Taking Action

to end extreme poverty

The MDG Centre

EAST & SOUTHERN AFRICA

Corporate Report 2009

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The MDG Centre: Taking action to end extreme poverty

The Centre celebrates 5 years of achievement in 2009

The Centre began modestly as an outreach office of the UN Millennium Project and the Earth Institute at Columbia University. Initially mandated to serve the whole continent, but focusing on four pilot countries (Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya and Senegal), the Centre's objective was to bring global policies and strategies closer to the field reality of what it takes to achieve the Millennium Development Goals: supporting governments in designing and costing MDG-based poverty reduction strategies. While that work brought us all closer to "reality", it was apparent, as recently as 2006, that results on the ground were mostly disappointing. There was little to inspire optimism that the MDGs would be achieved in Africa. Something more than plans and strategies was needed to mobilize action and investment.

In 2004, Jeffrey Sachs and Pedro Sanchez, both from the Earth Institute, conceived the idea of a Millennium Village (MV)—working with impoverished rural communities to apply policies and interventions emerging from the UN Millennium Project, combined with local on-the-ground knowledge and experience. The core idea of the Millennium Villages Project (MVP) was to demonstrate that investing in practical interventions—such as improved seed and fertilizers for raising crop productivity, long-lasting insecticide-treated bed-nets to reduce malaria, school meals to increase school attendance by both girls and boys, safe drinking water to reduce diarrheal diseases, and clinics to dispense effective treatment and care—would lead to a transformation in village life. Millennium Villages would thus demonstrate that the MDGs are possible to achieve, with the right approach and level of investment.

Central to the approach was the idea that communities would participate actively in the design and prioritization of interventions. Beyond that,

communities would have to contribute a share of the expenses, usually in kind. Supported by the Millennium Promise Alliance, the Government of Japan and other partners, the MVP is now fully operational in 10 African countries, with several others in the planning stage. The MDG Centre has played a crucial operational and technical advisory role in establishing the MVP in East and Central Africa.

In late 2008, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) released a review of the MVP. Commissioned by the Open Society Institute, the largest single donor to the Millennium Villages, the ODI report concluded in its "Key Messages" that the MVP:

> "…has achieved remarkable results and has demonstrated the impact of greater investment in evidence-based, low-cost interventions at the village level."
> "…points to, but cannot address due to its limited budget, the many upstream investments, rural-urban linkages, infrastructure and institutions required to scale up village-level investments."
> *and*
> "Countries need to situate MVP scale-up in the context of a national development strategy."
> "Scaling up rural investment depends on donors living up to their commitments."

This resounding endorsement by ODI validates the MVP approach while highlighting the context and challenges of achieving sustainability and scale. Several countries are already responding to the early successes. The Ministry of Planning, National Development and Vision 2030 in Kenya developed a Millennium District approach and will roll this out in at least 10 districts. Rwanda's Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme builds on the MVP concept and is extending the lessons to the poorest sectors (sub-districts) in each of its 30 districts. In Mali, the government has approached donors to support the expansion of the MVP to 166 of the most food-insecure communes in the country.

The MDG Centre in Nairobi and its West African counterpart in Bamako are playing central roles in supporting governments and other stakeholders in scaling up lessons from the MVP. In 2007, the Centre partnered with Malawi's Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and UNDP in organizing a workshop to identify best practices and lessons learned from multi-sectoral integrated rural development in Malawi. Six key lessons were identified and are summarized in this report, which has been distributed to government agencies (including district authorities) and development partners in Malawi.

The African Green Revolution (AGR) has also attracted much attention in the past year. Kofi Annan's call for a "uniquely African Green Revolution" at the Addis Ababa High Level Conference in July 2004, co-organized by The MDG Centre and the Government of Ethiopia, is widely acknowledged as the critical event that mobilized greater African political commitment to the AGR. The establishment of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) by the Gates and Rockefeller foundations has subsequently sent a strong message of confidence in achieving an AGR.

The sharp rise in food prices in 2008 has drawn global attention to the challenges and opportunities for improving agricultural productivity. During 2008, The MDG Centre and its parent institution, the Earth Institute at Columbia University, strongly advocated for increased donor support to the smallholder agriculture sector in Africa. Buoyed by the crop productivity improvements in the Millennium Villages and the sustained success of Malawi's fertilizer subsidy programme, the Centre has called for the establishment of a new Global Fund to rapidly mobilize and effectively disburse additional funds for raising productivity and attaining food security in Africa. By late 2008, several donors were expressing interest in supporting such a fund.

The MDG Centre sees a successful AGR as requiring much more than just yield increases for the major staples. While productivity improvements are both necessary and feasible throughout much of Africa, the Centre is supporting, through research, policy advice and advocacy, the development of six critical dimensions of the AGR:

Children from pastoralist families attend school in Dertu Millennium Village, North Eastern Kenya.

- Improved nutrition for consumers through promotion of agricultural biodiversity
- Strategies to improve adaptation to climate change by smallholder farmers
- Environmental sustainability through integrated nutrient management including greater deployment of legumes in farming systems
- Reduction of post-harvest losses and attention to product quality
- Gender-sensitive policies and interventions
- Business development in rural areas through enterprise diversification and improved market linkages.

The Centre's work in each of these areas is briefly described in this report.

In conclusion, the Centre owes sincere thanks to the more than 20 investors that have supported its work during the past 5 years (see the full list at the end of this report). Foremost among these is the Government of Ireland. Since 2005, Irish Aid has contributed unrestricted funding in support of our mission, complementing the many restricted grants that support specific aspects of our work. This tangible and invaluable expression of confidence by Ireland has enabled us to implement medium-term strategic decisions as well as to respond quickly to emerging opportunities. As a result, we are now better placed to mobilize additional resources and deliver value to governments and other critical stakeholders in Africa.

The next 5 years will bring us to within a year of 2015, the internationally agreed deadline for achieving most of the MDGs. We cannot allow a food crisis or even a global recession to distract us from tackling the remaining challenges. This is no time to reinterpret our commitments or lower our ambition. The end of extreme poverty remains our mission and the Centre's sole reason for being. The MDG Centre was a bold idea when we began and today remains more relevant than ever.

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Lessons learned from rural development experience in Malawi

Poor health, food insecurity and poverty cannot be tackled effectively by addressing each sector in isolation; a holistic approach is needed

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranked 165 out of 177 countries by the United Nations Human Development Index 2007/2008. More than half of its population lives below the poverty line with many depending on erratic rainfed agriculture for their food and their livelihoods. Nearly 2.7 million of the country's 14 million people are so poor they are unable to meet the minimum daily food requirements.

In an attempt to improve this drastic situation, the Government of Malawi has prepared the country's Growth and Development Strategy as an overarching development policy for 2006-2011. Its major objectives are to achieve strong and sustainable economic growth of at least 6%, enabling Malawians to create their own wealth through socio-economic transformation. Integrated rural development (IRD) is a major priority of the strategy.

