

GENDER EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY (2020-2023)

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I. INTRODUCTION

Mercy Corps' **Gender Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion Strategy (2020-2023)** lays out a plan to remove barriers, address root causes of inequalities and model the power of diversity and gender equality in who we are and how we show up as a partner. A joint effort by the Gender, Diversity and Inclusion (GDI) and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion TSU (GESI) Teams, **this strategy is a call for collective action for all of Mercy Corps to address gender inequality, lack of diversity and social exclusion in our organization and in our programs.** We can't afford not to.

This document maps out steps for the next three years and what success look like for the longer term. **Helping achieve this vision WITH the women, girls, men and boys in communities where we work requires a cohesive and coordinated approach across teams and functions, signaling the critical importance of shared responsibility to achieve true gender equality, diversity and social inclusion.** It also lays out a framework, definitions and key advancements we have made in both our programs and our operations, and explains why the two are inextricably linked.

WHY NOW?

IT IS MISSION CRITICAL

Addressing not just the effects of gender and other intersectional inequalities that keep harmful societal norms in place, but the systemic, unequal power dynamics that perpetuate them is central to our mission of alleviating poverty, oppression and suffering. Addressing gender inequality and social exclusion leads to better outcomes across the most daunting challenges we face, from conflict to food insecurity to climate change.

IT EMBRACES THE UNEQUIVOCAL LINK BETWEEN AN INCLUSIVE AND GENDER EQUAL ORGANIZATION AND PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

A diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace that promotes a culture of respect leads to better organizational performance.

IT IS KEY TO INNOVATION

A gender equal, diverse and inclusive workplace leads to sharper, more innovative and creative thinking. Diverse and inclusive teams challenge the status quo, push boundaries and find opportunities for adaptation.

IT DEMONSTRATES LEADERSHIP

It is a leadership opportunity within and beyond our field, and most importantly with the communities with whom we work, to demonstrate that Mercy Corps takes gender equality, diversity and social inclusion seriously. It will also attract top talent if we lead with this set of values and demonstrate that they are more than just rhetoric.

IT IS KEY TO STRATEGIC GROWTH

As a leader in implementing programs that integrate and prioritize GEDSI, new and existing strategic partnerships and donors who share these same values and ambitions will join forces.

IT IS ABOUT LIVING OUR VALUES, ESPECIALLY "DIVERSITY IS POWERFUL" AND "EVERY VOICE MATTERS"

As an organization that seeks to address systemic issues and shift power dynamics, we must acknowledge and address power imbalances within our structures and processes, and within the communities with whom we work.

This strategy builds on over a decade of learning at Mercy Corps geared towards putting the different experiences of women, girls, men, and boys at the center of everything we do. It also acknowledges organizational ups and downs that have underscored just how critical this effort is (e.g. the completion and review of our first three-year gender strategy, the findings of the global Gender, Diversity and Inclusion assessment and the learning and external reports from the Culver crisis).² We recognize that **this is a time for organizational introspection about our norms, values, behaviors and culture, and for committing ourselves to do what it takes to put the lived experiences, perspectives and priorities of the people we work with at the center of everything we do in meaningful and transformative ways.** It also responds to advances in our field; meaningful gender integration at a minimum is now required practice in international development programs.³



An intersectional approach recognizes that true equality can only be achieved by acknowledging how other forms of discrimination (e.g. race, class, age, ability, socio-economic status, refugee/displaced status) overlap with and exacerbate gender discrimination.⁴ Adopting this lens allows us to identify and address complex contexts, and formulate strategies and programs that are more inclusive and relevant for people from a range of identities.⁵

There is also recognition that though gender is still the biggest determinant of inequality, it intersects with other forms of oppression based on unequal power relations like ableism, racism, caste and ethnic discrimination, classism, and discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and religion, among others. It is imperative for international development practitioners to proactively analyze and act to address the programmatic and organizational implications of these dynamics. INGOs are increasingly holding up a mirror to their own programming and organizational practices and undergoing organizational change processes to address gaps. In some cases, INGOs are embracing feminist principles wholesale, examining and declaring what taking a feminist approach means for their own organizational practices to every sector of their work from humanitarian approaches to influencing and advocacy. Some donors are also requiring that programs go beyond gender minimum standards to require that all programs (not just those focused on gender equality) focus on proactively addressing structural barriers and harmful norms that perpetuate all forms of inequality.

II. WHY DOES THIS MATTER? IMAGINING A FUTURE

Gender discrimination and social exclusion are pervasive and hold everyone back in all dimensions of human development. Women and girls are overrepresented in the extreme poor, and are disproportionately affected by conflict and poverty; in two thirds of countries women are more likely than men to report food security and women and girls are fourteen times as likely as men to die in a disaster.⁶ **The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) center gender equality as the fundamental human right that, if achieved, is the best chance humanity has to address the most pressing challenges of our time, from conflict to environmental degradation.** Gender equality is critical to the achievement of all seventeen SDGs, but monitoring reports show that implementation is entirely too slow. **While the challenges facing women, girls and other socially marginalized people are daunting, the connections between their systemic inequality and stymied global progress could not be more clear.⁷**

At Mercy Corps, we take the bold commitments of the SDGs as a collective call to action. As a values-driven organization, we want the way we work and the change we are working towards to be in line with those values, particularly justice and equality.

2. FOR FURTHER READING SEE: ACT FOR IMPACT GRANTS I AND II FINAL REPORTS, 2019 COMPLEX PROGRAM GENDER AUDIT, MERCY CORPS' GENDER STRATEGY (2015-2018), GDI GLOBAL ASSESSMENT, EXTERNAL REPORTS FROM THE CULVER CRISIS

3. RAO ET AL. GENDER AT WORK: THEORY AND PRACTICE FOR 21ST CENTURY ORGANIZATIONS

4. CRENSHAW, KIMBERLE. (1989). DEMARGINALIZING THE INTERSECTION OF RACE AND SEX: A BLACK FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF ANTIDISCRIMINATION DOCTRINE, FEMINIST THEORY AND ANTIRACIST POLITICS [HTTPS://PHILPAPERS.ORG/ARCHIVE/CREDTI.PDF](https://philpapers.org/archive/CREDTI.PDF)

5. OXFAM CANADA [HTTPS://WWW.CANWAC.CA/SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/2019-11/CAT-GJO-V6%20SINGLES.PDF](https://www.canwac.ca/sites/default/files/2019-11/CAT-GJO-V6%20SINGLES.PDF)

6. "TURNING PROMISES INTO ACTION: GENDER EQUALITY IN THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT," SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS MONITORING REPORT, UN WOMEN: [HTTPS://WWW.UNWOMEN.ORG/-/MEDIA/HEADQUARTERS/ATTACHMENTS/SECTIONS/LIBRARY/PUBLICATIONS/2018/SDG-REPORT-GENDER-EQUALITY-IN-THE-2030-AGENDA-FOR-SUSTAINABLE-DEVELOPMENT-2018-EN.PDF?LA=EN&VS=4332](https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2018/SDG-REPORT-GENDER-EQUALITY-IN-THE-2030-AGENDA-FOR-SUSTAINABLE-DEVELOPMENT-2018-EN.PDF?LA=EN&VS=4332)

7. "TURNING PROMISES INTO ACTION: GENDER EQUALITY IN THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT," SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS MONITORING REPORT, UN WOMEN

IMAGINE A WORLD IN WHICH ALL PEOPLE, REGARDLESS OF SEX, ETHNICITY, RACE, CLASS ABILITY, AGE, SOCIOECONOMIC, AND REFUGEE OR DISPLACED STATUS CAN...

