



# FUTURE PROOF

PROVING THE POTENTIAL OF YOUNG PEOPLE.



# OUR APPROACH TO PARTNERING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

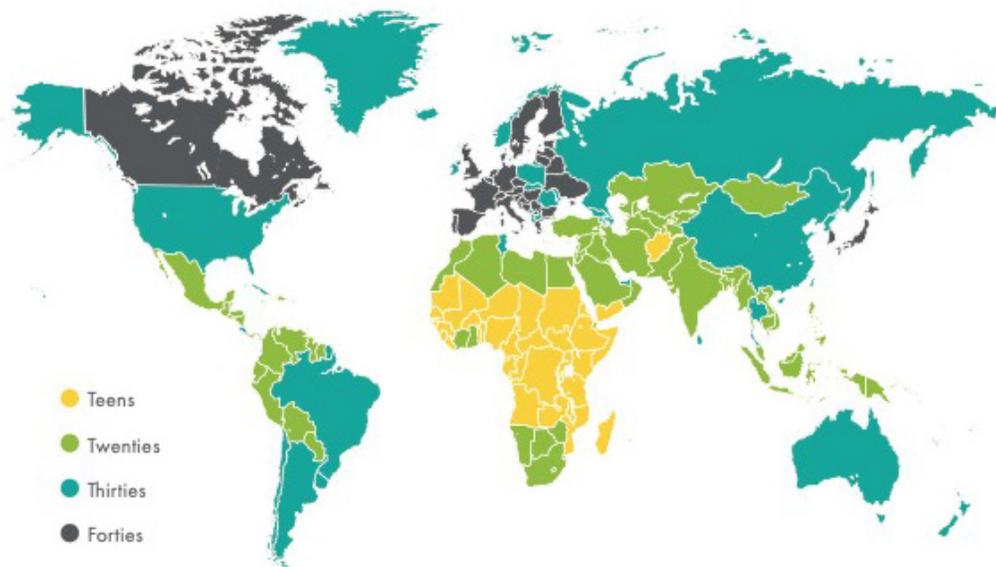
SEPTEMBER 2019

Today, our world is younger than ever before. The median age in the countries where Mercy Corps works tell an important story: Niger, 15 years; Mali, 16 years; Gaza, 18 years; Guatemala, 21 years; and Ethiopia, 17.6 years. Dozens of other countries are experiencing similar demographic trends. Partnering with young people to cope during crisis, adapt to adversity and drive forward development is our organization's call to action. In order to do this, we must engage adolescents and youth, referred to collectively as young people, who often make up the majority of those living in the communities where we work.

## We invest in young people as the leaders of today

Nearly 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 and 24 are making their way in this world.<sup>1</sup> They are brimming with hope, using innovative technologies, grappling with constantly evolving challenges and charting the way forward. The vast majority—nine out of 10—live in less developed countries where they are confronted with unprecedented social, economic and cultural shifts, and challenges that impede their ability to contribute to growth and stability. Young people confront these shifts and challenges at a time when their own psychological and physical development is undergoing rapid change. In many places where we work they face daily risks and obstacles in their homes and communities, often without social support systems. They demand and deserve our engagement – and the engagement of their peers, parents and leaders – as partners for change. Together we can foster access to existing opportunities or create new ones where few exist. The choices that young people make today and in the future – influenced by the people and events around them – will contribute to the possibility for peace, stability and progress in the world's most fragile places. We choose to be their partners in making that possibility a reality.

### Median Age Across the World



<sup>1</sup> UNCEF. (April 2016) Adolescent Demographics. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/adolescents/demographics/>

Since 2010, Mercy Corps has worked with more than 3.5 million crisis affected young people across our global portfolio. We believe that through partnering with young people we advance our mission to alleviate suffering, poverty and oppression by helping people build secure, productive and just communities. Prioritizing investments in adolescents and youth will drive recovery and development, decrease fragility and break cycles of violence. Young people are not only our future leaders, **they are the leaders of today.**

At Mercy Corps, we believe that young people who live in crisis-prone societies can be transformative change agents rather than demographic liabilities. Yet they are often overlooked when it comes to funding and services. Far too often, young people are thought of as passive recipients of support rather than influential stakeholders worthy of engaging in the community development process. Within this demographic, we focus heavily on adolescents (10–19 years old), who are coming of age in places where life is in a constant state of disruption and insecurity. Decisions they make now can set the course for them, their families, and society to thrive or decline socially, politically and economically over their lifetimes.