Two-thirds of Malawi's people live in rural areas, which therefore must be the focus of any attempts to tackle such deep poverty. One of the biggest challenges in international development is how to help the poorest people in a sustainable way. Many sub-Saharan African countries, such as Malawi, have been receiving advice and assistance from an increasing number of development agencies, but the aid and advice has often been conflicting.

Interdependence between different sectors in a country means that poor health, food insecurity and poverty cannot be tackled effectively by addressing each sector in isolation. Influencing sustainable and positive change suggests the need to adopt a holistic, multi-sectoral approach to development.

Farmers discuss progress of tomatoes grown as a cash crop.

This approach is now being taken by many non-governmental organizations (NGOs), intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and government bodies to implement multi-sectoral rural development programmes and projects throughout Malawi. The variations and similarities across these programmes and projects suggested that it might be useful to compare and contrast them in a rigorous way, and a workshop was held in Lilongwe to bring the diverse actors together to work towards a more comprehensive understanding of "best practice" and the components that could be implemented on a larger scale.

Cosponsored by Malawi's Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and The MDG Centre for East and Southern Africa, the workshop's purpose was to facilitate sharing, critical analysis and a synthesis of lessons learned in implementing multisectoral rural development in Malawi. The knowledge gained by the NGOs, IGOs and government agencies, and the Millennium Villages Project (MVP) yielded six important lessons, summarized here.

1. WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE GOVERNMENT

Participants agreed on the necessity to work in close partnership with government personnel, especially at local levels, as specific local knowledge is an important asset. Also, cost sharing and using government capacity, such as the extension network and research laboratories, can help maximize available resources.

Such cooperation can be especially helpful in Malawi as government decentralization has empowered local governance structures, making them better equipped to handle integrated rural development (IRD) projects. Projects should therefore aim to work closely with local government, and project and programme plans should both strengthen and be guided by district development plans.

Joint planning with the government also helps to avoid duplication of effort. Once projects and programmes understand which local government and community structures are in place, they can build on these, rather than setting up parallel structures.

2. INVEST IN THE SUSTAINABILITY, CONTINUITY AND OWNERSHIP ASPECTS OF THE PROJECTS

The involvement of the community from the planning stage throughout project implementation and beyond is essential for any sustainable impact. In particular, involvement in the decision-making process encourages community ownership of the project objectives. The MVP emphasizes the value of good communication between the project, partners and communities, so that everyone knows what to expect and how to plan project activities.

In the MVP in Malawi, village and district committees guided and monitored activities, finding existing local structures, such as women's groups, to be a suitable and useful entry point. With help in the form of capacity building, community members can become agents of change.

Several projects mentioned project duration as an important factor, saying that project timescales are often too short to achieve lasting impact. Advance planning with the local communities would bring up such requirements early and allow longer-term considerations to be built in at the project design stage. For example, the performance of agricultural interventions often needs to be monitored and refined over several growing seasons. Additional time must be allowed to train government extension staff to maintain new technologies over the longer term. Sometimes giving free inputs can be dependency-creating and detrimental. The principle of cost sharing was employed in several of the projects.

In the Malawi MVP, the community supplied inputs such as bricks, labour for digging a well, and maize for the school feeding programme. In another project, the villagers contributed labour and materials in return for inputs. Project staff also explained that the distribution of inputs was not a hand-out but an investment in the future sustainable development of the entire community.

3. BUILD CAPACITY AT DIFFERENT LEVELS OF THE COMMUNITY

Most of the projects recognized that, while using existing capacity is important, it is equally essential to put effort and resources into increasing the capacity of stakeholders, since inadequate capacity is one of the greatest obstacles to project continuity and sustainability. Capacity-building efforts can be directed at local government officers, extension services, community groups, NGOs, and others.

Capacity building is successful, too, in creating income and self-reliance through training in vocational skills (e.g. metalwork and motor mechanics). The provision of basic equipment in some projects has allowed many poor orphan teenagers to break out of poverty, build a livelihood for themselves and make a positive contribution to their community.

Women's groups learned about management and marketing skills in addition to being offered a wide range of vocational training. This new knowledge allowed members of the community to become agents of change, providing the potential for sustained development. More generally, building the capacity of the local community means the villagers will be able to manage the programme themselves.

4. DEVELOP ENTERPRISES AND WORK WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR

In projects that targeted food security through improved inputs and fertilizer, the surpluses were often much larger than anticipated. This created the new problem of trying to ensure that farmers achieved good prices for their crops, suggesting the need for effective market chain development.

Adequate attention should be given to creating links between farmers and new markets to ensure they receive a fair price for any surplus production. Attention should be paid to establishing a range of services that include purchasing, storage, transportation, processing, distribution, and market information systems.

Getting access to credit facilities is a key to successful projects. Even when loans are not used for investment, they can substantially improve beneficiaries' standards of living. Most project participants used their loans to invest in productivity increases by buying farm inputs or financing small-scale economic activities. One project helped create two micro-credit schemes, one of which has over 1,000 members and is now self-sustaining.

5. LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE: THE IMPORTANCE OF M&E

A large number of IRD projects have been put in place since the 1970s, and case studies from these activities have helped improve projects since then. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) components should be built in from the start, to assess efficacy and to allow necessary changes to be made. What is learned from such assessments and stakeholder feedback can improve not only the current projects but enhance the design of others that follow. Strong M&E frameworks can make a big difference in ensuring sustainability of impact.

6. GOOD COMMUNICATION: NETWORKING AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

While new knowledge was generated by all the projects reviewed at the workshop, the participants agreed that there is no need to 'reinvent the wheel'. Thus they felt the report of the workshop would be a useful knowledge-sharing tool, both for improving existing projects and for designing new ones. The fact that participants had previously been unaware that so many organizations were working in multi-sectoral rural development in similar ways highlighted the need for more communication.

The workshop group sessions also stressed the benefits to be gained by promoting information and communication technology (ICT) for networking and knowledge sharing. The traditional meetings for exchange of information and ideas should be replaced or at least augmented by faster and cheaper methods of communication among stakeholders.

For example, e-forums and an electronic mailing list would allow the multi-sectoral development community to communicate more regularly. Use of ICT would help the Government of Malawi to play a stronger coordinating role in ensuring that projects and programmes have impact on poverty reduction.

The full proceedings of the Lilongwe workshop were distributed to all government agencies (including district offices), international organizations, bilateral donors and NGOs.

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Millennium Village gender-sensitive programmes give birth to successful micro-enterprises for women of all ages

In Koraro, Ethiopia, 200 people, including many landless young women, received bee colonies and training in honey production

The gender programme of The MDG Centre provides training and technical support in women's and adolescent girls' education, sexual and reproductive rights, programmes to improve time management, and micro-enterprise development.

The Centre has helped establish girls' empowerment clubs that discuss contemporary issues that affect adolescent girls: living values, career guidance and life choices. While advances made in all these areas have been significant, it is the economic initiatives that are perhaps most noticeable.

In addition, because of the long relationship between women and farming in village life, it's only natural that the gender, business and agriculture sectors have become strongly integrated and this is evident in the creation of micro-enterprises.

Traditionally, rural women in sub-Saharan Africa are twice as likely to be involved in food production than men. As the mainstay of the agricultural sector, they provide the bulk of farm labour in preparing the land, sowing, weeding, controlling pests and harvesting.

