

GENDER

SECTOR APPROACH



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An Overview

The evidence is in. Programs are more effective, impactful and sustainable when all community members – especially women and girls – are included in the design, implementation and monitoring of humanitarian and development programs. The inclusion of women and girls in development is critical as they play key roles in food production, child health and nutrition, and improving livelihoods and education. Most importantly, deliberately including women and girls translates into helping them claim their basic human rights.

The donor community seems to agree—as it has increased its focus on women and girls over the past several years. USAID released its first Gender Policy in early 2012, and the U.S. Government released its National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security in December 2011. Also in 2011, DFID released its Strategic Vision for Women and Girls, firmly placing gender at the center of its development agenda.

Mercy Corps uses a gender approach (and not a women's approach) because we recognize that sustainable solutions to the challenges outlined above require that **men and boys play key roles as partners, supporters and advocates** of the integration of women's and girls' participation in their communities. Mercy Corps' 2010 Gender Assessment revealed that global program team members think gender integration is critical to effective program implementation. In response to the assessment, Mercy Corps is investing in building our team capacity to meaningfully integrate gender sensitivity into current and new programs.

Gender-sensitive programs pay off

- *Women invest their earnings in their families.* When women earn income, they invest 90 percent of it into their children and households for more nutritious food, school fees and health care.
- *Educating girls improves economies.* A 10 percent increase in girls going to school increases a country's GDP by 3 percent.

Gender inequalities are still vast

- Only 1 percent of the world's land is owned by women and girls
- 64 percent of the 774 million adults who lack basic literacy skills are women.
- 72 percent of the world's 33 million refugees are women.

Although there has been progress in improving women's and girls' human development indicators over the last decade, challenges remain. Girls' global access to secondary education lags behind that of boys, as does both women and girls' access to health care and employment opportunities. Women are still sorely underrepresented in international governments, representing only 17 percent of national parliamentarians and only seven of the 150 elected Heads of State.¹ Additionally, violence against women and girls continues to be a global problem, with high costs to both survivors and their communities. Further, the World Bank reports that an estimated 3.9 million women and girls under the age of 60 are "missing." About 2/5 are never born, 1/5 go missing in infancy and childhood, and the remaining do so between the ages of 15 and 59.² Major causes of missing women and girls include female infanticide; increased HIV/AIDS rates among females; and high maternal mortality rates.

Our Strategic Goals and Approach

Mercy Corps implements gender integration across all programs by engaging in active dialogue on gender issues and building capacity to design and implement impactful, gender-sensitive programming. Mercy Corps believes that efforts to create secure, productive and just communities result in more lasting, transformational change when **everyone** is engaged. Mercy Corps' approach to gender includes the following key elements:

- **Enhance global gender integration** through team skill building and developing gender technical resources.
- **Engage and influence the global arena** of development experts through research, networking and advocacy.
- **Involve women and men, girls and boys in gender mainstreaming.** When Mercy Corps talks about gender, we're not just talking about women and girls, nor are we talking about just their sex (male or female). Every culture defines social differences between men and women; one result is that these groups have different needs and different access to resources. While gender issues involve everyone, Mercy Corps' gender-sensitive programs frequently focus on addressing the unmet needs of women and girls.
- **Develop gender integrated programs** that both consider and accommodate the differing needs, restrictions and cultural roles of women and girls, men and boys, while serving and empowering the most vulnerable groups.

Intervention Areas and the Approach In Action

GENDER INTEGRATED PROGRAMMING

Mercy Corps' **Community Based Initiatives for Water Demand Management** program in **Jordan** ensures active participation of women in program activities. The program builds the capacity of local community-based organizations and reduces water demand in rural areas and has ensured that activities, including trainings and small grants for use in reducing water usage, include a minimum number of women participants and women-managed organizations. As a result, at least 30 percent of training participants

¹ United Nations Statistics Division. "The World's Women 2010"

² World Bank. World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development. Washington, DC; 2011. (p 14-15)

are women and 80 percent of participating organizations include female members, with 18 percent being women-only organizations.

In **Gaza**, where Mercy Corps has provided emergency assistance since 2003, Mercy Corps prioritizes the needs of female-headed households by ensuring that culturally appropriate cash-for-work opportunities are available for women as well as men, by requiring that both women and men participate in program related community committees and by prioritizing psychosocial support programs for male and female children as well as their parents.