- Claim their rights, live free of discrimination and violence and have the autonomy to choose how they live their lives.
- Have access to high quality education and job opportunities.
- Support themselves and their families and provide food, shelter and healthcare.
- Feel like their voices are heard, represented, valued and acted upon in their communities and by governance institutions.
- Have the freedom to express themselves fully about social and political issues and celebrate and practice their religious and cultural traditions.
- Have equal access to the same services and opportunities.



IN THIS WORLD...

- **A woman** has full control over her body, choosing if and when she marries and if, when and how many children she has.
- **Women and men** share household decision-making and labor, reducing the burden of unpaid labor and care on women.
- **Women smallholder farmers** have access to land rights, decide what to plant, and have access to markets to sell their crops.
- **Refugee girls** have access to quality services and opportunities and are seen for their contributions.
- **All girls** have the ability to access high quality education opportunities and can see a pathway to employment and empowerment.
- Everyone, especially **men and boys**, have alternatives to settling disputes using violence.
- **Marginalized ethnicities and women and people who are gender non-binary** serve in decision making roles from the community to the national levels.

TO CONTRIBUTE, WE MUST **IMAGINE A MERCY CORPS...**



- That reflects the diversity of our partners and stakeholders around the world with gender equal, diverse and inclusive teams.
- That creates spaces for all voices to be heard, in which every team member not only feels safe to come to work but has a sense of belonging and feels that their perspectives are acknowledged and valued.
- Where everyone is encouraged to talk about the systemic issues that enable inequity and contribute to creating actionable solutions.
- Where people are able to show up authentically and feel a sense of belonging, contributing to higher performing teams that are cohesive, adaptive and innovative.
- Where senior leadership are accountable for gender equality, diversity and social inclusion, providing the resources and modeling what this looks like to make this vision a reality.

III. OUR GENDER EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION PRINCIPLES

This strategy is guided by **inclusive feminist principles and approaches** that we believe can provide a powerful framework and path forward for the organization. As we strive to be an organization that stands in solidarity with others and that puts the “who” at the center of all of our work, embracing feminist approaches will make us a stronger and safer organization.

So what does this mean in practice? It begins by acknowledging the importance of *the process as much as the outcome*, and that we need to undergo a long lasting, sustainable effort to challenge the structures, culture and institutions that preserve and perpetuate inequality, starting with ourselves. If we don’t examine how power is exercised and operates in our organizational practices, then our efforts to shift power dynamics and create systemic change in our programs will fall short. Looking at dimensions of power within our organizational practices – from how we interact with our colleagues, to how programs are designed and implemented, to who and how decisions are made – is the first step in beginning to change them.

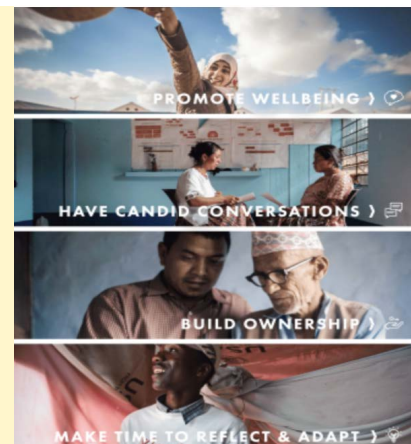
Following is a **set of principles inspired by feminist approaches to guide our work in programs, in our partnerships and in our organizational culture and behavior**.⁸ We acknowledge that these principles are aspirational and it will take significant effort to embody them, beyond the timeline of this strategy. We also acknowledge that they are already guiding Mercy Corps’ work in many ways we want to build on and amplify.

AN INCLUSIVE FEMINIST APPROACH IS ABOUT A BETTER WORLD FOR EVERYONE, NOT JUST WOMEN AND GIRLS

- **Recognize and understand** that patriarchal systems prioritize the needs and voices of men, boys and certain social groups and de-prioritize the voices of women, girls and people of other gender identities as well as people of other intersecting identities who can experience further marginalization. These systems constrain the lives of everyone, including men and boys.
- **Proactively address** resulting inequalities, while working to **dismantle and transform** power structures, norms and relations that perpetuate them.
- **Start with ourselves** (e.g. examining our own biases and privileges and how they manifest in our relationships and taking steps to take responsibility and address what we find) **and our organizations** (e.g. conduct a gender and social inclusion analysis to understand how planned interventions will affect people differently and acting on that understanding).

PEOPLE WITH POSSIBILITY

We are working to ensure teams are led by inclusive leaders who can build psychological safety and trust, and that Mercy Corps has structures, policies, and processes in place to support equitable and inclusive environments. People with Possibility has been designed to help teams across the agency embody a culture of agility and innovation. We have identified four practices that – when practiced day-to-day – will support the creation of more inclusive, supportive work environments in which everyone can do their best work.



8. MANY PEER AGENCIES HAVE BEGUN TO ARTICULATE THEIR OWN PRINCIPLES AND OPERATIONALIZE THEM (E.G. FEMINIST PRINCIPLES, OXFAM CANADA, FEMINIST LEADERSHIP, ACTION AID, FEMINIST LEADERSHIP FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION, JUST ASSOCIATES)



UNDERSTAND & SHARE POWER

- We seek to understand, address and shift both individual and institutional expressions of power. Institutional power dynamics include those associated with the colonial roots of international development. Individual expressions of power are the privileges we have or don't have based on gender, age, sex, race, ethnicity, and other intersectional identities.
- We proactively make space for and reflect on, openly discuss and challenge unequal power dynamics and design systems and processes that are equitable, responsive and intentional.



PROMOTE DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

- We celebrate and encourage diversity.
- We take every opportunity to seek out and honor diverse knowledge, expertise and experience.
- We affirm the equality of all people and acknowledge that being different does not mean being less than.
- We challenge all forms of discrimination in our organization and in the communities with whom we work. We strive to create a workplace that is physically and psychologically safe for everyone.



HONOR AGENCY & AUTONOMY

- We hold up the agency and autonomy of every individual.
- Program partners and participants are agents of change and experts on their own lives, communities and contexts as well as in a broad range of theoretical and practical subject matter.
- We take every opportunity to not only recognize the effects of systemic inequalities on marginalized groups, but also their power, capacities and contributions.
- We hold ourselves accountable to the statement “nothing about us without us” and will not instrumentalize or speak for people who can speak for themselves.



