



**THE U.S. NGO WORKING GROUP ON IFAD AND RURAL
POVERTY**

March 28, 2007

The Honorable Nita Lowey
State, Foreign Operations
and Related Programs Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
241 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-4610

Dear Madam Chairwoman:

We are writing to urge the Committee to fully fund the Administration's request of \$18 million for fiscal year 2008 for the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). This represents the second installment of the U.S. pledge of \$54 million for IFAD's Seventh Replenishment (2007 – 09).

Official development assistance for agricultural development – both bilateral and multilateral – has been in a steady decline for the past twenty-five years. This, despite the fact that three-quarters of the world's poorest people live in rural areas and depend in some way on agriculture for their livelihoods. A repositioning of agriculture and rural development within national and international development priorities is needed to achieve internationally agreed development goals for reducing poverty and hunger.

We note several hopeful signs that such a repositioning is underway. The forthcoming World Development Report, the World Bank's flagship publication, will focus on agriculture and development – for the first time in twenty-five years. Agricultural development features prominently in many of the country proposals and compacts of the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

Because of its specialized mission of enabling the rural poor to overcome poverty, IFAD has maintained a steady focus and level of funding in the agricultural sector. Its knowledge and expertise are of particular importance in light of the growing acknowledgement of the need to refocus attention and resources on agricultural and rural development.

Like other international financial institutions, IFAD has undertaken organizational reforms meant to achieve greater development results and improve the efficiency of its operations. The U.S., in its statement at the February 2007 Governing Council, noted a range of accomplishments in this regard, saying, "We would like to commend IFAD management and staff on the strong commitment and good progress in implementing key policies and

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reforms agreed to in the replenishments, including ... an Action Plan, with clear timelines, milestones and concrete performance indicators to measure the results of IFAD's work."

We thank you in advance for your consideration of our thoughts and concerns. We would welcome an opportunity to further explore options for strengthening support for agriculture and rural development, including an increased U.S. contribution to IFAD in its next replenishment.

Sincerely,

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Cc: House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related
Programs