## We directly and meaningfully engage young people

Young people have long been underserved and misunderstood. Displacement and conflict only increases their risk, invisibility and isolation. The result is that most humanitarian and development programs do not directly and meaningfully engage young people, making them blind to the barriers young people face, and in some cases, unknowingly cause harm.

### The Ladder of Youth Participation



Mercy Corps works to partner with young people so they can become the change they want to see. This is our core principle. **We facilitate young people initiating action in their communities and sharing in decisionmaking with community stakeholders** (Level 8 above). Young people know what will work for them and what won't. Talking with them (Level 5 above) about their priorities, fears, daily commitments and

safe and unsafe places in the community helps shape the design of any service or activity. We also know that adolescents and youth value mentorship in the form of peers, role models and adults who can help them expand their horizon of what is possible and how to get there (Levels 6 and 8 above). Finally, we expect that as young people become more engaged and influential in their families and communities, they will initiate and direct activities that promote social development (Level 7 above).

We are intentional about finding, reaching and engaging adolescents. If we don't have a clear picture on exactly who is in the community, we won't reach them. We account for sex- and age-specific vulnerabilities, needs and capacities and co-design program activities accordingly. We use mapping and mobile data tools, like the Girl Roster™ and Boy Matrix within the [I'm Here Approach](#), to understand the demographic of young people in a particular community, the challenges they face, and the services and opportunities available to them. We explore the barriers they face and the transitions they are going through because they differ according to factors like age and sex. The emotional, social, educational and economic needs and opportunities of a 24 year old are very different from a 14 year old. We won't have the intended impact unless we tailor activities to specific sex and age segments—and only then with the guidance and input from the young people themselves, using tools like [Skills and Knowledge for Youth Leaders \(SKYLS\)](#) or [Building Girls' Protective Assets™](#).<sup>2</sup>

## We see the big picture and support integrated programs

Our Future Proof Framework represents our conceptual approach to working with young people and informs how we design, implement and evaluate our programs. Daily life for a young person is a rich and complicated experience that intersects sectors, issues, challenges and solutions. This demands an integrated approach that addresses the complexity of their emotional, physical, educational, social and economic needs. An adolescent's path to adulthood is not linear with smooth, predictable transitions between milestones. Particularly in fragile environments, there are barriers, obstacles, setbacks and exposure to safety risks. Investing in the well-being of adolescents and youth living in complex environments multiplies the power of education, civic and community action, and economic engagement.

## Future Proof

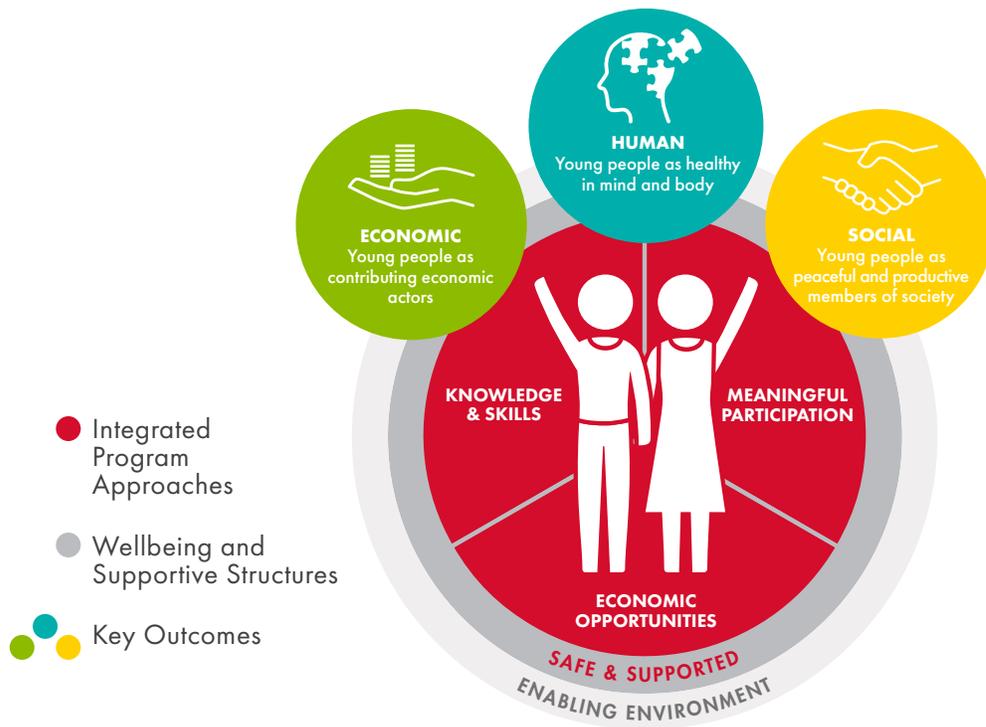
Our goal is to work with young people so that they are “**Future Proof**,” meaning they are ready for what comes their way; they can confront the obstacles of adolescence and young adulthood with resiliency and resolve; and they are able to demonstrate their value to their families, communities and society. By working with local civil society partners, private sector partners and local governments, young people can be seen as an opportunity for transformation rather than an inevitable liability. They are, in large part, why we believe a better world is possible.

