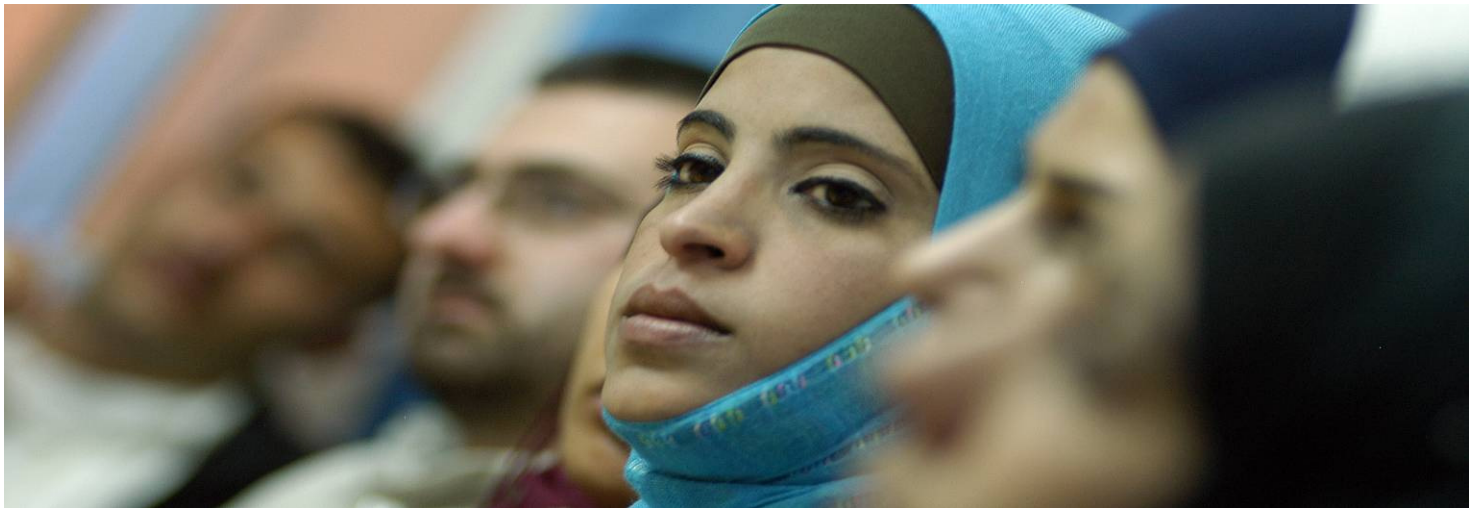


MERCY CORPS
GOOD GOVERNANCE
CAPACITY STATEMENT
2011



Jordan

Mercy Corps supports people living in some of the world's toughest places to turn crises of natural disaster, economic collapse, and conflict into opportunities for progress. Driven by local needs and market conditions, our programs provide communities with the tools and support they need to transform their own lives. Our worldwide team of 3,700 professionals is improving the lives of 14.5 million people in nearly 40 countries. Promoting good governance and working in partnership with local governments are central to Mercy Corps' approach because they build local ownership and sustainability for long-term development goals. **Many of our largest programs in the world have good governance goals and objectives, including over \$150 million in programming in six countries. An additional 300 programs across 30 countries reflect the deep integration of governance as a central approach for all types of relief and development efforts.**

Good governance emphasizes the partnership between citizens and government for the common good, specifically addressing how mechanisms, processes and institutions facilitate citizens and groups to articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their responsibilities, and mediate their differences. For Mercy Corps, **good governance is both a programming goal and condition for all other development initiatives to be sustainable.** In countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan, Colombia and Guatemala, Sudan and the Central Africa Republic, Mercy Corps is helping strengthen the capacity of citizens and their representatives so that political, social, and economic priorities are based on broad consensus and decisions are implemented in accountable and transparent ways. A central tenet of this approach is ensuring the voices of the poorest and the most marginalized are heard in decision-making. In the sectors of economic development, infrastructure, and training inputs for public institutions such as schools, Mercy Corps applies good governance programming **to improve accountability in decision-making, equitable civic participation and voice, and effective local government service delivery.**

