

# Research on Peacebuilding and Resilience in the Horn of Africa

## Quarterly Report, Oct – Dec 2012

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**Agreement #:** AID-OAA-A-12-00067  
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**Date submitted:** January 31, 2013

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### I. Summary

Mercy Corps' Research on Peacebuilding and Resilience in the Horn of Africa has gotten off to a strong start in its first quarter (Oct – Dec 2012). The research design and other preparatory work are progressing on time and budget, and have laid the groundwork for high quality baseline data collection.

The major activities we undertook as part of the research during the first quarter were:

- Identified research sites;
- Developed staffing plans and research partnerships;
- Conducted research design workshops; and
- Developed research protocols.

We are slightly behind on the development of the data collection instruments. Drafting, piloting, and finalizing these tools will be the main priority for the coming quarter (Jan – Mar 2013).

### II. Major Activities and Results to Date

#### 1) **Identified research sites**

We first worked with our regional and country teams to identify two Mercy Corps programs that would enable us to investigate the proposed research questions. The site selection decisions were based primarily on how well the objectives and timing of Mercy Corps programs aligned with the research, and the interest and abilities of the program teams to take on the research. We decided upon the following two program sites for the research:

- Sustainable Transformation in Agriculture and Nutrition (SUSTAIN) program in Karamoja, Uganda. This is a 5-year USAID/FFP-funded development food aid program (DFAP).
- Communities Helping their Environment and Land by Bridging Interests (CHELBI) program in Southern Ethiopia. This is a 2-year USAID/CMM-funded project.

While the conflict dynamics are different between Karamoja and Southern Ethiopia, we feel we will be able to generalize the research findings from these two sites to the broader pastoral populations in the Horn. This is in addition to being able to gain context-specific insights into what aspects of peacebuilding work appear to contribute to strengthening household resilience in the two regions.

#### 2) **Developed staffing plans and research partnerships**

During the first month of implementation, we put together a staffing plan that clarified how and by who the research project would be managed and implemented. The staffing plan (available upon request) details the roles, responsibilities, and relationships of the Mercy Corps HQ, regional, and program staff, as well as those of the research partners.

The Director of Research and Learning led the drafting, refinement, and finalization of agreements with the research partners for the life of the research. The primary partner for the research is TANGO International, which was selected due to their extensive experience in resilience-related research in the Horn. TANGO will adapt and apply their analytical model for measuring resilience in the two research sites, support the instrument development and fieldwork, and lead the data analysis and write-up the key findings.

### **3) Conducted research design workshops**

We organized and held two -day workshops in Ethiopia and Uganda to develop a joint plan to guide the implementation of the peacebuilding and resilience research. The workshops involved the Research Project Manager, the Research Field Coordinator, the TANGO focal point for the research, and key member of the SUSTAIN and CHELBI program teams, including the CoPs and M&E Managers. The major outputs of these workshops were:

- Established relationships and a collaborative team culture needed to make the research useful for all groups involved;
- Developed a common understanding of the CMM research objectives and questions, CHELBI/SUSTAIN program designs, and how to two fit together;
- Elaborated and contextualized the program theories of change, and identified key variables for operationalizing them in the data collection tools;
- Agreed on an appropriate methodology for the study, including sampling plans, data collection methods, and techniques for making causal inferences; and
- Elaborated start-up activities, timelines, and responsibilities, resulting in a detailed work plans for each site.

### **4) Developed research protocols**

TANGO International led the development of the research protocols for both the Uganda and Ethiopia sites (draft versions of these will be shared with CMM). These documents clarify the overall research design, the primary and secondary research questions, the methods to be employed, the sampling strategy and framework, the data collection and analysis plan, and the key variables to be used to examine and test the proposed theories of change.

Among the important design decisions reflected in the research protocols are our plans to use propensity score matching to establish a reliable counterfactual. This technique will involve collection of baseline and endline data from both CHELBI/SUSTAIN target households and from a sample of matched non-target households. For CHELBI, the comparison group will be drawn from neighboring geographic areas. For SUSTAN, a pipeline approach will be used wherein a comparison group will be drawn from target areas that the program will not reach for the first 1.5 years, but who will eventually be exposed to the program after the CMM research is completed.

## **III. Challenges**

**Feinstein partnership:** We were not able secure a partnership with Tufts' Feinstein International Center (FIC) for the baseline phase of the research as hoped. The proposed Principal Investigator and Field Coordinator from FIC were not able to take on the additional workload required this year. However, both have indicated an interest and availability to be part of the endline phase of the research. As currently envisioned, this would entail FIC leading the collection and analysis of the endline qualitative data, and co-authoring the final report(s). We will work on firming up the details and getting an agreement in place with FIC in the coming quarter.

**CHELBI project signing:** Mercy Corps and the USAID Mission in Ethiopia have not yet signed the agreement for the CHELBI project. This may delay the baseline activities in Ethiopia, which would influence the timing of the overall baseline analysis and report for the two sites. One option we are exploring is to undertake the baseline research prior to the CHELBI project starting. As part of this, we are looking into the approvals for the research that would be required from the Government of Ethiopia (versus when having in come under the approval of the overall CHELBI project), and how to avoid potential sensitivities among the GoE around working on issues related to conflict.

#### **IV. Plans for Next Quarter**

The main priority for the Jan – Mar 2013 period will be to develop, pilot, and finalize the data collection instruments. We are not starting from scratch with developing these tools. Rather, we are revising the suite of household survey, key informant interview, and focus group discussion tools that were developed, applied, and refined over time by Mercy Corps as part of its past conflict management programs in Uganda and Ethiopia. The instrument development is also being informed by the findings from a conflict and governance assessment that Mercy Corps recently conducted in Karamoja to guide the development of the activities for SUSTAIN. In addition, we are taking stock of and building on existing measurement tools on both conflict and resilience from outside Mercy Corps.

By the end of the next quarter (March 31, 2013), we expect to have the full set of data collection tools piloted, finalized and translated, and have trained enumerators and supervisors on their application. Baseline data collection is planned to start immediately following this. The Research Field Coordinator and/or Research Program Manager will provide firsthand support to key parts of the baseline activities in both Uganda and Ethiopia to ensure the quality and utility of the data collected.