



**MERCY
CORPS**

This project has been made possible in part by a grant from the
Cisco Fund, an advised fund of Silicon Valley Community Foundation.

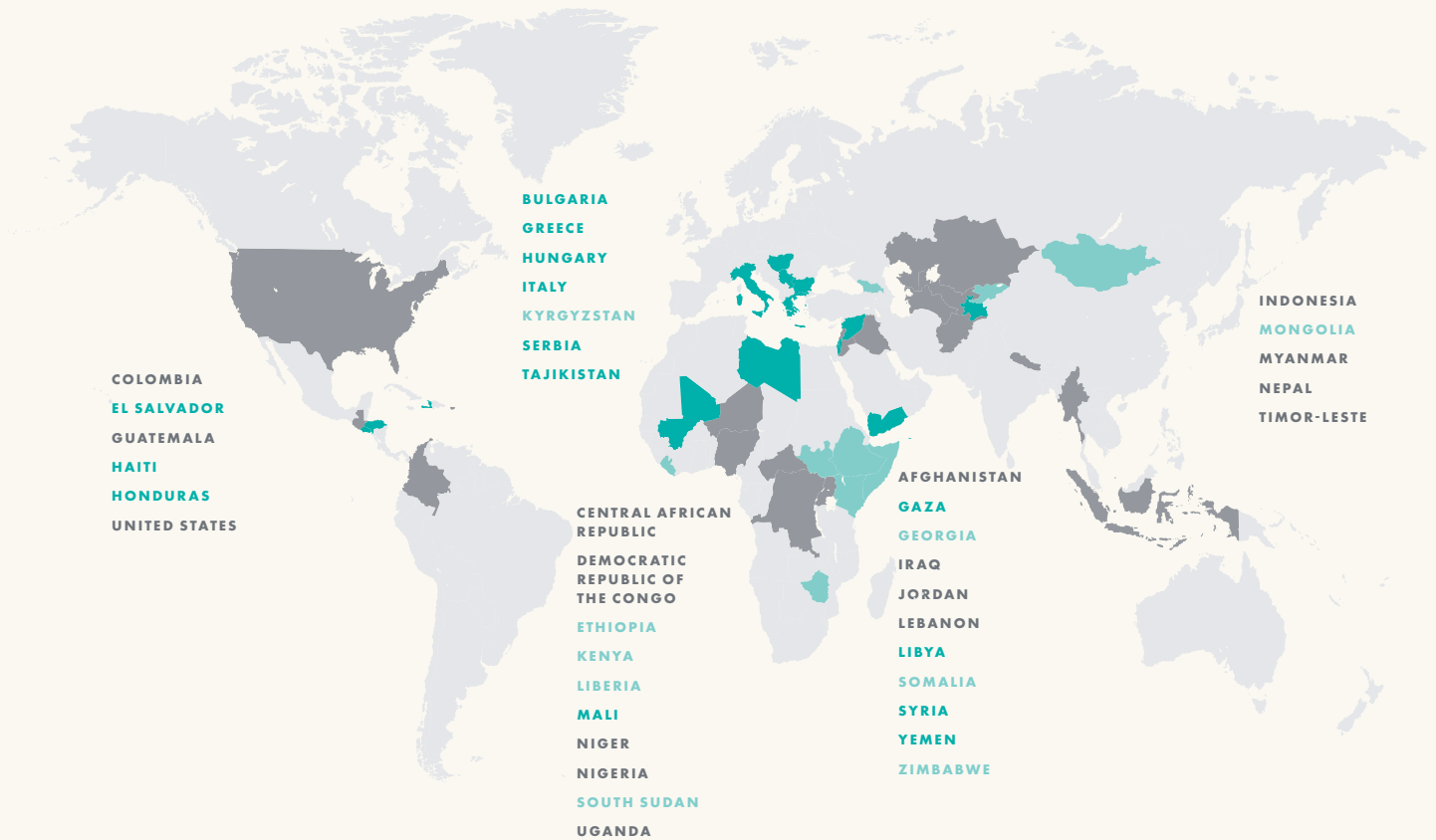
TECHNOLOGY FOR IMPACT

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT
AUGUST 2019–JULY 2020



39 countries are or have been home to Technology for Impact initiatives and/or Cisco Meraki networks installed as part of our partnership.

TECHNOLOGY FOR IMPACT
MERAKI NETWORK
BOTH



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WHO WE ARE

Mercy Corps' Technology for Development (T4D) team collaborates with field teams and external partners to unlock new possibilities and reach more people through the power of technology.

OUR VISION

A world of digital inclusion and opportunity where the ethical use of technology empowers secure, productive and just communities.

Every year, it seems that the challenges our world faces get more severe: The wars in Yemen, Syria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo drag on, hurricanes pummel the Caribbean, and cyclones make landfall in South Asia. This past year was no exception, with increased uncertainty in the Middle East, a 6.4 earthquake in Puerto Rico, and political shifts in the U.S. and the U.K. introducing questions about funding sustainability for humanitarian aid.

On top of all of this, we've also witnessed the biggest pandemic in a century combined with a global uprising against racism and white supremacy. Even the word "unprecedented" feels cliché.

Relief and development organizations like Mercy Corps have responded to crises and disease outbreaks for decades, but our operating model was upended by COVID-19. We could no longer travel to provide support, abruptly switching to web calls across time zones and intermittent connectivity. Our resilience and creativity has been called in new ways.