Principles of Good Local Governance

1. Accountability
2. Participation
3. Transparency
4. Follows the rule of law
5. Responsive
6. Effective and efficient
7. Equitable and inclusive
8. Strategic vision

Improving Public Service Delivery and Accountability for Development

A cornerstone of Mercy Corps' governance work is supporting communities and civil society organizations (CSOs) to hold government accountable for demand-driven planning and improved service delivery. In some of the most challenging political environments, Mercy Corps works in deep partnership with local officials to address community needs. Our experience shows that local governments, particularly in moments of significant transition, often require support for delivering services more effectively and efficiently and developing capacity to use the principles of good governance.

Working along Multiple Dimensions for Good Governance

These approaches constitute two dimensions of governance programming that Mercy Corps believes contribute to positive, lasting impact. The first dimension is the **vertical linkages**, those between government and its citizens. The second dimension is **horizontal linkages**, among groups of citizens working together across divides or finding common ground for action among diverse interests. Together, strengthened horizontal and vertical linkages enable a society to build and maintain relations that promote accountable governance and civic participation.

Mercy Corps is currently leading a consortium of six groups—both NGOs and technical service providers—in southern Sudan and the transition areas between north and south to address gaps in local government service delivery while building the capacity and credibility of nascent government institutions. This USAID-funded \$30 million program, **Building Responsibility for the Delivery of Government Services** (BRIDGE), works directly with local government in four states. Conflict prevention and successful improvement of peoples' welfare in southern Sudan rests on responsive and accountable local governance, particularly following the January 2011 referendum on the future of the region. Mercy Corps and partners engage local government officials in mentoring and training in strategic planning, team management/leadership, budgeting, financial management, and conflict resolution. The BRIDGE program is also strengthening officials' understanding of constituent relations and institutionalizing forums for participatory planning and improved community-government interaction. In these forums, communities and government officials are gaining practical experience in planning, implementing, and managing projects that address community needs. Since its inception the BRIDGE program has trained more than 1,600 government officials on planning and budgeting, anti-corruption, Sudanese laws, computer applications, project management, monitoring and evaluation. Through these trainings and infrastructure and supply projects the BRIDGE program has helped 100 sub-national government entities improve their performance and facilitated 16 consensus building processes between government and their constituents. **Already government officials are taking increasing responsibility for projects and services that deliver tangible improvements to communities in livelihoods, education, health, water, and sanitation.** Additionally, Mercy Corps and partners are developing and reinforcing practical linkages across all levels of government, between government and civil society, and among the diverse stakeholders within the community – including existing international actors. Collaboration with Mercy Corps' six-year *Localizing Institutional Capacity for Sudan* (LINCS) program has significantly aided these efforts.

In Iraq, the large-scale, multi-year **Iraq Community Action Program** (CAP) fosters grassroots democracy and better local governance by giving Iraqi community groups first-hand experience designing and participating in democratic processes. Mercy Corps' CAP program has been operational since 2003 and represents an investment of over \$125 million from USAID. Through the program, Mercy Corps is helping over 550 communities form Community Action Groups (CAGs) to identify their own development priorities, including possible causes of conflict, and design and implement solutions in an inclusive, participatory manner. To



date CAGs have implemented over 1,500 community development projects and supported women's groups in literacy programs, promoted equal representation in local and regional government, and aided disability-rights campaigns. **CAP has directly served almost three million people in Iraq and is helping Iraqis take advantage of the recent stability gains in their country. Mercy Corps is ensuring sustainability by gradually shifting the focus of project management from CAGs to sub-national government counterparts, building their capacity to secure national and provincial-level budgetary support for community-identified development priorities.**

In Mongolia, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)-**Market Opportunities for Rural Entrepreneurs (MORE) program** demonstrates the crucial role of government in creating the enabling environment for economic development. The program's goal is increasing the income of herders in 15 of Mongolia's 21 *aimags* (provinces) and creating new market opportunities to help diversify and expand rural businesses. A main objective focuses on **expanding public-private partnerships to increase demand for local goods and services**. This is being achieved through: a) collaboration with government on improvement of procurement legislation and local capacity-building, and b) use of a transparency and competition index for public procurement. **Tripartite Partnership Councils – with civil society, local government and private sector representation – have already been established in 11 aimags and CSOs trained in monitoring are providing the oversight for business delivery a range of services with funding from the Mongolian Government.** An example of the result is improvements in food quality at 45 schools across eight aimags. Study tours for members of the Tripartite Partnership Councils support the generation of creative approaches government can take to encourage the participation of the civil society and private sector in public procurement and how partnership can be strengthened.

