

Mercy Corps Profile Report - 2022/23

Understanding Mercy Corps and the World





A Message From Our Chief Executive Officer

As the chief executive officer of Mercy Corps it is my privilege to announce our 2023 report. I am honored to share the necessary, essential and marvelous work that we do here at Mercy Corps. The report highlights the work of not only Mercy Corps but also the collaboration that happens between us and the aid receiving countries. It is our responsibility to help communities and create an environment, when delivering program aid, with dignity and respect for all those involved.

We acknowledge that it takes more than our word, policies and procedures to be successful in our endeavors. It is all of our actions, big and small, that make Mercy Corps what it is. I hold myself and my team accountable for keeping transparent and putting our best foot forward when moving ahead with all of our initiatives.

This report outlines who we are as an international non-governmental organization (INGO). It highlights our emphasis on strengthening communities, what kind of projects that Mercy Corps takes on, our priorities as well as some of our current projects from all around the globe. We recognize that there are ever changing crises and there needs to be adaptability if these are going to be addressed and to combat them efficiently.

Throughout all of our projects the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can be identified and shown in our dedication to helping countries meet the SDGs that their people and governments choose to prioritize. Mercy Corps has made it our goal to always work from a ground up approach and to put the people that are affected most at the center of our operations.

Our vision for 2023 is to work towards our goals through the strength of resilience in the face of crisis. We want to help countries and communities within that country to create sustainable programs that will continue to benefit and meet the needs of that community so that they can live to their full potential. We want the people to be the change that they want and need so that they can create a future that is catered to them.

We want to foster and enhance the wellbeing of all of our program participants. With continuous effort we believe this to be possible while maintaining a welcoming and inclusive environment everywhere we work because it is in this space that we can work together to fight against the world's most complex challenges. With vigilance and determination from our team and partners Mercy Corps is committed to helping build a world where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

Tjada D'Oyen McKenna
Chief Executive Officer at Mercy Corps





Mercy Corps Profile Report - 2023/24

Madissyn Smith and Addy Fulks

Mercy Corps's mission



Our mission is to help mitigate the suffering of those that live in poverty and oppression. We do this through our dedication to community building, a bottom up approach and prioritizing sustainable projects. Although our organization sets up the aid, community involvement and training are always at the top of our priorities. Through program aid, our objective is to create sustainable and lasting change. Our goal is to work alongside community members, hoping to produce re-creatable change that promotes self sustainability within communities. In this way we can leave behind legacy programs that will continue to benefit them long after we are gone. This is reflected in the idea of “being the change”. Mercy Corps wants to help people be the change that they want to see in their communities, and the world.²

¹ Venezuelanalysis.com, Nina Cross -. “A Humanitarian Crisis in Venezuela? A Case Study into NGO Mercy Corps.”

² “Who We Are.” Mercy Corps, January 9, 2023. <https://www.mercycorps.org/who-we-are>.

What are the origins of Mercy Corps?

Mercy Corps traces its roots back to 1979 and a mission to help those fleeing the Cambodian Genocide. The Refugee Fund was organized by Dan O’Neil and was the first iteration of what would later become Mercy Corps. Although our work and commitment to humanitarian aid began in Cambodia, we were soon involved in Honduras, Sudan and Afghanistan, later expanding to 5 continents. Throughout our 44 years of service we have implemented agricultural projects, health care, money lending and education programs along with many other forms of bottom up aid to countries and communities around the globe. Headquartered in Portland Oregon, we have offices around the world and programs happening in over 40 countries³.

Our philosophy for aid

At Mercy Corps we value the input of local people and communities and believe that community lead response is the most effective method both in making sure aid is sustainable but also in creating further opportunities for those we work with. 84% of Mercy Corps workers are from the country that they work in, meaning that we are able to implement strategies that are created by and for those most in need⁴. Creating a

³ “Our History.” Mercy Corps, May 20, 2021. <https://europe.mercycorps.org/en-gb/node/1192>.

⁴ “Where We Work.” Mercy Corps, November 30, 2021.



foundation for aid that is long lasting and more specifically catered to communities is what sets us apart. One project does not fit all and by working in collaboration with local people, agencies and governments, we can unify our strategies to produce the most helpful results that actually change peoples lives⁵. The process of community mobilization and uplifting those who are actually struggling is laid out in our “Guide to Community Mobilization”, where we highlight the importance of it being a “living document”, not a guide set in stone⁶. Our focus areas when it comes to aid include agriculture, cash assistance, environmentalism, and food security among many other things. Strengthening communities and promoting resilience are themes that run through all of our projects.⁷

The Currency of Connections

Mercy Corps believes that paying close attention and respecting the already existing connections within an aid receiving country is of utmost importance. This is why it is highlighted in every one of our projects around the world. We have partnered with Feinstein International Center to further our research into how donors can give aid assistance without alienating those we work alongside.⁸ This project is made

possible with the assistance of the United State Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA).⁹ We have found that individual level connections and livelihood connections are crucial to a community to navigate crisis when government assistance is limited or nonexistent. People turn to their community for help in these times and create informal groups that follow informal rules. When an individual breaks those informal rules they are ousted from the group and no longer receive the help that they need. This occurs when donor agencies and their aid distributors do not take these connections into consideration. Donor agencies need to strengthen these connections and not dissolve them and disrupt underlying support structures. In order to not alienate these supporters. Donors should give short term funds with recovery efforts.¹⁰ This allows for when this emergency funding ends people can maintain sharing and support. To support this donor agencies should provide aid to the group rather than the individual. Therefore, aid can reach a larger number of people and in a more efficient manner. Understanding the importance of the role that these connections play then we as donor agencies can be sure that aid intervention is strengthening these support systems in times of crisis instead of dissolution in them.