In a matter of months, our organization has made a digital transformation that would have taken months or years otherwise. Technology for Development's years of work digitizing cash and voucher programs, providing vulnerable communities with responsive digital information, and supporting our peers with sophisticated analyses of evolving crises has never been more urgent or more relevant. Our first three years of partnership with Cisco has, in many ways, laid the foundation for us to respond to this moment.

In this Year Three annual report, we focus on the impact that the Technology for Impact partnership has had on individuals, communities, our own 6,000+ person organization and the wider humanitarian sector. Throughout, we also offer updates on how COVID-19 has affected our work around the world, and the lessons we're learning along the way.

Although the humanitarian need is especially great, we are motivated to meet the challenges head on and are enormously grateful for Cisco's foresight, flexibility and long-term investment that has allowed us to accelerate our technology use and prepared us to respond to these evolving circumstances with digital solutions.



Alexa Schmidt
Interim Director, Technology for Impact

[Read the Year 2 report here.](#)

HIGHLIGHTS

7 million people have benefited from Technology for Impact programming to date, including 5 million from Years 1 and 2.

52 programs incorporate Technology for Impact activities, more than double the programs in Year 2.

39 countries are or have been home to Technology for Impact programs and/or Cisco Meraki networks.

"Our first three years of partnership with Cisco has, in many ways, laid the foundation for us to respond to this moment."

TECHNOLOGY FOR IMPACT INITIATIVES

The Technology for Impact partnership is a 5-year collaboration between Mercy Corps and Cisco. Cisco has given T4D \$8.5 million in funding and \$1.5 million in product and technical expertise to support seven specific initiatives.

COMMUNICATION SECURITY & DATA PROTECTION AND PRIVACY *(mainstreamed into IT activities)*

Exploring potential security gaps in Mercy Corps' current communications and data protection models, tools, policies and procedures so we can enhance security and ensure regulatory compliance.

DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING AND ANALYTICS

Integrating multiple data sources into program management and crisis analytics tools to generate more relevant, timely information and help Mercy Corps teams make more precise, effective decisions.

BENEFICIARY IDENTITY AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Bringing complementary technology components, capacity and procurement/inventory processes into a single ecosystem to enable faster, better beneficiary registration and information management systems.

DIGITAL COMMUNITIES

Providing reliable, actionable information to communities through a safe, accessible digital ecosystem to help them engage more equitably with community power holders, plan for their futures and respond to changes in their environment.

FIELD TECHNOLOGY TESTING PROGRAM

Funding trials of new and emerging technologies to expand Mercy Corps' capabilities and develop innovative solutions to advance humanitarian aid and development around the world.

SOLUTION DISSEMINATION AND REPLICATION

Building awareness of technology solutions and replicating them internally and externally to sustainably scale Technology for Impact initiatives.

FIELD NETWORKING INFRASTRUCTURE

Deploying the latest, most secure connectivity hardware across our offices and field locations to enable centralized equipment management, reduce costs and ensure faster, more secure communications.



AMPLIFYING OUR IMPACT

Digital access, global impact

Mercy Corps helps build resilient communities that are equipped to respond swiftly and effectively to natural disasters and conflict events.

In Year Three of the Technology for Impact partnership, we've helped communities around the world stay connected and strengthen systems for the future by establishing and reinforcing accessible public WiFi networks and exploring ways to counter the sometimes destructive aspects of social media.

HIGHLIGHTS

We installed **67 community WiFi hubs** in six countries around the world, with over 670,000 users since 2017.

We conducted research with the **Signal Program at Harvard Humanitarian Initiative**, which observed that daily WiFi access resulted in increased social support and perceived self-efficacy, and lower odds of depressive symptoms among refugees and migrants in Italy.

We convened **15 tech companies and 22 policy stakeholders** to better understand the weaponization of social media, highlighting gaps and opportunities to partner.

Connecting vulnerable people to vital information

CISCO MERAKI NETWORKS AND SUPPORT FROM MERCY CORPS UNLOCK ACCESS TO RESOURCES WHEN THEY'RE NEEDED MOST.

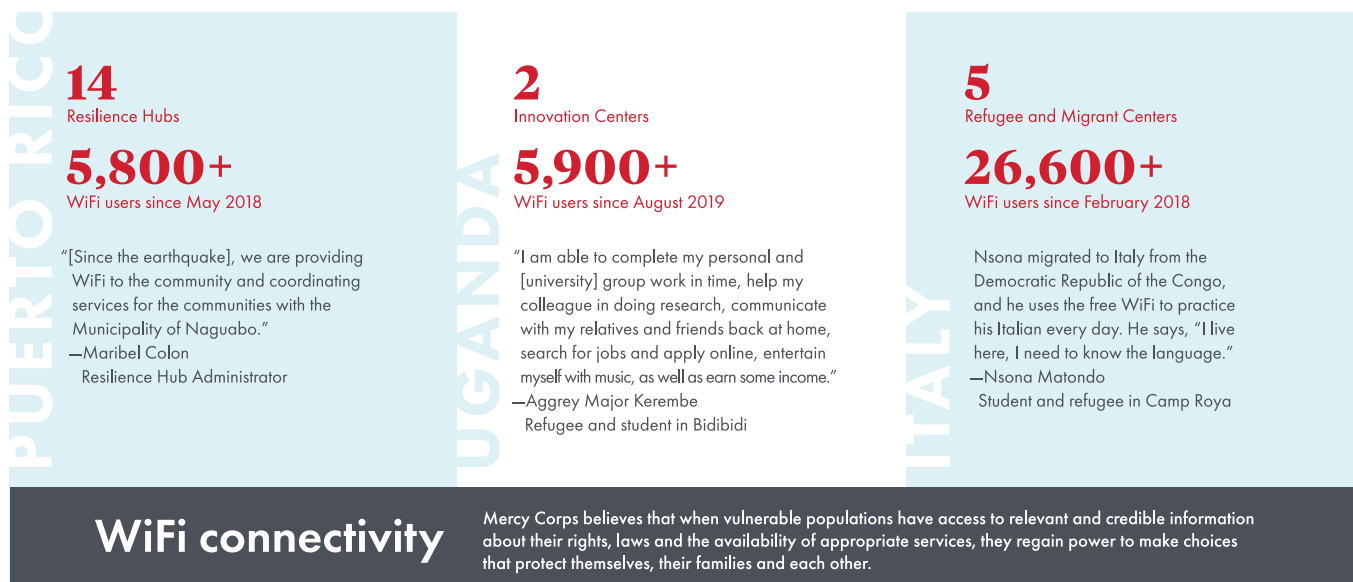
Some of the world's most vulnerable populations — survivors of natural disasters and refugees fleeing war and instability — share a vital need for accessible and reliable information. For example, in places like Puerto Rico, an annual cycle of natural disasters creates an ongoing, urgent need for real-time information about weather events, guidance for how to stay safe and resources to help people rebuild. In countries like Italy, Uganda and Colombia, millions of displaced people seek information on safe shelter, legal and medical resources, and updates from family and friends.

