

# How to Engage with Multi-National Corporations

## Private Sector Engagement Toolkit - Tip Sheet #5:

Engaging with multi-national corporations (MNCs) brings some specific dynamics because of their size and breadth and the disbursement of their operations to many locations. Below are tips specifically for engaging with field-based offices of MNCs which are also relevant to interaction with MNC headquarters.

### Tips for Engaging with MNCs

1. Determine if there is a CSR unit for the MNC and research how that office operates, as this can be your entry gate to a partnership. What are their strategic priorities, where are decisions made, what kinds of engagements do they support, etc.? Find out if this unit has influence over business decision or operates solely as a philanthropic office.
2. Try to understand any internal or shareholder information on partnerships for social aims. This could include shareholder resolutions, social responsibility statements, or other NGO or INGO partnerships. Do your homework before meeting with them.
3. MNCs are focused on their clients and their local partners in their supply chains. If our program works with those groups, they expect us to know a lot about who we want to work with, why, and what benefit each partner will see. Be prepared to answer these questions in detail.
4. As soon as you identify a possible MNC partner, find out who at Mercy Corps has engaged with that firm globally, and the nature of that engagement. Keep in mind that many large MNCs have very small CSR departments and regional offices, so consistent and coordinated outreach from the field can be crucial to building a strong relationship.
5. Pay special consideration to what value we can bring to the MNC and how it lines up with their mission. The MNC may have a greater interest in strategic CSR or “shared value” propositions, in which social value is created for communities and business value is created for the companies.
6. Recognize that an MNC may have much longer term interests than other private partners and may not be limited to interests in your geographic area or context. Try to have a good understanding of what those global interests may be before initiating contact.
7. Recognize the special attributes the MNC can bring to the partnership and communicate that recognition. These include their connections to other private, public and CSO actors, their technical resources and business knowledge, their ability to get people to listen to a position they take, and their market potential in a specific supply chain.
8. Recognize that, regardless of the existence of a formal CSR unit of an MNC, leveraging the most local marketing department can also be useful for sponsoring individual program components or events.
9. Build connections with senior MNC staff to keep up to date on new projects and developments as change in their environment is fast paced and the potential for collaboration can arise at any time.
10. Pay special attention to the interests of MNCs and recognize that the interest of the in-country team may not be the same as the global company. (i.e. the global CSR unit may have a social goal, while the in-country team may be more focused on the bottom line, or the Global HQ may be interested in longer term strategic goals that the local team does not know about.)

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