

Development GAP Founders Honored for Launching Foundation



Doug Hellinger, Fred O'Regan and Steve Hellinger at the ADF

On 6 May 2008, Development GAP co-founders Fred O'Regan, Steve Hellinger and Doug Hellinger were honored by the African Development Foundation for their efforts resulting in the establishment of the Foundation by the U. S. Congress. "Founders' Day", held with Foundation supporters and past and present staff on hand at the ADF's offices in downtown Washington, DC, celebrated both 25 years of the Foundation's operations and The Development GAP's eight-year endeavor to create a new vehicle and approach for the U.S. government's delivery of foreign aid to Africa.

The ADF's leadership cited Fred (currently the Development GAP's Chair), Steve (President) and Doug (Executive Director) for "their crafting of the Foundation's legislative mandate [that] reflected their vision and belief in the capacity of Africans to shape their own development" and for "their commitment, sustained work and diligent follow up actions [that] ensured that the ADF was established according to the letter and spirit" of the African Development Foundation Act.

In that Act, Congress mandated the ADF "to support self-help activities at the local level designed to enlarge opportunities for community development, to stimulate and assist effective and expanding participation of Africans in their development process" and to do so "in cooperation with, and in response to, organizations indigenous to Africa which are representative of the needs and aspirations of the poor ..." It called on the new Foundation to provide funding for "the fostering of local development efforts initiated by communities themselves" and to "give priority to projects which community groups undertake to foster their own development and in the initiation, design, implementation, and evaluation of which there is the maximum feasible participation of the poor."

Since its founding, the ADF has made more than 900 project grants in the total amount of approximately \$120 million to non-governmental organizations in some 30 countries in Africa. (See www.adf.gov)

Divergences from the Foundation's mandate that tilted the ADF's focus and funding in recent years toward the support of private businesses and the interests of foreign companies led The Development GAP to intercede in 2007. With subsequent changes in leadership, the Foundation is now moving to refocus its operations in compliance with its Congressional mandate. The level of commitment of recently confirmed Board members to this mandate, along with the level of Congressional vigilance, will in large part determine the Foundation's effectiveness in underwriting community-defined African development in the future.