Our Future Proof framework (following page) is a multi-sector approach that places safety and well-being at its foundation and layers on support for knowledge and skills development, meaningful participation, and economic opportunities.

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<sup>2</sup> Building Girls' Protective Assets, Population Council, 2016.

# Future Proof Framework



## Safe and Supported + Enabling Environment

### Safe and Supported

In the places where Mercy Corps works young people often face emotional and physical threats and endure extreme stress due to violence, displacement, neglect, and the need to assume adult roles to support themselves and their families. Feeling safe, hopeful and supported is critical to successfully learning, participating in community decisionmaking, and creating and pursuing economic opportunities. We partner with young people and their communities to promote safety and support by applying a protection mindset and promoting psychosocial support.

#### APPLY A PROTECTION MINDSET

In crisis and fragility, people must manage risks across every aspect of their lives—from managing family relationships to undertaking daily tasks to confront the unpredictable and sometimes violent, exploitative and undignified circumstances surrounding them. These protection issues threaten people’s safety, dignity and inclusion, and, ultimately, negatively impact their psychosocial well-being as well as affect their ability to meet basic needs and manage their daily tasks. How these protection issues occur and the impact they have on individuals depends on a variety of factors, including sex, age, ability, identity and associations. We can have more impact in our work when we apply a protection mindset. This requires that we undertake regular analysis of the safety, dignity and inclusion challenges that affect different people differently.

Protection issues impact different populations in different ways.

- In fragile settings, adolescent girls' mobility is often restricted to the home where families feel they are safer, but then they are deprived of finishing school, attending vocational training, or obtaining basic information on assistance that could be useful.
- Adolescent boys may also miss out on education because of pressure to contribute to the family income. As such, they are often placed in unsafe and exploitative working conditions.

Affected populations may have similar overarching concerns around safety, dignity and access, but individuals within the population experience these issues differently. Individuals have different levels of access and control over resources depending on who they are: male or female, young or old, wealthy or poor, elite or marginalized, or their health status and mental and physical abilities.



For more information, please see: [Applying a Protection Mindset for Safer, More Dignified, and Inclusive Environments](#).

#### PROMOTE PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

Adolescents, particularly those living in fragile and insecure communities, are likely to experience profound stress<sup>3</sup> at a critical time in their lives. Facing multiple shocks (i.e., violence, displacement, neglect) over an extended period of time can result in changes in adolescents' brain chemistry that reduces their ability to assess risk and can lead them to detach from themselves, their families, and communities.

Much of our programming focuses on psychological support interventions that strengthens family and community support interventions, the foundation of the IASC psychosocial intervention pyramid.<sup>4</sup> We support family and community strengthening through safe spaces and peer support, parental engagement, linkages with mentors, and a focus on growing life skills and interpersonal skills lays the foundations for adolescents to interact with a nurturing and enabling environment. Not only do enabling environments help adolescents learn how to be confident in themselves and with others but can have real healing effects for adolescents who have experienced trauma and need focused or professional support to integrate them back into supportive networks. Mercy Corps' focus on strengthening supportive systems provides the platform where they can reintegrate while they stabilize their well being and sense of belonging.

