

PRELIMS

"The Idealist" critiques Jeffrey Sachs' Millennium Villages Project (MVP) as a bold but flawed attempt to end poverty through top-down aid. It shows quick wins like better health and schools, but long-term failures in sustainable governance. [[ppl-ai-file-upload.s3.amazonaws](#)]

Simple Book Summary

Nina Munk tracks Sachs' 2006 MVP experiment in African villages (e.g., Kenya's Dertu, Uganda's Ruhira). Sachs spends \$120/person/year on seeds, nets, clinics to escape the "poverty trap." Early gains occur, but aid creates dependency and ignores local realities. [[ppl-ai-file-upload.s3.amazonaws](#)]

Main Ideas

- **Top-Down Fixes Fail:** Uniform plans overlook nomads or droughts; villagers expect endless handouts.
- **Short Wins:** Fewer malaria deaths, more kids in school, tin roofs as wealth signs.
- **Big Problems:** Subsidies end, loans default (99%), markets flop, staff quits. [[ppl-ai-file-upload.s3.amazonaws](#)]

Sustainable Governance Lessons

MVP proves aid (\$700B+ to Africa since 1960s) needs local buy-in, not expert blueprints. Improvements matched wider trends, not just project magic. Prioritize community-led plans over quick fixes. [[ppl-ai-file-upload.s3.amazonaws](#)]

Quick Review Table

Area	Wins	Fails	Essay Tip
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Health	Malaria down 66%	Free drugs breed reliance	Short aid works; needs handover
Farms	Yields tripled at first	2/3 loans unpaid	Build markets, cut subsidies slowly
Roads/Schools	Better access, enrollment up	Unfinished builds	Plan maintenance budgets [ppl-ai-file-upload.s3.ama-

Essay Angle: Sachs inspires funding but ignores warnings ("not ready"). Argue for adaptive governance: listen locally, scale slowly. [[ppl-ai-file-upload.s3.amazonaws](#)]

Key concepts from "The Idealist" relevant to your sustainable governance essay exam focus on Sachs' theories, MVP practices, and critiques—often tested via successes, failures, and alternatives. These draw from the book and related evaluations. [[en.wikipedia](#)] [[ppl-ai-file-upload.s3.amazonaws](#)]

Sachs' Core Theories

Poverty Trap: Extreme poverty locks people in a cycle of disease, hunger, low productivity, and no savings—needing a "big push" of aid to escape. Sachs claims sub-Saharan Africa needs \$250B/year globally (1% of rich-world income) by 2025. Critics say bad governance, not poverty alone, causes stagnation. [[ppl-ai-file-upload.s3.amazonaws](#)] inequality.stanford+1

Big Push: Simultaneous, heavy aid investments (e.g., \$120/person/year) in health, agriculture, education, infrastructure to spark self-sustaining growth ("take-off"). Like a forest fire needing many firefighters. [[cgdev](#)] [[ppl-ai-file-upload.s3.amazonaws](#)]

Clinical Economics: Treat poverty like a disease—diagnose (e.g., malaria, no roads), prescribe science-based fixes (nets, fertilizers), monitor rigorously. Sachs as "Dr. Shock" from Bolivia/Poland reforms. [[ppl-ai-file-upload.s3.amazonaws](#)]

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): UN targets (2000–2015) like end extreme poverty, halve hunger, universal education, cut child/maternal deaths. MVP tests them via "integrated rural development." millenniumpromise+1

MVP Interventions & Examples

Agriculture Package: Subsidized high-yield seeds/fertilizers for maize/beans (doubled yields initially), irrigation pushes, livestock markets (Dertu). Failed due to droughts, defaults, non-local crops. [[en.wikipedia](#)] [[ppl-ai-file-upload.s3.amazonaws](#)]

Health & Education: Bed nets (malaria -66%), free clinics/schools (enrollment up, e.g., Dertu 300→729 students). Created dependency ("refugee syndrome"). [[millenniumpromise](#)] [[ppl-ai-file-upload.s3.amazonaws](#)]

Infrastructure: Roads, boreholes, cell towers/solar (Ericsson donation), tin roofs as wealth signs. Garbage committees formed; but unfinished builds, no maintenance plans. [[ppl-ai-file-upload.s3.amazonaws](#)]

Business Shift: Later pivot to commercial farms, microcredit, value chains (e.g., Ruhiira beans to World Food Program). 99% loan defaults; staff warned "not ready." [[ppl-ai-file-](#)

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Critiques & Failures

Top-Down/One-Size-Fits-All: Western experts ignore culture (e.g., nomads settling unwanted; maize for non-eaters). No local input led to unrealistic demands (e.g., divert Tana River).
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Dependency & Unsustainability: Handouts foster "aid syndrome"; no exit strategy. MVP hit 1/3 MDG targets, matched non-MVP trends at 30x cost vs. alternatives like SFHC. Ended 2015 amid \$500M+ waste claims.
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No Scalability: "Island of success" didn't spread; poor monitoring, staff churn. Critics (Easterly): Aid crowds out markets/government.
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Shock Therapy Legacy: Sachs' past (hyperinflation fixes) shows bold works short-term but ignores politics/culture.
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Sustainable Governance Alternatives

Bottom-Up/Local-Led: Empower communities (e.g., Adopt-A-Village: locals ID needs, build beekeeping). Focus gradual, context-specific solutions.
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Evidence-Based: Randomized trials show targeted aid (e.g., deworming) beats big pushes. Prioritize governance reform over cash dumps.
[devpolicy+1](#)

Holistic vs. Piecemeal: Integrate environment (e.g., springs for sustainability) but with ownership to avoid Bura-like irrigation flops (\$200M waste).
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Essay Tip: Compare Sachs (optimistic, technocratic) vs. critics (complexity, agency). Use Dertu/Ruhiira examples: "Tin roofs rose, but self-reliance didn't." Argue hybrid: big push + local adaptation.
[en.wikipedia\]](#) [[ppl-ai-file-upload.s3.amazonaws\]](#)