

### **The MasterCard Foundation and MEDA Pioneer Financial Services for Poor Youth in Egypt and Morocco**

*Groundbreaking microfinance program develops entrepreneurial potential of youth*

**TORONTO — Dec. 15, 2008** — The MasterCard Foundation and Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) announced a \$5 million program to create inclusive financial services and education for youth in Morocco and Egypt. This five-year program, called Youth Invest, will enable microfinance institutions to develop and test innovative products, reaching approximately 50,000 people between the ages of 15 and 24, especially those living in rural areas. Until recently, microfinance institutions have not focused on poor youth, in part due to the perception of risks associated with serving young people who may lack collateral or work experience.

“Youth Invest will create new insights about the financial needs of youth and new ways to support young entrepreneurs,” said Reeta Roy, President and CEO of The MasterCard Foundation. “We are pleased to work with MEDA, which has been a pioneer in economic development, and is now expanding the frontiers of youth microfinance.”

MEDA will partner with leading microfinance institutions in both countries to study the needs of employed as well as unemployed youth, and to design appropriate financial products, such as savings for education or loans to start a small business. The program will also provide youth-specific services, including financial and business-related training to develop youth entrepreneurship skills.

“The area of financial services for youth is in its infancy. The MasterCard Foundation and MEDA agree that by taking a youth-centered view and working with leading microfinance institutions, we will create a new standard for financial services to youth, which we can share with the industry,” said Allan Sauder, President of MEDA.

Youth Invest will enable MEDA to document findings and build a business case encouraging microfinance institutions in other countries to view youth as an attractive client population.

## **ABOUT THE MASTERCARD FOUNDATION**

The MasterCard Foundation is an independent, private foundation based in Toronto, Canada. It was established through the generosity of MasterCard Worldwide customer financial institutions at the time of the company's initial public offering in 2006. The Foundation has more than \$1 billion in assets. Its vision is to make the economy work for everybody by advancing effective and innovative programs in the areas of microfinance and youth education.

For more information, go to [www.themastercardfoundation.org](http://www.themastercardfoundation.org)

## **ABOUT MEDA**

Founded in 1953, MEDA (Mennonite Economic Development Associates) is headquartered in Waterloo, Canada and has pioneered business solutions to the eradication of poverty in more than 45 developing countries. MEDA's innovative program range provides microfinance services for the poor, access to markets for small producers, and technical services to promote investment in businesses and institutions that serve the poor. In 2007, MEDA served more than 2.2 million clients in collaboration with 127 organizations worldwide.

For more information, go to [www.meda.org](http://www.meda.org)

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