



RESILIENCE HUBS

action and evidence

Mercy Corps has prioritized resilience thinking across our agency. Our global practice is actively informed by a robust learning agenda, woven together by our Regional Resilience Hubs that span more than a dozen countries in Africa and Asia. Informed by resilience vulnerability and capacity assessments, Mercy Corps' Regional Hubs are identifying theories of change and iteratively designing, testing and evaluating program approaches. They are contributing to and learning from a growing body of evidence on what helps build individual, household and community resilience to the shocks and stresses in their contexts. The development of resilience thinking as an agency-level objective has the commitment of every global team at Mercy Corps, including the full support of our senior level executives and board of directors. Find highlights of our work below, and for more detailed program and research findings, [visit **mercycorps.org/resilience**](https://mercycorps.org/resilience).

AFRICA RESILIENCE HUBS: Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda

The East and West Africa Resilience Hubs bring experience working in distinct dryland environments, enabling Mercy Corps to understand, test and adapt our resilience approaches for pastoralists, farmers and agro-pastoralists living in arid and semi-arid contexts that are increasingly exposed to recurring stresses and shocks including drought, conflict, food price spikes and flash flooding.

Africa Hub Highlights

Our Africa Hubs are composed of a growing portfolio of small and large projects contributing to resilience, from vulnerability and capacity assessments to longer-term programs that build on other efforts within the region to positively impact the community's ability to thrive in a changing context.

Our largest resilience-focused program is the five-year, \$57 million, USAID-funded **Ethiopia** Pastoralists' Areas Resilience Improvement through Market Expansion (PRIME) project. This program builds on Mercy Corps' previous projects to build links between market-based, resilience-focused programming and early crisis response focused on protecting livelihoods. Within the context of pastoral systems, PRIME works with communities and private sector leverage points to strengthen systems that will support household resilience in times of crisis. One example is the work being done on fodder. Fodder markets are underdeveloped in Ethiopia, and both supply

Definition of Resilience at Mercy Corps:

Mercy Corps defines resilience as the capacity of communities in complex socio-ecological systems to learn, cope, adapt and transform in the face of shocks and stresses. Our role is to understand how social, economic and ecological systems support the people and communities we serve, and to ensure the poor and vulnerable, especially women and girls, have options and opportunities to access and influence those systems.

How does Resilience Thinking Change the Way We Work?

- Prioritizes the capacity to learn to manage risk over time.
 - Requires us to think across sectors, systems and scales.
 - Takes a strategic, iterative approach – beyond the timeframe of a single project.
 - Emphasizes partnerships and working together in new and different ways.
-



and demand need to be increased in order to improve production of and access to milk during droughts and migrations, as well as to improve overall productivity for livestock owners (thereby increasing income). Our work on the supply side focuses on private sector actors, natural resource management and government support services, and is framed around the contribution of fodder to animal productivity. Work on the demand side focuses on mothers, caretakers and nutrition messages through government systems and “edutainment,” effectively building demand for fodder as a type of insurance against drought and an important input to nutrition support. Recognizing the unique approaches required in pastoralist settings, and the changing nature of markets, is at the core of PRIME’s resilience work. PRIME embraces the complexity of both the systems it is working in and the problems that the project is trying to resolve. This is further supported by a Crisis Modifier that uses market-sensitive triggers to protect livelihoods from the earliest stages of the crisis.

Building on a 10-year track record of community-driven programming in the drylands of **Niger**, Mercy Corps is now helping drought and conflict-prone communities become more resilient, with a special focus on the role of women and girls. The \$30 million USAID/FFP-funded “Sawki” project in the Maradi and Zinder regions empowers more than 106,000 community members, primarily women and adolescent girls, as part of the household decision-making process, to combat malnutrition and build resilience. Using a combination of tools, such as vulnerability and capacity assessments, the Sawki program explores challenges to agricultural productivity, and then identifies innovative actions that can lead to community resilience. These assessments take an in-depth look at women’s empowerment and how it can contribute to resilience in Niger’s drylands – analyzing how women-led decision-making affects the resilience of households and their associated livelihoods.

A post-project, independent evaluation of the USAID/OFDA Market Improvements and Innovative Linkages (MILK) program, **Tracking Resilience in Niger**, tracks resilience outcomes among program participants from the completion of the program through the 2012 food crisis. Findings indicate that entrepreneurial training for women and support to dairy cooperatives to revitalize the dairy value chain in Niger made the most difference in helping participants cope with the 2012 food crisis.

