



Overview of Sustainability Assessment for the United States Department of Agriculture McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program in Kyrgyzstan

I. General information

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. Mercy Corps in Kyrgyzstan has one overall goal to contribute to the strengthening of communities and institutions, so they are better able to work together to build healthy, financially stable communities based on civil society principles. In 1994 Mercy Corps became one of the first international non-governmental organizations to work in the newly independent Kyrgyzstan. Today, our programs reach more than 500,000 people in all major urban and rural communities of the country's seven provinces.

For more than a decade, Mercy Corps has served as the implementing partner of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) McGovern-Dole Food for Education (MGD/FFE) and Child Nutrition program. Since 2012, Mercy Corps has provided more than 3,000 metric tons of supplemental commodities (fortified flour, rice, peas, lentils, and oil) to support over 22.5 million hot meals in primary schools. USDA funded MGD programs had two successfully completed iterations (MGD'12, MGD'17) and is currently implementing a new five-year program (MGD'21).

Mercy Corps Kyrgyzstan's flagship McGovern-Dole Food for Education and Child Nutrition program, is a five-year multi-sectoral program that is implemented country-wide supporting improved learning environments for children through enhanced school and at-home nutrition, school infrastructure and education policies working towards achieving sustainable school feeding programs. Within the program framework, Mercy Corps will provide access to improved, child-friendly sanitation facilities and will increase programmatic focus on constructing and rehabilitating both indoor and outdoor latrines in program schools through provision of grants and technical assistance to ensure that new latrines meet all international standards, including gender requirements.

II. Program Objective

Under the MGD'21 program MC will design a thematic study to provide data which can feed into the USDA learning agenda and complement the program's final evaluation. This research will help USDA and MC with evidence-based decision-making, adaptive management, and design school-feeding sustainability strategies which Mercy Corps will advocate during the course of the program.

The objectives of the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program in Kyrgyz Republic for 2021-2025 are focused on achieving the following:

- Improve literacy of school-age children by supplying literacy materials and school supplies to schools and increasing the skills and knowledge of teachers and school administrators on quality literacy assurances through professional training and mentoring.
- Increase knowledge of health, nutrition, and hygiene practices through safe food preparation, better commodity storage practices, and increased access to clean water and sanitation facilities in schools through infrastructure improvement.



- Increase student attendance and reduce short term hunger through the provision of daily school meals and increase dietary diversity through establishing school gardens and procuring locally produced commodities.
- Improve policy and regulatory framework through training of government officials and school administrators on key issues of nutrition, school feeding, literacy, and health.

III. Purpose of this study

The purpose of this study is to assess the sustainability of the school feeding programs at schools supported by MC through the USDA-funded MGD program iterations over the past decade. MC is looking to recruit a research entity to conduct a quasi-experimental study in all provinces of Kyrgyzstan, covering schools that have participated in MGD programs between 2012-2017 and 2017-2021. Through this study Mercy Corps is looking to collect information on schools that are continuing to provide hot meals to primary grade students, schools that have improved hot meal programs, and schools that have stopped or reduced the number of hot meals provided. Collecting information on factors for improvement or reduction and recommendations will help Mercy Corps with implementation of the MGD'21 program activities and incorporate adaptive management techniques in order to ensure sustainability.

The study would cover all provinces of Kyrgyzstan, specifically remote and mountainous areas, since most of the Mercy Corps supported schools are historically located in these areas and provided support had significant effect on the lives of students and communities. Research questions and fieldwork should incorporate both school-level assessments, stakeholder consultations, and interviews/FGDs with regional government and community representatives.

The results of the study would contribute towards designing the School Feeding Sustainability Strategy for the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), together with a thorough desk review, analysis of the existing legislation supporting school feeding, procurement and nutrition practices, and existing school feeding support mechanisms (donors, regional governments, parents etc.). The research entity is required to analyze existing/ongoing discussions around this legislation and suggest an ideal and optimal version of legislation improvement documents, be it a new law, amendments to existing legislation, state programs, policy brief, MoES level decrees, etc.

Mercy Corps will support the selected research entity with coordination and obtaining approvals from the Program Stakeholders and partners, including MoES and other hot meal program implementing agencies, provide access to all previous studies, assessments and relevant databases, coordination with other Mercy Corps offices, and other relevant support.

All timelines, plans and intermediate results of the study should be coordinated with Mercy Corps and include justifications and detailed methodology for selecting schools, tools, participants and coverages, as well as getting formal approvals from the MoES. Results of the study will be used by Mercy Corps to ensure sustainable continuation of 'hot meals program' at the MGD'21 schools, other MC offices implementing MGD program as well as advocating for sustainable hot meal program at the state level through legislative amendments or introduction of new government level initiatives.

The study could potentially be anchored on Turfs sustainability framework that focuses on how sustained resources, capacity, motivation and linkages sustain service delivery, access, and demand



for sustained behaviors and impacts.¹ The study will cover previous MGD programs in Kyrgyzstan, as well as schools that have organized school feeding through other sources, donor lead support and/or funds, or without any donor support.

Main objective

The main objective of this study is to assess the sustainability of MGD school feeding program and other school feeding programs in the Kyrgyz Republic. In particular, the study will seek to understand to what extent the benefits of the program are continuing to be disaggregated by MGD support, territory, local government support, and municipality type.

Note: Complete Tender Package (including detailed SOW) will be shared with those who submitted signed and stamped Intend to Bid form and Supplier Information Form in a timely manner.

¹ <https://www.fantaproject.org/research/exit-strategies-ffp>