In post-harvest activities, women are usually responsible for the storage, handling, processing and marketing of fruit and vegetable crops. In the livestock sector, they feed and milk the largest animals, while raising small poultry and tending sheep and goats. This last sector has been the scene for the successful establishment of women-led micro-enterprises.

Fennel seeds, the end-product of a women's micro-enterprise that first grows the plants, then dries the seeds and markets them as spices.

In the Koraro Millennium Village (MV) in Ethiopia, for instance, almost 300 female household heads were given two goats each last year and advised not to sell them but use them for milk production and for breeding to start small herds. Already, many of the women have doubled the number of their animals.

In Kenya's Sauri MV, 20 young women received agricultural and business management training and began planting and marketing two crops—peppers and onions—that were not common to the area. Money from the sale of vegetables is used for essential purchases of clothing and other basics. The women also collected fertile eggs and received outside funding to buy simple hatchery equipment and are now hatching and rearing poultry for sale.

Poultry rearing is also becoming a healthy business in Koraro, where about 250 women-headed households were each given two hens and one cockerel. Once the ensuing chicks grow sufficiently, they are sold. Hen chicks are also kept and turned into egg layers.

Because of a high local demand for honey, beekeeping has become popular in Koraro, with 200 households receiving three bee colonies each plus training in honey production, forming cooperatives and financial management. The 200 people involved include landless young women as well as older women.

The agricultural sector is not the only one where women-led micro-enterprises have taken root. Basket weaving in Mayange MV (Rwanda), pot making in Koraro MV (Ethiopia) and Mwandama MV (Malawi), the production of decorative beads made from banana fibre in Ruhiira MV (Uganda), and the processing of foods such as tomatoes into value-added products such as juice puree and paste in Mwandama MV (Malawi), are some of the money-making activities taking place.

In Sauri MV, the building and marketing of small, low-cost earthenware stoves that use less fuel than the traditional three-rock cooking fires have recently begun. In addition to generating income, they will contribute towards reducing the burden of time and workload caused by the need to collect firewood.

While micro-enterprises may be one of the most immediately noticeable gender activities to visitors to the MVs, the programme is much more multi-faceted. It is integrated closely with other sectors in each community, a direct benefit from the training in gender relations received by all MVP staff.

In Koraro, 80 women are involved in setting up a small shopping centre with funding from a revolving loans activity established by the village's enterprise sector. They operate as small shop traders, one of them making and selling *sewaa*, a beer made from locally grown cereals such as sorghum or millet.

The training programmes in sexual maturation and distribution of sanitary towels to adolescent schoolgirls, which were piloted in Sauri and Koraro, has now been replicated in other MVs: Dertu (Kenya), Mbola (Tanzania) and Ruhiira. The availability of towels plays a major role in ensuring that the girls do not miss school that was previously the norm during their menstrual periods.
Educational support, in the form of scholarships, is also available from the gender programme for girls from poor families to pursue post-primary and vocational training.

For adolescent girls in Koraro who are out of school, the MVP has initiated a literacy programme in partnership with the district education office, and the Ethiopian youth and gender ministries. More than 100 girls, some of them married, are enrolled. Demand for entry into the programme is growing steadily.

To make sure that gender awareness remains integrated with all the other sectors of MV development, training activities to reduce gender bias and gender blindness are ongoing, and are responsible for the increased sensitivity of MVP staff and partners to the needs of women and girls.

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Beekeeping for honey production is a popular enterprise for MV women.

Adequate nutrition is key factor in African development

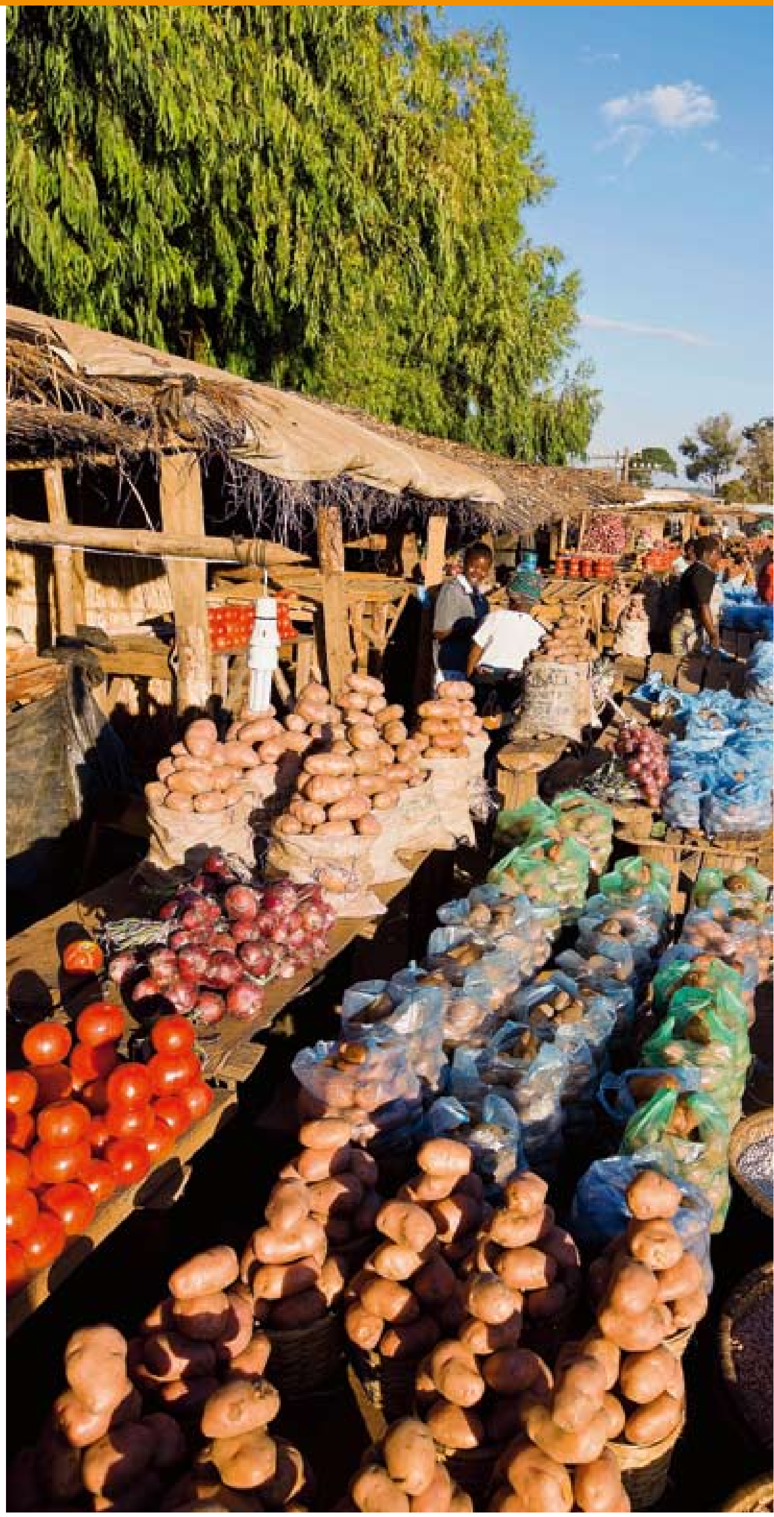
Increasing nutrition security in the Millennium Villages is being achieved by instilling innovative, integrated solutions

The UN's Millennium Development Goal 4 is to reduce the global mortality rate for children under the age of 5 years by two thirds between 1990 and 2015. In sub-Saharan Africa, however, with hunger and malnutrition continuing their dramatic rise, it is estimated that this goal will not be met until around 2115, one hundred years too late.