⁵ “Who We Are.” Mercy Corps, January 9, 2023.

⁶ “Guide to Community Mobilization Programming - Mercy Corps.” Mercy Corps . Accessed May 2023.

⁷ “What We Do.” Mercy Corps, March 24, 2021.

⁸ “The Currency of Connections.” *Mercy Corps*, 12 Oct. 2022

⁹ IBID

¹⁰ IBID



Why what we do is important and our values

What we do isn't just important to us, it's important to the community members that we work alongside and to the planet. Combining our initiatives to help those most in need with environmental sustainability projects means that when we help communities we are also helping the world. Our principles of inclusion, and strict code of ethics include **integrity, honesty, respect and accountability**, and we make sure that these ideals are enforced throughout our community. We want to fight to alleviate the suffering of people and that starts with our own organization and accountability.¹¹ Helping people around the world through food and water sovereignty, economic and social stability and gender equality is something that all people should be concerned with, most of all Mercy Corps.¹²

Goals and Vision for 2023

Our focus in 2023 is working on our aid projects through the lens of resilience.¹³ We do this through increasing and protecting wellbeing through people and lasting systems such as access to food and clean water along with an increase in incomes.¹⁴ This is done in the face of stresses from armed conflict, natural disasters and the shock that comes with trying to survive in the face of these

crises. That is true resilience. Our focus for 2023 is creating sustainable change and improvement in food and water security, economic opportunities, peace and good governance.¹⁵ These will be the building blocks for communities to emerge from crisis and create the brighter future that they deserve. We want communities to thrive and reach their fullest potential. These goals will be reached by taking it day by day and through the resilience of these communities in need.

Helping our home

We at Mercy Corps make a big deal about our international presence, but our beautiful home town of Portland and the amazing people that live here are just as important to us! The magical Pacific NorthWest, where we are headquartered, is a place with immense natural beauty and exceptional people. We work within our community on projects such as helping businesses of those who have historically been marginalized, like women and POC. We want to help small business owners, and do this through funding local businesses, guiding them in their endeavors, and distributing grants. We love our home and want to see the whole world thrive, including the people in our own neighborhood.

16

Key definitions:

Moving forward it is important to understand a few key terms that will be used. Not just vocabulary, this list includes the definitions of the

¹¹ "Ethics Policies and Reporting Misconduct." Mercy Corps, April 3, 2023.

¹² "What We Do." Mercy Corps, March 24, 2021.

¹³ "A Vision for Tomorrow: 2023 and Beyond." *Mercy Corps*, 30 Nov. 2022

¹⁴IBID

¹⁵ IBID

¹⁶ "Marginalized Small Business Owners across the Pacific Northwest Struggle to Stay Afloat." Mercy Corps, May 11, 2020.



terminology Mercy Corps uses for our aid.

- **Good Governance**

Good governance is important to any aid mission because it means sustainable results. Not just working in, but with communities ensures that things are actually getting done. Little else is more important than governmental systems that uphold countries, economies and people. By working on improving government systems to better serve their communities we are able to make lasting change. We help with good governance by supporting those who lead communities as well as mobilizing community members themselves and give them the encouragement and resources they need to get more involved with decision making.¹⁷

- **Cash assistance**

Nearly half of all assistance given out by Mercy Corps is through cash and vouchers. In 2020 alone we gave out more than 50 million dollars. By supplying those in need with the money to access necessities not only are we helping families purchase what they need but also supporting local economies.¹⁸

- **Emergency response**

Again, partnering with local communities when it comes to emergency response is incredibly important because it means that we are getting people the aid they need, not just what we believe would best fit the situation. All natural disasters are

¹⁷ "Governance." Mercy Corps, October 13, 2022.

¹⁸ "Cash and Voucher Assistance." Mercy Corps, May 4, 2021.

different, and because of this we encourage participation from the people most effectively to make sure we are helping them correctly. We meet people's most urgent needs, help them rebuild and give them the resources they need to help themselves, because self-reliance is both uplifting and often the most effective response.¹⁹

How do we fund our projects?



20

Fundraising and our work with foundations

The Bill and Melinda Gates foundation is just one of many donors that we work with. In 2019 they committed a \$350,000 grant in order to help those affected by a flood in the Central African Republic.²¹ Although bilateral donors account for a large amount of our funding, we also rely a great deal on our charitable donors. 86% of our donations go directly to programs that help those in need and we also encourage people to create their very own fundraising campaigns!²²

¹⁹ "Emergency Response." Mercy Corps, October 13, 2022.

