



## **‘The Hapinoy Program’ from the Philippines Wins *Project Inspire: 5 Minutes to Change the World* Grand Prize**

**UN Women Singapore and MasterCard Award US\$25,000 Women’s Empowerment Grant to Grand Prize Winner**

**‘UPLift Initiative’ from Thailand Receives US\$10,000 Grant for Best Financial Literacy/Livelihood Proposal; and ‘Painting the Road to Empowerment’ from India bags US\$10,000 Most Creative Community Outreach Award**

*Singapore, 24 August, 2011:* The Singapore National Committee for UN Women (UN Women Singapore) and MasterCard Worldwide today awarded a US\$25,000 Women’s Empowerment grant to ‘The Hapinoy Program’ from the Philippines at the *Project Inspire: 5 Minutes to Change the World* Grand Finals held at the INSEAD Asia Campus in Singapore.

Paolo Benigno Aquino IV, who represented his team for ‘The Hapinoy Program’, was among the 10 finalists who pitched their project ideas to a live judging panel comprised of today’s top global development and social entrepreneurial experts, social advocates and business leaders. Their winning project aims to support 1,000 women ‘sari-sari’ (or neighborhood convenience store) owners in Luzon in the southern Philippines through micro-finance. Hapinoy trains the women micro-entrepreneurs in personal and business development, management systems, and better priced goods, and introduces additional revenue channels.

The Grand Finals was broadcast live to a worldwide audience via the Project Inspire website at [www.5minutestochangetheworld.org](http://www.5minutestochangetheworld.org).

A joint initiative by UN Women Singapore and MasterCard, Project Inspire was launched in March to commemorate the 100th year of International Women’s Day and to celebrate MasterCard’s 25th year in the region. The 10 finalists – from Australia (2), Ghana, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore (2), India and the Philippines (2) – were selected out of 450 youth teams worldwide who submitted their life-changing ideas to empower women and girls across Asia/Pacific, Middle East and Africa in the form of 5-minute pitch videos (or written proposals) for a chance to win the US\$25,000 grant.

The judges also awarded a special grant of US\$10,000 to Mark Cox, who represented his team from Thailand for the Best Financial Literacy/Livelihood proposal. Their project, ‘UPLift Initiative’, will empower Burmese women migrants living in landfills at the border of Thailand and Myanmar by building a women’s resource centre that provides financial literacy training and skills for income generation activities.

In a surprise development at the Grand Finals, MasterCard put forward a US\$10,000 special prize for the Most Creative Community Outreach proposal, which the judges awarded to Madhura Dutta for 'Painting the Road to Empowerment' from India. Her team's program benefits abused and discriminated women from Pingla, East India, who have a unique culture of earning a living by singing and painting. Her winning project aims to replicate the successful Pingla model in the nearby village of Chandipur, bringing this artistic talent to the production of diversified products including decorative scrolls and other artworks.

Patrick Turner, Affiliate Professor of Entrepreneurship and Family Enterprise, INSEAD and Project Inspire judging panel lead said: "It is in the very nature of Project Inspire, of course, that it focuses on improving the lives of women, mostly in underprivileged areas of the world – a very laudable aim in itself. But beyond this, it brings together mainly young people from all parts of the planet, feeling passionately about issues, and thinking as entrepreneurs of how to make things happen in pursuit of social change. Being involved with these young people is, for me, an incredibly satisfying and rewarding experience."

"The inaugural Project Inspire has been a rewarding journey. We are overwhelmed by the number of submissions that we received from the socially-conscious youth around the world and the global spirit that has come through to support the empowerment of women. To see the Grand Finals taking place and to have met 10 exceptional finalists, who have been exchanging ideas, is worth all the hard work of the team from MasterCard and UN Women Singapore. We congratulate the winning teams and all the finalists for their outstanding work," said Trina Liang-Lin, President, UN Women Singapore.

