



# HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE APPROACH

Pathway to Possibility

*Release: July 2022*





# HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE APPROACH

We support communities—and the most marginalized within them—to emerge from crisis in the face of conflict and climate change and build towards a more inclusive, resilient future.



## CENTER PARTICIPANTS

We serve people with the greatest humanitarian need. We directly engage with participants to understand their vulnerabilities and capacities in each unique context.

We design and adjust our humanitarian programs to consider:  
Age • Gender • Abilities • Identities



## Cope

Meet their most urgent needs with dignity and self determination.

## Adapt

Recover quickly and strengthen their ability to manage future shocks.

## Thrive

Secure their long term wellbeing.

We support people to cope, adapt, and ultimately thrive.

## DEEPEN OUR IMPACT

We deliver timely, adaptive programs that focus on the prevailing needs in a given crisis. To help us better respond, we utilise three distinctive approaches:



### Crisis Analysis

We anticipate emerging shocks in dynamic contexts and deliver analysis that drives better decisions and more agile programming.



### Cash at Scale

We deliver cash transfers at scale to meet the most urgent humanitarian needs, as we enhance resilience through local market support and social protection.



### Community Engagement

We strengthen social connections and build trust, working with participants to increase demand for basic rights, essential services and access to critical, accurate information.

## BUILD PARTNERSHIPS

We actively cultivate diverse partnerships and directly support local actors with the resources and influence to lead humanitarian responses.

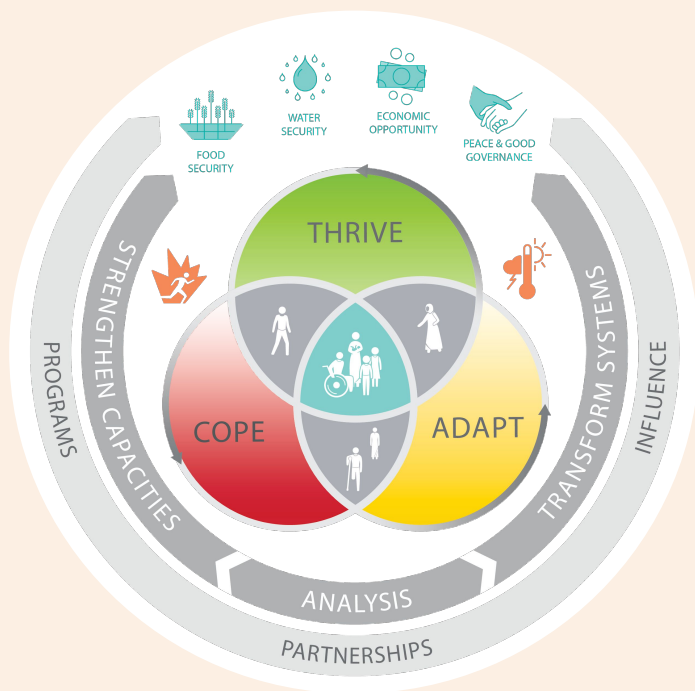
## LEVERAGE OUR VOICE

We raise our voice in contexts of high need and shrinking humanitarian space for:  
Humanitarian access • Protection of civilians • Timely, effective response

## OUR PRINCIPLES DRIVE OUR WORK

- Humanitarian principles
- Accountability
- Integrity
- Conflict sensitivity and do no harm
- Shifting power towards the communities we serve
- Environmental stewardship

# The Humanitarian Response Approach meets immediate needs and creates conditions for resilience



This includes:

- Anticipation and Early Warning
- Risk-informed humanitarian response
- Focus on most affected populations

# **Mercy Corps is committed to rapid, needs-driven assistance**

Whether it is a sudden shock or a slowly emerging crisis, whether the threat is natural or political, no matter how complex the environment, Mercy Corps is committed to delivering rapid, needs-driven assistance.



**Acute  
Emergencies**



**Slow Onset  
Crises**



**Complex  
Crises**

We are agile and adaptable, driven by the humanitarian imperative to meet the immediate needs of people most impacted by crises.

