



Bread for the World Louisiana

**The Twomey Center for Peace Through Justice
Loyola University New Orleans**

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Who Will Feed The Future

Poor rural producers, farmers, fishers, livestock keepers, entrepreneurs, and agricultural laborers figure disproportionately among the world's poor and hungry people. At the same time, they play a key role in helping meet the world's expanding demand for food, fiber, and fuel. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has been working with poor rural producers for more than 30 years. Its experience shows that with the right support, they can play a critical role in solving many of today's global challenges. This is possible when smallholders are fully consulted and actively engaged in shaping rural development policies and programs.

To support and empower small-scale rural producers to meet global challenges, we need to recognize the size and scope of this stakeholder group, and recast our image of the people who belong to it. We should no longer think of them as struggling subsistence

producers, but as small business entrepreneurs. Eighty-five percent of all farm holdings worldwide are less than 2 hectares in size, and 500 million smallholders produce 80% of the food consumed in the developing world. These farming households make up one-third of humanity. Our future is in their hands. Who else will feed the world in 2020, 2030 or in 2050 by which time we will have added another 3 billion people to our population? It is important to recognize the crucial role rural women and young people can play in improved agricultural and rural development, better food security, and less poverty.

500 SMALLHOLDERS PRODUCE 80% OF THE FOOD CONSUMED IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD.

IFAD is working to transform smallholder agriculture into smallholder businesses and thereby enable vibrant, thriving economies to take hold in rural areas. This process requires significantly increased long-term investment. It also requires initiatives to strengthen the resilience of smallholders in the face of a growing number of risks, such as climate change, desertification, diminished biodiversity, and increased competition over natural resources, especially land and water.

With the right support, these risks can become opportunities. For example, poor rural communities manage vast areas of land and

forests and are thus important guardians of natural resources. They are uniquely placed to provide critical environmental goods and services, help mitigate the effects of climate change, and reverse environmental degradation. These services could eventually become an important source of revenue for rural communities.



[Women in the Kidundu Sunflower Oil Group near Kisumu, Kenya, sort through sunflowers. The group is made up of women who pool their resources and skills to buy sunflowers and then press them to make sunflower oil, which they sell in the local market.]

The increased participation of rural producers' organizations, such as Farmers' Forum and IFAD Country Program Managers (CPM), in the development and implementation of policies and programs has also had a positive impact on the organizations themselves. Members state that their organizations have benefited from capacity-building and institutional development, improved dialogue with their governments and donors, and expansion of their networks and increased membership and organizational cohesion. IFAD CPMs confirm that increased

participation has also strengthened country ownership on the part of rural producers' organizations and led to more demand-driven country strategies. Furthermore, 65% of IFAD CPMs state that increased participation has better enabled the organizations to put forward their priority concerns, engage in policy dialogue, and develop support networks.

Despite the important progress that has been made, there are still some major hurdles to be overcome before rural producers' organizations can become fully engaged in developing and implementing policies and programs. Governments and donors alike must factor in the often untapped potential of rural women and young people. If rural women are to fulfill their potential and become economically empowered, they must have greater access to critical natural resources, rural financial services, and technologies. They must also take on stronger leadership roles and participate more actively in decision-making within households and producer organizations. Young rural people also need support in establishing viable livelihoods. We must help them organize themselves into young farmers' producers' associations and provide opportunities for capacity-building and training, institutional linkages, and access to markets and market information. They are the future.

The U.S. can play a leadership role in helping feed future generations by:

1. The out dated U.S. Foreign Assistance Act should be rewritten to make clear the importance of poverty reduction and development in U.S. foreign policy.
2. The U.S. should take the lead in strengthening international institutions that complement U.S. bilateral assistance in fighting hunger and malnutrition.
3. Focus on smallholder farmers.
4. Emphasize nutrition.
5. Empower women.
6. Strengthen safety nets.
7. Respond quickly to hunger emergencies.

Less than 1 cent per dollar of the federal budget goes to foreign assistance programs focused on reducing hunger and poverty. If we do not act, we will only perpetuate the cycle of crisis and response that helps people at their greatest hour of need, but doesn't help them become self-sufficient.

**LET YOUR SENATORS AND
REPRESENTATIVE KNOW IT'S TIME TO
REFORM U.S. FOREIGN ASSISTANCE**

Dear Senator / Representative,
I urge you to oppose funding cuts and to reform the way the U.S. delivers foreign assistance.

I am deeply concerned about some of the budget cuts Congress is considering. We need to cut the federal deficit, but we must NOT do so on the backs of poor people. We need to protect the people who need these

programs—the struggling women and children in developing countries. Poverty-focused foreign assistance is less than 1% of the federal budget, cutting it would not reduce the deficit.

More efficient U.S. foreign aid programs will ensure that our tax dollars are used effectively and give what local people in poor countries need. These reforms will foster economic growth, opportunity and contribute to our own national security. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has stated that helping countries develop “is a lot cheaper than sending soldiers.”

I urge you to protect families from cuts that cost lives, and support reforms to U.S foreign aid.
Sincerely, Your Name and Address



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