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<sup>3</sup> Profound Stress is defined as the prolonged, and at times overwhelming, threat to the physical or psychological wholeness of the person. This is also often referred to as Toxic Stress or Chronic Stress.

<sup>4</sup> IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings, 2007. <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/mental-health-and-psychosocial-support-emergency-settings-0/documents-public/iasc-guidelines-mental>

## **PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT FOR ADOLESCENTS**

Mercy Corps Jordan has developed a [Profound Stress And Attunement Framework called Hearts and Heads](#) to help adolescents reconnect with themselves, their families and communities; to regain a sense of personal safety; to establish healthy relationships; to build empathy; to develop critical thinking skills; to set short and long-term goals; and to engage in civic action projects that promote social cohesion and non-violence. It builds awareness around gender equity and power, and protective assets. This kind of holistic, psychosocial well-being programming is not just 'nice to have,' it can be truly life saving by curtailing destructive behaviors with long lasting consequences stemming from profound stress.

Integrated into the PSA approach is programing that educates young people on how their brain chemistry is affected during periods of prolonged stress, and how they can be proactive to get back on the path of positive development. Without being responsive to the impact stress has on cognitive and social functioning we risk having limited impact, and not maximizing limited resources. Once able to meet basic needs through positive coping skills, young people are better able to absorb new information, knowledge and skills. In addition to rigorous internal evaluations, [research](#) with Yale University examined the impact of this approach and measured changes in stress over time among Syrian and Jordanian adolescents.

For Mercy Corp's Jordan Hearts and Heads training and facilitation resources in Arabic and English go [here](#).

For more information, please see: [IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings](#).

### **Facilitate an Enabling Environment**

Working with communities to develop an enabling environment that helps young people cope during crisis, adapt to adversity and drive forward development is imperative to Mercy Corps. A young person's enabling environment refers to their relationships with others, their values, services and opportunities available to them, their society's rules, and the physical space in which they live. An enabling environment promotes young people's ability to achieve social, emotional, and economic wellbeing.

In Nigeria, Mercy Corps' Educating Nigerian Girls in New Enterprises (ENGINE) program fostered an enabling environment where adolescent girls thrive. Through advocacy campaigns and private-public partnerships, ENGINE supported nearly 18,000 girls to pursue education or start a small business. To cultivate support for girls' education, ENGINE sensitized and educated gatekeepers through meetings; held meetings with school heads, government school boards and faith leaders, and trained media groups on effective messaging. ENGINE secured national identity cards for nearly 9,000 girls, enabling them to vote and open bank accounts; and worked with the Central Bank of Nigeria to allow girls to open bank accounts without a minimum deposit. Data shows that 94% of in-school girls reported improved self-confidence; 74% of out-of-school girls started a business or expanded one; and 100% of gatekeepers reported willingness to send girls to school when resources are limited.



## Integrated Approaches

### Knowledge and Skills

We know that young people need access to relevant and in-demand knowledge and skills. Whether through formal or non-formal education settings, knowledge and skills must be both useful today and set young people up for success in the future. Currently, of the 263 million children, adolescents and youth out-of-school in the world, 77 percent are either adolescents not in lower secondary school (60 million) or upper secondary school (142 million). Many adolescents living in poverty and youth in low income countries have never been to school and others that have dropped out are expected never to return.<sup>5</sup>

#### NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

An alternative and innovative approach to supporting out-of-school adolescents and youth to learn relevant knowledge and skills through non-formal education is desperately needed. Non-formal education provides knowledge and skills that are critical to enabling young people to navigate a healthy, productive and safe present and future.

