

Mercy Corps in DR Congo

Bringing innovation and fresh hope to save lives and restore livelihoods

Mercy Corps Saves and Improves Lives in the World's Toughest Places

Mercy Corps is a leading global humanitarian agency saving and improving lives in the world's toughest places. With a network of experienced professionals in more than 40 countries, we partner with local communities to put bold ideas into action to help people recover, overcome hardship and build better lives. Now, and for the future.

Overview of Our DRC Programs

Mercy Corps is helping the people of the DRC by:

- Improving access to water and sanitation services.
- Designing and building large urban water facilities.
- Helping people obtain a more reliable food supply.

The Context

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is one of the largest countries in Africa. It is also home to one of the world's worst humanitarian crises and most dismal socio-economic indicators, ranking 186 of 187 on the 2013 U.N. Human Development Index. An already weak economy collapsed under the weight of five years of war, pushing the vast majority of the country's 70 million people to new depths of poverty. More than 70 percent of the population currently lives below the poverty line, and the country is considered to have the highest levels of hunger in the world.

Our Strategy

The crisis in the DRC is among the most complex emergencies in the world. There is no easy solution and no shortcut to results. Mercy Corps believes that with creativity and persistence we can overcome even the toughest development challenges. Despite the truly desperate state of DRC today, we are dedicated to helping communities take the lead in their own recovery. We are working together to fill service gaps through efficient, innovative approaches so the country can move toward a future that contains the hope and opportunity all people desire.

Through our programs in Eastern Congo, we are providing immediate emergency relief while also launching activities designed to lessen the impact of the current crisis, reduce the risk of future conflict and set the stage for recovery and development.

Our Work

Water: Meeting Basic Needs and Building Urban Infrastructure to Serve Tens of Thousands

North Kivu Province is plagued by conflict spawned by numerous armed groups. This conflict has displaced hundreds of thousands of people. Some have fled to cities while others shelter in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs); all arrive with little money and few possessions to sustain themselves and their families. To help them survive, Mercy Corps is providing emergency water, sanitation and hygiene services to 150,000 people living in 27 camps where cholera is endemic. We are protecting natural springs to ensure a reliable supply of clean water for camps and local communities; constructing latrines and showers in camps; and working with community health advocates to promote good hygiene practices.



Mercy Corps provides clean water and sanitation to people living in displacement camps. Photo: Gerry Ellis for Mercy Corps

At the same time, the influx of people fleeing conflict areas to cities in eastern Congo has overwhelmed a taxed urban infrastructure. In Goma, one of the country's largest cities, 750,000 people depend on an aging water system that was originally constructed to serve a population of fewer than 100,000 people -- and which was largely destroyed by volcanic lava flows more than a decade ago.

Mercy Corps has been a key actor in the construction and rehabilitation of Goma's urban water network, building more than 17 km of pipeline, a 700 cubic

meter storage reservoir, and 150 water distribution taps. The first phase of this construction is serving 250,000 urban residents; we are now scaling up the project to provide access to clean, inexpensive drinking water to the residents of additional cities in Eastern Congo. Our urban water program is building infrastructure to increase the availability of water in poor areas, while at the same time working to improve the management of water systems and the reliability of this necessary public utility.



We're building a new urban water network to serve tens of thousands of urban residents. Photo: Mercy Corps

Helping Communities Ensure a More Secure Long-Term Food Supply

Mercy Corps is helping vulnerable families and communities become more food secure. We are working to boost agricultural production, control crop disease, increase farmer incomes, strengthen agricultural markets, and prevent and reduce childhood malnutrition. We are also working with the public, private, and civil society sectors to become more engaged in setting and advocating development priorities as well as improving transparency.

To specifically address the challenges that vulnerable families face regarding food production, Mercy Corps has designed and operated 10 Farmer Field Schools. Mercy Corps' agricultural staff train farmers on how to use improved farming techniques, such as natural pesticide management, use of improved quality seeds, and post-harvest storage techniques. To improve nutrition, Mercy Corps trains farmers in growing healthy and marketable foods, such as orange-flesh sweet potatoes and local vegetables to reinforce better choices for dietary diversity.

Mercy Corps also trains farmers to build their marketing and business skills to run their farms as sustainable businesses.

Supporting Markets to Assist the Recovery of Families Affected by Crisis

Mercy Corps' cash and voucher programs allow conflict-affected families to purchase the goods they need for daily life, such as food, blankets and soap. Their purchases, in turn, help local merchants continue to do business, keep their shops open and support their own families.

This year, 10,000 families will use our vouchers to purchase food and non-food essentials so they can sustain their basic living conditions and, with that stability, better resist the damage that's caused by a new outbreak of conflict. Mercy Corps is piloting use of appropriate technological advances, including mobile money, to ensure that program participants who receive cash or vouchers can benefit from the flexibility to save or spend their resources when and how they choose, without sacrificing their personal security.

In all our DRC relief and development programs, Mercy Corps works in partnership with local governments and civil society organizations. Our goal is to help develop a robust, vibrant and independent civil society. By working together, we aim to help these institutions improve relationships among the communities they serve and encourage constructive dialogue between communities, governments and civil society organization around common interests and concerns.

CONTACT

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