Over the past year, the Mercy Corps T4D team has been working to improve onsite IT training and implement cost-saving measures at several of our 67 WiFi hubs, which have been helping people affected by natural disasters and refugee populations on the move access critical information and resources.

In 2017, Hurricane Maria left Puerto Rico reeling for months, leaving millions without power and access to communications. In response, Mercy Corps Puerto Rico partnered with T4D to equip 14 Resilience Hubs with Cisco Meraki WiFi networks. Powered by high-quality solar-energy systems, these networks continue to provide free and reliable access to the internet in schools, libraries and other community spaces.

When a 6.4 magnitude earthquake struck Puerto Rico in January 2020, causing major damage to municipalities close to the epicenter, communities were better prepared to respond to the disaster. "We have internet connectivity in the whole school (Resilience Hub), and this gives us the opportunity to provide access to the internet in case of an emergency to a high number of people across the building," says Maria Torres, director of one of the Resilience Hubs. The WiFi can help disaster-stricken community members find information about recovery resources through FEMA and other support, and keep them connected to friends and family during difficult times.

In Uganda, Mercy Corps installed WiFi hotspots for refugee populations in the Bidibidi camp and made plans for connectivity in the Rhino camp. WiFi services at Mercy Corps Innovation Centers are designed to support entrepreneurs and students, helping people like Aggrey Major Kerembe stay connected and productive during their migration, an often incredibly disruptive period in their lives. Prior to frequenting these hubs, Aggrey, a business student, would have had to choose between buying a smartphone data package to complete his assignments and research, or buying breakfast. This year, the free internet access has helped over 2,000 people like Aggrey complete educational studies, keep in touch with loved ones and save resources for their future.





Addressing the weaponization of social media

Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for communication, connection and community — but it can also drive conflict, sowing divisiveness and contributing to violence, persecution and exploitation online and off. The impact social media has on communities is complex and rapidly evolving, stretching across borders and challenging traditional humanitarian aid, development and peacebuilding models.

To better understand how social media can be weaponized, Mercy Corps partnered with the Do No Digital Harm Initiative and Adapt Peacebuilding on a landscape assessment that explores several types of digital violence from social media, how this violence can manifest as physical attacks and new approaches to mitigating weaponized social media.

Mercy Corps is now collaborating with Facebook to build on this work by identifying online and offline factors that have the potential to exacerbate conflict. The research will include case studies to explore the exploitation of social media, malicious influencers or other contributing risk factors.

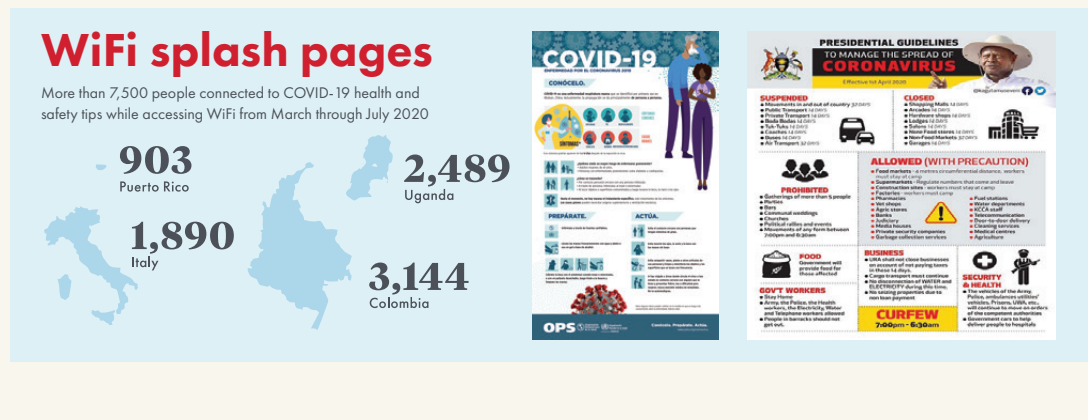
As part of this initiative, Mercy Corps convened meetings with 15 tech companies and 22 policy stakeholders to discuss how social media can potentially be weaponized and address how to mitigate online and offline violence, and we plan to continue these conversations moving forward.

