the 10th grade and is now working in an export house. Kamala's savings have increased over the last four years. She has peace of mind knowing that she no longer has to borrow money from loan sharks and money lenders to make ends meet. She is able to afford private medical care, which is more expensive than in government run facilities. Kamala will use future loans to enlarge her business and to become a leader in her community.



Members of the Vaanavil Trust Group sell food products, flowers and sarees, raise animals and manufacture leather bags. Together, they have savings of more than 30,000 rupees (\$600).