



INTEGRATED STIMULUS PACKAGE TO IMPROVE RESILIENCE (INSPIRE)

Annual REPORT (January 2014-December 2014)

Applicant Organization Name: Mercy Corps

Program Summary

Award No: AID-OFDA-G-14-00002

Start Date: November 01, 2013

End Date: October 31, 2015

Report Date: January 31, 2015

Overview of 2014 Implementation

INSPIRE has experienced a lot of changes in 2014. Shortly after the program launch, violence erupted on December 15th, 2013 between the government and opposition forces. The continued violence from that time has led to the current displacement of 1.5 million people in South Sudan and an additional 491,289¹ have sought refuge in neighboring countries. Mercy Corps responded with a modified approach, adding in WASH and Non-Food Item distribution. Further challenges were faced as the rainy season of June to September led to road collapse between Abiemnom and Mayom and also caused significant delays in the supply chain of procured items, while there was flooding in Abyei Administrative Area (AAA). Finally, a variety of factors, including the impact of crisis and increased insecurity in major transport routes, along with road damage, floods, and a poor harvest, led to a spike in market prices in October/November. Staple commodities were being sold at up to triple their prices from a year before.

Amidst all these changes and challenges, Mercy Corps has continued implementation and made significant progress while adapting to the needs of the most vulnerable populations. In the Abyei Administrative Area (AAA), Mercy Corps finalized much of the AFS and ERMS components and also started serving some of the Unity population who have come to AAA as IDPs. WASH activities began in Abiemnom and Bentiu. The road to Mayom was inaccessible until January 2015 so the main focus on activities was in Abiemnom, where many targets will be completed in early 2015. Now, the focus can be shifted to Mayom so that implementation can be completed before the rains begin in June.

Sector 1: AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

It is important to note that all activities under this sector have been implemented only in AAA.

1.1 IMPROVING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION/FOOD SECURITY

¹ OCHA South Sudan Crisis: Situation Report No. 69. 8 January 2015.

1.1.1. Selection, Identification and registration of 2,000 HHs in AAA and Unity (*Original target: 2,000, Modified target: 1,500*)

Through consultative meetings with chiefs and local leaders, Village Committees were formed in order to support Mercy Corps in the identification and selection of those best to participate in this activity. 1,464 beneficiaries across AAA and Unity have been registered and supported by the program.

1.1.2. Entrepreneurship support to thirty traders (20 seed vendors and 10 blacksmiths) in business growth and technical knowledge (*Original target: 30, Modified target: 16*)

This activity has posed issues since Mercy Corps has not been able to identify proper candidates and therefore will not be undertaken.

1.1.3. Re-constitution of agricultural assets (seeds and tools) for 1,500 households in Unity and AAA through Agro Seed Fairs and animal assets (goats) to 500 households in Unity and AAA (*Original targets: 1,500HH for Agro and 500 HH for animal assets, Modified targets: 1,250 HH for Agro and 250 HH for animal assets*)

This activity has only been implemented in AAA so far. Starting with the organizing of traders for seed fairs in early 2014, seeds were tested by the Ministry of Agriculture and between Q3 and Q4. 750 HHs were given vouchers to use at a seed fair and received two malwas of sorghum seeds (6.5kg) and one maloda tool each. Since the rainy season ended, Mercy Corps has continued agricultural efforts with the training and distribution of vegetable farm seed input including okra, sweet pepper, tomato, eggplant, pumpkin, kudra, and onion for 165 beneficiaries.

1.1.4. Agronomy and agro forestry training for 100 lead farmers in AAA and Unity State (*Original target: 100 lead farmers, Modified target: 100 lead farmers*)

Between Q3 and Q4, the Mercy Corps INSPIRE team identified 50 lead farmers and together with extension workers from the Secretariat of Agriculture Animal Resources and Fisheries (SAARF) organized a 2-day practical agronomy and agro-forestry trainings covering topics on line planting, IPM, timely planning, weekly management, intercropping and tree planting.

1.1.5. Tree nursery and horticulture cash grants (co-investments) to thirty producers/groups (*Original target: 30 grants, Modified target: 0 grants*)

This activity was eliminated within the modification of the grant.