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

In the **Central Africa Republic**, Mercy Corps utilizes a gender approach to improve women's access to quality sexual and reproductive health education and services. Mercy Corps works with both men and women within the target communities to build the knowledge and tools needed to make informed choices about reproductive health and to negotiate safe and responsible sexual practices. Over the life of the program, 1,600 women, men and young adults will increase their knowledge of contraception and family planning services, and improve their communication skills to effectively negotiate sexual and reproductive health decisions with their partner. In addition, Mercy Corps is working with 15 health care providers at community pharmacies and health centers to ensure that they have increased knowledge in family planning counselling and stock management to improve access to contraception. Equipping women with family planning information and skills to negotiate safe sexual practices empowers them to participate equally with their partners in family planning and reproductive health decisions.

In **Colombia**, Mercy Corps implemented an integrated community approach to reduce gender based violence in displaced communities. Over 400 community members attended men's and women's community groups to increase and improve community protection services against gender based violence. At the program's end, 749 adolescents (with near equal gender representation) showed a positive change in their attitude about gender roles and gender based violence. Further, 335 government officials participated in 16 workshops on gender based violence.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACE BUILDING

In **Guatemala**, Mercy Corps' **Empowering Women's Leadership in Conflict Resolution (EMA)** program is working to improve equitable access to and ownership of land—a continuing source of conflict in the country. Indigenous men and women directly experience the tangible benefits of women's increased leadership in managing and influencing agrarian issues. This includes peaceful resolution of land disputes and the application of more equitable agrarian policies and practices. During the first year of implementation, participants created the "Basic Guide for Mediating Territorial Conflicts in Alta Verapaz with Gender Equity;" they developed phase one of the communication campaign on women's agrarian rights; and they developed written guides for both male and female leaders. Training activities build women's skills and enable them to participate in public spaces at the community and municipal levels.

In **Iraq**, Mercy Corps' **Empowering Women Peace Builders** program in women's leadership and information and communications technology (ICT) activities promoted social entrepreneurship and civic-private partnership, contributing to more sustainable local solutions. During the two-year program, 20 women leaders proposed peace-building initiatives in their communities and received \$1,500 to implement small community projects. In total, over 23,000 community members benefitted from the initiatives. Nine ICT-related trainings, including conflict analysis and peace building, were provided for both women leaders

and civic society organizations. Women leaders also engaged in joint projects with other women from different ethnic, sect or religious backgrounds to implement projects that reached over 5,800 beneficiaries. Through program trainings and events, 95 percent of women leaders surveyed reported increased self-confidence and a desire to continue advocating for peaceful coexistence in their ethnically-divided communities.

HEALTH

The **Hati Kami: Nurturing the Mother Child Dyad** project builds on Mercy Corps' nutrition, maternal and child health, and water and sanitation projects in **Jakarta, Indonesia**—and is serving as a scalable model for the Indonesian government. This four-year project is strengthening the use and quality of health care services by developing a comprehensive “Mothers Support Group” model and making quality improvements in health services tied to an enhanced health information system. Mercy Corps, the District Health Office and UNICEF are testing an innovative strategy to track and monitor utilization and quality of maternal and newborn health services using a rapid analysis software, LAMAT, and mobile technology (SMS). The program is reaching approximately 7,723 infants ages 0–12 months and 131,211 women of reproductive age. During the program's first year, 46 Mothers Support Group mentors were trained. An additional 105 Mothers Support Group motivators were trained and are facilitating 18 support groups in two districts.

Resources

Mercy Corps' Gender Policy. Our statement on gender.

<http://www.mercycorps.org/resources/mercycorpsgenderpolicy>

Mercy Corps' Gender Procedures: Policy in Action. Our introduction to gender mainstreaming.

<http://www.mercycorps.org/resources/mercycorpsgenderprocedures>

Gender Mainstreaming in Practice: A Toolkit. UNDP's comprehensive gender mainstreaming guide with sector specific tools and recommendations.

http://www.undp.org/women/mainstream/docs/Gender_Mainstreaming_in_Practice__A_Toolkit.pdf

DFID's The Gender Manual: A Practical Guide. A comprehensive gender mainstreaming guide with sector specific tools and recommendations.

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications/dfid-gender-manual-2008.pdf>

Sex and Age Matter: Improving Humanitarian Response in Emergencies. Guide and tip sheets on incorporating gender in data collection and use during emergencies.

<https://wikis.uit.tufts.edu/confluence/display/FIC/Sex+and+Age+Matter>

IASC Gender Based Violence Guidelines: Guide to gender-based violence minimum standards in emergencies. <http://www.humanitarianreform.org/Default.aspx?tabid=657>

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