

PRESS RELEASE

New Front in Fight Against Extreme Poverty in Africa Announced

*UN Millennium Project and Government of Japan to launch eight Millennium Villages
throughout the continent*

New York, 18 July 2005—In a path-breaking initiative to support the fight against extreme poverty in Africa, the UN Millennium Project and the Japanese government are partnering to launch an African Millennium Village Research Project in eight clusters of villages around Africa. The “Millennium Villages” will be located across a range of agro-ecological zones, each presenting distinct challenges to poverty reduction. The project will provide a critical knowledge base for achieving the Millennium Development Goals in rural Africa.

The initiative will focus on promoting human security by empowering African villages to implement integrated rural development strategies as recommended by the UN Millennium Project. These strategies are designed to promote the escape from the poverty trap, and thereby to lead to healthy and economically productive lives.

Crucially, the initiative is anchored in a rigorous scientific approach to measuring progress and evaluating the results of the key interventions. The project will thereby provide a unique scientific basis for understanding the costs and developmental benefits of key strategic investments in agriculture, health, infrastructure, education, and other sectors. Moreover, it will determine these costs and developmental benefits in each of the major agro-ecological zones of rural Africa.

In its recommendations presented earlier this year, the UN Millennium Project found that the fight against extreme poverty has never been more winnable than it is today. The priority investments are broadly known, the costs affordable, and the technologies available. Central among the Project’s recommendations is the need for an African Green Revolution, an environmentally sustainable increase of food yields that will enable subsistence rural communities to achieve food security, and to begin diversifying production into commercial agriculture and into non-agricultural sectors.

The UN Millennium Project estimates that an annual investment of around \$110 per villager will provide the means necessary for communities to break out of the poverty trap and achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Of that sum, approximately \$70 should be financed by external donors, and the remaining \$40 by national and local government, and community contributions. Two villages (in Sauri, Kenya and Koraro, Ethiopia) have already begun their Millennium Goal-focused programs through partnership with the Earth Institute at Columbia University. The Government of Japan will contribute to activities in eight additional villages, each in a distinct agro-ecological zone.

"The 'Millennium Village' approach draws upon the leading science-based action plan to fight poverty in rural Africa and thereby to meet the Millennium Goals by 2015," said Professor Sachs, Special Adviser to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Director of the UN Millennium Project. "In these villages, the Goals will be achieved before 2015 and the 50,000 or so people we will be working with will be well on their way to ending the extreme poverty that entraps them. Their success will become a rigorous model for others living in similar agro-ecological conditions."

According to the Government of Japan, "The Government of Japan fully supports "The African Millennium Village initiative", as the Government of Japan believes that poverty reduction can be achieved through economic growth and human-centered approach based on the notion of Human Security. The Government of Japan is delighted to work together with Millennium Project and to contribute to the international society for achieving the MDGs."

Professor Sachs explained, "This groundbreaking partnership between the Millennium Project and the Government of Japan will be fundamental in showing the world that through practical and affordable interventions combined with community empowerment and leadership, the fight against extreme poverty can be won, even in the most impoverished and difficult areas in the world."

The UN Millennium Project is an independent advisory body that presented its report, Investing in Development to the UN Secretary-General in January 2005. The Project's report proposes straightforward solutions for meeting the Millennium Development Goals by the 2015 deadline. The world already has the technology and know-how to solve most of the problems faced in the poor countries. To date, though, these solutions have not been implemented at the needed scale. Investing in Development presents recommendations for doing so in countries both rich and poor.