More than half of all childhood deaths can be attributed to malnutrition, yet human nutrition is an often neglected factor in the development plans of many national governments, a fact difficult to comprehend given the increasing rates of child mortality.

The root causes of malnutrition are many, but the most common in sub-Saharan Africa is extreme poverty that leads to poor access to consistent and nutritious food sources. This is aggravated by degraded living environments that encourage infectious diseases such as intestinal worms that further compound malnutrition. Without a diversification of agriculture practices, clean drinking water, access to health services and education—all of which require funding—adequate nutrition will be difficult to achieve.

Despite the gloomy estimates as to when this objective might be achieved continent-wide, there is much more optimism at the level of the Millennium Villages (MVs), where MDG-related interventions specific to nutrition have been successfully employed. Now, a major objective of The MDG Centre is to scale-up such interventions to district and national levels by providing scientific, technical and policy support to governments and other development entities in East and Southern Africa.



Within the MV sites, the major objectives—to assist communities to eliminate hunger and increase nutrition security—have been achieved by instilling innovative, integrated solutions that focus on nutrition education and food and nutrition security. These include micronutrient supplementation, food fortification, diverse agricultural practices, and recommendations for policy implementation.

This approach involves the evidence-based, science-proven integration of multiple development sectors including agriculture, health, community action, education, and infrastructure. The major interventions recommended are to:

- Increase food production and consumption, micronutrient supplementation, processing and fortification of nutritious foods, and develop appropriate local technologies for the preservation and storage of foods
- Diversify and promote consumption of traditionally nutritious African crops and foods as well as introducing new, improved food varieties
- Develop and ensure cost-effective, nutritious school meals programmes for all MVs as well as providing nutrition education, encouraging the creation of school gardens, and monitoring the health, nutritional status, and physical growth of the schoolchildren
- Expand community-based participatory food and nutrition education programmes for agricultural extension workers, health and education staff, and community health workers with a major emphasis on maternal and child nutrition
- Create nutrition support programmes for vulnerable groups with particular focus on HIV and AIDS and TB patients, orphans, widows and the elderly
- Perform analysis of all such interventions by using tools such as food frequency questionnaires, serum micronutrient analysis, and anthropometric data.

Sweet potatoes add more vitamins and fibre to villagers' diets.

These demonstrate that nutrition action can contribute to better health, achievement of the MDGs, and the alleviation and, ultimately, the eradication of poverty.

One of the constraints faced by The MDG Centre in scaling up the successful MV-level interventions is that nutrition programmes are often a low priority for national governments due to a low demand for nutrition services from communities because malnutrition—as opposed to famine—is often not visible. Also, governments frequently do not recognize the economic costs of malnutrition.

By working directly with governments, the MV nutrition programme is serving as a demonstration model that shows what can be achieved with appropriate food security and nutrition interventions. The programme uses short- and long-term approaches that integrate public action at the community level with activities at regional and national government levels and international NGOs.

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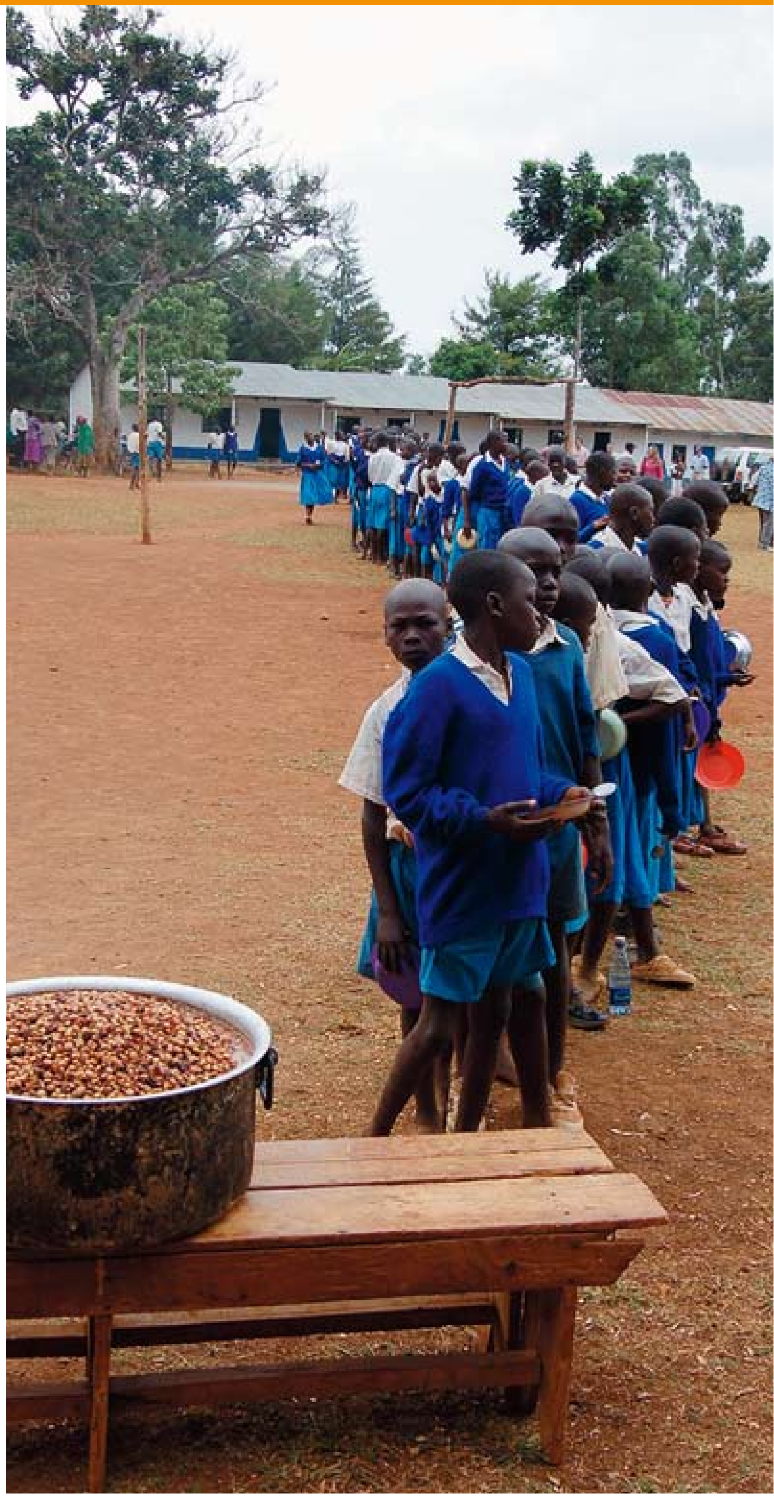
How a low-cost meal is allowing more village children to be educated

Nutritious free lunches each school day for 70,000 children mean that more young people can benefit from full-time primary education

Jane Otieno missed half of her first three years of schooling. Each morning she would be among the first in the classroom, but after the lunch break she was always absent. There was a simple reason for this—she had to go home for lunch and her mother always had some work she needed done—fetching water, looking for firewood. Sometimes she had to take care of her younger brothers and sisters while her mother carried out these chores. Schooling came second for Jane in her family priorities.

