

Grand Bargain in 2019:

Annual Self Report – Narrative Summary

Name of Institution: Mercy Corps

Point of Contact: Anissa Toscano, Vice President, Humanitarian Leadership and Response, atoscano@mercycorps.org

Date of Submission: 13 February 2020

Question 1: Reflecting on the information you have provided in the Excel spreadsheet, please highlight the 2 or 3 key outcomes or results relating to the Grand Bargain that your institution achieved in 2019?

Mercy Corps demonstrated a strong commitment to the **localization** workstream. In 2019, 29% of all subawards expenditure under humanitarian programming was by local organizations, totaling \$8,398,073, and 52% of multi-year humanitarian programming prime awards included subawards to local organizations. Syria continues to be one of the places where a localization approach is central to Mercy Corps' work. In 2019, Mercy Corps Syria partnered with over 19 local organizations (as defined by Grand Bargain).¹ In 2019, 14% of Mercy Corps Syria's annual budget went towards subaward agreements with local organizations.²

Mercy Corps continued to make progress within the **cash** workstream, with cash programming representing approximately 54% of the humanitarian aid provided by the agency. Cash transfer programming values in 2019 totaled \$19,261,673 in cash and \$16,060,284 in vouchers. Mercy Corps rolled out its Cash Minimum Standards globally in 2019, which set a benchmark for quality implementation throughout the project lifecycle, and launched a tracking system to monitor adherence to the policy. Mercy Corps is a member of the Collaborative Cash Delivery platform, which rolled out a new way of working in five countries in 2019.

Question 2: Please explain how the outcomes/results have or will lead to long-term institutional changes in policy and/or practice.

Mercy Corps' experience with the ISHA (Investing in Syrian Humanitarian Action) program in Syria indicates the positive outcomes of a **localization** approach. Through ISHA's Online Learning Program in DisasterReady.org, over 19,000 people can access learning materials to improve their humanitarian knowledge and skills. This kind of e-learning is adapted to situations like Syria with unreliable internet and inherent risks in gathering for training. The final evaluation of ISHA finds that the 4.5-year ISHA pilot project offers proof of concept for a holistic partnership strategy for delivering humanitarian assistance. Through a process of providing advice, support, and coaching to Syrian CSOs, the program efficiently served conflict-affected communities and empowered local Syrian NGOs to provide humanitarian assistance. The findings from ['Building Civil Society Through Humanitarian Assistance'](#) will contribute to lessons for humanitarian agencies about how to empower local actors in humanitarian responses, both in Syria and in similar complex contexts.

With respect to the **cash** workstream, Mercy Corps' introduction of a new tracking system to monitor compliance with our cash minimum standards resulted in greater adherence to and visibility of these standards. Through its engagement with the CCD, Mercy Corps

¹ The number of local organizations that Mercy Corps partners with increases to a total of 33 if we expand the definition to include Syrian NGOs based in the Syria response region.

² If we use the MC Syria definition of local, which includes headquarters in Syria and the bordering countries, then MC Syria provided over \$10,115,163 in subawards (24% of the annual budget).

has also noted improvements in the humanitarian sector's approach to standards. The CCD developed a toolkit of initial collaboration standards and guidance and a beta version of a digital common information and response planning toolkit to inform the design of in-country CCD.

Question 3: How has your institution contributed to the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment in humanitarian settings through its implementation of the Grand Bargain? What results/outcomes have been achieved in this regard? (please outline specific initiatives or changes in practice and their outcomes/results).

In 2019, Mercy Corps made significant commitments to ensure that its programs, including in humanitarian settings, are gender responsive and adhere to Gender Minimum Standards. To support this, Mercy Corps established a new Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) team, and launched a GESI Community of Practice, which has almost 100 focal points from 34 countries. Mercy Corps also launched a Gender, Diversity, and Inclusion (GDI) diagnostic process for country teams, enabling them to design contextualized action plans that support a culture of inclusion, diversity and gender equality in the workplace and programs.