Change in Government Involvement and Responsiveness

A recent ex-post evaluation by Mercy Corps in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan showed empowered communities and sustained good governance in areas that had graduated from the **Community Action Investment Program (CAIP)** and the **Peaceful Communities Initiative (PCI)**. Funded by USAID, CAIP and PCI were pioneering cross-border programs in conflict-charged areas of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. CAIP was a three-year \$11.8 million program which ended in 2005, and PCI was a five-year \$6.7 million initiative that ended in 2007. PCI and CAIP formed Community Action Groups (CAGs) which implemented community development projects in partnership with local government officials as the vehicle for peace-building, improving interethnic and community-to-government relations, and economic development. According to the evaluation, **73% of members of the CAGs felt it was still easier to approach local government at least one year after the programs ended and 68% witnessed local government becoming more involved in community activities after the end of the programs as compared with before the programs.** The sustainability of the mobilization process used in the programs can also be seen by the fact that at the time of the final report, PCI CAGs, including government partners, had implemented almost 100 infrastructure projects by themselves and independent of donor funds. For more information, see Mercy Corps' *Sustainability Field Study: Understanding What Promotes Lasting Change at the Community Level*.

Strengthening Equitable and Inclusive Public Participation and Representation

To Mercy Corps, strengthening a community's voice means tailoring specific approaches to ensure the meaningful participation of marginalized groups such as women, youth, ethnic minorities, and the disabled into all programs. **In the Central Africa Republic (CAR), five programs¹ address different barriers to women's political participation and, as a result of being designed as a comprehensive portfolio mind, are having significant impact.** Activities include working with municipal governments to establish access to justice centers for women to safely bring cases of rights violations and provide civic education through women's organizations. Additionally, the **Realizing Empowerment, Advocacy and Communications for Human Rights (REACH)** program trained over 4,000 women on democracy and good governance, human rights, civic education, and responsible participation ahead of CAR's most recent elections.

The **Access to Justice in Guatemala** project was part of Mercy Corps Guatemala's program on land conflict mediation in the northwestern highlands of Guatemala, specifically in the departments of Alta Verapaz, el Quiché, Baja Verapaz and Izabal. In 2005 the Law of Registration of Catastral Information (RIC) was signed into

¹ 1) *Realizing Empowerment, Advocacy and Communications for Human Rights (REACH)*; 2) *Strengthening the Role of Women in Participative Local Governance and Poverty Reduction*; 3) *Responsabiliser les Femmes pour un Développement Durable/ Empowering Women for Sustainable Development*; 4) *Standing Up for Women's Rights*; and 5) *Women's Rights in Central African Republic (MPower)*.

effect, and implementation of the law in the Verapaces began in 2008. The project facilitated the peaceful and transparent implementation of RIC in Alta Verapaz and Izabal, and **ensured indigenous communities were able to exercise, participate and protect their rights to land tenancy and registration in agreement with the 1996 Peace Accords.** The program reached approximately 276,046 indigenous people and involved multiple sectors, including civil society, local leadership and the municipal government, and rural indigenous communities.

A critical program in Sri Lanka, the USAID supported *Enhanced Capacity for Relationship Building among Indigenous Actors* (ECRB) program, strengthened multi-ethnic associations to act as a force for peace and reconciliation in eastern Sri Lanka. The program centered on strengthening the capacity of religious and community leaders to resolve conflict and build bridges among religious groups. The program also supported civic associations to promote joint interests in peaceful ways. Over 3,000 participants took part in dialogue and activities focused on building ties across communities and addressing conflict drivers.

