



May 21, 2009

Dear Potential Funder of OMID:

Effective strategies for addressing poverty are rare. That's why it's my great pleasure to write a letter of support for Dr. Mohsen Rezayat's OMID initiative, which holds uncommon promise for lifting millions out of poverty in the Middle East.

I first met Dr. Rezayat when he invited me to speak at Xavier University in Cincinnati, where he presented me with his business plan for addressing rural poverty in his home country of Iran. In my 28 years working in international development, I've encountered thousands of ambitious, but misguided strategies for combating poverty. Most of them are naïve, hoping to intervene on a large scale without having a thorough understanding of the problem's specific context or without targeting its roots. But Dr. Rezayat's initiative is different in both regards.

Hailing from a remote Iranian village himself, Dr. Rezayat has a deep understanding of the problems faced by the rural poor. His intervention targets small-acre farmers, who constitute the vast majority of people living on less than a dollar a day, by providing them access to affordable irrigation, to funding for small-scale enterprises, and to better infrastructure for health, education, and transportation. OMID incorporates the best elements of organizations like International Development Enterprises, which has moved over 17 million dollar-a-day farmers out of poverty, and the Grameen Bank, whose model has been used in 180 countries to provide 100 million families access to microloans. The combination of Dr. Rezayat's comprehensive grasp of poverty's causes in Iran and a model based on proven strategies make OMID dangerously capable of moving one million dollar-a-day farmers out of poverty within five years.

Therefore, it is my privilege to offer Dr. Rezayat and OMID my full support. With sufficient funding, OMID may create groundbreaking progress in tackling poverty in the Middle East.

Sincerely,

Paul Polak
Founder & Chairman of the Board