

QUARTERLY ACTIVITY PROGRESS REPORT:

Food Security for Flood-affected Populations in Odisha

Reporting Period: July 1 – September 30, 2014

Funded by USAID Bureau of Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance/Office of Food for Peace



Beneficiaries Participating in a Cash for Work Project

COUNTRY CONTACT	Mercy Corps HQ Contact	PROJECT SUMMARY
Rosy Choudhury Director of Programs, India Rajdanga Main Road Kolkata, India Phone: +(91) 9831023902 rchoudhury@in.mercycorps.org	Jared Rowell Sr. Program Officer 45 SW Ankeny St Portland, OR 9720 Phone: +1(503) 896-5853 Fax: +1 (503) 896-5013 jrowell@mercycorps.org	Award No: AID-FFP-G-14-00016 Start Date: April 1, 2014 End Date: March 31, 2015 Report Date: October 31, 2014 Total Award: \$1,457,761

Background

Mayurbhanj and Baleswar districts of Odisha suffered severely from the Cyclone Phailin induced flooding in October 2013. The unprecedented flooding caused massive destruction in Badasahi and GB Nagar Blocks¹ of Mayurbhanj district and Nilagiri Block of Baleswar. The resultant loss of crops led to acute food insecurity for affected families who are resorting to harsh coping strategies, including reducing the quantity of food consumed per meal and compromising on nutritional aspects by spending less money on food.

In order to respond to these needs, Mercy Corps, in partnership with Adhikar, initiated the food security project 'Surakhya' in the affected blocks in Badasahi, Khunta in Mayurbhanj district and Nilgiri block in Baleswar district. 'Surakhya' means security and was chosen as the project name to indicate that this program will help ensure households have food security and other basic needs following the emergency.

Program Overview

At the end of August, the baseline survey was finalized in order to assess the status of the beneficiaries related to food consumption, income-expenditures and availability of livelihood options. This survey helped the team to identify critical gaps and substantiate the assessments made during the project formulation. Some of the critical findings are as follows:

1. About 30% of the total targeted households (HH) are landless, whereas 40% have less than 0.5 acres of land.
2. Losses Due to the Flooding Include:
 - Shelter: 35% of HH lost anywhere between INR 5,000 to INR 10,000, whereas 33% of HH lost less than INR 5,000.
 - Household Assets: 40% households reported loss of assets like utensils, beddings, etc.

Progress Against Objectives

***Program Objective:** To improve food security of 17,500 people in flood affected villages of Mayurbhanj and Balasore districts of Odisha through cash transfers.*

Key Baseline findings:

- Standing Crops: 29% of HH lost their standing crops with an estimated value of INR 5,000 to INR 10,000. A total of 37% HH lost anywhere between INR 3,000 to INR 5,000.
- Stocked Food Items: 40% households reported lost food items with an estimated value of about INR 2,000.
- Livelihoods: A total of 31% of HH have not returned to their livelihoods, whereas 67% HH only recovered partially.

The cash transfers were broadly divided into two parts:

- Cash for Work (CfW) for **3,200** households
- Unconditional cash transfer for **300** most vulnerable labor poor households

Please see Annex A and Annex B for the segregated data of the affected populations.

¹Block is a basic administrative unit of the Government

ER1.1 Cash for Work (CfW): *The program will focus on Cash-for-Work (CfW) for at least 3,200 households (HH) to weather the next agricultural cycle and support the rehabilitation of infrastructure*

Activities:

Selection of Households:

3,100 households were identified from Badashi and GB Nagar blocks of Maurbhanj and Nilagiri block of Balasore district (details of the selected villages can be found in Annex C). These households were selected based on criteria to determine the most vulnerable populations in the villages. Village meetings were also conducted so that village leaders could help to verify the villages and households. Once villages were chosen, village committees were formed and each village committee signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that detailed the project activities and outlined the expected support from the participating villagers. All decisions were recorded by the village committee including the lists of households, type of infrastructure projects chosen, and the number of person days and material required to complete the projects.

Village Meetings:

The team conducted village meetings and rapport building exercises to help communities actively participate and understand the project's strategies, activities, and deliverables. In order to ensure that the CfW activities were successful, the project team oriented the communities about their responsibilities in the selection process, identification of community infrastructures, working hours, supervision etc.