Another major USAID/FFP-funded resilience-focused program is the \$53 million Northern Karamoja Growth Health and Governance (GHG) project in **Uganda**. It builds upon Mercy Corps’ ongoing presence in Karamoja, beginning with post-conflict emergency assistance, transitioning to medium-term USAID/OFDA response to the food crisis and now emerging into a program that combines long-term market development programming with targeted assistance to the critically vulnerable. Our integrated approach has enabled us to take deliberate steps to identify and address the drivers of resilience. For example, despite prevailing beliefs at the time, a study commissioned by Mercy Corps at the outset of GHG found that disease had a much larger impact on livestock herds than conflict (cattle raiding). As such, animal health and veterinary services

Evidence from Ethiopia and Somalia

What Really Matters for Resilience?, published November 2013, examines the uneven impacts that a combination of deadly crises in Southern Somalia had on families in 2010-11. Undertaken in partnership with TANGO, the research uncovered three vital factors that made some families more resilient than others. They include the importance of women’s participation, extended social networks and independent income streams.

In 2012, Mercy Corps evaluated the impact of past work to improve mobility among pastoralists on their drought resilience in Ethiopia. The findings showed that increased access to markets, water, rangeland and other natural resources were key contributing factors to households’ drought resilience.



has been a priority resilience-building sector for the GHG project, and has already yielded impressive results: a 20–30% reduction in retail prices of important treatments and vaccines in targeted markets. We're also strengthening the local governance behind these types of systems, positioning them to be functionally self-reliant. Local civil society and government leaders have a vested interest in improving the lives of their families, friends and constituents. Our behind-the-scenes program works daily to build civil society's skills to hold leaders accountable to the community's health, economic or security needs.

Gender and Resilience in the Sahel

In 2013, Mercy Corps embarked on a project with Harvard University researchers to better understand if systemic gender inequality undermines the ability of individuals and communities to be more resilient. Using three countries in the Sahel (**Mali, Niger, and Northern Nigeria**) as case studies, we assessed the different vulnerabilities of men, women, boys and girls along with their capacities for coping, adapting and transforming in the face of shocks and stresses. Our research captures examples of how gender inequality in the Sahel results in increased vulnerability for certain individuals, households and communities. We have developed a Gender and Resilience Theory of Change based on our assessment and secured funding through the ACT for Impact gender integration program to test the theory in our field programs in 2014.

ASIA RESILIENCE HUBS: Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, Timor Leste

While the landscape for resilience is diverse across Asia, our hubs in East and South Asia work to understand, test and adapt approaches to building resilience to natural and climate-induced hazards and shocks in landslide- and flood-prone river basins and watersheds in both urban and rural areas. **Myanmar** is also implementing resilience-focused strategies to increase food security in its dry zone. Our approach factors and builds on some common systems-level changes that impact resilience responses in both East and South Asia, including increased frequency of natural disasters, decentralized governance and market structures, urbanization and migration. As such, our Asia Resilience Hubs lead the way in strengthening urban governance systems for resilience, and integrating systems-based approaches to disaster risk reduction. Apart from the highlighted examples, we are also actively integrating resilience principles into our work in China, Mongolia, Pakistan, the Philippines and Tajikistan.

Northern Kenya: Livestock Insurance Makes First Pay-Out

In April 2014, 101 pastoralists (30 of whom were women) owning 2,186 insured animals in the pastoral Wajir County of northern Kenya were the first to benefit from an important insurance product introduced last year by Mercy Corps with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Index-Based Livestock Insurance (IBLI) combines sharia-compliant financial instruments with innovative use of satellite-based measures of vegetative cover to predict average livestock mortality experienced by local communities. The pilot program, run by Mercy Corps Kenya in partnership with the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and Takaful Insurance of Africa (TIA), paid out approximately \$5,800 for the loss of sheep, goats, cattle and camels during the long dry season that ended in March.

Following the rollout of IBLI in northern Kenya, the initiative has been linked to a 33% drop in reliance on food aid. With increased use of this innovative strategy, insured households will reduce their dependence on dangerous coping mechanisms like consuming fewer meals and selling off livestock, as they progress towards greater resilience and increased self-sufficiency.



Asia Hub Highlights

STRENGTHENING URBAN GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS FOR RESILIENCE

Recognized for our leadership in urban climate change issues in East Asia, Mercy Corps **Indonesia** is implementing the Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network (ACCCRN), funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. We are building the capacity of national and city governments and partners to develop strategies and tools to adapt to and mitigate climate change impacts. Our work with two ACCCRN pilot cities in Indonesia has resulted in those governments building and financing resilience strategies into their city planning. The cities have also developed and implemented a total of seven replicable, scalable projects. Another six cities are replicating and financing the ACCCRN process themselves. In dense cities, these relatively modest investments affect a disproportionately large number of people – more than one million in two cities alone. With \$1.6 million of public investment already leveraged, we envision this network to be 100% locally managed and financed within four years.