#### Types of Education

<p><b>FORMAL EDUCATION</b> leads to a recognized award, diploma or certificate</p>	<p>Institutionalized, intentional and planned through public organizations and recognized private bodies and, in their totality, make up the formal education system of a country.<sup>6</sup> Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary, Lower and Upper Secondary education, tertiary education</li> <li>• Special needs education, vocational, technical and professional education</li> <li>• Second chance education</li> <li>• Apprenticeships, practical applied learning, residential practices</li> <li>• Validated non-formal and informal learning</li> </ul>
<p><b>NON-FORMAL EDUCATION</b> leads to a non-formal certificate or none at all</p>	<p>Institutionalized, intentional and planned by an education provider and is an addition, alternative and/or a complement to formal education within the process of lifelong learning of individuals.<sup>7</sup> Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth and adult literacy programmes</li> <li>• Work skills training, professional development, internships</li> <li>• Out-of-school programmes, life-skills training, health and hygiene, family planning</li> <li>• Social or cultural development, organized sport, arts, handicrafts</li> </ul>
<p><b>INFORMAL EDUCATION</b> no award</p>	<p>Also called “Informal Learning”, includes learning that is intentional but not institutionalized and less organized and structured than formal or non-formal education. May include learning activities that occur in the family, workplace, local community, and daily life.<sup>8</sup> Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-directed, family-directed, socially directed learning: workplace, family, local community, daily life</li> <li>• Incidental learning: reading newspapers, listening to radio, visiting museums</li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> Global Education Monitoring Report. Education for People and Planet: Creating Sustainable Futures for All, 2016. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002457/245752e.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> UNESCO. UOE Data Collection on Formal Education, 2018. [http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/uoe-data-collection-manual-2018-en\\_0.pdf](http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/uoe-data-collection-manual-2018-en_0.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <http://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/non-formal-education>

<sup>8</sup> <http://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/informal-learning>

At Mercy Corps, we emphasize providing high quality and recognized non-formal education for out-of-school adolescents and youth. This often includes critical transferable skills that can be applied across a variety of settings including employment, entrepreneurship and civic engagement. Layering onto these transferable skills we work with local partners to teach demand-driven vocational training to support young people generating income. For those interested in returning to formal school, we support their re-entry into the formal system.

For more materials see Mercy Corps' [Transferable Skills Curriculum](#).

## LIFE SKILLS

Knowledge of and access to social and health services is another area of great influence on young people's development. For girls, access to sexual and reproductive health services and information is key. Many adolescent girls are poor, have little control over household resources, little knowledge about sexual and reproductive health issues, lack the ability to make their own decisions about their health and have no access to services that meet their specific needs. This is why Mercy Corps connects adolescent girls with trusted and safe partners that provide services and information to build girls' health assets.

For more information, see: [Education in Emergencies: Landscape Review and Opportunities for Mercy Corps' Engagement](#).

## Meaningful Civic Participation

Meaningful participation happens when **young people are prepared and have opportunities to safely express opinions and influence decisions that impact their lives**. Good decision-making requires young people's knowledge, experiences, views and values; ultimately increasing the acceptance, sustainability and impact of decisions. When communities recognize and demand meaningful participation from young people they gain confidence, increase their status and strengthen their relationships with peers and adults, and communities ultimately benefit from their bold ideas and openness to change.

There is tremendous benefit and opportunity when young people engage with their communities, understand their potential influence in the public sphere and are equipped with the skills and resources needed to earn a living. Community participation also helps young people gain agency and purpose—in some cases it enables them to participate in righting an injustice or protecting communities that have suffered in the past.<sup>9</sup> Around the world, Mercy Corps works with young people to contribute to solutions by expanding their engagement and influence with local actors, building broader community demand for their participation, and facilitating their active engagement in the design, implementation and evaluation of programs. We work with parents and other stakeholders to garner buy-in and open a space to empower adolescent boys and girls to be civic partners and leaders. We do this because we know that parents and leaders can be their biggest barriers if they see adolescents as a threat. Without their support it can lead to harm, especially when young people push against norms.

## CIVIC AWARENESS AND RESPONSIBILITY

We increase young people's civic awareness and equip them with the skills needed to demand their rights and hold leaders accountable. Our process often begins by increasing young people's awareness of their rights and responsibilities as citizens, and supporting them to develop their self-confidence and leadership

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<sup>9</sup> World Bank, Development and the Next Generation, World Development Report, 2007.

skills. This can and should be done with all young people ages 10-24, even though the opportunity and responsibility to vote often comes later at age 18 or older. It is not possible for young people to meaningfully participate in governance processes if they are unaware of the opportunities to engage or the rights to which they are entitled. We ensure young people can access information about the institutions, policies and processes that affect their lives.