In a pandemic, reliable, accurate information is critical

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, rumors and misinformation about the virus, its lifespan and its transmission swelled around the world. Sharing verified information to curb these rumors became an immediate priority in the global response.

Mercy Corps leveraged the power of Cisco Meraki's cloud management tools to quickly make reliable, relevant information accessible to people facing displacement or disaster combined with the dangers

of the pandemic. Twenty-five of Mercy Corps' Community WiFi hubs across Puerto Rico, Colombia, Uganda and Italy directed users to verified and location-specific sources of information regarding health and safety practices for COVID-19.



Empowering local IT teams to help themselves

Training local staff on IT systems can make their WiFi network administration more efficient now and more self-reliant in the future. This is especially important during disasters when access to WiFi networks becomes urgent, and mobility of external IT support may be limited. To build skills and knowledge among local staff, T4D provided an orientation and basic troubleshooting training to Resilience Hub leadership and local volunteers in Puerto Rico.

Resilience Hub teams have since reported feeling more confident in their abilities to solve issues related to network failure points and collaborate with new internet service providers.



FUELING INNOVATION

Learning and evolving

In collaboration with Mercy Corps' technical experts and local country teams, and with support from the Technology for Impact partnership, T4D has created a pipeline to pilot new solutions, replicate successes and build platforms for ongoing iteration.

From establishing 3D-printing projects in refugee camps to facilitating community dialogue around dangerous speech, the T4D team has learned from the successes and challenges of every engagement. When it comes to trying new things, it's clear that managing expectations, designing in collaboration with users and being willing to pivot are key to innovation.

HIGHLIGHTS

26 volunteer carpenters and metal fabricators received training on 3D-printing technology and design in Za'atari Camp, Jordan.

5 children received 3D-printed prosthetics or other assistive devices to improve motor ability and performance in school.

3 out of 4 Mercy Corps COVID-19 response pillars incorporate Technology for Impact activities, reflecting how the agency has embraced digital solutions in our response to the pandemic.

3D-printed solutions to help people adapt

T4D EXPANDS POSSIBILITIES FOR SYRIAN VOLUNTEERS AT THE ZA'ATARI REFUGEE CAMP TO CREATE LIFE-CHANGING PROSTHETICS.

In the summer of 2019, the T4D team collaborated with Mercy Corps' customization workshop in Jordan's Za'atari refugee camp to solve a problem: The team needed a reliable solution to the difficulty of acquiring or replacing hardware parts for assistive tools, which are often hard to find locally. Backed by the Technology for Impact partnership, T4D and Mercy Corps Jordan launched a 3D-printing pilot project, with a focus on building local capacity (training and infrastructure) and creating custom hardware parts to meet specific needs.

The workshop team consists of volunteers and Syrian refugees who previously worked as artisans (carpenters and metal fabricators). The pilot project offered them the opportunity to work on practical solutions to everyday problems, including assistive tools such as shoe insoles, pencil grips, eyeglass frames and more for people with disabilities. The team quickly advanced their use of the 3D printer and began to explore the possibilities of printing prosthetics.

The first recipient of one of the project's 3D-printed prosthetics was Mohammed, a 13-year-old student in the Za'atari camp who was born without his left hand. This has been both physically

and socially challenging, as other children often teased Mohammed. Now, he can use his customized prosthetic left hand for eating, playing and working at school.

"Today is a happy day for me because I have another hand now. When I received this hand, I felt an indescribable feeling," he said after receiving the prosthetic. "This will impact me a lot. For example, the ruler that I couldn't use with one hand, now I will be able to use it."

In response to COVID-19, the Jordan team has since pivoted to print face shields and has shared design templates with Mercy Corps Tunisia, where the team has printed over 200 shields to provide much-needed protective equipment for staff and visitors in local hospitals.

"Today is a happy day for me because I have another hand now."

—Mohammed A.
Student in Za'atari camp





Leveraging technology to enhance civic engagement

Innovation isn't just about exploring new technologies, but also using everyday technologies in creative ways.

Last year, we began to explore how technology could reinforce Mercy Corps' existing approach to governance work. While our approach traditionally focuses on community groups and civil engagement in offline or in-person spaces, more and more country teams, alongside T4D, are exploring governance work in the digital space. In Afghanistan, Mercy Corps is bringing community members in seven districts of Kabul online to talk about, vote on and receive updates about government infrastructure improvements, including roads, parks and bridges.

Using common technologies like social media platforms allows more people to come together to participate in project selection. These online conversations also allow for improved and scalable community outreach, transparency and feedback to participants, which all go a long way in improving civic engagement. The online ecosystem is particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic, when public health concerns discourage people from gathering in person.