Selection and Planning of Infrastructure Projects:

The villagers participated in the project selection process, which included identification of key needs, priorities, preliminary designs, man-power planning and monitoring mechanisms. The program took care to avoid duplication of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Act's (MGNREGA) activities, the Government's 100 days wage guarantee scheme, while planning the community infrastructure projects. The local Sarapanch, the representative of the local self-governance system, and ward members provided information on MGNREGA's planned coverage for the year. When selecting projects, emphasis was given on infrastructure projects which will add value to the local economy and improve livelihoods. The Sarapanch signed permission letters to allow the construction of the community infrastructure projects chosen. This ensured that there is no duplication of government-planned projects.

Below is a list of the community assets identified:

Types	No.	Utilities
Water Harvesting Structure	6	Irrigation, fish farming, domestic use
Ponds	7	Fish farming and domestic use
Embankments	6	Disaster risk reduction through raised barriers
Platform for weekly <i>haats</i> (markets)	3	Better facility for weekly market
Renovation of school and <i>Anganwadi</i> (play schools) sites	4	Improve grounds to boost community morale
Connecting Roads	30	Better connectivity to villages, markets, agriculture field etc.
Elevated Platforms	4	Protection from floods, drying yard for paddy and pulses
Canal Renovation	3	Irrigation
Plantation Sites	2	New plantation which will provide food, fodder and fuel to the communities and natural barrier to control flooding
TOTAL	65	

Please see Annex D for more details about villages, households, community assets, person-days planned and actual coverage by district/ cluster.

Implementation:

2,075 households participated in the CfW activities rebuilding community infrastructure for 38,646 individual work days at the rate of INR 165 per day. All payments are transferred to personal bank accounts. A total of 80% of the participants already had a bank account and the project facilitated the opening of bank accounts for the remaining 20% of the beneficiaries. The money is transferred to participating households after completion of each phase, consisting of 10 days of work and the beneficiaries are informed once the transfer is confirmed. Each household will be provided work for ninety days, which will cover the critical food gap in the pre harvest months of September to December. Opportunities for CfW will be available in January for households that have no other source of income. A beneficiary household earns approximately 3,300 INR per month which covers the monthly food needs of a family of six calculated at 3,000 INR. The surplus is used for income generating activities like purchase of seeds, transportation, etc. A small percentage is used for medicines, clothes, etc.

Out of the total number of participants, approximately 70% are women. Men are typically engaged locally as agricultural laborers or go outside to neighboring cities to work for daily wage. In 20% of the participating households, the men migrated in search of jobs as the local economy is unable to provide enough job opportunities. Many of these men only return once or twice a year. While this practice was prevalent prior to the crisis, the number of persons migrating after the crisis has increased.

Working hours are normally six to eight hours each day with periodic breaks. The work timings are set by the beneficiaries of the village as per their convenience. Generally, work starts at around 6:30 am and ends at 4:30 pm with two hours breaks in between. During the summer, the communities prefer to work during the early morning and late afternoon to avoid the heat. A mobile nursery is maintained at each work site where women supervisors take care of children for the women who are working.

Monitoring:

The CfW activities are monitored on the sites on a daily basis by the village committee as well as by the program staff. Attendance sheets are maintained twice a day to track participants. Two people from each selected household participate in the cash for work activities in more than 60% of the cases. One supervisor monitors the activities of 20 participants and tasks are divided among the sub groups to make the process smoother. The village committee members supervise the work progress on a rotating basis to ensure satisfactory progress. The program personnel visit the sites and check on participation and work progress as per the work plan. A civil engineer visits the sites from time to time and guides the work progress as needed.

Nutrition Improvements:

As part of the program, community mobilizers organize meetings, trainings and discussions in the community to counsel beneficiaries on the best practices in food consumption under the guidance of a food and nutrition expert. The program encourages communities to purchase food items that will provide nutritional sufficiency and diversity. The strategy is to identify locally available food to create a balanced diet. Critical gaps in present food intake have been identified as compared to the standard recommended dietary allowance as established by the Government of India.