²⁰ "Cash and Voucher Assistance." Mercy Corps, May 4, 2021.

²¹ "INV-005066." Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Accessed May 2023.

²² "Fundraising Faqs." Mercy Corps, March 18, 2022.



According to Charity Navigator, Mercy Corps scored an astounding 87% in accountability and finance, 93% in culture and community, and 100% in leadership and adaptability.²³

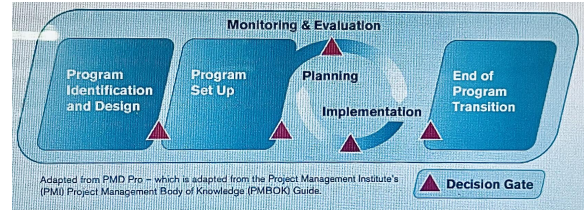
How we decide what projects to take on

Mercy Corps works on projects around the world helping those in need, but we are also always assessing potential future projects. Donors such as USAID often have their own goals for how the money should be used. Regional directors of Mercy Corps decide what aid projects to take on, and specifically cater them to what their region is most in need of. We work in countries in regions that are facing especially hard times and pay attention to our surroundings, looking out for potential future projects in neighboring regions. Although our aid is often sponsored by organizations with specific objectives, we also propose aid to donors that we believe might take on the financial responsibilities and help us achieve our own goals. Project sustainability and legacy programs are so important to us because we know sponsorship can be finite. Because of this idea we always want to understand what *isn't* working and change our strategies to best meet needs directly and quickly. Understanding geopolitics and the priorities of our donors helps us navigate the tricky space of the inbetween.²⁴

²³ "Charity Navigator - Rating for Mercy Corps." *Charity Navigator - Rating For*

²⁴ Smith, Madissyn, Addy Fulks and Najia Hyder. Questions about Mercy Corps . Personal, May 11, 2023.

Project Lifecycle



25

Our project life cycle has 5 steps. They are program identification and design, program set up and planning, program implementation, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) process and end-of-program transition.²⁶

Program Identification and Design:

During this phase the people involved in the program, the team and stakeholders, work alongside each other to identify things such as program ideas and collecting and analyzing assessment data. They also create proposals and a budget for the program.²⁷

Program Set-Up and Planning:

In this phase, the program work plan is made. The program work plan acts and functions as the 'map' of the program. This plan contains things like the budget and schedule of the program, as well as the illuminating details of the activities that will take place to achieve the goals of the program.²⁸

²⁵ *Program Management Manual - Mercy Corps*, Jan. 2012

²⁶ IBID

²⁷ IBID

²⁸ IBID



Program Implementation:

This is when the program is put in motion and implementation starts to take place. The processes involved in this are team structuring, setting up program files and communicating the work plan to the team that will be running the program. Implementation also requires managing, tracking and adjusting activities for quality risk communication and organizational capacity. There is also coordination with stakeholders about their roles and responsibilities.²⁹

M&E Process:

Monitoring and evaluation is done throughout the program. In this process program performance is compared to the original proposal as well as the program work plan. If there are deviations that are found, plans allow for an adjustment of the plan. This can happen at any phase of the program lifecycle.³⁰

End-of-Program Transition:

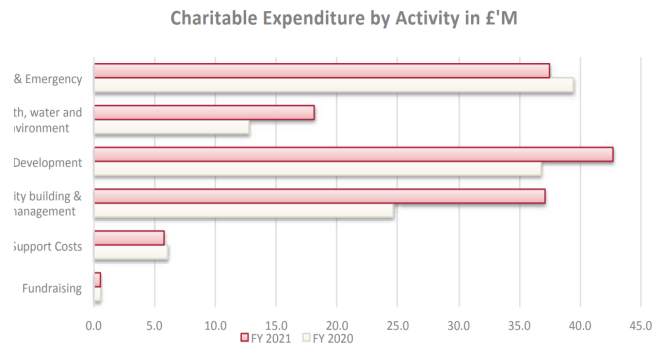
Transition strategies are outlined in the work plan. This will start to be updated and articulated during the final 90 days of the program. Other ‘closing out’ processes that need to be carried out will also be done at this time.³¹

These phases are not linear and adequate time and resources will have to be put into each phase of the life cycle. When

the end-of program transition happens that doesn’t mean that the program is finished and will cease to exist. What this means is that the program has become sustainable and self-sufficient to where Mercy Corps’ assistance is no longer needed. The local people will be able to maintain and continue the work that took place to further their goals.

Our financials

32



We value everyone that helps us help the world! More information can be found on our website, but here is a quick summary. Mercy Corps has offices around the world, but by highlighting our headquarters in Europe we can see that the majority of our charitable donations (in 2020 and 2021) went to countries like the DRC and Syria, specifically with funds going to economic development, DRR and emergency, and civil society organization (CSO) capacity building/conflict management respectively.³³ Working with institutional

²⁹ IBID

³⁰ IBID

³¹ IBID

³² Mercy corps. Accessed May 24, 2023.