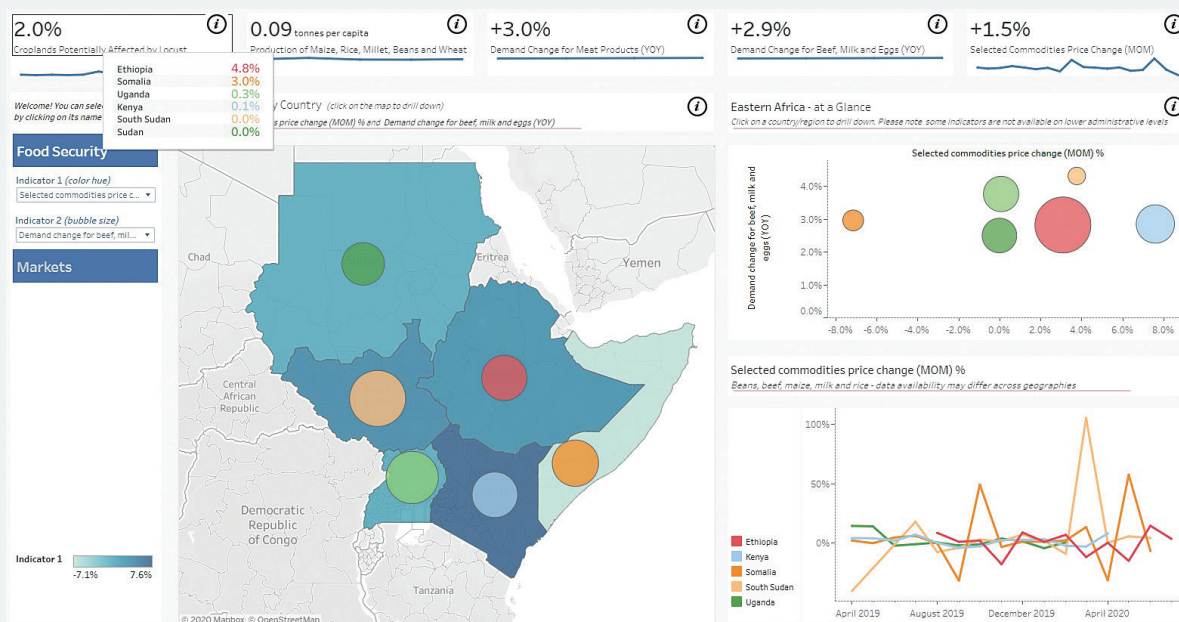
Planning for the future impacts of the current crisis

Mercy Corps prepares communities for disaster, and in light of COVID-19, we are innovating to better analyze crisis data and respond accordingly.

In a project called Scanning the Horizon, T4D is curating and synthesizing data from multiple sources through an analytical dashboard, to unlock insights on looming economic and agricultural crises in East Africa, including the largest locust swarm recorded in the last 70 years. When combined with the devastating economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, estimates indicate that East African

governments could face up to a \$114 billion shortfall in financing, and Kenya's government has predicted that over 750,000 jobs will be lost in that country alone.

Combining secondary data sources and visualizing derived statistics and metrics will empower teams with relevant insights to inform decision making on food security and resilience, supporting targeted interventions most relevant to specific geographies and groups of people.



Existing solutions can solve new challenges

In Year Two of the Technology for Impact partnership, Mercy Corps designed a pilot to test a custom app designed to combat dangerous speech and build community cohesion in Nigeria by integrating artificial intelligence with social media channels. In Year Three, the pilot kicked off with an in-person training where the participants — mostly community and religious leaders — had a chance to meet one another and exchange ideas about dangerous speech in their communities, as well as learn about the pilot and design of the app.

Program managers encouraged participants to suggest adjustments to the app, based on their own needs and preferences. Continual adjustments in addition to the fluctuating scope of the app led to challenges and frustrations along the way, which participants communicated to our “helpline” primarily through WhatsApp. Over the course of the pilot, the WhatsApp group became a primary channel for participants from different communities and regions to share information and dispel rumors, revealing how an existing platform can be useful in achieving current goals.



GROWING OUR INFLUENCE

A model for flexible humanitarian aid

Cash and voucher assistance (CVA) has quickly become a preferred modality for humanitarian responses, because it ensures program participants have the flexibility to buy the goods and services that will best meet their needs. Globally, CVA disbursements have increased by 100% in the past four years,¹ but the operational capacities, partnerships and infrastructure required to support large-scale CVA coordination present significant challenges for humanitarian organizations.

Digitizing and automating CVA programming can help overcome these challenges by streamlining targeting and enrollment, delivering transfers at scale, or securely sharing data with peers. Moreover, given the implementation challenge caused by COVID-19, humanitarian organizations are relying even more on technology platforms and partners to remotely deliver timely assistance.

In Year Three, six Mercy Corps programs worked alongside technology partners to transition to digitized and automated systems to improve accountability, transparency and security for communities receiving CVA.

¹ <https://www.calpnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/SOWC2020-Full-Report-1.pdf>

HIGHLIGHTS

We led the design process for a 7-partner consortium in Colombia, reaching over **100,000 vulnerable households** with cash programming.

We implemented digital cash and voucher programming that reached **12,293 households (64,170 individuals)** with over **\$2 million** USD of assistance.

We established a collaborative cash model, with technology as a core component, that is now being replicated by consortia in **4 locations** (Colombia, Gaza, Nepal and Syria).

Digitizing data for cash and voucher programs

DIGITAL PLATFORMS CAN HELP IMPROVE TRANSPARENCY, EXPEDIENCY AND SECURITY.

Digital information management and sharing has long presented challenges for humanitarian workers in constrained contexts, with demands for cost efficiencies and increased accountability putting pressure on responders to consider transitions to digital. The COVID-19 pandemic and need for social distance only exacerbates this demand. With support from the Technology for Impact partnership, Mercy Corps has advanced its approach to cash and voucher assistance (CVA) programming in six countries, improving the quality of data flow and exchange between partner agencies delivering humanitarian CVA.

Starting in Yemen, Mercy Corps introduced electronic voucher programming using systems that enhance transparency, accuracy and safety across its CVA programs. Using the Genius Tags platform, recipient data collected by Mercy Corps is linked to ongoing transfers, allowing teams to better understand and report on the purchasing behavior and transaction history between participants and local merchants. The automation of recordkeeping has also helped expedite payments to participating shopkeepers.