Based on the findings, a training module was prepared by the food and nutrition expert, in consultation with experts from other reputed health agencies, to train communities on how to improve their dietary habits. The objectives of the training are to help participants understand the effects of poor nutrition on their general health and ability of their immune system to fight off illness. It also attempts to provide solutions for better nutrition based on locally available and affordable food. Participatory exercises like Q&A sessions, simulation exercises and role plays are incorporated into the training design to encourage the trainees to actively participate and learn about nutrition.

ER1.2 Cash grant to most vulnerable labor poor households: *Approximately 300 severely food insecure and labor poor HH lacking the capacity to participate in CfW or other livelihood restoration activities will receive unconditional cash transfers for 120 days to meet acute food needs.*

Activities:

Selection of Households:

300 of the most vulnerable households who do not have regular wage-earning family members were identified for the unconditional cash transfer program. Based on the average household's need for food, INR 3,048 was established as the fixed monthly payment. A total of INR 15,312 will be transferred in five phases to each household on a monthly basis. To date, a total of 300 households received INR 914,400 during the first phase. The second phase of disbursements is under way.

Households with old women and men, widows, critically ill, and the disabled were given priority during the selection process. A total of 194 women and 106 men were identified to receive unconditional cash transfers as they are the most vulnerable to food insecurity in the communities.

Implementation:

Most selected household members do not have bank accounts and faced difficulties visiting banks. Therefore, cash was given to them directly. Following the cash transfer, they were encouraged to purchase non-perishable food items in bulk such as rice, pulses, oil, salt, etc. to ensure that most of the cash goes towards food purchases. Apart from these items, they purchased vegetables and proteins such as meat/ fish/egg, etc. at regular intervals.

Monitoring:

A food consumption survey is conducted periodically to measure the improvement in food consumption after the cash is transferred to households. The food consumption measures the consumption of five main food groups: cereal, pulses, vegetable, meat/fish/ egg and oil. A sample of 15% of the households is taken to assess the trend.

The survey found that on average 70% of the cash grant was used to purchase food. Out of which 40% was spent on cereal, as it is the staple diet of the area, and 17% spent on meat/fish/egg, as people could now afford to buy these. The rest was used to purchase vegetables and edible oil. About 45% of the total population spent INR 200 or more on pulses such as arhar and moong. Similarly, 70% of households spent more on vegetables (such as potatoes, tomatoes, brinjal and gourd) than they had before the program's support. Nearly half of the respondents spent INR 200 to purchase edible oil, as compared to less than 10% before the program.

Indicators:

- ER 1.1.1 **2,075 (out of 3,100 selected)** households participating in CfW and receiving CfW payments – target: 3,200 households from Mayurbhanj and Baleswar districts.
- ER 1.1.2 **21** community infrastructure sites partially rehabilitated – target: 60
- ER 1.1.3 **70%** of cash received used for food purchases and for livelihoods recovery target: 80%
- ER 1.2.1 **300** most vulnerable households receiving cash grants for food – target: 300
- ER 1.2.2 **70%** of cash transferred used for food purchases – target: 90%

Constraints and Challenges:

As many of the villages lay on the banks of the river Budhabalanga, most CfW activities could not start during this quarter because of flooding. For the sites that are located on higher ground, **21** infrastructures projects were completed and work is continuing on 29 sites. Gradually other sites will be worked on as the soil dries and is fit for work.

Cash transfers to bank account holders took 4 to 7 days longer than initially expected and caused delays to the cash transfer process. Adhikar, the local partner, opened three more accounts at local banks to hasten the money transfer process to now occur after 3 to 4 days.

The program clearly outlined the selection criteria for the households; however, local political leaders are putting pressure on the team to include more villages in the program activities. The team is using the selection criteria to restrict the inclusion of additional villages and ensure that the most vulnerable households are reached.

Large individual community infrastructure projects are not available in the selected villages in order to provide 80 days of work for each family. To address this challenge, smaller projects were identified by the communities and the technical experts. Combinations of these projects are likely to provide the necessary 80 days of CFW for each selected family.

Success Story:

Sakua is one of the revenue villages of Sialighati Gram Panchyat under Badasahi block of Maurbhanj district. For generations, the Budhabalang River that passes through the village of Sakua in Maurbhanj district is critical for the prosperity of the villagers. The river provides plenty of water for the rice paddies and vegetable cultivation for rabi and kharip crops. People use the water to bathe and for their household chores and farmers use it to water their livestock.