Sector 2: ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND MARKET SYSTEMS

As under Sector 1: all activities have been implemented in AAA.

2.1. TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT

2.1.2. Cash Transfer for the 500 most vulnerable households at US \$40 per household per month for four months in Unity State and AAA (*Original target: 500 HHs, Modified target: 500 HHs*)

In 2014, Mercy Corps completed a total of four cash transfers for 250 households in AAA for a total of 512 SSP (\$160 USD) per household and two cash transfers to 250 households from Unity residing as IDPs in AAA for a total of 256 SSP (\$80 USD) per household.

2.1.3. 1,500 households participate in 20 cash for work projects for a period of 4 months in AAA and Unity State (*Original target: 1,500 HHs, Modified target: 1,250 HHs*)

Through 11 Cash for Work projects, Mercy Corps has employed 936 households on projects that included footbridge construction for the rainy season, road construction and road maintenance. Each of the projects is 22 working days and participants received 550 SSP (\$172 USD) upon completion.

2.2. LIVELIHOODS RESTORATION

2.2.1. Beneficiary identification to receive cash grant assistance (*Original target: 10 grants, Modified target: 0 grants*)

This activity was eliminated within the modification of the grant.

2.2.2. 2-day business training modules for 80 businesses on ‘Start and Improve Your Own Business’ across the AAA and Unity State (*Original target: 80 businesses, Modified target: 40 businesses*)

The ‘Start and Improve Your Own Business’ training is designed to improve business skills for traders in the areas of marketing, stock control, procurement procedures, recording operating expenses, business planning, people and productivity, as well as pricing and costing. A total of 21 businesses have been trained including 5 female-led businesses and 16 male-headed businesses.

2.2.3. Entrepreneurship support to thirty traders for bulk procurement in AAA and Unity State (*Original target: 30 traders, Modified target: 15 traders*)

Seven traders were identified in 2014 to receive financial support for bulk procurement. These cash injections into local businesses were timed around the lean months and allowed traders to purchase bulky staple food items. Total input from OFDA has been USD \$8,591 for seven traders.

2.3 NEW LIVELIHOOD DEVELOPMENT

2.3.1. Enable livelihoods skills development for thirty youth through apprenticeships (*Original target: 30 youths, Modified target: 0 youths*)

This activity was eliminated within the modification of the grant.

2.4. MICROFINANCE

2.4.1. Mobilize the formation of 60 VSLA groups of approximately 25 members each, in Unity State and the AAA (*Original target: 60 groups, Modified target: 45 groups*)

Mobilizing VLSA groups has been a steady activity throughout 2014 and has grown to 39 groups with a total of 984 members including 284 men and 700 women. 14 groups are on their second cycle and their success has encouraged new members to join and new groups to form.

2.4.2. Provide initial 3-day training per group and VSLA materials

Related to Activity 2.4.1, each VSLA group receives a 3-day training in which members come up with their own constitution; elect their leaders (Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary); and develop an agreement based on the shared value, loaning dynamics in relation to share capital, repayment, and social fund, which all become incorporated in the constitution.

2.4.3. Data collection and follow up

The VSLA activity routinely includes data collection on all site visits and continually follows up with established groups. In a group's infancy, Mercy Corps attends all meetings, coaching the members and enabling them to achieve stability and sustainability. As the group matures, Mercy Corps allows for autonomy and visits at longer intervals to provide refresher trainings and to monitor progress. Furthermore, Mercy Corps is in attendance at each close of cycle share-out and the start of new cycles. The cumulative total saved, across the 39 groups, is 177,408 SSP (USD \$52,178) with a net social fund of 9,716 SSP (USD \$2,857).

Sector 3: WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE

WASH was not a part of the original program. It was added in as Mercy Corps adapted to the situation and changes caused by the outbreak of violence in mid-December 2013. The program design focused WASH efforts on Abiemnom and Mayom Counties and the Bentiu UNMISS Protection of Civilian site (PoC) in Rubkona County. Activities were designed to address the immediate water, sanitation and hygiene needs of IDPs and host communities. Mercy Corps also completed several activities in AAA in areas with extremely high levels of IDPs from Unity State.

