

MERCY CORPS
FOOD SECURITY
FISCAL YEAR 2009 SECTOR UPDATE



Photo: Colin Spurway for Mercy Corps

Furthering our Mission

July 2008 through June 2009 was an extraordinary period for global food security, and for Mercy Corps' food security programming. As a rise in food prices increased the number of hungry people worldwide from 852 million to almost a billion, Mercy Corps responded vigorously with an expansion of field programming and advocacy efforts. In FY09, Mercy Corps initiated \$135 million worth of new food security-focused programming in 15 countries, to make a total portfolio of more than forty programs in 22 countries worth approximately \$173 million. Mercy Corps' market-driven, community-centered strategies address the underlying causes of food insecurity while also meeting urgent needs. The sector works closely to integrate agriculture, market development and health activities to create holistic solutions to hunger in needy communities. When combined with the opening of the Action Centers to End World Hunger in New York and Portland, and our work on the Roadmap to End Global Hunger describing a new way forward for American leadership, Mercy Corps has become a powerful voice for the vulnerable and hungry. The combination of field expertise and headquarters advocacy makes Mercy Corps a significant leader in the fight to achieve global food security.

Global Food Crisis Response – an Integrated Approach

A hallmark of Mercy Corps' Food Security sector this year was an aggressive response to the global food price crisis. Though food prices have since fallen from their peak, the FAO reports that average food prices remain persistently high. A survey of 18 Mercy Corps country programs in December 2008 found that, within communities Mercy Corps serves, roughly 70 percent of income is spent on food and 80 percent of the population had been adversely affected by rising food prices over the last year. Mercy Corps actions have included, a) a comprehensive media and communications strategy to alert people to the problems, and potential solutions, to global hunger, b) creative program design involving staff from all regions and all technical sectors, c) a leadership role in hunger advocacy from Capitol Hill to New York City and d) outreach to donors to identify program opportunities drawing upon Mercy Corps' skills. As Mercy Corps' efforts have identified opportunities, our swift response has led to new programs targeting more than a million people.

Mercy Corps has 17 programs in 13 countries designed specifically to respond to the global food crisis. Through support from donors including USAID, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Gap Foundation, the Hunger Site and private individuals, the Food Crisis Response employs the principles of developmental relief to

ensure that the groundwork for sustainable economic development is built, even while protecting the most vulnerable. Activities include agricultural training and input provision, the introduction of improved agricultural varieties, child nutrition, value chain strengthening and small business development, Cash-for-Work, microfinance and microinsurance. Mercy Corps' Food Crisis Response will lead to a sustainable increase in income for participating households, a more resilient and diversified livelihoods base and an overall improvement in food security. In addition, Mercy Corps will strengthen its capacity to take regional approaches to global problems.

Innovative Use of Food Resources

During FY09, Mercy Corps initiated several programs that made innovative use of food commodities. In North Korea, Mercy Corps was the lead agency of a group of five NGOs providing food assistance to more than 900,000 vulnerable people in two provinces, alleviating the threat of large-scale hunger. The resumption of US food aid was made possible through the negotiation of unprecedented levels of monitoring in that country. In Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Zimbabwe, Mercy Corps is implementing new OFDA-funded Local and Regional Procurement (LRP) programs. This approach involves the purchase of food in local or regional markets, so as to decrease the lag associated with typical food aid programs where commodities must be shipped long distances. In Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, these programs allow us to respond swiftly to the hardship caused by rising prices and harsh winters, while in Zimbabwe, urban residents beset by economic turmoil now have greater access to food. The US government only introduced LRP programs within the past year, and Mercy Corps has won more of this funding than any other NGO. Looking forward, Mercy Corps has been awarded a competitive Maternal and Child Health and Nutrition program in northern Guatemala by USAID/Food for Peace. This program will pilot an innovative preventive approach to child malnutrition and will include extensive operations research so that lessons can be clearly learned and applied elsewhere. In all of these programs, Mercy Corps' responsiveness to opportunities to fight hunger, flexible approach to food resources and integrated strategies for building food security have contributed to our success.

Food Security Portfolio Highlights

Countries with food security programs	22
Total number of people targeted	3,551,942
Value of food security programs	\$173,303,000
Number of people receiving food rations	1,406,638
Countries with food price crisis programming	13
Programs addressing food price crisis	17
No. of people targeted by food price crisis programs	1,479,015

GLOBAL HEADQUARTERS

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You must be the change
 you wish to see in the world.

~ Gandhi



Be the change