
Green energy comes to one of Kenya's remotest areas

Nairobi, Kenya, 10 July 2009 – The pastoralist community of Dertu, set in the drought-prone Northeastern province of Kenya, is on the road to becoming fossil fuel free and developing sustainable small-businesses, thanks to a renewable energy project lead by The MDG Centre and the French embassy in Kenya.

The \$250,000 project, partly funded by the French embassy through its Cooperation and Cultural Affairs Service, was initiated by The MDG Centre, East and Southern Africa, which includes in its business development agenda the provision of reliable and sustainable energies. The Memorandum of Understanding was signed by both parties today at a ceremony in Nairobi, Kenya.

‘We chose to work with this project for its holistic approach and the fact that it targets a rural community. The Embassy of France in Kenya has a strong, proven commitment to such communities, especially to their environmental sustainability and to rural electrification as a cornerstone to sustained development,’ said Elisabeth Barbier, the French Ambassador to Kenya.

‘At a time when the worldwide economic crisis spells possible reductions in aid from donor countries, this project renews France’s commitment to Sub-Saharan Africa and brings hope to a community struggling to face climate change,’ she added

Set in a difficult area that has been off the development map in Kenya, Dertu has been facing the energy challenge for years, mostly relying on costly and highly polluting generators. But at the same time, the community was sitting on a gold mine: manure from thousands of livestock.

‘We believe that the development of business in the region, and more generally in Africa, is severely constrained by the lack of reliable power. With this project, Dertu will not only be able to generate power and support businesses, schools and clinics, but also to preserve the environment and achieve one of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDG),’ commented Glenn Denning, the director of The MDG Centre.

Not only will the four phase project bring power to vital institutions, like a clinic and a school, including a cybercafé open to community members, but it will also help the

people of Dertu set up small businesses and diversify their income sources. The project will also provide biodigester cookstoves at household level, at a time when firewood used for cooking is becoming a scarce and valuable item.

And last but not least, under the project, Dertu will have its first state-of-the-art school dining hall and kitchen, and a 12 beds in patient clinic built with eco-friendly sustainable technologies.

The announcement of this partnership comes on the same week of the release by the United Nations of the 2009 MDG report which states that ‘greater priority must be given to preserving our natural resource base, on which we all depend.’ ‘We have not acted forcefully enough – or in a unified way – to combat climate change,’ the report lamented, calling for the development of ‘more efficient green technologies.’

The report also states that the MDGs implementation needs to include ‘areas and population groups that have clearly been left behind – rural communities (and) the poorest household’, two conditions that apply to the Dertu community. With this project, the partners once again reiterate their commitment to achieving the MDGs in line with UN recommendations.

Note to editors:

The MDG Centre operates in seven countries in East and Southern Africa - Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. Its mission is to provide scientific, technical and policy support to governments and other stakeholders to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and to support the Millennium Villages Project. It works at multiple scales—village, district, national and international—in order to bridge the gap between global commitments and local action.

www.mdgcentre.org

The Dertu Millennium Village is part of the Millennium Villages Project (MVP), a partnership between the Earth Institute at Columbia University and UNDP in 10 countries to fight extreme poverty at the village level through community-led development and to help rural Africa achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

www.millenniumvillages.org

www.millenniumpromise.org

The French Embassy (Cooperation and Cultural Affairs Service) supports the efforts initiated by the communities to lift themselves out of poverty. The Social Fund for Development is one of its major tools. It seeks to meet the direct needs of the communities but also to look for new development opportunities. Therefore, it funds both small infrastructures and innovative projects, with a focus on gender, education, governance, environment and cultural heritage.

www.ambafrance-ke.org

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