

# When is the rigorous impact evaluation of development projects a luxury, and when is it a necessity?

## Description

by Michael Clemens and Gabriel Demombynes, Centre for Global Development, 10/11/2010  
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The authors study one high-profile case: the Millennium Villages Project (MVP), an experimental and intensive package intervention to spark sustained local economic development in rural Africa. They illustrate the benefits of rigorous impact evaluation in this setting by showing that estimates of the project's effects depend heavily on the evaluation method.

Comparing trends at the MVP intervention sites in Kenya, Ghana, and Nigeria to trends in the surrounding areas yields much more modest estimates of the project's effects than the before-versus-after comparisons published thus far by the MVP. Neither approach constitutes a rigorous impact evaluation of the MVP, which is impossible to perform due to weaknesses in the evaluation design of the project's initial phase. These weaknesses include the subjective choice of intervention sites, the subjective choice of comparison sites, the lack of baseline data on comparison sites, the small sample size, and the short time horizon. We describe how the next wave of the intervention could be designed to allow proper evaluation of the MVP's impact at little additional cost. •

See responses to this paper here:

- [Evaluating the Millennium Villages: A response to Clemens and Demombynes](#) and
- [A response to Michael Clemens on evaluating the Millennium Villages](#) and
- [Millennium Villages: don't work, don't know or don't care?](#) by [Laura Freschi](#)
- [Attested development](#) By Tim Harford, Financial Times, 16 Oct 2010
- [Rigorous Impact Evaluation Is Not a Luxury: Scrutinizing the Millennium Villages](#) by Michael Clemens, senior fellow at the Center for Global Development Posted: October 15, 2010 04:26 PM

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1. Uncategorized

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2. RCT

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