IV. MERCY CORPS' GENDER EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION VISION AND FRAMEWORK

This section presents a **framework for advancing gender equality, diversity and social inclusion at Mercy Corps**. It outlines six interconnected outcomes that, taken together, are a roadmap for the transformative, intersectional changes we want to see to better identify and equitably respond to the differences between people – including both needs and opportunities – on our teams and our partner communities.

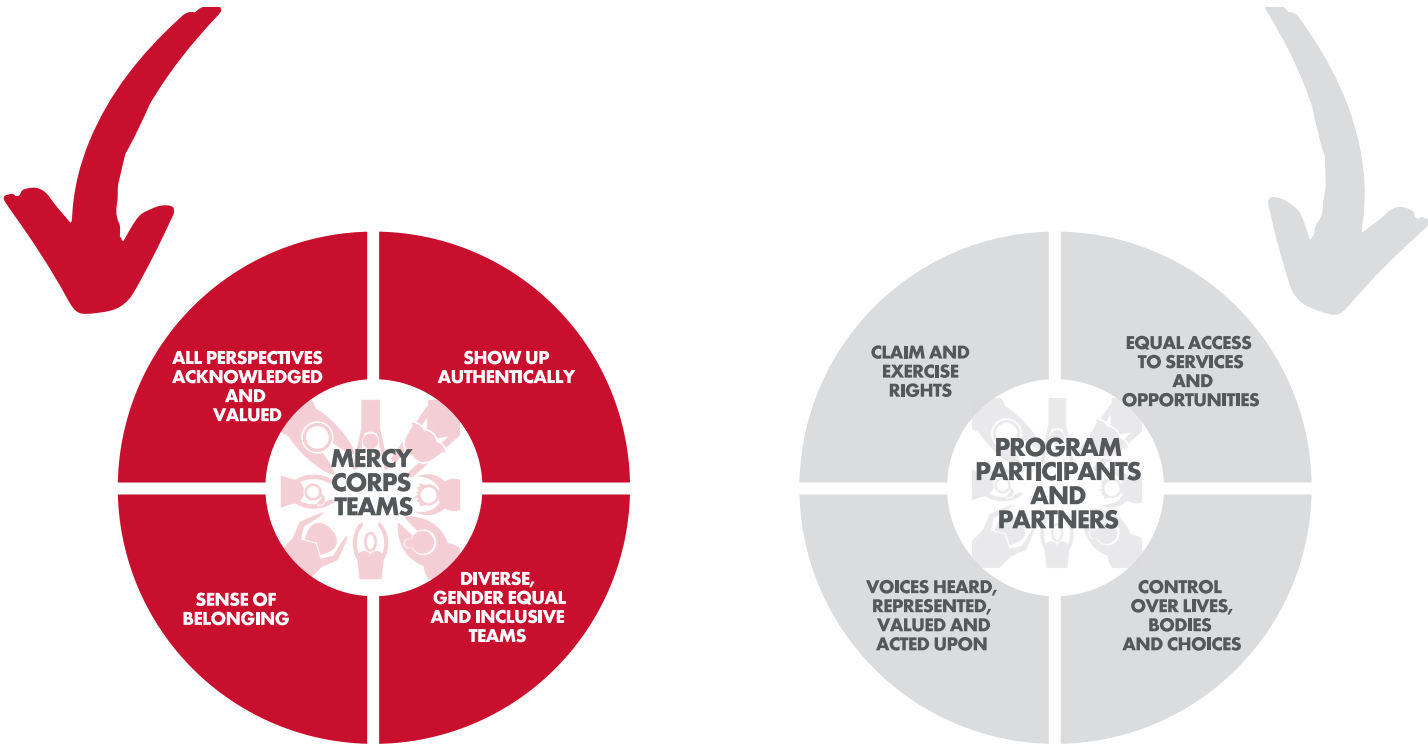
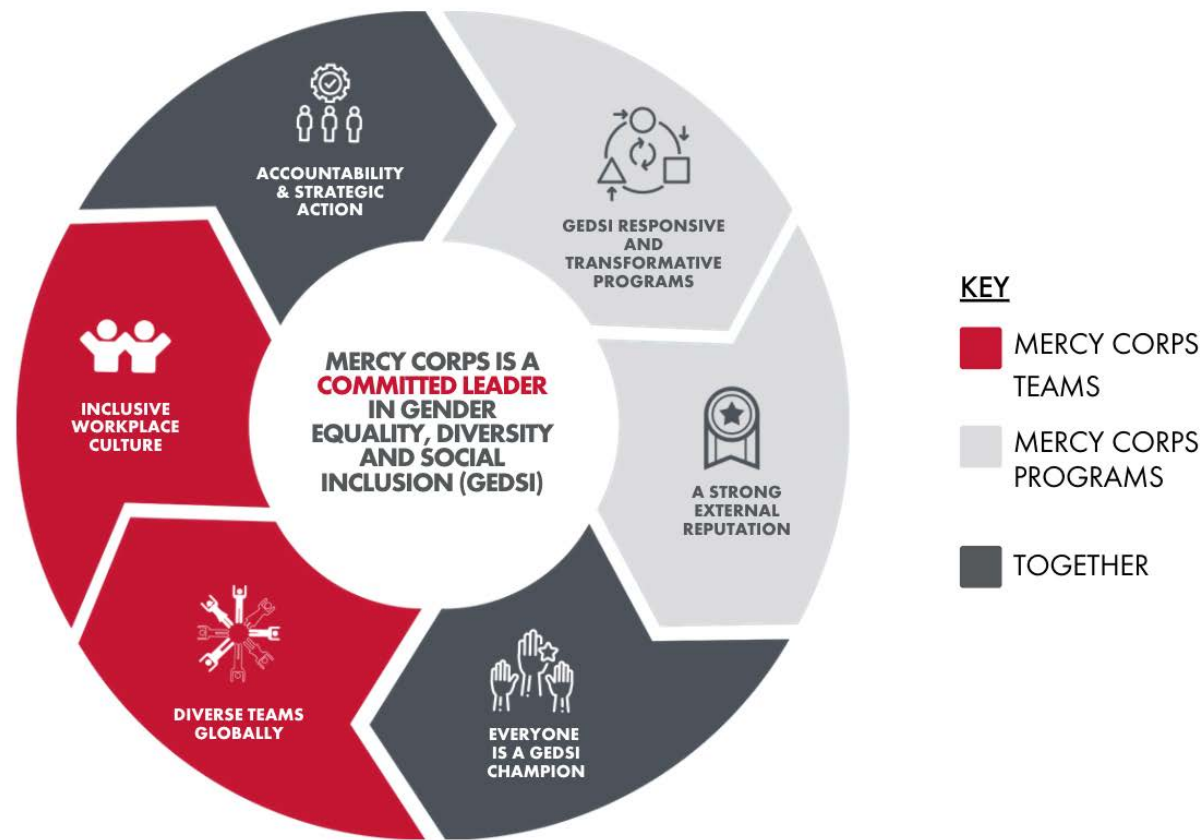
VISION

A world in which people, regardless of sex, ethnicity, race, class, ability, age and socioeconomic and/or displaced status, have the freedom to make choices about their lives and bodies, to express their perspectives and priorities, and have equal access to resources and opportunities, enabling them to live equal, empowered lives.

