

# Overview

## A Solution to Extreme Poverty: Millennium Villages

The Millennium Villages project offers a bold, innovative model for helping rural African communities lift themselves out of extreme poverty. The Millennium Villages are proving that by fighting poverty at the village level through community-led development, rural Africa can achieve the Millennium Development Goals—global targets for reducing extreme poverty and hunger by half while improving education, health, gender equality and environmental sustainability—by 2015 and escape the extreme poverty that traps hundreds of millions of people throughout the continent.

Sub-Saharan Africa has the greatest proportion of people living in extreme poverty in the world—more than 40 percent or roughly 300 million people living on less than \$1 a day. The continent's environmental, epidemiological and geographical challenges—including low-productivity agriculture, a high disease burden and high transport costs—render African countries most vulnerable to persistent extreme poverty. This means that to collect safe drinking water and firewood for cooking, people must walk several miles every day. It means that a child in sub-Saharan Africa dies of malaria every 30 seconds and that 1 in 16 women die in pregnancy or childbirth, compared with 1 in 3800 in developed countries. With these rural communities stuck in a poverty trap, they are unable to make the investments in human capital and infrastructure required to achieve self-sustaining economic growth.

The Millennium Villages project is beginning to turn this situation around. With the help of new advances in science and technology, local staff work with villages to create and implement sustainable, community-led action plans that are tailored to the villages' specific needs and designed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Simple solutions like providing high-yield seeds, fertilizers, medicines, drinking wells and materials to build school rooms and clinics are effectively combating extreme poverty and nourishing communities into a new age of health and opportunity. Improved science and technology such as agroforestry, insecticide-treated bed nets, antiretroviral drugs, the Internet, remote sensing and geographic information systems enrich this progress. Over a five-year period, community committees and local governments build capacity to continue these initiatives and develop a solid foundation for sustainable growth.

To date, the project has reached 500,000 people in 80 villages. Clustered into 14 groups across 10 African countries (Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania and Uganda), the Villages, comprised of approximately 5,000 people per village, are located in different agro-ecological zones that reflect the range of farming, water, and disease challenges facing the continent. Success in these different zones shows how tailored strategies can overcome each challenge.

The remarkable aspect of the Millennium Villages is that these basic investments can be financed at a total village cost of roughly \$120 per person per year for a five year period. The funding model falls within the global commitments donor countries have made over the years to invest 0.7 percent of their gross national income in the development of the world's poorest countries.

Each Millennium Village requires a total donor investment of \$300,000 per year for five years. In-kind contributions and support coming from partner NGOs, national governments and the villagers themselves support the broader budget.

In the Millennium Villages today, where once there was pervasive hunger and sub-subsistence farming, farmers are now producing bumper crops. Crop surpluses help supply school feeding programs, which have sparked a dramatic increase in school attendance, and simultaneously help to decrease rates of malnutrition. Malaria incidence has fallen dramatically in many Villages. The progress achieved by the Millennium Village communities is catalyzing tremendous enthusiasm among local and national policy leaders for expanding the project and building on the momentum underway. With sufficient donor support, scaling up these efforts can wipe out extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa within one generation.



• Year-3 Result Highlights across 11 Millennium Villages

Malaria prevalence among all age groups



Children sleeping under insecticide-treated mosquito nets



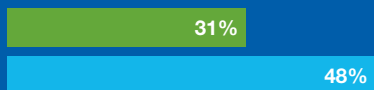
Households with access to improved drinking water



Students benefitting from school meal programs



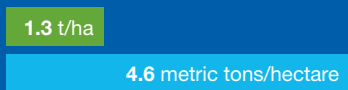
Births delivered by skilled health personnel



Adults tested for HIV in the last 12 months

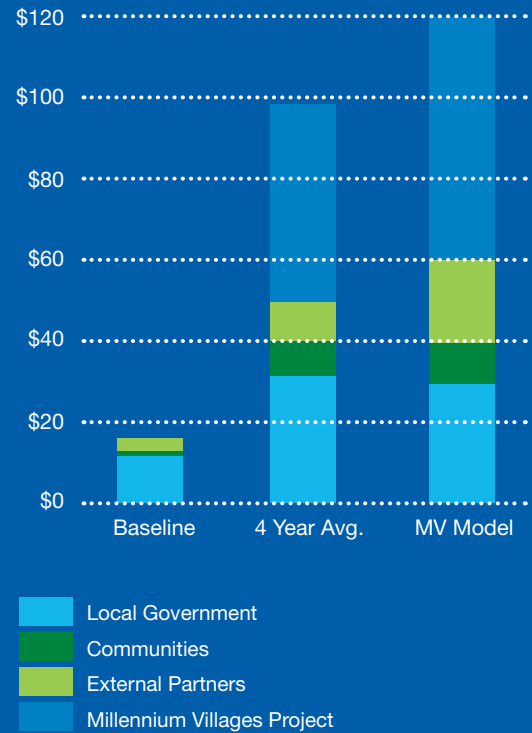


Average maize yields (across 6 sites)



■ Baseline  
■ Year-3

• MV Project Expenditures Well within Budget in First Four Years<sup>1</sup>



The Millennium Villages Project not only accomplished tremendous results in the first four years, but was able to do so within the budget envelope of \$120 per resident per year, a level of support fully consistent with internationally agreed levels of official development assistance. Moreover, local governments and communities met their investment targets. In the second phase of operations, local investments will continue to scale up while financial support from the Project tapers down.

<sup>1</sup> From baseline through Year-4. Complete costing data for Year-5 is forthcoming.