

Quarterly Report FY14 Q2 February – April 2014

IRTOUN “Rise Again”

Funded by USAID / Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)
and
USAID / Food For Peace (FFP)



Tassiga Market, Bourra Commune

COUNTRY CONTACT	HEADQUARTERS CONTACT	PROJECT SUMMARY
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1. Executive Summary

The main highlight during the reporting period is the reactivation of negotiations between the Malian government and armed groups. At a regional level, the security instability persisted in Gao with sporadic security incidents including the abduction of 4 ICRC staff and a veterinarian in Northern Gao along the Gao-Kidal axis. At the time of reporting, ICRC hostages have been released following the intervention of the French army in the region of Timbuktu. Another French led military intervention in the North of the country has led to the arrest of MUJAO military leader Abu Dadar and the death of fifty MUJAO members. In the district of Ansongo, the security situation has remained relatively stable. The presence of MINUSMA contingents, Malian army (FAMA) as well as different French military (Serval) patrols in the area have reduced banditry along the axis Gao - Ansongo. However, isolated cases of road banditry and IED explosions have been periodically reported on the axes Ansongo - Ansongo and Menaka - Labezanga.

During the first 50 days of the Irtoun program (Feb 11th-March 31st, 2014), Mercy Corps completed many activities related to program start up, including the hiring of the program team, procurement, partnership agreements, community meetings and baseline data collection. A detailed procurement plan and tendering processes were initiated for the vehicle, motorcycles and other assets approved under the project. Mercy Corps expects to complete the procurement by the end of May 2014. Field activities were initiated in Ansongo starting with community meetings to orient the community members on the new program activities. During the period, meetings were held with MC sub grantee AMATeVI for briefing and to review both their narrative and financial proposal before a partnership agreement could be signed. A baseline survey is being conducted in the four targeted municipalities of Ansongo. Mercy Corps also held several meetings with Orange Mali to discuss the use of mobile services (Orange Money) and Orange Phone Village initiative to support the VSLA and entrepreneurship component of the Irtoun program.

Table 1. Award Level Beneficiaries

Total beneficiaries targeted	25,060 beneficiaries (3,580 households)
Total beneficiaries reached this quarter	0
Total cumulative number of beneficiaries reached	0

Sector #1 Agriculture & Food Security	Objective 1: Vulnerable households in Ansongo circle recover productive agricultural livelihoods		
Beneficiaries Targeted	24,010 beneficiaries (3,430 households)	men	women
Beneficiaries Reached this quarter	0	0	0
Cumulative number of Beneficiaries Reached	0	0	0
Sector #2 Economic Recovery & Market Systems	Objective 2: Vulnerable households restore livelihoods and withstand economic shocks		
Beneficiaries Targeted	12,250 beneficiaries (1,750 households)	men	women
Beneficiaries Reached this quarter	0	0	0
Cumulative number of Beneficiaries Reached	0	0	0

2. Program Overview

In response to an extended period of conflict and drought in northern Mali, Mercy Corps designed the Irtoun program to enhance food security and economic recovery in Ansongo, by strengthening

agricultural production, helping vulnerable families protect their animal assets, and restoring livelihoods while building longer term economic resilience.

The objectives of the program are:

1. To help vulnerable households in the Ansongo circle recover productive agro-pastoral livelihoods, and
2. To allow vulnerable households to restore income-generating activities and withstand economic shocks.

Immediate food security needs will be addressed through food vouchers-for-work (VfW) as well as animal feed vouchers, acknowledging the importance of livestock as a food resource among agro-pastoral households in the region. Through a market-based approach, Irtoun also focuses on the recovery of market gardening activities, including the most important cash crops of the region, and on addressing the needs of pastoralists for improved fodder and health care services for their livestock. VfW projects will support the recovery of livelihoods by helping communities to rehabilitate lands, irrigation schemes and agricultural infrastructure degraded during the conflict.

Additionally, Irtoun will assist micro-entrepreneurs affected by insecurity through business training and a small cash injection to re-start their businesses. Finally, all Irtoun beneficiaries will be encouraged to join community based village savings and loan associations (VSLA), which will act as a form of safety net to strengthen recovery efforts, allowing participants to benefit from improved financial management and credit opportunities for community driven economic growth.

By intervening and supporting in key areas of agricultural and economic livelihood development, the Irtoun program will provide essential ingredients for communities to solidify a peaceful and productive future.

3. Performance Summary

Sector #1 Agriculture & Food Security		Vulnerable households in Ansongo circle recover productive agricultural livelihoods		
Beneficiaries Targeted	24,010 beneficiaries (3,430 households)	Budget:	\$ 1,375,056	
Beneficiaries Reached				
Geographic Area(s)	Gao Region of Northern Mali, Ansongo circle; Bourra, Ouattagouna, Ansongo, Bara Communes			
Sub-Sector 1.1: Livestock				
INDICATORS	BASELINE	TARGET	PROGRESS	COMPLETION DATE
Indicator 1.1.1: Number of animals benefiting from or affected by livestock activities	0*			
Indicator 1.1.2: Number of people benefiting from livestock activities, disaggregated by sex	Male:			
	Female:			
	Other:			
Sub-Sector 1.2 : Improving Agricultural Production				
INDICATORS	BASELINE	TARGET	PROGRESS	COMPLETION DATE
Number of people benefiting from seed systems/agricultural input activities, by sex	Male:			
	Female:			
Indicator 1.2.1: Projected increase in number of months of food self-sufficiency due to distributed seed	N/A			

