

Frequently Asked Question on the Millennium Villages

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1. What are the Millennium Villages? Where are they located?

Millennium Villages are designed to demonstrate what it takes to meet the eight Millennium Development Goals in rural Africa within five years.

By initially working in 12 research villages located in 10 African countries (**Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, and Uganda; see Appendix 2**), the Millennium Village initiative will work directly with the respective communities, key non-governmental organizations and national governments to show how rural African communities can lift themselves out of poverty and achieve the Goals if they have access to proven and powerful technologies to improve their farm productivity, health, education, and access to markets.

Each of the initial 12 villages is located in a distinct agro-ecological zone—arid or humid, highland or lowland, grain producing or pastoral—to reflect the range of farming, water, disease, and infrastructure challenges facing the continent and to show how tailored strategies can overcome each one of them.

Millennium Villages are:

- located in hunger “hotspots” where chronic hunger is prevalent, often accompanied by a high prevalence of disease, lack of access to medical care, and a severe lack of infrastructure;
- located in a reasonably peaceful nation governed by an accountable government;
- located in districts where NGOs or international donor organizations have been able to work successfully.

2. What are some examples of interventions within the Millennium Villages?

The needs of each village—while unique—can be met by solutions that are both practical and affordable:

- **Agricultural and agro-forestry techniques** dramatically increase farm production while enhancing the environment
- **Vitamin and mineral supplements** tackle malnutrition and make children stronger

- **Essential health services** provide critical, life-saving medicines and raise productivity
- Targeted investments **relieve burdens on women**: improved access to water and fuel wood, accessible clinics, mills for grain, and trucking and ambulance services
- **Free, daily school lunches using locally produced food** support children's nutrition, learning capacity, and school attendance
- **Access to anti-retroviral medicines** keep people with HIV/AIDS alive in poor countries just as they do in rich ones
- Sleeping under an **insecticide-treated bed net** prevents children from getting malaria, and immunizations will lower the incidence of TB
- **Innovative off-grid energy, water and information technologies** bring not only safe water and energy, but save tens of hours spent each day collecting firewood and water.

3. How will this effort be scaled up? 12 villages alone won't prove that poverty can be ended, will they?

Millennium Promise, a new non-profit organization formed to champion achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, is supporting the addition of an initial 100 "satellite" villages clustered around 10 of the core research villages. This clustering enables participating communities to benefit from economies of scale in roads, district hospitals, electricity grids, water and expanding local markets. Through the concentric build-out of village programs, costs can be lowered, investments shared, and knowledge distributed.

The UN Millennium Project is actively engaging national governments in monitoring and learning from the experiences of the villages. To ensure that the Millennium Villages are part of national discussion and policy formulation for scaling up community-based approaches, new villages will only be initiated in countries where national leadership supports and engages in the Millennium Villages and is committed to investing additional government resources.

In addition, Millennium Villages seek to establish a "proof of concept" for broad-based, community-led rural development strategies. The initiative will establish a technical consensus that extreme poverty can be ended in rural Africa. The importance of a "proof of concept" is perhaps best illustrated by how a small NGO in Boston changed the world's views on treating people infected with HIV/AIDS.

In 2001 a small NGO, Partners in Health, under the leadership of Paul Farmer started a small Antiretroviral (ARV) treatment program to combat HIV/AIDS in rural Haiti, the poorest country in the Western hemisphere. Using detailed epidemiological data, the physicians were able to document the success of their program, which included fully effective first-line treatments without signs of breeding drug resistance. The publication of their findings in major medical journals very quickly established a new international consensus that ARV treatment was indeed possible and necessary to contain HIV/AIDS in the poorest countries. Shortly thereafter, the World Health Organization launched the 3-by-5 initiative (a global target to provide three million people living with HIV/AIDS in low- and middle-income countries with ARV treatment by the end of 2005), and in 2005 the G8 leaders resolved to ensure universal access to ARV treatment by 2010. It is unlikely that this breakthrough could have been achieved without the "proof of concept" established by Paul Farmer in Haiti.

As was the case with ARV treatment in 2001, the core elements of rural development strategies are known today. Two "model villages" currently exist in Sauri, Kenya and Koraro, Ethiopia where individual components of the integrated package have been implemented. However, the full range of needed interventions has so far not been applied at scale as part of a community-led development initiative and subject to a realistic budget constraint as well as careful scientific monitoring. Millennium Villages are designed to fill these gaps.

4. What makes Millennium Villages unique? Hasn't this already been done before?

Millennium Villages offer a scalable model for fighting poverty at the village level, enabling the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals on a much broader scale, expanding from the village to district level, and eventually to nations across Africa.

Importantly, the Millennium Villages approach differs from integrated rural development programs of the 1970s and 1980s or traditional “model villages” in several ways:

- The Millennium Village effort is explicitly linked to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and addresses an *integrated* and *scaled-up* set of interventions covering food production, nutrition, education, health services, roads, energy, communications, water, sanitation, enterprise diversification and environmental management. This has never been done before;
- It focuses on participatory community decision-making; For example, at each village, specific committees and community members will evaluate the various possible interventions, including their own ideas, with a scientific team and local partners. Together they will create a package of village-specific interventions, deemed most appropriate and cost effective, and a community action plan for implementation and management of those interventions.
- The initiative uses improved science-based technologies and techniques that have more recently become available, such as agro forestry, insecticide-treated malaria bed nets, antiretroviral drugs, the Internet, remote sensing and geographic information systems.

Finally, funding for the Millennium Villages is well within the existing 0.7% envelope of rich-countries' gross national product to Official Development Assistance, recently reiterated at the 2005 World Summit, the G8 Gleneagles Summit and the Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development.