When the flood waters from cyclone Phailin inundated the village last year, it washed away 100 acres of standing crops and damaged all the houses in Sakua. As a result, the lives of 105 households were disrupted.

Through the assistance provided by the Food Security for Flood-affected Populations in Odisha Program, the villagers decided to reconstruct 800 meters of the river embankment which was damaged in eight places by the flood. A civil engineer was employed to provide the design for the reconstruction work and helped identify low cost local materials to use such as sand bags, stone packing and grass. These materials help construct a robust river bank and 80% of the work is already completed.

In response to this project, Ms. Sita Hembram, Sarpanch of Sialighati panchayat says that *“Every year the water damages the river embankment. It was worse in last year's Phailin-induced flood. Now that the embankment is reconstructed in a strong manner, we hope that the next year's harvests no more will be washed away with the river water and the houses will be spared.”*

Annexes

Annex A: Beneficiary Population Data for Cash for Work Project

Annex B: Beneficiary Population Data for Unconditional Cash Transfer Project

Annex C: Selected Villages from Mayurbhanj and Baleswar Districts

Annex D: Selected Infrastructure Projects

Annex A: Beneficiary Population Data for Cash for Work Project

The following table is the breakup of the beneficiaries disaggregated by sex and age for those participating in the Cash for Work project.

Cluster	Total Households	Total Population	Population Less Than 18 Years		Population 18 - 59 Years		Population Above 60 Years	
			Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Sialighati	1100	5345	376	291	1,656	2,482	267	273
Durgapur	1100	5642	555	712	1,591	1,985	321	478
Nilagiri	1000	6026	703	517	2,001	1,978	451	376
Total	3,200	17,013	1,634	1,520	5,248	6,445	1,039	1,127

Annex B: Beneficiary Population Data for Unconditional Cash Project

The following table is the breakup of the beneficiaries disaggregated by sex and age for those participating in unconditional cash transfers project.

Cluster	Total Households	Total Population	Population Less Than 18		Population 18 - 59 years		Population above 60 years	
			Male Less Than 18 Years	Female Less Than 18 Years	Male	Female	Male Above 60	Female above 60
Sialighati	110	172	11	7	19	24	41	71
Durgapur	100	166	17	22	16	19	32	60
Nilagiri	90	160	13	10	9	11	53	64
Total	300	598	41	39	44	54	126	195

Annex C: Selected Villages from Mayurbhanj and Baleswar Districts

DISTRICT	BLOCK	GP	VILLAGE
SIALIGHATI CLUSTER			
MAURBHANJ	BADASAH	BADASAH	BELPAL, KHUNTAPAL,
		MADHAPUR	ARPATA, UNCHABALI, CHAKMADHAPUR, SAHADASUNI
		PAUNSI	PATARAPADA
		SIALIGHATI	BAGHUAPAL, MANKADAPAL, SAKUA, KAUCHI, BHANJABATI, KENDUGADI
	GB Nagar	RANIBANDHA	RANIBANDHA, TIRALDIHI, ATHILAGADI, MANKIDIA
DURGAPUR CLUSTER			
MAURBHANJ	BADASAH	JOGINUAGAON	DINGIRA, BARIHAPAL
		DURGAPUR	AGUAD, ASUKANDA, RANGAPANI, KULKOTHA
		CHANDANPUR	TUNA GAMBHARIA, GAMBHARIA, CHANDANPUR, SARBESWARPU, JALANANDA, TENTALA,
		KENDUDIHA	KULIANA, MENDHAMUNDIA,
		MANAGOBINDAPUR	SIMILIDAH

NILAGIRI CLUSTER			
BALASORE	NILAGIRI	BEGUNIA	DOBATI,
		KANSA	SANGRAMPUR, KANSA (KHAMARISAH)
		NARSINGHPUR	AMBIKAPUR, DURGAPUR, NARSINGHPUR,
		MATIALI	ADIASAHI, BARPADA/ GHANTIBANIA
			DUMURIA
		AJODHYA	BALIPALA, PRATAPPUR, BADIA
		BHAUNIABAD	TENTULIAPADA

Annex D:

The following table details village wise households, community assets person days planned and actual coverage.

