

## Fall in love with farmers

A Progressio briefing

### How UK investment in water for farming will help to meet MDG1

“In the future we would like everyone to have well irrigated plots of land, just like our neighbour who is now able to grow a lot of rice. We are happy for her but we think everyone should have the same opportunity because water is life, it means everything to us.”

Joseph Basilore. Gens de Nantes, Haiti. April 2013

#### Critically off-track

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are eight international development goals which were established following the United Nations Millennium Summit and ratified by 189 leaders from around the world. The deadline for achieving the goals is 31 December 2015, yet progress towards MDG1, with its twin objectives to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, is badly imbalanced – with the target to halve the proportion of people<sup>1</sup> who suffer from hunger critically off-track.

Though poverty rates are falling, progress to relieve food deprivation has slowed or stalled in many regions; worldwide nearly 900 million women, men and children go to bed hungry every night. This discrepancy exposes a critical need to better address the roots of and solutions to hunger. Indeed, the United Nations Millennium Development Goals 2012 Report states “the disparity between falling poverty rates and steady levels of undernourishment calls for improved understanding of the dimensions and causes of hunger”.<sup>2</sup>

#### Investment in agriculture works

Ironically, the majority of hungry people are themselves food producers – smallholder farmers, with plots of two hectares or less and who, remarkably, provide food for one third of the world’s population. Financing the protection and support of these farmers is critical to tackling hunger. Countries that invest more in agriculture tend to reduce hunger more – the seven African countries who spent more than 10 per cent of their national budgets on agriculture in 2004-2007 achieved significant reductions in the proportion of hungry people. Further, the

FAO predicts that closing the gender gap in agricultural yields, through investing to bolster the access, knowledge and resources of women farmers, will reduce the number of hungry people worldwide by up to 150 million people.<sup>3</sup>

#### Focus on small-scale farmers and women

Yet aid to agriculture has fallen significantly, from 17 per cent of all aid in 1980 to under 4 per cent in 2006.<sup>4</sup> And despite a small increase in the wake of the 2008 food price crisis, it falls far short of what is required. To seriously advance progress to tackle world hunger, and achieve MDG1, greater global investment in and support for agriculture, targeted specifically at small-scale farmers, especially women farmers, is needed.

#### Focus on water

One of the main barriers to smallholder farmers producing enough food to feed and support themselves is poor access to water resources and irrigation systems. Without water, crops cannot grow. Sustainable and equitable access to water for farming is essential. Central to supporting agriculture-based livelihoods -and boosting food security- is the need for more investment in small-scale irrigation systems.

1 Between 1990 and 2015

2 <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/MDG%20Report%22012pdf#page=12>

3 <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2050e/i2050e.pdf>

4 <http://curtisresearch.org/Agricultural.Aid.pdf>

**“Because water is life”  
- reflections from Haiti**

The Basilore family live in the rural community of Gens de Nantes in northern Haiti and use water from the nearby river for growing food, drinking, cooking and washing. But the river water is in short supply.

Joseph Basilore is the father of the family and works as a tailor. He explains, “There is insufficient water for everything we need it for. We cannot grow enough food to eat so we must buy food from the local market.”

As in other communities, the main challenge faced by people here is accessing the water and bringing it to their crops. “The government has abandoned this area,” Joseph says. “No infrastructure is being built to improve people’s access to water. The government is too weak to solve such a big problem.”

Everyone in the community has to share the water from the same source, so they have set up a committee to manage the water. Seven people sit on the committee, five men and two women, who regularly meet with neighbouring communities.

“We are grateful for this because there is no interaction with local authorities,” says Joseph. “They don’t come to rural communities.”

Joseph has lived in Gens de Nantes all his life and has noticed the amount of water in the river decreasing along with increasingly unpredictable seasons. With no electricity or alternative energy sources, Joseph and his family rely on cutting down trees for firewood but know this reduces the amount farmers can produce because of soil degradation.

Since working with Progressio partner Solidarite Fwontalye, Joseph says: “We are able to grow more food as we received seeds, tools and training on new agricultural methods.

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## Progressio's recommendations

- ↘ At the September UN General Assembly review of MDG progress, the UK should demonstrate its role as a leader in international development by calling for a renewed global effort to achieve MDG1. The UK must push for policies and agricultural investments that benefit small-scale farmers, with a particular focus on women farmers and access to water for agriculture.
- ↘ To demonstrate its commitment and garner momentum on this, the UK government can increase its share of global financing for agriculture by investing part of the additional funds made available when the aid budget was increased to 0.7 per cent of national income.
- ↘ Where this investment is channelled through multilateral agencies (as is predominantly the case for UK aid to agriculture) greater transparency about how money is spent is needed, specifically how much goes to support small-scale farmers.
- ↘ Progressio welcomes the inclusion of a target to sustainably increase access to irrigation within the High Level Panel report on the post-2015 development agenda. It is vital that sustainable and equitable access to water for small-scale farmers, particularly women, remains a priority issue. A vision for the eradication of hunger and poverty cannot be realised without this essential ingredient.

## What you can do

Fallen in love with farmers?  
Take action ahead of the  
MDG Review Summit

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Progressio  
Units 9-12, The Stableyard  
Broomgrove Road, London SW9 9TL

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