LONG TERM GOALS

- Mercy Corps adopts an **inclusive feminist approach** to organizational and programmatic change. (7 year goal)
- **All team members contribute** to a safe and welcoming environment where **everyone has the opportunity to realize their potential**. (5 year goal)
- Mercy Corps has **equitable and inclusive policies and practices** that enable teams to create meaningful impact. (3 year goal)
- Mercy Corps has **gender equal, diverse and inclusive teams and partnerships** that actively **seek out diverse perspectives, create space for all voices** to be heard and work collaboratively to create **meaningful and relevant learning and impact** through our programs. (5 year goal)
- All Mercy Corps programs are **co-created, co-owned, and co-implemented with partners and participants**, have effective **accountability mechanisms** and **address the root causes of inequality and the unequal distribution of power**. (7 year goal)
- All Mercy Corps programs are gender responsive at a minimum or are transformative and exceed social inclusion minimum standards, resulting in all **women, girls, men, and boys are actively engaged in and benefitting from Mercy Corps programming without barriers**. (5 year goal)

V. GENDER EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY OUTCOMES



OUTCOME 1: GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION RESPONSIVE AND TRANSFORMATIVE PROGRAMS IN TARGETED COUNTRIES.

Lead Teams: Senior Leadership Team, GESI TSU, GDI team, Country Teams and Regional Program Directors, New Initiatives TSU, Communications, Research and Learning, Food Security and Markets TSU teams

The first objective in the strategy focuses on improving GEDSI outcomes in target countries and sectors within Mercy Corps within the next three years, creating models for the agency for what meaningful integration can look like. We will partner with six Mercy Corps country offices to demonstrate what best in class can look like for gender equality, diversity and social inclusion in operations and program impact. Based on intentional criteria, the GESI TSU and the GDI Team will take an integrated approach to GEDSI support in partnership with target country offices. We will also work with key sector and technical support teams to build up our expertise and leverage existing opportunities to integrate gender equality and social inclusion. We will work with food security and resilient-market focused programs in the six target countries, as well as seizing opportunities to ensure program design, implementation and MEL of programs outside of these countries meet the highest GEDSI technical standards.

OUTCOME	1	GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION RESPONSIVE AND TRANSFORMATIVE PROGRAMS* IN TARGETED COUNTRIES
OUTCOME GOAL		Demonstrate Mercy Corps' GEDSI "best in class" in both organizational and program impact
OBJECTIVE	1.1	Six country teams' portfolios become models for GEDSI standards for all of Mercy Corps (2/year, FY20-23)
MEASURE OF SUCCESS	1.1.1	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) and agency standards are met and/or exceeded in these countries (FY 21) Milestones: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GEDSI indicators are at outcome or higher levels. All programs are gender equality, diversity and social inclusion responsive. SADD collected, tied to G&SI analysis and tracked regularly. G&SI analysis conducted, informing program design and adaptations.
MEASURE OF SUCCESS	1.1.2	Gender equality, diversity and social inclusion is meaningfully integrated into all proposals (FY21) Milestones: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender marker developed and implemented. Any new program integrates GEDSI and is reviewed for GEDSI based on gender marker prior to submission. Any existing program reviewed for GEDSI adaptations. Staffing and policies follow GDI action plan Budgets include adequate gender staffing and activity costs as per new guidance/tools. All programs meet minimum localization requirements (see 1.1.5).
MEASURE OF SUCCESS	1.1.3	Country leadership teams track their GEDSI journey and contribute to evidence base for sharing internally and externally (FY21) Milestones: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accountability for GESI-GDI integration process including monitoring and tracking of agency standards. Research and learning agenda developed for each country, learning covers both organizational change processes and program impact.

***GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE PROGRAMS** HAVE GENDER EQUALITY AND INCLUSION INDICATORS AT THE OUTCOME LEVEL OR HIGHER AND ACTIVELY STRIVE TO EXAMINE, QUESTION, AND CHANGE HARMFUL GENDER NORMS AND POWER IMBALANCES.

***GENDER RESPONSIVE PROGRAMS** ACKNOWLEDGE THE ROLE OF GENDER NORMS AND INEQUALITIES AND SEEK TO LIMIT THEIR HARMFUL IMPACTS, BUT DO NOT AIM TO CHANGE POWER RELATIONS IN PURSUIT OF GENDER EQUALITY. THESE PROGRAMS MIGHT ADDRESS THE SYMPTOMS OF GENDER INEQUALITY, BUT NOT THE ROOT CAUSES.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS	1.1.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research and learning agendas for each country are GEDSI responsive with growing number of transformative research pieces. Establish evidence base about the link between GDI and GESI – organizational change and inclusive program impact <p>Strategic relationships with funding and advocacy targets are strong (FY23)</p> <p>Milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence and learning used to inform fundraising plans with private and institutional donors. Develop strategic donor partnerships (e.g. World Bank, UN, other multilaterals). Issue based advocacy strategy development around priority thematic areas (e.g. ensure governments uphold their commitments to funding GESI related work).
MEASURE OF SUCCESS	1.1.5	<p>All new programs inclusively co-designed with partners and stakeholders with at least 30% of program budgets delivered by partners (FY23)</p> <p>Milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build relationships with local women-led and GEDSI-focused organizations in preparation for partnership opportunities Local partners fully participate in program design from the design workshop through writing. Deploy organizational strengthening tools and approaches to ensure partners have capacity to deliver 30% program budget.
OBJECTIVE	1.2	<p>GEDSI is meaningfully integrated into targeted technical approaches and sectors (FY22)</p>
MEASURE OF SUCCESS	1.2.1	<p>All Food Security and Resilient Market-focused programs in the target countries have gender responsive or gender transformative outcomes (FY22)</p> <p>Milestones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergency programs include strong gender and inclusion analyses and have plans to reduce major equality barriers (e.g. time poverty and lack of decision making power). All DFSAs/non-emergency programs include transformative WE3 and equality outcomes transformative (e.g. changes in power dynamics and social norms). All DFSAs and Resilient Markets programs are gender responsive by end of FY 21 and gender transformative by end of FY22.

OUTCOME 2: EVERYONE IS A GENDER EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION CHAMPION.