Mercy Corps developed additional standards and guidance in the areas of cash transfer and energy programming, two areas that are important in humanitarian response. Mercy Corps' Cash Transfer Programming Minimum Standards Policy implemented in 2019 includes a standard which explicitly requires gender analysis and gender sensitive needs assessments. With respect to energy programming, Mercy Corps partnered with the Women's Refugee Commission to launch the 2-year [Energy in Emergencies: Reducing Risks of Gender-based Violence \(EEMRG\)](#) initiative. Drawing on consultations with 347 crisis-affected individuals, and over 100 humanitarians, the initiative creates training and technical resources on energy access, gender, and GBV risk reduction for humanitarian practitioners working across sectors. In 2019, the training was piloted with representatives of 10 humanitarian agencies following the Global Refugee Forum, and will be introduced to a broader group of humanitarian practitioners in 2020.

Mercy Corps also developed a field manual for engaging adolescents in emergency response. The manual contains resources and tools to prepare for and respond to adolescent needs and mobilize their capacities. We will be piloting the manual in 2020.

Question 4: How has the humanitarian-development nexus been strategically mainstreamed in your institutional implementation of the Grand Bargain commitments? Please explain how your institution has linked commitments 10.1 - 10.5 with other commitments from other workstreams.

Mercy Corps demonstrates a commitment to the nexus through its resilience in protracted crisis approach. In 2019, Mercy Corps advanced the integration of peacebuilding in humanitarian and development action through a framework for "Advancing Peace in Complex Crisis" (APCC). The framework supports actors working in complex crisis environments to identify actions and maximize impacts to better mitigate violence and

advance peace within and across humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts to better prevent the outbreak, escalation, and spread of violence. The components of the framework are conflict sensitive humanitarian action, violence reduction in the short- and medium-term, and peacebuilding to address underlying causes of conflict. Mercy Corps presented the APCC framework in multiple fora over the course of 2019, including the Positive Peace Conference in San Diego, the BOND Practitioner's Conference in London, the Stockholm Forum on Peace and Development, and at other events organized by DFID, ECHO, the Dutch and Swedish Ministries of Foreign Affairs, and SIDA. In 2020, Mercy Corps will pilot the APCC approach in three countries.

Mercy Corps recognizes that advancing peace involves promoting good governance. To explore this important topic, Mercy Corps published a report as a joint effort with eight democracy and governance organizations on The World Bank's role in promoting good governance in fragile environments. Mercy Corps also partnered with IRC and CGD to influence the IDA 19 renewal, and provided feedback to the Bank's draft FCV strategy based on Mercy Corps' work in Niger, Somalia, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and other countries. All of the eight recommendations made by Mercy Corps on the FCV concept note were incorporated by The World Bank into the final draft strategy.

Acknowledging the critical role of analysis in effectively engaging in the humanitarian - development nexus, Mercy Corps has invested in both our global crisis analysis capacity as well as country level analysis platforms in selected countries. Through our crisis analysis teams, we expanded the use of continuous context analysis to enhance our understanding of crisis dynamics, and boost our agility to program across the nexus in complex crises.

Mercy Corps also demonstrates nexus thinking by incorporating its approaches for [addressing markets](#), [agricultural systems support](#), social connections and [climate](#) into proposals and operational approaches for humanitarian and development programs operating in complex crisis contexts. In Northeast Nigeria, Mercy Corps is piloting a program founded by Gates to strengthen market systems in humanitarian contexts, including under the Poultry for Recovery Initiative that supports market-based livelihoods through poultry, and the Feed the Future Rural Resilience Activity, the first large USAID market systems investment in a protracted crisis. In Iraq, Mercy Corps has been working with the World Bank, DFID, the CWG, and other members of the Cash Consortium for Iraq (CCI) to enable transition from humanitarian cash transfers to the Government's Social Safety Net for the most vulnerable. Learning from this process is being documented to share with the wider humanitarian community. As part of an influence agenda focused on the role of social connections on community resilience in protracted crises, Mercy Corps released three reports under the series [The Reconfiguration of Social Connections in Bentiu, South Sudan](#).