5. Who are the key actors involved in the Millennium Villages?

Millennium Villages are supported by Millennium Promise, the Earth Institute at Columbia University and the UN Millennium Project. The interventions to bring villages out of extreme poverty will be implemented by the communities themselves.

The communities

Critical to the success of the Millennium Villages is the conviction that the communities must lead and be empowered in their own development and must give substantially of their time, skills and resources. Because Millennium Villages are an investment in a sustainable end to extreme poverty, Millennium Village communities must continue to strengthen their local governments and institutions and maintain a full participatory understanding of the interventions in their community. This will ensure the sustainability and self-sufficiency of their community development.

Millennium Promise

Millennium Promise is a non-profit organization that works with individuals, corporations, foundations, service organizations, faith based groups, and citizens to unite efforts around the Millennium Development Goals. Millennium Promise's activities are guided and overseen by a Scientific Council of world-leading scientists and development practitioners drawn from the UN Millennium Project and the Earth Institute at Columbia University.

UN Millennium Project

The UN Millennium Project will contribute technical advice on the design and implementation of village-level interventions. In addition, the Project and its two regional centres in Africa will work closely with the UN Country Teams in the countries where Millennium Villages are located in advising the government on preparing and implementing Millennium Goal-based national development strategies that incorporate the lessons learned from the Millennium Villages.

The Earth Institute at Columbia University

The Earth Institute at Columbia University will make available integrated scientific advice across a broad range of disciplines such as public health, education, energy, nutrition, hydrology, environment, and agronomy as it is uniquely placed to provide these scientific services.

6. How much money does it take to fund a Millennium Village?

The most remarkable aspect of the Millennium Villages is that the poverty-ending investments in agriculture, health, education, and infrastructure can be financed by Millennium Promise donors at a cost of just \$50 per villager per year—\$250,000 per village per year. The overhead costs of managing the project in each village are also low, \$50,000 per year, since the project draws upon skilled local managers who work alongside the UN Millennium Project and The Earth Institute at Columbia University.

All told, the Millennium Promise financial support per village is \$300,000 per year for a 5-year period, totalling \$1.5 million. This modest investment offers the realistic prospect that a community of 5,000 men, women and children will achieve the Millennium Development Goals and embark on a path of self-sustaining economic development.

On a per person basis, **the total village cost of \$110 per person** is comprised of:

- \$50 Donor funding
- \$30 Local and national governments (this is most likely to include funding for interventions themselves and the provision of agricultural and health extension workers in the villages)
- \$20 Partner organizations and in-kind corporate giving (for example, Sumitomo Chemical Corporation recently agreed to donate insecticide-treated bed nets for the Millennium Villages)
- \$10 Village members, typically through in-kind contributions of their time and expertise

Critically, the external financing needs of \$70 per capita are in line with the financial commitments made by the leaders of industrialized countries at the 2005 G8 Summit in Gleneagles. G8 countries promised to raise their development assistance to Africa from \$70 to \$100 per capita by 2010.

7. Isn't corruption a concern within some of the countries in which you are working?

Corruption is a concern in many developing countries, including some where, the Millennium Villages are implemented. Sometimes, high perceptions of corruption are used to argue that these countries should not receive any support until corruption has been eliminated. Unfortunately, such an approach would be doomed to fail, since fighting corruption is a long-term process that requires high-level political commitment and sustained support from the international community. Only if countries can pay their policemen adequate salaries, establish computer-based expenditure monitoring systems, and have a strong independent media, can corruption be successfully fought. Poor countries require more support to implement these practical measures against corruption.

The governments of the ten African countries where Millennium Villages will be implemented are fighting corruption and committed to development. Millennium Promise aims to support their efforts to improve the lives of their people.

Still, Millennium Promise places paramount emphasis on the transparent and accountable use of its resources. To this end, extensive safeguards are in place to trace the flow of funds in each country and to ensure that the funding reaches the intended beneficiaries.

8. How do you manage villages in countries experiencing social unrest and turmoil?

The countries we are operating in are among the poorest in the world and therefore politically and economically fragile. A core objective of the Millennium Villages is to support development in these countries to reduce their fragility. While this does not rule out political risks, investments in development will help reduce these risks over time.

9. What are the systems in place to manage the Millennium Village investments and implementation?

Millennium Promise will manage the financing and roll-out process with partner implementing agencies, including Columbia University's Earth Institute and the World Agro forestry Centre. Each country in turn will have a cluster leader. Furthermore, regional coordinators have been established for East and West Africa. These coordinators will make the required purchases and manage the budgets for each of the villages, with oversight from Millennium Promise's Chief Operating Officer. Quarterly reports will include a budget vs. actual expenditure analysis and an income and expense snapshot. The scientific council and external development experts will assess longer-term impact.

The communities will be supported on the ground by the UN Millennium Project, its regional Centres in Nairobi, Kenya and Bamako, Mali and scientists from Columbia University's Earth Institute. The Millennium Village teams will work closely with national and local host governments, international organizations such as UNDP and UNICEF, and national research institutions, civil society, the private sector and universities.

Appendices:

- (1) The Millennium Development Goals**
- (2) Map of Millennium Villages across Africa**

Appendix 1: The Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are the world's time-bound and quantified targets for addressing extreme poverty in its many dimensions-income poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter, and exclusion-while promoting gender equality, education and environmental sustainability. They are also basic human rights-the rights of each person on the planet to health, education, shelter and security.

Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Hunger and Poverty

Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education

Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality

Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases

Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability

Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development

Appendix 2: Millennium Villages across Africa