Lead Teams: People Team, Country teams, GESI and GDI teams

Capacity and ownership are critical elements to culture and behavior change. Outcome 2 captures the work we will do to ensure that all team members not only understand what Gender Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion mean for them personally and in their contexts, but also have the knowledge, skills and confidence to integrate GEDSI into their way of working. This initiative will continue the roll out of opportunities for all Mercy Corps team members to first reflect on what GEDSI related concepts mean for them personally and create the space for them to explore these often difficult concepts through in person and e-learning modalities. Another core focus of this outcome is building the capacity of a cohort of GEDSI technical advisors across regions who can provide targeted, direct billed support within their countries and regions which will help us meet the seemingly endless demand for high quality GEDSI technical support, reduce consultancies and increase retention and opportunities for professional development. We will also increase the availability of resources and e-learning opportunities on GEDSI for everyone at Mercy Corps, ensuring that staff have access to the most up to date and cutting edge training and thinking related to GEDSI and their sectors of work.

OUTCOME	2	EVERYONE IS A GENDER EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION CHAMPION.
OUTCOME GOAL		All team members understand what Gender Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion mean personally and in their contexts, and have the knowledge, skills and confidence to integrate GEDSI into their way of working
OBJECTIVE	2.1	Team members safely discuss and reflect on key GEDSI-related concepts together (e.g. mitigating bias, embracing diversity) and understand what these concepts mean in practice (operations) (FY21)
MEASURE OF SUCCESS	2.1.1	Team members have space and resources they need to have courageous conversations (FY21) Milestones: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and socialization of team agreements to sustain courageous conversations on GEDSI-related topics. • Development and dissemination of GDI-related resources and tools.
OBJECTIVE	2.2	GEDSI cohort of technical advisors provide technical support across regions (programs) (FY21)
MEASURE OF SUCCESS	2.2.1	Cohort members provide direct, billed support to program teams in their own country and/or other countries (reducing consultancies and increasing retention) (FY21) Milestones: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted capacity of cohort built and maintained. • Cohort e-learning program developed and launched by end of FY21. • Cohort serves as mentors for next round of Cohort members.
OBJECTIVE	2.3	Strong GEDSI support networks, resources and capacity building exist across the agency (operations and programs) (FY21)
MEASURE OF SUCCESS	2.3.1	Capacity building is widely available for staff at all levels (FY22) Milestones: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-learning modules developed and deployed for GEDSI • Capacity building modules developed for G&SI (e.g. different modalities, experience levels and content areas) • Expand opportunities for drop in technical support (e.g. GEDSI labs, office hours, podcasts on key concepts etc.)
MEASURE OF SUCCESS	2.3.2	Team members globally have access to educational resources that reflect cutting edge thinking on what gender equality, diversity and social inclusion means (FY21) Milestones: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration of GEDSI into global onboarding process. • Update core analysis tools (e.g. G&SI analysis, PM@MC curriculum) • GEDSI is fully integrated into the Integrating Standards Project and all MEL resources (e.g. PM@MC curriculum, GMS+) • Central repository created

OUTCOME 3: STRONG REPUTATION FOR GEDSI PROGRAMS AND CONVENINGS.

Lead Teams: Policy Advocacy team, Research and Learning team, GESI and GDI teams

Outcome 3 aims to establish Mercy Corps' reputation within policy and peer dialogues by externally communicating what we are learning in terms of operations and program impact. We want to close the gap between our rhetoric related to the importance of GEDSI and how we are prioritizing and demonstrating it in our programs and ensure that we have solid GEDSI program evidence to back up our policy level commitments. We also see a great opportunity to contribute new thinking specifically on the link between programmatic and operational GEDSI.

OUTCOME	3	ESTABLISH STRONG REPUTATION FOR GEDSI PROGRAMS AND CONVENINGS.
OUTCOME GOAL		Mercy Corps regularly externally communicates what we are learning and participates in peer and policy discussions about GEDSI
OBJECTIVE	3.1	Mercy Corps contributes to policy and program dialogues related to GEDSI (to be addressed in FY23)
MEASURE OF SUCCESS	3.1.1	Regular channels for engaging with peers and policy community are established (FY23) Milestones: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker series invites discussion around organizational change processes and program impact with focus on evidence from 6 best in class countries. • Bi-annual blog around what this looks like on the ground with voices from the field • Presentations and/or events scheduled around key major fora to showcase our evidence and change process from 6 countries • Co-publish analysis around GEDI+ key program areas with other TSU units.
MEASURE OF SUCCESS	3.1.2	Contribute to policy discussions related to GEDSI with feminist and target donors (FY23) Milestones: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seize opportunities to demonstrate our commitment to GEDSI (e.g. signatory to a NAP, head a working group, etc.) and consistently link them to programmatic impact lessons.

OUTCOME 4: DIVERSE TEAMS GLOBALLY.

Lead Teams: People Team, Country teams, RPDs, Senior Leadership Team

Outcome 4 focuses on a key aspect of organizational culture which makes us who we are and lays the foundation for the impact we can have together. Meaningfully addressing the challenges that Mercy Corps has with diversity and inclusion is at the core of this outcome, which commits us to ensuring that team members at all levels are embrace different perspectives and diversifying their teams, and have the structures and support they need to do so.

OUTCOME	4	DIVERSE TEAMS GLOBALLY.
OUTCOME GOAL		Team members at all levels are committed to embracing different perspectives and diversifying their teams, and have the structures and support they need to do so

OBJECTIVE	4.1	All team members understand how to and embrace different perspectives (FY21)
MEASURE OF SUCCESS	4.1.1	Team members, especially hiring managers, understand and actively embrace different perspectives (FY21) Milestone: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development and roll out of mitigating bias training for staff globally.
OBJECTIVE	4.2	Mercy Corps has policies and practices that reflect our organizational commitment to diversity (FY21-22)
MEASURE OF SUCCESS	4.2.1	Mercy Corps' hiring, retention and promotion guidelines and practices promote diversity (FY21) Milestones: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update recruitment and hiring process and practices to mitigate bias and encourage greater diversity. Design and dissemination of tools and capacity development materials for managers on updated recruitment practices and processes. Develop HR process to improve retention and facilitate advancement of female and underrepresented talent.
OBJECTIVE	4.3	Mercy Corps takes steps to ensure that our teams reflect the diversity of the communities and stakeholders with whom we work (FY21)
MEASURE OF SUCCESS	4.3.1	Teams globally are committed to reflecting the diversity of the communities and stakeholders with whom we work (FY21) Milestones: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of regional, country-level, leadership and board GDI metrics and plans (GDI diagnostic). Development of a process to link Next Generation and ELP participants to career development opportunities.

OUTCOME 5: INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE CULTURE

Lead Teams: People Team, Senior Leadership Team, GEDSI Team

Another critical component of transforming our operations is taking steps in Outcome 5 to promote an inclusive workplace culture that ensures that team members at all levels contribute to and operate in inclusive environments that are supported by equitable structures and policies. Key to this effort is the continued implementation and evolution of People with Possibility and the expansion of spaces and opportunities for team members from underrepresented groups to gather. Finally, agency policies related to compensation and performance management need to be transparent and reflect the use of an equity lens.