Mercy Corps has also rolled out an electronic voucher program in Myanmar's Rakhine state. Rakhine has been entrenched in a militarized civil war that has forced people to flee their homes, making it hard to access basic services and livelihoods. Many families in Rakhine must rely on humanitarian assistance to meet basic needs. Mercy Corps was the first agency to deploy this type of electronic voucher system in Myanmar, being able to systematically register participants and deliver needed assistance quickly.

And in the Central African Republic, where local lexicons and literacy levels made the team concerned about using a number-based PIN, Mercy Corps conducted focus group discussions testing pattern, color and pictographic-based PINs. We learned that the participants were more likely to remember a short story like "The cat ate the fish from the pond where the camel was drinking" than "7362." Interfaces were thus updated to allow individuals to set a sequence of animals as their personal PIN.

Mercy Corps also promotes collaboration with other humanitarian organizations to provide more effective and accountable cash programming at scale. Digitizing and automating data flows, along with implementing shared data standards, are integral pieces supporting these collaborations. The use of well-integrated or shared platforms reduces redundant data, facilitates analytics and helps prevent duplicate entries within caseloads supported by different implementers. Being able to access data quickly across organizations reduces time to deliver transfers, complete audits and provide data insights that inform high-level programmatic decisions in the moment.

Data protection and security is a top priority, especially when it involves sensitive personal data of program participants. Using authenticated and agreed-upon platforms, Mercy Corps and other consortium agencies are able to better protect and cross-check participant data. Moreover, collecting transaction-level data, like individual transaction amounts, helps Mercy Corps and partnering organizations flag potential inconsistencies.

Mercy Corps' innovations in cash and voucher programming have long been recognized throughout the humanitarian sector. Donors acknowledge Mercy Corps' enhanced efficiency and effectiveness in setting up collaborative cash models that go beyond harmonized technology platforms to a holistic set of shared standards across tools, ways of working and governance structures.



“The technology is great because we have been able to pioneer new cash programming, and other agencies have seen the beneficial impact.”

—Anthony Etim
Program Manager



Enhancing operations with new digital systems

Anthony Etim, one of Mercy Corps’ cash program managers, has years of experience delivering humanitarian aid around the world. Most recently, he’s been instrumental in rolling out digitized cash and voucher systems in Myanmar and Nigeria.

Digital systems have changed Etim’s job tremendously, and now he can focus on improving current programs and rolling out new ones more quickly. Previously, delivering humanitarian aid meant navigating complex and time-consuming logistical challenges. “It was hard to find vendors that could get all the commodities on location on time, and moving commodities was always filled with delays and breakdowns of vehicles, and robbery on the road,” Etim says.

Digital CVA has eliminated the need for the delivery of physical goods in many cases. Instead, program teams work with local vendors to meet people’s needs in a way that doesn’t disrupt local markets with an influx of supplies.

“The [digital CVA] system allows vendors to go cashless,” which reduces risk of theft and robbery, Etim explains. “The technology is great, because we have been able to pioneer new cash programming, and other agencies have seen the beneficial impact.”

Aligning with governmental social protection programs in the face of COVID-19

COVID-19 is devastating already strained economies, with the majority of the downturn borne by the most vulnerable. Informal income sources are disappearing, and typical coping mechanisms are drying up. Families that are unable to meet their critical basic needs are not able to abide by prevention measures, which will drive the transmission of COVID-19 among those already most at risk.

In response, governments around the world have enacted social protection programs to get cash support to citizens. But as state-led social payments continue to grow, demands

on the aid community's own interventions and capacity to support them expand in parallel. In Colombia and Gaza, Mercy Corps has been leading a harmonization effort between humanitarian CVA programming and state-administered social protection programs to enhance state capacity and better coordinate consistent delivery to maximize resources across aid and governmental systems.



Building partnerships requires more than technology

Most of our cash assistance occurs in some of the world's most complex infrastructural and regulatory environments; as context and needs rapidly shift, so does pressure on financial service providers to deliver. Increasingly, teams must diversify cash delivery channels so they can rapidly adjust operations to overcome sudden restrictions to mobility, liquidity crunches or lack of access to formal identity documentation.

Developing successful partnerships with financial service providers takes time, though. Trust building is required before stakeholders can commit to adjusting policies in favor of typically unbanked clientele, or to agree upon shared technical aims or advanced platform integrations. In short, the ability to fully digitize a cash transfer process — from enrollment to payment — is contingent on the maturity of a country's payment ecosystem and regulatory environment and deep collaboration between partners.

Automated CARM system

Community Accountability Reporting Mechanisms (CARM) are part of a key policy behind Mercy Corps' global commitment to accountability and effectiveness. It invites Mercy Corps program participants to provide feedback, suggestions and concerns related to programming, staff and all interactions with Mercy Corps in a manner that is safe, confidential and accessible.

   
1 PARTICIPANTS SEND CARM COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK THROUGH EMAIL, PHONE, IN PERSON OR DROP BOX

 **2** CARM TEAM MEMBERS DIGITIZE THE CASES IN AN AUTOMATED SYSTEM

 **3** AUTOMATED SCRIPTS FORWARD EMAILS TO APPROPRIATE STAFF FOR FOLLOW UP; DASHBOARD DISPLAYS REAL-TIME DATA

 **4** MERCY CORPS IS ABLE TO ADJUST PROGRAMMING TO MEET NEEDS

IMPROVING SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

New ways to enhance transparency and accountability

Community Accountability and Reporting Mechanisms (CARM) give members of local communities and Mercy Corps team members a safe, confidential and accessible way to provide feedback on humanitarian programming through locked suggestion boxes, toll-free hotlines and WhatsApp messages. Mercy Corps program teams adjust their response based on the nature of the feedback, making any necessary programmatic or safeguarding adaptations.

