

1. What are the Millennium Villages?

Millennium Villages are designed to demonstrate how the Millennium Development Goals can be met in rural Africa over 10 years through integrated, community-led development at very low cost. Operating in 10 countries across sub-Saharan Africa (Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, and Uganda), the Millennium Villages Project (MVP) works with local governments and partners to help nearly 500,000 people lift themselves out of extreme poverty through access to efficient technologies that can enhance their farm productivity, health, education, and access to markets. The MVP approach can be expanded to the district and national levels. This type of holistic, time-bound, budget-based approach has never been used before on this scale.

2. How much does the MVP cost?

The MVP operates well within the budget envelope of official development assistance (ODA) pledged by world leaders at the G8 Gleneagles Summit and UN World Summit of 2005. The commitment to double aid to sub-Saharan Africa by 2010, en route to larger increases by 2015, works out to approximately \$90 per African per year. The MVP operates within the donor budget envelope of \$60 per person per year, with another \$60 provided by local government, communities, and external partners. In the second phase of operations, local investments will continue to scale up while financial support from the MVP tapers down. (For further detail, see pages 12 and 25 of *The Next Five Years* report.)

3. Who is involved in the MVP?

The MVP is a multi-stakeholder project spearheaded by the Earth Institute, Columbia University, where scientists and researchers are helping to bring the latest evidence, technology, and practices into the project; and Millennium Promise, which oversees project operations. The project relies heavily on local governments and community participation in planning and carrying out interventions. Local, regional, and national governments play a key role in selecting MV sites and implementing interventions. The project also partners with several UN organizations, including UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNOPS, the World Food Programme, and the Broadband Commission for Digital Development, a joint initiative of the International Telecommunications Union and UNESCO. These partnerships ensure strong country- and international-level connections to global policy agendas. Scores of companies, individuals, foundations, governments, and other institutions also support the project, enabling communities to achieve tremendous gains through access to technology, in-kind donations, direct funding, and technical backing.

4. What has the MVP achieved so far?

The project has registered noticeable “quick wins,” especially in areas where national programs were nonexistent or lagging behind, such as improved crop yields thanks to subsidized seeds and fertilizers, malaria control through bed nets, and improved school enrollment with the help of school meal programs. Some successes stem from a combination of actions: improved yields, food security, diet diversity, and disease control have reduced stunting; and improved road networks, trained midwives, and new clinics have led to an increase in institutional deliveries.

Results across 11 Millennium Village sites at Year-3 include the following highlights:

- Malaria prevalence decreased by 72% (from 25% to 7%)
- Children sleeping under insecticide-treated mosquito nets increased by 629% (from 7% to 51%)

- Households with access to improved water increased by 300% (from 17% to 68%)
- Students benefitting from school meal programs increased by 188% (from 26% to 75%)
- Births delivered by skilled health personnel increased by 55% (from 31% to 48%)
- Across 6 sites, average maize yields increased from 1.3 t/ha to 4.6 t/ha

The project has also contributed to a number of broader policy learning and scale-up processes in agriculture, health, and infrastructure, reaching well beyond the geographic scope of the Millennium Villages themselves.

4. How does the MVP measure and evaluate progress?

To assess progress, the MVP conducts detailed surveys at five evaluation periods (Years 0, 3, 5, 7, and 9) over ten years. The research process is overseen by institutional review boards at Columbia University and in all host countries. The project publishes interim progress reports to inform policy discussions while the more detailed scientific evaluation process proceeds in parallel. External reviews and publication of project results in peer-reviewed scientific journals are key components of measuring and verify the impact of the MVP.

For instance, the Overseas Development Institute conducted a formative review of the MVP and produced a synthesis report in November 2008, concluding that the MVP “has achieved remarkable results” and recommending that governments and donors learn from and scale up the lessons of the MVP approach. Early scientific results have been published in journals such as *Advances in Agronomy*, the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* (forthcoming), the *American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, *Energy Policy*, *PLoS-ONE*, and the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*. (For more info, see pages 10-11 in *The Next Five Years* report.).

5. What is the plan for the next five years?

With communities in the Millennium Villages well on track to achieving the MDGs by the 2015 deadline, the next phase of the project (2011-2015) aims to strengthen gains made so far and further empower village communities through business development and diversified income generation. In order to achieve this, there will be an increased focus on farmers’ cooperatives, small enterprises, and strengthened market linkages. At the same time, core interventions in agriculture, education, and health will continue.

Phase II will also see the continued scale-up of interventions to the national level. Countries including Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and Rwanda have already committed to adopting specific aspects of the MVP model. As communities take greater charge of their own development and governments adapt MVP-like policies to their national MDG agendas, the project will scale down its financial investment until phasing out in 2015.

6. What will happen after 2015?

With basic systems firmly in place and increased focus on business development, forming cooperatives, and promoting off-farm employment through 2015, the project’s model predicts that incomes will generally increase in the villages. Higher incomes can in turn raise savings, thus accelerating economic diversification and investments in human capital. The resulting economic growth in the villages will reduce poverty and enable communities to finance a growing share of investments to achieve the MDGs. 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 deadline, although many villages will still require ongoing but generally declining financial support beyond then. It is crucial for these villages that existing international commitments are met and maintained until the countries where they are based graduate from the need for external support. Critical to the sustainability of the Millennium Villages is the need to empower the entire community by building local technical, administrative, and entrepreneurial capacity. When it phases out, the project will also leave behind infrastructure (roads, clinics, schools, communication towers, etc.) and knowledge networks that will enable communities to press on with their development.