OUTCOME	5	INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE CULTURE.
OUTCOME GOAL		Team members at all levels contribute to and operate in inclusive environments and are supported by equitable structures and policies
OBJECTIVE	5.1	Team members at all levels understand and practice inclusive behaviors to create an environment in which diverse perspectives are embraced (FY21)

MEASURE OF SUCCESS	5.1.1	Team leaders and team members exercise People with Possibility (PwP) and equitable performance management approaches (FY21) Milestones: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates to and socialization of Cornerstones of Leadership with equity and inclusion competencies • Expansion of PwP to include inclusive leadership
OBJECTIVE	5.2	Mercy Corps has equitable policies and practices to ensure all team members are set up for success (FY21)
MEASURE OF SUCCESS	5.2.1	Agency policies related to compensation and performance management are transparent and reflect an equity lens (FY21) Milestones: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption and integration of an equity lens into Mercy Corps' policies and decision making processes. • Preparation and roll out of equitable compensation and salary transparency workstream. • Development and dissemination of Performance with Possibility guidance and training for managers.
MEASURE OF SUCCESS	5.2.2	Mercy Corps has structures and spaces to support underrepresented groups (FY21) Milestones: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of affinity group program

OUTCOME 6: ACCOUNTABILITY AND STRATEGIC ACTION

Lead Teams: All listed

Outcome 6 underscores all previous outcomes and is key to the advancement and success of the strategy. Critical to our success is shared ownership and accountability for advancing gender equality, diversity and social inclusion priorities across Mercy Corps. Key to shared accountability is 1) regular reporting about progress, 2) associated budget, 3) an awareness campaign to keep the drum beat of the GEDSI work top of mind for people, 4) accountability mechanisms for people at all levels of leadership are in place so the strategy does not fall to an overstretched few.

OUTCOME	6	ACCOUNTABILITY AND STRATEGIC ACTION
OUTCOME GOAL		There is shared ownership and accountability for advancing gender equality, diversity and social inclusion priorities across Mercy Corps
OBJECTIVE	6.1	Mercy Corps has a high level GEDSI strategy that clearly maps out what success looks like in terms of operations and programs for the next 3 years, shared ownership and budget.
MEASURE OF SUCCESS	6.1.1	Strategy progress is regularly monitored and clearly communicated internally and externally Milestones: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GEDSI is integrated into the Compass and agency strategic planning processes. • Monthly strategy meetings with agency leads convened to track progress and communicate internally. • Awareness campaign about strategy content and progress launched and sustained through available agency channels.

- The board and executive team are accountable for promoting GEDSI (accountability mechanisms e.g. ET briefed quarterly by RDs, ET held responsible by the board)
- Key TSU and country teams are accountable for promoting GEDSI (accountability mechanisms e.g. shared agreements with commitments and targets, regular reporting meetings, etc.)

V. CONCLUSION

Addressing not just the effects of gender and other intersectional inequalities that keep harmful societal norms in place, but the systemic, unequal power dynamics that perpetuate them is central to our mission of alleviating poverty, oppression and suffering.

We are at a critical crossroads as it relates to our organizational advancement. Now is the time to take increased, agency-wide action to advance gender equality, diversity and social inclusion in our culture and in our programs. It is a time for bold, decisive action, guided by an inclusive, feminist approach.

ANNEX I

KEY DISTINCTIONS: BECAUSE WORDS MATTER

This section lays out key definitions and explanations of choices of terms. There are many ways terms may be defined; this section seeks to address the word choices made in this document and encourage further discussion, as we recognize that our understanding and use of terms will evolve.

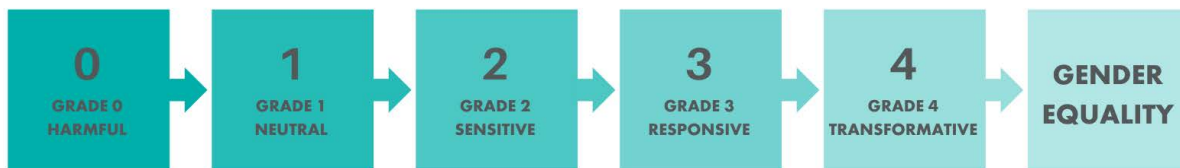
What is GESI and what is GDI?

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) is a concept that addresses unequal power relations experienced by people on the grounds of gender, wealth, ability, location, age, ethnicity/caste, language and agency or a combination of these dimensions. It focuses on the need for action to balance these power relations, reduce disparities and ensure equal rights, opportunities and respect for all individuals regardless of their social identity. At Mercy Corps, it is the name of the Technical Support Unit team responsible for ensuring that our programs are addressing issues related to gender equality and social inclusion. Gender, Diversity and Inclusion (GDI) is a concept that also addresses unequal power relations and was coined at Mercy Corps to be the name of the effort to examine and address issues within our organizations' operations. The GESI and GDI teams work closely towards the goals of this strategy.

What is the difference between gender blind, responsive and transformative? How do know how we are doing?

The gender integration continuum represents different steps towards integrating gender meaningfully at all phases of the program cycle. The phases and definitions are listed below. In terms of using this spectrum as an evaluation tool, INGOs have created approaches. For example, CARE created a Gender Marker that is an accountability and learning tool that monitors how well gender has been integrated into humanitarian and development work through a project cycle. It is a self-reporting mechanism that gives programs a grade from 1-4 on the continuum. It is a first step towards going beyond good intentions to being able to measure progress towards gender equality side by side. One of Mercy Corps' top priorities for the strategy is to create an accountability like a gender marker that will be compatible with other agency approaches to measuring progress on advancing gender equality.

- **Gender harmful:** Programs that (unwittingly) exacerbate gender inequalities in a context.
- **Gender neutral:** Programs do not acknowledge gender dynamics or do so in only cursory, "check the box" ways. Often gender "neutral" programs can do harm because of a lack of acknowledgement of the many different experiences of contexts and interventions on people of different genders.
- **Gender sensitive:** Programs highlight gender differences, issues and inequalities. Though they highlight these differences, they might not proactively address them like a gender responsive program would.
- **Gender responsive:** Programs take action to respond to differences in needs among women, girls, men, and boys and people of a spectrum of gender identities. Programs in this category adhere to Gender Minimum Standards, conducting a gender analysis and updating it to make program decisions, collecting SADD, etc. Gender responsive programs are different from gender transformative programs in that they do not seek to change the status quo, rather they work within the confines of existing gender norms and relations.
- **Gender transformative:** Programs that are designed and implemented to shift the structures that entrench gender inequality within a society.



Why gender equality and not just social inclusion?

While gender inequality negatively affects everyone including men and boys, women and girls are most disproportionately affected by restrictive laws, policies and social norms and attitudes. Dismantling patriarchal systems still requires standalone programs for women and girls (across the diverse spectrum of sexual orientation and gender identity and expression).

What is the problem with the term vulnerability?