We help communities be prepared for and respond to humanitarian needs as they arise, while laying the foundations for resilience even in the most extreme humanitarian situations.

Working in the most complex crises requires adaptive management and operational readiness; we are committed to strengthening response capacities within our teams, communities and our partners.

# Our principles drive our work

In line with our organizational values, humanitarian principles are core to realizing Mercy Corps' mission. We manifest these principles in our culture, every aspect of program design and our operating systems.



## Humanitarian principles

We are committed to the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence. We carry out humanitarian action on the basis of need. We do not take sides in a conflict or engage in controversies of political, religious, racial or similar nature. We may, however, call out injustices and atrocities when we see them.



## Accountability

We center the needs, priorities, and rights of affected populations, and hold ourselves accountable to them and to those from whom we accept resources. We have a responsibility to all of our stakeholders – most importantly those who are most impacted by our efforts – to use resources efficiently and effectively. We commit to aligning the impact we have with our intentions through strong and inclusive feedback mechanisms.



## Integrity

We operate with integrity, courage, honesty, and respect. We do the right thing even when no one is watching, taking a zero tolerance approach to fraud, corruption and exploitation.



## Conflict sensitivity and do no harm

We integrate conflict sensitivity and do no harm in every stage of our responses. We invest in deep analysis of power dynamics and conflict drivers and proactively identify, not only what exacerbates tensions within and between communities, but what can support social cohesion in the early days of a crisis.



## Shifting power towards the communities we serve

We commit to shifting power towards the communities we serve. We know that those impacted by the world's most complex challenges have the ability to determine their solutions, and that those solutions are fundamentally stronger as a result. Recognizing that our organization is in a position of power, we also commit to using power responsibly.



## Environmental stewardship

We implement our humanitarian responses with careful consideration of our environmental impact, and we reduce that impact where possible. This relates not only to individual programs but also to our global climate footprint. We recognize healthy ecosystems are critical to advancing and protecting humanitarian outcomes in the places we work.



## IMPERATIVE: CENTER PARTICIPANTS

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We directly engage with participants to understand their vulnerabilities  
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We support people with the greatest humanitarian need.  
We directly engage with participants to understand their capacities and vulnerabilities in each unique context.

By investigating the geographic and social factors driving vulnerability we can better understand the kinds of threats different groups face, informing which populations we engage for future interventions, and how. We strive to leave no one behind.

Recognizing the majority of first response comes from within communities themselves, we work with communities to best prepare and respond.

With the greatest humanitarian needs in mind, we work to understand and tackle the systemic constraints and power imbalances that prevent people from accessing or influencing the provision of needed services.



## IMPERATIVE: BUILD PARTNERSHIPS

### BUILD PARTNERSHIPS

We actively cultivate diverse partnerships and directly support local actors with the resources and influence to lead humanitarian responses.

Our impact is strongest when we act in collaboration and partnership.

This begins with meaningful engagement and leadership of crisis-affected community members and extends to a range of partnerships from local to global, from communities to private sector to civil society, governments and donors. Our partnerships are based on a strong understanding of the environment in which we operate, informed by our crisis analytics, power analyses, and in-depth market assessments.

Recognizing the importance and impact of locally-led responses, we actively develop equitable and meaningful partnerships with local responders that represent and serve the communities where Mercy Corps operates.

We first support locally-led humanitarian response, intervene only when we can add value, and deliberately step back when we are no longer needed.



## IMPERATIVE: LEVERAGE OUR VOICE

# LEVERAGE OUR VOICE

We raise our voice in contexts of high need and shrinking humanitarian space for:  
Humanitarian access • Protection of civilians • Timely, effective response

We focus on issues that matter. During responses, we use our influence to open up humanitarian access and promote protection of civilians, while always pushing for a more effective, coordinated response to needs.

At the global level, we raise our voice on global trends including the climate crisis, emerging conflicts, rising food insecurity and the growing humanitarian funding gap.

We leverage our voice at strategic moments to influence policies and practices that directly strengthen humanitarian action. In accordance with humanitarian principles, we engage with decision-makers at every level to deliver effective and impactful assistance.