³³ "Mercy Corps." ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021. Accessed May 2023.



donors is an important part of how Mercy Corps funds its projects; these donors include the European Commission and the United Nations.³⁴ We also work with charitable donors like the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation³⁵ and take on collaborative projects with companies on special assignments like our work with Shell for a COVID resilience fund.³⁶ USAID is another large contributor to Mercy Corps with the total awarded amount being 278.2 million (US) dollars through 130 transactions.³⁷

Most Current Projects



38

Sudan

Mercy Corps has had a presence in Sudan since 2004, but in recent times aid has become even more crucial as

³⁴ "Institutional Donors." Mercy Corps, November 17, 2020.

³⁵ "INV-005066." Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Accessed May 2023.

³⁶ "Shell Donates \$3 Million to COVID-19 Resilience Fund." Shell Global, May 11, 2020.

³⁷ "MERCY CORPS." USAspending.gov. Accessed May 2023..

³⁸ "The Facts: The Crisis in Sudan." Mercy Corps, May 5, 2023.

violence in the country rises.³⁹ The U.S. embassy in Khartoum has suspended its operations due to the surge in violence that broke out in April of 2023, creating a nation wide crisis.⁴⁰ This violence is in direct correlation to a coup that has now caused a power struggle in the country. The UN estimates displaced peoples number at over 300,000 on top of the nearly 2 million refugees already being hosted in the country. Mercy Corps is working in emergency response and peace building in Sudan to name just a few of our efforts. We have not left Sudan and plan to continue our work as the violence rages on.⁴¹

Ukraine

In 2022 Russia invaded Ukraine, and the war still continues today. Though Mercy Corps has been involved with Ukraine in the past, efforts since the conflict emerged are more important than ever, especially in the face of a huge refugee crisis. Millions of people have been displaced and many more are still in areas without access to basic needs. Mercy Corps is working within Ukraine as well as surrounding countries in order to help those who have been impacted. Our work within communities and alongside locally based aid is of the utmost importance to ensure refugees are getting the necessary resources to live. Emergency cash distribution and working with people, children and

³⁹ "The Facts: The Crisis in Sudan." Mercy Corps, May 5, 2023.

⁴⁰ "Situation in Sudan: Information for U.S. Citizens in Sudan." U.S. Department of State, 2023.

⁴¹ "The Facts: The Crisis in Sudan." Mercy Corps, May 5, 2023.



families that have been traumatized by the war are just a few of the ways Mercy Corps is prioritizing people in need, both within Ukraine and in surrounding areas.⁴²

Mercy Corps in Africa



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Understanding aid in Africa

Mercy Corps works in 15 different countries throughout Africa on projects that cover a plethora of different concerns.⁴⁴ As of September 2022, Africa is home to 9 out of the 10 poorest countries in the world based on a United Nations Human Rights Development report⁴⁵; Mercy Corps is involved in 5 of these countries.⁴⁶ The United Nations defines major issues affecting the African continent as, climate change, hunger/malnutrition, Ebola and conflict/disputes.⁴⁷ Mercy Corps has been working specifically in

East Africa since 2004 and is still present in the region in Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and South Sudan. In the past, Mercy Corps’s work in the region of East Africa has focused on combating key issues such as ecosystem degradation, gender inequality, and conflict through its work to create more resilient systems for communities.⁴⁸ As of 2022 a major issue that people in this region face is drought due to the effects of the climate crisis. Most affected by this are people living within specific regions of Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya. Along with drought, malnutrition is yet another issue that this part of Africa is acutely facing—between 2020 and 2021 12.8 million children were malnourished.⁴⁹ Mercy Corps’s work in West Africa brings us to countries like Burkina Faso, Liberia, and Nigeria where we are working to alleviate poverty, create peace, strengthen the effectiveness of aid and provide better socio economic opportunity.⁵⁰ Furthermore, West Africa has long been a region faced with economic issues, conflict and gender based discrimination, and in recent years these troubles still hold true. As of 2022 the rise in the cost of living due to inflation as well as floods, coups and the rise in violence from armed groups has caused

⁴² “Ukraine.” Mercy Corps, December 14, 2022.

⁴³ “Niger.” Mercy Corps, August 10, 2021.

⁴⁴ “Where We Work.” Mercy Corps, November 30, 2021.

⁴⁵ “The World’s 10 Poorest Countries.” Concern Worldwide, September 13, 2022.

⁴⁶ “Where We Work.” Mercy Corps, November 30, 2021.

⁴⁷ “Africa.” United Nations. Accessed May 2023.

⁴⁸ “Resilience in East Africa: A Framework for Action.” Mercy Corps, January 13, 2020.

⁴⁹ “The Facts: Severe Drought in the Horn of Africa.” Mercy Corps, February 2, 2023.