This year, things have changed. Jane now spends the whole day being educated for she no longer has to go home. The Millennium Village Project (MVP) School Meals Programme (SMP) has reached her school and she enjoys a nutritious lunch every day. She is one of 19,000 children in more than 20 schools in the Sauri MV cluster of western Kenya who are fed daily by the SMP.

Tesfaiye Bekalo grew up in a six-person family in northern Ethiopia that often struggled to get enough food on a day-to-day basis because his parents are smallholder farmers at the mercy of unpredictable rains and poor soil. Often he went without food until the evening. Because of the lack of food, Tesfaiye was undernourished, underweight and stunted for his age. His hair sometimes would turn red or blonde during the hunger periods due to severe protein deficiency. He also had a hard time focusing on his schoolwork because he was so often hungry.
Recently Tesfaiye's life has improved. He has caught up in his growth and has the energy and ability to concentrate on his studies, for he is now one of 18,000 primary school students in the MVP district of Koraro who receive a hearty lunch each school



day. Although his parents still at times struggle, he and his brothers and sister now get at least two meals a day—a big relief for his mother who no longer worries about her children going hungry.

The MVP has been implementing SMPs since 2006, with considerable success. Nearly all the villages in the 14 MV clusters across Africa offer a daily meal to all primary school children. In total, approximately 70,000 children are currently receiving meals in this way.

The meals programme relies heavily on community involvement to help shape what kind of food is offered. The programme often starts with a simple meal plan that uses local staples such as maize, beans and fish, with healthy nutrition additions including fruit and leafy green vegetables (Table 1).

Some of the MVs have established firm partnerships with the World Food Programme to ensure sustainable meal programmes, and many of the schools have cultivated school gardens and organized nutrition advisory clubs that complement the SMP. In parallel with improving the supply of food, fuel-efficient stoves have been installed at some sites. These help to reduce the amount of fuel that needs to be collected and shorten the time spent cooking.

Invaluable lessons have been learned during the programme's first two years, including the following methods for improving food distribution:

- Serving multiple meals in crowded schools without interrupting class time and disrupting the schedule of the education curriculum
- Establishing long-term sources of funding in the communities, national governments, and non-governmental organizations
- Providing food that is not costly yet is nutritious and well balanced
- Building site-specific kitchen facilities and access to fuel and water areas where resources are limited
- Community participation, contribution and involvement in planning is necessary for sustainability of the project.

There are still challenges in improving the programme that need to be faced in the near future, such as:

- Reducing its cost while maximizing nutritional and educational benefits
- Improving access to scarce resources such as water and firewood
- Not compromising the food quality as enrolment increases and schools become overcrowded
- Training the school cooks in proper hygienic food preparation
- Sustaining the communities' contribution to the programme during difficult times.

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Table 1: Typical meals programme menu

MVP Site	Menu
Bonsaaso, Ghana	Maize meal, groundnut soup, fish, and an orange
Dertu, Kenya	Rice/maize and beans
Gumulira, Malawi	Porridge made from maize, soybean flour, and fortified nutrients
Koraro, Ethiopia	Maize, wheat and chickpea or bean combination
Mayange, Rwanda	Maize meal, beans, fish, and peas
Mwandama, Malawi	Porridge made from maize, soybean flour and fortified nutrients
Pampaida, Nigeria	Maize flour, beans and vegetables
Potou, Senegal	Rice and fish
Ruhiira, Uganda	Maize meal, beans and green leafy vegetables with vitamin A fortified oil
Sauri, Kenya	Maize, beans and kale
Tiby, Mali	Rice and couscous
Tiby, Mali	Rice, fish, vegetables, and beans

Centre-supported study suggests how to cut losses of stored maize

The MDG Centre seeks solutions to substantial maize losses due to storage pests, following huge increases in production in the MVs

Maize is a staple food for many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, where it is mainly produced by resource-poor farmers. The MDG Centre has been supporting implementation of the Millennium Villages Project (MVP) in Malawi, Tanzania and Kenya, where inputs are subsidizing maize production and achieving food security.

This support to farmers living in Millennium Villages (MVs) has resulted in huge increases in production. However, these leaps in productivity were accompanied with substantial maize losses to storage pests, especially since farmers did not seem to prepare adequately for storing the extra grain.

To document the status of the maize loss in storage due to pests and make recommendations for cutting losses, The MDG Centre asked CABI Africa to carry out a study in Malawi's Mwandama and Gumulira MV Clusters, Tanzania's Mbola MV Cluster, and Kenya's Sauri MV Cluster from end of April to mid-June 2008. CABI is a not-for-profit, intergovernmental organization that provides information and applies scientific expertise to solve problems in agriculture and the environment.

The study was conducted through farmer focus group discussions, assessments of storage structures and pest status in selected households, and discussions with key informants in all three participating countries. A maize chain analysis and assessment of maize storage losses along the chain was also conducted, but mainly in Malawi and Kenya due to low rainfall in Tanzania and a subsequent reduction in maize productivity.

Maize losses occur primarily in the following locations:

- Households
- Receiving and storage sites
- Community cereal/grain storage facilities
- Schools used as temporary storage facilities for maize, some of which is for the school meals programme.

The larger grain borer (LGB) causes the highest maize storage losses, followed by the maize weevil, maize flour beetle and angoumois grain moth. According to national maize experts, maize losses due to storage pests range between 30% and 60% in the three countries— figures that far exceed what are currently recorded in the literature. Much of this loss is attributed to the presence of LGB. Farmers interviewed in the study confirmed experiencing losses even if they used inorganic or organic storage insecticides, and all confirmed that losses can be up to 100% if maize is not protected with insecticides before storing.

The key factors found to be influencing maize losses due to storage pests were:

- Improper harvesting methods which result in overexposing maize to storage pests in the field
- Varietal susceptibility
- Inappropriate use of storage structures
- Under-dosing of insecticides and improper timing for applying them
- Use of expired and adulterated insecticides
- Treating maize with insecticides at incorrect moisture content levels
- Short effectiveness of insecticides—some are only effective in protecting stored maize from pest infestation for three months
- Storing untreated maize for long periods, such as in the maize payback receiving centres
- Lack of experience in storing maize by school teachers and administrators who are often responsible for caring for the maize
- Lack of adequate storage facilities at community cereal/grain banks.