And in Iraq the *Supporting Effective Advocacy for Marginalized Populations* (SEAM) program began in 2009 to **strengthen the capacity of Iraqi women and youth through civil society groups in disputed areas to work cooperatively with elected officials to reduce violence and build a sustainable, accountable and responsible system of governance.** Funded by the US State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL), one of the main objectives of this \$4.7 million program has supported linkages between CSOs and elected government officials, **increasing citizen-government interaction at the provincial and national levels,** and provided CSOs and government with basic negotiation and diversity training.

Building a Critical Mass for Good Governance Across Generations

Mercy Corps recognizes the importance of people of all ages having the skills and capacity to understand processes of public decision-making, as well as to advocate for and make use of participatory governance processes. **The Global Citizen Corps (GCC) program directly addresses challenges pertinent to the half of the world's population being under 25 years of age, the largest proportion of young people ever recorded.** Globally, 80% of youth live in developing countries where economic, civic and social opportunities are insufficient to address the diverse needs of the transition to adulthood. And the Middle East, where GCC was launched, represents the youngest population in the world with 65% of citizens under age 30.² Since its inception in 2007, GCC has grown to involve more than 13,000 youth in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Indonesia, Pakistan and West Bank/Gaza, connecting with one another and peers in the US and UK. In 2010 youth leaders **engaged 71,142 people** in their projects and campaigns which subsequently reached over one million people. The GCC website, www.globalcitizencorps.org aggregates web, mobile, and other digital media into a single, youth-friendly platform. The program inspires and equips an expanding network of young leaders to take informed actions that build secure, productive and just communities around the world. Every year, **4,200 Global Citizens Corps Leaders (GCCL) are recruited in six countries and trained to engage 420,000 peers through their actions. They learn about global issues such as climate change and food security, research how these affect communities and what governments can do about the problems, and produce and distribute digital content to build awareness reaching 12 million others worldwide.**

In one of the GCC countries, Lebanon, Mercy Corps' also implements the *Local Governance through Youth Municipalities* program funded by USAID. The program is a partnership with the Lebanese Transparency Association and was operated in 2009-10, cultivating youth leadership in order to build stronger understanding of good governance at the community level and a sense of identity among participants. Over 150 youth participated in elections to create five "Youth Municipalities" and were trained in elections monitoring procedures. Mercy Corps' program team developed a user-friendly toolkit following the elections and representation process, informed by lessons learned. **Using the toolkit, other NGOs (both local and international), youth groups, and even Municipalities are now able to create similar Youth Municipalities in different areas that are capable of engaging nationally, setting an example for accepted standards of transparency and accountability in governance.** In total, there were 67,900 indirect beneficiaries, eight community projects implemented, 2,869 voters, four youth municipalities formed, and 80 youth candidates for elections.

² According to the UN's Arab Human Development Report (2009), there are 100 million Arab youth between the ages of 15 and 29.

Supporting Responsible Citizenship for Global Good Governance

For Mercy Corps, partnership is a cornerstone of successful and sustainable programming so partners play a major role our governance work. For example, the **World Citizens Project** was built on an innovative partnership between Mercy Corps, Scotdec, a teacher support agency with over 20 years of experience in development education, and Timor Aid, an experienced Timorese NGO. **Five schools in Dili, East Timor and six schools in**



Edinburgh and the Lothians participated in the project with 21 teachers forming part of the steering groups in their respective countries. An ICT facility was set up in East Timor and students communicated through an interactive website, www.Think.com. The students in Scotland and East Timor produced videos for each other introducing their lives and communities. Teachers from East Timor travelled to Scotland for a Study Visit, met with Scottish teachers and students involved in the World Citizens Project, observed classes and produced resources needed to plug a gap in their own knowledge as teachers approaching global citizenship. **Over two thousand copies of the teachers' resource publication have been printed and disseminated** among the International Development Education Association for Scotland (IDEAS) network.

Timor Leste

For More Information

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Access Mercy Corps' **Guide to Good Governance Programming** on the Digital Library
<https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/ docs/MCGoodGovernanceGuide.pdf>

Join the conversation with global colleagues on **Clearspace**
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