⁵⁰ “Where We Work.” Mercy Corps, November 30, 2021



unacceptable hardship for those living in West Africa.⁵¹

Mercy Corps's Work in Africa

What are we doing to help? In East Africa specifically, Mercy Corps has been working on providing food and supplements to those facing malnutrition, as well as cash assistance and veterinary work to those whose livelihoods are reliant on the health of their animals. We are also working to create more economic stability and help expand healthcare in the region in collaboration with local governments and authorities.⁵² Similarly as to east Africa, Mercy Corps's work in West Africa emphasizes encouraging economic growth, understanding how crucial the survival of livestock is to those who rely on their animals⁵³, and improving the healthcare system, especially in the face of deadly viruses like Ebola.⁵⁴

Liberia - Good Governance



Mercy Corps has been working with the people of Liberia since 2002. In 2003 the civil war that had ravaged the country for over a decade ended. This was not the end of the struggle of the Liberian people though—sadly Liberia was home to the most deadly outbreak of Ebola which killed thousands and played a big role in destabilizing the economy. 30% of Liberian children under the age of 5 are stunted in their growth due to malnutrition, while high unemployment rates make hardship even worse. An important part of Mercy Corps work in Liberia is with good governance, making sure that local communities are given a voice in how they are run, encouraging them to take charge. This is done in collaboration with government officials through programs emphasizing the accountability of policies and processes.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Adetayo, Ope. "The Good, Bad, and the Ugly: West Africa's Big Issues in 2022." Business and Economy News | Al Jazeera, January 17, 2023.

⁵² "Where We Work." Mercy Corps, November 30, 2021.

⁵³ "Where We Work." Mercy Corps, November 30, 2021.

⁵⁴ "Ebola Outbreaks in Africa." Mercy Corps, February 12, 2020.

⁵⁵ "A Sweet Business: Cocoa Brings New Hope to Liberian Farmers." Mercy Corps, August 26, 2021.

⁵⁶ "Liberia." Mercy Corps, August 10, 2021.

Jollof Rice?

When you think of West African food the first thing that comes to many people's minds is the rice dish that truly lives up to all of the hype. Jollof Rice is an important (and delicious) part of many West Africans diets. Usually a good and cheap meal that families have on a regular basis, due to inflation caused by the war in Ukraine, COVID and other issues happening in the region, the staple is becoming more and more expensive to make. Life has now been made even harder for those living in this part of Africa. What can Mercy Corps do to help? Because we give out aid like cash and vouchers, these resources could be used to help buy the supplies people need to make this important dish!

57

Mercy Corps in Asia



58

Understanding aid in Asia

Mercy Corps has programs in 9 countries across Asia, excluding the Middle East.⁵⁷ Although Asia has some of the fastest growing economies in the world, along with many extremely wealthy regions, the opposite is also true. Similarly to the

⁵⁷ Adetayo, Ope. "How Inflation Made West Africa's Prized Jollof Rice a Pricey Meal." Inflation | Al Jazeera, May 23, 2023.

⁵⁸ "Indonesia." Mercy Corps, May 20, 2021.

⁵⁹ "Where We Work." Mercy Corps, November 30, 2021.

rest of the world, climate change has and in the future will have even more devastating impacts on the continent. Climate change affects those who are the most disadvantaged at the highest rates, including minority ethnic and racial groups around the world.⁶⁰ The Asian Development Bank lays out many issues that the continent faces including: Agriculture and food sovereignty, displacement, the importance of strong governance and health care services. Throughout Asia, but specifically in the south, natural disasters are a prevalent issue that have caused tens of billions of dollars in damages and extremely high numbers of deaths. Deaths and damages due to natural disasters will only get worse due to the increasing effects of climate change. 8 out of the 15 countries most susceptible to extreme weather are located in Asia and the Pacific.⁶¹

Mercy Corps's Work in Asia

Mercy Corps's work in Asia expands across many different types of aid services. Agricultural and economic development go hand in hand in helping those who are at a disadvantage obtain better opportunities for a brighter future. Working within communities and with a ground up approach is especially highlighted with our work in these sectors as we hope it will create resilience that can be sustained even after

⁶⁰ "EPA Report Shows Disproportionate Impacts of Climate Change on Socially Vulnerable Populations in the United States." EPA, September 21, 2021.

⁶¹ Jmagdaraog. "Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management in Asia and the Pacific." Asian Development Bank, April 28, 2023.



Mercy Corps has left an area.⁶² Emergency response and resilience when it comes to natural disasters are especially important due to the effects climate change is having on countries like Indonesia where, on average, major natural disasters have been happening on an almost monthly basis since 2004. Indonesia is a good example of the importance of economic development. This is because many people straddle the poverty line, illustrating the importance of understanding economic instability. This is why projects focused around economic sustainability and development are the top goal of our organization.⁶³

Afghanistan - Renewable Energy



64

Mercy Corps has been working in Afghanistan since 1986, yet nearly half the population is still in need of humanitarian assistance. Because we emphasize environmental sustainability within all of our frameworks, one

exemplifying factor of our work in Afghanistan is our projects creating renewable energy that is more accessible. This renewable energy is used in businesses and households and in public distribution centers that provide people necessities like water. We have installed over 300 solar panels across Afghanistan that help to provide cheaper and more reliable power to many Afghans.⁶⁵

In the last year however, Mercy Corps has had to make the difficult decision in December 2022 to suspend operation in Afghanistan.⁶⁶ This is due to trying to seek clarity on the country's decision to bar women from working with aid donors in the country.⁶⁷ We support women and find their role in aid to be a crucial one. We cannot continue our operation in Afghanistan as we use people from the country to fulfill the aid programs and projects. We cannot support the government's decision to ban women from working.