National maize storage experts in all three countries have recommended the following:

- Early harvesting
- Use of new or treated bags for storage
- Better store hygiene
- Treating maize with inorganic insecticides
- Treating maize with botanicals and diatomaceous earths
- Use of modern structures such as improved granaries and mini silos
- Frequent inspection of maize while in storage, and re-drying and retreating if infested.

New-design maize storage containers (foreground) keep out pests that invaded the old type (background).

The study revealed that many farmers are not using all or any of the national recommendations. For example, apart from farmers in two MVs in the Mwandama Cluster, Malawi, very few are using inorganic insecticides and many are still using traditional granaries, even those living close to modern granaries that were built for demonstration.

Farmers suggested that the reasons why they have not adopted more modern storage management technologies are limited financial resources and lack of awareness of the recommendations.

It is apparent that maize storage is a crucial component of ensuring greater food security and should be included in efforts by national governments and development partners, especially in countries where there have been substantial returns from maize or other food crop production. With no proper storage facilities, farmers end up selling their maize soon after harvest, then have to buy it back later from the same people at more than twice the price they sold it for just after harvest, resulting in a continual poverty trap.

In order to address these factors a range of country-specific short-term recommendations by the MVP were presented by CABI. These can be implemented immediately in order to start reducing losses from storage pests.

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Summary of short term recommendations:

Recommendations	Malawi	Kenya	Tanzania
1. Facilitate availability of insecticides to farmers	✓	✓	✓
2. Train agriculture staff and farmers in proper maize storage systems	✓	✓	✓
3. Use of maize cribs—the period of drying maize in the cribs should be shortened to a maximum of 4 weeks	✓		
4. Awareness creation of maize harvesting and handling, storage pests, and insecticide rates	✓	✓	✓
5. Payback maize in receiving centres and the maize in cereal/grain banks should be fumigated before treating with contact insecticides	✓	✓	✓
6. Diatomaceous earth should be tried at a pilot level in Millennium Villages		✓	✓
7. An inventory of farmers who use ash of different types should be developed, and they should be supported and monitored for effectiveness		✓	✓
8. Institute an LGB reporting system	✓	✓	✓
9. Farmers using wild tubers and other botanicals should be monitored, and the effectiveness of the botanicals verified		✓	✓
10. Carry out campaigns for spraying houses and storage structures against LGB in the Zomba MVs where there are high populations of LGB	✓		
11. Introduce dipping of maize in water before milling at all maize mills in MVP to drown storage pests as part of integrated storage pest management	✓	✓	✓
12. MVP to devise a way of measuring maize quantities for treating with insecticides	✓	✓	✓
13. Maize stores should be built at each MV	✓	✓	✓

The MDG Centre's role in achieving environmental sustainability

Boosting soil fertility, protecting springs and boreholes, planting woodlots, improving sanitation are key activities of Centre work

Environmental sustainability is fundamental to our future on earth. Increasingly, humanity is living in an unsustainable way, consuming the Earth's resources more quickly than they can be replaced by nature. And nowhere is this more noticeable than in sub-Saharan Africa.

Poor soils, depleted water sources, destroyed forests and eroded landscapes are all familiar components of many of the ecosystems in which live rural Africans. This is why Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 7—"Ensure environmental sustainability"—has been identified as a key priority of The MDG Centre for East and Southern Africa.

A great deal of activity, both practical and effective, has been accomplished at the Millennium Village (MV) level to overcome such environmental challenges. Soil fertility has been improved through increased inputs of fertilizer and the adoption of low-cost techniques such as composting, mulching and nitrogen-fixing fallow crops. There is increased access to safe water through greater protection of springs and boreholes.

Woodlots have been planted to ensure supplies of lumber and firewood and also to reduce erosion on sloping lands. Sanitation has been improved through the construction and maintenance of pit latrines.

Also at the village level, a new question has moved into focus. Can the MVs acquire carbon credits from the improved cooking stoves that are replacing the old three-stone fireplaces, and the methane being produced by new but simple bio-digesters? And also by making charcoal briquettes and by planting trees?

Such questions have led The MDG Centre to tackle the challenge of integrating the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes in order to reverse the loss of national environmental resources, a target of the MDG 7. This is one of the most difficult goals to tackle, because of the wide range of national, regional and local groups that need to be involved in planning and decision-making.

The Centre began by examining how environment issues have been integrated into national development plans for Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. This analysis exposed strengths and weaknesses between different sectors and countries and highlighted priorities for support. For example, one strength that showed up is the increasing reference being made to national household surveys, thus bringing about a better understanding of the causes of poverty. One weakness is the lack of sufficient analysis of current conditions in slums and of future planning for these areas.

Concrete protection for freshwater springs keeps the water clean and unpolluted.

An example of the variability between countries is Rwanda's exceptional progress in tree planting that makes it a role model for many countries in the region. Rural dwellers have been motivated to plant trees by key individuals from the social and administrative structures of the country, and given support from the highest government levels.

Drawing from its analysis, the Centre selected several national policies to support from among the countries where MVs are located:

- Environmental fiscal reform (EFR), a range of taxation and/or pricing instruments that would raise revenue and further environmental goals at the same time
- Legalization, and therefore legitimization, of the manufacture and supply of charcoal fuel
- Promotion of alternative, "green" energy sources
- Reduction of air pollution
- Improvement of water use efficiency
- Environmentally responsible land use.

Looking to the future, the environmental sustainability of all major activities that contribute toward achieving the MDGs is critical, if they are to be realized. A better understanding is needed of the choices to be made between the three often competing components of rural society: environment, economics and social welfare. And an ongoing effort is needed from all parties concerned in order to achieve the transformation of that society into one that is more environmentally responsible.

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MV Community Health Workers provide vital care in battle to reduce deaths from pregnancy

In Uganda, more than 600 maternal deaths occur in every 100,000 child-births; in the 30 OECD developed countries, the figure is less than 10

More than half of the approximately 500,000 women who die in pregnancy or childbirth every year are in sub-Saharan Africa. Figures from the World Health Organization (WHO) show that a woman living in that region has a 1 in 16 chance of dying in those conditions, compared to a 1 in 2,800 risk in the average developed country.

In Uganda, about 600-700 maternal deaths occur in every 100,000 childbirths. The MDG Centre supports efforts to reduce this terrible statistic in Millennium Villages (MVs) throughout East and Southern Africa. In the 30 developed OECD countries, the comparative figure is less than 10.

One example of the Centre's work in this area is in the Ruhiira MV cluster of eight villages in southwest Uganda, where a team of 48 Community Health Workers (CHW) regularly visit all the pregnant women in the area.

The health workers are given minimal but essential training that covers methods for ensuring safer pregnancy and childbirth and guarantees skilled services at birth. The workers also encourage pregnant women to deliver their babies at improved local health clinics and also to visit the facilities regularly for antenatal care.

In addition, the CHWs have been equipped with cellphones and the authority to facilitate rapid referral to hospital in cases where there are pregnancy-related complications.

Prior to the start-up of the CHW project, very few women went to the health clinics to deliver their babies. The facilities are few and far apart, in difficult, hilly terrain. Most of them lacked essential delivery equipment and did not have electric power.

