

The Millennium Villages Project in Mbola (Tanzania)

The Millennium Village of Mbola is located in the Uyui district in mid-western Tanzania, about 36 km from the nearest city of Tabora. It is part of Miombo woodland savanna climate zone of the Southern Africa Plateau. Subsistence farming is the main economic activity, but many factors make it difficult for farmers to eke out a living from the land. The rains have become more erratic in recent years, and much of the land has become degraded due to poor crop management practices and the destruction of the Miombo woodlands by the tobacco industry. There is also a general lack of basic health, education and transportation infrastructure.



Key MDG Achievements through the Millennium Villages Project

Since the start of the MVP, the community in Mbola has seen positive change across all sectors. Overall, farmers are more productive, children are healthier, and the community has easier access to healthcare, all-season roads, and safe water.

Agriculture & Business Development

To meet MDG 1—reducing by half the proportion of people suffering from hunger—the Millennium Villages Project worked with the community and local government in Mbola to improve crop yields, diversify crops to boost nutrition, and develop ways of adding value to crops to increase incomes. The Lead Farmer Program in Mbola spread knowledge of good agronomic practices to farmers of all specialties through demonstration plots and peer-to-peer training. The Project also helped farmers to form farmer-based organizations so they can purchase inputs at bulk rates. New agricultural activities have also been introduced like raising baby chicks in a solar-powered incubator and cultivating honey with modern beehives.



Ms. Khadija of Isila village inspecting her bean garden.

The MVP measures prevalence of underweight in children under the age of five as one indicator around MDG 1. Data as of Year 5 of the MVP shows that this rate has fallen in Mbola since the Project began, and by Year 5 the target already had been surpassed.



Primary school students in the MV of Mbola receiving their daily school meal.

Household income is also an indicator for MDG 1. As of Year-7, the proportion of the population living in “extreme poverty” on less than \$1 per day had decreased since the Project began, and the poverty gap ratio had narrowed.

Education

Building schools, rehabilitating classrooms, providing training to teachers, and launching the Community Education Workers program are some of the MVP’s education activities geared toward ensuring universal primary education. In Mbola, modest progress has been made toward the target net attendance ratio and completion rate. Improving quality of education and closing the gap on attendance and enrollment were priorities in the second phase of the Project.

Health

From building and rehabilitating health clinics to deploying professionalized Community Health Workers to bring basic health services directly to households, investments in health interventions have led to strong improvements in the health sector in Mbola.

Rates of infant and under-5 mortality have gone down in Mbola since the Project began, with the target for both nearly reached by Year 5. Targets for measles immunizations and Vitamin A supplementation were reached by Year 5. The proportion of pregnant women tested for HIV has gone up, and those delivering with skilled birth attendants have increased significantly, with both indicators already surpassing the target by Year 5. More new mothers are receiving at least four antenatal visits, and modern contraception use is also up. The target for reducing malaria was already achieved by Year 5, and more children are sleeping under bed nets.



A mother and child at a health clinic in the MV of Mbola.

Infrastructure Maintenance, Energy, and Water & Sanitation

In the first years of the MVP, activities in this sector focused on building and improving roads and bridges, installing improved water points, and finding ways for the community to access electricity through on- and off-grid solutions. More recently, focus has been on establishing sanitation facilities like ventilated improved pit latrines with handwashing stations at schools, and ensuring that water point management committees are able to maintain assets.



An improved water point in the MV of Mbola.

MDG 7 called for ensuring environmental sustainability, in part by increasing the proportion of the population accessing safe drinking water and basic sanitation. In Mbola, significant progress has been made toward both targets since the Project began, with the improved sanitation target already reached.