We proactively engage in coordination systems, joining voices with others to ensure we push for technical excellence and proactively seek to create more pathways for locally-led humanitarian response.

We invest in building team members' knowledge base and practical negotiation, advocacy and persuasion skills to influence policy and practice beyond our organization, including within key national, regional and international discussions.

Through our own communication channels and in the media, we bear witness to humanitarian need and issue calls to action, amplifying the first-hand insights and perspectives from our teams, our partners, and the participant communities with whom we work.

## IMPERATIVE: DEEPEN OUR IMPACT

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#### Crisis Analysis

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#### Cash at Scale

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#### Community Engagement

We strengthen social connections and build trust, working with participants to increase demand for basic rights, essential services and access to critical, accurate information.

We deliver adaptive humanitarian programs to meet the most urgent needs.

Our responses are context specific and focus on the prevailing needs in a given crisis. We focus on activities that contribute to our higher level outcomes of: food security, water security, economic opportunities and good governance and peace.

We collaborate, innovate and deepen our impact through our three distinctive approaches.

We commit to excellence and to continually improve and adapt our approaches to best meet immediate needs and build resilience.



**IMPERATIVE: DEEPEN OUR IMPACT**



## Crisis Analysis

Ever-increasing complexity and reduced humanitarian access in the places we work requires in-depth understanding of the drivers of crises, adaptation to changing dynamics, and anticipation of tomorrow's conflict and climate related shocks.

Deep analysis informs our decision making and leads to greater impact, even in the most challenging locations. Our approach is defined by context and needs, with dedicated analysis teams and processes embedded at the program level.

Our unique analytical expertise, supported by the latest technology, enables us to flag emerging trends, including with predictive modeling, so our decision-makers can anticipate new shocks.

In line with our commitment to be evidence-driven, our analysis drives our response to immediate needs, our early work to build resilience, and our ability to manage risk in complex contexts.



**IMPERATIVE: DEEPEN OUR IMPACT**



## Cash at Scale

We deliver best-in-class cash and voucher programming and are known for high quality delivery at scale, often in high risk and challenging contexts.

Our portfolio is driven by technology and research and is grounded in principles of inclusion, accountability, and collaborative implementation. Throughout, we demonstrate best practice in implementing sound data protection approaches.

We are leaders in cash, respected as innovative and effective partners in consortia, working groups, and interagency initiatives. At the global level, our collaborative leadership gives us an influential voice in policy and operational debates about the future of cash in our sector.

We consistently link and layer high quality cash and voucher assistance with complementary programming; this supports us to achieve maximum impact and build the foundations for more systemic longer-term support. We recognize that cash can be a key leverage point to sustain markets through crisis, minimize setbacks in local economies, and support households to meet their needs. Early in our response, we explore linkages with social protection systems or other economic development approaches to enable a pathway to a more sustainable recovery.



**IMPERATIVE: DEEPEN OUR IMPACT**



## Community Engagement

Our community engagement work is central to meeting immediate needs and reducing risks while strengthening local systems, respecting basic rights, and delivering essential services longer-term. Fundamentally, this means listening and partnering with affected communities in decision-making that will affect their lives and wellbeing.

Recognizing that access to information is not only a basic right and a service but also an extension of power, we are dedicated to strengthening inclusive access to, and trust in, reliable information. This has always been a cornerstone of accountable humanitarian response and is now, in a time of rising disinformation and misinformation, even more critical.

Our humanitarian response does not replace or supplant existing service provision but rather enhances and fills gaps in systems resulting from inequity or crisis. We integrate conflict sensitivity and social cohesion in our response to promote trust and connections within and between affected communities and local systems, building the foundation for longer-term good governance and peace.

# Meeting Urgent Needs while Enhancing Resilience



We support people to cope, adapt and, ultimately, thrive.

We recognize that in the most complex crisis environments moving from response to recovery is not linear or, in all cases, sustained. Crises often recur in the contexts in which we work.

So, we focus on meeting the most urgent humanitarian needs and simultaneously investing early in laying the foundations for building resilience. We invest in supporting inclusive local systems to strengthen the capacity of individuals and communities to better cope in crisis today and in the future.



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