## CIVIC ACTION

As young people begin to recognize they can add value and have the skills needed to share their ideas and insights, we help them understand the power of collaboration and collective action. Mercy Corps creates safe spaces where youth can convene to identify common priorities and develop a shared voice, often across ethnic groups or host-refugee divides. We provide targeted coaching as they develop strategies for action and campaigns for change.

For more information, please see [Leaders of Today: Engaging Young People in Governance](#).

## Economic Opportunities

Employment, entrepreneurship and other income-generating opportunities often provide more than economic benefits—they provide young people with a purpose and a sense of status and belonging. At the same time, many young adolescents are forced to earn an income at an early age because of their families' dire economic reality. Mercy Corps advocates for protection against child labor and exploitative conditions, while also creating avenues for young people to gain skills and transition safely to decent and equitable work opportunities. Mercy Corps specifically promotes work that is productive, equitable and stable. This is particularly important for adolescent girls and young women, and may include safety initiatives tied to transportation and restrooms, and the inclusion of female mentors and staff in the workplace. To this end, Mercy Corps and the Women's Refugee Commission, piloted the [CLARA: Cohort Livelihoods and Risk Analysis](#) tool to help us design with intention for adolescent girls and their economic aspirations. CLARA is an operational approach that captures risks associated with livelihoods, including GBV, as well as potential risks arising from programs in response to crises.

Employment programming for adolescents and youth is often most effective when layered with other holistic interventions such as mentoring and transferable skills.



Mercy Corps' economic empowerment programs are demand-driven. We conduct market analyses to assess the changing needs of the private sector and other potential employers to ensure that the skills young people are developing will match the needs of local economies. As many young people have limited

social capital and professional networks, Mercy Corps also facilitates links with local businesses and potential employers.

Mercy Corps' [Youth Employment Cheat Sheet](#) highlights our successes and best practices in economic programming for youth and our [World of Work](#) document provides an overview of Mercy Corps' approach to employment programming. For more information, please see [Guidance on Safe and Decent Work for Adolescents and Youth](#).

**OUR THEORY OF CHANGE**  
When young people feel safe and supported they will be able to learn relevant knowledge and skills, and engage civically, peacefully and economically, enabling them to lead secure and productive lives.



## Future Proof Outcomes

The following outcome areas guide how we aim to measure the effectiveness of our work. These descriptions should help inform Monitoring and Evaluation efforts and indicator development.



### **Human Capital: Young people are healthy in body and mind.**

Young people are able to recognize signs of psychological stress and receive the support needed to positively cope with challenges. Stress does not limit a young person's ability to learn knowledge and skills, or engage socially and economically. Physical health and safety is maintained, disability does not lead to exclusion, and decisions about sexual and reproductive health are informed and made autonomously, especially for girls.



### **Social Capital: Young people are peaceful and productive members of society.**

Young people have access to supportive social networks and same-sex groups where trust is built and sensitive topics can be discussed. Guidance and support is offered by parents, peers, and mentors. Young people feel that local leaders and decision-makers respect their opinions and consider them when making decisions that impact their lives. As a result, young people do not feel the need to resort to violence to address grievances or concerns.