⁶² "Where We Work." Mercy Corps, November 30, 2021.

⁶³ "Indonesia." Mercy Corps, May 20, 2021.

⁶⁴ "Mercy Corps to Temporarily Suspend Programs in Afghanistan." Mercy Corps, December 27, 2022.

⁶⁵ "Afghanistan." Mercy Corps, March 17, 2022.

⁶⁶ "Mercy Corps to Temporarily Suspend Programs in Afghanistan." *Mercy Corps*, 27 Dec. 2022

⁶⁷ IBID



Mercy Corps in the Middle East



68

Understanding aid in the Middle East

Though not a continent, the Middle East is an important region of the world politically, economically and culturally. Home to some of the world's oldest cities and the birth place to some of the world's most prominent religions, this region has long faced hardship due to its abundance of natural resources like oil and gas that has historically caused many conflicts. Mercy Corps works in 6 countries/areas in the Middle East, on projects with goals that include increasing environmentally sustainable economic opportunities, promoting the importance of human rights and addressing the root causes of conflict.⁶⁹ Creating strong and resilient communities helps to ensure the sustainability of all projects; this emphasis is important in all projects that Mercy Corps takes on.⁷⁰ Many issues make it difficult to consider aid in the

⁶⁸ "Palestine (West Bank/Gaza)." Mercy Corps, April 11, 2022.

⁶⁹ "Where We Work." Mercy Corps, November 30, 2021.

⁷⁰ "What We Do." Mercy Corps, March 24, 2021.

Middle East—the United States Institute of Peace described the region as the “fragile Middle East” in their report amidst the Covid pandemic.⁷¹ This notion is furthered by ongoing conflict and instability, especially after the earthquake that ravaged Turkey and Syria earlier this year (2023). People outside see war as the Middle East's inescapable feature, yet the promotion of peace, human rights and equity are more important than ever and Mercy Corps will continue to try to get to the root cause of conflict through our work with local communities.

Mercy Corps's work in the Middle East

Our work in the Middle East brings us to countries like Iraq, where an estimated 1.3 million children do not have access to stable forms of education.⁷² Our work strengthening institutions, promoting self-reliance and peacebuilding come together in ensuring that all people have access to opportunities that are laid out in their human rights.⁷³ Refugees are often displaced within their own countries. Mercy Corps is working to create “durable solutions” to the refugee crisis within the Middle East, and part of this is emphasizing the importance of finding solutions to conflict.⁷⁴ Conflict does not just destroy infrastructure, it

⁷¹ Youssef, Hesham. “Six Challenges Facing a Fragile Middle East amid Coronavirus.” United States Institute of Peace, April 29, 2020.

⁷² “Iraq.” Mercy Corps, August 5, 2021.

⁷³ “What We Do.” Mercy Corps, March 24, 2021.

⁷⁴ “Towards Durable Solutions to Displacement.” Mercy Corps, November 15, 2021.



also destroys the livelihoods of those who have to endure it. Promoting economic stability and increasing the opportunities for people to make more livable income are especially important because they help us in our overarching mission of sustainability.⁷⁵

Gaza and the West Bank - Water



76

Gaza and the West Bank have been areas impacted by many hardships through the 20th and 21st centuries. Gaza specifically is greatly hit by these hardships. Gaza is isolated from the other Palestinian territories, their mobility is limited and relations with other countries are strained. One of our projects in Gaza is focused around providing people with potable water that is always accessible, even when electricity is not. We did this by building pipes that carry water using gravity. We have been working on building a desalination plant in Gaza that is helping

⁷⁵ "What We Do." Mercy Corps, March 24, 2021.

⁷⁶ "Palestine (West Bank/Gaza)." Mercy Corps, April 11, 2022.

to get people the fresh water resources that they need, especially in such an arid climate.⁷⁷

Supporting those with disabilities

In 2008 Mercy Corps started to prioritize educating people with disabilities, and this is still an important part of our work. Often schools refuse to serve those who are disabled, in large part due to the fact they do not have the right resources to correctly support them. We believe that all students, disabled or not, should have access to education. We are currently working with 65 different schools by educating teachers and parents about disabilities, and creating safe and accessible spaces for everyone to have a fair opportunity at this basic right.

78

⁷⁷ "Palestine (West Bank/Gaza)." Mercy Corps, April 11, 2022.

⁷⁸ Asmar, Maisa. "Everybody Wins When We Support People with Disabilities." Mercy Corps, January 12, 2022.



