

THE MILLENNIUM CITIES INITIATIVE:

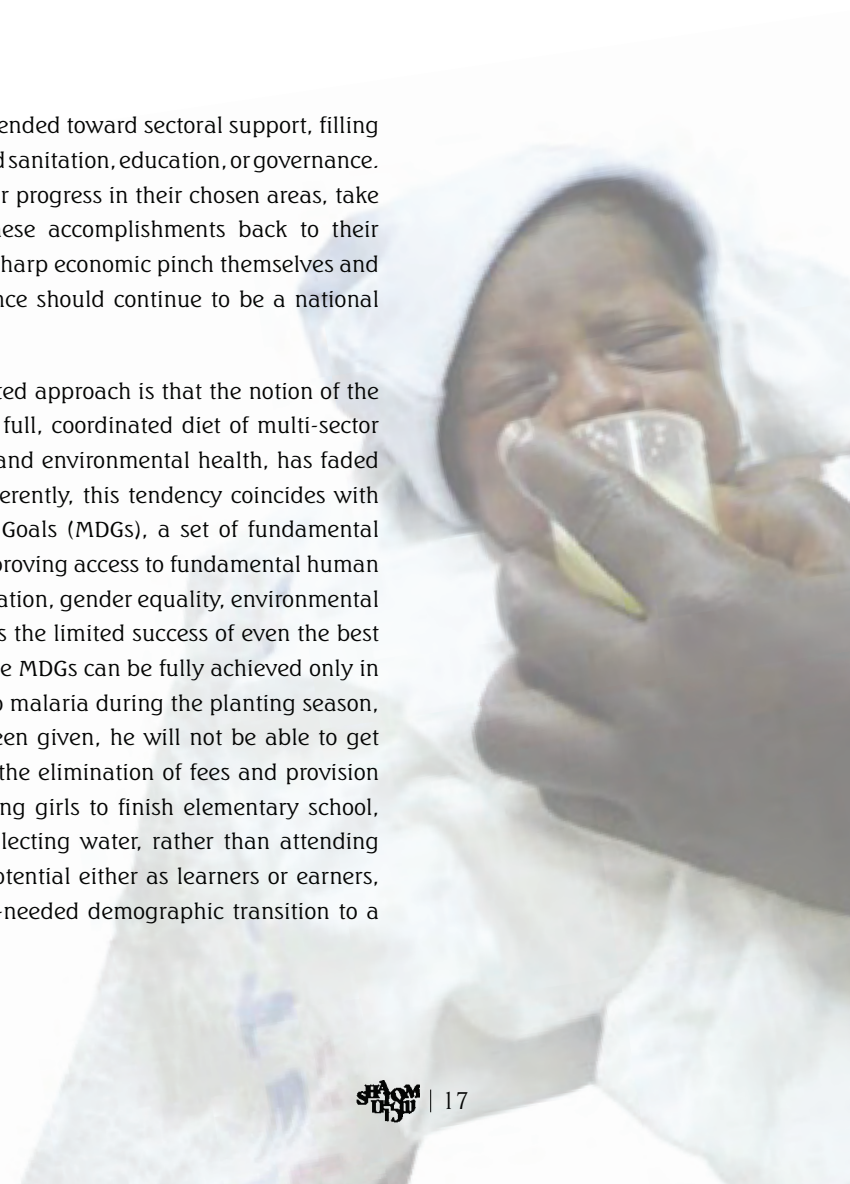
A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO REDUCING URBAN POVERTY AND GENERATING SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY

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In recent years, official development assistance has trended toward sectoral support, filling pressing needs in the domains of public health, water and sanitation, education, or governance. With this approach, donors are able to see and monitor progress in their chosen areas, take pride in a sense of accomplishment, and report these accomplishments back to their constituencies, including taxpayers who are feeling a sharp economic pinch themselves and may be questioning if overseas development assistance should continue to be a national government priority.

One unhappy consequence of this explicitly segmented approach is that the notion of the urban region as an integrated organism, requiring a full, coordinated diet of multi-sector interventions to ensure its ongoing economic, social, and environmental health, has faded into the background. Strangely, and somewhat incoherently, this tendency coincides with the global embrace of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a set of fundamental objectives adopted by the United Nations aimed at improving access to fundamental human rights such as health, education, clean water and sanitation, gender equality, environmental protection, and sustainable economic development. As the limited success of even the best sector-focused development projects have revealed, the MDGs can be fully achieved only in concert: If the farmer is unlucky enough to succumb to malaria during the planting season, no matter the improved seeds or fertilizers he has been given, he will not be able to get them into the ground in time for the rainy season. If the elimination of fees and provision of better equipped facilities make it possible for young girls to finish elementary school, but their families need them to spend their days collecting water, rather than attending secondary school, those girls will not achieve their potential either as learners or earners, distinct gender inequality will persist, and the much-needed demographic transition to a diminished total fertility rate will probably not occur.