### **Economic Capital: Young people are contributing economic actors.**

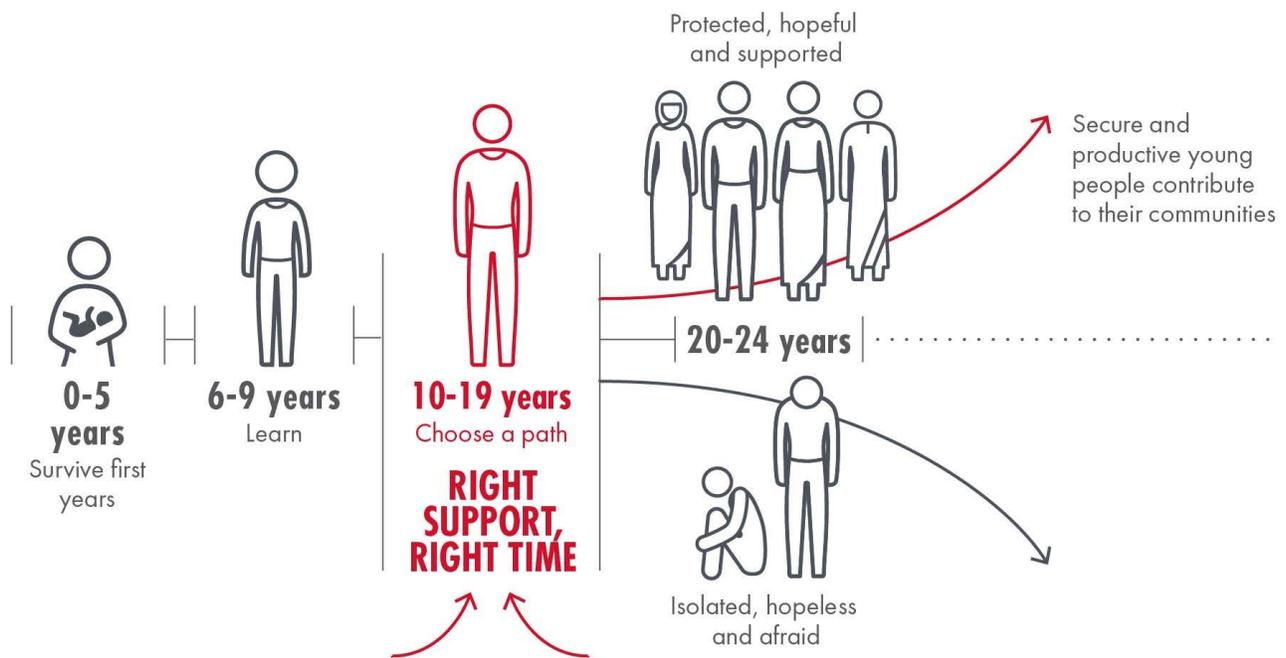
Young people are able to access decent, safe and productive work. Economic engagement by young people such as employment, entrepreneurship and other income-generating opportunities provide youth with a purpose and a sense of status and belonging. Young people can access vocational training, have knowledge of budgeting and saving, understand how markets work and where opportunity awaits, and can access financial services.

# Our Distinctives

## Adolescents

Mercy Corps focuses on adolescents because the decade of development from 10–19 years is filled with key life transitions such as sexual initiation, secondary school completion, economic activity, and in many cases, marriage and parenting. Adolescents’ brains are under development, full of creative potential and open to adopting new norms and behaviors. The ability of adolescents to navigate a productive, hopeful path is dependent on their ability to build strategies to overcome the inevitable challenges they face. Investing in adolescents and equipping them with the skills needed to make better choices, cope with and respond positively to situations of psychological stress, and confront challenges non-violently, builds their resilience and helps communities become more resilient to potentially derailing events.

### Pathways to Progress: The Right Support at the Right Time



## Age Differentiation

Young people are a diverse group with unique capacities and vulnerabilities. Whether a young male pastoralist in northern Uganda, an adolescent girl at high risk of Gender Based Violence in Colombia, or disabled adolescent girls and boys pursuing their education in Jordan, our programs reach and partner with young people through a specialized approach that is tailored for their unique life circumstances and abilities. We design and implement programs with the needs of these different demographics in mind by first conducting a gender assessment and by regular monitoring and analysis of age- and sex-specific data to apply learnings to our work.

Mercy Corps segments young people into the following groups:

### **Young Adolescents (10-14 years old)**

The years between 10 and 14 years old are a transitional period from childhood to adolescents. Very young adolescents are gaining the knowledge and skills needed for healthy and safe lives, as well as learning behaviors and attitudes that will shape their adulthood. Engaging very young adolescents and their parents can contribute to more positive futures by supporting them to stay in school, gain the knowledge and skills needed to navigate difficult decisions, build positive social networks and delay early sexual initiation or early marriage.

### **Older Adolescents (15-19 years old)**

Older adolescents can be both very independent and reliant on their elders and peers for direction. Many have already taken on adult responsibilities such as earning an income, becoming a parent, or fighting in a conflict. They are often expected to contribute to their families and communities. However, they can also become susceptible to abuse and exploitation because of their inexperience or limited social networks. Older adolescents need to be supported to stay in school, build transferable skills for safe work, form equitable relationships, and access information for healthy lives.