Kabuiyanda Health Centre, the only hospital in the area with the capacity to carry out the surgery that is sometimes required in childbirth, was looked upon purely as a last resort. Due to low salaries and unfavourable working conditions, the doctors were sometimes absent and other staff were overworked and sometimes not welcoming.

The only ambulance was broken down a great deal of the time due to lack of funds to cover running and maintenance costs, and when it was functional patients were required to pay upfront to cover the cost of fuel.

Parallel with the CHW project, the MVP has greatly improved the hospital infrastructure. The operating theatre has been renovated and equipped with a new out-patient complex, and new staff houses built that can accommodate 10 families.

Additional professional health workers, including doctors, nurses and laboratory technicians, have been employed. The facility is now staffed round the clock and patients get treated very well whenever they show up. There is a new ambulance and the operating theatre is well equipped with up-to-date anaesthetic and surgical equipment.

Prior to the start-up of the CHW project, only 8 % of women in the area were able to deliver their babies at health clinics. Now more than 70% of women are taking advantage of the improved facilities and 90% receive ante-natal care. The use of the health workers is being implemented at all 14 MV clusters in Africa.

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Long-lasting treated bed-nets received by village women from CHWs have significantly reduced incidence of malaria.

How can African agriculture adapt to water shortages caused by climate change?

The MDG Centre recommends water resources management strategies to help African smallholders to withstand the stress

In sub-Saharan Africa, climate change and the extreme variability of weather patterns caused by it, such as droughts and floods, are exacerbating poverty levels and food insecurity, leaving many farmers trapped in a cycle of vulnerability to diminishing water resources. These farmers, whose rainfed crops are most susceptible to the effects of climate change, have no alternative but to adapt to such severe conditions.

This won't be easily achieved. Climate change has a particularly strong impact on the hydrological cycle, the succession of water movement from the atmosphere to the earth and back to the atmosphere through precipitation, interception, runoff, infiltration, percolation, storage, evaporation, and transpiration. This makes water resources management strategies an important tool for helping agricultural production to successfully withstand the stress caused by climate change.

A recently concluded study by The MDG Centre on "Assessment of water resources management for smallholder farming systems' adaptation to climate change in sub-Saharan Africa" supports this view, stating that improved agricultural water management is one of the "best bets" for adapting agricultural production to climate change and variability. The study reiterated that a "blue revolution" will strengthen the much awaited Green Revolution in Africa.

Accomplishing this will be difficult. Only about 4% of African agricultural land is irrigated, and the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently reported that rainfed crop yields in some countries are expected to decrease by 50% by 2020, with as many as 250 million Africans facing increased water stress by 2020. The impact of water shortage on farmers and their livelihoods could be catastrophic.

Among the agricultural water management strategies suggested is irrigation development. The study showed that the performance of smallholder irrigation schemes—in terms of improved water management, food security and incomes—is encouraging, with net earnings ranging between US$200 and US$1200 per month for single-crop enterprises.

Enhancing surface irrigation with rainwater harvesting has also been shown to be profitable for smallholders. A combination of harvested rainwater and supplemental irrigation yielded net profits of US$150-600 per hectare (ha) in Burkina Faso, and US$110-500 per ha in Kenya. However, prevailing water management systems in many African countries may not be up to the challenge of providing such innovative practices.

The study points out that current poor performance in terms of water-use efficiency, plus competition over diminishing water resources, suggests the need for investment in better water management systems. Also, where there is limited access to irrigation development, smallholder farmers need to develop water conservation and water harvesting systems in order to maximize the use of rainfall on their farms.

The performance of large public irrigation schemes in Africa is associated with poor governance and insecure land tenure. While farmer groups have grown more active in the operation of public irrigation schemes, government agencies have largely been responsible for maintenance and operation, often with little cost recovery and poor performance: low water-use efficiency, decreased crop yields and hence low water productivity.

Water storage for crops and fish-rearing can be done in tandem using on-farm ponds.

The experience of parastatal irrigation organizations and similar government-controlled schemes in sub-Saharan Africa attests to this. In such ventures, farmers rarely pursue an active role in improving the irrigation systems, citing reasons such as insignificant incentive for individual users, lack of cohesion among users, geographical isolation combined with poor means of communication, and the fact that reforms often reduce subsidies and increase individual expenses.

However, when some government-controlled schemes have instituted reforms that give farmers more responsibility in water management, operation and maintenance, and ultimately freedom in the acquisition of farm inputs and the sale of crops, positive results have been demonstrated. The need for policy and institutional reforms has been identified as a prerequisite for tackling the improvement of most public irrigation systems in Africa.

A key policy change would be to support increased investment in smallholder irrigation as opposed to large-scale irrigation projects. Apart from the obvious lower start-up cost and high economic impact, smallholder irrigation systems often have strong local community governance, are relatively free from political intervention and have relatively low operation and maintenance costs.

Water management is also improved by having a greater diversity of options for water sources such as small streams, shallow wells, boreholes and rainwater storage. There are also many irrigation technological options, for example: surface irrigation methods (furrows and small basins), pressurized systems (sprinkler and both high head and low head drip systems), and water lifting technologies (gravity, manual and pumps—motorized, wind-driven and solar).

There is also potential for the rehabilitation and improvement of existing smallholder irrigation systems, some of which were initiated by farmers on their own, that have fallen into disarray for a number of reasons: inadequate management or technical skills, socio-political instability, inadequate funding for maintenance, and land degradation. There are an estimated 2 million ha of land in Africa equipped for irrigation that are unused; these could be developed along with the approximately 13 million ha with irrigation potential.

Another improved agricultural water management strategy is the upgrading of rainfed agriculture through integrated rainwater harvesting systems and complementary technologies such as low-cost pumps and water application methods, e.g. low-head drip irrigation kits. Rainwater harvesting systems include two broad categories: (a) in-situ soil moisture conservation—technologies that increase rainwater infiltration and storage in the soil for crop use; (b) runoff storage for supplemental irrigation using storage structures such as farm ponds, earth dams, water pans, and underground tanks.

While the technologies proposed seem to answer many of the needs for improved water management at the farm level, political and financial investment is required before they can be put in place. The realization of the African Green Revolution is threatened by climate change. With this in mind, the study identified interventions that can be promoted and supported by development partners and donors. These included capacity building at different levels, research and technology development, appropriate policy and institutional reforms, and the provision of farmers' support services—micro-credit, revolving grants, crop insurance, marketing infrastructure, and value-added possibilities.

The Centre's study also made recommendations to improve replication and up-scaling of the "best practices" that have been identified.

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Conflict prevention and rural development: Dertu MV coordinator on UN mission to the Sahel

The Centre's experience in Kenya's North Eastern Province, where the environment is similar to the Sahel, led to request to join study group

A United Nations mission to the West African Sahel region in mid 2008, led by Jan Egeland, Special Adviser to the Secretary General on Conflict Prevention, had as its main objective the drawing of international attention to the need for appropriate and sustained development and conflict prevention efforts.

