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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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International Expert on Women's Development Issues Joins RDI Board of Directors

SEATTLE – Geeta Rao Gupta, President of the International Center for Research on Women, has joined the board of directors of the Seattle-based Rural Development Institute (RDI), which recently launched its Global Center for Women's Land Rights. The Center is a unique initiative to foster research, create partnerships for collaborative action, and advocate for policies and laws that provide secure land rights for women and girls.

"Half of the world's food is produced by women. Yet few own the land they farm or reap the rewards of their work," said Rao Gupta. "Women need to be viewed not just as helpers, but farmers in their own right and as key economic agents who contribute to local, national and global food security and to agricultural and economic growth. Moreover, when women can generate income through agriculture, they are more likely to spend it on improving their families' nutrition, health and education."

"Rao Gupta's leadership and commitment to the protection and fulfillment of women's rights aligns directly with RDI's mission to help the world's poorest—primarily rural women—get the assets they need to lift themselves and their families from poverty," said Tim Hanstad, President and CEO of RDI, an international nonprofit working to secure land rights for the world's rural poor. "Rao Gupta's support for property rights as an important structural policy for poverty alleviation, together with her demonstrated expertise in gender and health issues, will strengthen RDI's efforts to address poverty, hunger and economic growth."

Rao Gupta brings more than 20 years' experience in women's health to RDI. As a leading global authority on women's role in development programs, Rao Gupta is a strong advocate for women's economic and social empowerment to fight disease, poverty and hunger. Rao Gupta is the recipient of numerous awards, including Harvard University's 2006 Anne Roe Award and the 2007 *Washington Business Journal's* "Women Who Mean Business" Award. The Bill & Melinda Gates foundation, another RDI supporter, just announced that Rao Gupta will join the foundation's Global Development Program as a senior fellow.

RDI launched the Global Center for Women's Land Rights on October 15, the International Day for Rural Women, to catalyze global efforts to improve women's property rights, especially by raising awareness among government, donors, and policymakers about the importance of secure land rights for women as a proven pathway out of poverty.

About the Rural Development Institute

RDI is an international non-profit working to secure land rights for the world's poor. Over the past 40 years, RDI has worked in more than 45 countries, partnering with governments on reforms that have helped more than 100 million families attain secure land rights. A global pioneer in using law to create land ownership opportunities, RDI's collaborations with government partners create leveraged, sustainable and generational poverty alleviation. For every dollar contributed, on average, RDI has helped secure land rights for six families. For more information, visit www.rdiland.org.

About the International Center for Research on Women

The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) has worked for more than 30 years to empower women, advance gender equality and fight poverty in the developing world. Learn more about ICRW and its work at www.icrw.org.

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