

## Q/A on the Millennium Villages November 2006

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

Millennium Villages are designed to demonstrate how the eight Millennium Development Goals can be met in rural Africa within five years through community-led development.

By working in 12 sites located in 10 African countries (*Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, and Uganda*), the Millennium Village initiative works directly with the respective communities, 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 that can enhance their farm productivity, health, education, and access to markets – while operating within the budget constraints established by international agreements for official development assistance.

Each of the 12 clusters of 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, and disease 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 widespread, 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.

### 2. 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 and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The approach can be expanded from the village to district level and eventually to countries 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 identify and evaluate possible interventions supported by a scientific team and local partners. Together they create a package of village-specific interventions that are deemed most appropriate and cost effective, as well as produce a community action plan for implementing and managing these interventions.
- The initiative uses improved science-based technologies and techniques that have only recently become available, such as agroforestry, insecticide-treated malaria bed nets, antiretroviral drugs, the Internet, remote sensing, and geographic information systems.
- The Millennium Villages initiative is linked to national-level processes to ensure that the success can be scaled up by governments.

Finally, the initiative can be taken to broad scale since the financing needs for the Millennium Villages are fully in line with global commitments to increased official development assistance (ODA). The per capita support to each village is fully consistent with the international target of 0.7% of rich countries’ GNI in official development assistance. This target was agreed at the 2002 Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development and has been reaffirmed at the 2005 World Summit. The EU-15 countries have all committed themselves to achieving the 0.7% target by no later than 2015. Moreover, the G8 countries committed at their 2005 Gleneagles Summit to provide \$50 billion per year in ODA to Africa by 2010, which is equivalent to roughly \$70 per African per year and again entirely consistent with the budget framework for the Millennium Villages.

### 3. Will the Millennium Villages be sustainable?

The Millennium Villages aim to establish the ground-level evidence showing that the UN Millennium Project’s recommended interventions for rural Africa can lift villages out of the poverty trap and achieve economic viability through community empowerment backed up with adequate resources. By raising productivity, diversifying into higher value crops, and promoting off-farm employment, incomes will rise in the villages. Higher incomes will also raise household savings thus accelerating economic diversification and household investments in human capital. The resulting economic growth in the villages will reduce income- and non-income poverty, and enable the communities to finance a growing share of investments to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Over time these communities will end their dependency on outside assistance thereby ensuring sustainability.

A central proposition underpinning the Millennium Villages concept therefore is that operational sustainability can be achieved in each village before the 2015 MDG deadline, although many villages will still require ongoing but generally declining financial support beyond then. For these villages, it will be crucial that existing ODA commitments for 2010 and 2015 are met and maintained until the respective developing countries graduate from the need for external support.

Critical to the sustainability of the Millennium Villages is the need to empower the entire community, including women and vulnerable groups by building local technical, administrative and entrepreneurial capacity. As outlined below, the Millennium Villages empower local groups to identify the pressing problems of most community members, their responsibilities for developing workable and cost effective solutions, and their central role in identifying, communicating and designing the project so that the initiative can be locally managed.

### 4. How are national and local governments involved?

Multiple levels of government are providing major in-kind contributions and playing a key role in the implementation of the Millennium Villages and the identification and application of lessons learnt. Millennium Villages were selected in close consultation with national governments. To ensure

that the Millennium Villages are part of national discussion and policy formulation, 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.

Ensuring that the Millennium Villages can be scaled up as part of national development strategies and agreeing on cost-sharing from the outset ensures that governments are full partners in the project and as well as long-term operational sustainability. The Millennium Villages also rely on existing government implementation mechanisms, such as agricultural extension workers and other government staff who are already working in the villages.

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

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

### *The communities*

Critical to the success of the Millennium Villages is the principle that communities must be empowered to lead in their own development. To ensure success they must give substantially of their time, skills, and resources. Because Millennium Villages are an investment toward a sustainable end to extreme poverty, Millennium Village communities strengthen their local governments and institutions and certify the preparation and implementation of the interventions in their community. This is necessary to ensure that their development will become sustainable and self-sufficient.

### *Millennium Promise*

Millennium Promise is a US-based nonprofit organization that works with individuals, corporations, foundations, service organizations and faith-based groups to unite efforts around the Millennium Development Goals. A central activity of Millennium Promise is to raise funding in support of the Millennium Villages.

### *UNDP*

As an implementing partner of the Millennium Villages, UNDP plays a critical role in the coordination of village- and national-level activities

as well as in the support of the scaling up of the Millennium Villages initiative to the national level. In addition to its policy work, UNDP provides operational support to the Millennium Village teams in each country. It is also involved in the design and implementation phase of the project through its coordinating role of the UN Country Teams, its policy work at headquarters level, and its support for the preparation and implementation of national development strategies that are bold enough to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

### *The Earth Institute at Columbia University*

The Earth Institute at Columbia University is making available integrated scientific advice across a broad range of disciplines such as public health, education, energy, nutrition, hydrology, environment, and agronomy. Its scientists work with communities to adapt appropriate interventions and ensure rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the initiative.

### *UN Millennium Project*

The UN Millennium Project and its two regional centers in Africa work have worked closely with the UN Country Teams in the countries where Millennium Villages are located to support governments in the preparation and implementation of Millennium Development Goal-based national strategies. A central element of this work has focused on incorporating lessons learnt from the Millennium Villages into the national strategies.

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

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

- **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 while at

the same time increase demand for locally produced food.

- **Access to anti-retroviral medicines** keeps 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 lowers the incidence of common diseases, such as measles.
- **Innovative off-grid energy, water, and information technologies** bring not only safe water and energy, but save many hours spent each day collecting firewood and water.

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

The Government of Japan (through its Human Security Trust Fund) and private philanthropic donors (through the Earth Institute at Columbia University) provided the financing the first set of Millennium Villages, reaching some 60,000 people. Millennium Promise, a nonprofit organization formed in 2005 to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, is partnering with UNDP and the Earth Institute to scale up the Millennium Villages to reach another 330,000 people clustered around 10 of the initial villages (See Appendix 3), bring the total number of Millennium Villages to 78 as of November 2006. It is important to note that each village has guaranteed funding for five years. The clustering of villages 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.

In addition, Millennium Villages strive to establish a “proof of concept” for broad-based, community-led rural development strategies. The initiative aims to show that extreme poverty can be ended in rural Africa. The core elements of rural development strategies are known today. However, the full range of needed interventions has so far not been applied at scale as part of a broad-scale community-led development initiative while subject to a realistic budget constraint as well as careful scientific monitoring. Millennium Villages are designed to fill these gaps.

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

A core aspect of the Millennium Villages is that the poverty-ending investments in agriculture, health, education, and infrastructure can be financed by donors at an incremental 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. This modest investment offers the realistic prospect that a community of 5,000 men, women, and children can 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 through the Millennium Village program
- \$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 (e.g., existing programs supported by official bilateral donors) and in-kind corporate giving (for example, Sumitomo Chemical Corporation recently agreed to donate insecticide-treated bednets 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 to the equivalent of \$70 per capita by 2010.

## 9. 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 located. 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 are located are fighting corruption and are committed to development. UNDP and Millennium Promise aim to support their efforts to improve the lives of their people.

Still, UNDP and Millennium Promise do place paramount emphasis on the transparent and accountable use of their 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.

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

The countries where the villages are located 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.