The term “vulnerability” is often used to describe the state of people who experience systemic or structural inequalities based on their identities. The root causes of inequalities are the fundamentally unjust systems and structures that privilege certain people and discriminate against others, not the individuals themselves. However, the term “vulnerability” can inadvertently assign a level of responsibility and even fault to people who experience systemic discrimination. It also labels people as fundamentally deficient, or lacking something, not taking into account the full range of their experience, agency and personhood. When agencies apply the term “vulnerable” to individuals based on the implied assumption that their identities, needs and priorities are known without their involvement in setting these, it may inadvertently contribute to their further marginalization. At Mercy Corps we want to move away from using the blanket term “vulnerability.” In doing so, it will encourage us to have a more nuanced understanding of the “who” in our programs and the different dimensions of social inclusion we are working to address. Moving beyond using the term “vulnerable” is an important step in realizing our goal of really integrating intersectional understanding into our work and meaningfully addressing social inclusion goals through power sharing.

ANNEX II

KEY DEFINITIONS

Agency is the self-determination, autonomy, power, and ability to make decisions freely and exercise power within society, household, and over one's own body; It is the ability to set goals for oneself and carry them out.

Cisgender: Describes people who identify and experience their sex/gender (identity and expression) as congruent with the sex/gender assigned to them at birth.

Diversity is about recognizing and valuing individual and group differences across various visible and invisible dimensions. These include race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, age, as well as personal life, educational and work experiences, geographic and socioeconomic roots, and differences like thinking and communication styles, cultural knowledge, language abilities and religious or spiritual perspectives.

Discrimination is the unjust or prejudicial treatment of individuals or groups based on characteristics such as their ethnicity, religion, race, class, gender, age, etc. Discrimination may be intentional or unintentional. It puts burdens, obligations, or disadvantages on some individuals or groups that are not put on others, and/or denies or limits access to opportunities and advantages.

Empowerment refers to the expansion of people's capacity to make and act upon decisions (agency) and to transform those decisions into desired outcomes, affecting all aspects of their lives. It entails overcoming socioeconomic and other power inequalities in a context where this ability was previously denied. Programmatic interventions often focus specifically on empowering women, because of the inequalities in their socioeconomic status?

Equality is the state of balanced power relations that gives equal rights, responsibilities, opportunities and decision-making authority to all people. Gender equity is the process to achieve gender equality, recognizing that all people do not have the same starting point.

Equity is the fair treatment of all people according to their respective needs which might include equal treatment or treatment that is different but is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities.

Ethnicity denotes groups that share a common identity-based ancestry, language, or culture. Ethnicity is often based on religion, beliefs, and customs as well as memories of migration or colonization.

Gender: The roles, behaviors, activities, expectations and attributes that a given society may construct or consider appropriate for the categories of "men" and "women".

Gender Expression: Gender expression is the expression of gender characteristics and behaviors that are socially understood as to convey masculinity, femininity, or androgyny, and includes dress, grooming, mannerisms, speech patterns, and social interactions

Gender Identity: An individual's internal, deeply felt sense of being a man, a woman, both, neither, or in-between. This may or may not match the individual's biological or legal sex

Gender-based Violence: Gender-based violence is a phenomenon deeply rooted in gender inequality, and continues to be one of the most notable human rights violations within all societies. Gender-based violence is violence directed against a person because of their gender. Both women and men experience gender-based violence but the majority of victims are women and girls. Gender-based violence and violence against women are terms that are often used interchangeably as it has been widely acknowledged that most gender-based violence is inflicted on women and girls, by men. However, using the 'gender-based' aspect is important as it highlights the fact that many forms of violence against women are rooted in power inequalities between women and men.¹⁰

Gender Relations are the social relationships between men and women shaped by beliefs and social institutions. Gender Roles are the behaviors, tasks, and responsibilities that are considered appropriate for women and men as a result of socio-cultural norms and beliefs. Gender roles are usually learned in childhood. Gender roles change over time as a result of social and/or political change.

Gender Stereotypes are ideas that people have about masculinity and femininity: what men and women of all generations should be like and are capable of doing. (e.g. girls are allowed to cry, and boys are expected to be brave and not cry.)

Intersectionality: How our individual identities (e.g. race, gender, disability status, age) interact in ways that can intensify inclusion or exclusion experienced by an individual. It is a perspective that challenges us to expand our understanding of gender beyond binaries to understand how multiple aspects of identity, such as indigeneity, ethnicity, race, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, religion, ability, and class, among others, intersect to create people's particular "frame" or way of seeing the world as well as people's particular experiences of oppression and discrimination, and how these compound and exacerbate oppression and marginalization.¹¹

Patriarchy: A system of male authority which legitimizes the oppression of women and people of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression through political, social, economic, legal, cultural, religious, and military institutions. Men's access to and control over resources and rewards within the private and public sphere derive their legitimacy from the patriarchal ideology of male dominance.

Privilege is the unearned access to resources, opportunities, or advantages (social power) that are readily available to some people because of their social group membership; an advantage, or immunity granted to or enjoyed by one societal group above and beyond the common advantage of all other groups. Privilege is often invisible to those who have it.¹²

Power:¹³

- Invisible Power: Invisible power is in many ways the most insidious and problematic of all to challenge and confront, because we rarely see it operating on us, yet it has the capacity to shape people's self-image, self esteem, social attitudes, and biases, without playing any apparent role in doing so. The media and marketing/advertising industries are classic purveyors of such invisible power.
- Visible Power: Visible or direct power operates in both public and private realms and determines who participates and who is excluded from decision-making; how privileges, tasks, and opportunities are allocated and who has the authority to control resources, people, or access to knowledge and information.

Sex refers to anatomical, genetic, hormonal, and other characteristics that play a role in reproductive or developmental processes, and is used roughly as a classification system to identify people as male, female, undetermined or intersex, usually assigned at birth.

Social Inclusion: The process of improving the ability, access, dignity, and opportunity for people who are disadvantaged on the basis of social identity, to take part in society. The process requires changing systems and challenging social norms.

LGBTQI+ describes people who identify and experience their sex/gender, including gender identity and gender expression, as incongruent with the sex/gender assigned to them at birth.

Transformative Change is a long lasting and sustainable effort that challenges the structures, culture and institutions that preserve and perpetuate

Race is a social construct forged historically through oppression, slavery, and conquest. While it has been scientifically proven that no biological or genetic evidence exists to support racial groupings, the social significance of race has forged powerful identities for many.

Racism is the belief that all members of each race possess characteristics or abilities specific to that race, especially so as to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or races.

