

FAST FACTS

United Nations
Development Programme



Millennium Villages Project: An Overview

What is the Millennium Villages Project?

The Millennium Villages Project (MVP) is based on a single powerful idea: by fighting poverty at the village level through community-led development, rural Africa can achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. With proven, powerful and practical technologies, the project aims to eliminate the poverty trap that confines more than one billion people worldwide.

Background and History

The MDGs, created in 2000, aim to reduce extreme poverty and hunger while improving education, health, gender equality, and environmental sustainability. The MVP was developed by a team of scientific experts at the UN Millennium Project and the Earth Institute at Columbia University and is now partnered with Millennium Promise. The project is supported by the countries of Japan (through the UNTFHS), Korea and Norway, who serve as bi-lateral donors.

There are more than 80 Millennium Villages operating or planned in ten countries in sub-Saharan Africa: Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, and Uganda. Overall, the MVP now reaches approximately 400,000 people in these countries.

What We Do

The MVP offers an innovative model for helping rural African communities lift themselves out of extreme poverty. Focus is directed on promoting human security in impoverished rural areas through community-based investments and capacity building.

With the help of new advances in science, technology and project personnel, sustainable community-led action plans are tailored to the villages' specific needs. This is done through investing in health, food production, education, access to clean water, and essential social and physical infrastructure.



This approach embodies principles of participation, social and gender inclusion, equity, and local ownership of the decision-making and development procedures.

The cross-cutting processes of capacity development and strengthening governance support these communities and helps usher them into a new age of health and opportunity.

Areas of Focus and Results Achieved

AGRICULTURE

Across all sites, average food production has more than doubled as more than 74,000 farmers in the Millennium Villages have received subsidized fertilizer and improved seed in at least two planting seasons since 2006.

The MVP's agricultural successes have been particularly strong in Malawi. In the Mwandama Millennium Village, maize yields increased 350%, from 0.8 tons per hectare prior to the MVP to 3.6 tons per hectare in 2006/2007. Moreover, the MVP leadership worked closely with the Government of Malawi on its national agricultural support program, which helped the country more than double maize production since 2005.

HEALTH

The MVP has placed particular emphasis on malaria control. Since the beginning of the project, more than 340,000 Sumitomo-donated Olyset® bed nets have been distributed. Moreover, artemisinin combination therapy (ACT), the international standard for first-line malaria treatment, is in stock and available for distribution in all 80 Millennium Villages sites.

Across the Millennium Villages sites, more than 800 community health workers have been trained to provide a range of basic health services. Health access has dramatically increased with 14 newly constructed and 35 refurbished hospitals, clinics and health posts.

The MVP has also put an emphasis on improving maternal health. Since the beginning of the project, the percentage of births delivered under trained supervision increased from 9% to 51% in Ruhira, Uganda. In addition, 80% of Ruhira's pregnant mothers access antenatal care from health facilities at least once during their pregnancy. In addition, access to family planning services has also increased. In Bonsaaso, Ghana, the number of residents using modern family planning techniques increased 670%, from 296 in mid-2007 to 2,278 in mid-2008.

EDUCATION

To ensure access to primary education, the MVP has made major improvements to classrooms in the villages. Since the beginning of the project, more than 100 classrooms have been constructed and almost 120 have been refurbished.

The MVP and its local partners, including the World Food Program (WFP), have bolstered school meal programs across the sites to provide more than 70,000 children with locally produced meals. For example, in Koraro, Ethiopia, the WFP managed four local school meal programs at the start of the project. Since that time, the project has set up 20 additional programs, bringing meals to 100% of enrolled students.

An integrated approach to school construction and refurbishment, school meals and teacher training has helped to increase school enrolment and attendance in the villages.



For example, in Potou, Senegal, these interventions have helped increase cluster enrolment from 1,286 in 2007 to 4,164 in 2008.

INFRASTRUCTURE

In partnership with Ericsson, the MVP is bringing connectivity to all of the Millennium Villages using EDGE/3G, a next generation cell phone technology that allows users to access the Internet at broadband speeds via mobile phones. In May 2008, Ericsson and its local provider partner Zain launched a cell phone network in Dertu, Kenya, donating and installing a cellular base station to provide the residents with reliable cell phone and internet access for the first time.

Working with local governments, the MVP is making important improvements in transportation and electrification. In coordination with the MVP, the local government of Pampaida, Nigeria constructed a road of 10 km to connect the cluster to the nearby regional center of Sauwala and provided electricity to a central point in the cluster near the primary school and market.

The MVP is also working to bring improved drinking water to the people living in the villages. For example, in partnership with JM Eagle and PEPAM, the agency that coordinates water activities for the Senegalese Government, the MVP in Potou, Senegal launched a water project to bring improved drinking water to approximately 13,000 residents.

Scaling Up and Challenges

Spurred by the success of the Millennium Villages, the Government of Mali recently announced its national scale-up strategy to extend the core Millennium Village concepts to two million people across the country's 166 most food-insecure communes. Also, with the ongoing success of the MVP in Mayange, in 2007 the Rwandan government announced plans to scale-up the project to 30 districts nationally as part of an initiative called Vision 2020 Umurenge.

Yet despite these amazing successes, Africa has the world's greatest proportion of people living in extreme poverty. With rural communities stuck in a poverty trap, many are unable to make the human capital and infrastructure investments required to achieve successful economic growth. The Millennium Villages Project requires the ongoing commitment of local and national governments, as well as other organizations, to finding a long-term sustainable approach to the educational, health, infrastructural, and agricultural challenges faced by the thousands of Africans participating in the project and the millions who can potentially benefit from their example.

For more information, see:

www.millenniumvillages.org

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