### **Older Youth (20-24 years old)**

As adolescents grow into young adulthood they continue to make critical choices that influence their ability to engage economically and civically, start families, and reduce their exposure to or participation in violence. Mercy Corps supports youth who may need opportunities to develop skills, generate income, broaden social networks, develop a greater sense of safety and belonging, or engage in local-, regional- or national-level decisionmaking.<sup>10</sup>

For more information, see: [Gender Analysis Framework](#) and [Who Knows? to Knowing Who! Collecting Age- and Sex- Specific Data](#).

## **Social Inclusion**

To reach the most marginalized we must think beyond age and gender. At Mercy Corps, we strive to understand young people's intersecting identities that create barriers to access, participation and partnership, as well as their capacities and hopes for the future. This allows us to engage them as partners in building innovative solutions that foster the change they want to realize for their lives and society.

### **Age and Gender as a Starting Point**

Mercy Corps' gender and inclusion approach strives to ensure the fair treatment of all people, which demands that we recognize the complex identities of young people. Identity goes beyond age and gender, and is shaped by religion, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and experiences. Gender and social norms also dictate expectations for young people's contributions, opportunities, privileges, and safety. Being intentional about *who* we want to reach through programming is critical to having impact. Programs should use gender analysis tools, track gender indicators and disaggregate data by sex and age in order to deliberately consider and respond to gender dynamics that affect young people.

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<sup>10</sup> USAID Policy Youth in Development: Realizing the Demographic Opportunity. October, 2012.  
[http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/Youth\\_in\\_Development\\_Policy\\_0.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/Youth_in_Development_Policy_0.pdf)

For more information, see: [Mercy Corps' Gender Integration Toolkit](#) and [Mercy Corps' Gender Approach](#).

## **Include All Abilities**

Adolescents with disabilities often face numerous barriers in reaching their full capabilities. They face widespread discrimination, stigma and social exclusion. Because of this, evidence shows that when compared to their peers without physical or mental disabilities, adolescents with differing abilities are three to four times more likely to experience violence, have poorer health and nutrition outcomes, and are less likely to access to relevant and appropriate skills development programmes.<sup>11</sup>

## **Invest in Adolescent Girls**

Adolescence is especially risky for girls. In many contexts, a girl's world narrows when she enters puberty. Her mobility and choices become limited because of fears for her safety; she is expected to take on more household labor; and she may be at risk for early/forced marriage. Compared to boys, adolescent girls are more likely to drop out of school, experience poor health outcomes and have fewer opportunities for income generation. The knowledge, choices and opportunities afforded to adolescent girls around the world are instrumental in lifting their families, communities and even their countries out of poverty. Investing in the education, health, safety and economic opportunities of adolescent girls has been shown to have positive impacts on ending inter-generational poverty, often called the Girl Effect. Mercy Corps works with girls and their community support networks to develop culturally appropriate avenues to access education, life skills, safe and equitable work, opportunities for civic participation and to secure their basic rights.

For more information: [A Girl Can Change Her World: Mercy Corps Capacity Statement on Adolescent Girls](#).

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/12323.pdf>

# Key Resources & Tools

[Who Knows? to Knowing Who! Collecting Age- and Sex- Specific Data](#)

[Mercy Corps' Gender Integration Toolkit](#)

[Gender Analysis Framework](#)

[I'm Here Approach](#)

[Skills and Knowledge for Youth Leaders \(SKYLS\)](#)

[Building Girls' Protective Assets™](#)

[Applying a Protection Mindset for Safer, More Dignified, and Inclusive Environments](#)

[Profound Stress And Attunement Framework For Advancing Adolescents](#)

[Education in Emergencies: Landscape Review and Opportunities for Mercy Corps' Engagement.](#)

[Leaders of Today: Engaging Young People in Governance](#)

[Guidance on Safe and Decent Work for Adolescents and Youth](#)

[Youth Employment Cheat Sheet](#)

[World of Work](#)

[CLARA: Cohort Livelihoods and Risk Analysis](#)

An expanded toolkit and resources guide for working with young people is available on the Mercy Corps Digital Library under [Young People and Protection](#) .

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### 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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