While mega-cities and super-disasters hold the public's attention, Mercy Corps sees emerging "secondary cities" as a critical place to develop and test groundbreaking approaches to building urban resilience. Within a decade, more than 500 cities will have populations exceeding one million, many along coastlines. The lessons we learn in Indonesia hold critical instruction for cities throughout the region, and the globe. Mercy Corps is working closely with the broader ACCCRN network across India, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam and is currently leading the establishment of an independent regional ACCCRN network. We facilitate and contribute to the Urban Climate Change Working Paper Series, in partnership with the Institute for Social and Environmental Transition (ISET) in Vietnam. We have recently published the peer-reviewed *Mainstreaming Urban Climate Resilience into Policy and Planning: Reflections from Asia*, in the March 2014 issue of *Urban Climate*. These peer-reviewed publications and international presentations ensure that collective learning is broadcast globally to other networks, including between groups working in Asia and Africa, where urbanization issues are also increasingly recognized.

Indonesia: Addressing the Challenges of Climate Change and Urbanization

In Semarang – a bustling port city on the Java Sea – the impacts of climate change are a day-to-day reality. Flooding, landslides and unpredictable seasons threaten the city's economy, coastal lands, public health and groundwater.

One of the first cities to join ACCCRN, the Semarang government formed a City Team – made up of stakeholders in and outside of government – to better understand, prepare for and respond to the challenges of climate change and urbanization. Mercy Corps has facilitated and supported the Team's participation in more than 60 learning dialogues, trainings and conferences. The city is also:

Improving coastal ecosystems and fishermen's livelihoods in partnership with a local youth group and government agencies. The project is restoring mangrove forests, reviving fishponds and educating residents on climate change and alternative livelihoods, such as ecotourism.

Strengthening the health sector to reduce incidences of dengue fever. The Ministry of Health and University of Indonesia are conducting the country's first ever assessment to investigate the ties between dengue fever and climate change. Community health workers are documenting disease and promoting behavior change to reduce the spread of disease.

Improving preparedness and response to floods in the city's most vulnerable neighborhoods. Local groups are developing flood information systems, early warning systems and evacuation strategies, as well as identifying temporary shelters.

Sharing its knowledge with other cities. The Semarang City Team is building local, national and international networks to share their knowledge and experience as a member of ACCCRN.



SYSTEMS-BASED APPROACHES TO DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Our **Managing Risks through Economic Development (M-RED)** program supports vulnerable populations in 64 disaster-prone communities in **Nepal** and **Timor-Leste** to develop disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies directly linked to economic security.

By taking a systems approach, the program reinforces traditional community-level solutions for risk reduction, and strengthens them by incorporating sustainable, market-based opportunities for long-term economic development that specifically incentivize risk reduction. For example, by planting grasses used for animal fodder in the growing dairy sector of Far Western Nepal, the program is able to promote slope stabilization and reduce soil erosion in landslide-prone areas. These grasses are also directly linked to market potential through dairy production, and in this way incentivize the application of risk-reducing grasses on unstable slopes. There are currently four target sub-sectors being promoted with this type of model in Timor-Leste and Nepal in order to build the resilience of 175,000 individuals. Mercy Corps is measuring the impact of M-RED by conducting research in partnership with the Asia Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) in Bangkok, with specific focus on the project's unique approach linking risk reduction with economic development in hazard-prone communities, in comparison to more traditional DRR approaches. The research is looking specifically at resilience-related questions about how the M-RED integrated DRR and economic development approach impacts the target communities' absorptive, adaptive and transformative capacities with regard to hazard risk reduction.

Finally, in both **Nepal** and **Indonesia**, multiple projects have helped to link disaster prone communities and sub-districts to national DRR frameworks through practical planning and action. This includes strengthening action committees and disaster preparedness teams; conducting vulnerability and capacity assessments, formulating action plans that reflect expert-vetted community and sub-district priorities; linking to central and sub-national government master planning budgets and DRR policies; and capital investments for disaster mitigation. Our practical approach ensures that communities not only have plans to cope with the next disaster, but have made critical investments and built relationships instrumental to their success, while influencing the disaster policies and practices that impact their long term resilience.

CONTACT

SHANNON ALEXANDER

Director | Resilience, Governance and Partnership
salexander@mercycorps.org

JON KURTZ

Director | Research and Learning
jkurtz@dc.mercycorps.org

mercycorps.org/resilience