Mercy Corps in Europe



79

Understanding aid in Europe

When most of the global world looks at Europe we see a continent that is often presented as free from challenges, this is not necessarily true. It is important to realize that unique challenges are faced by people in every corner of the world, not just places Westerners might refer to as “underdeveloped”. Most recently the war in Ukraine has caused this continent to again be intralled with the consequences of war through an increase in the amount of refugees coming from Ukraine (as well as many coming from the Middle East and Africa). Although we only currently work in the European countries of Georgia and Ukraine, our help through providing emergency cash, setting up and running refugee camps and rural development are as important as ever, especially as war rages on.⁸⁰

Mercy Corps’s work in Europe

In Europe we work in both Ukraine and Georgia, yet these two regions are facing problems brought on by separate issues.⁸¹

⁷⁹ “Ukraine.” Mercy Corps, December 14, 2022.

⁸⁰ “Where We Work.” Mercy Corps, November 30, 2021.

⁸¹ “Where We Work.” Mercy Corps, November 30, 2021.

Our work in Georgia, as highlighted later on in this report, focuses on rural development and social entrepreneurship⁸² whereas in Ukraine we are focused on the ongoing war that has been raging since 2022 when Russia invaded the country. The UN estimated the repercussions of the war to cause 10 million people within the country to become displaced, we work at refugee reception centers and provide those displaced with assistance. Although the war in Ukraine has caused us to recenter our focus on the country, we have also been involved in the past following the conflict in 2014, distributing food, providing families cash and rebuilding homes that were destroyed.⁸³

Georgia - Economy



84

Higher incomes, rural development and employment opportunities are our three largest projects that are going on in Georgia during this time. Soviet leadership was finally dismantled in Georgia in 2003 but left the area with

⁸² “Georgia.” Mercy Corps, August 6, 2021.

⁸³ “Ukraine.” Mercy Corps, December 14, 2022.

⁸⁴ “Cash Cows: On the Ground with Georgia’s Dairy Industry.” Mercy Corps, January 29, 2020.



many problems that needed assistance. Although the beginning part of the 21st century saw economic growth for the country, this was set off course in 2020, not helped by the COVID-19 pandemic. We have been working within the private sector, developing businesses and have been helping more specifically with women, in order to help the economic situation. We support young entrepreneurs and business owners by making sure that they are able to advocate for themselves and seek funding for their businesses. COVID-19 has affected the whole world especially economically, and Georgia is not an exception. Self sustainability and directly helping business owners is a step in the right direction for economic growth and independence.⁸⁵ Economic growth is not our only focus here. We have established a new municipal service called the Women's Room. This has helped women, mainly rural women, be connected to the local government and participate in the decision-making process.⁸⁶

⁸⁵"Georgia." Mercy Corps, August 6, 2021.

⁸⁶ IBID

Mercy Corps in the Americas



87

Understanding aid in the Americas

A large region, the Americas are home to an incredibly diverse set of peoples that come from around the world. Natural disasters, especially in the Caribbean region are an issue that impact the lives of millions of people each year. Disaster relief is then, of course, an integral part of Mercy Corps's framework for the Americas⁸⁸, but that is not all that we do. We also work within small communities in our own home state of Oregon and town of Portland, through community fundraising efforts.⁸⁹ Gender Equality, good governance and social cohesion are also specifically important, especially in countries like Haiti. Similarly to everywhere else in the world the Americas face great challenges due to climate change, but this is especially impactful in Haiti, which is not only one

⁸⁷ Judes Jonathas, Mercy Corps Haiti Program Manager. "A Critical Moment for Haiti." Mercy Corps, November 10, 2022.

⁸⁸ "Emergency Response." Mercy Corps, October 13, 2022.

⁸⁹ "Marginalized Small Business Owners across the Pacific Northwest Struggle to Stay Afloat." Mercy Corps, May 11, 2020.



of the most unstable countries in the world as of 2022, but is also seriously impacted by Hurricane season.⁹⁰

Mercy Corps's work in the Americas

From Colombia to the United States and the Bahamas Mercy Corps works throughout North, South, Central America and the Caribbean.⁹¹ In Colombia, an estimated 10% of people are in need of immediate humanitarian assistance, and over 5 million people are internally displaced within the country. Mercy Corps has been working to provide cash assistance to those in need and on programs that involve agriculture and land titling.⁹² In Guatemala, one of the most violent countries in the world, we are working to mitigate conflict through creating more resilient communities that create more safe living situations for those most vulnerable.⁹³ We also work in the Caribbean on the effects that the region faces due to the ever increasing effects of climate change.⁹⁴

Haiti - Natural Disasters



Haiti is a country where people experience extremely high levels of hunger, but also a place that is increasingly affected by climate change because of the annual hurricanes that wreak havoc on Hispaniola. 3.6 million Haitians are facing extreme hunger, in the poorest country in the Americas.⁹⁵ We have been working in Haiti since 2010, after the devastating earthquake that killed around 250,000 people and left hundreds of thousands more injured.⁹⁶ Resiliency is the key word and aspiration for our work in Haiti. We want to ensure that people are prepared for the next natural disaster through encouraging good governance that will help to create better opportunities even in the face of hardship.⁹⁷

⁹⁰ "Haiti." Mercy Corps, August 27, 2020.

