



Moses and his son Paul are fishermen in the Middle Belt of Nigeria. Like many others, they were often at odds with herders whose animals threatened their livelihood. As this resulted in deadly conflict, Moses collaborated with Mercy Corps to mediate such disputes so that all sides could earn a living without it leading to violence.

Photo Credit: Mercy Corps 2021

ADVANCING PEACE IN COMPLEX CRISES

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Background

The world's crises are becoming more complex and protracted, and at the heart of these crises is conflict, which drives 80% of all humanitarian needs.¹ In order to effectively respond in these emergencies, we therefore have to break the cycles of violence that are causing and prolonging them. To do so, Mercy Corps developed the Advancing Peace in Complex Crises (APCC) framework to support actors working in complex crises to better mitigate violence and advance peace within and across humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts. Complementing wider initiatives around the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, APCC places an emphasis on the peace component.² While extensive reflection has already taken place on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, APCC sees its role in piloting initiatives that provide relevant and practical examples from the ground. Hence, building on research and learning with our teams around the world, Mercy Corps designs and implements programs that lay the foundations for peace as we tackle the complexity and multifaceted nature of today's crises.



Framework

Mercy Corps applies the APCC framework at different levels depending on the circumstances; ranging from meeting the minimum standards of conflict sensitivity in a humanitarian response, to connecting transformational peacebuilding and economic development. Thereby, APCC is made up of three components:

- I. Conflict sensitive humanitarian action
- II. Violence reduction and prevention in the short- and medium-term
- III. Development and peacebuilding to address underlying causes of conflict

¹ [World Bank - Fragility, Conflict and Violence](#)

² [ICVA - What is the Triple Nexus?](#)

Component I:

Conflict sensitive humanitarian action

No matter how much they may seek to avoid it, all actors operating within a conflict environment will inevitably play a role in that conflict. It is therefore essential that they do not inadvertently cause harm. While not all interventions will have explicit violence reduction or peacebuilding objectives, all actors can nonetheless work to ensure that their efforts avoid exacerbating conflict dynamics. In order to do so, they must be conflict sensitive and should seek to strengthen existing local efforts to build peace.

CONFLICT SENSITIVE HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Conduct ongoing conflict analysis

Maintain regular two-way communication with communities

Adapt programming to minimise harm and strengthen opportunities for peace



Mercy Corps staff member Grace Dalah speaks with a community member in Gombe, Nigeria

Photo Credit: Mercy Corps 2021

Mercy Corps' Crisis Analytics unit operates in a number of complex crises ranging from Northeast Nigeria to Syria. Our team of analysts triangulates data from field-based monitoring, open source data collection, and social media analysis. In doing so we are able to provide real-time forecasts of emerging risks that shape responses, and deliver regular updates on conflict trends for humanitarian actors to ensure that their interventions are conflict sensitive.

Component II:

Violence reduction and prevention in the short- and medium-term

The objectives of violence reduction efforts are to monitor, manage, and reduce tensions and incidents that risk precipitating the outbreak of violence. These actions might address proximate causes of violence like the failure to reintegrate ex-combatants, acute resource shortages, or tensions linked to displacement. These actions are short- and medium-term in nature, seeking to minimize outbreaks of violence.



Strengthen Dispute resolution mechanisms

Undertake social cohesion, trust-building and dialogue initiatives

Reduce incentives for participation in violence



Shameer, 19, is a Peace Ambassador working to promote tolerance, inclusion, and social cohesion in her city of Kirkuk.

Photo Credit: Mercy Corps 2021

Mercy Corps has been working on conflict management in Iraq since 2005. Over the years, the community leaders we have trained and mentored in mediation eventually evolved into an Iraqi NGO coordinating a network of nearly 500 mediators. They include individuals from across the religious and ethnic spectrum in the country, and resolve disputes ranging from tribal conflicts over land to tensions between citizens and government over elections.

Component III:

Development and peacebuilding to address underlying causes of conflict

Long-term development and peacebuilding seeks to transform the underlying social, economic, political, and/or ecological dynamics that constitute the root causes of conflict. Efforts to address these causes of conflict typically require long-term thinking and investment in order to successfully address patterns that are entrenched within a society. While the initiatives take longer and benefits can appear intangible, they are the essential ingredient to ultimately resolving and preventing the conflict that drives complex crises.



Address root causes of conflict

Transform norms and perceptions around violence

Promote gender equity and social inclusion

Support good governance and sustainable development



Ernest is the manager of a seed company in Baraka that worked with FARM to strengthen their operations and double their production.

Photo Credit: Mercy Corps 2021

The Food Security and Inclusive Access to Resources for Conflict-Sensitive Market Development (FARM) program in Eastern Congo integrated food security and peace programming. Through negotiations, dialogue platforms, conflict dispute mechanisms, and collective land titling, land access doubled from 42% to 84% in areas where FARM worked. In conjunction, there was a 22% increase in respondents reporting being 'very' or 'fairly' hopeful about the prospects for stability in their community.

Localisation at the heart of APCC

Across the world, people feel a disconnect with the structures and systems that exist to serve them. This is just as true of citizens' relationship with their governments as it is of the interaction between local communities and aid actors.¹ In order to advance peace we must therefore empower community members to take part in and lead on the decisions and initiatives that affect them. While peacebuilding and governance programming can work to improve the collaboration between communities and their leaders; humanitarian and development actors can also promote principles of individual agency, local ownership, and inclusion in the way they work. Thereby, the central principle running through APCC is the need to promote local ownership and empowerment in everything we do. Ultimately, APCC's vision is that the way to advance peace in a complex crisis is to put local communities first, and for all actors to work together to address the interconnected economic and social factors that cause crises in the first place.

¹ For example, the UN-World Bank report on [Pathways for Peace](#) stresses first and foremost that "grievances related to exclusion...are at the root of many violent conflicts today." At the same time, an OECD study on [Field Perspectives on the Grand Bargain](#) found that "Most people (58%) find aid 'not at all' or 'not very' empowering. This question repeatedly provokes some of the most negative responses in our survey."

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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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