In cities and urban regions, an integrated approach is just as essential. The mother who walks an hour each way to gather cooking fuel or to bring a sick child to the local clinic is neither earning nor studying during that hour, because the bus doesn't go where she needs, or even if it does, it costs too much. To demonstrate the importance of a full-frontal approach to achieving the Goals in urban areas, the Earth Institute at Columbia University launched the Millennium Cities Initiative during 2005 in order to assist mid-sized sub-Saharan African cities in addressing these complex challenges. The current roster of Millennium Cities includes: Mekelle, Ethiopia; Kumasi, Ghana; Kisumu, Kenya; Blantyre, Malawi; Bamako and Segou, Mali; Akure and Kaduna, Nigeria, and Louga, Senegal.

In general, the cities chosen are capitals of the regions where the Millennium Villages Project (a joint undertaking of the Earth Institute, UNDP, the non-profit Millennium Promise, and an increasing number of donors and host governments), is assisting smallholder farmers in making the transition from sub-subsistence agriculture to sustainable commercial agriculture, together with related non-agricultural economic activities.

With more than half of the world's population now living in towns or cities, and the clear majority of the world's gross national income coming from urbanized regions, it is clearly vital that the fundamental human rights embodied in the MDGs be achieved in urban areas. Indeed, to escape extreme poverty and ascend the ladder of economic growth and development, one essential component of a necessarily complex set of solutions includes strong and well functioning cities. Urban regions must be capable of delivering essential human services; constructing and managing adequate infrastructure, transportation, and telecommunications connectivity; and supporting a healthy, productive, and engaged citizenry with access to the essential exchange of information necessary both to thrive in today's global economy and to participate in the international community of ideas. Succeeding in this quest by the MDG target date of 2015 will require a series of systematically conceived, carefully targeted, wide-ranging interventions across all economic and social sectors. Measuring the size of the gap in each sector, thinking deeply about how to meet these challenges, and aiding this carefully selected group of cities in their efforts to do so, constitutes the main purpose of the MCI.

Strengthening farm-to-market linkages is a key strategy for promoting economic development in these urban regions. Once the farmers in the Millennium Villages begin

harvesting significant agricultural surpluses, the next move is to add value to their production by taking full advantage of urban infrastructure for agricultural processing, manufacturing, transportation, and distribution of their products to domestic, regional and international markets. Helping to transform these combined rural-urban dynamics into regional economic growth engines is central to MCI's agenda. Toward this end, the MCI is helping to mobilize substantial public and private capital investment long overdue in all of the Millennium Cities – primarily in infrastructure, but also in a variety of economic and social sectors capable of creating local livelihood opportunities that enable businesses and households to thrive in place, rather than be forced to migrate to Africa's overcrowded "megacities" such as Nairobi, Dakar, Lagos, and Kinshasa.

To further advance the global MDG agenda, the MCI is matching external partners with the Millennium Cities to help meet clearly identified needs in the social sector. Bi- and multi-lateral, corporate and non-profit development partners have already delivered to these severely underserved metropolitan areas whole series of medical trainings, screenings and other direct services; medical supplies and equipment, and research expertise in a wide spectrum of fields, from preventing gender violence and fostering early childhood development, to enhancing the regulatory environment for investment; and increasing the potential for carbon trading under the Kyoto Protocols.

To accomplish these objectives, the MCI has adopted a five-part methodology, beginning with two distinct areas of investigation undertaken in each Millennium City:


- A series of needs-assessments and cost-analysis for key MDG related sectors, more precisely measuring the steps required to achieve the MDGs in areas such as public health, education, water and sanitation, and gender equality, and
- The concurrent formulation, through careful research, of a public and private investment strategy predicated on the city's and region's strongest assets, while identifying and leveraging essential infrastructure improvements to help attract and retain increased inflows of foreign direct investment.

These two research trajectories converge in the third phase of our work, when MCI's findings are shared with stakeholders so that, as fully informed citizens, they can determine their own development priorities and generate

a comprehensive development strategy for their city and urban region.