11. OXFAM CANADA <https://www.oxfam.ca/publication/a-feminist-approach-to-womens-economic-empowerment/>

12. NATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR COMMUNITY AND JUSTICE <https://www.nccj.org/resources/social-justice-definitions>

13. ALL ABOUT POWER, CREA <https://namati.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/all-about-power-srilatha-batlivala.pdf>

ANNEX III

CREATING A MORE INCLUSIVE MERCY CORPS

Mercy Corps has made significant strides to promote gender equality, diversity and inclusion in our operations through the GDI priority. Here are a few examples of these efforts:

Prompting Individual Reflection:

Organizational and cultural change begins with individual team members. To that end, the GDI priority is identifying ways to host in-person and virtual learning and reflection sessions to help team members at all levels, including leaders, to understand and internalize key GDI-related concepts, reflect on biases that show up in the workplace, and discuss ways that team members can role model diversity, equity, and inclusion. We have hosted in-person workshops for leaders and team members in D.C. and Portland, virtual workshops for the global GDI Core Team, and several other cohorts of Mercy Corps team members, including the Executive Team. We are also in the process of developing and testing a simple inclusive workplace culture discussion guide to help team members globally raise their awareness of and reflect on GDI-related concepts within their teams.

Focusing on Team Environments:

Team members' experience at Mercy Corps largely depends on the quality of their day-to-day interactions within their colleagues. The GDI priority is therefore focusing on ensuring that teams are led by inclusive leaders who can build psychological safety and trust, and that Mercy Corps has structures, policies, and processes in place to support equitable and inclusive environments. Specifically, the GDI priority is promoting People with Possibility, supporting a workstream dedicated to equitable and transparent compensation in partnership with the Global HR team, providing technical guidance for an equity-centered performance management program, and creating formal structures to support underrepresented voices at Mercy Corps.

Shared Ownership for a Culture of Belonging:

Shared change at Mercy Corps requires teams to own and drive their gender, diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. The GDI priority has created a GDI self-diagnostic process through which teams -- including global-level functions -- can analyze their team's demographic data, collaboratively diagnose their GDI-related issues, and develop context-specific GDI action plans. As of the end of 2019, we have fourteen countries from all of our regions that have expressed interest in or have started conducting the GDI diagnostic process. As we pilot the GDI diagnostic process, we are adapting pieces of the toolkit based on feedback from country teams. We will continue to seek out opportunities for teams to drive their own change processes.

MULTIFACETED PROGRAM APPROACHES TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY

Build the Capacity and Solidarity of Women and Girls

Recognizing that women and girls are the experts about their own lives, we work in close partnership to help them realize their agency. In the Improving Pastoral Girls Improving Resilience with Livestock (GIRL) program in the drylands of Kenya and Uganda, Mercy Corps has worked with nearly 30,000 pastoralist girls to improve their livelihoods, as well as increase the food security of their households and the resilience of their communities. Girls meet weekly with a mentor to learn life skills, financial literacy, basic literacy and numeracy, entrepreneurship skills, and how to care for livestock. Girls' are increasing their decision-making power, particularly over the marketing and sale of livestock and livestock by-products; increasing their access to markets for safer economic opportunities, including access to financial services, as well as increasing their access to formal education; and enhancing their social status through increased acceptance and credibility for their contributions to their households and communities.

Combatting Gender-Based Violence

Embedding Do No Harm and explicitly working to prevent gender-based violence (GBV) are essential to all Mercy Corps programs. We are currently implementing the Energy in Emergencies – Mitigating Risks to GBV (EEMRG) in Jordan, Afghanistan, and Uganda. EEMRG aims to support humanitarian efforts to mitigate risks of gender based violence (GBV) in emergencies by providing humanitarians with the tools to design relevant market-driven energy access programs in emergencies that harness the energy needs of women and girls, enhance their meaningful participation, and address safety concerns that they face associated with energy access at different phases of an emergency response. In Colombia, we have worked to reduce GBV and cultivate leadership skills for girls. Through this work, Mercy Corps has supported the creation of safer school environments and improved quality of education for more than 48,000 young people. We work with 89 schools and boarding schools to improve teachers' skills, involve caregivers in the development of their children; ensure child protection and safeguarding, and engage adolescents through sports and other activities to decrease gender-based violence, increase equity, and improve leadership skills.

Working with Men and Boys to Address Toxic Masculinities

Engaging men and boys is a critical component for changing social norms and attitudes related to gender inequity. Our Gender, Peace and Security focused programs seek to reshape these gendered perceptions, behaviors and relationships so that men can become more effective advocates for peace. For example, the GHG Program in Karamoja included the Male Change Agent (MCA) initiative, through which men were actively engaged in transforming norms and practices and supporting the promotion of women's social power. Through a core group of committed and trained MCAs, participants championed positive behaviors and influenced other men through mentorship, information community discussions, and by directly reaching other influencers in the community. Communities with MCAs saw significant improvements in workload sharing and major shifts in decision making regarding farming and family planning and women's health, and a decrease in overall levels of domestic violence, leading women and girls to report that they worked longer hours in the fields and were more likely to stay in school.

Enhance Women's Resilience and Recovery Capacity:

Many of our programs prioritize alternative livelihood and economic relationships between communities that may have been torn apart by violence. Women's access to economic opportunities contributes to long-term stability. The WISE Program in Mali increased the capacity of 2,400 girls in financial management and leadership as well as their understanding of gender-based violence and early child marriage. Four hundred women also undertook income-generating activities with the support of cash grants, setting themselves on a positive course to reducing their economic dependence on their husbands, building financial management skills and benefitting from reduced vulnerability and exposure to violence. 800 individuals also increased their access to financial services through their participation in Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) and 15 community projects designed and led by women's associations, which included improving the financial stability for women's associations and generating sustainable income sources for women. Women's associations also reported that VSLAs improved cohesion and solidarity among their members.

Advance Equitable Participation of Women in Decision Making

Mercy Corps programs promote the effective participation of women, men, girls, and boys in conflict prevention, management and resolution to transform gender norms that contribute to the exclusion or marginalization of certain individuals and groups. In Guatemala, indigenous women enhanced their participation in the National System of Development Councils and strengthened their networks to combat gender inequity and build social cohesion through their participation in the PODER Program (UN Peacebuilding Fund, 2017-2018) 279 women trained on conflict analysis, budgeting, violence prevention, advocacy, mediation, and collaborative decision-making engaged government representatives in the importance of creating an enabling environment for women to participate. By the end of the program, the number of women participating in the development commissions increased from 25 to 279 and at the departmental level, the number of women commissioners increased from 18 to 38. The program also included a communication campaign through 40 local radio episodes in three languages on decision making, citizen participation and the prevention of violence against women.

Women's Economic Empowerment & Equality (WE3)

A priority programmatic area for the next three years for Mercy Corps is building on the momentum of our Women's Economic Empowerment portfolio of programs. Focusing on Access, Agency, Women's Leadership, Do No Harm, and Enabling Environment, WE3 programs drive equitable economic outcomes via four pathways: Labor Market Development, Financial Inclusion, Climate and Adaptation, and Markets in Crisis. Cross cutting our approach is gender-responsive Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning (MERL) and Women-led Partnerships. WE3 is about working at the intersection of gender equality and inclusive economic growth. WE3 requires that we take a whole-of-system approach that requires us to meaningfully engage all stakeholders.



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About Mercy Corps

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.



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