The importance of regional development, as one of the solutions to ending strife there, was underlined by the mission's decision to visit rural sites to examine the realities and impacts of climate change on the livelihoods of the inhabitants. It was also the reason why one of visiting team was Dr. Ahmed Mohamed, the Millennium Village coordinator at Dertu in Kenya's arid North Eastern Province where the environment is similar to that of the Sahel, and where several successful interventions have made life easier for the villagers.

Others on the mission included staff from the UN's Office for West Africa, its Department of Political Affairs and Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and the United Nations Environment Programme. The field visits took the group to the Timbuktu and Lake Faguibine region in Mali, and to Lake Chad and degraded soil and eroded land sites in Niger.

Dr. Mohamed's report details how the effects of climate change on this endangered area are clear to see as the recurrent droughts and unprecedented floods of recent years have created poor environmental conditions that in turn have caused some of

the terrible conflicts that have destroyed the lives of so many.

Lake Chad, once one of the world's largest bodies of fresh water—shared by Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria—has dried to such a large extent on the Niger portion that the livelihoods of millions of farmers, fisher folk and pastoralists have been permanently disrupted. Lake Faguibine in northern Mali, once a major body of water that covered 590 square kilometres—bigger in area than many small countries—has been totally dry since the late 1980s, ending subsistence resources for many thousands of people.

Climate change has also drastically reduced the amount of water in the River Niger, at 4,180 kilometres Africa's third longest river after the Nile and the Congo, and a valuable resource for the five countries it flows through. Groundwater resources such as wells have dried up and the resulting scarce pasture has led to conflict between pastoralists and sedentary farmers and governments.

Agricultural production in the Sahel is low, due to population pressure, overgrazing and the sand dunes advancing from the Sahara Desert, causing major food security problems in many areas. This, in turn, leads to further conflict that involves the trafficking of arms and drugs in order to obtain income.

The mission members recommended actions that should be taken immediately:

- Draw the attention of donors and international development agencies to the existing situation and suggest that the industrialized nations that contribute most heavily to climate change have a moral responsibility to help the victims of this phenomenon through regional investment—in the form of improved germplasm, seeds, fertilizer, irrigation and infrastructure—so that more food can be produced while sustainably conserving the environment
- The UN to work in close partnership with local and regional communities as well with international groupings to improve the conservation of inland waters, to halt environmental degradation and desertification, and to increase efforts in conflict resolution
- More support, such as the establishment of Millennium Villages, should be given to marginalized pastoralist communities in the Sahel—with priority given to the Lake Faguibine area.

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The similarity of the northeast Kenya landscape (above) to that of the Sahel was a major reason why the Dertu MV coordinator was invited on the UN mission.

Scaling up successful Millennium Village interventions to district and national levels

The private sector is complementing governments in designing, delivering and financing interventions to achieve the MDGs at higher levels

As this report details elsewhere, a great many successful development interventions are now successfully in place in the Millennium Village (MV) clusters in the six countries working with The MDG Centre for East and Southern Africa. The next step, now beginning, is to scale up such interventions to larger district and, eventually, national levels to achieve a greater impact in the countries.

Although this could be looked upon as a daunting task, given the perilous economic state of some sub-Saharan countries, the situation is not static. Encouraging developments include a recent rise in the region's rate of economic growth, an overall improvement in the policy environment, and the adoption of strong macroeconomic fundamentals.

There is also a growing realization that the private sector can complement government in designing, delivering and financing interventions to achieve the MDGs. As an engine of innovation and growth, it already provides incomes for rural and urban populations and is a valuable repository of organizational and management expertise that can be drawn upon.

As each of the six countries takes a different approach toward the implementation of the goals, the Centre is making sure that scaling-up efforts are integrated with the mainstream priorities and administrative units of each individual government.

For example, in Kenya, the Millennium Districts (MDs) have been the main mode of government-led

scale-up. The Centre supported the formulation of district development plans for the 2008-2012 period, putting a greater focus on MDGs and improved institutional governance and collaboration at the intermediate level.

In Rwanda, the Vision 2020 Umurenge, a national programme that has been the main avenue for scaling up, has opted for MV-type interventions in the poorest cells in its 30 districts.

Rwanda has also been joined by Uganda in a partnership approach, with The MDG Centre, the SNV (a Netherlands development organization), and the MVs in both countries seeking to draw greater synergies from the best lessons from each partner.

Valuable lessons for successful upscaling of interventions have already been learned by the Centre in collaborating with national governments. Among these are:

1. There is a need to ensure realistic groupings of agro-ecological zones selected on the basis of their special characteristics in order to enable appropriate intervention. For example, a pastoralist region such as the Dertu MV in Kenya with its livestock-driven economy provides development challenges that are quite different to that of Ruhiira MV in Uganda, a major highland banana production zone.
2. Greater spending is called for on certain MDG sectors by governments and other in-country actors, especially in education, which has wide ripple effects on health, agriculture and enterprise development.
3. The development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the MVs is essential to provide easy-to-access linkages. For example, in the Sauri MV cluster in Kenya, the inclusion of ICT has facilitated Internet connectivity between local and external hospitals for joint diagnoses of illnesses, educational exchanges with other schools, and links with markets on day-to-day prices of agricultural produce.
4. The better integration of rural investments—such as education, agricultural inputs, child and maternal health and environmental management,

As scaling up from the village begins, activities such as honey production also develop to meet market demand.

Scaling up MV interventions includes better health measures such as long-lasting, treated bed-nets

offered as a package—is an essential component of successful upscaling and will contribute to a more holistic improvement of livelihoods.

5. Local capacity and institutional building will also help the upscaling process. A start is being made with the training of community-based workers in agriculture, health and infrastructure who are then each allocated a number of "client" households. One community worker will work with rural households with day-to-day follow-up. This creates MDG boosters at the community level and ensures micro-level capacity enhancement that, in turn, can be up-scaled.
6. In enterprise creation and training, the quickest and most sustainable development is likely to come from agribusiness—the subsistence farming that has always been the MVs' greatest livelihood contributor can more easily lead to commercial production as the skills and knowledge are already in place. However, such transition needs to go hand in hand with the establishment of co-operatives, savings and credit organizations, and access to markets. Farmers are increasingly being encouraged to view their activities as enterprises.
7. Partnership, with both government—national and district-level—and the private sector is a key component of successful up-scaling. Government partners share human resources and infrastructure while the private sector enhances the enterprise aspects.

One example is the partnership with Ericsson, a world leader in the supply of telecommunications, and Zain, a Kenyan mobile telephony services provider, which has brought mobile telephones to the pastoralist community of the Dertu MV. This has allowed herders in the village area to make price enquiries for their livestock before transporting their animals on the 3-hour drive to Garissa. Previously, without such communication, they would often arrive at the market only to find very poor prices prevailing.

Another partnership, with the Business Alliance Against Chronic Hunger (BAACH), a coalition of local and international private sector organizations, has boosted access to markets and microfinancing schemes. The Alliance, established by the World Economic Forum, is now investing in high-value crops in the Siaya district, where the Sauri MV is located, which is improving agricultural production, processing and marketing.

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Our Investors

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