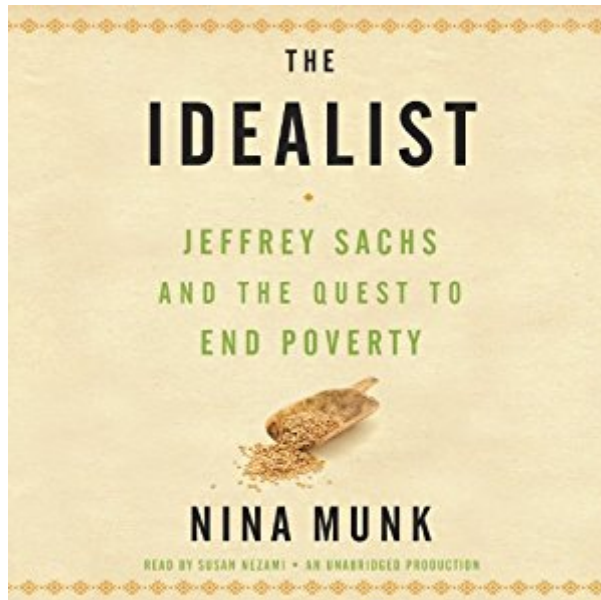


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The Idealist: Jeffrey Sachs And The Quest To End Poverty



Synopsis

A powerful portrayal of Jeffrey Sachs's ambitious quest to end global poverty "The poor you will always have with you," to cite the Gospel of Matthew 26:11. Jeffrey Sachs - celebrated economist, special advisor to the Secretary General of the United Nations, and author of the influential best seller *The End of Poverty* - disagrees. In his view, poverty is a problem that can be solved. With single-minded determination he has attempted to put into practice his theories about ending extreme poverty, to prove that the world's most destitute people can be lifted onto "the ladder of development." In 2006, Sachs launched the Millennium Villages Project, a daring five-year experiment designed to test his theories in Africa. The first Millennium village was in Sauri, a remote cluster of farming communities in western Kenya. The initial results were encouraging. With his first taste of success, and backed by 120 million dollars from George Soros and other likeminded donors, Sachs rolled out a dozen model villages in ten sub-Saharan countries. Once his approach was validated it would be scaled up across the entire continent. At least that was the idea. For the past six years, Nina Munk has reported deeply on the Millennium Villages Project, accompanying Sachs on his official trips to Africa and listening in on conversations with heads-of-state, humanitarian organizations, rival economists, and development experts. She has immersed herself in the lives of people in two Millennium villages: Ruhiira, in southwest Uganda, and Dertu, in the arid borderland between Kenya and Somalia. Accepting the hospitality of camel herders and small-hold farmers, and witnessing their struggle to survive, Munk came to understand the real-life issues that challenge Sachs's formula for ending global poverty. *The Idealist* is the profound and moving story of what happens when the abstract theories of a brilliant, driven man meet the reality of human life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The paperback edition of *The Idealist: Jeffrey Sachs and the Quest to End Poverty* was eagerly anticipated. Well, by me, at least. I have spent the past year reading broadly on the topic of economic development. Sachs's 2005 bestseller, *The End of Poverty*, is by far the most optimistic and prescriptive of the lot. He declared triumphantly in that book: "The wealth of the rich world, the power of today's vast storehouses of knowledge, and the declining fraction of the world that needs help to escape poverty all make the end of poverty a realistic possibility by the year 2025." After serving a year on the ground as an economic development officer in Kandahar, Afghanistan in 2010, I'm skeptical of such sweeping and confident assertions concerning development. Nevertheless, I admired Sachs for the courage of his convictions. According to her own account, author Nina Munk came to this project with an objective, open mind; if anything, she genuinely wanted to believe in the feasibility of Sachs's grand and noble vision of eradicating poverty in sub-Saharan Africa and beyond. After six years researching this book, however, Munk is no fan of Jeffrey Sachs. In fact, I'm fairly confident she grew to loathe the man. By the end of the book, she dismissively refers to his many op-ed pieces in prominent publications as *jeremiads*, his rapid fire Twitter feed as embarrassing *screeches*, the man once tenured as a Harvard economics professor at the ridiculously tender age of 28 as a *sawed-off shotgun*, scattering ammunition in all directions. Sachs is a controversial character; his own book makes that clear.

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