"We would like to congratulate the winning teams for their outstanding proposals to make a difference in the lives of disadvantaged women and girls in the Philippines, Thailand and India. The past six months has been an incredible journey, and we would also like to recognize every young person who submitted their ideas," said Georgette Tan, vice president, communications, Asia/Pacific, Middle East & Africa, MasterCard Worldwide. "We came together with UN Women Singapore to bring greater understanding of women's empowerment to young people and give them a platform for action. We truly hope that each Project Inspire participant continues on their journey to create a better tomorrow – this isn't the end of the journey, it's just the beginning, and we can all play a part."

The winning projects were judged on project sustainability, impact and long-term economic or social benefit to disadvantaged women and girls in Asia/Pacific, Middle East and Africa. The three winning teams will blog about the progress of their projects on the Project Inspire website from September 2011 and commence fieldwork by 1 December 2011.

**WHAT:**

Project Inspire serves as a worldwide platform for 18-35 year-olds, offering them the chance to make their ideas a reality in an effort to empower disadvantaged women and girls in Asia/Pacific, Middle East and Africa.

Project Inspire is jointly organized by UN Women Singapore and MasterCard with support from INSEAD, Bain & Company and Channel NewsAsia.

**Highlights:**

- **450** pitch proposals submitted from youth around the world
- Youth teams represented **50** different countries from Africa to Asia to Middle East, the Americas & Pacific Islands
- Supporters from **117** countries worldwide have shown their support for women's empowerment by visiting the Project Inspire website: [www.5MinutestoChangetheWorld.org](http://www.5MinutestoChangetheWorld.org)

**Key Milestones:**

1 March 2011: Project Inspire Launch & Call for Pitches Opened  
30 June 2011: Call for Pitches Concluded  
1 Aug 2011: Public Voting Commenced  
19 Aug 2011: Public Voting Concluded  
24 Aug 2011: Grand Finals in Singapore  
Nov-Dec 2011: Winning Projects Kick-off

**WHO:****GRAND PRIZE US\$25,000 WINNER**

**Project:** The Hapinoy Program

**Team:** Paolo Benigno Aquino IV, Michelle Pabalan, Mark Ruiz (Philippines)

**Who the project helps:** Women micro-entrepreneurs in Southern Luzon, Philippines

**FINANCIAL LITERACY/LIVELIHOOD US\$10,000 GRANT WINNER**

**Project:** UPLift Initiative

**Team:** Mark Cox, Jennifer Jones, Nobel (Thailand)

**Who the project helps:** Oppressed Burmese women migrants and their families in Thailand

**MOST CREATIVE COMMUNITY OUTREACH US\$10,000 GRANT WINNER**

**Project:** Painting the Road to Empowerment

**Team:** Madhura Dutta, Moyna Chitrakar, Imran Chitrakar (India)

**Who the project helps:** Women and girls in Chandipur Village, India

*Note to editors: For profiles of the ten Project Inspire finalists and to learn more about the Project Inspire judging panel, visit*

[www.5MinutestoChangetheWorld.org](http://www.5MinutestoChangetheWorld.org)

**WHY WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT:**

- **Project Inspire supports the heightened need to devote resources to the empowerment of women.** Despite great strides in their socio-economic standing over the past 100 years, statistics show that women account for 70% of the world's poor.
- **Women work two-thirds of the world's working hours but earn only 10% of the income and own 1% of the world's property.** Giving these disadvantaged women more opportunities to stand on their own feet has

enormous socio-economic ramifications, as empowering women fuels economies, spurring productivity and growth.

- **A growing body of research demonstrates that there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women.** The Global Gender Gap Report 2009, for one, issued by the World Economic Forum found no country where men and women were equal, but noted that where the gender disparity gap was narrower, countries were more economically competitive and prosperous.

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**Project Inspire was jointly organized by:**



25 YEARS IN ASIA



**Project Inspire was supported by:**