3.1 IMPROVED WASH ACCESS AND USE

3.1.1 Rehabilitation of Water Sources and Access Points (*Original target: 0, Modified target: 22*)

Mercy Corps identified 10 boreholes in need of repair in both Abiemnom and Mayom Counties. In addition each county had a water yard that is not currently functioning. In 2014, Mercy Corps completed the rehabilitation of all 10 identified boreholes in Abiemnom and is in the process of rehabilitating the water yard. Mayom County has been inaccessible due

to road conditions after the last rainy season; however, since January 2015, the road has been repaired and the Mercy Corps WASH team has already made initial preparations to carry out the proposed activities.

3.1.2 Treatment and distribution of surface water (*Original target: 0, Modified target: TBD*)

This activity is targeted to the UNMISS PoC in Bentiu. Mercy Corps currently provides 60,000L of water per day in PoC1 directly serving 5,905 beneficiaries.

3.1.3 Distribution of point of use (POU) water treatment items and training of the beneficiaries on their use (*Original target: 0, Modified target: 5,000 beneficiaries*)

Before distribution, Mercy Corps trains communities with sensitization campaigns on the use of water guard. Thus far, Mercy Corps has trained and distributed water guards to 579 households in Abiemnom.

3.2 IMPROVED SANITATION INFRASTRUCTURE

3.2.1 Construction and maintenance of 50 latrine blocks and 500 HH latrines (*Original target: 0, Modified target: 50 communal latrine blocks and 500 HH latrines*)

Since the conflict erupted in mid-December 2013, tens of thousands of men, women, and children have flocked to the UNMISS PoC which is currently home to 43,718 IDPs. Mercy Corps has addressed the sanitation needs with the construction of 34 latrine blocks (134 stances) in PoC1 and PoC6. Further, based on the number of IDPs from Unity finding safety within host communities of Abiemnom and AAA, Mercy Corps built 4 blocks in MDK IDP camp in AAA, 1 block in Joulok market in AAA and 1 block in Abiemnom.

Inputs for 169 household latrines were distributed in Abiemnom and Mercy Corps has thus far verified 40 functional latrines in an on-going follow-up activity. In the upcoming weeks, 81 additional inputs will be distributed in Abiemnom and with the road recently opened to Mayom, activities will begin there shortly.

3.2.2 Equip each emergency trench latrine block with hand washing facilities (*Original target: 0, Modified target: 50 hand-washing facilities*)

In correlation to activity 3.2.1, 103 hand-washing facilities were constructed in Bentiu alongside the latrine blocks.

3.2.3 Create and operate waste disposal facilities in Bentiu (*Original target: 0, Modified target: 1 facility*)

Mercy Corps has established 90 waste disposal boxes throughout PoC 1 and PoC 6 in Bentiu (60 and 30 boxes respectively). These boxes are attended to by 44 garbage collectors who take the rubbish to a central point where it is picked up and disposed of by UNICEF twice a week.

3.3 INCREASED HYGIENE PROMOTION

3.3.1 Provision of at least 3 hygiene promotion sessions per month in Abiemnom, Mayom & Bentiu (Original target: 0, Modified target: 25)

Hygiene promotion sessions began in October in Abiemnom for a total of 7 sessions. Bentiu started hygiene promotion sessions in December and in that month completed 13 sessions. Each session averages over 150 participants, reaching a minimum of 3,000 beneficiaries. Further, Mercy Corps has trained and hired 25 hygiene promoters in Bentiu PoC who go door-to-door three times a week to instruct households on hygiene promotion. They have reached a total of 480 households during the current reporting cycle.

3.3.2: Regular distribution of hygiene items to 5,000 HH in Abiemnom, Mayom & Bentiu (Original target 0, Modified target: 5,000 HHs)

In coordination with Activity 3.3.1, Mercy Corps' WASH team distributed assorted hygiene items including hygiene kits, soap, and narrow-mouthed jerry cans to 3,938 HHs in Bentiu and 960 in Abiemnom for a total of 4,898.

