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## Kenya: UN Official Links Poverty to Malaria

*The Nation (Nairobi)*

January 18, 2007

Kaburu Mugambi  
Nairobi

Elimination of malaria and supply of inputs to farmers would be the most effective tools in the fight against poverty, a UN official has said.

The director of the UN Millennium Project, Professor Jeffrey Sachs, said yesterday giving farmers high yield seeds, fertiliser and mosquito nets to prevent malaria infection would accelerate the country's economic growth.

"I believe we can have dramatic (economic) takeoff if we focus on farmers by giving them the tools," he told reporters at Treasury.

Prof Sachs is also the special advisor to United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on the Millennium Development Goals, which are to reduce poverty, disease and hunger by 2015. He added that these interventions targeting villages could within an year place the country on the way out of poverty.

"It is not hypothetical, in areas where the Millennium Villages concept has taken root, people have seen their lives change," he added.

In Sauri Village of Siaya District, committees of elders have taken responsibility for the new investment in health, food production, education, access to clean water and infrastructure.

According to Mr Glenn Denning of the Millennium Project's Nairobi office, cases of malaria in Sauri have dropped by at least 50 per cent since the distribution of free mosquito nets.

Last year, the villagers' harvest was four times bigger than the 2005 harvest.

Prof Sachs has made a deal with the farmers that, if they get a bumper crop, they would donate 10 per cent to a free lunch programme, and this has made the schools attendance to go up from 20 per cent to 100 per cent.

For these programmes to succeed, Prof Sachs said, the Government would need assistance from donors. His estimates show that an investment of \$110 (Sh7,656) per person would be required to create a Millennium Village.

Planning and National Development minister Henry Obwocha called for Prof Sachs' intervention in campaigning for the cancellation of Kenya's \$6 billion external debt.

[ILO Symposium at the 8th Regional Congress on Asia and Pacific in Sri Lanka](#)

Prof Sachs successfully pushed for the scrapping of Nigeria's \$17 billion debt.

The UN official promised the minister he would follow up the issue of debt cancellation.

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