Sector #1 Agriculture & Food Security		Vulnerable households in Ansongo circle recover productive agricultural livelihoods		
systems/agricultural inputs for beneficiary households ¹				
Indicator 1.2.1: Number of people benefiting from seed systems/agricultural input activities, by sex		Male:		
		Female:		
		Other:		
Sector #2 Economic Recovery & Market Systems		Objective 2: Vulnerable households restore livelihoods and withstand economic shocks		
Beneficiaries Targeted	12,250 individuals (1,750 households)	Budget:	\$ 354,819	
Beneficiaries Reached	Reporting period:	Cumulative:		
Geographic Area(s)	Gao Region of Northern Mali, Ansongo circle; Boura, Ouattagouna, Ansongo, Bara Communes			
Sub-Sector 2.1: Livelihoods Restoration				
INDICATORS	BASELINE	TARGET	PROGRESS	COMPLETION DATE
Indicator 2.1.1: Number of people assisted through livelihoods restoration activities, disaggregated by sex	Male:			
	Female:			
	Other:			
Indicator 2.1.2: Percent of beneficiaries reporting their livelihoods restored within three to six months after receiving support	N/A			
Indicator 2.1.3: Total USD amount channeled into the program area through sub-sector activities	N/A			
Sub-Sector 2.2 : Microfinance				
INDICATORS	BASELINE	TARGET	PROGRESS	COMPLETION DATE
Indicator 2.2.1: Number of people, disaggregated by sex, or MSEs newly receiving financial services or continuing to receive financial services due to USAID/OFDA support systems/agricultural inputs for beneficiary households ²	Male:			
	Female:			
	Other:			
Indicator 2.2.2: Percentage of financial services accounts/groups supported by USAID/OFDA that are functioning properly	N/A			

***Targets for all indicators will be confirmed in the next quarterly report.**

Sector Summary:

Sector #1: Agriculture & Food Security:

- **Partnership negotiations with AMATeVI:** A Malian organization specialized in the production of cash crops will be responsible for disseminating the best agricultural techniques and practices in the four municipalities of the circle of Ansongo.

¹ The Months of Adequate Household Food Provisioning (MAHFP) measurement tool will be used for this indicator.

² The Months of Adequate Household Food Provisioning (MAHFP) measurement tool will be used for this indicator.

- **Village Selection:** villages were selected in collaboration with communities and local authorities.
- **Identification of beneficiaries for animal fodder and VFW:** The first quarter witnessed the community participating in very crucial aspects of the project. General meetings have been conducted in all villages, bringing together notables, religious leaders, youth representatives of women’s groups, and representative of various professional groups. Through participatory integrated meetings, targeted communities identified and prioritized beneficiaries based on vulnerability. In each village a selection committee comprised of seven members was set up, including the participation of: village council representatives, youth, women, religious leaders, pastoralists, farmers and fishermen.



Women’s group in Ansongo

Sector #2: Economic Recovery & Market Systems

Activities planned in this sector will commence in the next quarter.

4. Monitoring & Evaluation

Mercy Corps is conducting a baseline survey in the four targeted municipalities of Ansongo (about 400 households will be surveyed in 25 villages). At the time of reporting, twelve of twenty villages have already been surveyed. The questionnaires were designed and transferred to tablets (iPods) using Iformbuilder³ application in order to ensure a smoother data collection and processing. Market surveys are planned for next quarter.

5. Coordination

Mercy Corps continues to regularly attend and contribute to coordination meetings both in the field and in Bamako. Since November 2013, Mercy Corps is part of the Strategy Advisory Group of the Food Security Cluster.

Mercy Corps has held several meetings with key stakeholders in Ansongo including municipal and communal authorities to present the Irtoun program in detail in all the targeted municipalities and the proposed approach to further engage all stakeholders in meaningful ways.

Following the signature of the pre-award letter by OFDA, Mercy Corps has undertaken an initial appraisal and update on programs currently undertaken the various agencies present as well as their areas of intervention as shown in the table below:

Actor	Domaine d’intervention	Location
ICRC	Food distribution	Ansongo, Tessit, Talataye

³ <http://www.iformbuilder.com>

		Municipalities
	Seed distribution	Bourra, Bara, Ansongo, Ouatagouna, Tin Hama Municipalities
	Gardening and Fodder production	2 gardens in Ansongo, 2ha of <i>bourgou</i> in Ansongo
	Animal feed distribution, Destocking Vaccination	Ansongo
NRC	Gardening (4 gardens), IGA (50 households) Food Vouchers	Commune Ansongo
ACF	Cash transfer	Ansongo, Bourra
	Gardening	Bourra
	Goat Distribution	Bourra, Tessit, Tin Hama
	Nutrition	All 7 municipalities
IRC	WASH	Bara, Ansongo
	Child protection	Bourra, Ouatagouna
MSF	Primary healthcare	CSREF Ansongo
IEDA Relief	Protection	Ansongo, Bourra, Ouatagouna

Discussions were held with NGOs working in the Circle of Ansongo, such as ACF, to harmonize intervention strategies and avoid duplication.

6. Conclusion

The Irtoun program provides an opportunity to implement a systems approach and new ways of partnering with program participants, as part of Mercy Corps’ resilience strategy to seek and promote innovative solutions and alternatives to negative coping mechanisms that vulnerable people are forced to adopt in times of crisis and take a system.

During the socialization of the program, the words ‘alternatives’ and ‘Irtoun/rise again’ actually resonated strongly with communities and the overall approach to focus on transitional recovery rather than relief assistance was very well received.

“We no longer want emergency assistance from NGOs. Give us the means and equipment to enable us to work independently from ongoing donations. Our brave people want to get out of this crisis and only consistent support in agriculture, key sector to our development, can help us”

Tassiga Mayor