Sector 4: Non-Food Items (NFI)

4.1.1: Beneficiary selection and Needs Verification in Abiemnon & Mayom (Original target: 0, Modified target: 2,000)

In 2014, Mercy Corps completed the beneficiary selection and needs verification of 1,000 beneficiaries in Abiemnom. With recently opened roads, this process has begun in Mayom in 2015.

4.1.2: Beneficiary Registration (Original target: 0, Modified target: 2,000)

Related to Activity 4.1.1, 1,000 beneficiaries were registered in Abiemnom.

4.1.3: Distribution of relief commodities (Original target: 0, Modified target: 2,000)

After delays in the supply chain, NFI kits were received at the Mercy Corps office in Agok in the beginning of December. These items were distributed to 1,000 beneficiaries in Abiemnom December 2nd to December 4th, 2014.

4.1.4: Pre-positioning and Warehousing

Mercy Corps used its warehouse in Agok for NFI storage until final arrangements for distribution were complete. Furthermore, Mercy Corps has used the warehouse in Abeimnom to store some of the kits; however, since Mercy Corps works to ensure that communities are quickly mobilized once kits have arrived, prolonged storage periods have been avoided.

CONCLUSIONS

This INSPIRE program, funded by USAID OFDA for Unity State and Abyei Area has played a significant role in providing life sustaining assistance to conflict affected households in AAA and Unity State. The program, which was launched in November 2013, underwent modification to include other activities to cater to the growing needs of the population. Moreover, resources have been greatly stretched in response to these increasing needs. The modification of the program, which was approved in June 2014, was initially intended to cater to emergency and life-saving needs for the population of Unity State for six months. It was anticipated that within 6 months, peace would have prevailed to allow the population to shift back into normal development activities. However, despite the signing of several peace agreements between the oppositions and the government, fighting still continues and more people continue to flee their areas and into POCs as IDPs. Meanwhile, by the time the program was developed, the Abyei Administrative Area had just conducted a referendum with 99% voting for the area to be part of South Sudan. Unfortunately, the results of the October 31st 2013 referendum have not been accepted or officially recognized by Sudan or South Sudan. Therefore, Abyei has remained a disputed area between Sudan and South Sudan and a majority of the population has remained in IDP status in areas south of the River Kiir. To add to the already dire state of affairs for the population in Abyei, the rainy season of 2014 started late into the season and then intensified, resulting in flooding and a very poor harvest season. Most households lost their crops, as they were submerged first under water and later under non-edible vegetative growth.

Under the food security and livelihoods (AFS) sector, the program provided seeds and tools to households who were able to engage in productive agriculture. Although the harvest was compromised by the flooding, this was a great step towards revamping staple crop production. Households were trained and provided with seed sources from within the population, this provided some market recovery and encouraged farmers to save seeds as they will be marketable in the next season. The success of the organized seed fairs has attracted interest from other agencies to work with the Farmers Union in Agok.

The Economic Recovery and Market Systems (ERMS) sector, which provided injections of cash through cash transfers and cash for work activities, had a double fold impact on the population. At the time the program started the cash program, following the crisis, commodity prices had risen by 25% in Abyei, leaving a majority of the population who rely on the market for food and non-food items unable to purchase sufficient amounts of foods and goods. The cash program helped increase the purchasing power of the population that had no alternative sources of income. Cash for Work projects helped to connect households to farmer lands and major service centers including health centers and schools. The Village Savings and Loan Association component under the ERMS sector has provided a source of credit to rural communities and enabled households to start small businesses.

The Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene sector of the program has provided access to water to the most vulnerable communities. Most community water points had been destroyed during the conflict while the population in the POC had no sources of water at all. With the rehabilitation and trucking of water, households were able to access safe drinking water. Sanitary facilities have been constructed and

households have been provided with inputs for household latrines which will go a long way in reducing open defecation.

Although a lot has been achieved during the first year of INSPIRE, numerous external challenges have been encountered which have negatively impacted the program, but without INSPIRE, more suffering would have been experienced. At this stage, resources have been exhausted and this has resulted in Mercy Corps starting the close-out of the program earlier than the proposed two years. Rather than another modification, Mercy Corps will submit a new proposal to USAID OFDA for INSPIRE 2.