In sum, the Millennium Cities Initiative has engaged in a comprehensive approach to achieving the Millennium Development Goals in urban regions, because cities' and donors' best-intentioned attempts to accomplish the MDGs individually and incrementally have not been working well enough to succeed. Despite donors' understandable interest in addressing one problem at a time, the fact is that all significant economic, social, and environmental

development is inextricably interconnected, meaning that partial success in some aspects of the MDGs remains quite vulnerable to the other "weak links." With mothers still dying from childbirth and their children dying of malaria, the clock is fast running out, and MCI's comprehensive approach to poverty reduction, public health, and sustainable prosperity offers hope for the world at a time when the need for rapid and long-lasting solutions is extraordinarily urgent.



EDITOR'S NOTE: MASHAV's programs in the Millennium Cities of Kumasi, Kisumu, and Mekelle as well as in the Millennium Village of Koraro, provide field-tested solutions to development challenges. Cooperation within the framework of the Millennium Cities Initiative and the Millennium Villages Project can be viewed as models of MASHAV's goal to cooperate and coordinate its programs with donor and partner countries alike to achieve international sustainable development. Following are a few examples of MCI-MASHAV Cooperation:

KUMASI, GHANA

Excerpt from a report by Abenaa Akuamo-Boateng, MCI Project Manager, Kumasi, Ghana

MASHAV and the Millennium Cities Initiative (MCI) joined together in October 2006 to assist the city of Kumasi in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), through the transfer of knowledge supported by model projects. To date, MASHAV has been actively involved in the health and education sectors of the Kumasi Metropolis. In the health sector, MASHAV has funded eight on-site courses targeted at strengthening the capacity of health service providers to provide effective and efficient care in many different areas, including trauma and medical emergencies, neonatal nursing, nutrition

care, and support for persons infected with HIV/AIDS. The courses have also empowered health teams to plan and implement programs aimed at the prevention of non-communicable diseases that are on the rise. To address the unacceptably high rate of neonatal mortality, MASHAV funded a three month TOT course on neonatal nursing for two doctors and two nurses in Israel. MASHAV has also constructed, refurbished and equipped two new Mother and Baby Units (MBU) in the Kumasi South and Suntreso Hospitals, in order to decongest the MBU at Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital (KATH), improve the care for neonates, and ultimately, reduce neonatal mortality.



Mother and Baby Units in Kumasi: Improving care of neonates

The Government of Ghana's Educational Restructuring Program of 2004 incorporated kindergartens into the formal education system. With this revision, providing early childhood education has become a major challenge for the Ghana Education Service. The MCI, in consultation with the Kumasi Metro Education unit, identified the need to strengthen the capacity of teachers in the kindergartens to adequately address this challenge. To this end, the MCI, through MASHAV, has empowered the Mount Carmel International Training Centre in Israel (MCTC) to provide courses

for teachers aimed at upgrading their skills and knowledge in order to effectively address the children's' needs. A MASHAV delegation including Ms. Beth-Eden Kite, Director, MASHAV Training Department, Mr. Meir Cohen, Director, MASHAV Projects Department, and Dr. Yossi Baratz, MASHAV's Special Medical Advisor, visited the Kumasi Metropolis in February 2009 to view the projects, interact with key stakeholders, and map out the path of collaboration for the next two years.

KISUMU, KENYA

Kisumu, Kenya's third largest city, has one of Kenya's highest poverty levels. Severe deficiencies in housing, water, sanitation and appropriate solid waste disposal have slowed development, and the disease burden (untreated HIV/AIDS, malaria and other infectious diseases) is very high. Over 60% of the population lives in peri-urban settings, practicing unregulated, subsistence-level urban agriculture. The city is working to improve its infrastructural capacity.

The MASHAV-MCI cooperation in Kisumu is currently formulating proposals to address many of the most pressing challenges. Included in this are support of the health sector, and the training of the medical staff, including doctors, nurses and management. Another issue addressed is disaster preparedness and management, with an emphasis on mitigation measures such as the provision of ambulances and fire engines, and training in life-saving techniques. MASHAV-MCI is also working on local economic development, emphasizing



capacity-building and setting up strategic planning units (SPU) in the council, as well as developing a plan for the city structure. Also addressed are environmental development issues, with an emphasis on technology for waste management, greening the city and capacity-building. Education development, with emphasis on school planning and early childhood development, is a priority as well, as is youth development, focusing on employment creation and opportunities for income generation for the energetic majority of Kisumu, most of who are in the informal sector.

MASHAV-MCI, in cooperation with the local African governments, will continue striving assist communities in developing countries to meet the Millennium Development Goals.