While Mercy Corps has implemented CARM for many years, the approach varied across different country teams and was in need of better global oversight. Over the past year, T4D has supported this important agency priority by supporting and expanding an initiative to automate emails with coded scripts, build digital databases, and streamline data collection and storage with digital apps. Now, the global CARM toolkit includes resources for country teams that want to develop automated processes.

HIGHLIGHTS

We automated CARM processes in the Gaza office, saving the team roughly **2 hours per day** between the data-collection and follow-up phases of each case.

We helped reach **38,200 people** in Haiti with COVID-19 information. 50% accessed information relevant to children's health, and 18% completed myth-busting modules.

We trained **33 Mercy Corps team members** across 4 countries on digital data management and tools.

Automating mechanisms for handling participant feedback

STREAMLINING FEEDBACK PROCESSES HELPS TRACK, PRIORITIZE AND RESOLVE PROGRAM ISSUES.

As a global policy, CARM is essential to improving programs throughout their life cycle, and our intention is to ensure individuals have access to make a report in a way that is safe, comfortable and convenient for them. T4D's support opened new avenues for programmatic decision making by supporting CARM teams through minimum standards and beyond with data-informed analytics and automated systems.

Before these processes were automated, Mercy Corps Gaza would receive about 200 cases per month, but only had the personnel to process 15 to 20 of those cases. With this overwhelming caseload, the Gaza team had to prioritize the most serious cases, delaying or preventing thorough processing of lower-priority programmatic feedback or suggestions for improvement.

With T4D's support, the Gaza and Yemen teams have integrated their existing CARM systems with ONA data collection tools, Google Sheets and Google Scripts, automating many steps of the CARM process, including data collection, data aggregation and email follow-up. These technologies save teams approximately one hour per case by streamlining data entry, reporting and escalating cases into one seamless step. Moreover, the automated data

processing and reporting has allowed teams to visualize real-time CARM data with dashboards and reports. These technologies help program teams take in more feedback from participants than before and make decisions more quickly based on real-time data.

Between the automated databases and email follow-ups, teams are now able to process more CARM cases than before. These improvements have also mitigated human error by automating tedious tasks prone to mistakes and optimized data efficiencies. T4D's interventions have helped teams protect participants as well as listen and respond to their feedback and adapt programs accordingly. To date, T4D has advised eight country offices on implementing technologies to support CARM operations and has developed a CARM automation manual to further support automation in other Mercy Corps' offices.



“It’s a unique experience; we’re the only ones in Gaza using [digital case management software], and we’re sharing our expertise with our partners.”

—Basma Zakout
MEL Coordinator



Building capacity for digital data collection

Training team members on digital data collection is the first step to improved program analytics.

In 2019, the T4D team launched a training program to develop the data management skills of Mercy Corps’ field teams. So far the program has helped teams in four countries identify fit-for-purpose software, optimize data pipelines from collection to visualization, and improve overall program outcomes.

Basma Zakout, a Mercy Corps monitoring, evaluation & learning coordinator in Gaza, and members of her team completed the training in November and immediately began applying new skills to improve surveying. “We needed [the case management software] to facilitate a number of forms to track vulnerable households and conduct baseline surveys and post-distribution surveys,” Zakout explains. The digitized data tools have replaced about six paper-based surveys per household.

Using their new skills, Zakout and her team have been able to collect data, perform analysis calculations in real-time and see results as data comes in. Zakout’s team built logic and validation questions into their survey forms to ensure accuracy and save time, where in the past, data collection and entry was prone to human error.

The training also opened new doors for data-driven decision making. The efficiency of the digital tools empowered Zakout’s team to identify where program participants were not receiving enough hygiene items in their fight against COVID-19, and realign assistance where it’s needed most or refer participants to other programs.

“We are now experts at this,” Zakout says. Their mastery of the digital case management software has empowered the Gaza team to win new donor proposals and led to new responsibilities. Now the Mercy Corps team is leading assistance projects and their data management in partnership with other international humanitarian actors in Gaza. So far Zakout’s team has shared their training with over 20 field surveyors on projects that have impacted 3,500 vulnerable households in Gaza.