⁹¹ "Where We Work." Mercy Corps, November 30, 2021.

⁹² "Colombia." Mercy Corps, August 3, 2020.

⁹³ "Guatemala." Mercy Corps, August 4, 2020.

⁹⁴ "'resilience Hubs' in Puerto Rico Are Vital in the Wake of Hurricane Fiona." Mercy Corps, October 10, 2022.

⁹⁵ "Haiti." Mercy Corps, August 27, 2020.

⁹⁶ Reid, Kathryn. "Haiti Earthquake: Facts, Faqs, and How to Help." World Vision, April 13, 2023.

⁹⁷ "Haiti." Mercy Corps, August 27, 2020.

NASA and Mercy Corps?

Did you know that Mercy Corps has even worked with NASA? Cool, right? In 2019 we partnered with NASA on an initiative to help those most in need, working on things like resource scarcity and climate change. NASA used science such as satellite technology to aid us in our mission and provided us with important data that helped us on both large and small scales alike. Because of their help we were better able to understand our planet as a whole and implement strategies with things regarding climate change and other similar concerns.



98 99

Mercy Corps and COVID What happened in Turkey and lessons learned

Our work in Turkey was extremely important, especially while the country's neighbor to the south was enthralled in a civil war that displaced 5.5 million people.¹⁰⁰ Turkey also hosts the most refugees at a staggering 3.7¹⁰¹ million people, meaning that the work that Mercy Corps provided to both Syria and Turkey was crucial. Although we were working hard to help those displaced, sadly our relationship and time in Turkey

⁹⁸ Dunbar, Brian. "Symbols of NASA." NASA, July 27, 2018.

⁹⁹ Dunbar, Brian. "NASA, Mercy Corps Join Forces to Aid Vulnerable Communities." NASA, March 29, 2019.

¹⁰⁰ Reid, Kathryn. "Syrian Refugee Crisis: Facts, Faqs, and How to Help." World Vision, March 28, 2023.

¹⁰¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "Refugee Statistics." UNHCR. Accessed May 2023.

ended when the government suspended Mercy Corps's registration for unclear reasons in 2017.¹⁰² A Turkish government official stated that the expulsion of Mercy Corps was due to 'technical' reasons and that documentation requirements failed to be met.¹⁰³ However, they have not elaborated on what documents they were speaking of.¹⁰⁴ We still do not have a presence in the country today and this has created more difficulty for us to carry out our mission of helping people in crisis.¹⁰⁵ We can learn from this example that aid is an extremely fragile system and working with governments can be especially tricky, moving forward and continuing our work helping those fleeing violence, but understand that governance sometimes overrides the essential needs of people, for better or worse. Despite it being a fragile system this event has showcased the importance of having and maintaining a good relationship with the government of an aid receiving country. As an INGO we have limited government involvement. However, as seen through Turkey, aid cannot be given if the government of the country does not want it; they can stop operations of the donor agency at will.

¹⁰² "Turkey Forces Aid Group Mercy Corps to Cease Operations." NPR, March 8, 2017.

¹⁰³ Toksabai, Ece, and Humeysra Pamuk. "U.S. Aid Group Mercy Corps Says Turkey Has Revoked Its License." Edited by Catherine Evans, *Reuters*, 8 Mar. 2017

¹⁰⁴ IBID

¹⁰⁵ "Where We Work." Mercy Corps, November 30, 2021.

Why we usually don't take physical donations

Nearly half of our aid is given to people through cash and voucher assistance. This is because it allows them to access exactly what they need and helps boost local economies. Although we appreciate the thoughtfulness behind all types of donations, monetary is often the most helpful because it creates opportunities for more direct support of people and small businesses.

the situations are in every area of the world. Understanding what is correct and beneficial to people is always our top priority, but also understanding more big-picture overarching goals. Aligning ourselves with the SDGs or Sustainable Development Goals is one way that we can make sure we are on track in a more global sense.¹⁰⁸ Like the SDGs lay out, Mercy Corps is working on projects that include trying to alleviate hunger, end poverty, focus on environmental sustainability, improve gender equality and reduce inequality. Our goals align with the SDGs, and SDGs create a great avenue for unpacking and understanding the issues that face our world today.¹⁰⁹

106

Understanding aid and the SDGs



107

Providing aid can be a delicate process that doesn't always go as planned, as shown in how we had to leave Turkey, but it is also hard because of how diverse

¹⁰⁶ "Fundraising Faqs." Mercy Corps, March 18, 2022.

¹⁰⁷ "Objectifs de Développement Durable." Partenariats internationaux. Accessed May 23, 2023.

¹⁰⁸ "The 17 Goals | Sustainable Development." United Nations. Accessed May 2023.

¹⁰⁹ "What We Do." Mercy Corps, March 24, 2021.



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