Cluster - Sialighati**District - Maurbhanj**

Sl. No	Name of the village	Cash for Work Continuing		Types of community assets	No of HH identified	Human days planned	No of Human days covered	Human days balance
		Yes	No					
1	BAGHUAPAL	Yes		Raised platform	32	2560	729	1831
2	PATRAPADA	Yes			48	3840	807	3033
3	KENDUGADI	Yes			16	1280	224	1056
4	BHANJABATI	Yes		Connecting road repair	87	6960	1402	5558
5	MANKADAPAL	Yes			32	2560	611	1949
6	SAKUA	Yes		Repairing the river embankment 800 meters	83	6640	1576	7624
7	RANIBANDHA	Yes		Raised barriers in the embankment	178	14240	3995	10245
8	MANKADIA	Yes			36	2880	713	2167
9	TIRLDIHI	Yes		Connecting road repair	34	2720	514	2206
10	KAUCHI	Yes		Connecting road construction	115	9200	2276	4364
11	BELPAL	Yes		Levelling of the temple area	105	8400	424	7976
12	KHUNTAPAL		No	Water Harvesting structure , Raised platform	105	8400	0	8400
13	ATILAGADA		No	Connecting road repair	35	2800	0	2800
14	ARAPATA		No	Repairing of damaged check dam/ water harvesting structure , Connecting road repair	65	5200	0	5200
15	SAHADASUNI		No	Raised platform,	40	3200	0	3200
16	CHAKAMADPUR		No	Connecting road repair	36	2880	0	2880
17	UCHABALI		No	Connecting road repair	55	4400	0	4400
	Total				1102	88160	13271	74889

Cluster – Durgapur**District - Maurbhanj**

Sl. No	Name of the villages	Cash for Work continuing		Types of work going on	No of HH engaged	No of human days planned	No of Human days covered	Human days balance
		Yes	No					
1	Dingira	Yes		Connecting road repair & Raised platform Canal renovation,	106	8480	2879	5601
2	Barihupal	Yes		Connecting road repair	86	6880	1370	5510
3	Joginuaaon		No	Raised platform				
4	Aguad	Yes		Repairing of canal, water harvesting structure, Connecting road repair	80	6400	793	5607

5	Asukanda	Yes		Develop Plantation on the waste land , Connecting road repair	110	8800	2163	6637
6	Rangapani	Yes		Connecting road repair, School compound levelling	83	6640	1367	5273
7	Kulkotha	Yes		Connecting road repair, Pond digging	120	9600	1121	8479
8	Tuna Gambharia	Yes		Repairing of Pond, Connecting road repair High rise platform.	116	9280	2902	6378
9	Gambharia		No	Pond	40	3200	0	3200
10	Chandanpur		No	Pond digging	30	2400	0	2400
11	Sarbeswarpur		No		40	3200	0	3200
12	Jalananda		No		40	3200	0	3200
13	Tentala		No		20	1600	0	1600
14	Kuliana	Yes		Plat form for weekly hats	50	4000	295	4000
15	Mendhamundia	Yes			30	2400	98	2400
16	Similidahi		No	Pond digging	50	4000	0	4000
			No			0	0	0
			No			0	0	0
	Total					80080	12988	67485

Cluster – Nilagiri**District - Balasore**

Sl. No	Name of the villages	Cash for Work		Types of work going on	No of HH engaged	No of human days planned	No of Human days covered	Human days balance
		Yes	No					
1	Dobati	Yes		Pond digging & Repairing of River Embankment	70	5600	1100	4500
2	Sangrampur	Yes		Plat form for weekly hats, Digging of village pond	78	6240	1240	5000
3	Kansa	Yes		Pond digging	58	4640	75	4565
4	Ambikapur	Yes		Repairing of River Embankment Connecting road repair.	95	7600	1306	6294
5	Durgapur	Yes		Levelling of the temple area, Elevated platform	78	6240	1005	5235
6	Narasinghpur	Yes		Connecting road repair	72	5760	540	5220
7	Adiasahi	Yes		Connecting road. Elevated platform	71	5680	1009	4671
8	Barapada (Ghantibania)	Yes		High rise platform, connecting road	95	7600	1463	6137
9	Balipal	Yes		Connecting road repair	75	6000	720	5120
10	Pratappur	Yes		Connecting road repair High rise platform in the school campus.	99	7920	3929	3991
	Total				791	63280	12387	50733