

Mercy Corps in Haiti

Transitioning from emergency relief to long-term economic development

Just two days after Haiti's devastating January 2010 earthquake, Mercy Corps deployed emergency response teams to Port-au-Prince. Our first imperative was to address the immediate needs of survivors in a country that was already vulnerable, with 55 percent of the population living below a poverty line of \$1 a day.

Since launching our Haiti response, Mercy Corps has provided 1 million people with emergency food, clean water and shelter materials, as well as post-disaster assistance including trauma support, educational opportunities and short-term employment.

Now Mercy Corps is focusing on long-term development. We're helping communities develop their own ideas to solve Haiti's most daunting problems and create a more secure, productive and just society.

Mercy Corps works with vulnerable communities in Port-au-Prince and in the Centre, Artibonite and Archaie Departments. Our programs take innovative approaches and apply the benefits of technology to support underserved communities. Where appropriate, we leverage the power of markets to further stimulate economic development, partner with local organizations and work to strengthen local resources at all levels of government, business and civil society.

Boosting Economic Development

Our programs are accelerating economic growth by promoting entrepreneurship and increasing financial security.

Mercy Corps launched an innovative microinsurance entity called MiCRO that provides coverage against earthquakes, floods and hurricanes to clients who take out microloans from our local MFI partner, Fonkoze. Combining insurance with microloans allows low-income clients to inexpensively reduce their vulnerability and protect their assets.

In partnership with the mobile phone operator Voilà and financial institution Unibank, we helped introduce Haiti's first "mobile wallet," a cell phone account that works like a debit card and also stores savings. Mercy Corps drove the technology's development and adoption, using it to safely and efficiently deliver cash

assistance to nearly 9,000 earthquake-affected families while promoting the establishment of a mobile monetary system.

Our MicroMentor program – a business mentoring platform that leverages technology and a network of partnerships to provide high-quality, low-cost business mentoring services – has helped 220 Haitian entrepreneurs build stronger businesses.

Mercy Corps and our local partner Fondation Etre Ayisyen have joined forces to implement Discovering Young Women Entrepreneurs, Haiti's largest-ever female-only business plan competition. The project will connect young female entrepreneurs with the resources and tools they need to thrive in their businesses and communities, now and in the future, and help advance Haiti's economic development.



Agricultural development helps build long-term security in Haiti. Photo: Kate Riley/Mercy Corps

Combining Agriculture with Technology

In partnership with the Haitian private sector, Mercy Corps is piloting an agricultural product traceability system that will enable agricultural producers and exporters to meet strict international regulations imposed by importing countries. This project aims to address the needs of small-scale farmers and provide information collection and product traceability through the use of cutting-edge technologies like mobile data collection and near-field communication identification systems.

Alternative Energy and Renewable Resources

Less than 2 percent of Haiti's natural forest remains -- and yet 80 percent of the population relies on wood for cooking fuel, creating a vicious cycle of poverty and environmental degradation.

Mercy Corps is helping to break the cycle of poverty and environmental degradation through our Life, Land and Energy (Vi, Tè et Eneji) project, which takes a holistic approach to watershed rehabilitation and community development. Our program aims to create, refine and implement an exceptional model of socioeconomically driven watershed rehabilitation across Commune Arcahaie that can be replicated and shared throughout rural Haiti. It will transform 600 hectares of barren, low-yielding farmland into diverse and fruitful agro-forestry systems.

Mercy Corps is supporting local entrepreneurs to market solar lamps and build fuel-efficient stoves while providing key technical assistance on a flagship cooking technology program, focusing on fuel-efficient charcoal cooking stoves.



Our soccer program helps young people learn healthy living skills. Photo: Devan Wardwell for Mercy Corps

Helping Young People Recover – and Lead

Since the earthquake, Mercy Corps has trained 7,500 Haitian educators, caregivers and youth workers to better understand and respond to the emotional and physical needs of children and youth. Through our signature emergency interventions, Comfort for Kids and Moving Forward, Mercy Corps has helped 100,000 children in their recovery process.

Building on this foundation, Mercy Corps developed a portfolio of programs designed to help young people become informed, empowered and productive agents

of positive social change in their local communities. Our Youth Leadership Council projects support meaningful opportunities that help young leaders and community organizations effectively engage in community development.

Mercy Corps, in a partnership with Partners in Health and Grassroot Soccer, launched Soccer for Life (Foutbol pou Lavi) in Haiti in the fall of 2011. The program helps stop the spread of HIV/AIDS – while increasing support for people living with HIV/AIDS and reducing the stigma that surrounds the disease – by leveraging the power of soccer to educate, connect and mobilize communities. So far we have trained 120 coaches to serve as mentors to groups of youth, taking them through three months of after-school activities.

Soccer for Life builds basic life skills that help boys and girls adopt healthy behaviors and live risk-free. Through a series of interactive activities and discussions students gain a tangible understanding of HIV/AIDS and get the chance to practice the skills necessary for sustainable behavior change. Our active approach is combined with community mobilization events and soccer tournaments that provide a safe space for HIV counseling as well as testing to stop the spread of HIV.

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