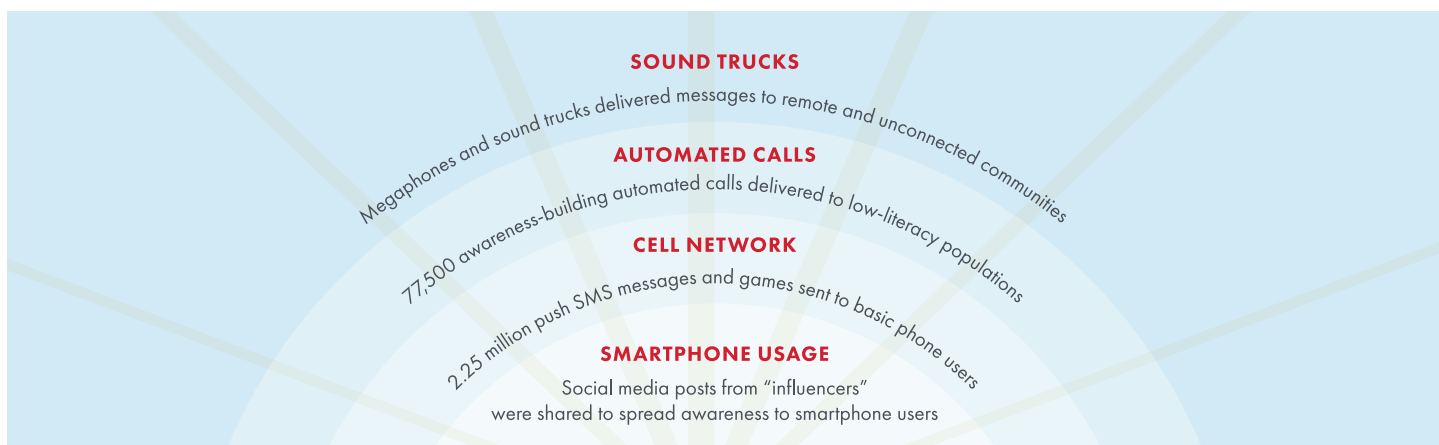
Responding to the stigma and fear associated with COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic hit Haiti with 2,500 cases by June 2, 2020, with a doubling time of five days, creating massive social challenges in addition to the public health crisis. To help, Mercy Corps focused on implementing information-sharing programs designed to mitigate violence stemming from stigmas, fear and gender-based conflicts. Mercy Corps targeted people with disabilities, parents and caregivers in their fight against COVID-19.

In May, Mercy Corps launched a hotline to combat fear-based violence and stigma toward COVID-19 patients, with an emphasis on youth, infected persons, older people and other at-risk populations. In collaboration with a mobile-

phone-based information services company and the Haitian Ministry of Health, Mercy Corps adapted and created messages to promote social distancing and self-quarantine through five key formats. These included general COVID-19 information, children's lessons designed to minimize fear, gamified scenarios, rumor quizzes and a survey to assess how people were feeling.

Within a month, 2.25 million text messages were sent and 77,500 robo calls were made. At the end of the program, over 38,000 people had engaged with digital content about COVID-19.



Leveraging external data sources is dependent on better, more efficient leveraging of our own

Mercy Corps' data landscape is a loosely connected ecosystem of technologies and practices, built piece by piece over time by stakeholders with their own platform preferences. As a result, we are now at a place where, for example, program data usually doesn't tie into finance data, and data tends to be siloed within country teams or sectoral approaches.

At the outset of the Technology for Impact partnership, we anticipated the greatest challenge to improving data-driven decision making would be building a culture where decision makers trusted and utilized insights from diverse external data sources in conjunction with our own internal data. However, we have found a challenge that precedes that shift: getting more efficient and unified about our own data ingestion, analysis and visualization as a foundation for asking meaningful questions using external data. This means working much more on our internal infrastructure, and specifically, harmonizing the technologies and approaches we use.



NOW FOR YEAR 4

This upcoming year, we will continue to adapt and leverage our initiatives to respond to the needs caused by COVID-19. This includes meeting immediate needs for cash support and providing digital platforms for community engagement when in-person interactions are discouraged. Many elements of the Technology for Impact partnership are beginning to align in new ways, and we are excited to field test last-mile connectivity solutions that facilitate access to digital information in remote settings and predictive analytics to improve data-driven decision making.

We will work to ensure that everything we have created and implemented — all new knowledge gained and capacity developed — is sustained for years to come and shared broadly.

We have much to do in this never-ending challenge to help build secure, productive and just communities, but we are more energized and indispensable than ever before. And of course, we remain ever grateful for the unwavering support of Cisco in helping us move our goals forward amid evolving global realities.

T4D TEAM

Adrienne Brooks

Technology for Development Advisor

Alexa Schmidt

Interim Director, Technology for Impact

Alicia Morrison

Data for Impact Advisor

Farah Haddad

Program Specialist

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John Traylor

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Julius Adewopo

Technology for Development Advisor

Mary Rocheleau

Senior Technical Program Manager

Ric Shreves

Director, Emerging Technology

Rosa Akbari

Technology for Development Senior Advisor

PARTNERS

Technology Collaboration



ACCENTURE
DEVELOPMENT



ESRI



ONN



TABLEAU



TRANSLATORS
WITHOUT BORDERS

Partnerships



THE DEVELOPER SOCIETY



DIMAGI



GENIUS TAGS



NAGIS



R3

Peer Consortia



CASH LEARNING
PARTNERSHIP (CALP)



GSMA MOBILE 4
HUMANITARIAN



ID2020



NETHOPE

Implementation



CARITAS



INTERNATIONAL RESCUE
COMMITTEE



INTERNEWS



ITALIAN RED CROSS



JOEL NAFUMA
REFUGEE CENTER



ST MARTIN PARISH

Funding



CISCO



FACEBOOK



MICROSOFT

Advisory



ADAPT PEACEBUILDING



DO NO DIGITAL HARM INITIATIVE

Research



HARVARD

“In the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic, technology is more relevant than ever before. For vulnerable communities, access to WiFi, digital payments and mobile-based information services are essential to maintaining lives and sustaining livelihoods.”

—Tae Yoo, Senior Vice President
Corporate Affairs and Corporate
Social Responsibility
Cisco

ABOUT MERCY CORPS

Mercy Corps is a leading global organization powered by the belief that a better world is possible. In disaster, in hardship, in more than 40 countries around the world, we partner to put bold solutions into action—helping people triumph over adversity and build stronger communities from within. Now, and for the future.



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