



With breaking stories and
newswire products from

UN NEWS CENTRE



UN agency pledges to double food purchased in Millennium Villages



Josette Sheeran (left) and Jeffrey Sachs (centre), with an official at the Ruhira village in Uganda

26 July 2010 – A top United Nations official has promised to double the amount of food purchased from women farmers living in a Millennium Village in Uganda, part of a United Nations-backed initiative to help African communities lift themselves out of poverty.

A strategic, integrated approach to rural development is already changing lives in Ruhira, home to 50,000 people spread out across several hundred square kilometres in southwestern Uganda.

Before joining the Millennium Village programme in 2005, more than 90 per cent of Ruhira's population survived on subsistence agriculture and more than half of its children under the age of five were chronically malnourished or stunted.

In the past five years, nearly all of Ruhira's 6,000 farmers have diversified their plots to boost their incomes. The scheme has also helped to attract buyers, both local and regional, so that they can get higher prices for their maize.

During a stop in the area over the weekend, Josette Sheeran, Executive Director of the World Food Programme ([WFP](#)), hailed Ruhira for "the transformation and revolution of hope in this community."

She was speaking to a Woman's Association, which sells beans and maize to the agency.

Ms. Sheeran said the “beans of hope” grown in Ruhiira area are helping to feed hungry children in Karamoja, a drought-stricken region in northeast Uganda.

The official pledged to buy twice the amount of food from the community next year.

The Women’s Association, which is using a new warehouse to store food in WFP-marked bags, has already sold 250 metric tons of beans and maize to the agency’s Purchase for Progress (P4P) initiative, which seeks to give small farmers better access to markets.

“Today in all the places WFP works in the world, Uganda is our number one purchase market,” Ms. Sheeran said. “We look forward to purchasing more here, to working and supporting your community-based school feeding programme and to our deepening and strengthening partnership.”

The Millennium Villages scheme seeks to reach the Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)) – eight anti-poverty targets with a 2015 deadline – in 13 areas of 10 African countries within five years through community-led development.

“What you are doing is known all over the world,” Jeffrey Sachs, who heads the Millennium Villages Project and is a Special Advisor for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, said as he toured Ruhiira with Ms. Sheeran.

“People are inspired by the progress Ruhiira is making. I want you to keep inspiring the world,” he said. “When 2015 comes, you will have shown the world how this community achieved all the Millennium Development Goals.”

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

Development can help nations consolidate peace, top UN officials say